

Psychology - Visualization - Christianity

VISUALIZATION

If visualization is so all-important, one would expect that the Bible would have a great deal to say about it. But in fact the word does not occur even once in the entire Bible, and the concept is never so much as mentioned, much less explained or taught. The whole idea of visualizing a vivid image in the mind in order to produce an effect in the physical world is not just missing from the Bible but is present in all occult literature as far back as we can go ... and is the major technique used for inner healing or healing of the memories and even for healing at a distance.

Such methods are neither taught nor practiced in the Bible as helps to faith or prayer. Those who attempt to do so are not following the leading of the Holy Spirit or the Word of God, but are practicing an ancient occult technique. Legitimate uses of the imagination would involve such things as seeing mental images of something being described in a book; designing, planning, or rehearsing something in our minds; or remembering a place or event. Such mental processes are normal aids to everyday activities and do not involve an attempt to create or control reality through mind-power.

Agnes Sanford taught that we can literally create virtues in other people by the power of our minds, heal people at a distance, and even forgive their sins through visualization.

Shamanistic visualization is an attempt to create or manipulate the physical world. It is based upon the ancient sorcerer's belief that the entire universe is an illusion (called Maya in Hinduism) created by the mind.

Many suggest that shamanistic visualization is a counterfeit of God's truth that they teach. However, there is no true visualization taught or practiced in the Bible for Satan to counterfeit. Visualization is as absent from Scripture as it has always been present in the occult. Neither Isaiah, Jeremiah, nor any other Biblical prophet created his visions through visualization, but received them by inspiration from God. Jesus didn't teach that His disciples could get Him to appear at will by visualizing Him, or that we should visualize what we are praying for.

Biblical truth is no longer the solution, but flattery and fantasies of the mind. What used to be called pride is now called 'positive self-talk,' and is as diligently cultivated today as it was formerly struggled against.

Visualization of God or Jesus ... is an attempt to *make* Him *appear* rather than to know His abiding presence. Our Lord certainly gave no instruction nor even hinted that they should visualize Him and that He would then appear.

That visualization is ideally suited for contact with demons can be demonstrated in the fact that it has been used for that very purpose for thousands of years in various forms of shamanism. And the shaman will always tell you that it doesn't matter what image you conjure up, but conjure up an image you must.

Few idol-worshippers of any kind would say that they intend to worship devils. Most would protest that they look upon the idol as a symbol of the true God. Yet they get involved with devils because they are using a methodology that God has forbidden. Would "sincerity" in visualizing "Jesus" or "God" be any better an excuse?"

With regard to visualizing Jesus, it should be clear that:

1. this procedure is **not** Biblical;

2. it has been used for thousands of years in numerous forms of sorcery;
3. something more than imagination is taking place; and
4. those who practice it run the real risk of opening themselves to demonic influence.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY - NEITHER SCIENTIFIC NOR "NEUTRAL"

So in the name of the latest psychology we are being led back into primitive paganism/shamanism, which then enters the church because psychology is embraced as scientific and neutral.

It is absolutely necessary to allow the Bible to judge each and every experience. If there is not clear teaching in the Bible to support a practice, it should not be adopted by the church today, regardless of how beautiful and seemingly miraculous the experiences are that it produces. Unfortunately, to an alarming degree, the Scriptures are no longer looked upon as the full and sufficient guide given by the Holy Spirit for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Two major attitudes have opened the door to error in the church:

1. Experience is taken as self-authenticating, so that the need for Biblical authentication is considered to be marginal at best; and/or
2. psychological theories are accepted that provide the authentication of experiences and practices which cannot be justified from the Bible.

INNER HEALING

Both secular and Christian therapies share the common delusion that salvation or healing comes through uprooting memories of 'hurts' from early childhood and even the womb that are supposedly deeply buried in the subconscious from where they dictate our present behavior without our knowing it. Thus the blame is too often placed in the past and upon others rather than ourselves.

There may indeed be something in the past that must be dealt with which is causing bitterness against those who may have wronged us and we have never forgiven, or guilt for things we have done to others and never repented of, apologized for or made right.

Inner healing is based upon a denial that Jesus is all we need. 'Something more' must be involved, and that 'something' is borrowed from a variety of psychotherapies, most of which are related to shamanism.

