



Martin, Walter, Jill Martin Rische, and Kurt Van Gorden

The Kingdom of the Occult

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
New Jersey

Walter Martin always wanted to write a “*companion volume to The Kingdom of the Cults, but something always prevented him from beginning the new project,*” says his daughter Jill Martin Rische in the introduction to *The Kingdom of the Occult* (xi). When Jill and her husband began Walter Martin Ministries one of their first goals was to produce that companion, and with the help of Martin’s former research assistant Kurt Van Gorden, Jill has been able to accomplish this, thus maintaining her father’s legacy while continuing the work of his ministry.

The Kingdom of the Occult is comprised of edited portions of Walter Martin’s various lectures and writings as well commentary on Martin’s work and original material by Rische and Van Gorden. It offers exactly what the title implies, an overview of the Kingdom of the Occult, ranging from Paganism to UFOs to spiritual warfare with just about everything you can think of in between. Each chapter follows a pretty standard format. They all begin with a list of “quick facts” which anyone who has a copy of (the updated) *The Kingdom of the Cults* should be familiar with. The chapter introductions serve as summaries of whatever particular practice is the focus of the chapter before moving into case studies from Walter Martin’s experience with these various groups and practices. These are followed by a Scriptural responses and then the chapters are closed out with concluding remarks and a recommended resources list (always a welcome feature) containing references to books and audio presentations.

The chapters are heavily footnoted with references to books as well as websites. I was pleased to see that in many of the website article references the date of access is cited along with URL which informs the reader that this material was available as quoted *at that time* and not necessarily presently, e.g., on p. 327 n. 25 we’re informed that the article in question was accessed on December 28, 2006 but that the site is no longer accessible. Unfortunately this method is not consistently maintained throughout the book and there are plenty of references to websites with no date of access. Nonetheless, the authors show themselves to be well versed in

the various facets of the occult and up-to-date in their knowledge of the beliefs and practices of these groups. It almost sounds cliché to say that they exhibit an encyclopedic knowledge, but I'd describe this book as an encyclopedia of sorts, so that description fits.

However, this work is not without fault. One common occurrence is the tendency to use the shotgun approach to support certain arguments. For those not familiar with this technique, it involves taking a list of seemingly similar passages and throwing them all out at once in order to show that the Bible supports a certain claim. The problem is that these passages aren't examined in context, nor is it shown how or why they all relate to one another in the context of the argument being set forth. Also frustrating at times was the fact that the best of *other* Christian views were not always represented. There were times when these views were distorted or presented vaguely and without supporting reference. The authors' view is presented as the only legitimate "biblical" view by default and when mention is made of another viewpoint it is done in a dismissive manner without examining exactly what lies behind that view. To take one example, in chapter 14 "Demon Possession and Exorcism" the authors argue that Christians cannot be possessed by demons. They refer to people involved in "deliverance" ministries by placing the word "deliverance" in quotations as to automatically dismiss that such a ministry is valid. Ironically they go on to note what they see as a difference between demonic *possession* and demonic *oppression*, but this is generally the same distinction made by those involved in so-called deliverance ministries and their conclusions are largely the same!

The Kingdom of the Occult is rounded out with two appendices, the first a question and answer session with Walter Martin on the occult, and the second counseling assessment sheet. Following this is a 22 page bibliography and a 19 page subject index. As a reference book this is a wonderful resource. I wouldn't personally recommend reading it straight through as it can be somewhat tedious at times, but when a question arises concerning a certain occult practice or belief then this, I think, would be one of the first places to turn. Also worth noting is the final chapter on evangelism. The authors have not lost sight of the fact that the most important reason to study the occult is to be able to offer help to those trapped in it; to be able to offer hope in something better, Jesus Christ.