

# Theophostic Theology: God's Light...or Darkness?

## Introduction

This paper is a review of Beyond Tolerable Recovery (2000 edition), by Edward M. Smith, D.Min., who advocates an approach titled "Theophostic Prayer Ministry." (When the 2000 edition was published, the title was "Theophostic Ministry.") The page numbers in parentheses refer to the 2000 edition; the manual is revised and updated periodically. This book is a basic training manual used in seminars to train individuals who are interested in using the theophostic method. The name "Theophostic" is a registered trademark.

There are numerous other writings that criticize Smith's approach. This particular critique relies solely on Scripture and is intended to be a critical theological analysis. Our focus will be on the theological underpinnings of Theophostic Ministry, analyzing in terms of basic doctrinal categories, such as God, man, revelation, sin, justification, sanctification. There is no intent here to question the sincerity of Smith's saving faith or his desire to help suffering people, but rather to hold up his teachings and methods to the penetrating light of Scripture.

Early in the book, Smith explains that "ministry" is used rather than "counseling" in the title for his approach [2]. As we will see, theophostic "counselors" avoid actually giving counsel during their ministry.

Smith acknowledges that the theophostic approach is a major departure from his earlier work as a counselor, and he contends that it offers significantly greater hope:

"I used to tell people the damage was too deep ever to hope for complete freedom and recovery. I was very wrong." [193]

Throughout the manual, Smith zeroes in on childhood wounds that supposedly have led to embedded "lies" that drive current adult behavior. As to the magnitude of the alleged problem, he makes sweeping assertions:

"My estimate is around 75 percent of any local congregation is hurting deeply from early suppressed wounds. I believe 100 percent of the members of all congregations (this includes the pastors) have some element of woundedness (lies held in memory). Even the little bruises and scratches produce handicaps in our daily lives and need to be healed." [24]

Smith guesses that more than half of all women have been sexually "wounded" in some manner. He defines such abuse broadly to

include words and looks, in addition to actual touching. He believes the results are always devastating:

"When an adult (whom a child should have been able to trust) sexually touches the soul of a child in any fashion, a ghastly wound will always result." [25]

Describing his methodology, Smith claims that "Theophostic Ministry is more a set of principles and techniques than a prescribed set of steps" [114]. Nine such "principles" are identified, based on the account of the man who approached Jesus at the pool of Bethesda (see Chapter 7, "The Theophostic Process"). These principles involve matching current emotions with painful memories of being wounded in the past, identifying the "lie" believed as a result, and passively allowing God to speak a personal word of truth to the person. Smith contends that people are healed instantaneously when God "speaks" to them, and the healing that results allegedly "requires no maintenance or effort in abstinence" [114].

Smith attempts to distance Theophostic Ministry from guided visualization techniques that alter memories. He says that he encourages people to *feel* the presence of Jesus, rather than expecting them to *visualize* Him [141].

"Some may think this visualization is some glorified form of guided imagery. This is not so. I had used guided imagery before Theophostic Ministry, but it is no longer a part of what I do. I now recognize guided imagery as a vain attempt to change memories." [141]

What Smith describes is more of an "unguided" visualization, a process he claims is "God-directed" [141]. He may *ask* Jesus to touch or hold the person, but he does not tell his counselee to "have Jesus" act in some particular way [143].

Smith asks his readers to believe that true believers can be trapped for years because of childhood trauma:

"It is possible to believe and receive God's forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life and yet live one's life totally in bondage to the lies of one's childhood." [185]

Christians do mature at varying rates. Justification is complete at the time of salvation, because it is God's declaration that the sinner is "not guilty," based wholly on the finished work of Christ. Sanctification is a lifelong progressive work empowered by God's Spirit, and believers grow at different rates. However, Smith focuses on childhood wounds as the driving force behind adult behavior, minimizing the gravity of sin and substituting "healing" for holiness. The theophostic "recovery" process is essentially a substitute for biblical sanctification, as we will examine in greater detail. It poses significant dangers in terms

of casting logic aside, encouraging mysticism, and damaging family relationships by shifting blame to others. The memories that emerge during this "unguided" process may or may not be reliable. Although God offers an abundance of hope in His Word, He does not promise a life free of trials, pain, and suffering, nor does He require believers to take extended journeys into the past in order to overcome their emotional pain and sinful patterns in the present.

### **Smith's Response to Critics and Pragmatism**

Perhaps the biggest challenge in reviewing theophostic ministry is the manner in which Smith evaluates his critics and deflects any thoughtful biblical analysis of his teachings. He describes critics as harsh and mean-spirited, using his own theories to explain away their concerns. He claims their harshness is evidence of either the absence of Christ or emotional woundedness [4]. In reference to a particular unnamed critic, Smith believes that "someone has hurt him deeply along the way" and that theophostic writing has "tapped into this lie-based pain" [4-5]. More generally, he explains the critiques of other believers in terms of his own theory:

"Whenever you see people criticizing and berating others in the name of Christ, look behind the behavior for the wounded soul." [5]

In answering critics, Smith *assumes* the truth of the very matters under debate, namely his theories and methods. Anyone who dares to criticize him is presumed to be "wounded" and in need of his brand of therapy.

In response to those who would raise theological objections, Smith builds a defense based on results rather than a careful analysis of compatibility with Scripture. (As we will see later, Smith does use Scripture but he presupposes the truth of his own methods and reads his theories onto the passages he selects.) Here are some of his claims:

"This method does work and has set thousands of people free in ways I have never seen in all the years I have been doing counseling." [113]

"I realize that all of this visualization, symbolic pictures, and hearing God's voice may be difficult for some of you. It was for me when I first began. I have become a 'bottom line' counselor. I do not limit my thinking to how God should act or heal; I simply watch the bottom line. If the person is set free from his lies and pain and gives the glory and credit to God, I say, 'AMEN!'" [143]

Smith cautions against putting God into a "religious, denominational theological box we might try to create," explaining that "the box does not limit God, but it limits what we are able to receive from Him" [140]. He cites Ephesians 3:20 and says that "the only limitation that God has is in us" [140].

In response to Smith's pragmatism, we can certainly agree to consider the results of a ministry that claims to be biblically based. After all, Jesus did say that a good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bad fruit (Matthew 7:15-20), so it is biblical to consider the results of a ministry. However, results are not to be evaluated in isolation, severed from sound doctrine. The Bible warns us about *false signs and wonders* (2 Thessalonians 2:9). The fruits of a ministry must be considered within the framework of Scripture, never detached from God's Word. It is not enough to simply say "it works." As for placing God in a "box," Scripture itself issues strong warnings against wandering outside the "box" by adding to or subtracting from God's Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18). God's power is certainly not limited, and we could not limit Him under any circumstances. However, God has chosen to limit His written revelation, and we must exercise great caution when someone claims to have received new information directly from God, or a new view of God that is not necessarily consistent with what He has revealed about Himself.

Smith also claims that his critics have violated Matthew 18:15 [5]. However, that passage gives counsel concerning our obligation to privately approach other believers who have sinned against us, not authors who publicly promote new ideas. Smith's materials are available to the public on the internet and through his seminars. Although debate should be conducted in a kind-hearted spirit, Smith has opened his ideas to public scrutiny, and other Christians may -- indeed must -- test them against Scripture. Throughout the history of the church, it has been necessary to carefully and biblically evaluate teachings that concern our salvation, sanctification, and other crucial spiritual matters. Numerous ancient heresies were evaluated and condemned, sharpening the church's understanding of scriptural truth. Some of the early controversies, for example, concerned such important truths as the trinity and the two natures of Christ. Later, the Protestant Reformation reaffirmed the essential doctrine of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If theophostic ministry is biblically sound, it should withstand scrutiny without the need to ward off criticism by explaining the alleged "woundedness" of those who would search the Scriptures to see if it is true. Smith's apologetic rests on the assertion that he has received new information from God, that "it works," and that his critics must be in need of the very ministry they seek to evaluate under the searchlight of Scripture.

## Theophostic Ministry and the Church

The title to this section is identical to Chapter 16 of Smith's book, wherein he describes efforts to gain acceptance of his methods in Christian churches. Smith says that people frequently encounter "skepticism and sometimes blatant attack" when they attempt to introduce Theophostic Ministry into their churches after attending one of his seminars [251].

The first heading in this chapter is about "why the church struggles with the miraculous" [251]. Smith says that:

"...much of what we hold in our theological reservoir is logical truth with little or no actual life experience to support it.... Genuine faith is belief that is based on fact and rooted in personal experience." [251]

Smith anticipates some obvious objections when he observes that we believe in eternal life but have obviously not yet experienced it. He answers with Ephesians 1:13-14, which says that we have been given the Holy Spirit as the pledge of our inheritance. Smith calls this an "experiential pledge" [252] and rushes off in the direction of experience-oriented theology that casts logic and doctrine to the wind.

There are some biblical problems with Smith's "experiential" approach to both truth and faith. The Christian faith is truly rooted in certain historical facts, most notably the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has provided abundant eyewitness testimony in the New Testament. The "personal experience" component of Smith's theology is questionable, however. Note, for example, Hebrews 11. Faith is defined in the opening verse as the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. Repeatedly, believers in past centuries acted "by faith," not personally experiencing the fulfillment of God's promises. The Christian life is certainly not without personal experience of God's blessings, but such experience is not the foundation of our faith. When our Lord showed His nailprints to Thomas after the resurrection, He said that those who believe *without seeing* are blessed (John 20:24-29). In contrast to some modern psychological views, biblical faith does not rest primarily on personal experience.

Smith discusses several of his conclusions about the church in this chapter, along with barriers to acceptance of theophostic ministry and his view of the church's responsibilities. There is a mixture of truth and error here.

First, there are three admonitions Smith provides to those who wish to promote his methods in the church.

