An Introductory Note of Warning

Before we present the findings of the late John Senior, it is fitting that we supply a few warnings. First, he researched the occult and wrote his work *The Way Down and Out* some years before his conversion to the Holy Catholic Church. Thus, his thinking in this early work is flawed in many ways. He delved too deeply into his subject matter, such that he fell under its influence to some degree. For example, in painting with too broad a brush, he classifies all authentic mystics inside the Holy Catholic Church with the occultist pseudo-mystics on the outside. This is incorrect. True mystics receive light from the supernatural gift of faith as well as the gifts of the Holy Ghost in regard to the public revelation of the Gospel and the entire Deposit of the Faith. In contrast, occultists seek, and many times receive, hidden or secret knowledge through their own senses and imagination with the help of praeternatural forces, namely demons. Not surprisingly, later in life after his conversion, John Senior frowned on this early work of his still half-pagan mind and asked that people not read it. We agree with his conclusions. That having been stated, however, even though the book admittedly has many problems, Senior nevertheless becomes an excellent source for an unbiased summary of occultist ideas. No one can claim Senior had a Catholic bias in writing this book. This is why we are presenting the key points of his findings here.

Second, we feel compelled to reveal anew these flawed principles so that people today will be alerted to this real and present danger to our faith. It is important to realize our modern thinking and culture is riddled with these occult ideas (including, sad to say, various writings and speeches of modern Catholic prelates and clergy). Yet to be very clear, our objective is not to introduce anyone to the occult but rather to enable the faithful soul to recognize its presence in our very midst so that it be rejected and resisted for what it really is, hellish thought.

Third, we must keep firmly in mind that the devil cannot do anything totally new but rather must ape what God does. Thus, we should not be surprised to find some elements or echoes of Catholic truth in these findings of John Senior; yet, at the same time, these echoes are always perverted, flattened, or naturalized in some way, gutted of their true and supernatural meaning. For example, the third principle of *Hermes Trismegistus* is a mockery of how God made the world through His Word. The occultist twists the truth that God made all things through His Word and transforms it into the pantheistic error that all things are actual elements of God’s Word. As we pray at the Last Gospel in the Holy Mass: “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” This passage is fulfilled most especially in the occultists!

We ask you, therefore, good reader, to pray before reading these subtle and toxic principles and to use them as tools to discern (i) what books you and your children should or should not be reading, (ii) what you may hear being taught about the “goodness” of various non-Catholic spiritualities (e.g., yoga, 12-steps, enneagram, etc.), and finally (iii) matters concerning the environment or environmentalism, all three of which draw frequently upon occult principles. (Please note that the following parts I-IV are direct quotes from John Senior’s work *The Way Down and Out*).

### Part I: Primitive Principles (cf. page 8)

Here are some, at least, of the beliefs of “primitive” people: (1) the universe is animate; (2) there is an animating “force”; (3) this force can be controlled through sympathy and contagion in various kinds of ritual and discipline. These beliefs are not of course necessarily primitive. They are held by people who are neither charlatans nor fools in our own time and are the basis of the “occult” worldview in all times and places.

### Part II: Babylonian & Egyptian (cf. pages 10-11)

These are the basic Chaldean beliefs, and we must mark them well because they will recur substantially in all occult thinking; and it is also wise to remind ourselves that they are elaborations of the three basic articles of the “primitive” credo:
1. There is one supreme, divine, ineffable being who is himself all that is. There is no ex nihilo creation. This being includes all time and space.

2. The universe is not his creation but his substance and is therefore “animate”.

3. The supreme god emanates.

4. He is one and many.

5. He is androgynous. Manifesting himself as male and female separately, he creates by self-copulation.

6. Each city-state worships him under a special aspect, worships a particular appearance of his single reality. Thus all religions are one.

7. Beneath the supreme god are the stars, lower emanations which approach humanity in order of creation and are thus interested in men’s affairs.

8. The cosmology of the sacerdotal schools fits the theological order exactly, the world in fact being a replica of heaven so that everything which happens in the one is reflected in the other. This accounts for the efficacy of astrology and allied forms of divination and of magic.

Part III: Alchemy (cf. pages 28-29)

Everything — the universe of men and things — is one; everything acts in correspondence with everything else — striving to realize the appointed end, the sublime perfection of gold, the sun, the light, the Everlasting God.

Alchemists were the avowed disciples of Hermes Trismegistus, to whom they attributed the Emerald Tablet whose thirteen precepts sum up the “great work”:

1. I speak not fictitious things, but that which is certain and true.

2. What is the below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing.

3. And as all things were produced by the one word of one Being, so all things were produced from this one thing by adaptation.

4. Its father is the sun, its mother the moon; the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth.

5. It is the father of perfection throughout the world.

6. The power is vigorous if it be changed into earth.

7. Separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, acting prudently and with judgment.

8. Ascend with the greatest sagacity from the earth to heaven, and then again descend to the earth, and unite together the powers of things superior and inferior. Thus you will obtain the glory of the whole world, and obscurity will fly away from you.

