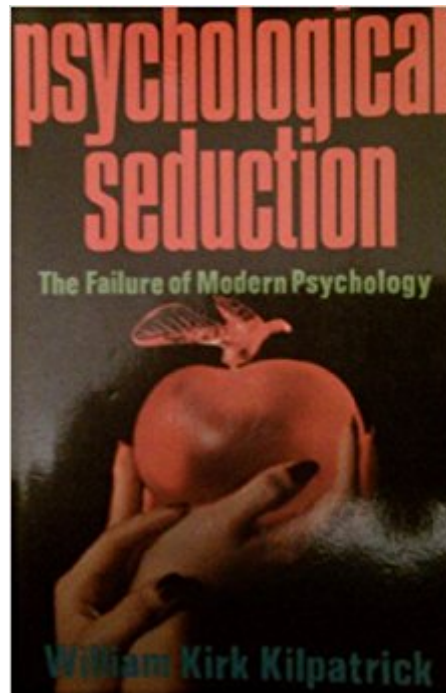




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Psychological Seduction



Synopsis

Book by Kilpatrick, William

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Book by Kilpatrick, William

The why's of psychology will ultimately lead one to formulate a worldview. If this worldview is different than the Christian worldview of the bible, it may lead one into deception. The author examines these pitfalls bringing biblical wisdom to challenge each area of psychology that has found its way into the church. He doesn't reject all of the study of human behavior completely, however. It is a great book to put things into perspective. Psychology can lead one into making Self as God so deceptively that one would hardly know it, especially when the church condones some of its practices. This book helps one be aware of these subtleties.

Excellent book. Demonstrates the problems that psychology can cause.

Wonderful book. A real eye opener....a must read for all believers!

We've owned this book for years and recently purchased this for a friend. It should be required reading in any Psych class.

Ok

This book is being hailed by several quarters of the Christian community as one of the best psychology books written by a Christian. It is a book that causes the Christian psychologist to take a long look at his or her profession. Is his or her work actually the work of Satan, destroying families, promoting narcissism, advocating pride and arrogance? Does psychology stand in direct opposition to the Scriptures? Kilpatrick seems to say so. Actually, there is not much new in the words of Kilpatrick. He sounds like Jay Adams, taking the hard line anti-psychology/psychiatry arguments of Eysenck, Szasz, Lasch, Gross, and Vitz. Not only does psychology seem worthless, "true Christianity does not mix well with psychology" (p. 23). "The Christian message does not change, while the psychological one changes constantly" (p. 135). Ultimately, Kilpatrick makes the Adams distinction between the "medical model" and the "moral model" saying, "Psychology wants to judge an idea not on whether it will save man's soul, but on whether it will save his sanity" (p. 27). The problem is sin versus sickness (p. 82). Kilpatrick blames psychology for its lack of results, saying good intentions are not enough. As do Piper, Stott, Browback, Vitz, and others, he criticizes psychology's emphasis on self-esteem, saying that it puts an enormous burden on people and it leads to both an unhealthy self-seriousness and withdrawal of interest in the world. Although there is a legitimate type of self-love (pp. 43-44), both the biblical way and the most healthy way is "losing self." Psychology's emphasis on the self and self-esteem is only the tip of its dark iceberg, according to Kilpatrick. Psychology has taken on the American spirit of democracy and individualism at the expense of community and shared objective values. The very process of values clarification and modern moral education assumes that people are free to choose, that there is no set of objective values, that individual humans are master of their own destinies. Kilpatrick objects saying that this approach deprives us of our "inbred repugnance to vice or debased values" (p. 112), builds children's minds before it builds their character and habits, and presupposes that clarification will lead to proper moral judgment. Kilpatrick's book is a catholic book in the best and most universal sense of the term. Rather than American individualism and its gospel of self-fulfillment and consumption, he advocates the values of tradition, community, and family. The stories and tales of tradition, both biblical and nonbiblical, give us our sense of identity and place in society. Psychology and the American culture have secularized our lives, reducing reality to nothing but natural processes, whereas the Christian faith maintains the sacredness, the mysteriousness, the awesomeness of all creation and its acts. Psychology trivializes objective meaning, values, and suffering by making them merely a product of our own psyches and sentiments. Psychology

emphasizes man's bigness, whereas Christianity emphasizes man's smallness in relation to God and His community. In sum, this is a book that is difficult to put down. It is a sociological, anthropological, psychological, and theological book, making it as exciting as C. S. Lewis to read. It speaks to the heart of reality. Kilpatrick's use of analogy and story adds to its richness. Yet the book has several problems. Although it speaks to so many issues, it does not deal with any issue in depth. It is not a book that explores basic theological themes biblically, or criticizes psychological themes using research. Kilpatrick never does adequately define psychology, but lumps all of psychology and its varied theories and findings into one term, one that the skilled reader would easily discern as distinctly "humanist psychology." He gives hundreds of quotes without reference, sometimes citing the names of those he quotes and sometimes not. The book is written in a popular style in order to reach the masses. Kilpatrick builds his case about the seductiveness of psychology on tradition, logic, and the heart of Scriptures.

William Kirk Kilpatrick is a professor of educational psychology at Boston College. He states in the Preface to this 1983 book, "The criticisms I offer in the pages that follow are directed toward psychology as a social force: in other words, psychology as it influences our everyday ways of thinking and acting. Psychology as a science has a legitimate part to play in our society. It is another matter, however, when it wants to play every part and direct the drama as well." Here are some representative quotations from the book: "It is true that popular psychology shares much in common with Eastern religion; in fact, a merger is well under way. But if you're talking about Christianity, it is much truer to say that psychology and religion are competing faiths. If you seriously hold to one set of values, you will logically have to reject the other." (Pg. 14) "True Christianity does not mix well with psychology. When you try to mix them, you often end up with a watered-down Christianity instead of a Christianized psychology." (Pg. 23) "People will continue to behave badly, says the Christian, because human nature is twisted, and liking yourself doesn't remove the twist. But psychological theory doesn't take account of the Fall; it takes the position that there are no bad natural inclinations. As a consequence there is no reason we shouldn't accept ourselves as we are." (Pg. 37) "The real test of a theory or way of life, however, is not whether it can relieve pain but what it says about the pain it cannot relieve. And this is where, I believe, psychology lets us down and Christianity supports us, for in psychology suffering has no meaning while in Christianity it has great meaning." (Pg. 181)

Despite the title, this book is actually about the downfalls of modern psychology. Its critique is fairly

well reasoned, and accurate in many respects. I think the author gives too little credit to many individuals who well realize the downsides of feel-good psychology, but in general many of his points are well taken. The criticism in the main is also a defense of Christianity as the more valid and useful (and true), of the two possibilities, which he sees (and makes a good argument for seeing) as inherently incompatible. I don't agree with everything he says - largely because my own beliefs and views are substantially different from his on several points, but many of his concerns are well taken. I.e. self-esteem without grounds is merely narcissism and self-worship. Worth the time I spent reading it.

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