**1. "Avoidance of the name Theophostic or any other definers will remove unnecessary barriers when promoting this ministry." [252]**

Smith says that he "never thought that these simple Biblical principles would create such chaos and redemption at the same time in the Body of Christ" [252]. He explains that he chose the name ("Theophostic") to "protect the integrity and purity of the process," knowing that others would rework his principles. He says that some have actually done so, causing "confusion and in some cases emotional harm" [252].

Smith wants everyone doing this ministry to have the same training, and therefore:

"No one has permission to train others in any other form except for the presentation of the videos. The reason for this is to avoid watering down the basic material by presenting second generation interpretations." [253]

Smith notes his copyright and trademark protection, explaining that he is "simply protecting the purity of the approach so that the enemy does not use others to discredit this work by redefining it and administering it with detrimental results and then calling it Theophostic Ministry" [253]. However, he assures us that:

"After the local church gets used to God healing people, the name used to describe the process will be irrelevant." [253]

Frankly, no legal copyright/trademark protection is required for believers to minister *God's* biblical truth to one another. If Smith's principles are truly *biblical*, such legal tactics are not only unnecessary, but offensive to the God who revealed His truth in Scripture. (If anyone is entitled to a "copyright," it is God Himself.) In addition, it seems odd that Smith is so protective of his copyright, while simultaneously suggesting that the name he has coined for his ministry should be shrouded in secrecy in order to introduce his methods to the church.

**2. "Avoid the 'haves' and 'have-nots' syndrome." [253]**

Smith notes the division in the church caused by various spiritual movements, including the charismatic movement of the early 1970's and the contemporary worship style [253].

"Some of the more immature began to demand conformity to certain experiences that would 'prove' whether you were among the spiritually elite." [254]

Smith warns that those who have been healed through Theophostic should not present themselves as more spiritual than others [254].

This a good general principle, in that all believers are equal before Christ in terms of salvation, even though they progress in sanctification at various rates. One of the greatest harms in psychological counseling is the "one-up, one-down" sort of relationship that sets some believers higher than others. Although God's Word endorses qualified church leadership (pastors, elders, deacons), as seen in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, the Bible presents us with many "one another" admonitions that recognizes our equality before God.

**3. "Avoid moving ahead of the assigned shepherd of the flock." [254]**

Smith acknowledges the authority structure of the church that God has established, and warns that Theophostic Ministry will be hindered if the senior pastor does not support it. He advises patience, and perhaps moving to another church if necessary. When Smith first began his seminars, his own church did not embrace his methods, nor did other pastors in the area. Two years later he "felt led" to move to a different church. His own local area still does not embrace Theophostic Ministry. He cites Matthew 13:57 ("a prophet is not without honor except in his home town") [254].

We can credit Smith in his respect for church leaders, and not advocating his methods in a divisive manner (see Titus 3:10-11). However, as noted above, Smith has found theophostic ministry to result in both "chaos and redemption" [252]. We must wonder whether a truly biblical ministry would result in "chaos" and division. God revealed His Word over many centuries, and it has been completed now for hundreds of years. When some "new" means of sanctification claims to be genuinely biblical, careful examination is needed. If it really *is* biblical, why hasn't it been discovered and used in centuries past? In Smith's case, why doesn't the Bible ever expressly teach believers the tenets of theophostic ministry, e.g., that they must delve into the past and identify the "lies" causing their current sins?

Next, Smith discusses eight "fundamental barriers" faced by churches in embracing of "inner healing and mind renewal" [255-264].

**BARRIER #1. "The church has a misunderstanding of what defines spiritual maturity." [255]**

Smith believes the church wrongly defines maturity in terms of performance. He sees it as a "journey of being released of our faulty thinking through mind renewal and the ongoing

appropriation of the deeper things of God through Christian growth and discipleship." However, he believes the church will have a hard time "looking at her woundedness and lie-ridden mind" while on the "performance track" [255].

Sanctification is certainly far more than mere "performance," as Jesus pointed out to the Pharisees (Matthew 23:27-28). However, it does involve obedience and the practice of God's commandments (for example, Philippians 4:9, John 14:15). Smith focuses on "woundedness" in contrast to the Bible's focus on *sinfulness*, and his methods downplay the legitimate role of good works, or "performance," in the believer's life (see Ephesians 2:10).

**BARRIER #2. "The church has been led to believe that more knowledge will result in victorious living." [255]**

Smith says that having biblical knowledge is not equivalent to spiritual maturity. He sees that too much of what the church does to promote growth is "cognitive" [255].

Smith is correct that knowledge, per se, is not the same as spiritual maturity (or sanctification). James points out that even the demons have certain intellectual knowledge (James 2:19). Paul says that the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19). However, Paul also warns about the critical importance of sound doctrine (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Knowledge alone is not enough, but knowledge of God's Word is an indispensable aspect of the believer's sanctification.

**BARRIER #3. "The church has been trained to suppress and deny pain and woundedness with a false spirituality." [256]**

Smith explains that at church people will generally smile and say they are "doing great" rather than reveal their emotional pain [256-257]. (His church uses Theophostic Ministry in its worship services. [257]) He laments that "the Church has become a place of performance and false realities" such that a new believer learns that having problems leads to being ostracized. "In short, the new struggling believer learns to repress his needs and act like the rest of the group." [229]

Having diminished the value of both performance and knowledge, Smith now reveals his emphasis on "pain" and "woundedness." It is true that believers suffer in this world, and sometimes the burdens are overwhelming. We are called to compassionate "one another" ministry (see 2 Corinthians 1), and the Bible has wonderful words of comfort to the brokenhearted. Scripture also calls us to rejoice during our earthly trials (James 1:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7). However, it is not biblical to *emphasize* "feeling good" as the ultimate test of spiritual maturity. Sometimes, too, setting aside one's own hurt feelings,



to serve God and others, *is* a sign of spiritual maturity. The Bible never sets up the expression of perceived emotional needs, or the continual absence of emotional pain, as evidence of spiritual maturity.

**BARRIER #4. "The church has been taught to rationalize away its pain which hinders inner healing and mind renewal." [257]**

Continuing his focus on feelings, Smith says that:

"Now and then, people forget to repress their pain or something happens that it just *seeps* out before they can contain it." [257]

Often, Smith says, people search for an "external reason" for such behavior [257]. However, these reasons "are all excuses for lies from which we need to be set free" [258]. Smith says that if these "excuses" were the real reason, "then we would be trapped and in bondage from which there is no release unless the situation changes" [258].

Is this really true? We live in a world permeated by sin. Our own sinful actions, and the sins of others, often lead to hurt. "External reasons" may well exist, but it possible to respond biblically regardless of painful emotions. Again, "feeling good" is not the key to spiritual maturity.

**BARRIER #5. "The church's fear of moving beyond her present Biblical understanding and theological reality will hinder inner healing and mind renewal." [258]**

Here, Smith essentially chides the church for its unwillingness to consider new ways of understanding and applying Scripture. He cites Ephesians 3:20 for the claim that:

"There is a power that God grants 'us,' those who are willing to allow Him to be God and do whatever He wants however He chooses. The 'us' that hinders this power is failure to believe." [258]

This wonderful passage praises *God* because *He* is able to do "exceedingly abundantly" beyond what we could ask or think, according to the power working within us. The emphasis is clearly on God's power and glory, not man's alleged power to "allow" God to be God. In verses 20-21, Paul repeats the phrase "to Him" before ascribing glory to God. Then, in the next breath (4:1), Paul refers to himself as the *prisoner* of the Lord. The "power" working within us is God's power.

Continuing his rebuke of the church, Smith says:

"The old 'have never done it this way before' is a common saying among churches who have succumbed to the lies of traditionalism, denominationalism, methodology." [258]

How does Smith define these terms? Roman Catholicism wrongly exalts "tradition" to the level of Scripture. The mere fact that a church has always, or never, "done it this way," does not necessarily mean that a practice is (or is not) biblical. However, an entirely new understanding of sanctification ought to be closely scrutinized. God would not have left His church completely in the dark for centuries about how to live a godly life (see, for example, Ephesians 4:1, Philippians 1:27, and many others) and how to overcome sin.

Smith assaults "traditionalism" in light of the fact that theophostic ministry is a "new" understanding of Scripture. He claims that a skeptical person will become "ready for more" after first experiencing the healing of Theophostic Ministry [258], and he criticizes the church for its limited understanding:

"Often the church has defined for God what He can and cannot do based on its particular view of Scripture. More often than not, the limitations are not Biblically-based but rather historically-based." [259]

"Tradition and methodology are predictable and musty. God is a living being, offering a living and growing relationship." [259]

Similarly, Smith says, "the religious leaders of Jesus' day struggled with the healing of the blind man due to a legal technicality." The miracle "did not fit in their theology and tradition" [259]. Meanwhile, Smith acknowledges that traditions and theology are not to be entirely discarded:

"I am not suggesting that we throw out our traditions, theology, or doctrines. I am suggesting we not limit God to our present place of understanding." [259]

He also denies any intent to split the church over his method:

"I am not advocating splitting the church. I see denominationalism as nothing more than 'Dissociative Identity Disorder' in the Body of Christ." [260]<sup>1</sup>

Simply put, Smith uses a rather generalized attack on "traditionalism" and "denominationalism" to advocate his methods.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a new denomination results from the efforts to believers to be faithful to Scripture (see Jude 1:3). For example, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church was formed in the 1930's in response to rampant liberalism in the mainline denomination that denied the basic tenets of the gospel. It is highly misleading to call such faithfulness "dissociative identity disorder."

However, the fact that his method is a "new" understanding of Scripture does not mean that it is, or is not, consistent with Scripture.