9. This has more fortitude than fortitude itself, because it conquers every subtle thing and can penetrate every solid.

10. Thus was the world formed.

11. Hence proceed wonders, which are here established.

12. Therefore I am called Hermes Trismegistos, having three parts of the philosophy of the whole world.

13. That which I have to say concerning the operation of the sun is completed.

These precepts almost sum up not only to alchemy, but the occult itself, and may be compared with the lists of “primitive” and Babylonian and Egyptian beliefs. Translated into the less symbolic language of India, the alchemical operation is yoga, whereby the opposites are “yoked.” The operation of the sun is the realization of the Self.

Part IV: Overall Summary of Principles
(cf. pages 39-41)

Occultists tend to believe and act upon the following related notions:

1. The universe is one, single, eternal, ineffable substance.

2. This substance manifests itself as spirit, or fire, or light.

3. It further manifests itself Demiurge of Logos which orders the created light into the visible world by means of numerous intermediaries likewise emanations from the One.

4. All things progress by dialectical oppositions. The created universe is composed of paired “opposites” — male-female, light-dark — which generated their own equilibrium or harmony. The creative triad thus formed is then considered as contained in the One, uncreated, ineffable, and thus the universe is seen as a four-fold unity.

5. Things above are as they are below because, since mind and matter are one, the imagination is real, and any analogy it conceives is as good as “scientific” proof of correspondence.

6. Since all things are one, a “science” of interference can be established whereby knowledge of the spiritual can be gained by study of the material, and vice versa, as in contemplation of the created
universe in mysticism, manipulation of the created universe in alchemy.

7. The human body is especially taken to be the image of creation. The universe is taken to be, in fact, a living man.

8. Since men are created by sexual means, sex is an attribute of the divine. The original source is said to separate into male and female parts and, by cohabiting with itself, creates.

9. Since man is the prototype, man is capable of realizing in himself all things. He is capable of becoming God because he is God without “realizing” it. In the sex act, man realizes his own female nature and becomes symbolically androgynous — becomes one flesh — and therefore whole.

10. The task of man is therefore self-realization. To know thyself is to be everything.

11. Self-realization is the progressive discovery of the layers of the psyche which is not mere ego but at least seven separate things including the universal substance.

12. Certain supermen, having achieved self-realization, turn back to their unrealized fellows. These are the bodhisattvas, the masters, the guardians, the founders of religions who veil the ultimate in terms suitable to time and place.

13. Thus all religions are variations on a single transcendent unity.

14. Ordinary men can become supermen by arduous practice, by grace and/or by virtue of their past experience.

15. The superman is appraised of his possibilities for illumination, accidental or induced state in which heat, fire, or a light surround him and he sees ineffable and profoundly moving proof of the oneness of the universe.

16. The supermen, according to principal nine, is often sexually androgynous as symbolized by tonsure, circumcision, peculiar dress.

17. Since the self-realized bodhisattva wants to communicate something of the higher truths to those not able to understand, he uses symbols in his teaching and in this way affects the less-developed mind on its unconscious levels. He thus not only turns the ego inward so that it may explore as much of the self as possible, but fosters the growth of the soul itself. Symbols are efficacious even when you do not understand them. Or rather, in the discursive sense, the symbol can never be understood. The symbol is the meeting ground between the ego and the ineffable.

18. Ziggurats, pyramids, mysteries, myths, alchemical processes, astrological diagrams — these are symbolic systems, or yantras.

19. To facilitate the work of self-realization, adepts have often organized brotherhoods, such as Rosicrucians, Pythagoreans, and so on. Initiation into these orders is often considered a prerequisite of the necessary extraconsciousness and is usually a ceremony in itself efficacious in producing such states of mind.

20. All things live according to pulse, or breath, or rhythm, which expresses itself in time as cycles of birth, growth, and decay, as Magnus Annus in the life of worlds, as birth, death, and resurrection in men.

21. In the cycles, both collectively in history and individually in men, all souls must eventually be all things. The task of the individual man as we know him, of the times as we live in them, is to leave things as they seem in order to discover the unknown, which is often symbolized as a descent into Hell.

The list could be longer—which would be ruinous to its purpose. These are, at least, the chief ideas held by occultists. We must remember, however, the classifications, even doctrines themselves, are relative. The absolute upon which they depend may not be stated but only symbolized.

A partial listing of authors John Senior identifies as having used the occult in their writings, saying: “there has been widespread interest in the occult on the part of some of the most eminent English literary figures of our century” (p. xv): Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, Victor Hugo, Blake, Aldous Huxley, T.S. Eliot, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, and Henry James.

Some insightful quotes from John Senior:

• “those who set out to ‘explain’ myths inevitably end up with a myth of their own” (p. xxi).
• “Around the time of the French Revolution, Europe suffered great shocks of occultism. . . . a plethora of self-consciously occult sects swarmed over the intellectual centers of Europe” (p. 35).
• “The world view of the romantic movement is occultism. At least insofar as romantic poets expressed philosophical and cosmological ideas, those ideas were occult” (p. 50).