

PSYCHOHERESY & INNER HEALING

<http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/psy-innerhealing1.html>

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Part One

Psychoheresy is the use of psychology where God has already spoken in His Word. It is using the very wisdom of men about which God has warned His people. Inner healing is a process through which someone goes in order to transform the effects of the past on the present. Inner healing involves finding painful memories of early life traumas thought to be buried in the unconscious. The inner healer guides people into reliving and recreating past events by imagining the presence of Jesus or some other significant faith figure. It is a reliving of the person's past in his imagination. By replacing the memory of a past event with a new one, painful memories are claimed to be healed and one is supposedly set free from the grip of the past. Some of the elements of psychoheresy are used in inner healing. Therefore, inner healing is psychoheresy.

Individuals Involved

Agnes Sanford mothered the inner healing movement and directly or indirectly mentored many others. Best known followers of Sanford are Ruth Carter Stapleton, John and Paula Sandford (no relation to Agnes), Dennis and Rita Bennett, Francis MacNutt, Morton Kelsey, Richard Foster, David Seamonds, and John Wimber. Though some of the promoters are deceased, their books, which have sold millions of copies, are still a powerful influence in this movement. Moreover, these individuals have spawned thousands of other inner healers, perpetuating these teachings to millions of others. The past and present book sales testify to the popularity of this movement.

Errors of the Movement

There is a real, genuine, biblical healing and transformation of the inner person. But while one may call the Lord's inner work "inner healing," let us quickly add that among all the seminars, books, tapes, or workshops of which we are aware, we do not know one that is truly biblical and has not dipped into the broken cisterns of the wisdom of men about which the Bible warns believers. We would not recommend any of them because they represent a spiritually unholy combination of biblical, psychological, and even occult ideas.

Inner healing teachings often sound biblical at the beginning. Many of them even elevate excellent biblical principles, but all those with which we are acquainted eventually worship at the altars of psychology and the occult. While we cannot cover the whole spectrum of inner healing mis-teachings and heresies, we will discuss some of the serious errors that are common in psychoheresy.

The serious errors involve **five psychological ideas**, one of which is right out of the occult. John and Paula Sandford describe and summarize what Agnes Sanford was trying to do. They say:

She saw that ancient [**past**], unforgiven, forgotten sins [**memory**] buried in the heart [**unconscious**] could be manifested in unwanted, unseemly behaviors, which could be changed [**emotion and imagery**] if such sins were forgiven and the heart were cleansed.¹

Two of the very important components often used in psychotherapy and in inner healing are those of the **unconscious** and the **past**. These two elements are found throughout the teachings of the inner healers. We will first discuss their use of these two psychological concepts and then deal with their **dangerous and unbiblical** use of **memory**, **emotions**, and **imagery**. These potentially perilous five psychological ideas are used by those involved in psychoheresy, which includes inner healers. Christians need to be wary of these five activities from psychoheresy wherever they are used. While this article focuses on the psychoheresy of inner healing, Christians will encounter these psychological elements elsewhere as well.

The Unconscious

Before Freud popularized the unconscious, we lived in an era of consciousness. The history of man until the nineteenth century was directed at conscious thought and action.² Now we are in an era of the unconscious.

When inner healers use the word *unconscious* (and its equivalents), they use it in the Freudian sense, which is a specific mental state. The common meaning of the word *unconscious* is quite different from the Freudian unconscious. The *unconscious*, as a general term before Freud popularized it and even now, refers to the thoughts, memories, feelings, etc. of which we are not presently conscious. However, the Freudian unconscious is one in which these thoughts, memories, feelings, etc. **determine** one's behavior. With this kind of unconscious, you do not do what you do or think what you think because of a conscious choice; you are driven by your unconscious.

Freud used the iceberg as his model of the unconscious. According to Freud, the entire iceberg represents the mind, and only the tip is fully accessible to the person. It includes all information and memories that are not accessible through recall, as well as present thoughts and mental activity. The huge mass beneath the waterline does not simply represent all that is presently outside conscious awareness; it supposedly contains all that drives, motivates, and determines behavior outside conscious volition. Psychologists Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson point this out in their standard work on psychology.

Freud compared the human mind to an iceberg: the small part that shows above the surface of the water represents conscious experience, while the much larger mass below water level represents the unconscious—a storehouse of impulses, passions, and inaccessible memories that affect our thoughts and behavior.³

Agnes Sanford wrote:

But this much I do know: that this unseen part of me, whether submerged beneath the depths of my conscious self or rising above it, whether descending into hell or ascending into heaven, this also is myself. And if I am to be a whole person, this area of emanation or interpenetration must also be healed. I call this part of me the soul, or the “psyche.” I might instead say “the unconscious” or “the subconscious,” or “the deep mind” or the “spirit.”⁴

The inner healers use Freudian theory absent his name. All inner healers with which we are familiar use either the Freudian “unconscious” or some equivalent, absent the use of Freudian terms for the mind such as *id*, *ego*, and *super ego*. Inner healers' favorite terms they use for the Freudian unconscious are *subconscious*, *heart*, *inner heart*, and the *inner child*, or some variation of it, from psychiatrist W. Hugh Missildine and his book *The Inner Child of the Past*.

Biblical Basis for the Unconscious?

