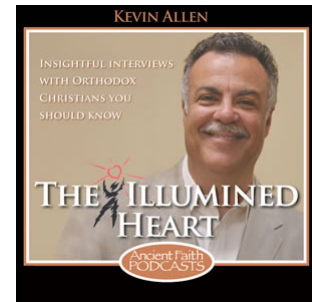


## Transcript

# **The Illumined Heart: 158: The Occult: Shining Light on Satan's Shadow**



**Kevin Allen · December 03, 2010**

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**In this two-part series, Illumined Heart host Kevin Allen speaks with Eastern Orthodox priest and occult-specialist Father George Aquaro about the attractions and dangers of the metaphysics and practices of what is called the occult. From seemingly benign astrology to ghost-chasing, and Father George speaks extensively about these practices and what is behind them from the Orthodox Christian perspective. Do ghosts and apparitions exist, or are they necessarily demonic? This and other questions will be addressed in this fascinating two-part series you will not want to miss.**

**K**evin Allen: Welcome to this edition of *The Illumined Heart* on Ancient Faith Radio. Our current cultural climate has been called neo-pagan, with the resurgence of many ancient heresies and traditions claiming new adherents, many of whom are unfamiliar with the teachings of traditional Christianity, and the occult and so-called occult arts and magic are having a resurgence in popularity, too. We see this in the media, with movies like the *Twilight* series, TV programs like *Ghost Whisperers*, and reality shows about ghost hunters, not to mention the all-popular Harry Potter series of books and movies, which more youth have read than the Bible itself.

In this program today, we will be discussing the resurgent neo-occult movement. My guest on the program has studied this movement extensively, and has written a paper on the subject, for the purpose of helping clergy to understand what the demonic arts are. My guest is Fr. George Aquaro. Fr. George is the pastor of St. Matthew Antiochian Orthodox Church in Torrance, California. I am pleased to be speaking with him in the studio today. Fr. George, it's great to have you. Welcome to *The Illumined Heart*.

**Fr. George Aquaro:** Thank you very much for having me.

**Kevin:** How did your interest in and concern about the occult begin?

**Fr. George:** I grew up in Los Angeles, and it's a hard topic to avoid. L.A. has always been known—I guess the whole West Coast, sometimes called the “Left Coast”—as full of all kinds of crazy religious movements. Both of my parents left the Catholic Church in their early days and my mother took an interest in it, so I was actually raised around the topic throughout my childhood. It came up periodically throughout my life. At one point I lived in Japan. Japanese culture breaks down into Buddhism on one side, and Shinto on the other. Shinto is very much what we would consider a shamanistic religious system, so there were lots of things with the demonic and ghosts. So it's kind of come up. Then later on, becoming a Christian, I tried to avoid all of that, but discovered that it's not something that we can really get away from that, actually; it's a topic that is all around us.

**Kevin:** I didn't know that was your background. Interesting. Very, very interesting. Can you give us an overview, Fr. George Aquaro, of what the occult is, how you would define it, and what some of its best-known practices and methods are?

**Fr. George:** The meaning of the word really is “what is hidden.” The idea of the occult is that there are energies, forces, powers, that exist in the world—be they spiritual energies that are bodiless forces, or things in plants, trees, objects. These energies can be harnessed. What occult practices are about are harnessing energies, or in more advanced practices, harnessing *beings*, for the purpose of enhancing our self-will—getting what we want out of things.

**Kevin:** You write in your piece, “There are depersonalized energies free in the universe which may be harnessed, either through natural abilities, or mechanical means. In this view, those that practice it see God either as a generalized energy force, or a disinterested party to their activities.” That's the underlying assumption, then, of those involved in the occult, that there is not a personal creator God, and that these energies are just floating out there ready for you to harness?

**Fr. George:** Right, because if you had a personal God, there would be a natural question, which is: What are you doing tampering with his stuff? But the idea is that the world has no ownership; there isn't anybody who is really, really in charge, there are forces that sort of battle for territory. You can either have a mentality that it's a feudal system, where there are forces fighting for power, or that it's the wide open frontier, that anything that you can get is yours.