**BARRIER #6. "The church's continual conformity to the world hinders her mind renewal. " [260]**

Smith says that the church "tends to stay just far enough removed from the world's evil to maintain its self-righteousness," but since God's standards remain the same, the church drifts further away as the world falls into deeper darkness [260]. There is certainly some truth here, but Smith concludes that: "Because we have moved, we have limited what we can receive experientially from the Lord Jesus" [260].

Smith's statement is a sweeping generalization about "the church." There are conservative, Bible-believing churches, and there are those who have gone the road of apostasy and abandoned the Bible. Conformity to the world varies widely among Christian churches. Such conformity does hinder individual sanctification, but more importantly, it hinders the church's witness to the world, blurring the good news of the gospel. Smith places great emphasis on the individual believer "feeling good," but little is said about preaching the gospel.

**BARRIER #7. "The church's love and affection for the world has resulted in her organizing herself around it." [260]**

Smith says that the church has embraced some unbiblical doctrines in its efforts to minister [260]. This is TRUE, and modern psychological counseling is a great example. Smith also notes the popular beliefs that trouble-free living and financial success are signs of God's blessing [260]. We can agree that this is not necessarily so. Smith also notes the church's adoption of a "consumer mentality" in planning worship. He believes people would travel from all over the world if they really believed we had something to satisfy their souls [261].

In addition, Smith observes that "the entire theology of suffering is being avoided in the pulpits across the nation" [261]. This is true in many churches, contrary to biblical promises that Christians will face suffering (John 16:33, Philippians 1:29). Smith also observes that the inner man is revealed by outward responses to suffering:

"The truth is, whatever is on the inside comes out when the pressure is applied. My inner belief will be revealed. If I believe lies, my emotions will tell you so." [261]

There is some truth here, in that man's words and conduct reveal the condition of his heart (Matthew 15:18). However, Smith again focuses primarily on *emotions*. Emotions are one aspect of the inner man, but godly living is much more than the absence of painful emotions when believers face trials.

There are some major problems with Smith's view of the nature of sin and how believers overcome it. He cites 1 Peter 4:1 ("he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin") and claims:

"Did you hear what Peter just said? He proclaimed a life 'free from sin.' How can this be? Actually, as you **apply the Theophostic grid over this passage**, it makes perfect sense." [262, emphasis added]

Smith explains that sin is (allegedly) rooted in the lies we believe, which are exposed by emotional reactions to life's problems [262]. Focus on the behavior leads to an endless cycle (confession, repentance, and attempts to change), or the "moment of pain" can be used to get into the memory that is the source of the lie [262].

"Therefore, as we '*suffer in the flesh*' our lies are revealed so that we may receive truth which allows us to be able to live life '*free from sin.*'" [262]

Significantly, Smith himself acknowledges that he is "applying the Theophostic grid" over this text. This is *eisegesis* (reading something into the text), rather than *exegesis* (drawing what God has to say out of the text), a dangerous way to study Scripture.

Suffering is a major theme of the book of 1 Peter, with Christ's suffering for righteousness' sake as our example. Believers are exhorted to share His suffering. The purpose is to glorify God and advance the gospel, not to journey into one's own past to dig up memories. The translation in 4:1 is not "free from sin" but rather "has ceased from sin." "Cease" is in the perfect tense here. There is a sense (particularly in context) of having ceased living a sinful lifestyle, devoted to the lusts of man, to living for the will of God. Smith really has to read his theories *onto* the text (*eisegesis*) in order to find what he wants to find in this verse.

**BARRIER #8. "The church must come to realize that her friendly relationship with the world actually sets herself up against God and makes her an adulteress." [263]**

Smith says he has had to "grieve the loss of this world" as he moves into healing and renewal of the mind [263]. Some of what he says here is good, in that this world is a sinful place

and the believer's true home is heaven. However, his focus quickly shifts to "woundedness" rather than sin:

"It is my belief that the Lord is releasing more and more of the deeply traumatized to seek help from the local church and Christian counseling centers. More than ever before, victims of horrible abuses are coming in for help." [263]

In spite of this development, Smith does not believe that current church programs are designed to really help [263]. He also claims that satanist groups deliberately "program" victims to turn to the church for help, knowing "that the church will embrace the wounded for a time and then grow tired and reject them," confirming what the satanists have taught [264].

These are serious and sweeping charges against the church. Note, too, how Smith has lumped the church with "Christian counseling centers," most of which are completely independent of any church oversight, using licensed "professional" therapists who happen to be professing Christians. It is here that the church often fails, i.e., by referring God's sheep outside the church for counsel rather than caring for souls. The church's "friendship relationship with the world" can better be seen in terms of the way so many believers have uncritically embraced modern psychology and attempted to integrate it with Scripture.

Finally, Smith discusses the church's call to minister to "the wounded." He begins by quoting Jesus in Luke 4:18-19, where He reads from Isaiah 61 [264]. He claims that "the church today is poor, held captive, blind and downtrodden and unaware that we are in the midst of the favorable year of the Lord" [264].

**A. "We are poor because we have been deceived of our true identity." [265]**

Smith cites portions of Ephesians 1, underlining some of the present realities "that the enemy has led us to believe we do not possess" such as: every spiritual blessing, being holy and blameless, adoption as sons, redemption through His blood, forgiveness of our sins, riches of His grace, inheritance, gospel, pledge of our inheritance (the Spirit), being God's own possession [265]. Yes, believers truly have these blessings. However, it does not follow that a newly discovered method, such as theophostic ministry, is necessary in order for Christians to appreciate their heavenly heritage.

**B. "The church is downtrodden (emotionally defeated) because she is worn out and defeated from her feeble and futile attempts at overcoming her lies by way of self-effort, determination and self-justification." [266]**

Smith says the church as a group is doing its best to "keep up a front" but that its self-efforts lead only to frustration and fatigue [266]. He explains that:

"If you could peek into the lives of the people before they get out of their cars, you would see weary, hurting people. You would see frustration, angers, brokenness, and discontent. Once they step out of their automobiles, a temporary miracle occurs that transforms them into Apostles and angelic deities." [266]

Supposedly, this describes all believers without exception:

"I see no distinction in who is wounded in the church. We are all wounded." [266]

This is a sweeping generalization, and one that ignores the church's fundamental mission to preach the gospel to a lost world. Freedom from emotional pain seems to be given a far higher priority than salvation or living to glorify God.

**C. "Being captive, blind, and downtrodden hinders the Church from fulfilling her mission." [267]**

Smith says that too often the church simply patterns its programs after someone else's ideas, whereas "true ministry comes from the heart of those set free" [267]. In addition, he says that: "So much of what drives us that we mistake as giftedness is actually our avoidance of pain or the masking of pain." Examples include the gifts of service (codependency), prophecy (need to be in control), and mercy/compassion (another's pain "tapping into our own woundedness") [267].

Human motives (which God alone knows with certainty) can certainly be a mixture. However, Smith again engages in huge generalizations about ministry motives. It would be difficult for any believer serving God and others to escape the sort of charges that Smith levels here.

**D. "The woundedness of the church manifests itself in many different ways: conflicts, disunity, mis-focus on programs rather than heart-born ministry, rejection of people in pain, inability to implement change, and a failure to fulfill Christ's calling." [267]**

Smith makes the far-reaching claim that:

"Conflicts and disunity in the local church can always be traced back to the woundedness of an individual." [267]

Notice the term *always*. Smith leaves no room for other explanations, including *sin*, honest disagreement about doctrine, or sincere desire to defend the faith.

Smith also notes the church's rejection of hurting people, saying they "do not fit in" and there is "no place" for them [268]. Sometimes, undoubtedly, difficult people do not receive ministry in the church. Often, however, they are referred out of the church to "professional" psychological counseling, rather than receiving ministry from God's Word and God's people, *free of charge*. "New" theories, such as theophostic ministry, only intensify this problem.

### **Revelation and Theophostic Ministry**

In thoughtfully evaluating Theophostic Ministry, it is important to consider whether it is grounded in established biblical truths, or a claim to new revelation that Smith has received directly from God, i.e., revelation somehow omitted from the Scripture. In addition, we must consider revelation and epistemology (how we know what we know), both before, during, and after receiving theophostic ministry. *How* does God speak to the individual believer at each point?

Smith himself acknowledges the need to test allegedly new revelation:

"When I have a person who professes to have a message from God for me I test the spirit very carefully. I NEVER assume just because they say it is Jesus that it is so." [142]

Similarly, we must not uncritically assume that Theophostic Ministry is from God, or that it is biblical. We must test its theology, its use of Scripture, and its underlying assumptions, in addition to the results claimed, to see if it is truly of God.

Smith rightly acknowledges certain limitations:

"Theophostic Ministry should not be used to gain insight into future events or for personal guidance for future decisions." [142]

Note, however, that God's Word does give certain insight into future events (such as the return of Christ), and does provide a reliable source of guidance for personal decisions.

One major source of concern arises from Smith's view regarding truth that is not explicitly stated in Scripture:

"Not all truth is recorded in the Scriptures but all truth is from God." [287]

"The fact is, not all truth is necessarily Biblically verifiable...." [287]

This is the familiar "all-truth-is-God's-truth" refrain recited ad nauseum by Christians who advocate integration of the Bible with modern psychology. In stating his view that the Scriptures are not the source of *all* specific truth, Smith refers to space travel and mathematics as examples [288]. In addition, he claims that "non-biblical information can be very helpful when dealing with the enemy" and affirms the use of approaches that have no biblical model but are "built on the general principles of Scripture" [287].

To be sure, all truth *is* God's truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. However, this little phrase does not support adding the speculations and theories of unbelievers to the Bible in areas where Scripture claims sufficiency. Truth regarding space travel and mathematics are not among those areas that the Bible claims as its exclusive domain. Discoveries in those subjects are based on truth established by God, such as the laws of physics, so that sort of truth is indeed "God's truth." However, there is a fundamental difference when we enter the moral arena, i.e., sanctification. God has expressly promised that in Scripture we have *everything* we need for "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3-4). We can live godly lives without space travel or mathematics, but not without God's revelation as to how we should live and how we can change. God has not left His church in the dark for hundreds of years on this essential subject. Claims to "new revelation" regarding how to make godly changes in our lives...are particularly subject to biblical scrutiny.

