

## MAGIC, SUPERNATURALISM AND RELIGION

We of the late twentieth century have sought to see the natural world as a rational, explainable mechanism. Those who spoke of higher and lower forces, supernatural beings, strange evocative rites, and the power of magic have been labelled superstitious, inadequate psychologically and intellectually, or mad.

We may have condemned too hard. Certainly we have shut ourselves off from the real beliefs and fears of our ancestors and of other human civilizations. Religion and magic, hope and fear, are still in our everyday waking and dreaming life.

Kurt Seligmann, the surrealist painter, locates magic and the occult in the broad stream of what we know and acknowledge about the history of civilizations. He writes neither with the wild-eyed speculation of the fanatic nor the obscurity of the scholar.

We have been so afraid of magic that we have hesitated to look at it seriously.

Mesopotamia, Zoroaster, Jehovah's Warriors, Egypt, Gnosticism, Roman Paganism, Hermes Trismegistus, Alchemy, Albertus Magnus, The Witch, The Magus, Cabala, the Magical Arts, the Masons, and the Count of Saint-Germain are among the influences discussed.

'A work of this kind, written for the layman but to scholarly standards of accuracy, has been needed for a long time . . . it is a notable try . . .'

*James Blish*, SPECTATOR

'An interesting Crowley-free account of the world of magic.'

*Cyril Connolly*, SUNDAY TIMES

'The collection of precious stones made by Mr Seligmann is excellent. With an artist's discrimination he has surveyed the past, pulling out a fragment of lapis lazuli here, an amethyst there; alchemy, the philosopher's stone, divination by moles, infernal helpers, Nostradamus . . . the list is endless.'

*Mair Lewis*, IRISH TIMES

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