

# HYPNOSIS & RELIGIOUS FAITH

by Chaplain Paul G. Durbin

A few years ago, I read an article in Family Weekly titled, "Boom Days For Devil Hypnosis" Hearing that title: what ideas, images, thoughts come to you? Thought the article had what I considered a very negative title, it was a very positive article on hypnosis in the health care field. The only reference to the devil was in the last paragraph, "Some conservative religious groups consider hypnosis to be the work of the devil."

Hypnosis is mistakenly viewed as mind control or demonic by many people. Recently I received a physician consult to work with a woman for pain management. As I explained the process of relaxation, imagery and hypnosis; I could see that she was very responsive. As I concluded my pre-talk, she said, "I am really looking forward to this experience, but I need to tell you that my daughter is a self-proclaimed born-again Christian and she may say something negative to you about this. If so, do not pay any attention to her, for I am the one who is hurting and I want this."

As I completed the induction, the phone rang. I told the patient, "Just allow the ringing of the phone and my answering it to add to your relaxation." I answered the phone, "This is Mrs. Doe's room. As she is in therapy, please call back in 30 minutes." and hung up the phone.

When the procedure was completed, I walked out of the room and there was her daughter standing in front of the door with arms folded over her chest. She said, "What have you been doing to my mother?" I explained that I had thought her mother relaxation, self-hypnosis and pain reduction. She responded, "I am a born-again Christian." Before she could continue, I raised my hands and said, "Praise the Lord, so am I." She was speechless, so I continued, "I will bring you some information on hypnosis, but regardless of how you feel about hypnosis, your mother has found it very helpful in the reduction of pain."

I believe that hypnosis and religious faith can work hand in hand to bring about a better life. Jesus said in St. John 10:10, "I am come you may have life and have it more abundantly." Though the title of this presentation is "Hypnosis and Religious Faith", I will be dealing primarily with "Hypnosis and Judo-Christian faith." Whether you are a Christian or not, whether you are religious or not, many of your clients come to you as religious people, most of whom will have a Judo-Christian background. The better you understand the client's religious history, the better you can relate to that person and help that person.

In our study of hypnosis and religious faith let us look at the history of hypnosis. Now I am not going to review the entire history of hypnosis, but would like to point out those incidents that relate to religion. What is the first written record of the use of hypnosis? The first written recorded use of hypnosis is found in the book of Genesis 2:21-22, "So

the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up in its place with flesh, and the rib which God took from man. He made woman and brought her to the man." In this incident, God used hypnosis as an anesthesia so that Adam felt no pain during the removal of his rib.

In addition to the reference in Genesis, mention of hypnotic techniques is found in other ancient sources concerning the Egyptian "Sleep Temples." In the temples, Egyptian priest used hypnotic-like procedures to improve health. These temples were so popular that they spread to Greece and Asia Minor.

Paul speaks of going into a trance while praying in the temple (Acts 22:17). Peter "fell into a trance" and from that experience came to see that God loved all people and accepts all people who come to him. Peter had been invited to the home of a centurion who was devout in his faith, but was not Jewish. At that time, it was religiously unlawful for Peter to visit the centurion's house. After the dream, Peter went to visit the centurion (Acts 10:1-48).

The practice of "laying on of hand," mentioned in the Bible, uses some of the techniques of hypnosis. In the book of Acts (28:8) we read, "And it came about that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him." Elsewhere in the book of Acts, there is a reference to an apostle looking into the eyes or gazing into the eyes of a person which resulted in the person being healed. "This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who when he had fixed his gaze upon him, and had seen that he had faith to be made well, said with a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And he leaped up and began to walk." (Acts 14:9-10)

In the Eighteenth Century, two Roman Catholic priest used hypnotic procedures and gained a reputation as healers. Due to their influence on Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer, they played a significant role in the history of hypnosis. Father Gassner would have those desiring to be healed brought into a room where they were told to wait. As their expectations mounted, Father Gassner would then majestically enter the room, lower his cross on the head of a patient and command him to sleep. The patient would collapse and upon command would rise praising God for healing. Father Hell used hypnotic techniques and metal plates. He believed that illness occurred when the magnetism of the body was out of polarization. He would have his patients lie down and pass metal plates over them. His suggestions and the passes of the metal plates seemed to cure those who came to him for healing. Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer (1735-1815) came to the conclusion that it was the metal in Father Gassner's cross that caused the cures as well as the religious significance of the cross. If the metal in the cross could bring cures, perhaps any metal could be used for healing. With this information and experiments conducted by Father Hell in mind, Mesmer began to develop his theory of "Animal magnetism."