### **Is Theophostic Ministry a New Revelation?**

In denying that he claims new *revelation* from God, Smith explains his approach in terms of new *insight*:

"I do believe that God provides His Church with new insight in new methods of leading people to Jesus and into healing."  
[14]

In explaining the origin of his ministry, Smith claims that the "room" of "experiential knowledge" is the one that "contains the original memories and embedded lies which shamed them, causing deep feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and despair" [36]. He describes his frustration on the way home from a group meeting for "Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse," where "the ladies in this group all knew the truth of their innocence and yet were in bondage to the shame and fears of their abuse" [37]. It was during this trip that Smith says he cried out to God for a way to

"...bridge this gap between embracing the lie to knowing the truth.... I did not receive an answer that evening in the



car, but over the course of the next few weeks, simple yet profound principles began to emerge in my thinking. It was as though a spigot had been turned on and the insight of this process began to flow through my mind." [38]

Nevertheless, he claims no new principles, but rather "simple biblical truths" that have been "overlooked" [38].

Smith's disclaimer as to new revelation from God is not entirely consistent throughout his book. Although at times denying any claim to new revelation, elsewhere he makes exactly that claim:

"When I was open to learning a new approach, God began to **pour this information into my mind.**" [199, emphasis added]

"I could not write down the **new information** fast enough to keep up with **what God was saying to me.**" [199, emphasis added]

Is this...or is it not...a claim to be receiving new revelation, apparently hidden from the church in centuries past? This is no small issue in evaluating Smith's ministry. In spite of disclaimers sprinkled throughout the book, it is hard to escape the conclusion that theophostic ministry rests on a claim to new revelation outside the bounds of Scripture.

### **Epistemology Prior to Theophostic Ministry**

Smith is enormously concerned about uncovering the lies people believe that cause them emotional pain. This concern is one of the pillars of Theophostic Ministry. Smith proposes two general ways in which the conscience receives false information: (1) repeated exposure to the same information, and (2) traumatic events [215]. In discussing the sources of "embedded lies," he explains that "children will almost always misinterpret life," and sometimes an adult (often a parent) will tell a child that he is to blame:

"...my children have little choice but to believe whatever I tell them. The same is true for all children. Parents tell them who they are." [31]

A third source of lies is demonic influence [31], but Smith explains that a demon is "only present because of the deception in the person's mind...ridding people of demons does not release them of the lies they believe" [32].

**False Memories.** Smith is more concerned about "the lies the person believes" than whether a memory is true or false. He says that it is not so much what actually happened that is causing the trouble, but rather the person's interpretation of the event:

"Theophostic Ministry is not for the purpose of determining what was true or false in the actual event but rather what is perceived to be true in the event." [55]

Smith says that as memories are stored, there is also an interpretation of events, and that false interpretations cause emotional pain [209]. He goes on to say that when a situation arises, the brain searches for information, working according to priority with safety being the highest priority [209].

"If I was abused as a child, I will probably not interpret the experience with truth. I will assume that the abuse occurred as a consequence of something I did or did not do.... We are also falsely programmed through another's opinion of us." [358]

In discussing how a person can logically know truth yet still believe and embrace a lie:

"The lie is embedded in the memory banks of the brain while the truth is located in a different part with other logical facts. The person is not able to access both areas at the same time." [371]

People *do* misinterpret reality, and memories are often faulty. Sin, pervasive as it is, impacts every aspect of man, including the mind. Unfortunately, Smith is unconcerned with whether the memory of an event is actually *true*, and false memories of abuse have the potential for irreparable damage to reputations and relationships. Also, we should not uncritically accept Smith's undocumented assertion that a person is unable to simultaneously access "the lie" and "the facts."

### **Epistemology During Theophostic Ministry**

Much of the theophostic process focuses on retrieval of past memories, "stirring up the darkness," in order to access the "lies" that allegedly underlie current sinful behavior and emotional pain:

"To '*stir up the darkness*,' I have them focus on the picture and tell themselves the lie(s) (silently in their minds), allowing the emotions to surface." [135]

Later, the person being helped is expected to receive a direct word from God.

**Sources of Information.** Smith discusses several possible sources of information (and/or truth) during the ministry process. If the individual is "making it up himself," then "nothing happens as far as release of the painful emotion" [136].

Early in his counseling career, Smith might have considered the counselor a source of truth, but now his perspective has changed. He used to believe that the counselor's role was to supply truth, but now he insists that "only Jesus can enter into a person's historical reality and speak a present truth" [136].

"When Jesus enters into the person's memory, He is present tense. He walks about in the person's historical event and His words create a present reality in the person's historical moment." [137]

Demons are yet another source of messages [137]. Smith says that he has "been face to face with thousands of fully-manifested demonic spirits" [137]. He sometimes allows them to use the person's vocal chords, but never allows them to "act out physically or cause bodily or mental pain" [137]. Smith takes authority over demons when he encounters them, but cautions that:

"Until you are highly skilled in spiritual warfare, do not allow the demon to speak." [137]

Finally, Smith claims that physical memory can be used "to aid in recovery of repressed memory and the discerning of original hidden lies" [49].

**The "Correct Lie."** It is vitally important, according to Smith, to correctly identify the lie. Smith warns that:

"...if the correct lie (the lie that was planted in the original wound) is not discerned, no noticeable results will occur. You must discover the lie that matches the emotional pain in the memory, stir up the accompanying emotion, and then receive the divine truth." [69]

Smith cautions that God will *only* speak truth after the "correct lie" is identified:

"If you have not correctly identified the original lie, God will not reveal His truth." [96]

However, if you *do* correctly identify the lie, and God still does not speak, "you may be dealing with a cluster lie." At this point, Smith recommends that you stir up the other lies [96].

This identification of lies is potentially a never-ending process. An even greater concern is that Smith does not acknowledge God's speaking to believers in His Word. There is no biblical precedent for the statement that God will *not* reveal His truth unless certain "lies" are first identified. Such an approach makes lies more important than God's truth. Theophostic theology seems to be constructed on an edifice of lies rather than biblical truth.

**Logic.** Logic is cast aside in this whole process. Smith distinguishes "logical cognitive information" from "experiential knowledge" [34-35]. He explains by a "two-room" analogy that the "light is off" in the latter but "on" in the former [35]. In looking at memories during theophostic ministry, Smith is more concerned with whether a statement *feels* true than whether it actually *is* true [27]:

"You must keep him focused on what '*feels*' true, not on what is true." [127]

"Basically, I try to keep people focused on what they are feeling and the lies (what feels true, not what is true) and side step their logical reasoning." [97]

Smith apparently denies that there is any legitimate role for the mind in the process of his ministry:

"If you counsel with your clients in the room with the light on (where the logical truth resides), they can quote the Bible for you, affirm the truth, and see the illogic of the lie. Little will happen if you remain in this room. Logic and reason will not heal the wound. Reason is the enemy in this process. Logic is the cause of the defense mechanisms which have kept them from accessing their wounds and healing." [67]

In fact, Smith would cast aside valid concerns raised by logical thinking:

"A person may not be able to hear God's truth due to the power of the logical mind.... They are worried whether it is really God or simply their own thinking." [97]

If a counselee does try to analyze and explain an event, rather than entering the memory and feeling the pain, Smith cautions that:

"...we are not looking for the truth; we are looking for the lie. This analyzed truth will not heal them from the lie." [131]

Smith has counselees rate lies on a scale of 1 to 10, as to how true a lie "feels." [131-133]

The Bible never casts aside logical thinking in this manner. The intellect and the emotions are both aspects of the inner man, the "heart." Neither is to be summarily dismissed.

**Dissociation.** This discussion would be incomplete without some mention of "dissociation," which Smith proposes as the

explanation for cases where memories do not emerge in spite of painful emotion, or where memories occur without emotion:

"Whenever you have strong emotion yet the absence of any clear memory or no memory at all, or if you have clear memory with the absence of emotion, then you probably are dealing with some level of dissociation. The scope of this manual does not provide information on dealing with this condition but can be learned through the Advanced Training."  
[49]

This analysis fails to acknowledge other possible reasons for emotion or the lack thereof. Emotions may be related to current unconfessed sin, for example.

**God Speaks.** Smith looks to emotions to "speak" the "correct lie," and then he expects direct revelation from God to the counselee:

"When the three components [historical emotional 'echo,' memory picture, and embedded lie] are in place, God reveals truth, releasing the person of his lies and woundedness."  
[39]

"The emotion will speak its lie.... After the pain is embraced and the lie discerned, I ask the Lord Jesus to reveal truth." [112]

"When we are willing to look at the true source and origin of our emotional pain and embrace the lies, we experientially believe God will supply truth." [116]

"If God does not reveal truth soon after stirring up the darkness (12-15 seconds), stop and look for the reasons for His silence." [135]

Smith says that "God speaks" in "all the different ways He presents truth to the individual...not limited to speaking audio mental words" [2]. However, he proposes to distinguish such "speaking" from revelation, again trying to avoid the charge of new revelation:

"I am not suggesting that what God is revealing to people is new revelation." [3]

"I do not believe that He is speaking new truth nor truth contrary to what He has already revealed in the Scriptures."  
[14]

Instead, according to Smith, God is "personalizing His Word for the individual" [3]. As to God's methods of revelation, Smith says that He usually speaks words which come into the person's

mind [138], but such words are never contradictory to Scripture [139]. Other times, He uses word pictures (light, colors, objects, items with symbolic value) [139]. If the image cannot be readily understood, Smith prays to Jesus for an interpretation [139].