There is no biblical basis for the use of the unconscious. Freud stated that the unconscious is a place where all kinds of powerful drives and mysterious motivations cause people to do what they do. The implications of such a powerful seat of urges driving people to do all kinds of things flies in the face of God holding people responsible for their actions. If people look for unconscious reasons for their behavior, they can excuse all sorts of behavior. **But, the idea of the unconscious as a hidden region of the mind with powerful needs and motivational energy is not supported by the Bible or science.**

We are tremendously complex beings, but psychological explanations about the inner workings of the soul are merely speculation. The only accurate source of information about the heart, soul, mind, will, and emotions is the Bible. Not only is the Bible accurate; the Lord Himself knows and understands exactly what lies hidden beneath the surface of every person. He knows and He brings cleansing to those inner parts that we may never understand. David prayed:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalms 139:23-24).

Teaching a Freudian concept of the unconscious is contrary to Scripture. Rather than relying on the Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit to search their hearts, inner healing victims will learn to rummage around in some kind of Freudian unconscious and remain focused on the self.

If you check all the usual Bible helps having to do with words and their meanings, you will not find one that equates the heart or any other word in the Bible with the Freudian unconscious. This is one of the many theological errors in the teachings of those who attempt to integrate psychology into Christianity. The Bible focuses on the conscious mind, not on the unconscious. We see this throughout the Bible. The Bible is not deterministic in a Freudian unconscious sense. Conscious behavior and volition are hallmarks of Scripture. For example, obeying the Great Commandment is a conscious choice. God's Spirit dwells in our hearts by faith and transforms the inner man, but these are not equivalent to a so-called unconscious. God works in us through conscious cooperation and volition on our part. When we assign motivation and action to the unconscious mind we throw out responsibility.

Scientific Basis for the Unconscious?

There is no scientific support for the Freudian idea of the unconscious. E. M. Thornton, in her book, *The Freudian Fallacy*, says:

This book makes the heretical claim that [Freud's] central postulate, the "unconscious mind," does not exist, that his theories were baseless and aberrational, and, greatest impiety of all, that Freud himself, when he formulated them, was under the influence of a toxic drug [cocaine] with specific effects on the brain.⁵

University of California professor Richard Ofshe, with freelance journalist Ethan Watters, has written a book titled *Therapy's Delusions*. The subtitle revealing the book's content is *The Myth of the Unconscious and the Exploitation of Today's Walking Worried*. In discussing "The fallacy of the Freudian Unconscious," they say:

While it is clear that we all engage in out-of-awareness mental processes, the idea of the dynamic unconscious proposes a powerful shadow mind that, unknown to its host, willfully influences the most minor thought and behavior. There is no scientific evidence of this sort of purposeful unconscious, nor is there evidence that psychotherapists have special methods for laying bare our out-of-awareness mental processes. Nevertheless, the therapist's claim to be able to expose and reshape the unconscious mind continues to be the seductive promise of many talk therapies.⁶

The Past

Just as there is a huge difference between the usual use of the term *unconscious* and that of the Freudian or deterministic unconscious, so too with the use of the past in inner healing. For inner healers, the past is not merely your early life experiences, but rather your early life experiences **causing, determining, or driving your behavior**. Freud postulated that a newborn will go through several "psychosexual stages of development." He named them the oral (0-18 months), anal (18-36 months), phallic (3-5 years), and genital (through puberty). Freud believed that the first five years of life and how a person maneuvered through these stages determined the person's life. Outdoing Freud, the Sandfords go further back into the prenatal period, as we shall show shortly.

Biblical Basis for the Use of the Past?

There is no biblical basis for the use of the past (past determinants of behavior). The Bible includes the past works of God in history, because we are to remember the works of God both individually and corporately. But, regarding the Christian walk, the cross took care of the past. The walk of the believer is to be according to the new life and is therefore present and future oriented. In Philippians 3 Paul gives his religious and personal background, on which he had depended for righteousness before God. But when confronted by Jesus he saw his own wretched sinfulness, not only that he had persecuted the church, but that he was sinful to the core. He knew he could not make himself righteous by going back into his past. Therefore he declared: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" Phil. 3:13-14). This does not mean an

inability to recall the past; it means that the past now has a different significance. Biblically speaking, attempting to fix the past is purely a fleshly activity, which when indulged in wars against the spirit.

A person need not be trapped in negative patterns of behavior established in the early years of life, for the Bible offers a new way of life. Put off the old man; put on the new. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Ye must be born again,” and He said elsewhere that new wine could not be put into old wineskins. Jesus offers new life and new beginnings. One who is born again has the spiritual capacity to overcome old ways and develop new ones through the action of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and the sanctification of the believer. One wonders why so many have given up the hope of Christianity for the hopelessness of past determinism.

Scientific Basis for the Use of the Past?

There is **no predictive validity** to the relationship between early life circumstances and present life. If you want to test it out, examine 100, 200, 500 kids in preschool or at whatever point in early life. Give all the tests you want and then predict what the children will be like as adults. Even Freud knew better than this. He could be **postdictive** (look back to connect one’s early life with one’s present adult life), but never **predictive** (look ahead from a child’s present life to tell how his future life as an adult will be). Given an adult with a problem, a Freudian will then interview the person and tell him how his childhood determined his present life. It is obvious that there is no science involved in this, only guess work.

