

# What is paranormal?

## In search of the paranormal

By Mrs. Martie Dieperink

Contemporary man is seeking. He is in pursuit of a little happiness or relaxation and, if he is religiously inclined, he is in search of God, or rather the divine as many call it these days.

Many people are in search of something because they are no longer sure of the traditional values they might have been taught in church. They prefer to go on a journey of discovery themselves and to explore new areas. There is truth in seeking. The Bible promises: "Seek and you shall find." I have done this myself. I too was one of the many seeking people for a number of years.

My interest in the paranormal came from my parents and I was sensitive to it. During my studies of theology in the sixties at Utrecht in the Netherlands (I am a Dutch lady) I was enthralled by Eastern religions and I also attended the lectures of Professor Tenhaeff, the renowned Dutch parapsychologist. I even stayed in an ashram in India for one year. In that community I went more deeply into the studies of yoga and contacted a guru. I was especially interested in the fact that yogi's claim to have experienced God. I longed for a living experience of God and I hoped to find God in India. For twenty years I was closely associated with the New Age movement.

People in the New Age believe that a totally new time will come – a New Age – a time of light, love and peace.

They believe that we ourselves are able to create paradise on earth.

According to them we have not yet fully developed our consciousness.

They believe we could acquire unknown divine powers

by developing our consciousness to

a much higher

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degree. This would enable us to communicate with spirits, to become clairvoyant and to make use of cosmic forces through which we could heal others and ourselves.

In our post modern time there is a tremendous thirst for paranormal experiences. These experiences transcend normal sense perception. There are people who hear, smell, see, know or feel things others do not. For instance, we cannot see angels with our normal/natural eyes. However, there are people who claim they have seen angels. Isn't that very interesting?

Irene van Lippe Biesterfeld, a Dutch princess, writes in her book *Dialog met de natuur* (A Dialogue with Nature):

"It was quite true what Mary (a friend) had said: I too had the capacity of learning to read energies in the chakra's and aura around us. I discovered this when I attended courses to satisfy my tremendous curiosity to look behind things."<sup>1</sup>

There are so many possibilities to satisfy this spiritual curiosity these days: all kinds of New Age books are available, there are paranormal fairs and the Harry Potter books enable children to become familiar with the world of magic.

### **A new world**

The hypno-therapist Van der Heide writes in the *Paranormal Journal* (August '99):

"Welcome to the Paranormal Fair of 'View'. For many years 'View' has organised well-attended fairs on the paranormal and on healthcare. Everything focuses on the spiritual, paranormal and alternative therapies and treatments. Visitors and workers in alternative health fields are all searching for factor X in life. However, no one has absolute wisdom. We talk about spirits, haunted houses, chakra's, guardian angels, clairvoyance, mesmerism, faith, the stars, the spheres ... but nobody really knows exactly how Life, the SPIRIT, the Cosmos is put together ... no one knows precisely what God, Jesus, Mary, Allah or Krishna had in mind."

From his words we can conclude that we go into a new mental world when we seek new possibilities and paranormal experiences. This new way of thinking differs fundamentally from the traditional Christian way of thinking that many people, especially the older generation, know from their parental home. These days the old

certainities are being exchanged for new uncertainties. According to Van der Heide we cannot know things for certain. But are we really improving if we exchange the old certainties for a new uncertainty? Is it not dangerous to dabble with forces that are unknown to us? Suppose we end up in quicksand and sink? For this reason we will examine the forces we contact in the paranormal world.

Whenever we start out on a journey to an unknown destination we take precautionary measures. For instance, we take a map with us to be able to find the way. Is it not also necessary to take precautionary measures when starting out on an exploration of unknown regions in the spiritual world? According to hypno-therapist Van der Heide it would be best to rely on our own intuition. He writes: "Nothing beats your own intuition when it concerns your own existence. Life is the art of learning to listen to your own feelings."