Smith assures his readers that God's truth will enable positive changes in the way people handle their lives:

"It is possible and appropriate to discover truth which can, and will, in turn change the way we emotionally respond to current life situations. When negative emotions control people's lives, it is due to their inability to appropriate God's truth for the given situation." [47]

Yes, God's truth does change our responses, including our emotions. The problem, however, is the manner in which Smith accesses "truth." It is *biblical* truth, such as God's promise of eternal life, that completely reorients the believer's life. The truth that Smith endorses is supposedly consistent with Scripture, yet Smith pushes the Bible to the side in his ministry, waiting instead for direct revelation.

**Concluding, Confirming and Continuing the Process.** At the conclusion of theophostic ministry, Smith has the person "look back and feel through the memory to determine if true healing has occurred" [150], making sure that "the memory is completely free of pain" [112]. He looks for "residual emotion" to see if additional lies need to be processed [151]. Smith cautions that such additional lies may emerge, and there may be "splinter lies" presently in memories that are now peaceful [153]. He also says that there will sometimes be a physical ache, often in the chest or stomach. If so, he encourages the person to ask Jesus to take that pain onto Himself [152].

In spite of numerous claims to permanent and complete healing, Smith cautions:

"If you have a 'Jesus' proclaiming complete healing such as saying, 'You are completely whole' or 'It is finished,' beware!" [151]

Explaining further, he says that "we are on a life long journey of mind renewal...take authority over this 'Jesus' and cast it out!" [151].

This proposed "life long journey" of processing "lies" is actually a substitute for the life long process of progressive sanctification, wherein believers are conformed to the image of Christ, becoming more like Him in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

In talking about how Jesus Christ "reveals His freeing truth," Smith claims that "I am not saying that God is giving new revelation." (Smith repeatedly disclaims "new revelation.") Instead, he claims that the truths revealed are "consistent with what He has already given in His Word" [14].

Smith even criticizes a counselee's own attempts to look to the Bible for truth. For example, he explains the use of Scripture by a person who wanted to "perform" in order to please her counselor:

"She would use her knowledge of the Scriptures and quote biblical texts out loud instead of simply listening for God's special truth for her. The things she was expressing were indeed true, just not 'the truth' she needed to hear."  
[107]

It appears here that "listening" to God's "special truth" is more important than the study of God's revealed truth in Scripture. It is true that people may misunderstand, misinterpret, and misuse Scripture at times. However, Smith's approach is dangerous, in that all sorts of special, individual truth is allegedly "heard," and it may or may not align with the Bible.

Smith's timing is also suspect, in that Scripture is viewed as a mere addition to what an individual has heard directly from God. Smith says that *after* God has spoken to the counselee, he "supplements" that truth with "supportive additional truths from the Bible text" [201]. He explains that God "exchanges old life for new and beauty for ashes" [152], but God's written revelation is clearly relegated to a secondary, supplementary role:

"I will bless them with positive affirmations and sometimes with the reading of Scripture that relates to what God has said to them. I will then ask the Lord Jesus to affirm the reality of the healing." [152]

Smith's placement of Scripture in such an inferior position, exalting *new* individual revelation, poses serious dangers.

### **Theophostic v. Psychotherapy**

Smith straddles the fence in his position on the validity of psychological counseling. His opening "Statement of Faith and Belief," aside from his radical trichotomy, sounds reasonably orthodox in terms of the trinity, Scripture, deity of Christ, salvation, and evangelism. Smith acknowledges here that "man's ways (of counseling) have not produced what God's word says should be happening in the counseling setting" [vi]. In these opening pages, the believer who wants to be biblical in his ministry will want to keep reading.

In his first chapter, Smith distances his method from any sort of counseling, explaining to readers that he uses the term "ministry" rather than "counseling" [2]:

"If you do true Theophostic Ministry then you cannot rightfully be accused of counseling." [13]

Again, such statements may appeal to believers who want something other than psychologically based "Christian counseling," and to those who truly want to minister to others and not merely give problem-solving counsel. Readers may be further encouraged when Smith says he wants "something which can go beyond what secular traditional therapy is doing," namely, complete, permanent freedom from bondage [17]. He describes his counseling experience prior to theophostic as requiring considerable time: "...a person coming to me with a sexual abuse history would need to be in therapy for at least two years, and for as long as three to five for some." Now, he expects "drastic, remarkable change in the first session" [10]. Christians truly are free from the penalty and power of sin because of the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:1-14), but more analysis is necessary to test the claims of theophostic ministry.

Smith laments the fact that Christian counselors needlessly seek the accreditation of the secular community:

"I wish we could see our advantages over them and their humanistic approaches. We have something they do not have. We have truth and authority to bind the enemy and to loose the captives.... The trouble is that we have left our foundational position and have accepted 'another gospel.'" [17]

"...much of what we do as Christian counselors is no more miraculous than what our secular contemporaries are doing. The sad thing is we tend to look to them for direction, approval, accreditation, theories, and practice rather than standing alone with God in the area of faith, trust, and the divine. We have forgotten from which we were hewn." [116]

Indeed, the tenets of modern psychology are well labeled "another gospel," and the church need not look for worldly accreditation or approval for its personal ministry among believers. It also appears encouraging when Smith appears to expose the flaws in so-called "Christian counseling":

"We have bought into the secular psychological model which is medical and humanistic. If you take the spiritual robes off much of what we call Christian counseling, you will find basically the same foundation as is holding up the secular world of psychology. This foundation has two primary



humanistic stones. The first is 'self-help' (human effort)." [23]

Smith further explains that other "stones" in this foundation include the medical model and "it's not my fault," both of which "may be rooted in lies" [23]. We can agree with Smith that "self help," the medical model, and a victim mentality are not biblically grounded.

However, at many points Smith endorses psychology, or at least opens the door sufficiently so as not to alienate his readers. Early in the book, Smith says he doesn't intend to criticize "traditional therapy" [5], but is "just excited about a more effective way" [21]. He doesn't want to dismiss psychology, and criticizes those who "demand a biblical model for all they do in ministry," because modern man uses new approaches in *other* areas of life [7]. Smith describes his previous counseling as "secular theories of psychology dressed up in Sunday clothes" [193], but in almost the same breath he says:

"I am not seeking to discredit the value of secular psychology, but it truly has its limitations." [193]

Which is it? Another gospel? Or a valuable method that simply has "limitations"? Smith tries to appeal to believers on both sides of this controversial issue, but in the process he may well lose both audiences.

**Training for Theophostic.** While Smith presents his method as being biblically sound and distinct from professional psychotherapy, he repeatedly insists that those interested in doing the ministry must receive appropriate training. He encourages the reader to "do this ministry only under qualified supervision" or to fulfill state requirements for licensure [9]. At the same time, he claims that the church must accept responsibility for "setting the captives free," that professionals cannot do it all [8]. He encourages accountability, which could be a church, pastor, counseling organization, or state license [9]. He warns against using his methods with "dissociative disorders," those with "multiple alters," and victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse, until having received the advanced training offered by Smith at his Kentucky retreat center [19]. Generally, such an approach tends to create an elite "priesthood" of counselors who hold themselves above other believers. All Christians have access to God's Word and Spirit, although we certainly need much "one another" ministry so that all may grow in their faith.

Further, Smith endorses some other works, such as Dr. James Friesen's "Uncovering the Mystery of MPD" [101]. He cautions that:

"If you are not familiar with this condition, do not attempt to work a person through his memories. You can cause greater harm than good if you are not qualified to do so."  
[149]

Again, rather than affirm that believers are competent to minister to one another (Romans 15:14), Smith insists that ministry requires "professional" credentials. Certainly, believers can minister more effectively following their own study of the Scripture, good Bible teaching in their churches, and wisdom acquired through years of godly living. However, it is not necessary to have a psychology degree, or to complete a specific training program, in order to minister to others in the body of Christ.

### **Theophostic Ministry and the Counseling Relationship**

Smith's view of the counselor's role has gone through a major reconstruction since the development of theophostic ministry:

"Before Theophostic Ministry I viewed my role of counselor as one who diagnosed problems, offered steps of correction, and encouraged application.... I believed people were in trouble due to their lack of truth and skill in applying the truth." [192]

The role of the counselor, or theophostic "minister," has several different aspects that Smith discusses: participating follower-helper, discerner, spiritual advocate, affirmer-encourager, interpreter, discipler-teacher, and bearer of burdens (p. 193-197, Chapter 12). All of these appear to be founded on general biblical principles for believers ministering to one another, but serious weaknesses emerge. The most troubling aspect of the counselor's role is that both Scripture and logic are set aside in favor of an experiential approach.

Smith carefully limits the theophostic minister's role. The limitations he proposes have the sound of spiritual humility, but unfortunately, God's revealed Word (Scripture) is secondary to whatever the counselee perceives to be a direct revelation from God. Smith says to acknowledge Jesus as your leader and work as His assistant:

"Ask Jesus if He would like to do this or that; do not tell Jesus what to do. Do not tell the person what to do either, but make gentle suggestions." [194]

There is an element of truth here, in that it is truly the Holy Spirit who changes the believer's heart, and of course, we ought

never be so presumptuous as to tell Jesus what to do. However, as the apostle Paul said to the early Roman Christians, we are competent to counsel one another (Romans 15:14), having been equipped with the knowledge of God's Word. Smith's approach is more of a touchy-feely experience that can easily be distorted.

Smith sees the counselor as a "discerner" who senses the leading of God in order to discover the "hidden lies" [194]:

"Often times in the process I will have a thought or word enter my mind. I have come to trust these impressions as God's gentle promptings of His leadership and direction." [195]

Smith says he never forces an idea on a person, nor does he say "God told me," but he asks "Does this feel true to you..." [195]. While it is good for the *counselor* not to claim new revelation in the context of counseling, the *counselee's* feelings are exalted as the final arbiter of truth, and the *counselee* is expected to be "told" something directly by God.