Orville Brim, Jr., of the Foundation for Child Development in New York, studied this question. “Most of Brim’s career has been devoted to charting the course of child development and its relation to adult personality; recently he has become convinced that ‘far from being programmed permanently by the age of 5, people are virtually reprogrammable throughout life.’” Brim says: “Hundred and hundreds of studies now document the fact of personality change in adulthood.”⁷

Jerome Kagen of Harvard and co-researcher Howard Moss say they “could find little relation between psychological qualities during the first three years of life—fearfulness, irritability, or activity—and any aspect of behavior in adulthood.”⁸

Victor and Mildred Goertzel investigated this fallacy of early life determinants. In their book *Cradles of Eminence*, they report on the early environments of over four hundred eminent men and women of the twentieth century who had experienced a wide variety of trials and tribulations during their childhood.⁹ It is surprising and even shocking to discover the environmental handicaps that have been overcome by individuals who should have been psychically determined failures according to Freudian formulas. Instead of being harmed by unfortunate early circumstances, they became outstanding in many different fields of endeavor and contributed much to mankind. What might have been environmental curses seemed to act, rather, as catalysts to spawn genius and creativity. This study is not an argument for poor upbringing; it is an argument against psychic determinism.

Early Life and En Utero Healing: One more dimension to the inner healing practices is that of believing that **very** early life and even en utero healings can take place. The inner healer encourages the person to imagine early life situations and even en utero situations. And then to imagine Jesus being in that situation ministering to them.

John and Paul Sandford say:

By revelation of the Holy Spirit, we have been led to pray for thousands of traumas en utero, treating those as factual. Dramatic results in mental, emotional, and physical healings, and transpersonal behavior testify to the reality of such en utero traumas.¹⁰

This all flies in opposition to the well-known, scientific fact that memory is related to the development of the hippocampus of the brain, which is fundamental to memory formation, and therefore such memories do not exist in the brain.

The Sandfords also say:

We have found under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and found that science confirms that a baby within the womb already knows, experiences, tastes and feels everything which is going on

around him. He knows whether he is wanted. He knows what is going on in the family. He knows whether there are bickerings and fightings. He hears everything that is going on in the family and inside the womb already reacts in his spirit and can make sinful choices within his spirit before he ever gets out of the womb, having already set himself in rebellious, hurtful ways before he is born.¹¹

The Sandfords claim that if a child is conceived out of wedlock the child knows it in the womb. If the mother thought about abortion, the child knows it. If the mother hoped for a boy and is carrying a girl, the child knows it. And how do they know all these things? According to the Sandfords, the Holy Spirit told them and their experiences confirmed it. In their attempt to biblically prove their outrageous statements, the Sandfords quote Luke 1:41, “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Using Bible verses out of context to support what they teach is typical of how the Sandfords twist Scripture to justify their inner healing tactics. Note that “the babe [John the Baptist] leaped in her [Elisabeth’s] womb” and that “Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” This was a sovereign act of God that involved two persons, the “babe” (John the Baptist) and Elisabeth in response to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Such a specific act of God cannot be used to prove anything generally about any other unborn child’s ability to know and experience what the Sandford’s claim. It is as unbiblical as saying that all pregnant mothers are “filled with the Holy Ghost” in the manner and for the purpose that Elisabeth was.

Luke 1:41 magnificently confirms the presence of the Messiah in Mary’s womb, and Elisabeth’s words in Luke 1:42-44, under the unction of the Holy Spirit, confirm that glorious truth. Luke 1:41 also foretells John the Baptist’s unique role to be the forerunner of Jesus. The words “the babe leaped in her womb” in verse 41 have been preceded with a great deal of information about the conception of both babies. In reference to the babe, John the Baptist, Luke 1:15 says: “For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and **he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.**” This is a unique prenatal event not found elsewhere in Scripture. Also, nothing is said in Luke 1 or in all of the Bible to which the Sandfords can refer that would support their fallacious claims that babes in the womb would have the knowledge and understanding that they assume.

To reduce this supernatural heralding of the Messiah to an ordinary occurrence due to some natural ability within all unborn children is to undermine Scripture and make it say what it does not mean. Indeed, to our knowledge, no one in the history of the church has given such an egregious application of verse 41. Inner healers major in eisegesis, which is interpreting Scripture with one’s own ideas, rather than explaining what the Bible is actually saying.

Summary

Therefore, we are **not** determined by our unconscious and we are **not** determined by our past. However, those two ingredients are essential to the inner healer and are fundamental to many psychoheresies. These ideas form the theoretical base for what inner healers and many counselors do. These erroneous notions from the cauldron of psychoheresy are both taught and believed by many Christians as they attempt to address problems of living. These two mental concepts (the **unconscious** and the **past**) are detrimental to the clear teachings of Scripture. They displace God’s Word as the final authority in areas of life and godliness. Christian, beware! Be wary and avoid such heretical teachings and practices, especially when used with the Bible as in Theophostic Prayer Ministry and other inner healing ministries.

In Parts Two and Three (next issues), we discuss three more ingredients of many psychoheresies that are also used in the inner healing movement. These are the use of **memory**, the **emotions**, and **imagery**. While the unconscious and the past are the essential ingredients of many psychoheresies; memory, emotions, and imagery are the added collaborative dangers of inner healing.

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Endnotes

- 1 John and Paula Sandford.
- 2 Henri F. Ellenberger. *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers,
- 3 Ernest R. Hilgard, Rita L. Atkinson, Richard C. Atkinson. *Introduction to Psychology*, 7th Edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1979, p. 389.
- 4 Agnes Sanford. *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit*. New York: Trumpet Books, 1966, p. 10.
- 5 E. M. Thornton. *The Freudian Fallacy*. Garden City, NY: The Dial Press/Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984, p. ix.
- 6 Ethan Watters and Richard Ofshe. *Therapy's Delusions*. New York: Scribner, 1999, pp. 38,39.
- 7 Carol Tavris, "Freedom to Change," *Prime Time*, October 1980, p. 31.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 9 Victor and Mildred Goertzel. *Cradles of Eminence*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962.
- 10 John and Paula Sandford. *Restoring the Christian Family*. Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, p. 15.
- 11 John and Paula Sandford, "Healing the Prenatal Spirit," sound recording.