"REBIRTHING"

LSD-induced fantasies have become the foundation of a new secular therapy called "rebirthing." Often the rebirthing takes place in water, and seems to be the mind-science cults' answer to Christian baptism.

Rebirthing is a Westernized version of ancient mythology that is closely related to the fertility cults: It attributes mystical significance and godlike powers to the birth process. The scientific evidence, however purports that the pre-natal, natal, and early post-natal brain is not sufficiently developed to carry memories. And now rebirthing has entered the church. Often, they refer to their various techniques of healing of the memories as "Reliving the Scene with Jesus." (They got the idea from Ruth Carter Stapleton)

FREUD'S ERRORS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

The primary foundation for inner healing is a misinformed acceptance of Freud's discredited theory of 'psychic determinism.' Psychology textbooks describe this as the belief that 'human behavior occurs in accordance with intra-psychic causes' and is actually 'controlled by impulses, many of which are buried in the unconscious, below the level of awareness.' These two Freudian/Jungian ideas, psychic determinism and the unconscious, form the foundation of inner healing, both in the secular world and in the church. It is obvious, however, that if Freud's theory about the past determining the present and future is true, then man does not have a free will, but is ruled by unconscious forces. It would follow that he cannot be held personally accountable for his actions. Inner-healing methodologies sometimes provide a means for putting the blame on others (parents, friends, and even God) and then forgiving them, using Freud's theory of the unconscious as a rationale. Psychologist and author Martin Bobgan has said:

... "So from a Biblical basis and from a scientific basis there really is no support for the use of the unconscious as used in Freudian psychology and as borrowed by the inner healers..."

Another invention of Freud's that has deeply influenced society and is now seducing Christianity was the idea that 'for all practical purposes the adult personality is formed by the end of the fifth year of life' through 'certain psychosexual stages of development' that 'determine what kind of personality he or she will possess as an adult.' It is important to know that it was through 'memories' of past experiences aroused in their patients under the influence of the ancient shamanic practice of hypnosis¹ (which we have already noted are at best unreliable and most likely demonic), that both Freud and Jung developed their primary theories.

IS OUR PAST THE ROOT OF OUR PROBLEM - WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

Bobgan says "The use of the past – this is another insidious psychological concept, which is amalgamated with Christian doctrines in order to be used on unwitting Christians. I don't find any Biblical basis for it."

Even Christians have accepted this theory, in spite of the fact that the Bible teaches that present moral choices rather than past traumas determine our current condition and actions. Nor does the Bible offer any example of prophet, priest, or apostle dealing with anything even vaguely related to buried or repressed emotions or memories.

If this were the great truth that inner-healing practitioners insist it is, then surely the Bible would have both teaching and example to offer. On the contrary, Paul, whose legalistic upbringing and crimes against the church prior to conversion would seem to make him a primary candidate for healing of the memories, was not only free from any bad effects but declared, 'Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 3:13-14). Nevertheless, John and Paula Sandford, authors of 'the most comprehensive book on inner healing today,' declare:

"We need to remember carefully to search out the whole history of the person. ... We are not ministering merely to the grown person, but to the child yet living in the heart..."

"Frequently, resentments lie totally beneath both the heart and mind, having originated either in the spirit in the womb or at birth."

¹ For a full discussion of hypnosis, see Martin and Deidre Bobgan, HYPNOSIS AND THE CHRISTIAN (Bethany, 1984) and pp. 111-28 of PEACE, PROSPERITY AND THE COMING HOLOCAUST, by Dave Hunt.

We do not deny that a past event may have some influence upon present attitudes ... It is not so much the event *but how one reacts to it* that is of primary importance in a person's life.

It would be an endless chore to dig up every past experience. We are not chained to the past until therapy in some form sets us free. We are free in Christ. He is our life. That life does not need 'inner healing' or any other un-Biblical therapy. We become born again the day He comes into our hearts.

THE CURE IS WORSE THAN THE DISEASE - SEDUCTION

Unfortunately in the area of psychology, we have adopted beliefs and practices that have neither a scientific nor Biblical basis. As psychologist Carol Tavris has said:

"Now the irony is that many people who are not fooled by astrology for one minute subject themselves to therapy for years, where the same errors of logic and interpretation often occur."

