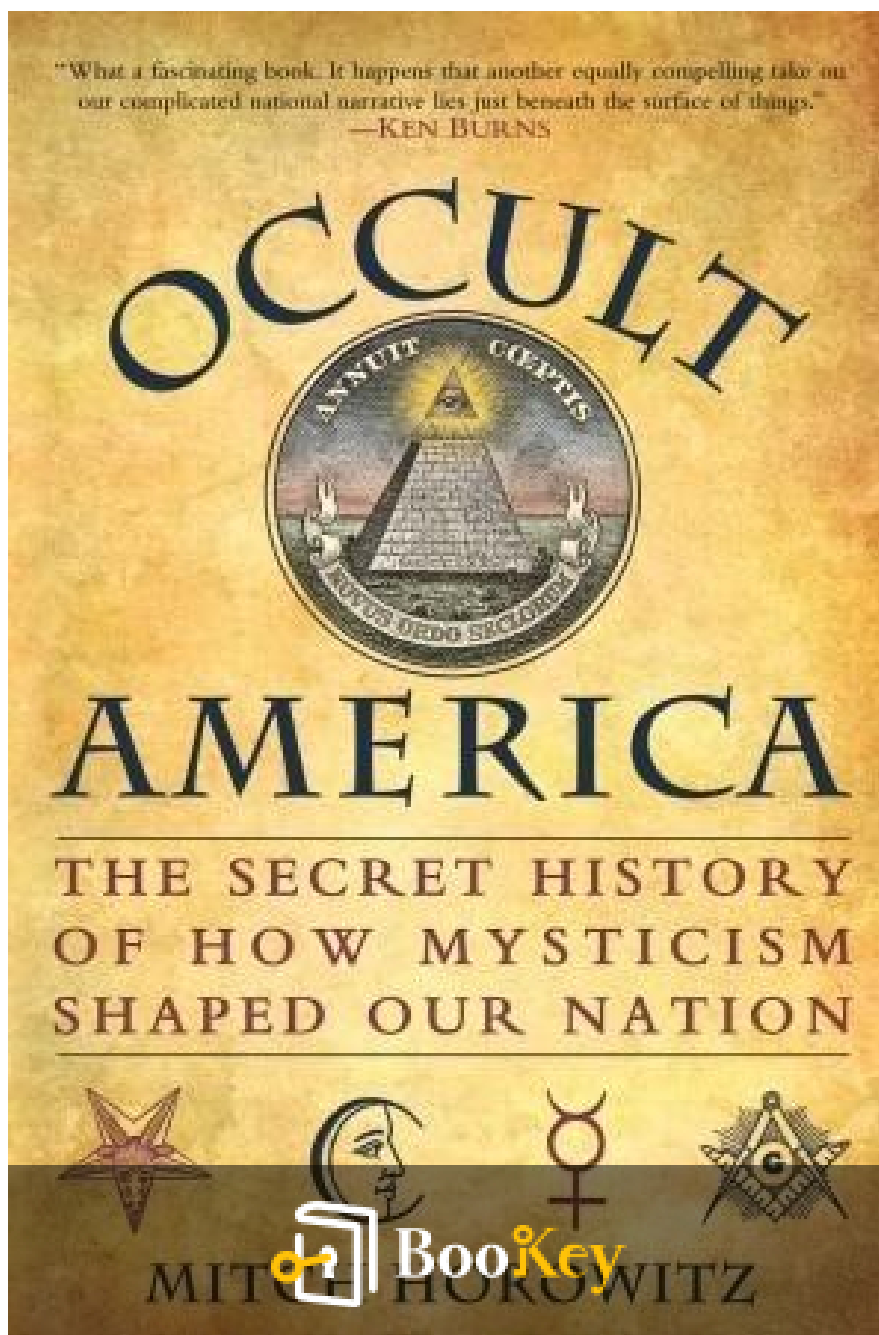


# Occult America PDF (Limited Copy)

Mitch Horowitz



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# **Occult America Summary**

Exploring America's Hidden Mystical Foundations and Their Lasting  
Impact.

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## About the book

In "Occult America," the author embarks on a journey through the intricate tapestry of alternative spiritual movements that have played a pivotal role in shaping the United States from its very beginnings. The narrative reveals how various esoteric philosophies, such as Freemasonry—an organization promoting moral and ethical behavior through its symbolic rituals—have permeated American society.

Spiritualism, which gained prominence in the 19th century as a belief system asserting the possibility of communicating with the dead, is also examined. This movement not only captivated the public but influenced notable figures like Madame H.P. Blavatsky, a key player in the formation of Theosophy. Theosophy sought to blend science, religion, and philosophy, positing that all religions share underlying truths. Edgar Cayce, known as the "Sleeping Prophet," is another significant figure whose clairvoyant readings and holistic healing practices contributed to the understanding of spirituality in America.

The author emphasizes how these mystical undercurrents, though often overlooked, have profoundly influenced American culture, politics, and religion. By tracing these connections, the book reveals the depth of their impact on contemporary society. Ultimately, "Occult America" serves as a vital examination of how these hidden spiritual traditions continue to shape

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American identity, offering insights into the spiritual landscapes that color modern life. The narrative weaves together historical context, influential figures, and the sociocultural implications of these beliefs, providing a comprehensive understanding of the enduring legacy of the occult in America.

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## About the author

Mitch Horowitz delves into the intricate world of American metaphysical thought, exploring how spirituality and the occult have shaped the nation's cultural landscape. His expertise stems from a well-rounded background in philosophy and a deep engagement with various esoteric traditions, allowing him to present complex concepts in an accessible manner.

In his exploration, Horowitz highlights significant movements and figures that contributed to this rich tapestry, such as the transcendentalists who emphasized individual intuition and the potential for personal transformation. He also examines the influence of Eastern philosophies and indigenous practices, illustrating how these diverse elements have melded into a unique American spiritual identity.