The foundation of my work in hypnotherapy is based on what I refer to as the human trinity. I also believe each of us is a trinity within himself or herself. I'm a trinity, you're a

trinity. What is the human trinity? We are physical, emotional and spiritual being. These three aspects of our being are so different and yet so integrated that one part of the human trinity can not be affected without having some effect on the other two. If you have a physical problem, it affects you spiritually and emotionally. If you have a spiritual problem, it affects you physically and emotionally. If you have an emotional problem, it affects you spiritually and physically.

With this understanding of the human trinity, hypnosis can be used as a bridge between the conscious and subconscious mind. Though you only have one mind, you have two parts to your mind: conscious and subconscious. The conscious mind is the logical, reasoning, analytical two plus two part of the mind. The conscious part of the mind makes up about 10% of your thinking power. The subconscious part of the mind makes up about 90% of your thinking power. It does not think logically and is concerned with bringing about your deepest wishes, desires and expectation even if they are contrary to logic and your own well-being. The subconscious mind does not care if your body hurts but rather that your deepest needs are met. If your greatest need is for affection and the only time you experience affection is when your are sick, you may get sick in order to receive the affection you need. This occurs even though you don't like being sick and the reason is unknown. It is interesting to note that the subconscious mind can not tell the difference between a wish and a fear. If a fear become dominate, the fear is received by the subconscious mind as wish.

A woman was in the hospital because she had lost the use of her right arm. As she had gone through many test and none had showed any reason for the cause of her problem, I was consulted. Through counseling, it was discovered that she had been physical abused, not sexually abused as a child. As a young child, as a teenager, as a young wife and mother, she vowed that she would "never ever" hit her child in anger. She had a five-year-old son and she had disciplined him when needed, but she had never hit him in anger. A few days before coming to the hospital, her little five-year-old son had been especially aggravating. He did one more thing and in anger, she hit him. As this was such a shock to her, her subconscious mind protected her against hitting her child any more by making her arm useless.

As I felt that she needed to experience forgiveness, I used the following imagery. I suggested that she visualize herself walking down a country road. "On your back is a heavy backpack, but there is nothing in that backpack that you need for this journey. In fact, that heavy backpack contains the guilt you have been holding on to since you hit your son. God has forgiven you. He is telling you that you can now forgive yourself. You can be free of the heavy backpack. It is a decision for you to make. If you are ready to be free of that heavy load of guilt, one of your fingers will rise indicating that you have released the backpack and your guilt.

The first finger of her right hand jerked upward and I said, "The backpack with all your guilt is gone. God has forgiven you and you have forgiven yourself. You are forgiven." I added the following post-hypnotic suggestion, (Note: I seldom use negative words in suggestions but this time I used some of her own words.) "Since as a little girl, teenager,

young wife and mother you vowed that you would 'never ever' hit your child in anger and because of the trauma you have experienced, you need 'never ever' hit your child in anger again, therefore you have no need to be paralyzed. She left the hospital two days later completely cured.

Accepting the theory of the human trinity, one understands that life is more than just being alive mentally and physically. To be the whole person that we were meant to be by our creator, we have to be alive spiritually as well as physically and mentally. An airplane does not cease to be an airplane when it sets in the hanger or taxies along the runway, but its true nature as an airplane becomes apparent only when it is airborne. Similarly, a person is a human being when he or she is functioning only on the physical and psychological plane, but one shows his or essential humanness when he rises to the spiritual dimensions.

A man asked his three daughters how much they loved him. The oldest of them replied that she loved him more than all the gold and silver in the world. The father was noticeably pleased with her answer so throw his arms around her and thanked her. The second daughter responded, "I love you more than the most valuable jewels in the world." He was pleased with her response so throw his arms around her and thanked her. The third and youngest said, "I love you better than salt." The man was not especially elated with her remark and dismissed it lightly as an indication of her immaturity, but nevertheless throw his arms around her and thanked her. His wife, their mother overhearing the conversation, left salt out her husband's next meal. As he ate his food, he was confronted with the deep meaning of his youngest daughter's statement. She was saying that he was the flavoring, the spice and the seasoning of her life. Developing the spiritual aspects is like salt is to food. The spiritual dimension give flavor, spice and seasoning to all of life.