When we speak of different practices of the occult, we tend to have three general categories that one can use. The first one is what we would consider to be psychical abilities. These are people that have natural talents, let's say. You find these in people who are folk healers, or people who are psychics, certain types of mediums, who are people who speak to the dead—and these are considered to have natural-born abilities.

Then on the opposite extreme is what we would consider to be wizardry. You don't have any natural talents to be a wizard; it's somebody who finds a book. For example, in medieval

Europe there were books called “grimoires.” They were basically instructions on how to harness these occult forces in the universe, and it’s strictly a cookbook, you know, the eye-of-newt, bubbling-cauldron practices.

Then somewhere in between is what we would consider to be classical witchcraft, which is someone that has natural, let’s say, magical abilities, on the one hand, but then they also learn how to harness them, how to use them—the classic case of Hogwarts, right? They bring little children in that have these abilities, and then they teach them more stuff, all of this occult knowledge, to enhance the abilities, or even given them new ones, but they have to at least have the potential to be able to use them, in themselves.

**Kevin:** I want to come back and ask you about Harry Potter in just a minute, but sticking on this track that we are on, this underlying assumption of depersonalized energies free in the universe, obviously conflicts very directly and specifically with traditional Christian teaching?

**Fr. George:** Absolutely.

**Kevin:** Would it be safe to say, Fr. George Aquaro, that there is really no spiritual vacuum out there in the unseen world?

**Fr. George:** Yes, when you take the biblical perspective; God makes everything, and the creation is his, and he doesn’t give it up. That’s why, even in the Fall, the world is not lost to God. He’s still *here*. It is still *our* world, in that he has given it to us, we are to tend it, but it is still *his*. The forces of Satan, the fallen spirits and everything else, are squatters. The created realm is not for *them*; it’s for *us*.

This is the first thing that we learn as Christians: it’s that, if you are talking about energies of God, or powers, you have to ask, “Where do they come from?” God does not bless something, and allow it, with his blessing, to be used for evil. Our definition in the Church of “sin” is something that is good that is turned against its purpose. These things, if they are taken, are stolen. That means the original owner still owns them. When we are trying to tamper with these forces, we have to ask, “Where do they come from?”

The Church teaches us something very different, and that is that there aren’t depersonalized forces. Everything is attached to a person. Let’s say, for example, you are engaged in some type of occult practice. You are casting a spell; you think, “I am getting this energy, and I am using it.”

What the Church teaches is no, no, no, no, no. *Somebody* is giving you the *appearance* that you are doing something, but really, what it *is* is it’s a force, you’ve gained its attention by your incantation, your magic act, and whether it introduces itself or not, *it’s* the one doing these things. This is the start of that demonic temptation. You see, the demonic temptation is: yes, there *are* these depersonalized energies and they are just out there for you to grab...

**Kevin:** Neutral energies, if you want to call it that.

**Fr. George:** Yes, “neutral” forces that are just out there, and you can do whatever you want, and there’s no repercussions, and there’s no payment due. That is the beginning of—

when you talk about a vacuum, remember, a vacuum pulls stuff toward itself. The *real* vacuum, spiritually speaking, is that initially we get drawn into magical practices, just thinking, “This is all for free, there is no cost to this.” But we discover later on there *is* a cost, because there is *somebody* that we are indebting ourselves to.

**Kevin:** It is so interesting to me, Fr. George, when you think about these “impersonal” and “depersonalized” energy theories, that you get sometimes in some forms, not all forms, of Buddhism, and so on, really, when you come down to it, and correct me where you think I am wrong, there’s no such thing. The idea of an impersonal anything is just an *idea*. We are *persons*. There is no way to *think* impersonally. There is no *concept* of “impersonal.”

**Fr. George:** Exactly.

**Kevin:** Except some maybe apophatic, opposite-of personhood, which isn’t an idea. It is the thought that you’re contradicting the only thing you know. This idea of impersonal forces and impersonal states of being—what is it? It is really kind of a false notion, no?