PSYCHOHERESY & INNER HEALING

Part Two

In Part One we discussed two essential ingredients used in many psychoheresies that are essential in inner healing. They are the **unconscious** and the **past**. The use of both are unbiblical and should be avoided by believers because they function contrary to God's Word. In this part we discuss two other elements of many psychoheresies that are an integral part of inner healing. They are the use of **memory** and **emotions**. These are common activities of the mind. However, joined to the activities having to do with the **unconscious** and the **past** in the way they are generally used in inner healing, they contradict the clear teachings of Scripture and are heretical wherever they are taught and practiced.

Memory

The healing of memories is a central function of inner healers and many psychotherapists. Typically the "healers" look for memories reaching back as far as the early post-natal period, but some attempt to deal with what they imagine to be memories from the pre-natal period, as dealt with in Part One. Dr. Jane Gumprecht, in her book *Abusing Memory: The Healing Theology of Agnes Sanford*, quotes Sanford's own description of her theory behind the healing of memories:

Something is troubling the deep mind. . . some old unpleasant memory.... What are these "roots of bitterness" and how can they be drawn out of us? ... We are apt to drag chains fastened upon our souls so long ago that we do not even know what they are ... burdens put upon our souls when we were too little to be responsible?... Yet there is hope, because God is involved with time ... seeing our need He incarnated Himself and became man, thus entering into the collective unconscious of the race.... Jesus is our time-traveler ... out of timelessness into our time, on purpose to transcend time in each of us, entering the subconscious and finding His way through past years to every buried memory in order to touch it with His healing power and set us free. I ask Jesus to enter into him, and go back through time and heal the memories of fear and resentment—even those he had forgotten... then I ask Jesus to walk into the past—back though their memories ... and set them free.¹

As mentioned in Part One, we are to remember the works of God both individually and corporately. God provided not only His written word to remind the Israelites of His glory and His gracious acts of mercy, but He instituted feasts to help them remember the exodus and other significant events that demonstrated His great love for them and also their own sinfulness. The Israelites sinned when

they forgot God's great mercies and His written law. Therefore the psalm writer says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Many times Jesus urged his listeners to remember what God had done and what He had said. Jesus instructed His followers to celebrate communion in remembrance of Him (1 Cor. 11:24). Therefore memory is important in relation to God, what He has done for the believer and what He has said in His Word.

Biblical Basis

The Bible gives no instructions to search for forgotten circumstances (memories) in one's past in order to be healed. The Bible instructs the believer to count that past self (called the "old man") dead and to live the new life in Christ Jesus: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Therefore, the practice of recovering memories in inner healing is in direct disobedience to the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life.

Scientific Basis

The inner healers and many psychotherapists rely on the accuracy of memory in dealing with the past. The healee is directed to remember early life experiences in order to begin the process of healing.

In Part One we revealed that John and Paula Sandford claim "that a baby within the womb already knows, experiences, tastes and feels everything which is going on around him."² The Sandfords give more credence to prenatal, postnatal, and early life memories than science permits. Mark L. Howe, an expert in the field of early life memories, says that memories before the age of two years are unlikely to "survive intact into adulthood." Howe concludes: "For now, it is safe to say that we do not remember being born or our *in utero* experiences. We do, however, have excellent imaginations, ones that can not only create 'memories' but also affect the memories we do carry with us from childhood."³

In Freudian psychoanalysis the process of getting to the unconscious and past is through the portal of free association, which heavily involves past memories and particularly early life memories, as the patient reports whatever comes to mind while in the presence of the analyst. Theophostic Prayer Ministry, which is a combination of inner healing and various psychotherapies known and practiced by Ed Smith, its originator, utilizes a form of free association, which he calls "drifting." Regardless of the change in name from free association to drifting, it is relatively the same activity with the same associated problems with memory.⁴ It is axiomatic that the further one goes back in memory, the more unreliable the result.

Since memory is so essential in this process, it is important to ask, "How good is memory?" Dr. Carol Tavris has said, "Memory is in a word lousy. It is a traitor at worst, a mischief-maker at best. It gives us vivid recollections of events that could never have happened, and it obscures critical details of events that did."⁵

The brain does not operate like a computer. Nevertheless, counselor, pastor Dr. Cecil Osborne says:

Everything that has ever happened to us is inscribed somewhere in the memory bank. Though the event may have transpired many years ago, the memory is lodged somewhere in those fifteen billion cells in the brain. Time does not diminish them in the slightest. The fact that most of the traumas of childhood are "forgotten" does not mean that they are doing no damage. Deep in the unconscious mind they can become festering pools of pain, producing anxiety, tension, character distortion, obsessive-compulsive behavior, alcoholism, drug addiction, difficulty in giving or receiving love, impaired relationships and, in time, actual physical symptoms of a hundred different varieties.⁶

In his book *Remembering and Forgetting: Inquiries into the Nature of Memory*, Edmund Bolles says, "The human brain is the most complicated structure in the known universe."⁷ He also says, "Remembering is a creative, constructive process. There is no storehouse of information about the past anywhere in our brain."⁸

As an example of how memory works, the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget describes a clear memory from his own early childhood:

I can still see, most clearly, the following scene, in which I believed until I was about fifteen. I was sitting in my pram, which my nurse was pushing in the Champs Elysées, when a man tried to kidnap me. I was held in by the strap fastened round me while my nurse bravely tried to stand between me and the thief. She received various scratches, and I can still see vaguely those on her face. Then a crowd gathered, a policeman with a short cloak and a white baton came up, and the man took to his heels. I can still see the whole scene, and can even place it near the tube station. When I was about fifteen, my parents received a letter from my former nurse saying that she had been converted to the Salvation Army. She wanted to confess her past faults, and in particular to return the watch she had been given as a reward on this occasion. She had made up the whole story, faking the scratches. I, therefore, must have heard, as a child, the account of this story, which my parents believed, and projected into the past in the form of a visual memory.⁹

Memories are created out of images, overheard conversations, dreams, suggestions, and imagination as well as out of actual events. And they change over time. Even as we remember we tend to fill in the gaps. Therefore, each time a memory is recalled it is also recreated with the emotions accompanying the recall and with the imagination which fills in the gaps.

