

## A Biblical Perspective on Hypnotism

By Rebecca S. May

- *What is hypnotism?*
- *How does hypnotism work?*
- *Is hypnotism dangerous?*

Accepted in 1958 by the American Medical Association as a therapeutic technique, hypnotism has not only become a socially acceptable medical practice but it has also become a popular way of dealing with a variety of life's problems--from weight loss, allergies, and smoking to cancer.

### What is hypnotism?

The word *hypnosis* is derived from the Greek word *hypnos*, meaning *sleep*. It is a means of bringing on an artificial state of sleep or a state of reduced consciousness (*Occult ABC*, p. 95).

Hypnosis can be traced back in to a psychic named Anton Mesmer (from whom we get the term *mesmerism*). But the practice became widely used in America through a man named Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866). One of his first patients was a woman named Mary Baker Eddy (founder of the Christian Science cult) who after being hypnotized by Quimby, received *new interpretations* of the Bible, which became the basis of Christian Science doctrine.

### How does hypnotism work?

The process of hypnotism is described by Nobel Prize winning brain researcher Sir John Ellis, who argues that the existence of "consciousness or mind ... is not reconcilable with the natural laws ..." (*Wonder*, p. 37). He concludes this based on the fact that the mind and the body separate at death. In other words, the brain (physical) uses the mind (spiritual) to send messages to the body.

Jon Klimo summarized Ellis as follows: "The argument is that mind operates brain (and the rest of the body) at all times in a basically psychokinetic manner ... Yet, if your own mind can affect your own brain, then the similar nonphysical nature of another mind might also be able to affect your brain, giving rise to your hearing a voice seeing a vision, or having the other mind speak or write by controlling your body the same way you normally control your own body" (*Channeling*, p. 249).

### Is hypnotism dangerous?

#### Examples

1. A woman suffering from a fear of spiders was tormented because she was seeing them day and night all over her house. She saw a doctor who hypnotized her saying, "When you awake, you will see no more spiders." When she awoke the spiders were gone but a new problem immediately arose. She was free from spiders, but totally enslaved to alcohol. This experience and another similar made the doctor resolve never to use hypnosis again. He said that in both cases it was an issue of **altered symptoms but not of deliverance** (emphasis mine) (Kurt E. Koch, *Occult ABC* pp. 96).
2. A woman came for counseling after her thirteen-year-old son was hypnotized at a high school sponsored get-together. The woman said that from that very night on he has suffered from horrific nightmares that have continued for years. Often in his sleep she would hear him cry out, "The man is coming, the man is coming, please take the man away from my throat" (*Ibid*, p. 97).
3. At an end-of-the-year college party, a hypnotist was hired to amuse the graduates. After he had asked his volunteers to perform many tasks, he released them from their hypnotic state. All resumed consciousness except one student. He tried

repeatedly to release him but the boy remained in an unconscious state. Eventually the paramedics were called who rushed him to the hospital. None of the specialists were able to help the boy and he remained in a coma. After six days, the boy's father, being convinced that his hypnotic state was demon controlled, stood over the boy saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I command you dark powers to withdraw." At once the hypnotic spell was broken and the boy regained consciousness (*Ibid.*).

## Conclusions

There are many problems or dangers associated with hypnotism, "not the least of which is the release of one's mind to the suggestions and control of another person. ... the Christian is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he is not to permit his mind to be controlled by another person ... or to permit the possibility of influence by spirit entities" (*The Facts on Holistic Health*, p. 29).

According Dave Hunt, author of *Occult Invasion*, "hypnosis involves a highly suggestible state in which one is controlled by the hypnotist. It is entirely reasonable to believe that a demon would take advantage of this passive state to interject its influence as well" (p. 229).

"Hypnosis is a major doorway to the occult and has played a key role in the occult invasion of western society. It is one of the oldest occult practices. No one should ever submit to hypnosis" (Hunt, pp. 455 and 229).

## What does the Bible say about hypnotism?

The word *hypnotism* is not in the Bible, but the Bible does have a lot to say about the practices of the occult and of mind control. Because hypnotism involves manipulation of the mind, the hypnotist is a form of spiritist or sorcerer.

*As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people* (Leviticus 20:6-8). See also Deuteronomy 18:10-13; Isaiah 47:9-12; Jeremiah 27:9-10; and Malachi 3:5.

The human mind is our most powerful asset, yet extremely volatile. Our mind directs our tongues to, *bless our Lord and Father; and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God* (James 3:9). Of all our faculties, abilities, and responsibilities, which God has given us, none need our constant attention like the mind. Have you ever wondered why God permits drinking alcohol but forbids drunkenness? Because, at the point in which we lose control of our mind, we sin and become dangerous to ourselves and others.

*Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:13).

*The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee* (Isaiah 26:3).

*This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it ...* (Joshua 1:8).

Paul is very clear about keeping control of your own mind and what you should do with it. ... *set your mind on the things above* (Colossians 3:2). ... *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things* (Philippians 4:8).

Solomon, who was given special wisdom from God, said, *I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom* (Ecclesiastes 1:13). Consider the other ways in which he uses and is always in control of his mind. *I set my mind to know ...* (1:16), *I explored with my mind* (2:3), *I directed my mind ...* (7:25), *I applied my mind ...* (8:9). In fact, it was not someone else who was in control of his mind or that was guiding his subconscious, *my mind was guiding me wisely* (2:3), claims Solomon.

In conclusion, demonic involvement is a reality, and is definitely possible, if you choose to make yourself vulnerable to it. However, being exposed to a hypnotist, whether it *worked* on you or not, is biblically irresponsible and very dangerous. It is impossible to say exactly what will happen to you if you put your mind under the control of another individual.

John Ankerberg is an accomplished writer on issues of the occult. In one of his books entitled *The Facts on the Occult*, he

quotes a man named Brooks Alexander, senior researcher for the Spiritual Counterfeits Project in Berkeley, California. Alexander observes that when it comes to any form of psychic involvement and the possibility of demonic contact, “it is a little like entering a cage with a man-eating tiger. You may or may not be eaten, depending in part on how hungry the tiger is. The significant point is that once you enter the cage, the initiative passes to the tiger” (p. 23).

## Questions and Answers

**Q:** *What is hypnotism?*

**A:** Hypnotism results when control of the mind is forfeited to another person. The result is an artificial sleep or a state of reduced consciousness.

**Q:** *How does hypnotism work?*

**A:** The mind operates the brain (and the rest of the body) at all times in a basically psychokinetic manner ... Yet, if your own mind can affect your own brain, then the similar nonphysical nature of another mind might also be able to affect your brain, giving rise to your hearing a voice, seeing a vision, or having the other mind speak or write by controlling your body the same way you normally control your own body.

**Q:** *Is hypnotism dangerous?*

**A:** Yes. The specific effects upon each individual cannot always be known. But because of its occultic ties, the numerable negative and demonic experiences we do know of, not to mention the biblical warnings about sorceries and all the verses dealing with mind control, it will always be spiritually dangerous to be exposed to a hypnotist.