But if I travel to an unknown destination and rely only on my own feelings for guidance, I can easily get lost. My own sense of direction can fail. I too have taken decisions based entirely on my own feelings. I intuitively felt that I had to go to India in order to seek my happiness there. In retrospect, however, I realise that this was not the right decision at all. I have experienced that intuitions and subjective feelings can be deceptive. Just as in our normal world we need a reliable guide when we go on a journey of discovery, so it is in the spiritual realm: you cannot do without a trustworthy guide.

But in these times anyone who knows things for certain is looked on with suspicion. If you express a conviction, you can hear the following reproach: "You are so sure of everything, you'd think you had God in your pocket." It is true, we can easily become arrogant if we are sure of our ground, thinking that we know everything so well, but is it wrong to be sure about our destiny? We expect a map to show clearly how we can reach our destination. We are not satisfied with a map that only shows vague lines, are we? If factor X, God, is love – and even Van der Heide speaks of LOVE – would He allow people to remain in doubt concerning their eternal well-being? For this reason we want to have objective guidelines that will help us discover which forces we contact in the paranormal world.

### **Can we make use of the Bible?**

A lot of people are put off by the idea that the Bible expresses absolute truth. The new way of thinking is not only rather vague but it is also relativistic. Buddha, Jesus, and Krishna are lumped together. It is difficult to understand why the Bible should be true, but not the Hindu books. In these times we are easily accused of discrimination if we regard one religion good and another bad.

In the New Age movement the Bible is considered an interesting book, but it also provokes resistance and rejection. People in the New Age tell us that the Bible is out of date because it belongs to a bygone Piscean Age. But this cannot be the real reason for their rejection since the Hindu books are even older than the Bible and they are popular in the New Age and not classed as out of date. There is another reason for the rejection. What really matters is that the Bible warns people of practices propagated by New Age people, for example, channelling. Of course this provokes resistance. John Klimo writes in his book *Channeling* that churches wrongly claim that they have an exclusive right to communicate with the Transcendence and have to forbid channelling as being idolatry. The Christian point of view seems to be narrow-minded and this is exactly what I thought. That the Old Testament forbids spiritualism was, in my view, an outdated standpoint. Today we can take a much broader view and, during my student days, I went to séances several times. Whatever seemed to be negative, namely the existence of hell, the devil, the anti-Christ and demons, I put out of my mind. I didn't want to think about it. And so these 'outdated things' are often brushed aside as intimidation or being relics from the past. We are more enlightened!

Two mental worlds seem to collide with each other. It looks as if Christians and those in the New Age don't understand one another. In post-modern thinking different truths can exist side by side, but that doesn't make the actual gap smaller. I know both worlds from my own experience and I know how great the gap is. In this document we will examine which collision of spirits takes place in this conflict. Can this conflict indicate a struggle between powers and forces in the unseen world of spirits? Is it really true that all religions experiences come from one and

the same common source? It is as if Christians and those in the New Age receive inspiration from different spirits.

It is indeed not recommended to adopt a narrow-minded attitude. I still like to keep a broad view. If we look for an adequate answer to the question of which forces we contact in the paranormal world, we must find out as much as possible on the subject. That means we need to take New Age experiences seriously, but we also must not ignore the Bible. Therefore this exploration of the paranormal world is based on my personal experiences, New Age literature and the Bible. It may well be that the Bible will turn out to be not such an outdated book but, on the contrary, a highly topical one.

### **The paranormal world does exist**

For a long time people in the West – rationalists but also Christians – were not interested in miracles and the existence of a spirit world. It seemed as if the Bible consisted only of dogmas. Although Christians accepted that miracles occur in the Bible, they often didn't believe they could happen today. This being the case it is understandable that people will turn to other sources. For example, people went to Jomanda who is a well-known Dutch medium, because something did happen there. However, faith in miracles, also among Christians, is making a come back in these days. H. Stoffels, sociologist of religion, announced in his inaugural lecture dated 22nd February 2002: you are again allowed to believe in miracles.

