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VISUALIZATION: God-Given Power or New Age Danger? (Part Two)¹

by John Weldon and John Ankerberg

Summary

Although visualization can be adapted to almost any philosophy, in its popular usage it is loosely tied to a monistic or pantheistic world view that sees humans as divine and creators of their own reality. The practice itself enhances and perhaps even sets up the development of the monistic ("all is one") states of consciousness foundational to the New Age movement. Visualization is commonly used in occult practice, from casting spells to contacting "inner advisors" or spirit guides. As such, Scripture prohibits New Age visualization. Yet even alleged Christian forms of visualization are insufficiently critiqued, of dubious value, and subject to abuse.

Some have heralded the practice of visualization as one of "two important 'new' concepts in 20th century American life" (the other important concept being meditation).² According to its New Age advocates, visualization, which combines mental concentration with directed imagery, is a powerful tool for achieving personal and corporate goals and changing physical, psychological, and spiritual reality.

In Part One of this series we examined the nature, influence, and varieties of visualization, as well as the reasons people use it. In this concluding installment we will consider the world view commonly associated with visualization, dangers inherent in its practice, its occult aspects, and the question of whether Christian visualization can be a safe and biblical practice.

WORLD VIEW

Because the practice of visualization can be adapted to almost any philosophy and uniquely colored by it, there is no well-defined world view we could present that would always be representative. But if we restrict our discussion to the popular and occult types of visualization (as opposed to the academic and Christian types — see the chart in Part One), while recognizing the very real potential for cross-fertilization between the various types, we can see the emergence of a broad outline. Some principal components include the following:

- 1) Pantheism or monism: an underlying divine energy — the one power or cosmic reality — interconnects everything.
- 2) Humans are divine in their true nature and control their personal destinies; they are an integral part of this divine energy and can experientially realize this through proper technique and instruction.
- 3) The mind of each human has "infinite" potential; the "higher self," unconscious mind, or some such concept provides the connecting link to the infinite, and is believed to be the repository of vast wisdom and power.

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4) Visualization is an important technique that taps the higher self and initiates contact with the ultimate cosmic reality.

Andrew Wiehl observes in his *Creative Visualization*, "In all the Universe there is but *one* power, the power within yourself."³ Shakti Gawain in her later book by the same title claims we are linked to "divine omnipresence and omnipotence" and that our "higher self" is "the God-like being who dwells within you."⁴ Because of this, "there is no separation between us and God" in that we are "divine expressions" of God, the creative principle.⁵ In the words of other proponents, "Imagination...empowers [us] to tap the endless and unborn potentials of universal mind,"⁶ and, "Visualization allows a person to travel into the mind to a space where the possibilities of matter, time and space are unlimited."⁷

When used in an occult program, visualization techniques can thus become seemingly powerful instruments for securing New Age goals: "At a practical level, visualization has an uncanny ability to improve the quality of our lives. It does this through its power to heal the body and spirit, to reconstruct the past and to reveal our hidden truths....The most dramatic visualizations touch the deepest part of ourselves — our essence, our core, and allow us to experience connections beyond ourselves, what some describe as cosmic consciousness."⁸

Indeed, the visualization process *itself* may tend to alter the person's world view. As noted in Part One, Dr. Mike Samuels is an authority on the subject. He discusses the mechanics and implications of the process:

When a person consciously visualizes he gains the ability to hold his mind on one object, to concentrate. This *one-pointedness of mind* is a state [of meditation] that has special properties: alertness, clarity of thought, identification with the object, and a feeling of participation in the visualization.

The feeling of identification-participation causes the person to be less involved with himself as an entity separate from the world around him. He goes beyond the boundaries, the limitations of his physical body, beyond the awareness of his personality....

Time and space disappear....A person who has the experience feels that it unites him with the universe. He feels he is a part of creation rather than an observer of it....This purity of vision...is associated with tremendous energy surrounding both the visualizer and the image, and the unity of the two. Such energy cannot help but affect the world around it.⁹

The world view of visualization just discussed is obviously not Christian. The Bible denies that people are one essence with God or the universe because it declares that only God has eternity — for He "alone is immortal" (1 Tim. 6:16) — and only He is an infinite being. Thus the one and only God (John 17:3) who existed from eternity (Ps. 90:2) created the entire material and spiritual universe, including humanity, from nothing. God did not emanate something of Himself in the process of creation so that everything in creation partakes in the nature of God. To the contrary, as the following Scriptures declare, God created the universe merely by speaking it into existence: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1); "The universe was formed at God's command" (Heb. 11:3); "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made...For he spoke, and it came to be" (Ps. 33:6, 9).