One of the key themes Horowitz emphasizes is the practical application of esoteric principles. Through personal anecdotes and historical examples, he demonstrates how individuals can harness these teachings for personal growth and empowerment. His works, such as "Occult America," serve as both a historical examination and a guide for those interested in the transformative power of metaphysical ideas.

In sum, Horowitz presents a narrative that not only reflects on the evolution of spiritual thought in America but also invites readers to engage with these

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timeless ideas for their own enlightenment and personal evolution. By intertwining history with personal insights, he offers a compelling invitation to explore the depths of American spirituality and the occult.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: (And What Is It Doing in America?)

## ### INTRODUCTION TO THE OCCULT IN AMERICA

### Historical Context

The seeds of occultism in America can be traced back to 1693 when philosopher Johannes Kelpius, fleeing the devastation of the Thirty Years' War in the Rhine Valley, arrived in Philadelphia. There, he and his followers established a monastic community dedicated to studying mystical and esoteric traditions. After Kelpius's death, this movement expanded, cultivating a vibrant occult culture that would significantly influence spiritual movements throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

### Defining the Occult

The term "occult" refers to knowledge that is hidden or secret, encompassing various mystical beliefs and practices that suggest an unseen world profoundly impacts human existence. In America, key occult figures redefined public perceptions, aligning themselves with progressive social causes such as abolitionism and women's suffrage. They presented the occult not as an inward-focused pursuit but as a means for societal upliftment and

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individual growth.

## **Contrast with European Occultism**

While European occultists often sought personal power, American counterparts like Andrew Jackson Davis prioritized societal betterment. This distinct divergence fostered a uniquely American approach to the occult, characterized by openness and accessibility. Notably, practices such as Spiritualism emerged, empowering women to emerge as public leaders and mediums in their communities.

## **Cultural Shifts in the 19th and 20th Centuries**

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a cultural shift toward a DIY spirituality among Americans, birthing innovations like the Ouija board and popular astrology. Influential figures, including Wallace D. Wattles and Marcus Garvey, applied occult principles to advocate for personal empowerment and social justice. This era ushered in a "New Age" of spirituality, blending ancient wisdom with contemporary self-help movements.

## **Personal Reflections on the Occult**

The author shares a personal anecdote from childhood, recalling a curious

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encounter with a horoscope vending machine in the 1970s. This moment highlights the pervasive nature of the occult in American culture and sparks the author's interest in astrology, linking it to its deep historical roots and evolution into modern practices.

## **Astrology's Popularization**

The narrative culminates in the story of Bruce King, famously known as Zolar, who democratized horoscopes through his innovative dime horoscope machine in the 1930s. His grassroots initiative significantly broadened access to astrology, marking a pivotal moment in the commercialization and acceptance of mystical practices within American society.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates the intricate relationship between the occult and American spirituality, illustrating its transformation from esoteric beginnings to a dynamic popular movement focused on personal and societal transformation. Such evolution has profoundly influenced the landscape of modern spiritual practices in America.

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# Chapter 2 Summary: (And What Is It Doing in America?)

## INTRODUCTION

The occult has significantly influenced American religious and cultural landscapes, tracing its origins to the esoteric traditions of European emigrants. One notable figure, Johannes Kelpius, arrived in the late 17th century, fleeing war and persecution. He and his followers established a community near Philadelphia focused on mystical practices, which sparked a chain of spiritual movements throughout America. This set the stage for diverse expressions of spirituality, including Spiritualism and radical occult philosophies emphasizing social progress and personal transformation.

### Sons of Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" serves as a reflection of Enlightenment attitudes toward the occult, juxtaposing the selfish pursuit of power with the altruistic visions held by American occultists. Figures such as Andrew Jackson Davis illustrated a belief in inclusive spirituality, intertwining occult practices with early feminist and abolitionist movements. This period saw women, like Jemima Wilkinson, leverage Spiritualism as a platform for leadership, blending mystical revelations with Christian tenets and

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challenging societal norms.

## **The Rise of DIY Occultism**

In the period between the Civil War and World War II, American society adopted a "do-it-yourself" ethic, which fostered the widespread interest in various occult practices. This era saw an explosion of accessible mystical activities, from Ouija boards to astrology, breaking away from European secretive traditions. Prominent figures, including Wallace D. Wattles and Marcus Garvey, began integrating metaphysical concepts into social activism, while political leaders like Henry A. Wallace harnessed occult ethics to formulate visionary governance ideas.

## **The Silver Moon**

The author shares a personal story reflecting their childhood fascination with astrology, particularly highlighted by a visit to a diner featuring a horoscope machine. The prevalence of astrology in American culture during the 1970s signals a broader engagement with the mysterious, rooted in ancient practices that have endured through the ages.

## **On Dime Horoscopes**

The invention of the dime horoscope machine by Bruce King, known as

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Zolar, in 1934 marks a pivotal moment in the commercialization of the occult. By catering to the burgeoning interest in astrology, Zolar made mystical knowledge accessible to the masses, heralding a new era of mass-marketing horoscopes. This development illustrates the profound transformation of how occult ideas integrated into everyday American life, making spirituality more relatable and practical.

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# Chapter 3 Summary: 1. The Psychic Highway

## Chapter Three: The Psychic Highway

In this chapter of "Occult America," the historical context of occult beliefs in 19th-century America is examined, revealing a complex landscape shaped by persecution and spiritual innovation. The Age of Reason presented significant challenges for those espousing unconventional religious beliefs, highlighted by notorious witch trials and accusations of heresy against figures such as Cagliostro and Ann Lee. Ann Lee, later known as Mother Ann, emigrated from England to America in 1774, forming the Shaker community despite facing substantial adversity and charges of witchcraft. The Shakers emphasized communal living and radical spiritual practices, which gained traction after a significant natural event in 1780 sparked renewed interest and conversions.