**Fr. George:** It is, because it’s a notion where God is divorced from the universe. Let’s say you see a river, and you want to dam up the river and make a lake. Well, it’s just a river, and nobody owns this, and it’s just out there for me to grab, so I dam up this river and I make this little lake. Well, somebody is going to come and say, “Hey, this is my property. What are you doing damming up my river?” “Well, you weren’t *here*, I didn’t see you.” But the ownership is still there, and the owner says, “Well, now that you’ve done this, you *owe* me. You owe me something.”

**Kevin:** Now are you speaking of God in this sense? Or are you speaking of the unseen forces that may also feel that they have ownership?

**Fr. George:** Both. When we talk about the demonic, and their powers that they have— all of us are given, by God, in our creation, certain powers. We, as human beings, we have the power to use our senses, to think. We have reasoning; we have talents. We are given certain things. It’s the same thing with spiritual beings, and when you hear about “a third of the heavenly host fell,” they *retained* their abilities, and they can *do* stuff. The demonic still retain all of their forces, because these are the forces that God created them *with*. They can go out and do these things, but what has happened is, what witchcraft and magic *really* involve, in their core, is *obedience*. Whom do you obey?

When you pick up a magic book, and you are doing these incantations, *you are obeying the author* of the book. The question is: Who told the author that these things work? Who is it who has passed down this supposed knowledge, this information? We are put in a place where we begin to *obey* these beings. The being says, “I will come if you do this. I will come if you draw this particular circle and you put these inscriptions around it, and you burn these colored candles. *I will come*, and I will do what you want me to do.”

But it always begins with our obedience to their instructions; you have to follow the instructions. And you start obeying these things, you see, and now you have put yourself

under them. Eventually, when you have put yourself on this path of obeying them, there is a point where that obedience is no longer reversible, where you've gone a bit *too* far, and now you want to come out, and they say, "No, no, no, no, you see, you should've asked, 'How do I get out of this?' before you started." Literally, it is a spiritual version of "Let the buyer beware."

**Kevin:** Wow. You wrote in your article that the occult really boils down to obedience, either to God, or to our own desires. I was struck by that, and thinking of the famous, or infamous, rather, Alistair Crowley, the great Satanist. One of his famous quotes—I don't recall the book now, he did not write that many, maybe the one book that he wrote—the quote was, "Do what thou wilt." This was his congealing, if you will, of all of the information and knowledge that he claims that he got. "Do what thou wilt," speaking of self-will.

I also want to defer a little bit to a conversation I would like to have with you about how the modern self-actualization, self-realization movements may tie into this, and let's get to that in a minute.

So the root of the occult is, then, in all cases, the demonic?

**Fr. George:** Yes. In all cases, where we see unseen powers at work, we always ask the question, "*Who is doing this?*" One situation that I worked with in the past had to do with a person who went to a witch. Now, this person was from an Orthodox country, so it was an Orthodox witch. Now, what does that mean? Well, this person knows the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, but this person is talking to angels, and the angels are giving this person these incantations and rituals to do. So you ask, "Why wasn't this done in the Church?" That's where you get the silence, and "Well, you know, the priests, they don't *do* these things the way that *I* do them."

**Kevin:** This is a real blending of "religion and the shamanistic," or "native-istic."

**Fr. George:** Yes. Let's say you go to church, you are really concerned, let's say you get sick, or your child gets sick. "Oh, my child, I have to do something." And I go to the church, and I ask the priest, "Pray for my child, and anoint him with the holy oil." We see lots of examples where the priest is clearly not a healer, because he goes and visits everybody and not everybody recovers.

**Kevin:** Or he prays and the child doesn't get healed.

**Fr. George:** Right, so the parents say, "But I really want *my* child to be healed." Well, what's the next stage? Well, there is this person over here, and this one says she can *heal*, and there is a temptation, "Maybe God has blessed her to say these incantations and do all of this stuff." But, the question that remains is: why is she operating *outside of the Church*? Why is it that she's doing this *on her own*?