The first thing we can say about paranormal experiences is that they do exist. We cannot brush them aside as if it was simply imagination. When people tell us that they have paranormal experiences, let us take them seriously. Let us first listen to what they have to say. In the sixties the late professor Tenhaeff tried to prove, on the basis of numerous examples, that telepathy and clairvoyance exist. Clairvoyance means that a person can see into the future. I have had predicting dreams. Once I dreamed that my grandmother told me she was going on a journey. I knew from a book on dreams that it meant that she was going to die. And so she did.

Telepathy means that one has an extrasensory contact with others. Let me give an example.

You have the thought or idea to phone a friend and as you go to the phone that friend calls you. I did not find it difficult to believe with professor Tenhaeff that paranormal experiences are real for the simple reason that I had them myself. Spontaneous telepathy is a rather common paranormal experience. Most people have had such experiences once in a while. There are peripheral areas of the paranormal and there is no need to call these experiences supernatural or miraculous. However, remarkable experiences also occur in the paranormal world; they cannot be classed as just natural happenings. These gifts are usually developed by training or initiation.

The various areas within the paranormal world can be identified as follows:

- Firstly, a person can have remarkable gifts like telepathy and clairvoyance which goes beyond the normal. To know the future various aids are used like palmistry, tarot cards, I-Ching, and horoscopes.

- Secondly, it has become popular to communicate with spirits. These spirits can transmit all kinds of information and give inspiration to compose music or write a book. They also help the paranormal healer. Contacting spirits is called "channelling."

- Thirdly, paranormal powers can be developed, for instance, by means of magic and sorcery in order to help and cure people (white magic) or to harm them (black magic).

Now I want to give some idea of the extraordinary experiences that occur in the Bible as well as in the alternative circuit.

### **Extraordinary experiences in the Bible**

Numerous biblical stories testify of experiences that transcend the normal sense perception. When the notion "paranormal" is understood in a broad sense and refers to all experiences that transcend the normal sense perception, the Bible can be considered to be the most paranormal book in the world. Miracles occur from beginning to end.

Modern theologians maintain that the miracles in the Bible never really took place; they are fairy tales since miracles do not happen. This is a remarkable thing because, in our post-modern time, the interest in paranormal experiences has returned. People who are interested in the para-

normal will not find it difficult to believe that the Bible is not a fairy tale. It tells stories that really have happened. People really have seen angels. Also today we can have the same remarkable experiences. Wonders never cease.

Let me give some examples of extraordinary paranormal experiences in the Bible.

1. People may have the gift of prediction. Joseph had predicting dreams.

"Now it fell out also that he told his brethren a dream that he had dreamed: which occasioned them to hate him the more. And he said to them: Hear my dream which I dreamed. I thought we were binding sheaves in the field: and my sheaf arose as it were, and stood, and your sheaves standing about, bowed down before my sheaf. 8 His brethren answered: Shalt thou be our king? or shall we be subject to thy dominion? Therefore this matter of his dreams and words ministered nourishment to their envy and hatred." (Genesis 37:5-8)


We read about the Holy Spirit:

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth. For he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear, he shall speak; and the things that are to come, he shall shew you." (John 16:13)

2. Angels appear to human beings in order to deliver a message from God. The appearance of angels occurs at all crucial events. They were present, of course, at the birth of Jesus Christ. The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear Jesus.

"And the angel being come in, said unto her:

**But if I travel to an unknown destination and rely only on my own feelings for guidance, I can easily get lost. My own sense of direction can fail. I too have taken decisions based entirely on my own feelings. I intuitively felt that I had to go to India in order to seek my happiness there. In retrospect, however, I realise that this was not the right decision at all. I have experienced that intuitions and subjective feelings can be deceptive. Just as in our normal world we need a reliable guide when we go on a journey of discovery, so it is in the spiritual realm: you cannot do without a trustworthy guide.**



Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.." (Luke 1:26-29) From her reaction we can conclude that Mary really saw the angel and heard his voice. The shepherds in the field also saw angels.