Smith defines the counselor's role primarily in terms of facilitating the "lie identification" process, rather than giving counsel, and he insists that truth must be received directly from God and not from the counselor:

"We can discern the lies together, but to be healed requires you to receive a personal Word of truth directly from the source of truth (no, not me your therapist)." [24]

"The primary reason that he needs to hear from Jesus and not us is because of the time frame in which the truth is being received.... He needs the truth spoken into the memory. I cannot do this. I can speak a truth at the memory, but it will only be received logically in the present tense. Jesus supersedes all time. He is all-tense." [355]

If God's "personal Word" were derived from the Bible, the first statement would be a good one. Instead, Smith proposes a type of direct revelation to the counselee.

Smith distinguishes Theophostic Ministry from cognitive therapy in that with the latter, it is the therapist who must discern the faulty thinking and supply truth. Both are concerned about replacing lies with truth [31], but the theophostic counselor facilitates the process by pushing logic to the side:

"I find I have to be much more directive in this process than ever before to keep people from being logical and to keep them moving along through the process." [107]

Smith is thus directive, but he directs *away from* the Bible and the logical thought processes that God has given us as creatures

made in His image. Rather than opening God's Word, Smith's approach is to look for personalized guidance through words (from God) or some other means of communication:

"Throughout the discerning process, the therapist must remain totally dependent on the Holy Spirit's words of knowledge and the person's inner awareness to guide him/her to the lie.... Once the lie is discerned and the darkness stirred up, God will speak or show truth through some means." [70]

Smith describes a "three-way conversation" that occurs in his counseling, wherein the counselor's role is to evaluate the genuineness of what the person believes he has heard from God: "I ask Jesus, He speaks to them, they tell me what they think He has indicated, and I discern its reliability" [136]. At the same time, Smith rarely attempts to interpret the "experiential truth" a counselee hears from God; he does so only if the person still does not understand after asking Jesus: "When the right interpretation is made, they will know it is right" [197].

However, what about the content of this "truth"? Throughout his discussions of the counselor's role, Smith insists on direct revelation from the Spirit rather than using the Word that God has already revealed and instructed us to use in ministry to one another. Theophostic ministry places fallible human beings, both counselor and counselee, in the role of evaluating a new "word" allegedly received from God. Meanwhile, the Word God has provided (the Bible) is intentionally set aside. Logic is only introduced at the conclusion of the process, when Smith affirms the truth God has spoken to the counselee [196] and provides "supplemental truth" [197]:

"It is now, after having received experiential truth in their foundational memories, that they are able to appropriate logical truth and teaching." [197]

Experience and feelings are set above reason and logic as the standard by which "truth" is to be judged.

Smith has some counsel for the counselor preparing to minister, and some of it is based on valid biblical principles for ministry:

1. "Enter into each session with an open mind and a readiness to learn something new." [199]
2. "Prepare yourself to stand against the enemy." [199]
3. "Arm yourself with truth." [201]
4. "Enter each session with a pure heart." [201] Smith says to "spend a few moments alone with the Savior yourself"

and pray for the people to whom you minister. He also prays during the session [201].

5. "Know your place of authority and stand in it with confidence." [202] (This has to do with authority over the manifestation of demons, a subject to be reviewed in a later section.)

Certainly, effective ministry to others requires the believer to spend time with the Lord, be armed with truth (God's Word), and pray for others.

Smith also warns about the counselor's motives, but unfortunately buys into secular "codependency" theory:

"Sometimes, we want healing for the person more than he wants to be healed. I think this may result from our own co-dependency and lie-based woundedness." [106]

"When we organize ourselves around another's pain and need for healing, we are codependent. We need to be free of the lie that causes us to stress out over others' pain. Sometimes our own woundedness is confused with compassion." [145]

There are problems here, in that a believer may genuinely desire freedom for a loved one, particularly an unbeliever, more than that other person appears to desire change. The motive may or may not be godly, but it isn't necessarily always "lie-based woundedness." Only God can truly discern the motives and thoughts of the inner man (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10).

Smith also warns that the counselee may be motivated by a desire to please the counselor:

"Some people will feel a great need to perform for [the counselor] as their helper" and therefore "try to create truths" to accomplish the counselor's goal, rather than wait for God to reveal truth. [107]

Such things do happen. However, this particular problem could be eliminated entirely by relying on the truth God has revealed in His Word, rather than expecting some new "truth" to emerge.

### **Theophostic Theology: The Nature of Man**

Any counseling theory must rest on some view of the nature of man. God created man, both male and female, in His image, to glorify Him and live in covenantal fellowship with Him. Man has been separated from God by sin. This is the most basic, fundamental root problem from which arises all of the problems encountered in the counseling context. Deviations from this

theme inevitably fail to produce the type of change that God desires in His people. Smith recognizes the reality of sin, but he is far more concerned about wounds inflicted by others than he is about godly responses. He also digresses from biblical truth regarding human nature.

### Radical Trichotomy

Smith proposes a radical division of the inner man that ought to disturb even those believers who hold to a trichotomous (body-soul-spirit) view.

First, note Smith's view of creation:

"He [God] breathed life spirit into a body of living organic flesh and equipped this dichotomy with a third counterpart called the mind. It is from this mind that the spirit man (the spiritual breath of God) is able to live life on the planet we call earth." [203]

Genesis 2:7 teaches us that God formed the first man out of the *lifeless* dust of the earth, then breathed into him so that he became a "living soul." This lifeless dust can hardly be described as a "dichotomy." There is nothing in the text to suggest any sort of "living organic flesh" *before* God breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. Aside from this basic problem, the two sentences quoted above are barely coherent. If the "third counterpart" is the "mind," what are the two parts in the original dichotomy? Body and spirit? How could that be, when there was no spirit until God's in-breathing? Does Smith equate the mind and spirit, as the third counterpart?

Smith says that the primary damage of abuse is to the "soul or mind" of the person, rather than the spirit:

"James the Apostle wrote to the early Christians that they could have their *souls* saved (rebuilt, renewed, restored) by receiving the Word of God implanted" [203].

Smith says he was confused about this text because he believed the soul of a Christian is already saved. He now believes that this passage is not the same as the salvation of the *spirit* in 2 Corinthians 5:17 [203], the familiar verse about the believer being a "new creature in Christ." Smith says that "all things" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (which are "made new") does *not* include the body or mind, which are still "programmed" the same as prior to conversion [204]. "All things" only includes the "inner man" (Ephesians 4:24) [204]. Smith explains that (supposedly):

"The spirit is righteous yet blinded in part by the deception held in the mind. The mind needs to be renewed (Romans 12:2) so it will stop hindering the perspective of the redeemed spirit." [206]

The trichotomous view of man arises out of the alleged sharp distinction between "soul" and "spirit." Smith claims that the Old Testament uses "soul" and "spirit" as synonyms, but the New Testament does not [204]. He cites 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (a frequently cited proof-text for trichotomy) and Ephesians 4:23-24 [204]. He claims that the "soul" can be identified by "subtracting" the body and the spirit from the whole man [204]. However, a review of several reputable Greek lexicons used by theologians, as compared to Smith, reveals that there is considerable overlap in the New Testament between the terms soul and spirit:

SPIRIT - SMITH'S DEFINITION:

"Who he [a person] is inwardly," "his individual unique eternal being, created in the image of God at conception," "the spark of life breathed into man which will never die" [204]. The spirit is fallen and separated from God, due to sins and due to separation inherited through Adam [204-205].

SPIRIT (*pneuma*):

1 - blowing, breathing, wind (Bauer);<sup>2</sup> movement of air (Thayer);<sup>3</sup>

2 - breath, (life-)spirit, soul (Bauer); vital principle by which the body is animated (Thayer);

3 - spirit as part of human personality; immaterial part of man when used with flesh in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Colossians 2:5 (Bauer);

4 - source/seal of insight, feeling, will; inner life of man (Bauer); the rational spirit, the power by which a human being feels, thinks, wills, decides; the soul (Thayer); a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting (Thayer); the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one, the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire (Thayer);

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, translated by William J. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (second edition), (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957 and 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Grimm S. Wilke S. *Clavis Novi Testamenti* translated and revised and enlarged by Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981).

5 - spirit as an independent being that cannot be perceived by the physical senses (God, angels, evil spirits) (Bauer);

6 - Holy Spirit (Bauer); God's power and agency (Thayer);

Thayer's definition of pneuma notes that pneuma and psyche are used indiscriminately most of the time (1 Thessalonians 5:23 is an exception).

SOUL (psyche):

1 - (breath of) life, life-principle, soul (Bauer); breath, breath of life, vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing (Thayer);

2 - earthly life itself (Bauer); life (Thayer);

3 - the seat and center of the inner life of man in its many and varied aspects, including feelings and emotions (Bauer); the seat of feelings, desires, affections, aversions (Thayer);

4 - seat and center of life that transcends the earthly (Bauer); the (human) soul in so far as it is so constituted that by the right use of the aids offered it by God it can attain its highest and secure eternal blessedness, the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life (Thayer);

5 - that which possesses life, a living creature (Bauer); that in which there is life, a living being (Thayer);

6 - an essence which differs from the body and is not dissolved by death, noting "disembodied" souls in Acts 2:27, Rev. 6:9 (Thayer).

Smith claims that the "mind/soul" is distinct from the spirit and has the following functions: (1) stores and retrieves memories, (2) uses those memories to think and reason, (3) accumulates values and perceived truths, (4) supplies emotions that match the person's beliefs [206]. Smith expressly excludes the "will" (choosing to act), which he believes is a function of the spirit [206]. What about choosing to believe in Christ? Using Smith's theory, it isn't possible (and he isn't a Calvinist), because the spirit has not been renewed. (Scripture does affirm man's inability to believe, apart from regeneration



[Matthew 7:17-18, 12:33-35; John 6:35 ("come" to Jesus means having faith in Him), 44-45, 64-65; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14, 12:3]; however, the Spirit causes regeneration prior to saving faith.)

