

# When Evangelical Christians Object to the Use of Hypnosis

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I am a United Methodist Pastor, serving Hamilton UMC, Hamilton, Mississippi. A few weeks ago my District Superintendent, Dr. C., and I were discussing my Outreach Ministry, which is a Pastoral Counseling and Hypnotism ministry. During our conversation, Dr. C. told me about two ladies from another United Methodist Church who came to see him, complaining about me using hypnosis. These ladies were not members of my congregation, nor did they know me, yet they took it upon themselves to report me to Dr. C.

When the ladies came into his office, one of them said, "We want you to get rid of this Lips fellow." "Why?" asked Dr. C. "Because, what he's doing is evil, demonic, of the devil." "What do you mean?" C. asked. "He's using hypnosis. It's demonic. What can we do to get rid of him?" they retorted. "Nothing!" said Dr. C. "He's doing a good job. Besides, there's nothing wrong with what he's doing. I approve of his counseling and hypnotism practice. He's not going anywhere." The two busybodies were stunned to hear that they had no say so in the matter.irate, the two stomped out of Dr. C's office like two spoiled schoolgirls who just lost a bet.

I've been a hypnotist for 17 years. And for 17 years I've had to deal with people who think hypnosis is of the devil. Where do they get such a notion? Usually, it comes from the non-expert, expert. People who think they know, but they don't know. People who make blanket statements without researching the facts. People whom you would think know better, but they don't.

Usually, most objections come from Evangelical Christian who believe the Bible is inerrant [without error]. If the Bible says it, it must be true. They are Evangelical authors, such as Martin and Deidre Bobgan, who denounced the use of hypnotism in their book, *Hypnosis and Christianity*. *The Bobgans attempt to position hypnosis as being evil, demonic, by quoting several Scriptures concerning the Holiness Social Rite Codes, which includes: Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 27:9; Isaiah 47:9-13. But the main Scripture referenced by the Bobgans is Deuteronomy 18:9-14.*

The Bobgans complain that hypnosis is occultic, more so in the deeper stages. Because those who use hypnosis are also involved in other areas of the occult, the Bobgans believe that "Christians should avoid hypnosis even for medical purposes," no exceptions [Bobgan, 1984].

Dave Hunt, author of *The Cult Explosion* and cult researcher, says: "From the Biblical standpoint, I believe that in such places as Deuteronomy 18, when it speaks of 'charmners' and 'enchanters,' the practice involved anciently was exactly what has recently become acceptable in medicine and psychiatry as hypnosis. I believe this both from the ancient usage of this word and from occult traditions [Hunt in Bobgan, 1984].

In 1969, Hobart E. Freeman published, *Angels of Light?* Freeman rejects hypnosis in any form. In condemning hypnosis, he said, "One of the most subtle and potentially dangerous forms of magical practice is hypnosis, an ancient occult method of influence or control of the mind and action of others" [Freeman in Court, 122-123].

Dennis and Rita Bennett [1971] assert that hypnosis allows demonic forces access to the unconscious mind. They believe that it also involves control of one person by another rather than by the Holy Spirit. To the Bennetts, Hypnosis puts the Soul in jeopardy by placing it in a passive receptive state, opening the door to morbid spiritual influences. They offer Biblical support to their

assertions by quoting Deuteronomy 18:10-11. So it would appear that the key verses are found in Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

Most Evangelical authors who claim that hypnosis is the same as 'charmings' and 'enchanters' [Deut. 18:10-11] are lacking an accurate and truthful exegesis. Not one author cited above has done this. What am I talking about? First, let's define exegesis.

Exegesis comes from the Greek word, *exegesis*, "interpretation," from *exegeisthai*, "to draw out or explain." It is the act of interpreting or explaining the meaning of verses or passages of Scripture [McKem, 1996].

Since the exegesis of these verses is central to any Christian objection to hypnosis, it is important to be accurate. Since the Christian Gospel is based on Truth, the exegesis of Deuteronomy 18:10-11 also must be based on truth. Dr. Fred Bush, the D. Wilson Moore Professor of Ancient New Eastern Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary is an expert on Eastern languages. Bush states that "to use these passages as a reference to hypnosis is exegetically indefensible" [Bush in Court, 123].