False memories abound in inner healing. In 1989, we wrote the following:

Across America parents are receiving phone calls and correspondence that plunge them into a nightmare of accusations of abuse and incest. These are not parents of young children or teenagers. They are parents of grown children who throughout their lives had had no recollection of being sexually molested by their mother or father. Now, seemingly out of the blue, their bizarre stories are stunning their parents. These adult children, usually daughters, now claim to remember precise details of one of their parents sexually abusing them. Where do they get such ideas? Where do those sordid memories come from? What brings them to the surface? Inner healing and other forms of regressive-type therapy lurk behind this surge of family horror stories.

Since we wrote that in 1989 there has been a surge of sexual abuse and satanic ritual abuse accusations by adult children towards their parents, primarily based upon early life memory reconstruction. These can occur quite easily during inner healing.

The Emotions

The intense use of emotions is an essential ingredient in inner healing. Remove emotions and you'll disable the movement. The Freudian concept involved is that of abreaction, which is "the discharge of tension by reliving by words, feelings, and actions a traumatic experience (the original cause of the tension)."¹⁰ It is a type of catharsis. A whole movement to express emotions is built upon this one Freudian concept. Others took the Freudian idea and postulated that lurking within each one of us are emotions that need to come out if we are to feel better. These groups became known as "ventilationists."

Biblical Basis

There is no biblical basis for emotional expression as manipulated by inner healers and some psychotherapists. If you only deal with one human emotion, anger, you will find prohibitions against its use, not permission for its use in the way the inner healers use it. We call it unrighteous anger.

Scientific Basis

In the past, self-control was encouraged and was the model for behavior. Now we have moved from a society of self-restraint to one of self-expression. Leonard Berkowitz, who has extensively studied violence and aggression, disagrees with the idea that it is desirable to let out one's aggressive feelings. "Those therapists that encourage such active expression of negative emotions ... [and] stimulate and reward aggression heighten the likelihood of subsequent violence."

Hydraulic Model: Tavris discusses the hydraulic model of emotions. The model says simply that if emotional energy is blocked in one place it must be released elsewhere. She says:

Today the hydraulic model of energy has been scientifically discredited, but this has not stopped some therapeutic circles from expanding the "reservoir" idea to contain all the emotions—

jealousy, grief, resentment, as well as rage. These therapists still argue that any feeling that is “dammed up” is dangerously likely to “spill over” and possibly “flood” the system.¹¹

Catharsis, in spite of its seeming temporary relief, has never been proved to be a panacea for problems.

“Talking out an emotion does not reduce it; it rehearses it.” Tavis says, “Talking can freeze a hostile disposition.”¹² She says, “The psychological rationales for ventilating anger do not stand up under experimental scrutiny. The weight of the evidence indicates precisely the opposite; expressing anger makes you angrier, solidifies an angry attitude, and establishes a hostile habit.”¹³ To put it simply, “anger, over ventilated, perpetuates anger.”¹⁴ “Sometimes the best you can do about anger is nothing at all.”¹⁵

Well why do adults in general, Christians included, follow such false teaching? It is because they honestly believe (never mind scientific proof to the contrary) that catharsis is good. They have bought the psychological notion of expression over our tradition of suppression (not repression).

Cognitive Dissonance: What happens when people have experiences and how do these experiences shape their theology? Leon Festinger has developed a theory called *cognitive dissonance*. The theory is simply this: because people cannot live in a state of conflict (dissonance) between a belief (a cognitive idea) and a behavior or an emotional experience, something has to give. And, very simply, according to Festinger, what gives is usually the belief. The brain needs to maintain consistency for behavior and it will generally do so by conforming its belief to its behavior or emotional experience.

Example One: Consider the happily married Christian man who believes in fidelity. An office party comes along and after a little too much to drink he drives a woman office coworker home and commits adultery. His behavior is at odds with his belief about marriage. So, what happens? According to this theory he will often change his original belief (fidelity) to conform to his behavior (adultery).

Example Two: Someone is invited to attend a meeting in which emotional experiences are promoted and practiced. He has great doubts, but goes because a friend has invited him. During the meeting he hears teachings supporting the emotional activities and sees others participating. In the midst of all the hype he ends up becoming emotionally and experientially involved. As soon as he crosses the line from hesitation to participation he becomes ensnared in the emotions and experiences. No more doubts, no more hesitation. He usually becomes both a participant and a promoter.

According to this theory such immersion and participation will change an individual’s beliefs. And that is precisely what happens in emotional experiences such as inner healing. One such example from a pastor follows:

During the course of her talk, [Roz] Rinker explained how the Holy Spirit could work through our prayers to reach back into past experiences and heal old emotional wounds. She invited us to test the validity of this claim for ourselves. Following her lead, we were instructed to allow our minds to be led by the Spirit to our childhood. As I did so, I began to visualize myself as a boy of eight. I was startled to see a very burdened child; in fact, I saw myself carrying a large bundle on my back. Apparently, the weight of this burden symbolized my past needs and worries.