When one is functioning in all three levels (physically, emotionally, and spiritual), life is more joyful, more productive and more healthy. Accepting this position, one can see the important place that hypnosis can have for us; physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Hypnosis is neither anti-religious nor pro-religious. It can be used for good or bad depending on the hypnotist and the subject. Today, most religious groups accept the proper ethical use of hypnosis for helping people. Exceptions are Christian Science, Seventh-Day-Adventist and some individuals of various churches. In recent years, the Seventh-Day-Adventist have lessened their resistance by using relaxation therapy and suggestion therapy. A hypnotist by the name of Quesby greatly help Mary Baker Eddy overcome an illness and she used many of his teachings and techniques in developing the Christian Science Church. Though Quesby used hypnosis to help her, she denounced hypnosis while using its techniques. Though many in various churches opposed to hypnosis are using the principles of hypnosis (relaxation, concentration, suggestion, repetition) in their healing services, they denounce hypnosis. For those who oppose hypnosis on religious grounds, I remind them of the words of Baptist Van Helmont, "Hypnosis is a universal agent ... and is a paradox only to those who are deposed to ridicule everything and who ascribe to Satan all phemanema which they

cannot explain."

Then Roman Catholic Church has issued statements approving the use of hypnosis. In 1847, a decree from the Sacred Congregation of The Holy Office stated, "Having removed all misconceptions, foretelling of the future, explicit or implicit invocation of the devil, the use hypnosis is indeed merely an act of making use of physical media that are otherwise licit and hence it is not morally forbidden provided it does not tend toward an illicit end or toward anything depraved."

The late Pope Pius give his approval of hypnosis. He stated that the use of hypnosis by health care professionals for diagnosis and treatment is permitted. In 1956, in an address from the Vatican on hypnosis in child birth the Pope gave these guidelines. (1) Hypnotism is a serious matter, and not something to be dabbled in. (2) In its scientific use the precautions dictated by both science and morality are to be used. (3) Under the aspect of anesthesia, It is governed by the same principles as other forms of anesthesia. This is to say that the rules of good medicine apply to the use of hypnosis.

Except for exceptions noted, no other Protestant or Orthodox Churches have any laws against the proper-ethical use of hypnosis. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no opposition to the use of hypnosis in the Jewish faith when it is used for the benefit of mankind. Many of the Eastern Faiths: Buddhism, Yoga, Shintoism, Hinduism and others approve the use of hypnosis and they often use hypnosis in their worship. The Moslem religion has no opposition to hypnosis that I have been able to discover.

In their book, *The Holy Spirit and You*, Dennis and Rita Bennett have shown a profound dislike and misunderstanding of hypnosis by declaring, "Hypnosis is particularly dangerous because it is thought to be a valid form of therapy in psychology and psychiatry, or an alternative anesthesia in medicine and dentistry". The Bennett add, "The fact is the hypnotist, by placing the soul in a passively receptive state even when the hypnotist has no such intention, opens the door to morbid spiritual influences that my bring oppression that lasts for years. Until the person is delivered by prayer and exorcism ... Do not allow yourself the by hypnotized for any reason whatsoever." By these statement, the Bennett's show their prejudice and total misunderstanding of hypnosis. If their interpretation is correct, the Bennett's should also be concerned about prayer, meditation, chemical anesthesia, and going to sleep (for that period just before you go to sleep is a natural state of hypnosis) for the individual is in a similar state to hypnosis in all those situations.

Hypnosis should not be condemned as anti-religious just because some people misuse it. Some oppose hypnosis because the say it is used by the occult, but do they condemn prayer because prayer is used for occult purposes? Hypnosis can be a very helpful tool in counseling. Without apology and when appropriate, hypnosis can be used for growth, health and the benefit of people.

During counseling and hypnotherapy, I often tell a story to bring home a point or allow the client hearing the story to come to his or her own meaning to the story. Roger Ring

in a seminar conducted at a past College of Chaplains convention called these "Parables, Metaphors, and Healing Stories." Jesus often spoke in parables or used stories which still bring to mind vivid word pictures which teaches something important about life.

Until there is an image in the mind there can be no reality. All great inventions began with a thought in the mind. The inventor was able to visualize or image the invention before he could bring it to reality. The same is true of great music, great writing, great living. The author of Proverbs 28:18 also wrote that where there is no vision, the people perish.

I would like to share with you a healing story and how it may be used when working with someone who would respond well to religious or spiritual imagery. You can use this story to help a Christian client regardless of your religious views.

**IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM:** (Can be used with Christian in the midst of a crisis or having trouble dealing with stress. I say to the client: "Let this story speak to you the message it has for you.) For just a moment, let this story of the disciples in the midst of the storm speak to you the message you are ready to hear. Just image that you have been with Jesus all day and he has been teaching from a boat because there were so many people there to hear him. Jesus concludes his message and needs a rest so he tells you and the other disciples to sail with him to the other side of the sea.