"And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. " (Luke 2:9,14)

3. Numerous miracles testify to a supernatural power. When the widow's son at Zarephta fell ill and died, Elijah raised him from the dead. Jesus healed many sick people, he cast out demons and he raised people from the dead. The apostles also performed many miracles. "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest no man durst join himself unto them; but the people magnified them. And the multitude of men and women who believed in the Lord, was more increased: 15 Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that when Peter came, his shadow at the least, might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities." (Acts 5:12-16)

4. Many miracles occur in nature. Elijah prayed that rain would stop and, later on, that it would rain again. And that is exactly what happened. Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. He multiplied some bread and fish to feed at least 5,000 people.

There are many more examples of miracles in the Bible but, for now, I simply want to make the point that paranormal experiences do occur in the Bible. They are miracles (works) of God.

### **Paranormal experiences in the New Age**

As already stated, people believe in miracles again. Many people in the Netherlands went to Jomanda, a medium, because they had seen or heard that remarkable things happen there and people seemed to feel better afterwards. Certain-

ly remarkable paranormal things happen in the New Age movement just like they happen in the Bible. The big question is what kind of miracles happen there. When Jomanda lays hands on a person, does she transmit – like the apostles – the Holy Spirit? Is it just humbug or does something really happen? And if something does happen, what is it?

Professor Tenhaeff, the parapsychologist, was of the opinion that the Bible is full of paranormal experiences and he compared them with the experience of psychics and clairvoyants. For instance, psychics can tell fortunes just like the prophets in the Bible. According to him it is a general human capacity to have or to develop paranormal gifts. He thought it very interesting that eastern yogis can develop their paranormal capacities by means of yoga techniques.

New Age books claim that eastern yogis can perform the same miracles Christ did. A guru conjuring an orange out of the air has been compared to the multiplication of food by Christ. The appearance of a guru after he has died has been compared with the resurrection of Christ. I also was of the opinion that all miracles were of God.

The guru in the ashram who was an elderly lady called 'the Mother' had great paranormal powers. She could read my mind. She was able to go into a trance, she could leave her body and appear somewhere else and she also had a healing gift. I experienced she had a supernatural power and I assumed that everything that was supernatural came from God...

The idea that the development of paranormal gifts is a fairly common human capacity is also found in Christian literature these days. Pastor Piet Schelling writes in his book Jomanda, heks of heilige (Jomanda, saint or witch) "As for the paranormal talent, my pre-supposition is that paranormal gifts belong to the creation of God and that a healing work can come from these gifts. Paranormal gifts belong to the creation and each individual human being can get them. Jomanda can also possess such creative gifts."<sup>2</sup>

According to him paranormal gifts are in fact innate and, if we are religious, we say that God

has created them. He overlooks the fact that people usually don't have these powers by nature, but that they have developed them by means of training, a technique or initiation. What happens during training or initiation? Contact is made with the world of spirits. For instance, Jomanda receives help from the spirits of the dead during her healings. Then you can no longer say she uses a general or common human power to heal people.

### Negative experiences

In Piet Schelling's book I did not read that people could also have negative experiences with paranormal healers like Jomanda. For instance, I heard of a young boy with Down's syndrome who lived with his parents and used to listen to CD's. A friend of his parents brought a package into which Jomanda had radiated energy and she advised them to put it under his pillow; this apparently would do him good. They did so. The boy did not know what to do. He felt he was thumped and beaten left and right and lost a lot of weight. His parents brought him to an exorcist who prayed for him twice and calm returned.

The great question is: how do we explain such negative experiences? During a conversation, which the exorcist and I had with Jomanda, she simply brushed aside the negative incident. It was not her fault. In such a case, negative things that are already in a person manifest themselves. Of course a person can fall ill because of psychic problems but we cannot explain the boy's troubles in this way. He had no psychic problems and had, on the contrary, the feeling that it came to him from outside. If his troubles were due to an inner problem, his parents would have discovered that much earlier. The most plausible explanation is that the boy was affected by a negative force outside himself. After my return from India, where I was initiated by the guru, I was suddenly confronted with a long period of ill health and suffering, for instance, I had excruciating pains which made a normal life impossible.

