

SAUL'S VISIT TO THE MEDIUM AT ENDOR: AN ANIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

“When the plain sense of the word makes common sense, seek no other sense.” This is often considered to be the primary guideline for interpreting scripture. The question is, “common sense” to whom? Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor, 1 Sam 28:3-25, makes no sense whatsoever to many Westerners. They are often unfamiliar with necromancy, and, therefore, regard it as a hoax. Others will give mental assent to its existence, but will go no further. But what of those who know of it, have seen it, or have even been involved in it? To this group, 1 Sam 28:3-25 likely has a more substantial meaning. This paper is an attempt to examine this scene in the Bible from an animistic perspective, hopefully shedding new light on some oft-disputed events.

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

Animism is most simply defined as a belief in the spirits. These spirits may be of human origin (ancestral spirits), or simply exist (having no human origin), but they are all regarded as having an effect on people’s lives¹. In an unpredictable world, the animist attempts to maintain some control, through the influence of the spirits. Therefore, at its root, animism is an effort to get the spirits to do what people want them to do.

¹ Daniel Sanchez, Master’s level course, “Animistic Folk Religions”, Fort Worth TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2005.

Evidence shows that animism has been around since earliest recorded history. The first cave paintings are thought to be a representation of a “spirit house” or a ritual exercise.² The first-known clay tablets were likely temple records of offerings made to gods. Even the biblical patriarchs were not exempt from animistic thought, as evidenced by Rachel’s theft of her father’s household gods. The inhabitants of Canaan worshipped false gods, and were to be driven out during the conquest, but the Philistines, among others, were never fully expelled. In fact, there is some speculation that Saul, because of his height, and his reluctance to attack the Philistines, was either a Philistine sympathiser, or of Philistine descent.³ If this is, indeed, the case, and Saul has synchronised a monotheistic and animistic worldview, it may explain some of his actions.

Necromancy is one small part of animistic religion. In general, the animist believes that, when a person dies, his soul lives on, and, at least for a time, can affect others’ lives – for good or ill. The spirits are often worshipped, in order to obtain their favour, and are often consulted for the blessing of a new birth, or for advice on how to work the land the ancestor tilled while living. Ancestral spirits can also have crucial information regarding the timing and advisability of a venture. On the other hand, ancestral spirits may be viewed as the cause of a poor harvest, or illness. If this is the case, then they must be appeased – normally by some type of sacrifice – to remove the curse.

Shortly after arriving in Papua New Guinea as a missionary in 1994, the author was introduced to a young man from the Ningerum tribe, with whom the missionary was there to work. This young man was one of the few Christians in the tribe, and was a very kind, gentle, and soft-spoken person, who was only too happy to spend time teaching the missionary his language. Several years later, the author heard rumours that the young man had gone “*longlong*”, a term indicating psychotic behaviour. He had become violent, and very dangerous. They brought him to the missionary for medical help,

² *The History of Writing*, available at: <http://www.historian.net/hxwrite.htm>.

³ Eric Mitchell, Master’s level course, “1, 2 Samuel”, Fort Worth TX: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Fall 2005.

because the small chains they were using to bind his wrists were beginning to chafe. While bandaging his arms, and binding him in a way that would be less painful, the missionary was able to determine that the young man was not demon possessed, but truly ill. The missionary tried to persuade the family to take him to a mission hospital. This they eventually did, but, at about the same time, they also hired a shaman to find the reason for his illness. A few months before, the young man's father had died, and so, it was determined that his spirit was unhappy. To please the father's spirit, the family was required to kill a pig – a valuable possession – and pour its blood on the father's grave. Because of either the medicine or the sacrifice – depending on the worldview of the person asked – the young man got better.

LITERARY CONTEXT

It should not be troubling that the scene of Saul's visit to the medium at Endor is out of place chronologically in the work of 1-2 Samuel. In fact, its placement is advantageous, because it clarifies the main idea of the work. Previous to this pericope, Saul is in pursuit of David. Saul's intent is to kill him, and, even though David is able to sneak to Saul's side while he sleeps, he will not kill Saul. Joab's brother, Abishai, goes with David, and urges him to take Saul's life, but David proleptically replies, "he shall go out to the battle and perish" (26:10). To escape Saul, David joined the Philistines, and was soon made the bodyguard of Achish of Gath (27:12). In 28:1-2, the Philistines gather their armies to attack Israel, and, as a bodyguard, David was expected to fight with the Philistines against his own people. The continuation of the story is in chapter 29, where David trusted in God, and was spared having to fight. Inserted between the presentation of David's problem, and its solution, however, is the story of Saul attempting to solve his own dilemma. Saul did not trust in God, but, instead, turned to a medium, a practice which had been strongly condemned by God (Deut 18:10-11). Thus, the contrast is drawn between David and Saul, between one who trusted God, and one who went against God's command, between the rightful king, and the rejected king.