People are not a part of God. Their minds do not have the "infinite" powers attributed to them by visualization philosophy, nor are they a source of true spiritual wisdom apart from spiritual regeneration or rebirth (Prov. 28:26; Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20-23; James 3:14-17). Furthermore, visualization has no power to initiate contact with God or gain knowledge of Him. Biblically, those who wish to personally know the one true God must come to Him by faith through the true Jesus Christ (John 17:2-3; Col. 1:15-20; 2:9; Heb. 11:6; 1 Pet. 2:24) — not by trust in their own inner vision, a spirit guide masquerading as Christ, or by an alleged mystical union with some abstract impersonal concept of the divine.

DANGERS

It should be recognized that when the mind is manipulated into novel states of consciousness, there is always a potential for spiritual deception and danger. This is true regardless of a person's motive or environment (i.e., the spiritual context in which he or she is operating). The number of well-meaning people who have embarked on a visualization program for physical health, psychological understanding, or spiritual advancement and ended up

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involved in the occult is not small. Books on visualization carry numerous anecdotes of how even the well-intentioned and seemingly nonoccult use of visualization catapulted people into the New Age movement, psychic development, and/or spirit contact.

Visualization allegedly has the capacity to place the mind into a certain brain wave pattern conducive to the development of psychic abilities.¹⁰ If this is true (and our research leads us to think that it is), how do we view the practice of visualization in Christian psychotherapy? What about visualization techniques practiced in education in general, or among children?¹¹ Prominent educator Jack Canfield states, "When students are participating in a guided imagery experience they are in an altered state of consciousness."¹² To what degree does a belief that is conditioned or manipulated by visualization affect our behavior and our world view? What are the long-term effects of visualization itself, irrespective of the environment in which it occurs? How neutral is a systematic program of repeated visualization exercises?

Experts in both the theory and practice of visualization warn of its potential dangers. For example, H. V. Guenther and leading Tibetan Buddhist guru, Chogyam Trungpa, assert in *The Dawn of Tantra*: "Certainly practicing visualization without the proper understanding is extremely destructive....Tantric scriptures abound with warnings about using visualization."¹³ Practicing occultist J. H. Brennan, whose *Astral Doorways* cites visualization as an "excellent doorway," still warns that to mix certain things — such as yoga postures and visualization techniques — without knowing exactly what one is doing "is asking for psychosis."¹⁴

As noted, many people have embarked on a visualization program and converted to occultism as a result. This poses another danger of the practice because, as we have documented elsewhere, occultism is hazardous to people physically, emotionally, and spiritually.¹⁵

THE OCCULT

Coauthor Weldon became interested in evaluating the practice of visualization a number of years ago. While examining the latest New Age trends at a local metaphysical book shop, a large bright yellow text with a colorful caduceus caught his eye. *The Well Body Book*¹⁶ was a holistic health home medical handbook. (It was right next to *The Well Cat Book* and *The Well Dog Book*.)

He began thumbing through the book and noticed that it stressed visualization exercises. In fact, the ability to visualize was said to be necessary "for understanding many parts of the book."¹⁷ In the acknowledgments, coauthor Mike Samuels, M.D., gave thanks to "Rolling Thunder," a well-known native American shaman, "who taught me about healing," as well as to "Braxius, my imaginary doctor." However, it turns out "Braxius" is the personal spirit guide of Samuels and, therefore, *not* what a Christian would call imaginary. The story of their meeting is found in Samuels's coauthored book, *Spirit Guides: Access to Inner Worlds*,¹⁸ a text that utilizes visualization techniques to encounter spirits.

To date, *The Well Body Book* and *Spirit Guides: Access to Inner Worlds* have sold over half-a-million copies. The authors have received a "large number" of letters "from readers who have begun to use spirit guides in their [own] lives."¹⁹ Visualization was the basic method used to contact the spirit world.

This is why the relationship between visualization and the occult is our greatest concern. If visualization can lead to spirit contact, it should concern everyone. As we will later document, in spiritistic writings the spirits themselves often recommend visualization practices as important components for securing occult goals, including spirit contact.

In the following section we will examine the occult potential of visualization by showing: (1) the role of visualization in developing psychic abilities; (2) the use of visualization in occult ritual; and (3) the relationship between visualization and spiritism.