All of the services in the Orthodox Church are acts of obedience to God. This is one thing I want to really emphasize: there is a difference between the obedience in the Church and the obedience to the self. When you pick up a magic book, you're going through this thing saying, "I want to do this, I want to do that, oh, and here's these things that'll help me do it." In the

Church, we obey God, in that we have a system where we have been called to serve the services, not because we *feel* like doing them, but because we *have* to do them, we have been called to obedience.

The priest does not say on Sunday morning, “You know, I just do not feel like doing this whole Liturgy thing.” Well, some of us are tempted to do that, (laughter) but we don’t. You still get up out of bed, and you get dressed, and you go to the church, and do the service. Why? Because you are commanded to do it. This is what you must do. We, as priests, when somebody comes to us and says, “I am sick,” we are commanded, you go to this page of the book, and this is the service that you do.

**Kevin:** And it is God’s will.

**Fr. George:** What happens past that point is up to him, but we do it; we’ve been called to obedience. Throughout the Scriptures, for example, Elisha worked great miracles, and yet, he was afflicted. He died with diseases, that easily, if it had been somebody else, he could have healed them, but it was not for him to use the powers for himself, you see. He was called to obey *God*, and do what God called him to do.

The services of the Church are an obedience to God, in which the self-will is removed as much as possible. That’s why there are *standards* for when you use these things, how you use these things, and it’s always for the benefit of *another*.

**Kevin:** And for the salvation of our souls.

**Fr. George:** Absolutely.

**Kevin:** Without entering into danger.

**Fr. George:** Right, because our wills are broken. That’s what the fallen nature is, that our human will is broken, and so we don’t perceive things properly, we don’t get all of these things.

**Kevin:** Interesting.

**Fr. George:** So it is always *to* another person. That is why I do not hear my own confessions. I can only hear somebody else’s confession.

**Kevin:** Interesting.

**Fr. George:** It is a check on our will, so the will does not remain in the self.

**Kevin:** The fallen will is within the realm of the fallen man.

**Fr. George:** Absolutely.

**Kevin:** So when you are depending upon *it*, you’re dealing in the realm of that which is fallen, as opposed to that which is divine.

**Fr. George:** Right.

**Kevin:** How interesting. A question, though, about that, Fr. George Aquaro: Is there a distinction that can be made between what we’ve been discussing and what others might call the “paranormal” and the “occult”? Or is it the view of the Church that all, and anything, that

would be within “paranormal,” is necessarily occult and demonic?

I ask the question, and just let me make a very brief question follow-up, because it seems to me that sometimes we operate at such a low level of normal consciousness that perhaps some of what might be called the paranormal is nothing more than the widening of the parameters of what God has given us, in terms of human consciousness. Am I off-base there?

**Fr. George:** No, the question isn’t really, “Do these things exist?” It’s: “Who’s doing them?” In the Church, we *believe* in miracles. When you come on Sunday, we say, “Bread and wine: Body and Blood”—how’d that happen? And it goes on from there. If you talk about, for example, the idea of ghosts, well, if you go back to the desert Fathers, you see where there’ve *been* apparitions of the dead. When the witch of Endor raises Samuel, Samuel actually appears.

**Kevin:** Was that an apparition, or was that a demonic being masquerading as an apparition, and where are we on ghosts?

**Fr. George:** Well, there are numerous examples of the dead asking the saints, the living saints for prayer. This isn’t really a disputed issue in the Church. Samuel appears in a type of appearance that one could call an angel of sorts. The root “*angelos*,” is “messenger,” and in fact, some of the early saints said that when we die and we are of Christ, that we go to school and literally become types of angels.

That doesn’t mean that we become bodiless powers; that’s a different category. The dead can bring messages for the living, but it’s under very restricted cases, and these are cases where, number one, there isn’t any necromancy going on. Necromancy is raising the dead.