LITERARY STRUCTURE

This pericope is highly dependent on dialogue. After the author introduces the scene, in only three verses, the dialogue begins. At first, it is between Saul and his servants, as he requests a seance. After a short sequence, taking Saul from the slopes of Gilboa to the town of Endor, he is in dialogue with the medium, who carries Saul into his conversation with Samuel. There is, again, a short sequence, before the scene concludes with an exchange between Saul and the medium. The servants are reported to join this dialogue as well, and a two-verse sequence finishes the section. To emphasise the interplay between sequence and dialogue, the scene could be divided in the following manner:

1. Sequence: The scene is set (28:3-6)
2. Dialogue: Saul asks his servants for a medium (28:7)
3. Sequence: Saul goes to meet the medium (28:8a)
4. Dialogue: Saul assures the medium she will not be punished, and asks for Samuel (28:8b-11)
5. Sequence: The woman sees Samuel and screams (28:12)
6. Dialogue: Saul asks the woman what she saw (28:13-14a)
7. Sequence: Saul bows before Samuel (28:14b)
8. Dialogue: Samuel pronounces judgment on Saul (28:15-19)
9. Sequence: Saul is scared and hungry (28:20)
10. Dialogue: The medium and the servants convince Saul to eat (28:21-23a)
11. Sequence: Saul eats and leaves (28:23b-25)

An easier outline would be as follows:

1. Introduction: God will not answer Saul (28:3-6)
2. Crisis: Saul requests a seance (28:7-11)

3. Climax: Samuel appears (28:12-14)
4. Resolution: Samuel pronounces judgment on Saul (28:15-19)
5. Conclusion: Saul eats and returns (28:20-25)

INDUCTIVE STUDY

1 SAM 28:3-6: GOD WILL NOT ANSWER SAUL

Samuel's death has already been recorded in 25:1, but it is repeated here. The traditional time of mourning has passed, and, perhaps, in memory of Samuel, Saul makes an edict, exiling all those who work with the spirits. This would have been very troubling to those with animistic tendencies. If Saul did, indeed, hold a syncretistic worldview, it would explain his double-mindedness in proclaiming an edict expelling the mediums, but not following through with their exile.

The army of the Philistines and the Israelites face-off across the Jezreel Valley, and it was apparent to Saul that he was in trouble; this put his worldview to the test. At first, he calls out to God for help, but God is silent, so it seems that, in Saul's mind, his next option is to turn to the spirits, specifically the ancestral spirit of Samuel. This is exactly the kind of syncretism found among the Ningerum people. They like very much the idea of a benevolent God, who loves them, and desires to do good towards them – especially in the face of some very malevolent spirits. But, when God doesn't do what they want Him to do, they are soon back to the spirits. One of the author's best Bible school students had a son, who had been ill for some time. The student prayed, then the church leaders prayed, and when that didn't work, they poured oil on the young boy's head, and prayed some more. He also brought the child to the author for medical treatment, which was administered with prayer. But the boy remained weak and sickly. A few weeks later, the boy had a large "+" sign smeared in mud on his chest. They had taken the boy to a "magic man". God did not answer them, so they turned to the spirits, just like Saul.

1 SAM 28:7-11: SAUL REQUESTS A SEANCE

When Saul sees that God will not answer him, the first thing he does is request a medium be found. It is interesting to note that one is found so easily. This is not simply an aside in the text; it is there to draw attention to Saul's double-mindedness. In verse three in the introduction, the author has already stated that Saul had put all the mediums and spiritists out of Israel, and it is mentioned again by the woman in verse nine; yet, right in the middle of those two statements, Saul has no trouble finding one. This is certainly in accordance with how a person, who has aligned himself with animism, while following God, would act: to please God, he decrees that the mediums are no longer welcome. However, in order to keep from angering the spirits, there is little or no enforcement of this edict. Also, if God did not answer him, what would Saul do if there were no mediums?