Central New York's Burned-Over District emerged as a pivotal site for religious revival during the early 19th century, attracting a spiritually inquisitive populace drawn to mystical beliefs. This area's cultural significance was intertwined with the myth of lost tribes of Israelites, fostering a fertile environment for new spiritual ideologies. Among these was the Millerite movement, led by William Miller, who predicted Jesus's imminent return in 1844. Despite sensationalized reports of mass hysteria,

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most followers maintained realistic expectations about balancing their apocalyptic hopes with everyday life.

Another notable figure, Jemima Wilkinson, redefined spiritual leadership by adopting the persona of the Publick Universal Friend. Through her emphasis on simple virtues and a rejection of rigid church doctrines, she cultivated a supportive spiritual community focused on mutual care and enlightenment.

Joseph Smith's emergence as the founder of Mormonism marked a crucial development in this era of spiritual exploration. Inspired by the mystical currents prevalent in the Burned-Over District, Smith claimed divine revelations that culminated in the creation of the Book of Mormon. This text intertwined local legends with grand themes of lost civilizations and providential history, nourishing the growth of the Latter-day Saint movement.

Freemasonry also thrived during this period, appealing to individuals seeking personal spiritual development and ecumenical connections. However, scandal and controversy eventually tarnished its reputation within American society.

As these various movements proliferated, they reflected a broader societal inclination towards reform, spirituality, and utopian ideals. A key figure in this synthesis was Andrew Jackson Davis, whose works in spiritualism and

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mysticism articulated a vision of enlightenment that was universally accessible, promoting equality and inclusiveness.

Overall, Chapter 3 encapsulates the dynamic interplay between mystical beliefs and social transformation in early 19th-century America, highlighting how spiritual exploration not only shaped individual lives but also the course of American culture and identity.

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## Chapter 4: 2. Mystic Americans

### ### MYSTIC AMERICANS

#### #### Introduction to the Occult in America

In the late 19th century, Manhattan's West 47th Street emerged as a central hub for the burgeoning occult movement in America, largely due to the efforts of key figures such as Henry Steel Olcott. This era marked a transformative period where traditional religious paradigms began to intertwine with mystical explorations.

#### #### Henry Steel Olcott: A Life Transformed

Henry Steel Olcott, a reputable lawyer and ex-Civil War officer, underwent a significant personal metamorphosis following his divorce. Rejecting his conservative upbringing, he sought spiritual enlightenment, diving into the world of the occult—a fascination rooted in his childhood. His pursuit led him to engage with prominent personalities within the Spiritualist movement, revealing a profound thirst for understanding the metaphysical.

#### #### Encounter with Madame Blavatsky

Olcott's journey brought him into contact with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a mystic steeped in Eastern spiritual traditions. The synergy between their visions inspired the creation of a spiritual salon, termed the "Lamasery," in

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New York. This gathering attracted a milieu of intellectuals and artists, all eager to delve into the esoteric insights and metaphysical concepts they were uncovering.

#### #### Founding of the Theosophical Society

In pursuit of deeper wisdom, Olcott and Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society. Their aim was to uncover hidden truths across various religions and safeguard Eastern spiritual traditions in the face of colonialism. This society championed the exploration of theosophy—defined as divine wisdom—seeking to uncover universal truths prevalent in spiritual thought.

#### #### The Journey to India

In 1878, Olcott and Blavatsky relocated to India, where they became instrumental in the Buddhist revival and independence movement. Their advocacy for the preservation of Buddhist customs amidst colonial challenges positioned Olcott as a pivotal player in the modern history of Eastern religions, particularly in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka).

#### #### The Broader Context of Occultism

The rise of Theosophy coincided with a wider intellectual awakening in America, influenced heavily by New England Transcendentalism, which sought to reconcile ancient mystical teachings with contemporary thought. Influencers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson laid the groundwork for a growing acceptance of the occult, fostering an increasing appetite for

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spiritual exploration in American society.

#### #### Growth of Spiritualism in America

Early American spirituality was deeply intertwined with the Spiritualist movement, which gained popularity through sensational events such as the Fox sisters' spirit raps. This movement offered a framework for communicating with the deceased, providing comfort to grieving families during an era characterized by high mortality rates.

#### #### Impact on Society and Politics

Spiritualism garnered interest from numerous public figures, including the Lincolns, who sought solace through its practices amid personal losses. This movement also intersected with social reform, promoting values of equality, as many mediums and leaders were women and advocates for social change.

#### #### Spiritualism's Global Influence

The American Spiritualist movement had a significant impact globally, inspiring similar movements in Europe and Latin America, as well as shaping new religious movements like Caodaism in Vietnam. Its core themes of communication with the beyond and the quest for transcendence resonated widely, creating a legacy that influences spiritual thought and practice today.

#### #### Conclusion

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The mystical currents shaped by figures like Olcott and Blavatsky in America not only revolutionized Western spiritual practices but also paved the way for a richer dialogue with Eastern philosophies. Their efforts created a unique tapestry of belief and inquiry that continues to shape modern spirituality, intertwining diverse cultural insights and practices into a coherent whole.

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# Chapter 5 Summary: 3. Don't Try This at Home: Ouija and the Selling of Spiritualism

## CHAPTER FIVE: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

### Ouija and the Selling of Spiritualism

This chapter delves into the intriguing history and cultural significance of the Ouija board, beginning with a nostalgic reminiscence of three teenage girls experimenting with it in the 1960s. While the board is often treated as a mere novelty, its origins trace back to the American Spiritualist movement of the nineteenth century, where various methods of spirit communication—such as table rapping and automatic writing—set the groundwork for its invention.