If you pull our Ouija board out, you will not get Grandma Ethel. She is not going to come to your Ouija board, because that’s not what God has the communication between the living and dead for. It’s not to find out what your lottery number is. These are set cases where God may, in certain circumstances, allow the dead to contact the living for either the request of prayers, so that their souls may go to rest, or to deliver a particular message. This is sometimes called a psychopomp. A pomp is a procession. It’s somebody escorts the soul to the place of rest. For example, you’re dying, and you are holding onto this life, because you are afraid of dying, and God will send someone that you know to come and say, “Hey, look, it’s going to be okay. It’s going to be okay. I’ll be with you, to go through this process. Yes, it is scary, but ...” You know, *God is very merciful*.

**Kevin:** So the answer is, and do not let me put words in your mouth, there are some apparitions who are truly those of our departed, but this is under the operation of, if you will, the mercy and the *economia* of God, not self-will and not magical forces?

**Fr. George:** Right, right.

**Kevin:** Did I understand you correctly to say that there are *some* paranormal activities, maybe, that we might call “clairvoyance,” or whatever, that *could* be within the realm of the natural, just an extension of it? Maybe some of us are sleepwalking half the time and we are not tapping our natural God-given resources? Or are they always occult?

**Fr. George:** Well, there are examples of saints who appeared to have what we would consider paranormal abilities.

**Kevin:** Yes, out-of-body clairvoyance, bilocation healings, foreknowledge, etc., etc.

**Fr. George:** Right, and those are things that God blessed those people with. Who are we to say whom God is going to bless and whom he isn't? But again, you have to look at what does that person do with those things, under what circumstances? In the case of these saints who had these powers, they were very holy people. They were very well-healed people, so they weren't going to use these things to— "Hey, watch this, I am going to really spook my cousin. Watch me, I am going to levitate across the room."

**Kevin:** Or, "Look how holy and wonderful *I* am because of these powers that I have," i.e., pride.

**Fr. George:** Exactly, these powers aren't unheard of. In one case I dealt with someone who claimed to have a lot of psychic abilities—precognition, the ability to have visions of the future that were coming true, lots and lots of activity, but there were some *mixed* things that were happening along with it, and that is always a *bad* sign, where some of these beings appeared to be rather sinister in how they were acting. My advice to his person was: "Pray against these things, reject them," and as soon as this person started to reject these powers, all kinds of things started to happen in their house...

**Kevin:** Negative things?

**Fr. George:** *Very* negative things.

**Kevin:** They didn't like being rejected, they weren't going to be rejected.

**Fr. George:** Exactly. All of a sudden this apparent "personal gift" that this person had— all of a sudden the gift disappears, and suddenly it became this highway for these demons to start attacking the family and the household.

**Kevin:** Scary, scary. Father, let me ask you this question. Most of the occult practices that you outline in your paper are ancient. We've talked about magic, necromancy, the use of so-called "natural powers," foreknowledge, and so on, but you have said that these practices and their magical symbols are also alive today in our culture, even having resurgence in popularity. Why do you think that is? Why are they having a resurgence in popularity today, and can you give us some examples of some of these ancient methodologies that we can see around us, even if we don't realize that they are occult?

**Fr. George:** I think one of the reasons why these things are becoming more popular is that our society, as a whole, has lost its spiritual strain. We, as human beings— we're body, soul, and spirit. Part of us has that spiritual thirst for God, and a lot of this phenomenon is going on around us. How many people have said, "Oh, that house down the street is *haunted*"? Or they'll go to someone's house late at night and they decide, "Hey, let's get out the Ouija board."

But we now have an utterly materialistic philosophy in our modern culture. We have sort of bought into Marx's dialectic materialism—"There is only the material, this is all that there



is”—and people are naturally *hungry* for something *more*, something profound.

This is the problem with the boredom of modern Christianity. It's *boring*. That is why everything now has become about entertainment—the televangelist, or the rock band in your church. It has to make it exciting because it's so *boring*. It's *banal*. “Okay, well, I have said the magic incantation, I am now saved, Jesus is going to give me everlasting life, because I said this certain prayer that somebody gave me.”