Having found a medium at Endor, Saul prepared to travel. Endor was about 12-15 miles to the north of where Israel was camped on the slopes of Gilboa, but the Philistine encampment at Shunem lay between them. To make the nighttime journey unnoticed, Saul dressed in clothing that concealed his royalty and his identity (v 8). After he and his two servants arrive in Endor, Saul immediately requests a seance. It seems that something could have tipped the medium off to their possible identity. Perhaps she did not yet know he was the king, but she must have at least thought they were undercover agents of the king, because she accuses Saul of setting a trap for her that would result in her death. But Saul's reply seems to make his identity clear – only a king could pardon her of a royally-decreed capital offence.

1 SAM 28:11-14: SAMUEL APPEARS

Once the woman realises she is dealing with the king of Israel, there is quick acquiescence. There is no talk of payment, she simply asks Saul whom he wants to see. Saul names Samuel, and, of course, this is not likely a great surprise. The author does not mention any preparations she may have made, or rituals she performed, but, the next thing she sees, frightens her greatly.

At this point, there is much discussion among scholars. The problem is this: what caused the medium to scream? Many believe that her response is at recognising Saul for the first time that night. Some would point to the textual variation in some copies of the LXX that replace Samuel's name in v 12 with "Saul", making it read, "When the woman saw Saul . . .".^{4,5} However, because this is found in such a small percentage of known manuscripts, this reading was likely a scribal error, or a deliberate deviation, because of the difficulty it presents. Regardless, the vast majority of textual evidence supports leaving it as "Samuel".

Others resolve this problem by speculating that something about Samuel's appearance caused her to recognise Saul. It may have been that the mental picture of Samuel in his prophetic mantle (v 13), standing side-by-side with Saul, sparked her memory, now that they were together again.⁶ This seems unlikely, though, since they hadn't been together for perhaps 15-20 years – when Saul failed in his divine mission to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:35). Another theory, along the same lines, is that, when Samuel appeared, his posture was that of one approaching a king.⁷ On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Samuel would have given this type of respect to Saul, in light of their relationship.

⁴ Ralph W. Klein, *Samuel*, vol 10 in Word Biblical Commentary, Waco TX: Word Books, 1983, p. 269.

⁵ George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol 2, New York NY: Anglican Press, 1953, p. 1028.

⁶ Klein, *Samuel*, p. 270.

⁷ Milton Spenser Terry, "Saul's interview with the witch of Endor", in *Methodist Review* 51 (October, 1869), p. 536.

In the end, it is difficult to reconcile these views with the text. As previously mentioned, verse 9 seems to indicate that the woman at Endor was suspicious of her visitors, as she accuses them of entrapment. However, the royal pardon, given to her in verse 10, seems to make it clear with whom she is dealing.

Another possible reason for the medium's scream is that she was frightened that she was actually able to conjure up a spirit. Those who ascribe to this view, usually place little value in the reality of necromancy, and some regard it as pure hoax. Therefore, the sight of any spirit was enough to cause her to cry out. This raises yet another question: if she did bring up a spirit, was it really Samuel? Some would say that it was purely demonic activity. John I. Ades agrees with P. Kyle McCarter, in that it was a demonic spirit, and a scribe simply added "Samuel" later on.⁸ Milton Spenser Terry asserts that Samuel never appeared at all; rather, the woman possibly went into a mock trance, and spoke as Samuel might have. He states that the first part of what was said was general knowledge: the kingdom was taken from Saul, and given to David. And, hearing how superior the Philistine forces were, she made an educated guess that he and his sons would die in a rout the next day.⁹ Also, they argue, God vehemently condemns all types of activities involving the spirits in Deut 18:10-12, so it seems unlikely that He would use this venue to pronounce judgment on Saul.

Conversely, God often uses unsavoury people to fulfil His purposes. He used Balaam, a diviner, to bless Israel, and to curse the surrounding nations (Num 24:15ff), yet Balaam was grouped with false teachers that Peter calls "accursed children" (2 Peter 2:12-16). God used the cruel Assyrians to punish Israel, and the wicked Babylonians to punish Assyria, as well as Judah, much to the prophet Habakkuk's chagrin. So, this should not be a sticking point. Finally, the text clearly states that it was Samuel, a reading

⁸ John I. Ades, "Samuel, whar 'ast tha been sin' I saw thee?", in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain*, Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1990, p. 263.