### Spiritual Telegraphs

Spiritualism created a close-knit community as practitioners sought innovative means to connect with the deceased. This quest led to the development of talking boards, inspired by simpler devices like planchettes and alphabet boards that emerged in the 1850s. Practitioners engaged in these methods to bridge the gap between the living and the spirit world.

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## **Baltimore Oracles**

The widely recognized inventor of the Ouija board, William Fuld, is often mistakenly credited for its creation. In reality, the board was patented by Elijah J. Bond in 1891 and later popularized by Fuld and others. The board's design features letters, numbers, and celestial symbols, catering to both social interaction and a sense of mystery around spiritual communication.

## **True Origins**

Contrary to mainstream narratives, talking boards had already been in use among Spiritualists during the 1880s, revealing that this method was a reflection of existing practices rather than a novel invention.

## **Ancient Ouija?**

Claims of an ancient ancestry for Ouija boards are critically examined. While some historical texts hint at similar devices, they often lack solid evidence, underscoring that the Ouija board is fundamentally a product of the Spiritualist movement.

## **Ouija Boom**

By the 1920s, the Ouija board had reached a zenith of popularity,

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influencing culture and entertainment. Despite William Fuld's skepticism regarding its spiritual authenticity, he played a pivotal role in its proliferation. His untimely death in 1927 signified a turning point; however, the board continued to thrive under his family, even experiencing a resurgence during World War II as people sought means to communicate with lost loved ones.

## **Ouija in Winter**

Toward the end of the century, interest in the Ouija board wavered, but it surged again in the 1960s when Parker Brothers acquired it. This revival was driven by the countercultural movements of the time, redefining the Ouija board for a younger audience and adding layers of intrigue and fear.

## **An Occult Splendor**

Accounts of Ouija sessions vary widely, with experiences ranging from benign interactions to chilling encounters with allegedly malicious spirits. These narratives amplify the board's mystique, while some users credit it with igniting creative inspiration and fostering significant literary works.

## **Creepyville**

James Merrill's renowned literary creations, evidently inspired by Ouija

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sessions, exemplify the board's capacity for profound artistic expression. However, they also provoke contemplation about the implications for personal relationships and existential risks associated with spiritual contact.

Ultimately, the Ouija board remains a controversial subject, drawing diverse reactions that span entertainment to cautionary tales about spiritual dangers. Its dual identity—as a playful tool and a potential gateway to the unknown—continues to captivate and perplex users, securing its status in American culture and consciousness.

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## Chapter 6 Summary: 4. The Science of Right Thinking

### CHAPTER SIX: THE SCIENCE OF RIGHT THINKING

This chapter delves into the transformative ideas of Wallace D. Wattles, a Methodist minister who, facing financial hardship in 1896, began to explore the intersection of Christian teachings with metaphysical concepts. His journey was influenced by social gospel advocate George D. Herron, leading Wattles to believe that true liberation from external circumstances begins with freeing one's mind.

In the late nineteenth century, the United States experienced a cultural shift characterized by the blending of various belief systems, including Spiritualism, Mesmerism, and Theosophy. This period gave rise to the "New Thought" movement, which posited that thoughts could manifest tangible outcomes, such as health and wealth. Ralph Waldo Emerson emerged as a pivotal figure, advocating for the notion that one's thoughts directly influence actions and experiences.

A significant precursor to the New Thought movement was Phineas P. Quimby, a clockmaker who uncovered the power of uplifting thoughts in the healing process. Quimby theorized that illness arose from erroneous beliefs, leading him to develop a philosophy of mental healing that profoundly

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impacted subsequent thinkers.

Following Quimby's death, Mary Baker Eddy established Christian Science, emphasizing the supremacy of divine mentality over mortal thought. Eddy's teachings diverged from Quimby by dismissing physical reality as an illusion, creating a distinct yet parallel spiritual movement that further shaped New Thought.

As the late 19th century progressed, the term "New Thought" gained popularity, with leaders such as Emma Curtis Hopkins and Ella Wheeler Wilcox expanding its principles beyond Eddy's rigid interpretations. Wattles himself embraced New Thought concepts, engaging in the political landscape as a socialist and advocating for societal reform through mental empowerment rather than personal gain.

Ernest Holmes later emerged as a significant figure, founding the Science of Mind movement. Unlike his predecessors, Holmes focused on philosophical exploration rather than organizational structure, influencing modern self-help movements and popularizing the idea of "positive thinking."

However, the New Thought movement faced challenges, particularly regarding its understanding of evil. Critics argued that it often oversimplified life's complexities by reducing everything to mere thought manifestation. Although Holmes made efforts to reconcile these issues, critiques around the

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movement's implications persisted.

Norman Vincent Peale further popularized New Thought with his influential book "The Power of Positive Thinking," which resonated deeply with mainstream audiences. While he drew inspiration from Holmes, Peale's interpretations often overshadowed acknowledgment of earlier influences in the realm of positive thought.

In conclusion, the New Thought movement evolved beyond its original philosophical roots into a versatile ideology embedded within American culture, intertwining spirituality with contemporary self-help philosophies and addressing the broader human experience.

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## Chapter 7 Summary: 5. The Mail-Order Prophet

### CHAPTER SEVEN: THE MAIL-ORDER PROPHET

In the midst of the Great Depression, Frank B. Robinson, an Idaho druggist, established Psychiana, a revolutionary mail-order religion grounded in New Thought principles. His innovative approach required no formal congregation, and he attracted an astonishing two million followers by the time of his death, positioning Psychiana as one of the largest religions globally. Offering a money-back guarantee for satisfaction, Robinson's strategy embodied a groundbreaking media evangelism that resonated deeply with many Americans facing both financial and spiritual crises as traditional religious institutions faltered.