**Kevin:** “What do I do now?”

**Fr. George:** Yes. “Is that all there is?” I remember before I converted to Christianity, one of the reasons that I swore that I would never become a Christian was: there was a story about this young man who had murdered his family, and there was some boneheaded pastor who said, “Well, you know, a week earlier he gave his heart to Jesus, and I know that he killed his family, and then ended up killing himself, but I know that he's in heaven right now, because he gave his heart to the Lord.” And I said, “Wait a second! He gave his heart to the Lord one day, and the next day he does this horrible act.” And I think to myself, “What is going on here? *Is God that stupid?*”

**Kevin:** Bad doctrine.

**Fr. George:** It was horrific, and because we are surrounded by, as you put it, “bad doctrine,” people get this stuff in their mind, but they know that there is something *more* out there, and they start looking for it *on their own*, because these figures that they look to who are supposedly “their church,” are not giving them the whole story of the world and how it really is.

**Kevin:** “Devoid of true wisdom,” let's say.

**Fr. George:** Absolutely.

**Kevin:** Devoid of true wisdom. Can you give us some examples of modern extensions? I was fascinated, by the way, in your article, to read about the Starbucks logo. I have to ask you about that.

**Fr. George:** (laughter)

**Kevin:** I almost want to stop drinking... I am sorry Starbucks, I know, whatever, but, please...

**Fr. George:** If you look at the history of the Starbucks logo, originally they had a rather graphic portrayal of a mermaid with two tails, and it is an old fertility symbol. Now, as Starbucks has gotten gradually more corporatized and [has] cleaned up its graphics, now it is just sort of a lady, and sort of a little bit of her hair, and all that, but it's an old fertility image. This image was also used to ward off the evil eye.

There is a type of image that this is sort of based on which is called a “sheela-na-gig,” which was usually a picture of a woman giving birth. It was a type of fertility image that was used to contradict infertility, thus bad luck. So it's an old lucky charm, let's say. It is the same as

a horseshoe over your doorway. It's a symbol, but it's slapped on a cup of coffee, and when I tell people, particularly young people that are not really interested in having children right now, that, yes, there is a fertility logo on your half-caff latte, you should see how quickly they put it down! (laughter)

**Kevin:** I wonder why they went with that. Was it because they picked that character from *Moby Dick*, and he was into all that sort of stuff?

**Fr. George:** I've never really looked into why they picked it, but it gets into something that you brought up a little bit earlier, and that is: the occult is very aesthetically pleasing, because that is part of how it attracts our interest.

**Kevin:** And we are naturally drawn to the transcendent.

**Fr. George:** Absolutely, and when you have an appealing image, when you take a look at, for example, the power of the Nazi art, and how it drew Germans in: the swastika—well, the swastika is an image from Hinduism that goes back 4000-5000 years, and it's such a powerful image that you see it in Native-American art, you see it in Greek art: the *tetra-gamma*, the four *gammas* that come together to make that swastika pattern—that graphic image has such an effect on us that it pops up in unrelated cultures. This is what the power of the occult is, that it harnesses our natural attractions to things, and turns them against us. It is a romance.

**Kevin:** And we are visual, we are auditory, and we smell, and so all of these sensual prompts, maybe, can lead us in those directions. I shop at health food stores, and I am interested in evangelizing to the New Agers and all that kind of stuff. What about Reiki?

**Fr. George:** Well, that's, again, a very old idea that the body has these energies that are out of balance, and you have to bring them back into balance, and it's a kissing-cousin to the idea of, "Your humors are off balance, and you have too much blood, and so we need to bleed you."

**Kevin:** Is that just bad science, or is that occult?

**Fr. George:** In the case of Reiki, it really goes into the occult. This idea that I can come up to another person and pull energies out of them with my hand...

**Kevin:** Messing with "the auras" and all that sort of business?

**Fr. George:** Yes, you are right to pull out the idea if this is bad science. Well, it is absolutely bad science, but, at the same time, it also gets into these impersonalized energies. The question is, if you are sick, where is God in your illness?