⁹ Terry, "Saul's interview", pp. 540-542.

which textual criticism overwhelmingly supports. The text must trump in these cases, so it is best to look for another reason for the woman's scream.

What seems most likely is that the woman had never encountered this *kind* of spirit before. When a person wants to speak with a dead ancestor, they go to a medium. The medium then chooses one of two methods, depending on the training received, and how things are done in the diviner's culture. The first method is for the medium to be possessed by the spirit. The person will normally use music, drugs, or dancing, until the demon takes control over his or her body. At that point, the spirit can be addressed by the family members, and can answer, using the medium's mouth. When finished, the medium typically remembers nothing. The second method is for the diviner to go into a trance, and to act as an intermediary between the living and the dead. This, too, may involve a stimulant of some sort, with the result being that the medium has a vision, "seeing" a spirit. The family communicates with the spirit, through the medium, but the medium normally remembers what has occurred.

In this case, it does not appear that the woman was possessed, or that she went into a trance. It seems, instead, that she saw something externally, which she had never before encountered. Here, the text provides a clue. When Saul inquires as to what she saw, she tells him, "I saw a god ascending out of the earth." The deuteronomistic writings normally use either אֱלֹהִים = 'ēb or יְדֻעָנִי = *yidd^e 'ōni*, when referring to a ghost or a spirit – especially in reference to necromancy.¹⁰ Here the word אֱלֹהִים = *'elōhīm* is used (v 13). This was the normal Hebrew word for a god, and is often used to refer to Yahweh God. It seems that this "woman with a familiar spirit" actually saw a very unfamiliar spirit. This frightened her, and caused her to cry out.

This leaves just one question unanswered: why did she then cry out, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul!" The story of the fall of man may

¹⁰ Brian B. Schmidt, "The 'witch' of Endor: 1 Samuel 28, and ancient near-eastern necromancy", in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995, p. 125.

help here. When a divine figure (God) approached a guilty human (Adam), the human immediately pointed the finger at another equally-guilty human (Eve). That human, in turn, pointed the finger at the serpent. Here, when a *seemingly* divine being (Samuel) appears to a guilty human (the woman), she likewise points the finger at another equally-guilty human (Saul). It would be much like a schoolteacher turning the corner to find two students in a scuffle. The first one to see her immediately shouts, “He started it!” In 1 Sam 28:12 only the words are different, “You tricked me!”

Saul, much more interested in what she saw than whom should get the blame, quiets her down, and asks for a report. She replies that she saw an **עִלְוִיָּהּ** = *'elōhīm*. Saul asks for more details, and she tells him she saw an old man wearing a robe or mantle. This robe was indicative of social standing, or prosperity; it was something the royal and the rich wore. Saul realised that this was Samuel, and bowed down to the spirit that had come up.

1 SAM 28:15-19: SAMUEL PRONOUNCES JUDGMENT ON SAUL

This section begins with words that have spawned entire essays, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”¹¹ People have often speculated on the nature of Sheol, and the state of the dead. Prior to 800 AD, rabbis believed that the dead could be raised within the first 12 months of their death, but not afterwards!¹² Remarkably, this may be close to the view that an animist would take towards this passage. Again, depending on local beliefs, a spirit of the dead often remains active for a certain length of time. Some cultures, which believe in reincarnation, think that a spirit skips two generations and then returns, i.e., a man’s daughter may have his grandmother’s spirit. Others believe that, if a person’s spirit feels they have incomplete business, in the realm of the living, they will stay around for a while, as a malevolent spirit

¹¹ Ades, “Samuel, whear ’ast tha been”, pp. 60-267.

¹² Klaus A. D. Smelik, “The witch of Endor: 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian exegesis till 800 AD”, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 33-2 (1979), p. 165.

seeking resolution. For yet other animistic cultures, the time limit is set by memory. As long as a person is remembered, his spirit will stay around.¹³

Perhaps this is why Samuel spoke this way: knowing Saul as he did, Samuel simply spoke from Saul's perspective. People thought the "grave" or the "place of the dead" was under the earth. This is similar to the Bible saying the sun rises in the east. Obviously, the sun is stationary, and the earth is revolving, so that it *appears* that the sun is rising. Samuel simply spoke in a way that fitted Saul's point of view. Samuel's words in modern English might be, "What do you want?"