We then were asked to envision a setting for this child. I immediately found him standing before a dark school ground at night. Fear began to creep into my meditation and I intuitively realized that all of these symbols were poignant descriptions of how my childhood experience felt to me.

Next she asked us to do a surprising thing. “Now see if you can imagine Jesus appearing,” she instructed. “Let Him walk toward you.”

Much to my amazement, I—an ordained Reformed Church clergyman with a doctorate in psychology—found this happening to me. An image of Jesus moved slowly toward me out of that dark playground. He began to extend His hands toward me in a loving, accepting manner.

“Now,” she said softly, “ask Him to touch you with His healing power.”

Before I could consciously respond to her direction, I saw Christ already moving through my imagination with a freedom that exceeded my direction. My meditation seemed to have taken on a life of its own. I no longer was creating the scene. The figure of Christ reached over and lifted the bundle from my back. And He did so with such forcefulness that I literally sprang from the pew.

I blinked my eyes and looked at the people who still were meditating. I was perplexed, confused. But then it occurred to me: *Something in my past has just been healed. I feel released.*

In the days that followed, I had a growing realization that something profound had transpired within me.¹⁶ (Italics in original.)

Remember that, according to the theory of cognitive dissonance, when a belief and a behavior are in conflict, either the belief or behavior usually changes; and, it is usually the belief that changes.

Notice the imagery in the above account. In Part Three (next issue) we discuss imagery, the fifth ingredient in the unbiblical stew called “inner healing.” Imagery is potentially the most dangerous of the five.

(PAL V15N2 * March-April)

Endnotes

1 Jane Gumprecht. *Abusing Memory*. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1997, p. 101.

2 John and Paula Sandford, “Healing the Prenatal Spirit,” sound recording.

3 Mark L. Howe, “Memories from the Cradle,” -*Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 622-65.

4 See “A Response to the Christian Research Institute’s Evaluation of Theophostic Prayer Ministry” by Martin Bobgan on the Psychoheresy Awareness Ministry web site: www.psychoheresy-aware.org.

5 Carol Tavris, “The Freedom to Change” *Prime Time*, October 1980, p. 28.

6 Cecil Osborne. *The Art of Becoming a Whole Person*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1978, p. 175.

7 Edmund Bolles. *Remembering and Forgetting: Inquiries into the Nature of Memory*. New York: Walker and Company, 1988, p. 139.

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11 Carol Tavris, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982, p. 38.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 144.

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16 Robert L. Wise, “Healing of Memories: A Prayer Therapy for You?” *Christian Life*, July, 1984, pp. 63, 64.

PSYCHOHERESY & INNER HEALING

Part Three

Parts One and Two dealt with four essential ingredients of inner healing. They are the **unconscious**, the **past**, the misuse of **memory**, and the eliciting of **emotions**. Part Three is about **imagery**, the fifth ingredient in the unbiblical stew called “inner healing.”

Imagery

The most potentially dangerous practice used by inner healers and by some psychotherapists is that of **imagery**. There is a natural imagery that occurs in all our minds. However, the type of **imagery** often used by many inner healers comes right out of the occult. There are three techniques (practices) used by mental alchemists (occultists) to manipulate reality with the mind. They are:

1. Thinking—positive mental attitude or changing circumstances by thought.
2. Speaking—mantra or positive confession.
3. Visualizing or imaging—picturing in the mind.

The most powerful of these three occult practices is that of **imagery** or visualization. All of the senses have images. The images of touch, sound, smell, and taste can be formed, but they are not as powerful as images created through visualization.

Biblical Basis

A predominant theme of inner healers is reliving earlier life (primarily childhood, but sometimes prenatal life) situations with Jesus. Here one must visualize Jesus. And why? Because inner healers believe that unresolved early life traumas continue to plague the Christian in the present and thereby hinder sanctification. According to them, there is a virtuous, spiritual reason for this kind of visualization. However, there is no biblical basis for this kind of inner healing. The Bible deals with truth and even warns against imaginations that would interfere with knowing God as He is, rather than as one might imagine (2 Cor. 10:5). The Bible is concerned with one's sanctification, but nowhere in the Bible is such an activity as visualizing or creating an image of Jesus allowed or even hinted at.

Inner healer Rita Bennett says:

As you pray, Jesus brings back to you what it is He wants to heal. You, the hurting person, **visualize** the scene as clearly as you can. Perhaps you may remember what you had on, where you were sitting or standing, something you smelled or tasted, and especially what and how you felt. Remember that the **memories** and **emotions** are permanently joined together, so **revisualizing** the scene clearly from your **memory** will put you in touch with your feelings, so that you can let Jesus heal them.¹ (Emphasis added.)

And, who is this visualized Jesus? According to the inner healers, the visualized Jesus is the real Jesus. As one of them says, "God's omnipresence becomes His manifest presence." We repeat: **they believe that the visualized Jesus is the real Jesus.**

Dave Hunt says in his book *Occult Invasion*:

Visualization has become an important tool among evangelicals as well—which doesn't purge it of its occult power. [David] Yonggi Cho has made it the center of his teaching. In fact, he declares that no one can have faith unless he visualizes that for which he is praying. Yet the Bible states that faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Thus visualization, the attempt to "see" the answer to one's prayer, would work *against* faith rather than help it! Yet Norman Vincent Peale declared, "If a person consciously visualizes being with Jesus that is the best guarantee I know for keeping the faith." ...