1. Psychic Development. The fact that visualization is often used to develop psychic powers is recognized by numerous experts in both the occult and visualization. For example, "The capacity to utilize visual imagination is a regular part of the training for psychics and healers in the Philippine spiritist churches."²⁰ As noted, lifelong occultist J. H. Brennan acknowledges the need for successful visualization to contact the astral realm where spirits dwell.²¹ In fact, as Samuels

and Samuels observe, "People who have experienced astral travel say they do so by visualizing themselves separating from their physical body, then floating away from it."²²

Parapsychologist Milan Ržyl observes that "the ability to visualize sharply is central to good psychic performance."²³ Thus, for example, psychic Jack Schwarz utilizes visualization and creative imagery in a meditative context to develop and use his psychic powers.²⁴ According to Samuels and Samuels, "The receptive visualization state is a state in which a person can receive extrasensory perceptions of another person's mind (telepathy), of objects or events (clairvoyance), of future events (precognition), and of psychic diagnosis."²⁵

2. Occult Ritual. Occult magician David Conway devotes an entire chapter, "Visualization and the Training of a Magician," to the importance of visualization for magic ritual in his *Magic: An Occult Primer*. For example: "The technique of visualization is something you will gradually master, and indeed must master if you are to make any progress in magic....It is our only means of affecting the etheric atmosphere. It enables us to build our own thought forms, contact those already in existence and channel elemental energy we need down onto the physical plane."²⁶

3. Spiritism. Conway also provides an example of a visualization practice used during magic ritual whose goal is to "produce, in reality, the spirit, god, or demon imagined through ritual." No one knowledgeable in occult ritual has any doubt about the dangers here, least of all Conway.²⁷ Visualization at this point becomes an integral factor in the fostering of spirit possession:

The adept imagines that the god-form or the most congenial of the planetary or sefirothic forms is materializing behind his back. He visualizes this in as much detail as possible. Slowly, as the altar candles flicker, he will sense with a sureness which precludes all doubt that the visualized form is in fact towering inside the circle behind him. On no account must he turn his head to look at whatever is there; any temptation to do so must be sternly resisted: the form may be unbearably hideous or else possess a beauty that may literally be fatal. In the meantime, the adept should endeavor to continue his mantra, although by now his heart will no doubt be beating furiously. Whatever else happens he must not move, even when he senses that the form is so close as to be almost touching him. Above all he must not panic but should comfort himself with the thought that he is safe enough provided he stays where he is.

At last — and he will certainly know when — the god-form will take control of him. To begin with, the adept will feel an exquisite giddiness somewhere at the base of his skull and quickly convulsing the whole of his body. As this happens, and while the power is surging into him, he forces himself to visualize the thing he wants his magic to accomplish, and wills its success. He must put all he has into this [effort] and, like our friends the Bacchantes, must whip himself into a veritable frenzy. It is at this point that the force evoked will be expelled to realize the ritual intention. As he feels the force overflowing inside him the adept, while still visualizing the realized magical intention, bids it go forth to fulfill his wishes.²⁸

In magic ritual we see the full power of visualization: directed imagery, meditation, force of will, and certainly faith. But what many do not realize is that although visualization can be used deliberately in magic ritual for spirit contact and spirit possession, the very same things can be encountered in normal visualization practice or even through purely make-believe fantasy rituals.

Fantasy Spirits? "Philip" and the "Group Spirit"

The story of "Philip," the "imaginary" spirit, is illustrative.²⁹ A group of psychic investigators and parapsychologists with the Toronto Society for Psychical Research came together to see if they could create the physical phenomena found in a seance and produce a materialized spirit through their "collective mental power [i.e., imagination and visualization] alone." They named him "Philip," giving him an imaginary past, personality, and so forth.

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They eventually succeeded — quite beyond their expectations — and remain puzzled to this day. Indeed, they have been awed over the subsequent events. What entered their parlor was not an imaginary spirit, but a genuine, living spirit being with its own personality and power — certainly not part of the group's "collective" mind or energy. Incredibly, however, the group continued to believe that this independent spirit entity and the phenomena it produced were merely the result of their own "imaginative powers."