Suddenly, the narrative slows down, and seems to record Saul's and Samuel's entire conversation. Saul rehearses for Samuel the troubled state he is in, and Samuel responds by repeating much of what he said, when they last spoke: the Lord has rejected Saul (1 Sam 15:26), and the kingdom has been torn from him, and given to another (1 Sam 15:28). In this case, unlike before, Samuel specifically names David. Samuel then goes on to deliver a new message to Saul: that he and his sons would die the next day, and the armies of Israel would be decimated.

1 SAM 28:20-25: SAUL EATS AND RETURNS

To this point, the activities of the day had kept Saul busy. Struck with fear at his circumstances, he found a medium and rushed to her for help. Soon, he was before Samuel, hearing of his own doom. Suddenly, with Samuel's departure, Saul crashes. The adrenalin is gone, his fate is sealed, and he is flat on his face.

The woman's evening was draining as well. A trio of men showed up at her door late at night, and, somehow, she seemed to deduce that they are, at the very least, the king's men. She soon found herself doing the very thing that could get her killed, for the very men, who would kill her. If that weren't enough, she suddenly came face-to-face with a kind of spirit she had not seen before. But the ordeal is not over yet, she still had the king of Israel sprawled

¹³ Sanchez, "Animistic Folk Religions".

out on her floor! She came to him, and attempted to convince him to eat. She makes the very convincing argument that she listened to him, at the risk of her own life. Therefore, Saul could trust her, and he was obliged to her. She implied he could fulfil that obligation, by letting her give him a small snack for his own good.

Typically double-minded, Saul initially refused to eat, but, at the behest of both the woman and his servants, he gave in. She then quickly went to prepare this “morsel of bread” by killing her house-fed calf, and making loaves of flat bread (no time to let it rise).¹⁴ Saul ate, and then he and his two servants returned to their camp that night.

The most-striking feature of this section is the author’s use of irony.¹⁵ It was certainly present, previously, in the scene, such as when Saul, the lawmaker, becomes Saul, the lawbreaker, or when he swears on the life of YHWH that he will not punish one who practices what is an abomination to YHWH (1 Sam 28:10; Deut 18:10-12)! But now, the author fills this final section with biting wit. Here, we see Saul heeding the voice of the diviner, and that of his own servants, but he has long since shown that he will not obey the word of the LORD. The woman sacrifices greatly of her limited means to feed a “dead-man-walking”. Saul accepts this life-sustaining food from someone who works with the dead. Furthermore, in accepting food from this evil woman, he is signifying his acceptance of her – and his rejection of God. It was odd enough that he accepted food, since death was now inevitable, but it is ironic to see Saul strengthened by a meal, so he can go to his death.

This scene in the Bible, showing Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor, has several purposes. Firstly, it serves as a contrast between David and Saul. David and Saul are both in a jam, but David trusts God to work it out, while Saul turns to necromancy. Secondly, this passage gives us more insight into

¹⁴ This could be purposely reminiscent of the Passover meal that the children of Israel ate before leaving Egypt (Ex 12:8). Ironically, this time the death angel would not pass over Saul.

¹⁵ Klein, *Samuel*, pp. 273-274.

the person of Saul. By this time, in scripture, Saul is a very round character, but this scene reveals one final facet of his personality: he has combined his belief in God with animism. Finally, this scene serves to build the circumstantial case against Saul that he, truly, is “a king . . . like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5, 19-20). Not only is it possible that he has **רַפְּאִים** = *rephaim* (ghost/dead one) blood (see footnote 2), it seems he may also have inherited some of their pagan animistic beliefs as well.

This scene makes it clear that Saul has already been rejected, because of his disobedience, and now, he is sentenced to death for his syncretism. Necromancy is a sin, and it was rightly made a capital offence by Saul. But Saul, himself, broke that rule, and so, he will be put to death – by God.

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of 1-2 Sam is to show that David is the rightful king of Israel. To do so, the writer must rehabilitate Samuel as a king-maker, show Saul as the rejected king, and show David as the rightful king.¹⁶ This scene fits perfectly: Samuel is still a prophet, even after death. Samuel reiterates Saul’s rejection as king, adding that the kingdom belongs to David. Saul does not deny this, but his worldview compels him to handle the crisis, by turning to that which is an abomination to God. Samuel is still a prophet, Saul is still rejected, and David will soon be king.