R.B. Morton is more pungent with his assessment. He says, "To find otherwise highly intelligent men speaking of the subject out of a warehouse of ignorance and in the authoritative manner is an inexcusable affront to integrity. Thousands of people have been influenced to disregard hypnosis as a viable therapeutic modality by such inaccurate and prejudiced writing [Morton in Court, 1997].

Hobart E. Freeman in his book *Angels of Light? includes all hypnosis [without exception] in those practices which are condemned by God, by quoting Deuteronomy 18:10-11 and interpreting hypnosis as being an act of 'charming.'* The author indicates his lack of exegetical accuracy, and his prejudice towards a subject he has not fully investigated [Morton in Court, 123-124].

Let us now do what the Bobgans, Dave Hunt, Hobart Freeman, and the Bennetts failed to do in their flawed belief that hypnosis is the same as 'charmer' and 'enchanter.' But, first, let us read Deuteronomy 18:10-11, which says:

10. *There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire or that useth **divination**, or an observer of times, or an **enchanter**, or a **witch**.  
11. Or a **charmer**, or a **consulter** with familiar spirits, or a **wizard**, or a **necromancer** [KJV].*

So that it will be easier to understand the meaning of each word I've highlighted, I will list each word by the verse it appears in, using the biblical word, Hebrew word, Hebrew pronunciation, and its meaning.

Vs. 10: **Divination** [Heb. Qesem, "Keh'-sem"] *False prophesying by one who attempts to learn the will of the gods in order to manipulate the circumstances.*

Vs. 10: **Enchanter** [Heb. Nachash, "naw-khash"] *Casting a magical spell. To foretell. Practices magic [divines- foretells by signs].*

Vs. 10: **Witch** [Heb. Kashph, "Kaw-shaf"] *To whisper a spell, to enchant or practice magic-sorcerer. One who pretended to cure disease.*

Vs. 11: **Charmer** [Heb. Cheber, "Keh'-ber"] *A dealer in spells, one who by means of spells or charms pretends to achieve some desired result. The verb here used primarily means to bind, and the species of magic indicated is probably that practiced by binding knots,*

**whereby curse or blessing, as the case may be, was bound on its object. This was accompanied with incantations [spells or charms] [SEE Psalm 58:4-5, which is referring to snake charming]. In Rome, there was a species of incantations which consisted of tying knots with threads of different colors, three in number, supposedly to bind and secure the object.**

Vs. 11: **Consulter [Heb. Sha al or Sha el] One who asks or inquires of an Ob [Python], or divining spirit. This spirit was supposed to be in the person of the conjurer, and to be able to reveal to him what was secret or hidden in the future. The notion of a “Familiar Spirit” refers to the spirit not dwelling in the person, but with which he is intimate- a disembodied spirit. One who once lived on earth, a modern notion not known in Scripture. This person here was probably a “ventriloquist,” used for the purpose of magic, pretending they had a spirit in them, which they could consult to predict the future.**

Vs. 11: **Wizard [Heb. Yidde oni, “yid-deh-o-nee,” wise one; knowing one; to know.] Originally it did not convey evil in the person who used it. Wizards were Magi, like the Magi who worshiped Baby Jesus in Bethlehem.**

Vs. 11: **Necromancer [Heb. Muth, “mooth”] One who calls up the dead to learn the future.**

Hypnosis cannot be found in any of the above Hebrew words. People fear what they do not understand. It is our job as hypnotists to educate everyone we help to achieve their goals. Most of those who object to the use of hypnosis are diehard users of the Authorized King James Version [KJV] of the Bible. If you are going to address each of their objections in a professional manner, you need to learn how to do so with the Bible they use. In addition, it is a good idea to be familiar with the Hebrew and Greek words and their meaning, so that your client will know that you know what you are talking about. Never try to bluff your way through a session when dealing a person's belief system, especially, when it concerns the Holy Bible.

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In common use, "evangelicalism" deals with the doctrines, practices, and history of a class of Protestants that emerged distinctively in the early modern period, endured for three centuries, and spread to five continents. While evangelicals are orthodox, Nicene Christians with a Protestant heritage like that of many other Christians, these four characteristics together set them apart and hold them together as a movement through time and change. Evangelicals have thus been centrally concerned with what it means to discover a personally meaningful relationship with Christ through conversion. Evangelicals are concerned to bring people to Christ more than to convert anyone to the category of evangelicalism. Moreover, these core convictions have never been the whole.