One result of this experiment — as knowledge of it spread through articles, a book, and a film — was to camouflage spiritistic phenomena in the guise of human potential. "Philip groups" began all over the world, attempting to duplicate the phenomena of the Toronto group. Thus "the most important feature of this book is the fact that it specifies the method by which the physical PK [psychokinesis] force can be generated by ordinary people and thus made available for study."³⁰

The only problem was that the contacted "imaginary" spirits "act with their own personalities and idiosyncrasies and not as though they were a part of your subconscious mind."³¹ Therefore, many "Philip groups" ended up in actual spirit-contact and necromancy.

Not surprisingly, then, in modern channeled (spiritistic) literature, the spirits actively endorse visualization, recommending specific exercises for learning how to contact them and become a channel:

Enter into the trance state you have practiced. . . .Imagine yourself going higher and higher, transcending ordinary reality and entering into a higher dimension of love, light, and joy. . . .Imagine that many beings of light are coming closer to join you. Feel their love and caring for you. Open your heart to receive them. Imagine the doorways opening between your reality and theirs. Sense the presence of many loving and high beings all around you. . . .Your guide and the guides are aware of you and hold a special welcome for you as you join more closely with them. Imagine that there is a doorway in front of you. . . .When you are ready, *walk* through this doorway. . . .Ask for the highest guide and teacher who is aligned with you to come forward. Imagine that your guide, a special guide, is coming forward. Sense this guide, feel his or her love for you. Be open to receive. Feel your heart welcoming this guide. Feel the response. Believe that it is really happening! Your imagination is the closest ability you have to channeling, and it is the easiest connection your guide has to you at first. . . . Greet your guide. . . .mentally carry on a conversation with this guide. . . .Ask your guide to begin doing all that he or she can to open the channel, now that you are committed and ready to verbally channel.³²

Even cancer therapists O. Carl Simonton and Stephanie Matthews-Simonton, who utilize visualization in a professional setting for cancer therapy, accept this theme of using "imaginary" spirit guides for supposed healing processes. An examination of their book *Getting Well Again* indicates that they are encouraging nothing less than a form of spiritism.

Consider another illustration of how visualization can be used to contact the spirit world. In *Mind Games: The Guide to Inner Space*, leading consciousness explorers Robert Masters and Jean Houston tell others how to utilize visualization and trance to develop psychic awareness and monistic consciousness, and then to raise and contact what they term a "Group Spirit." This is all done as a means to advance the cause of psychic development. Participants actually offer "obesance" to a materialized spirit masquerading in the form of the collective group consciousness of the "players."³³

Yet, as in the case of "Philip," this "mental" entity is described as "an entity with an independent existence of its own"³⁴ and as "an actual, intelligent being, conscious and powerful."³⁵ In truth, the participants in such exercises hold a seance under another name.³⁶

The process described by Masters and Houston is little different from the visualization process described by magician Conway earlier in which magic ritual is used to conjure the spirit that possesses the magician. Further, the purpose is also similar — inspiration and guidance from the entity (the reader may recall that Jean Houston was recently in the national news for directing Hillary Clinton to engage in "imaginary" consultations with Eleanor Roosevelt and other deceased entities):

Go and stand before the place we have designated to be the residing place of this entity we have evoked. Request inspiration in the form of a dance or a song or a chant, something that can be performed by you now, as an offering and in celebration of the spirit of our group....

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After that, as instructed by the guide, each player successively will stand near the center of the circle, receiving inspiration, and then carrying out whatever movements or sounds or other behavior the person feels motivated to do and experiencing this motivation as coming directly from the Group Spirit....

The Group Spirit will appear to you in a dream and you will be able to gain a clear and detailed impression of its appearance, and you may be able to enter into a conversation with it, and various things might be revealed to you.³⁷

Jack Canfield also recommends spiritism under another name. He encourages teachers to assist their students to perform a guided imagery exercise developed by Paula Klimek, who is with the Center for Holistic Education. This occult exercise is to be used by students as early as the sixth grade: "It is a very powerful experience which can help students become aware of their essential nature, their highest potential, their unique gift to the world, and their life purpose."³⁸

But this exercise deliberately attempts to have children contact and develop a relationship with their "special guide":

You are about to meet a special guide, your own special guide. A guide whom you may ask what the purpose of your life is. . .Meet this guide and pose your question. . .Feel your guide's unconditional love and strength and beauty. . .Let whatever happens happen. . .communicate with your guide in whatever way possible. . .Listen to your guide. . . .³⁹

Another example of visualization-induced spiritism can be found in Shakti Gawain's *Creative Visualization*:

Each one of us has all the wisdom and knowledge we ever need right within us...The inner guide is known by many different names, such as your counselor, spirit guide, imaginary friend, or master. It is a higher part of yourself, which can come to you in many different forms, but usually comes in the form of a person or being whom you can talk to and relate to as a wise and loving friend....