Robinson's marketing strategies, which began in 1928, were both simple and powerful. His advertisements promised individuals a direct connection with God, promoting the concept of affirmative thought as a means to achieve personal empowerment. In a period marked by despair, his teachings provided a source of hope and strength for countless people. Nonetheless, mainstream religious leaders struggled to combat the appealing unconventionality of Robinson's messages, which surged in popularity and sales across the nation.

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Despite garnering a dedicated following, Robinson was met with significant backlash and criticism. Opponents branded him a "religious racketeer," sparking investigations and accusations of fraud. Ironically, these challenges enhanced his notoriety, enabling his teachings to reach millions of households through a variety of media channels throughout the 1940s.

Robinson's life was heavily influenced by a troubled upbringing. Born into a difficult family situation, he often encountered hardship and discord during his youth. His spiritual quest began in earnest after a disheartening church experience, prompting him to explore deeper religious insights, ultimately leading him to develop his unconventional approach to spirituality.

The foundation of Psychiana rested on principles of measurable outcomes and empowerment through thought. Drawing from New Thought ideologies, Robinson emphasized affirmations and the consciousness of a "living God." Although his teachings borrowed from established spiritual philosophies, they sometimes overlooked ethical nuances, raising questions about their depth and authenticity.

Financial aspects of his operation stirred skepticism regarding his motives. Critics accused Robinson of exploiting his followers financially; however, records indicated that a majority of his revenue was reinvested into Psychiana's operations. He maintained a modest lifestyle, particularly when compared to other prominent religious figures, suggesting a genuine belief in

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his own teachings.

In 1941, Robinson collaborated with renowned spiritual teacher Ernest Holmes to create the “American Spiritual Awakening” program, promoting unity among various faiths during a time of sociopolitical strife. Their partnership highlighted a message of inclusivity, though philosophical differences eventually led to their separation, with both pursuing their distinct paths thereafter.

Following Robinson's passing in 1948, Psychiana rapidly declined. The absence of strong leadership and funding, coupled with the rise of new self-help movements, contributed to its downfall. Despite its disbandment, Robinson's pioneering outreach techniques and practical spirituality continue to influence contemporary religious movements, showcasing his profound and lasting impact on American spiritual life.

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# **Chapter 8: 6. Go Tell Pharaoh: The Rise of Magic in Afro–America**

## **Chapter 8: Go Tell Pharaoh - The Rise of Magic in Afro-America**

This chapter delves into the profound interplay of magic, spirituality, and identity among African Americans in the post-slavery landscape, centered around key figures and traditions that shaped their cultural fabric.

### **Introduction to Frederick Douglass**

Frederick Douglass, a former slave who rose to prominence as an eloquent advocate for freedom and justice, underwent a significant transformation after he stood up to his brutal overseer, Edward Covey. This turning point marked the beginning of Douglass's enduring fight for emancipation, both personal and societal.

### **The Encounter with Sandy Jenkins**

While seeking refuge in the woods, Douglass encountered Sandy Jenkins, a seasoned root worker who practiced hoodoo—a system of African-American folk magic with roots in African, Native American, and European traditions. Jenkins offered Douglass a magical root believed to afford protection against

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beatings, highlighting the intersection of spirituality and survival in Douglass's life.

## **The Significance of Hoodoo**

Hoodoo, often confused with Voodoo, possesses a unique identity that focuses on practical magic through the use of herbs and household items for protective and healing purposes. Root workers, like Jenkins, form a vital part of this tradition, empowering individuals within the African American community through their spiritual practices.

## **Douglass's Transformation**

Initially doubtful of hoodoo's power, Douglass's acceptance of the protective root catalyzed a pivotal moment. When he faced Covey again, he boldly asserted his own identity and autonomy, marking an emotional and psychological liberation beyond mere physical escape. In his later writings, Douglass reflected on this experience with an understanding of Jenkins's wisdom, albeit downplaying the dependence on hoodoo.

## **Commercialization of Magic**

As the early twentieth century unfolded, hoodoo began to commercialize, with supply houses providing various items for spells and rituals—such as

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herbs and mojo bags—further entangling the practice with diverse religious traditions and rituals.

## **Cultural Fusion in Hoodoo**

The evolution of hoodoo saw practitioners integrate elements from a myriad of faiths, including Catholicism and Judaism. Folklorist Harry Middleton Hyatt documented this fusion, highlighting hoodoo's emergence as a free-spirited faith devoid of rigid boundaries.

## **Literary Influence of Henri Gamache**

Henri Gamache became a key literary figure within hoodoo, authoring influential texts such as *\*The Master Book of Candle Burning\**. His work harmonized hoodoo practices with African heritage, reinforcing a cultural connection to spiritual beliefs.

## **Black Herman: The Magician and His Legacy**

Known as Benjamin Rucker, Black Herman gained fame as a magician who intertwined hoodoo into his performances, presenting himself as both an entertainer and a practitioner of the occult. His unique shows set him apart from conventional magical acts by embracing his heritage and capabilities.

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## **Marcus Garvey: Magic Meets Politics**

Marcus Garvey, a pivotal black-nationalist leader, synthesized metaphysical concepts with his political aspirations through the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). His vision emphasized self-reliance and empowerment, urging African Americans to reclaim their identity.

## **Philosophy and Science in Garvey's Ideals**

Garvey championed a “scientific understanding” of spirituality, bridging the gap between metaphysical beliefs and natural laws. His ideas resonated with the New Thought movement, which advocated for the transformative power of positive thinking.

## **Noble Drew Ali and Moorish Science**

Noble Drew Ali infused Garvey's ideals into his religious framework with the founding of the Moorish Science Temple. His \*Circle 7 Koran\* uniquely combined elements of Eastern spirituality with a narrative that fostered identity and purpose among his followers.