The sharp soul-spirit division proposed by Smith does not withstand scriptural scrutiny, and there are serious implications for ministry.

### **Truth, Knowledge, and Conscience**

Smith proposes two categories of truth: (1) non-experiential, non-emotional ("logical"), and (2) experiential [206-207]. He claims that "experiential" knowledge overrides logical truth in times of crisis [207]. He also insists that such non-logical "knowledge" is buried beneath the level of conscious awareness:

"Much of our belief system is not accessible from a conscious perspective. It is experienced from the subconscious mind in the form of sensations and feelings."  
[208]

Smith defines the conscience in terms of "experiential knowledge," calling it "the storehouse of previously established truth" [211]. He claims that "much of what a person says he believes is not in his conscience" but is "merely stored, categorized brain information" [211]. This is the "non-experiential," logical truth category proposed by Smith. But the conscience, according to Smith, does not fall under the "logic" category:

"Conscience truth is what we live by. It governs our life and choices." [211]

To effect changes in living, Smith insists that this non-logical "conscience" is what requires change: "If a person is to experience healing, the conscience must be reprogrammed" [213]. Citing Romans 12:2, Smith insists that the renewing of the mind in this verse could not be simply receiving new information:

"Simply filling our database with new information will accomplish very little in transforming our lives. Transformation occurs when we reprogram the conscience with truth." [215-216]

We could agree that mere information, per se, does not change lives. Even the demons have some accurate theological information, but without saving faith (James 2:19). Jesus taught us the importance of the human heart as the source of all sorts of sin (Matthew 15:15-20; see also James 4:1-3).

However, Smith's radical division of the inner man throws us off the biblical track here. He sees the spirit as redeemed and righteous, but the soul/mind as still needing to be "saved" or "healed." (The Greek word for "save" can mean "heal" in certain contexts. Careful exegesis is required to discern the correct translation and meaning, e.g., in James 1:21. See later section regarding Smith's exegetical errors.) This inner dichotomy may seem a convenient explanation as to why Christians continue to struggle with sin, but it is not biblical. The unredeemed "soul/mind" is allegedly driven by experience rather than logic, and this is the part of the inner man that Smith claims is hurt by the sins of others (abuse). Smith thus tosses Scripture to the side in his ministry, despite God's assurances of its sufficiency (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:3-4). Personal responsibility is grossly minimized by Smith's theory that the mind is driven by "knowledge" that is buried below the level of consciousness.

Notice how Romans 8 describes the Christian life. As believers, we walk according to the Spirit rather than the flesh (8:4). Those who walk according to the Spirit set their *minds* on the things of the Spirit (8:5-6). How does this reconcile with Smith's insistence that the "soul" or "mind" is not fully redeemed? The mind of the unbeliever, by contrast, is set on the flesh and cannot subject itself to the law of God or please Him (8:7-8). This sorry state does not apply to the believer, who by definition has the Spirit of Christ and belongs to Him (8:9-10). The contrast portrayed here (believer v. unbeliever) is set forth in terms of the *mind*, contrary to Smith.

### **Repressed Memories**

Smith's theophostic approach is grounded in the assumption that traumatic memories can be repressed so as to become inaccessible to the conscious mind. This is an example of the "experiential" knowledge that allegedly drives human behavior. He must make such an assumption, in order to support the claim that it is necessary to retrieve such memories and the "lies" embedded in them. Smith has no patience with his critics:

"I cannot comprehend people who want to deny the reality of repressed memory. The only explanation I have for these people is that they are either lacking experience working with people in pain or else simply in denial of the obvious." [56]

Smith explains his response to such critics in pragmatic terms, claiming that some of his former counselees have:

"...the perfect peace of Christ after having embraced the repression and received truth from Jesus.... They will have already done everything else available in typical counseling

but by simply embracing their repressed memories and receiving a freeing truth from God they are restored." [57]

Still another response is to presume that critics are themselves guilty of the type of sin that is likely to create a "repressed" memory:

"If I were seeking to hide my evil deeds I might want to discredit the reliability of what others remember." [57]

Thus Smith explains away criticisms of the repressed memory phenomena, without considering the possibility that there might be genuine theological concerns about his methods.

### **Dissociation**

The "repressed memory" phenomenon goes hand in hand with Smith's view of "dissociation." Smith says that he does not thoroughly cover this topic in the basic text we are reviewing, but he believes it occurs frequently:

"Whenever I encounter a person who can feel strong emotion yet cannot locate the memory from which it is coming, I suspect some level of dissociation." [376]

Smith believes that dissociation is a means of denying that some traumatic event ever occurred:

"The primary lie of a dissociative system is that the event never happened." [376]

He also appears to believe in "multiple personalities" that emerge in connection with such a "dissociative system":

"...before you can access the memory you must gain permission from the protecting system (often alters) to go there." [376]

"The alter did not go through the event; he is a projection coming off the memory event protecting the conscious mind from the pain and doing functional jobs in the present life." [376]

"It [the alter] is a mental functioning part of the person doing a specific role." [376]

"Multiple personalities" split the inner man even more than Smith's radical trichotomy. There is no apparent limit to the "alters" that may be present. This has serious implications for evangelism as well as sanctification. Scripture views human beings as *whole* persons, as we see in the command to love God

with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. (See Discernment Publication's critique of The Mystery of MPD, by Dr. James B. Friesen.)

### **Man as a Moral Agent**

Smith claims that God acts in the context of total helplessness, and therefore a declaration of "total helplessness" is "a necessity in the Theophostic process...we call this act 'stirring up the darkness'" [115]. Smith has the person "embrace the lie in the memory and confess it as true" [115]. At the same time, he believes that man's "free will" is left intact:

"A person's free will is never violated in the Theophostic process." [115]

"Theophostic Ministry will not release people of their lies against their will." [164]

As an example, Smith describes the case of a young man who was using people to escape responsibility, but refused to confess this sin and "let go of the rewards of being a victim" [164-165].

Essentially, Smith asserts an unbiblical view of human will:

"We have been created as free choosing agents. God does not nor will He violate our free will." [228]

The problem with this is that if God did not "violate our free will" by graciously granting new life (regeneration), there would be no conversions whatsoever (Romans 3:10-18; Psalm 14:1-3). Man is a moral agent who makes moral choices and is fully responsible for his actions (free agency), but the will is in bondage to sin apart from God's gracious intervention. The unbeliever is only able to decide between alternative sinful choices. Many verses affirm the inability of the unregenerate man: Matthew 7:17-18, 12:33-35; John 6:35, 44-45, 64-65; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14, 12:3; Ephesians 2:1-2. Smith sees man as being able to make the initial choice required for salvation, but *not* the choices following conversion that would lead to godliness [228]. His thinking is reversed. Man requires a renewing of the will by divine intervention in order to believe in Christ. Then (see Romans 6), being set free from the power of sin, the redeemed man has the ability and freedom to act in a godly manner.

Smith is closer to the truth when discussing the ability of the *regenerate* person, if the term "saved" is substituted for the word "healed" in passages such as this one:

"Theophostic Ministry will not prevent people from making wrong choices after they are healed." [168]

Citing Romans 7:22-8:2, Smith says:

"Just because I am now free from the lie (sin) does not mean I will not choose to sin again. I still have a choice but the power of sin has been broken." [170]

Yes, believers do continue to make sinful choices after they are saved, but Christ has broken the power of sin so that that are now able to make righteous choices.

Nevertheless, Smith reads his own method onto the Scripture. In discussing the woman caught in adultery, after Jesus said she was not condemned:

"She could go right out and commit adultery if she chose to. But if you are free from the lie which was driving your behavior, you are less likely to do it." [169]

Smith presupposes that "lies" learned earlier in life are what actually drives behavior, contrary to Scriptures such as James 1:14-15 and Matthew 15:15-20, which teach that sin is rooted in the lusts of the heart. While the Bible sees a radical turning point at the time of *salvation*, in terms of the believer's ability to make righteous choices, Smith marks that change at the time of theophostic ministry.

Similarly, note how Smith apparently places discipleship, teaching, and sanctification *after* his approach has been used to deal with the past:

"That is why continual discipleship and teaching in God's truth is imperative for people after they have been set free." [169]

Biblically, God's people should be disciplined and taught His truth *in order to* deal with past sins (of themselves and others), as well as present sin.

### **Family Systems**

Smith proposes a family systems theory that assumes "a person's troubles are systemic in nature." This means that "if one person is upset, all the others will react and respond to that upheaval" [381]. His view of the family is (not surprisingly) bound up with his view of the individual, trapped by "lies" that result from some experience of being wounded:

"...family conflict is nothing more than lies that are systemically linked and perpetuated throughout the family system." [382]

"Almost always the family conflict is rooted in individual woundedness" and not in the present situation [383]. Smith

explains the behavior of children as "a combination of both the lies they have embraced and a reflection of the marital relationship or other primary adult relationship in their life" [383]. Then, "when the parents in the family system heal and begin to relate appropriately, the children often reflect this change" [384].

Certain, Scripture places a premium on good family relationships, and God gives serious instructions to parents in the raising of their children. However, Smith again assumes that family conflicts are rooted in *woundedness* rather than *sinfulness*. This unbiblical approach to the problem results in unbiblical solutions. Instead of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, Smith would direct troubled families to take an excursion into the past to see where they have been hurt by others, rather than facing their own sins in the present.