Go to your inner sanctuary [through visualization] and spend a few minutes there, relaxing, getting oriented....See in the distance a form coming toward you, radiating a clear, bright light....

Greet this being, and ask him or her what their name is....Ask your guide if there is anything he or she would like to say to you, or any advice to give you at the moment....

Also your guide *may* change form and even name from time to time. Or you may have the same one for years. You may have more than one guide at the same time.

Your guide is there for you to call on anytime you need or want extra guidance, wisdom, knowledge, support, creative inspiration, love or companionship. Many people who have established a relationship with their guide meet them every day in their meditation.⁴⁰

The above process is similar to those found in many other practices, for example, using the imagination to create "imaginary advisors" in New Age seminars such as est (The Forum), Mind Psi Biotics, or Silva Mind Control. Various cults and humanistic or fringe psycho-therapies that have reached millions of people do the same.

From a biblical perspective there is little reason to doubt that visualization techniques can and do result in the contact of genuine spirit beings, however they may be redefined as part of the human imagination or "nervous system."⁴¹ Until recent times, visualization had been relegated to occultists and shamans. But now, medical doctors, athletes, teachers, artists, businesspersons, and even clergy are employing new, updated forms of visualization. Unfortunately, because many psychologists, physicians, and others have little understanding of the mechanics of spiritual deception, they have unknowingly allowed themselves to become pawns in a battle whose players are invisible to them.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

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A number of variables may affect the specific outcome of visualization techniques. Unfortunately, as we've seen, neither good motives nor a neutral environment are a sufficient safeguard against spiritual deception or other potential dangers. However, the *context* of visualization (whether the therapist's office, personal meditation, magic ritual, etc.) and the *content* of visualization (i.e., the world view into which the practices are structured) are important for determining the relative potential for alignment with the occult.

Certainly, any claim to benevolence is ruled out when visualization is used to develop psychic abilities, enter altered states of consciousness, or magically control the environment, or is used for channeling or other forms of spirit contact. While some of the seemingly innocuous visualization techniques in certain forms of psychotherapy are undoubtedly not the same as visualization programs in the world of the occult, there are still unanswered questions about the possible impact of long-term visualization practices. For example, in education and in Christian or secular psychotherapy, do we know the consequences of sustained visualization practice among children or patients? Can we be sure that long-term visualization practice will never open the door to the experience of so-called "higher consciousness"?

Is there such a thing as neutral visualization in the long-term? When people consecrate themselves into an intensive program of visualization, do they really understand where this may lead? Practices that initially seem innocuous, such as Transcendental Meditation (TM), nevertheless, in the final analysis, can have considerable impact on a person physiologically, emotionally, and spiritually.⁴² We might ask how a simple sound, a mantra repeated 15 minutes twice a day, could produce such dramatic changes as those brought about by TM. But we could ask the same thing of a simple visualization technique. Perhaps there is more going on here than meets the eye. Perhaps spiritistic influence is a greater possibility than is usually supposed.

Consider someone using visualization to induce astral projection. What factors actualize the event? Intent? Occult environment? Psychophysical changes induced by visualization conducive to trance? The spirits? (Indeed, it is the spirits themselves who often claim to induce and, to a degree, control out-of-body experiences.⁴³) What are the parameters of the psychophysiology of visualization? Where do they end, and where does spiritual deception begin?

Christian Visualization?

Many Christians have used some form of visualization. They argue that in rejecting visualization, the church is ignoring aspects of the creative imagination that are really legitimate. The comments of researcher Stanley Dokupil are perhaps relevant:

One of the reasons the New Agers are making such inroads is that the evangelical church has proven itself to be unimaginative, and overly linear in its thinking. The unconscious is real and there are powers there I believe that are not necessarily evil. Certain individuals by their nature are more inclined toward the full use of their imaginations than others, artists, therapists, certain other creative types, etc. If the church doesn't provide a discerning guidance for these people, other than outright dismissal of all borderline phenomena as satanic, then the church is not only poorer for having lost these people but will have to pay for it by having God's gifts used against His own church. The works of Jonathan Edwards, such as *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Word of the Spirit of God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, as well as Elizabeth Winslow's biography of Edwards are very informative here.⁴⁴

Obviously, we cannot recommend the kinds of visualization we have been discussing in this article. The spiritual risks are too clear. So if the church is going to accept some aspects of the practice of visualization, it will need to sort out the godly uses of the imagination from occult varieties.