## **The Influence of Robert T. Browne**

Esoteric philosopher Robert T. Browne added depth to the discourse on

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spirituality and science, often navigating the challenges of racial prejudice in publishing. His teachings on visualization, particularly during his imprisonment in World War II, demonstrate his unwavering commitment to metaphysical principles.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter illuminates the intricate interplay between African cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and the quest for empowerment in post-slavery America. Figures like Douglass, Garvey, and Black Herman not only shaped the landscape of hoodoo but also illustrated the broader narrative of African American identity, resilience, and cultural evolution.

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# Chapter 9 Summary: 7. The Return of the “Secret Teachings”

## THE RETURN OF THE “SECRET TEACHINGS”

### Introduction to Manly P. Hall

In the 1920s, a young visionary named Manly P. Hall emerged, driven by a profound fascination with esoteric lore and ancient wisdom. Amidst the backdrop of a post-World War I society plagued by superficiality and ethical decay, Hall dedicated himself to studying the rich traditions of human thought and spirituality. His quest was not just for knowledge, but to preserve and share the timeless teachings of antiquity with a world desperately in need of depth.

### The Emergence of The Secret Teachings

As the world grappled with the aftermath of conflict, a surge of interest in hidden doctrines manifested, yet many writers produced convoluted interpretations that lacked clarity. Hall’s response was to meticulously craft \*The Secret Teachings of All Ages\*, initially published under the lengthy title \*AN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MASONIC, HERMETIC, QABBALISTIC AND ROSICRUCIAN SYMBOLICAL PHILOSOPHY\*.

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This work, released when Hall was just twenty-seven, became a seminal guide, intricately weaving together myth, philosophy, and mysticism.

## **An Eccentric Scholar**

Despite his eventual success, Hall's journey began from humble beginnings, marked by little formal education. Raised by his grandmother after his parents separated, he navigated his formative years in isolation, yet his insatiable thirst for knowledge propelled him forward. Hall's interactions with mystical communities in California ignited his desire to educate others, shaping his lifelong mission of connecting people to the wisdom of the ages.

## **Philosophical Ideals and Critique of Society**

Hall was not just a scholar; he was a keen observer of society's spiritual deficits. He critiqued the era's superficial understanding of philosophy, advocating for a deeper engagement with the esoteric traditions that had shaped human consciousness for millennia. His early public speaking engagements highlighted his idealism, where he urged audiences to embrace classical ethics as a remedy for societal malaise—a call to revive the spiritual and intellectual richness of the past.

## **Development and Impact of The Secret Teachings**

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After years of extensive research across the UK and the US, Hall's magnum opus was published in 1928, quickly resonating with Masonic lodges and esoteric enthusiasts alike. Its impact was profound, establishing Hall's legacy as a pivotal figure in the revival of ancient wisdom. In 1934, he founded the Philosophical Research Society (PRS), creating a nurturing space for the continued study and dissemination of esoteric knowledge.

### **Hall's Later Years and Legacy**

Though Hall's contributions were vast, his personal life revealed complexities that often contrasted with his public persona. His relationships, particularly with his second wife, were intricate, and in his later years, his trust was compromised by unscrupulous associates. This raised questions about his discernment, yet his intellectual influence persisted. Following his death in 1990, legal disputes surrounded the PRS, but the organization ultimately stabilized, continuing Hall's mission and bearing witness to his extensive contributions. His work remains a beacon of knowledge, inspiring subsequent scholars and attracting the spiritually curious.

### **Conclusion: Enduring Value of The Secret Teachings**

Today, Hall's *\*The Secret Teachings of All Ages\** stands as a monumental compendium of esoteric knowledge and a testament to his philosophical vision. By deftly weaving intricate subjects into an accessible narrative, Hall

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encouraged audiences to delve into and appreciate the wisdom of the ancients, securing his legacy amongst the foremost mystical authors of the twentieth century. His insights continue to resonate, reminding us of the enduring value of ancient teachings in navigating the complexities of modern existence.

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# Chapter 10 Summary: 8. New Deal of the Ages: Politics and the Occult

## Summary of "New Deal of the Ages: Politics and the Occult"

### Chilling Connections in the 1960s

In the summer of 1968, the United States was shaken by the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. In this tumultuous climate, writer Truman Capote proposed a provocative theory suggesting that these events were part of an occult-political conspiracy aimed at destabilizing the American government. Reference was made to the writings of Madame Blavatsky, a key figure in Theosophy, who Capote alleged promoted the violent removal of influential public figures to incite revolution. However, this theory lacked substantial evidence, exposing the fragile links between political turmoil and conspiracy theories during this era.

### The Political Landscape of Occultism in America

The fascination with occult conspiracies was influenced by Europe's history, marked by figures like Grigori Rasputin, whose mystical influence had shaped political landscapes. Conversely, in the United States, figures like Henry A. Wallace represented a philosophical variety of occultism. As

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FDR's Secretary of Agriculture and vice president, Wallace embraced esoteric beliefs without veering into debauchery, contributing innovative ideas to the New Deal.

## **Henry A. Wallace: The Philosopher Politician**

Wallace garnered a reputation for his unconventional Theosophical beliefs, astrology, and other esoteric interests. Despite criticism describing him as "weird," he played a pivotal role in the New Deal's agricultural policies, revealing a conflict between his intellectual contributions and the mainstream political sentiment of the time.

## **Wallace's Spiritual Search**

Describing himself as a "practical mystic," Wallace was deeply engaged with various metaphysical traditions, exploring Theosophy, the Liberal Catholic Church, and Native American spirituality. This spiritual quest informed his policy-making and showcased a broader philosophical perspective within the political realm.

## **Nicholas Roerich and the Roerich Pact**

Wallace's interaction with Nicholas Roerich, a mystical philosopher, led him to sign the Roerich Pact, designed to protect cultural heritage during wars.

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Though Roerich was often considered eccentric, his ideals aligned with Wallace's vision of governance infused with spiritual awareness.