I was perfectly healthy when I went to India. I remember that I had negative predicting dreams about Holland in the ashram which gave me the impression that a difficult time lay ahead of me. I had no negative thoughts and I

forgot about those dreams. I was thinking about my studies and I wanted to bring them to a good conclusion. The source of this difficult time can be traced back to my stay in the ashram.

In his book *Tussen Wetenschap en Mystiek* (Between Science and Mysticism) Rolf Wennekes writes that people who practice Transcendental Meditation can have serious mental and physical complaints even those who had been perfectly healthy beforehand.

I am not the only one who has had negative experiences. If that were the case I could think that I was to blame. What happened to me has proved to be a common recognisable pattern found with people who have entered the paranormal world. The conclusion is that it is possible to contact negative forces in the paranormal circuit.



**Jomanda, Dutch medium during a healing session**

Why one can get negative experiences in the paranormal world cannot be ignored. During my involvement with the New Age I read a book about a Hindu who started meditating and, for many years, struggled with mental disorders. He could not understand why this happened to him since he had not practised any dangerous techniques. He talked about his problem with all gurus he knew in India but none of them could explain it satisfactorily. I also did not understand why I had to suffer. Sri Aurobindo wrote in his books that suffering was a necessity for the fur-

ther evolution of the world. But does a loving God impose such torture on human beings? My great question was: why do I end up in darkness when I am actually seeking God?

### **A warning in the Bible**

I finally found an answer to my question in the Bible. Having scarcely looked at the Bible for many years, I started reading it with new eyes. This book warns us about negative paranormal experiences. During my time with the New Age I simply did not see the warning passages in the Bible. I was young and unaware of dangers. After

and the counterfeit miracles of Satan.

Professor Tenhaeff was strong against making a distinction between real wonders of God and false wonders of Satan. With regard to the account of Simon the magician in Acts 8 he writes that it is an error of orthodox Christians to consider paranormal powers as either divine or devilish gifts. According to him the saints have performed the same miracles as witches and magicians. Capacities which are in general attributed to human nature underlie paranormal powers.

However, in his argument he makes a certain logical error. It is not true that orthodox Christians and authors only later on made a distinction between real and false wonders and condemned Simon's paranormal powers. The Bible does and so does Jesus. Professor Tenhaeff fails to make the necessary distinction. Man has a general capacity to contact the unseen world. If man did not have that capacity, he would not be able to see an angel. We have a spiritual aerial for making contact with the spiritual world. But the crucial question is: to which spirits have we tuned our aerial. If good and evil spirits exist, then it is necessary to tune our aerial to the good angels and not to the evil ones.

It is also a general human capacity to transmit energy. When a mother lays her hand on the sore spot of her child's knee after a fall, the pain can go. But paranormal healing is something else. Mesmerist Frank den Ouden writes in his book that spirit guides assist him when healing and this gives him the ability to heal better. The question is which spirits does he contact? How do we know whether we are exposed to positive or negative energy? This is a vital question since I, and others, have experienced being exposed to negative forces.

1. Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld. *Dialoog met de natuur*, Deventer: Ankh-Hermes, 1995, p. 43.
2. Piet Schelling. *Jomanda, heks of heilige?*, Kampen: Kok, 1995., p. 42.



**Dreams in Holy Scripture: The angel appears to Saint Joseph telling him to leave Bethlehem and to flee to Egypt. Rembrandt van der Rijn, 1645.**

a long period of suffering, my eyes were opened. The Bible warns about the negative experiences I had endured and so I understood what had happened to me.

In the Bible we read that not only do good angels exist, but also evil spirits, called demons, Satan being their ruler. It warns against practices through which one comes into contact with such dark powers. This happens, for instance, through spiritualism, that is, the practice of calling up spirits. The Bible teaches that we have to test the spirits to see whether they are of God, because false signs and wonders are also possible. Jesus warns us: "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible." (Matthew 24:24) A clear distinction is made between the real wonders of God