Of Christ, Peter said, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). In the previous verse he refers to a future "appearing of Jesus Christ." John likewise speaks of "when he shall appear" (1 John 3:2), and Paul speaks of loving "his [future] appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Visualizing Jesus would seem to be an unbiblical attempt to have Him appear before the proper time—unless, of course, one insists that it is only imagination. Yet those who are involved attribute results to this process that could scarcely be explained as resulting from fantasy conversations with oneself.

Furthermore, a "Christ" who would take on any color of hair or eyes and any form to suit the visualizer is not the real Lord Jesus of the Bible and history. Then who is this entity that appears in response to this occult technique to deceive Christians?²

Alan Morrison's book titled *The Serpent and the Cross: Religious Corruption in an Evil Age* includes a chapter titled "Sorcerous Apprentices: The Mind-Sciences in the Church Today." A subsection in that chapter is titled "In Your Mind's Eye: The Occult Art of Visualization" and is a must-read for those who want to learn about the roots and promoters of visualization in the church. The following quotations are from that section:

Fundamental to our study is the fact that the development of the imagination through "visualization" exercises is one of the most ancient and widely used occult techniques for expanding the mind and opening up the psyche to new (and forbidden) areas of consciousness.³

The practice of visualization can be used in a variety of ways, but they all fall into three main types. **Firstly**, they can be used to provide a doorway into what psychologists call a "non-ordinary state of consciousness." **Secondly**, they can be used as a means towards something called "Inner Healing" or "Healing of the Memories." **Thirdly**, they can provide an instrument for the manipulation and re-creation of matter and consciousness.⁴

Most of the people being seduced into the practice of visualization—especially those within the Church—have not the faintest conception of the occultic aim which lies at its root. In spite of the attractions and harmless benefits put forward by its advocates, visualization is a primary gateway for demonic infiltration into human consciousness—a deception currently being worked on a truly grand scale.⁵

This confusion of an *imagined* Jesus with the *actual* Person of Christ is the fatal flaw in the entire psychotherapeutic visualization process, about which we shall say more shortly. How convenient it is to invite the Jesus of your own imaginings into scenes where sins can be forgiven without repentance—not only those of others who have wronged you, but also your own!⁶

A further question can here be raised: if each of these visualized "christs" is *not* the objective, risen Christ of Scripture, then who or what are the entities which are conjured up in the imaginations of professing Christians and others who are encouraged to fantasize these images by Christian psychotherapists? The plain truth is that they are little different to those "inner guides" of the secular visualizer.⁷

What, therefore, should be the response of the Christian to the use of visualizations involving the image of Jesus Christ? Of primary concern should be the fact that this type of activity is specifically forbidden and warned against within the pages of the Bible. It is a solemn fact that every figurative representation of God contradicts His being; and although we do not wish to obscure the fact that Jesus (as God manifested in the flesh) was a real human being, **the conjuring up of a visualized image of Christ for the purposes of mental manipulation is surely a gross form of idolatry.** The last thing that the Christian should be doing is relying on such images in the imagination for guidance in life or to increase faith.⁸ (Bold Added)

Charles Hodge has said: "Idolatry consists not only in the worship of false gods, but also in the worship of the true God by images."⁹ J. I. Packer says that "Images dishonour God for they obscure His glory." He says, "They inevitably conceal most, if not all, of the truth about the personal nature and character of the divine Being whom they represent."¹⁰ Packer also says:

If you habitually focus your thoughts on an image or picture of the One to whom you are going to pray, you will come to think of Him, and pray to Him, as the image represents Him. Thus you will in this sense "bow down" and "worship" your image; and to the extent to which the image fails to tell the truth about God, to that extent you will fail to worship God in truth. That is why God forbids you and me to make use of images and pictures in our worship.¹¹

Imagining God in our heads can be just as real a breach of the second commandment as imagining Him by the work of our hands.¹²

All man-made images of God, whether molten or mental, are really borrowings from the stock-in-trade of a sinful and ungodly world, and are bound therefore to be out of accord with God's own holy Word. To make an image of God is to take one's thoughts of Him from a human source, rather than from God Himself; and this is precisely what is wrong with image-making.¹³

Within the theoretical framework of the **unconscious** and **past** determinants of behavior, the practice and the use of **imagery** often produce cathartic **emotions**. But, it is in the use of **imagery** or visualization that one can decidedly move the normal (natural) use of the imagination to that of an occult practice. It is particularly the conjuring up of an image of Jesus that can make it occult. This is exactly what Shamans do. Shamans seek spirit guides through an altered state of consciousness (ASC) in order to accomplish certain goals. The Shaman often consults his spirit guide and even travels with it on a Shamanic journey. The Jesus of the inner healer is **unlikely** to be the real Jesus, but more likely an occult spirit guide.

Guided Imagery/Hypnosis; Inner Advisor/Shamanism: David Bressler, Ph. D., and Martin Rossman, M. D., use and teach **imagery** considerably. Dr. Bressler says of the relationship of guided **imagery** and hypnosis: “They are the same.” Bressler and Rossman, in their workshop on “The Inner Advisor in Clinical Practice,” encourage speaking to an inner wisdom figure. Bressler says, “It is as I understand it the essence of shamanism.”¹⁴

They refer to it as contemporary Shamanism. Shamanism is witchcraft! Bressler and Rossman don’t care what wisdom figure you use. Jesus would be just fine with them. In fact, Rossman says that the most used inner guide by Catholics is the Holy Guardian Angel. What is the difference between a shamanistic practice of using any imaginary figure, including Jesus, and some Christian asking you to imagine Jesus? Or, is **imagery** as used by David Yonggi Cho in his book *The Fourth Dimension* any different from the **imagery** used by Bressler, Rossman and a host of other teachers of imagery outside the church?