### **The Eye and the Pyramid: Symbolism in Politics**

Wallace proposed that imagery from the U.S. Great Seal, specifically the all-seeing eye and pyramid, be featured on currency. He believed this symbol represented a "New Order of the Ages," which intertwined mysticism with political symbolism and raised speculations regarding his true intentions.

### **People's Perceptions and Political Risks**

Despite his significant contributions, Wallace faced considerable political backlash. As conservatism rose, his esoteric associations began to eclipse his achievements, ultimately leading to his ousting from the vice presidency in favor of Harry Truman. This shift underscored the political risks posed by his mystical interests.

### **William Dudley Pelley: The Dark Side of Occultism**

In stark contrast to Wallace stood William Dudley Pelley, a former writer turned neo-Nazi leader, representing the darker dimensions of occultism. Initially noted for his near-death experience narratives, Pelley became

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notorious for fostering racial hate through the Silver Shirts, promoting anti-Semitic propaganda that demonstrated how occult beliefs could be twisted for nefarious purposes.

### **Twists of Ideology**

Pelley's trajectory, from an aspiring author to a leader of a hate group, raises uncomfortable questions about the intersection of fascism and occultism. While some have explored possible occult influences in Nazi ideology, it is noted that Hitler himself largely dismissed these connections, complicating the narrative of occultism's role in politics.

### **Gandhi and Theosophy**

Unexpectedly, Mohandas K. Gandhi held Theosophy in regard, crediting it with shaping his ideas of universal brotherhood. This relationship illustrates the nuanced balance between spiritual beliefs and practical politics, with Gandhi's engagement reflecting the complexities of integrating idealism into social movements.

### **Conclusion: Legacies of Occult in Politics**

The contrast between figures like Wallace and Pelley underscores the dual potential of occultism within American politics: it can inspire compassionate

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ideals or breed destructive hatred. This complex legacy continues to echo in today's social movements and ideologies, showcasing the intricate relationship between spirituality and political action throughout history.

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# Chapter 11 Summary: 9. The Masters Among Us

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE MASTERS AMONG US

### Introduction to Spiritual Curiosity

The chapter begins by exploring the intrigue generated by Baird T. Spalding's book, *\*Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East\**, which ignited curiosity and sparked discussions within the Unity Metaphysical Center in Helena, Montana. Spalding, depicted as a bald, intellectual figure, embarked on what he described as a “metaphysical research” expedition, recounting miraculous tales involving ancient spiritual teachers in India that captivated audiences eager for new spiritual insights.

### Embracing New Spirituality

Amidst this growing interest, Ruth E. Chew, a key local figure in metaphysical teachings, seized the opportunity presented by Spalding's work. Through engaging lectures, she attracted individuals seeking deeper spiritual connections, reinforcing the book's themes. Initially, Spalding's writings were published in limited quantities, but they eventually exploded in popularity, selling hundreds of thousands of copies. His key concepts, including the interconnectedness of all religions and the idea of "Christ

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Consciousness" existing within every individual, resonated deeply with those disenchanted by conventional religious practices.

## **Foundations in Hidden Wisdom**

Spalding's narratives were rooted in Theosophical ideas concerning hidden masters and the modern myth surrounding Christ's enigmatic past in the East. These concepts resonated with Western occult traditions, harkening back to earlier Rosicrucian beliefs and contemporary narratives like Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *\*Zanoni\**, which revolved around mystical knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. The backdrop of the 1893 World's Fair played a pivotal role in introducing Eastern philosophies to Western audiences, exemplified by the influential presence of Swami Vivekananda, who captivated the crowd with his spiritual insights.

## **Cultural Interpretation of Christ's Journey**

Amid these developments, there was a surging fascination with the speculative accounts of Christ's early life, particularly those suggesting his connections to Eastern philosophy. Spalding presented a modernized depiction of Christ, engaging in mystical feats that appealed to a populace eager for spiritual renewal. His accessible writing style, which intertwined scientific reasoning with spiritual exploration, allowed his narratives to reach a broad audience, further enhancing interest in these transformative

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ideas.

## **Conclusion: The Impact of Spalding's Vision**

Despite the fantastical aspects of Spalding's stories, they resonated with many Americans yearning for a deeper connection to divine mysteries and higher truths. The chapter concludes by reflecting on Spalding's enigmatic persona, noting the limited knowledge about his personal history but emphasizing the significant and lasting impact of his teachings on the spiritual landscape of America. His work has not only inspired a movement towards embracing diverse spiritual philosophies but also fostered a collective yearning for enlightenment and divine understanding within a rapidly changing cultural framework.

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# Chapter 12: 10. Secrets for Sale

## Chapter 12: Secrets for Sale

This chapter delves into the evolution of occult practices, tracing their journey from exclusive European secret societies to widespread American accessibility.

### Overview of Occultism's Evolution

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, European occult lodges, notably those like Theosophy and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, thrived on secrecy, preserving esoteric knowledge from the public eye. However, by the 1920s, American practitioners began democratizing practices such as astrology and numerology, making them accessible to a broader audience and signaling a shift toward inclusivity in spirituality.

### Paul Foster Case: The Occult Rebel

Paul Foster Case, an influential magician and occultist, began his journey in the early 1900s, rooted in humble beginnings. His fascination with mystical ideas was sparked by his encounter with the architect Claude Bragdon, prompting him to explore the Tarot. A pivotal meeting with a stranger in

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Chicago solidified his commitment to the occult. By 1920, Case became a member of the declining Golden Dawn, a key organization in Western esoteric tradition.

## **Case's Departure from the Golden Dawn**

Tensions emerged within the Golden Dawn, particularly between Case and prominent figure Moina Mathers, exacerbated by his romantic relationship with Lillian Geise and his rising acclaim as a teacher. Following his expulsion in 1922, Case and Geise set out to forge their own path, culminating in the establishment of the School of Ageless Wisdom and later the Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A.). These institutions offered comprehensive courses in topics like Tarot, thus making esoteric knowledge more approachable.