Otherwise, how does a Christian therapist using an "inner Jesus" as a guide, friend, and advisor ensure his or her client against spiritism? What safeguards can be provided to ensure that imagination will not lead to unanticipated reality and that a spiritistic Jesus will not appear? Spiritistic Jesuses appear all over the place in the occult, from dictating occult texts such as *A Course in Miracles* to direct appearances in the temples of the Mormon Church and to various occultists.⁴⁵

Is the "Jesus" who manifests inwardly in inner healing to guide, comfort, or erase bad memories an entity who must appear at the beck and call of the emotionally needy? If so, how is this different from the familiar spirit of the channeler?

Apart from the occult, how much power does visualization really have? If people *were* gods-in-embryo with divine energy at their disposal, and if their thoughts actually *did* create reality, then visualization *should* create literal miracles — but this is not the case. Given biblical teaching, visualization is mostly impotent and would seem only marginally useful at best even in its allegedly "neutral" or "Christian" therapeutic aspects. In other words, isn't it true that living in harmony with God's ordering of the world and obeying His moral standards are vastly more important to physical and spiritual health than are manipulation of mental pictures through visualization — even in a Christian context?

Another issue to face is where the Christian should be deriving his or her personal identity. Is our self-image to be determined from our creative imagination or from the Word of God? Do the popular visualization techniques applied in a Christian context really conform to reality? Belief can certainly affect our behavior but such belief must be based either upon reality or something possible. New Age and much Christian positive confession imaging do not count as true what *is* true; they only imagine and visualize as true what one *wants* to be true but really is *not* true — and, if people are honest, what *continues* not to be true.⁴⁶

If visualization truly puts us in contact with our inner being, our subconscious, what can we expect to accomplish but perhaps the welling up of that reality that Jesus spoke of? "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'" (Mark 7:20-23). Perhaps this is the reason why many authorities have warned about the psychological danger resulting from using visualization to explore the unconscious. But New Age theorists and most visualizing church members must regard the biblical doctrine of human depravity as anathema. To find the "divine" within, with its suggestion of universalism, the words of Christ must be ignored or reinterpreted.

Therefore, is the visualization program that seeks to remold human depravity into divinity really based on reality? Whose reality? If a Christian has been forgiven, regenerated, justified, joined to Christ, adopted, and positionally sanctified, how important is a spiritual program of visualization? These doctrines *are* spiritual realities and facts one need only understand and accept to integrate.⁴⁷ While the imagination might help a Christian to see such realities as personally true, this perception is not something that needs to be attained through a daily program of visualization.

God has promised Christians many things — that He will finish the work He began in us (Phil. 1:6), that our inner man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16; 3:18), that we will stand before Him blameless, perfect in body, soul, and spirit — for "the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

Christians are to be renewed daily by the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the Word of God. They are not to be renewed by a transpersonal psychology using Eastern metaphysics or inner work through visualization. The power of the Word of God to build a truly integrated person in those whom it "renews" makes modern visualization pale by contrast. Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Where then is the spiritual power of visualization? Will an hour a day of our busy lives be better spent in visualization or in prayer? Will an hour a day be better spent on the therapist's couch talking to an imaginary "inner Jesus" or in the Word of God hearing from the real Jesus? And what of our children? Will secular or New Age visualization methods in the classroom finally be in their best interests?

In our culture, visualization practices are here to stay. This underscores the necessity for Christians to bring a thoroughgoing, biblical critique to this occult method.

NOTES

¹This article is excerpted with minor changes from the authors' *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Harvest House, 1996), used with permission.

²Mike Samuels, M.D., and Nancy Samuels, *Seeing with the Mind's Eye: The History, Techniques and Uses of Visualization* (New York: Bookworks/Random House, 1983), 34.

³Andrew Wiehl, *Creative Visualization* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1958), 81.

⁴Shakti Gawain, *Creative Visualization* (Mill Valley, CA: Whatever Publishing, 1983), 55, 81.