**Kevin:** Yes, okay, I get that. Also, too, we learn all about, in our culture, certain yogas and chakras, and all of this, meditation practices, and so on. We will talk a little bit more about that, as well. Father, I see that we are coming up to the time limit on our first program, so let me close with this question. Take what time you need, then we will close and come back later, because I realize this is going to be two parts, and I am extraordinarily interested in this. I'm sure our listeners will be, too, so I don't want to rush us.

You said something interesting in your article that I'd like you to close on. You claim that

the failure of modernism that came out of the European Enlightenment, and which set the stage for post-modernism—where we don't trust anything absolute, and we've lost our hope, if you will, in some of these postulates of modernism—post-modernism provided the cultural, philosophical environment within which modern magic can flourish: can you explain what you mean, as we close on that? How does post-modernism allow for modern magic to flourish?

**Fr. George:** In an earlier part of this interview we talked a little bit about the human yearning for the spiritual, and modernism is a very depersonalized, very mechanical approach to the world. It's utterly materialistic. People are searching for these spiritual truths, these spiritual realities. Post-modernism jumps in as a response to it, because those needs, those desires, were never quite fulfilled.

The failure of Marxism has always been that you give people everything that they are supposed to have, you give everybody an equal share, and they're still unhappy. Human beings have a *need* to be happy far beyond a roof over our heads or foods in our tummies. Post-modernism, then, in rejecting the absolutes of the modernist ideal, says, "Now you need to look after your own happiness yourself. You need to find whatever *your own truth* is." Modernism produces a technocratic system that's supposed to make everything right.

**Kevin:** Which fails and failed.

**Fr. George:** It failed, and so now, you cannot depend on anybody else. No church...

**Kevin:** Got you: a rejection of everything absolute, a rejection of everything historically traditional?

**Fr. George:** Well, what you can do then, is you can take all of those little traditions and pick out what you like. "I like Byzantine icons, so I put Byzantine icons on my wall, but you know, I kind of like some of that Hinduism, it is really neat with the yoga, so I am going to do yoga in front of my Byzantine icon, but you know, the Byzantine music, it's a little spooky, I kind of still like my Christian rock, so I will listen to that." That is what happens: you pick up the things that you like.

**Kevin:** Or, "I like their angel thing, I'm going to pray to the angels."

**Fr. George:** Sure. I remember there was a TV show about, supposedly, these women who were angels, and my question always was, "Well, who runs the show there, are the angels just doing things on their own, or do they have a boss? With Charlie's Angels, you've got Charlie, but on this TV show, who's your boss?" "Well, we don't want to talk about that." It is interesting that *angels* are not controversial, but God is.

**Kevin:** Yes, that is very, very interesting. The point is that post-modernism opened the door to this kind of eclecticism, if you want to say it that way, and the search for one's *personal* spirituality.

**Fr. George:** Yes, the locus of truth in modernism was always the scientific fact. Science has never been able to really produce human happiness. This is the failure of pharmacology, this is the failure of psychology, it's the failure of even the marketing approach to business. All

of these things ultimately fail, so then the post-modernist says, “I am going to *reject* the systems, I am going to *reject* the facts, and I am just going to look for what makes me happy,” and this flings the door open.

You see, modernism tries to destroy the Church by rejecting the spiritual, and making everything about business, and then post-modernism tries to keep the Church from standing up, by saying, “You don’t have to follow a system, you don’t have to follow an institution, you don’t have to listen to anybody else, just *do* what your *heart* guides you to,” and you are right back to self-will.

**Kevin:** With that, Fr. George Aquaro, let’s end Part I. My guest has been Fr. George Aquaro. He’s the pastor of St. Matthew Antiochian Orthodox Church in Torrance, California. We have been speaking about the resurgence of occultism in the neo-occult movement. Fr. George, a fascinating, wonderful part one. I am really looking forward to part two. Thanks for being my guest.

**Fr. George:** Thank you very much.

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