## **Case's Influence and Works**

After Geise's tragic death in 1924, Case continued to advocate for his teachings, ultimately publishing "The Tarot" in 1947. This seminal work integrated Golden Dawn principles with psychological insights, further demystifying occult knowledge. His approach encouraged self-discovery and empowerment, significantly influencing American occultism and reshaping public perception of mystical practices.

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## **The Rise of Other Occult Organizations**

While Case was a significant figure, others, like C. C. Zain of the Brotherhood of Light, also emerged, challenging the era's traditional secrecy. Zain made occult education accessible, proposing a "Religion of the Stars" that blended astrology with a sense of social responsibility, resonating deeply during the hardships of the Great Depression.

## **California: The Epicenter of Occultism**

By the 20th century, California had become a vibrant hub for occultists. Notable political figures, including Ronald Reagan, engaged with astrologers, exemplifying astrology's pervasive influence on American society. Astrologers such as Carroll Righter and Sydney Omarr gained widespread recognition, with Omarr pioneering the integration of ethical considerations into astrology.

## **Omarr's Journey and Legacy**

Sydney Omarr's personal experiences informed his successful career as a public astrologer, allowing him to blend the entertainment and psychological dimensions of astrology. Despite facing challenges in his later life, his legacy endures in shaping astrology's popularity in America and highlighting its cultural significance.

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## Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the transformation of occult practices from exclusive European traditions to integral components of American culture. Key figures like Paul Foster Case and Sydney Omarr played transformative roles in this transition, advocating for a collective and accessible approach to spiritual and mystical exploration that resonated widely, reflecting the evolving American spiritual landscape.

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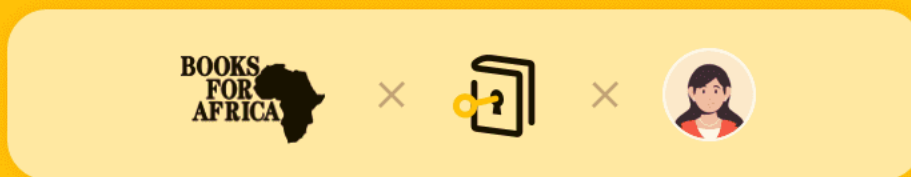




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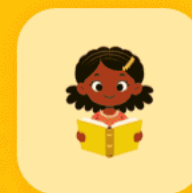
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# Chapter 13 Summary: 11. “The Greatest Mystic Who Ever Lived in America”

## Chapter Summary: The Greatest Mystic Who Ever Lived in America

### Introduction to Edgar Cayce

Edgar Cayce emerges as a complex figure within the realm of mysticism, marked by a challenging past intertwined with controversial affiliations, notably with groups like the Silver Shirts and the Ku Klux Klan. These ties contrast sharply with his later life’s dedication to healing and guidance, which he chiefly accessed through his remarkable trance abilities. After a debilitating accident in 1935 strained his personal life, Cayce sought the insights of renowned psychics to navigate his hardships.

### Edgar Cayce's Abilities

Cayce's reputation as a psychic rests primarily on his exceptional readings, which offered detailed medical diagnoses and profound guidance to countless individuals, despite his lack of formal medical credentials. His readings consistently emphasized ethical living, urging clients to practice compassion and avoid judgment, underpinning a powerful moral framework in his teachings.

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## **Cayce's Personal History**

Born in Kentucky on March 18, 1877, Cayce's early years were steeped in difficulty, characterized by a heightened sensitivity and an inclination toward spirituality. His formative experiences included his interactions with what he referred to as “spiritual friends,” alongside an earnest exploration of Biblical texts. These elements coalesced in 1901 when Cayce began providing trance readings after successfully diagnosing his own illness.

## **Development of Cayce’s Philosophy**

In 1923, Cayce relocated to Selma, Alabama, where he began to enrich his spiritual approach. Under the mentorship of Arthur Lammers, he incorporated diverse metaphysical concepts including astrology, reincarnation, and ancient wisdom into his readings. Lammers encouraged him to formulate connections across various religious traditions, resulting in a unique synthesis of Christian beliefs with ideas like karma and reincarnation.

## **The Impact of Past Life Readings**

Cayce notably delved into past life readings, often casting clients in historical or mythical roles that illuminated their present struggles by linking

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them to former life experiences. This perspective offered many clients clarity and a sense of resolution, allowing them to navigate their current challenges more effectively.

## **Cayce as a Healer**

In 1929, Cayce established the “Hospital of Enlightenment” in Virginia Beach, merging conventional and alternative medical practices. His insights into holistic healing laid the foundation for what would become significant movements within alternative medicine. This approach emphasized treating the individual as a whole, rather than merely addressing symptomatic ailments.

## **Ethical Guidelines and Legacy**

Throughout his life's work, Cayce adhered to a code of compassion, asserting that spiritual teachings should cultivate inner wisdom and encourage service to others. His influence resonated through the New Age movement, as terms like “reincarnation” and “channeling” gained popularity under his guidance.

## **Cayce’s Later Influence**

The publication of "There Is a River," a biography by Thomas Sugrue in

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1942, played a pivotal role in cementing Cayce's legacy and broadening public interest in his spiritual insights and readings. This surge in curiosity about reincarnation and other spiritual practices during the mid-20th century marks Cayce's enduring impact on modern spirituality.

## **Conclusion**

Edgar Cayce, often hailed as "the greatest mystic who ever lived in America," embodies a rich tapestry of contradictions—facing inner prejudices while simultaneously exhibiting profound empathy. His journey reflected a pivotal evolution in American occult thought and practice, redefining how spirituality and healing are perceived and integrated into contemporary life.

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