- ⁵Ibid., 149.
- ⁶R. Eugene Nichols, *The Science of Mental Cybernetics: How to Lead a High-Voltage Life* (New York: Warner Paperback, 1975), 126.
- ⁷Samuels and Samuels, 279.
- ⁸Adelaide Bry, *Visualization: Directing the Movies of Your Mind* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1979), 14.
- ⁹Samuels and Samuels, 65-66; cf. Herbert A. Otto and James W. Knight, eds., *Dimensions in Wholistic Healing: New Frontiers in the Treatment of the Whole Person* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979).
- ¹⁰Kenneth Pelletier, *Mind as Healer Mind as Slayer: A Holistic Approach to Preventing Stress Disorders* (New York: Dell, 1979), 244-45; Robert L. Keck, *The Spirit of Synergy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 95-98; Jess Stearn, *The Power of Alpha Thinking* (New York: Signet, 1977), 138-39.
- ¹¹Pelletier, 262; James Vargiu, ed., *Psychosynthesis Institute, Synthesis Two: The Realization of the Self* (San Francisco: Psychosynthesis Institutes of the Synthesis Graduate School for the Study of Man, 1978), 151.
- ¹²Anastas Harris, ed., *Holistic Education: Education for Living* (Del Mar, CA: Holistic Education Network, 1981), 29.
- ¹³H. V. Guenther and Chogyam Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra* (Boston: Shambhala, 1975), 49.
- ¹⁴J. H. Brennan, *Astral Doorways* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), 98.
- ¹⁵John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Coming Darkness: Confronting Occult Deception* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993).
- ¹⁶Mike Samuels and Hal Bennett, *The Well Body Book* (New York: Bookworks/Random House, 1982).
- ¹⁷Ibid., 5.
- ¹⁸Mike Samuels, M.D., and Hal Bennett, *Spirit Guides: Access to Inner Worlds* (New York: Random House, 1974).
- ¹⁹Ibid., 27, 55.
- ²⁰Alfred Stelter, *Psi-Healing* (New York: Bantam, 1976), 41.
- ²¹Brennan, 11-17.
- ²²Samuels and Samuels, 282.
- ²³Ibid., 274.
- ²⁴Jack Schwarz, *Voluntary Controls* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 77, 95-101.
- ²⁵Samuels and Samuels, 270.
- ²⁶David Conway, *Magic: An Occult Primer* (New York: Bantam, 1973), 59.
- ²⁷Ibid., 180, 196-201.
- ²⁸Ibid.; cf. Guenther and Trungpa, 52.
- ²⁹I. M. Owen, "The Making of a Ghost," *Psychic*, July-August 1975. See also "Generation of Paranormal Physical Phenomena with an Imaginary Communicator" and "Philip's Story Continued" in *New Horizons* (Toronto Society for Physical Research), vol. 1, no. 3 and vol. 1, no. 4; I. M. Owen and M. Sparrow, *Conjuring up Philip* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).
- ³⁰A. R. G. Owen in I. M. Owen and Sparrow, xviii.
- ³¹Samuels and Bennett, *The Well Body Book*, 8.
- ³²Sanaya Roman and Duane Packer, *Opening to Channel: How to Connect with Your Guide* (Tiburon, CA: H. J. Kramer, 1987), 80-82.
- ³³Robert Masters and Jean Houston, *Mind Games: The Guide to Inner Space* (New York: Delta, 1981), 198-206.
- ³⁴Ibid., 203.
- ³⁵Ibid., 198.
- ³⁶Ibid., 199-201.
- ³⁷Ibid., 202.
- ³⁸Jack Canfield, *The Inner Classroom: Teaching with Guided Imagery* (Amherst, MA: Institute for Wholistic Education, 1981), 14.
- ³⁹Ibid., 15.
- ⁴⁰Gawain, 91-93.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 29-33, 53-55.
- ⁴²A critique is found in John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *The Transcendental Explosion* (Irvine, CA: Harvest House Publications, 1975).
- ⁴³For example, see Jane Roberts, *Seth: Dreams and Projection of Consciousness* (Walpole, NH: Stillpoint, 1986), 193, 350.
- ⁴⁴Letter to John Weldon (May 1983).
- ⁴⁵For example, see *The Christ, New Teachings for an Awakened Humanity* (Santa Clara, CA: S.E.E. [Spiritual Education Endeavors] Publishing, 1986); John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on Mormonism* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991).
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1994).

⁴⁷See J. I. Packer's 1981 and 1978 books, *God's Words* and *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press).

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