Hypnosis: “The active ingredient in hypnosis is **imagery**,” declares Daniel, Kohen, M.D., Associate Director of Behavior Pediatrics at the Minneapolis Children’s Medical Center.¹⁵ Medical doctor Jeanne Achterberg says, “I don’t know any real difference between hypnosis and imagery.”¹⁶ (Bold added.)

William Kroger says, “The images you use are the most potent form of therapy.” He suggests that bad images make you sick and good images make you well. Kroger tells how he increases the power of the image. He says:

We now give an image in five senses, because an image in five senses now makes the image more potent. The more vivid the image, the more readily conditioning occurs.¹⁷

Robert Baker contends that “the greater or better the individual’s powers of imagination or fantasy, the easier it is for the individual to become hypnotized and to demonstrate all of the behavior others normally associate with or attach to the phenomenon of hypnosis.”¹⁸

There are ordinary, legitimate uses of the imagination. For instance one may mentally see what is happening while reading a story or listening to a friend describe something. Imagination and visualization are normal activities for creating works of art and for developing architectural designs and even scientific theories. However, imagination by suggestion may be so focused as to move the person into an altered state of consciousness with the images becoming more powerful than reality. Other dangerous uses of **imagery** in or out of a trance would be attempting to manipulate reality through focused mental power or conjuring up a spirit guide. Some people are led to imagine a quiet, beautiful place and once they are mentally there, the suggestion is made to wait for a special being (person or animal) who will guide them and reveal information important for their lives. That is a form of shamanism, and the conjuring up of an image of Jesus, as in Theophostic Prayer Ministry, can be shamanism.

Victim versus Sinner

In addition to the potential damage caused by the use of the **unconscious**, the **past**, the misuse of **memory**, the eliciting of **emotions**, and **imagery**, a grossly unbiblical result of inner healing is its propensity to treat humans as victims rather than sinners. Inner healers and those who go to them perpetually see the mote in the eyes of others rather than seeing the beam in their own eyes. Inner healers not only encourage the victim role, but they have a compulsive preoccupation with it. An inner healer asks one to dwell on “my hurts,” “my inner child,” mistreatment by others, etc.—all

victim roles. If one would count all the Bible verses about man as victim (sinned against) and man as sinner, they are about 100 to 1 in the direction of man as sinner.

Why do inner healers always dwell on the hurts received rather than the hurts given? If you really want to confuse an inner healer, tell him that you want to deal with **your** sins before others' sins and that you first want to think about all the joys of the past and thank God for them before doing anything else. That could send all the inner healers into a state of panic, that is, unless they accuse the individual of denial or bide their time before encouraging a journey into the dim past of the old self that believers are to count dead.

Proof?

The inner healers' use of the **unconscious**, the **past**, the misuse of **memory**, the eliciting of **emotions**, and **imagery** are false, fleshly attempts to deal with spiritual problems. When one functions in a fleshly manner in the spiritual realm, there is an openness to the sins of the flesh and even demonic spirits. Dr. Gumprecht, in her book *Abusing Memory*, says:

[Agnes Sanford's] criteria for truth was "Does it work?" It was not "what does the Word of God say?" She wrote, "Religion is an experience of God. Theology is merely an attempt to explain the experience."¹⁹ J. Gresham Machen called this mysticism: "Mysticism is the consistent exaltation of experience at the expense of thought."^{20 21}

No one knows the long-term results of the inner healers' practices. When dramatic claims are made, as they are by inner healers, proof of dramatic results must be required. Aside from personal testimonies, there is no scientific research that has established the efficacy of any of the brands of inner healing. Christians should stay away from inner healers who use methods described here. If you want real inner change, pray the prayer that God always answers: "Thy will be done" in my life. Then do two things that are far more productive than any inner healing seminar that we know: simply "trust and obey . . . for there's no other way."

Experiential Theology versus the Word of God.

We are in an era of experiential theology—a feeling theology. Theology is too often formed out of personal experiences. There is a movement away from a Word orientation to a feeling orientation, away from the Word as the basis for theology to feelings as a basis for theology. Experiential theology rarely equates to biblical theology. In fact, human experience is often the worst enemy of divine revelation.

Though the most popular writers in the inner healing movement include both men and women, it is our observation that the overwhelming number of participants are women. We read a secular book titled *Perspectives on the New Age*. It is obvious from what the writers say that the number of women involved in the New Age movement far outnumbers the men. One writer says: "I have argued that the New Age appeals to women because it values traits that have been traditionally attributed to women (e.g., intuition, nurturance, etc.)."²²

The use of the **unconscious**, the **past**, the misuse of **memory**, and the eliciting of **emotions**, and **imagery** are all fleshly, experiential attempts to deal with problems of living, not only in inner healing, but in a multitude of other individual and group activities in which Christians should not become involved. If we give in to experience, our experience will create our theology. We will have another Christ (created through mental imagery), another spirit (emotional sensations), and another gospel (salvation from victimhood and sanctification through catharsis).

God, save us from such folly!

(PAL V15N3 * May-June)

Endnotes

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- 3 Alan Morrison. *The Serpent and the Cross: Religious Corruption in an Evil Age*. Birmingham, UK: K & M Books, 1994, p. 426.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 426, 427.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 432.
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- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 443.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 447, 448.
- 9 Charles Hodge, quoted by J. I. Packer. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993, p. 39.
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- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
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