The placement of this scene in the book is intended to contrast how David and Saul handle crises. Here Saul turns to a medium to solve his problem, while 1 Sam 29 shows God solving David’s problem. The passage’s placement serves a second purpose as well: to show that God is on David’s side. God refuses to answer Saul, and eventually condemns him to death – but only through Samuel. On the other hand, God is at work for David, solving his life-threatening dilemma.

¹⁶ Mitchell, “1, 2 Samuel”.

One of the key verses in the work of 1-2 Sam is 1 Sam 16:7b “for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”. God is looking for one with an obedient heart. Samuel had it; Eli did not. David had it; Saul did not. The obedient heart is a heart of faith; a person with faith will obey God.

Throughout the Bible, faith and obedience¹⁷ are a major theme. Abel made a better sacrifice by faith, Noah obeyed God by building an ark, and Abraham had faith in God’s promises, and obeyed Him. The theme extends to Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and the judges. Now, Saul does not obey God, proving he has no faith, while David has a heart for God. This theme continues through the prophets and Esther, and is personified in the person of Jesus Christ. He had complete obedience, because He had complete faith. Every Christian is called to show his faith, by his obedience, until he dies, or until Christ returns. At that time, faith will become sight, and obedience will be complete.

The story of Saul’s visit to the medium at Endor is a perfect example of what faith is not. Saul did not obey God, and, therefore, the kingdom is torn from him. Furthermore, Saul seeks the assistance of an enemy of God, and, as a result, his life is torn from him. Saul disobeys God’s law in a way that dramatically shows that he has no faith.

The issue of faith and obedience transcends the Testaments. “Without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Heb 11:6). That is a timeless truth. Samuel and David pleased God; Saul did not.

APPLICATION

Faith is often an obscure and intangible truth. To be sure, the whole issue of faith is more than obedience, but it is not less. To put it more simply, obedience is what faith looks like. When a Christian obeys God, as instructed

¹⁷ Faith and obedience are interlocking. When a person believes God is in control, he will obey God. The book of James explains that a person who has faith will obey, and 1 John shows that a person who is obedient has faith. Conversely, a person without obedience has no faith.

in His word, he is proving his faith. If a person believes the Bible is God's message to him, he will obey it. If a Christian believes that God is real, and that He is sovereign, he will obey Him. If a Christian believes that God wants all people to come to Him, he tells others. When the believer obeys, he is showing that he believes.

Conversely, when a person does not obey, he is showing his lack of faith. If a Christian really believes that all he has belongs to God, and He has simply made His resources available to him, he would give more. If a Christian believes that He will supply our every need, he would be willing to give it all. If the believer really believed that God looks at the heart, he would be more concerned with the smallest sin than the biggest test. If a Christian honestly believed he should do what is best for others, he would give them the parking spots closest to the doors!

A question that could be asked is, do Christians really believe that combining the worship of God with the worship of anything else is spiritual prostitution? Saul combined his belief in God with a belief in the spirits. When God didn't answer him, he turned to the spirits. When God does not answer people's prayers the way they want, what is their response? If God doesn't give them the money to buy the car they want, do they get a smaller car, or a bigger loan? When trials come, do they ask God for wisdom, and follow it, even if it seems like bad advice? Or, do they rely on their own wisdom? Are they syncretistic, like Saul? He combined worship of Yahweh with animism, just as believers are often guilty of combining Christianity with materialism or humanism.

CONCLUSION

This passage is rooted in animism, yet it is often interpreted apart from it. This paper has looked at Saul's visit to the woman at Endor, not only in the light of necromancy, but also through the eyes of animistic beliefs. As the study progressed, it became clear that Saul was viewing the events in just that way: through the eyes of an animistic worldview. He expelled the mediums and spiritists to make God happy, but did not follow through and actually

remove them, because he did not want to anger the spirits. Also, when God didn't answer him, he turned to a diviner. An animist would understand these actions.

It also helps in understanding the woman's reaction to seeing the spirit. It was not that she had not seen one before; she probably had, at least in a vision. More likely, she had not seen one externally before, nor had she seen an אֱלֹהִים = 'elōhīm before. Nor would it be hard for an animist to understand why she pointed quickly to Saul, when the spirit showed up. She wasn't sure where it came from, but she didn't want to share Saul's jeopardy.

The Bible is a book that spans cultures. Some cultures will see things in a way that others will not, but the central truths of scripture will remain the same. Saul, animistic worldview, or not, is still rejected as king, for his disobedience, and his disobedience was the result of a lack of faith in God.

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