Inner healing is simply a Christianized psychoanalysis that uses the power of suggestion to 'solve problems' which it has oftentimes actually CREATED. The same can be said for other forms of psycho-therapy. Like thousands of others, Dr. Carney Landis, of the Psychiatric Institute of Columbia University, found himself much worse AFTER psychoanalysis. His analyst frankly admitted to him that 'the analytic procedure would create a neurosis' in any 'really normal person.' Landis eventually concluded:

"I believe that ... the childhood fantasies, memories, the feelings of unreality, the love transference - are actually PRODUCED by analysis rather than revealed by it."

Numerous studies have shown that the amount of 'psychological' problems in society increases in direct proportion to the growing number of psychologists and psychiatrists. Jerome Frank, professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and himself a psychiatrist, has said:

"... Psychotherapy is the only form of treatment which, at least to some extent, appears to create the illness it treats."

The healing-of-memories process that was intended to deliver them has in fact CREATED PSEUDOMEMORIES that have confused them. No longer can they rely in simple faith upon the promises of the Bible, but are now dependent upon practitioners and practices that attempt to mediate God's blessings through emotional experiences and periodic catharsis created by guided imagery.

"SCIENCE, FALSELY SO CALLED"

There is a commonly held misconception that psychology is scientific. In fact, it is a pseudo-science riddled with contradiction and confusion.

We have no quarrel with chemistry, medicine, or physics, but with psychology's pretense to scientifically understand and deal with the heart of man, who is a spiritual being made in the image of God. To attempt to deal with human behavior 'scientifically' denies man's free will and spiritual nature.

Science can deal with such things as nutritional deficiencies or chemical imbalances in the BRAIN, but it has nothing to say about MIND, which is nonphysical. Moreover, psychology not only pretends to bring 'science' to bear on problems which it cannot even define, much less solve, but it claims to meet needs that the Bible says God alone can provide. Thus psychology is in the fullest sense a rival religion that can never be wedded to Christianity. Furthermore, psychotherapy involves the danger

that is implicit in all false religions: Those who practice it open themselves to all manner of demonic delusion. If the Bible is true, then psychology pretends to offer what we do not need.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM - THE WRONG DIAGNOSIS

An evangelical humanism is throughout the church. Hatred, violence and social disorder are caused by a lack of self-esteem, we are being told; rather than the truth which is that they arise out of willful rebellion and sin.

Instead of pride, a refusal to repent of our sin, and a refusal to forgive being the three great barriers between men and God, we are now being told that such a message is demeaning to our psyche and that the paramount need is to build up everyone's SELF-esteem. This is the seductive gospel of selfism.

The Scriptures differ with the current assessment that many of mankind's problems arise from a deficiency of self-esteem or self-love. In contrast, the apostle Paul warns that self-love in the end times will be at the root of such problems.

2 TI 3:1 THIS KNOW ALSO, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME.

2 TI 3:2 FOR MEN SHALL BE LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES, COVETOUS, BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY,

2 TI 3:3 WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION, TRUCEBREAKERS, FALSE ACCUSERS, INCONTINENT, FIERCE, DESPISERS OF THOSE THAT ARE GOOD,

2 TI 3:4 TRAITORS, HEADY, HIGHMINDED, LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD;

What makes this problem so difficult to unmask is the fact that psychologists and psychiatrists are usually sincerely devoted to helping other people. Moreover, psychiatrists are medical doctors (as Freud and Jung), the medical profession stands behind psychiatry, and no one has the trust of society like the family physician (unless it is the pastor). Increasing numbers of pastors are getting advanced degrees in psychology in order to better help those who come to them for counseling, and those without such degrees feel compelled to accept the seemingly insightful pronouncements of the professionals.

But far from being supported by the Bible, this new 'self esteem' theology/psychology is OPPOSED by Scripture. God chose Moses, who was "very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3), to confront the mightiest emperor on earth and to deliver Israel, so that God and not man would get the glory. Moses shrank from this call, considering himself incapable. Instead of giving him months of psychological counseling to bolster his poor self-image and build up his self-esteem, God promised to be with Moses and to work through him miraculously (Exodus 3). Today we are being robbed of the presence and power of God (that Moses and others like him knew) by being told that the lack of joy and power in our lives is due to a poor self-image.