As the boat sails for the other side, Jesus lies down and goes to sleep. All of you are happy. The gentle waves rocked the boat back and forth, back and forth, which allows Jesus to sleep soundly. As so often the case in this region, the weather can change drastically in a very short time. Suddenly the sky turns black and winds began to blow. The storm winds intensified and the wave now rock the boat violently. Lightning struck the water near the boat and the boat rocks and water leaps over the side into the boat. You are afraid that the boat will sink. One of the disciples who is also afraid cries out, "Wake up Jesus! Don't you care that we perish?"

As you use your imagination, let that storm on the Sea of Galilee represent any storm that may be going on in your personal life. Do you feel like the disciples? Can you cry out, "Wake up Jesus!"

Jesus responded to the cries of disciples by reassuring them of his presence. "Peace be still, I am with you." When the disciples heard those words, the heart of each disciples began to grow calm. At almost the same time, it was as if the storm was listening for the storm itself became calm.

If you listen now you can hear Jesus say to you, "Peace be still, I am with you." Peace can come to you with or without a change in your circumstances. In the Bible, the word "peace" never simply means just the absence of trouble or discord. When Jesus comes to us and speaks "Peace be still, I am with you," he is offering the gift of his presence -- not just to resolve disharmony but to assure us that he with us to help us overcome or

endure.

No, you are not on the Sea of Galilee, but you feel the winds of the storm and perhaps you are questioning your resources to cope with the situation. The storm in your life may be caused by unrealized dreams, dashed hopes, impairment of health, domestic difficulties, tension on the job, insecurity of position, inadequate finances or conflicts with family or friends. When the storms of life come, we want to cry out, "Wake up Jesus! Don't you care that I perish?" Then we hear him say, "Peace be still, I am with you." When the uncertain winds of anxiety blow, there is a steady safety in the presence of Jesus. When the harsh winds of illness or injury blow, there is calm and comfort in the presence of Jesus. When the cold, bleak winds of sorrow and grief blow, there is peace and security in the presence of Jesus. I am not saying that Jesus is a magic cure, but He is with us to either still the storm or help us cope with the storm. To experience the presence of Jesus is to experience peace in the midst of the storm. May you experience peace today.

As therapist, it is our job to help people move from an area of dissatisfaction to one of better dealing with life. If you listen to the broadcast of a baseball, football or basketball game, you have surely heard the announcer say, "It's a brand new ball game!" If you are a sports fan, you know the announcer means that the score is tied. It is like starting over again. The past is still there, but we can begin where we are. In a baseball game, if a team ties the score in the sixth inning, they do not go back to the first inning to start over again. For they keep playing from where they are. See we began where we are, but with the proper use of relaxation, imagery, hypnosis and hopeful expectation comes a "brand new ball game."

In the years ahead, may those who discount hypnosis, come to see its value. May those who oppose hypnosis on religious grounds come to view it as a gift of God to help us attain the more abundant life.

Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to teach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4:18) Following this guidance and with the proper use of hypnosis; we can heal the brokenhearted, bring deliverance to those in captivity to pain, fear, and phobias; give sight to the emotionally and spiritually blind, and set at liberty those who are bound by unwanted habits. As members of different denominations and religions, let us join hands in brotherhood to share the blessings of hypnosis with others.

***Biography of Paul G. Durbin***

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Question: "Should a Christian ever get involved with hypnosis/hypnotism?". Answer: Hypnosis is problematic for a Christian for several reasons: 1) The fruit of the Spirit is self-control ( Galatians 5:22-23 ). As we follow the Spirit's lead, He will give us the power to better control our own selves. Hypnosis involves the transfer of control away from ourselves to another person. 2) We are to yield ourselves—body, soul, and spirit—to God. Romans 6:12-13 gives us the formula for overcoming sin: "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. No, hypnosis is real, religion is just a delusion, faith is how you believe something you know isn't so. I believe in never, I believe in all the way. But belief is not to notice, belief is just some faith. And faith can't help you to escape. 2. 0. Religion does not mean that reason and logic is no longer present. I have not always been a believer but now I am christian and I know what I believe and why I do. 0. 3. Religion, or an organized system of beliefs that typically relates to one's faith and trust in a higher power, is a defining characteristic of the way many people live and make decisions. A person may base a number of life choices on religious views, but when aspects of a person's life conflict with religious ideals, it may be difficult to reconcile the two, and doubt and distress may result. When a person is challenged by religious beliefs, finds that they lead to uncharacteristic actions, or experiences mental distress as a result of internal doubt or external persecution, the supp