THE BIBLICAL DIAGNOSIS

The only correct self-image comes from viewing God, not ourselves, and it isn't flattering - but it changes lives and turns us from self to HIM. It was when Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted" that he cried, "Woe is me ... I am a man of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:1-5). This glimpse of God's glory and his own unworthiness in comparison, changed Isaiah's life. The turning point in Job's life came when he said, "... now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor mySELF and repent in dust and ashes ..."

"NEGATIVE PRIDE" AND SELF-ESTEEM

The person who says, "I'm so ugly, I hate myself!" doesn't hate himself at all, or he would be glad that he was ugly. It is because he loves himself that he is upset with his appearance and the way people respond to him. The person who grovels in depression and says he hates himself for having wasted his life would actually be glad that he had wasted his life if he really hated himself. In fact, he is unhappy about having wasted his life because he loves himself. The apparently remorseful criminal, who says he hates himself because of the crimes he has committed, should then be glad to see himself suffer in prison. Yet he hopes to escape that fate, which proves he loves himself in spite of his protestations of self-loathing. So it is with the person who takes his own life. Most of these tragic people consider suicide to be an escape; but who helps someone he hates to escape? It is the ultimate act of self attempting to escape circumstances without considering anyone else.

The person who is always putting himself down doesn't really hate himself or have a bad self-image; he is simply letting others know that his performance is not up to the standard he has set for himself. This is not a symptom of low self-esteem, but the flip side of pride [*negative pride!*].

A. W. Tozer explained it well:

"Self-derogation is bad for the reason that self must be there to derogate. Self, whether swaggering or groveling, can never be anything but hateful to God...Boasting is an evidence that we are pleased with self; belittling, that we are disappointed in it. Either way we reveal that we have a high opinion of ourselves."

Tozer puts it all in perspective: ...

"The victorious Christian neither exalts nor down-grades himself. His interests have shifted from self to Christ. What he is or is not no longer concerns him. He believes that he has been crucified with Christ and he is not willing either to praise or deprecate such a man."

CLIMBING ON BOARD A SINKING SHIP

By now it should be more than clear to the reader that psychology is playing a major role in an ongoing and staggering seduction of Christianity. The high respect and indisputable authority granted to this "pagan emperor" within the church is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that its nakedness has been so thoroughly exposed by secular psychologists and psychiatrists themselves. Yet at the same time that its own crew is so desperately trying to plug the many leaks in this obviously sinking ship, Christians continue to climb aboard with ever-increasing enthusiasm. This is all the more incredible when one considers that they are selling their Biblical birthright in order not just to buy a mess of pottage, but to purchase passage aboard a doomed vessel.

PSYCHOTHERAPY AND THE EASTERN CULTS

The disillusionment of those who once believed in psychotherapy, and the reason why psychotherapists (and he himself) are turning to Eastern religions, are expressed poignantly by Jacob Neddleman:

"Modern psychiatry arose out of the vision that man must change himself and not depend for help upon an imaginary God. Over half a century ago ... the human psyche was wrested from the faltering hands of organized religion and was situated in the world of nature as a subject for scientific study...

"The era of psychology was born. By the end of the Second World War many of the best minds of the new generation were magnetized by a belief in this new science of the psyche. Under the conviction that a way was now open to assuage the confusion and suffering of mankind, the study of the mind became a standard course of work in American universities ...

"Against this juggernaut of new hope, organized religion was helpless. The concept of human nature which had guided the Judeo-Christian tradition for two thousand years had not to be altered ...

"But although psychiatry in its many forms pervades our present culture, the hope it once contained has slowly ebbed away ...

"The once magical promise of a transformation of the mind through psychiatry has quietly disappeared ... The psychiatrists themselves ... despair over their inability to help other human beings ...

"A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the EASTERN RELIGIONS offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time ... the numerous gurus ... are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology."

BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY - THE ANTITHESIS OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

The Bible clearly declares that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3) and that those who receive Him as Savior and Lord are new creations, for whom *old* things have passed away and *all* things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). The past is taken care of on the basis of our faith in God and the finished work of Christ on the cross - not on the basis of some psychotherapeutic process that must be engaged in to make God's promises effective (which the Bible neither teaches nor the early disciples practiced).

In contrast, psychotherapy is based upon the premise that the past is still attached to us, buried deep within the unconscious, from where it determines our attitudes and actions. This secular form of salvation offers psychospiritual rituals for digging up the past and wiping the slate clean. It is at best an un-Biblical addition that detracts from the power of the cross and at worst a secular substitute for the gospel that destroys true faith in God.

God's Word offers the best of counsel in every area of human behavior and human relationships. While Proverbs and Ecclesiastes deal primarily with such matters, example and instruction sufficient to guide us in every situation is found throughout all of Scripture, which is another reason why the entire Bible must be studied as a unit.

The psychologist is rare, however, whose counsel even in limited areas is free of contamination from the fallacious assumptions and practices that pervade psychology as a whole. This is true of most Christian psychologists. It is not easy for those who desire to be strictly Biblical to be completely free from the influence of years of studying and honoring erroneous ideas, which may color their interpretation of the Bible in ways that they themselves may not recognize.

What we really need is to turn from any preoccupation with self to Christ. God redeemed us because of who He is, not because of who we are or even what He could make us become. God loves us because He is love, not because we are lovable or lovely. [THIS WILL PRODUCE A BIBLICAL HEALTHY VIEW OF SELF AND ITS WORTH.] Here is a solid basis for deep confidence.

The teaching that God valued me so highly that Christ died for me may make me initially feel more secure, but that feeling will last only so long as I can continue to have this sense of self-worth. Though it is true, it is not the primary, paramount truth, hence its focus is wrong ... as it is a secondary truth, not having Jesus at the apex. In turning from the One who loves to myself as the object of His love, I am being robbed of the true joy and freedom that is found in Him alone. To know that God loves me not because of who I am but because of who He is, really sets me free and gives me a security that the gospel of self-esteem can never produce.

CONCLUSION:

Finally, Paul declared that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 15:50). Thus, "THE KINGDOM" cannot merely be the millennium, with its flesh-and-blood humans multiplying across the earth, much less the world of today taken over by Christians exercising dominion. We are told many times in the Bible that God's kingdom "is an everlasting kingdom". Of the coming Messiah, Isaiah prophesied that there would be no end - both to His kingdom and to the peace it established (Isaiah 9:6,7). On this count also "the kingdom" cannot be the millennium, for that time of peace on earth as Christ reigns from Jerusalem, as great as it will be, not only ends - but it ends with a great war (Revelation 20:7-9).

Jesus clearly said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Although the kingdom begins in the hearts (the spiritual aspect) of all who receive Christ as King, and although the millennium is the *initial* thousand year phase of the kingdom, the outward manifestation (the physical aspect) of this kingdom will not come *in its fullness* until God has destroyed this present universe at the end of the millennium (the end of the "Day of the LORD" which is a "day" of a thousand years duration) and created a new one into which sin and evil will never enter (II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1; I Cor. 15:24-28, etc.).

The Scriptures call us to *that* kingdom, which cannot be established by our programs or efforts, but which we can enter through repentance of our attempts to play at being gods. Eternal life is what God offers to a race deserving of eternal judgment, and it can only be received as a free gift of His grace by those willing to receive Christ as their only Savior and Lord, the One who died for their sins and rose again to live His life in them. This may sound too elementary to those who confront a world of chaos and hopelessness and who imagine that modern methods and therapies lately developed by this or that school of psychology are needed in this advanced age. Yet this is the simple prescription given by God in His Word, and since the basic disease hasn't changed, we don't need a modern version of the remedy.

What we desperately need is to get back to the simplicity that is in Christ and earnestly begin to follow the Good Shepherd rather than the many who claim to speak for Him. Do not take our word, but test everything yourselves. Be like the Bereans, who didn't accept what Paul said just because he was the great apostle to the Gentiles, but 'searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so' (Acts 17:11 KJB). We must each come to the firm conviction of what we believe and why we believe it on the basis of the Bible itself, not on the basis of someone else's interpretation.