### **Theophostic Theology: The Nature of Sin**

The entire methodology of theophostic ministry focuses on the sins of others (wounds) rather than our own sins, past and present. There is an underlying assumption that we *cannot* proceed with godly living in the present until we focus on and are "healed" of the effects of sins others have committed against us in our childhoods. To his credit, Smith notes the tendency to use terminology that softens sin, e.g., "premarital sex" instead of fornication [220]. He also affirms that a believer is eternally sealed, and that his sins as a Christian do not impact his eternal destination [220]. Smith acknowledges that the only cure for sin is the cross of Jesus Christ, citing Hebrews 9:22 [221]. Nevertheless, there are serious theological problems with his view of sin.

### **Sin-Based Theology or Lie-Based Theology?**

Smith's entire theology regarding sin is grounded in the assumption that sinful behavior is driven by "lies" rather than man's sinful nature, desires, and heart. He says that "sin-based theology believes that the root of my problem is my sin," i.e., "we walk in defeat...because we have a sin nature and we choose to sin rather than choose to walk in righteousness" [225]. He claims this "doesn't work," that the success rate with this approach is low and produces "a church who denies her true state of woundedness." He compares this state of the church to that of Laodicia (Revelation 3:17-18) [225].

Smith does affirm his belief in man's fallen state and the atoning blood of Christ as the only way to be right with God [225]. However, he confuses even this truth by proposing some sort of "true self" that is separated from God:

"Before we come to Christ in faith, we have a fallen nature. Our true self is separated from God by our sinful state."  
[230]

The Bible simply says that we are separated from God by our sin. The whole person is separated, not some imaginary "true self."

Smith proposes a different explanation for the sins of a Christian, who is no longer separated from God:

"A true believer's sinful behavior is not rooted in a sinful nature but in deception of his experiential knowledge."  
[230]

At this time..."the source of my sin problem is no longer in my *heart*...my trouble with sin is now in my *mind* or lie based thinking" [225, emphasis added]. This mind-heart dichotomy is inconsistent with Scripture, which refers to the *thoughts* and intentions of the *heart* (Hebrews 4:12). Smith cautions that if we focus on overcoming sin, "we will wind up in legalism, perfectionism, and self-effort" [225-226]. He discusses three common beliefs that he alleges are erroneous.

**1. That we can overcome sin and live in victory through determination and self-efforts [226].** Smith contrasts this with the church's rejection of "works salvation." Elsewhere, he says it is not victory to cease a sinful behavior, and suggests that we may "overcompensate with religious behavior" [219].

"Any attempt to overcome our lie with adjusting our behavior is works salvation and 'falls short of the glory of God,' as does any sinful choice. This is not true victory but rather switching the lie's mode of manifestation." [219]

As we will discuss more thoroughly in a later section, Smith confuses justification and sanctification, and he fails to see the legitimate role of human efforts and participation in the latter.

**2. That "abstinence" is victory in our battle with sin [226-227].**

"I am afraid that much of what we call Christian victory is merely controlled behavior and little more than what a nonbeliever could achieve if he just set his mind to it."  
[226]

Smith notes the "abstinence" goal of support groups, viewed as a "badge of honor" [226]. While it is true that mere outward holiness does not please God (Matthew 23:27-28), the New Testament repeatedly exhorts believers to conduct themselves in a

godly manner (for example, Romans 6:12-14; Ephesians 4:1-3, 17-24; 1 Peter 1:14-17).

**3. That we must be willing to turn from sin and choose God in order to overcome sin [227-228].** Smith affirms that we must choose to turn to God as our only hope for redemption, but claims it is impossible to willfully choose to turn away from sin. He rejects this definition of repentance, saying it is just another act of self-effort rather than faith [227]. Smith says the New Testament word for "repentance" does not mean turning away from anything, but simply to change one's mind [227].

Smith's view does not square with definitions of the Greek word for repentance, "metanoia." Bauer's lexicon, for example, says it *does* mean to "turn away" from something, although it is also defined as a changing of mind (Thayer). However, that "change of mind" is itself a "turning away" from sin. Kittel<sup>4</sup> observes that the New Testament uses "metanoia" to describe a one-time total conversion, beyond the call to sorrow for sin and make restitution. Notice that turning *toward* God is also necessarily a turning away from sin.

Biblically, repentance, like faith, is indeed a *gift* of God, not self-effort: Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25, Lamentations 5:21. There is thus a grain of truth in Smith's position, and he does acknowledge true repentance as God's gift, citing James 1:17 and 2 Timothy 2:25. He also notes that true repentance is a consequence of God's kindness (Romans 2:4) and the result of godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) [228]. But again, Smith presumes that the "change of mind" God grants is equivalent to his theophostic ministry approach.

**4. That confessing sin has some effect on the lies at the root of our sinful behavior [229].** According to Smith:

"The truth is, confession only removes the stains of the immediate defilement but makes no provision for the lies which are at the root of our sinful choices and source of temptation." [229]

Smith claims that all of this "self-effort" only leads to a "false sense of spiritual maturity" [229].

Smith presupposes his "lie-based" theology in reading the Scriptures. His comments fail to account for the simple truth stated in Scriptures such as 1 John 1:9, that if we confess our sins, God is *faithful*, both to forgive and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.

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<sup>4</sup> Kittel, Gerhard and Friedrich, Gerhard (editors), translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (abridged in one volume). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.



## "Sins of the Fathers"?

Smith makes a sweeping generalization about the impact of wounds that are not "healed," and thus indirectly about the necessity for his approach to ministry:

"The symptoms of every wound not healed will be passed down to the next generation.... This is without exception."  
[188]

Smith bases this on a reference to the Old Testament passage about the "sins of the fathers" being passed down from generation to generation. He says that a molested person will not necessarily molest his own children, but the wound will impact his manner of dealing with them [188]. Some of the "symptoms" allegedly passed down include the following: (1) inability to remember childhood, (2) feelings of shame and guilt, (3) sexual dysfunction, including difficulty feeling intimate (4) difficulty expressing emotions [189], (5) compulsive/addictive behavior, (6) other (low self-esteem, inadequacy, suicidal thoughts, fears, poor partner choices) [190].

The biblical text, "sins of the fathers," is found embedded in the Ten Commandments, specifically, the third commandment regarding idolatry (Exodus 20:5). God is prohibiting the worship of false gods (idols), and it is *He* who "visits the iniquities of the fathers" on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him. The sin here is not generalized, but the specific sin of idolatry, and it is God Himself who causes the consequences. However, this "visiting the iniquities on the third and fourth generations" is immediately followed by God's promise of covenant faithfulness to *thousands* of generations of those who love Him. The comparison is a critical part of this passage, because of the comfort it should bring to those who love God. This text simply does not support the view that individuals who are sinned against as children *must* undergo something like theophostic ministry to heal wounds resulting from the sins of others, or be doomed to pass on the "symptoms" to future generations. However, Smith bases his counseling method, and his view of sin, on the assumption that "woundedness" is *the* root problem that will inevitably impact future generations.

## Man's Fundamental Problem

Smith defines the fundamental *problem* of most counselees in terms of emotional pain and woundedness, including guilt and shame for those who have been sexually abused [11].

"Theophostic Ministry says you are in trouble as a consequence of lies embedded in your memories. These lies are dictating your thinking and behavior each time the memories are accessed when present life triggers them through associations." [24]

"I often tell people who are carrying deep wounds that there is very little in their present life that is not being impacted by the original wound." [364]

Interpersonal conflict is similarly attributed to wounds, rather than sin:

"I find people are not really in conflict; they are just wounded, 'bumping' into each other's wounds or lie-infested painful memories." [15]

Scripture, however, does not teach such a view. In James 4, for example, we are told that conflicts result from lust, envy, and wrong motives.

Smith tries to draw a sharp line between woundedness and sin, and the solutions for each:

"The only cure for sin is the cross, but woundedness comes about as a result of someone else's sinful actions.... We don't need to be healed of sin. Sin is atoned through death on the cross." [82]

The line is blurred, however, as we consider specific situations. For examples, Smith describes a pastor who had an affair with a woman in his church. Smith led him through a trail of memories, back to a time when he experienced abandonment and rejection as a small boy. The pastor exclaimed to Smith that this memory was "the reason" why he "did all those other things." Then: "When we returned to the first memory of the sexual affair, he found release as he was able to **forgive himself** now that he understood **the reason** for his failure" [80-81, emphasis added]. Smith uses "woundedness" as an *explanation* for what the Bible clearly defines as sin (adultery in this case). He refuses to look at sin in the present without an excursion into the past to find some sort of "wound" as the real culprit:

"Most of our difficulties and pain have been with us for most of our lives.... If we blame our present situation for our emotional pain, we are destined to remain crippled." [115]

"The hurtful behavior by one person to another is often their reaction to the pain they feel coming from their woundedness." [125]

Smith flatly denies that sin is the primary problem, particularly for the struggling believer:

"I want to suggest that if we focus on sin as being the problem (and repentance and abstinence as the solution), we

set ourselves up for ultimate defeat and a cycle of perpetual confession, repentance, and self-effort." [219]

"I do believe that sin is the root of the problem in the life of 'fallen mankind,' but not in the heart of those who are 'partakers of the divine nature.'" [219]

The Scripture does make a radical distinction between the believer, who has been made alive together with Christ, and the unbeliever, who is dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-6). The Holy Spirit indwells the believer, who is enabled to follow God's commands; the unbeliever does not have the Spirit and therefore cannot live righteously (Romans 8:1-17). However, believers continue to wrestle with sin during this lifetime. The Bible does not say that sin is no longer the fundamental problem once a person has been saved (see Romans 7:14-25, which Smith discusses but reinterprets according to his own presuppositions).

### **Defining and Distinguishing Sins and Wounds**

In focusing on pain as the fundamental problem, Smith makes a sharp distinction between sins and wounds. He redefines the redemptive work of Christ in terms of his own definitions, saying that most people who come for counseling "are carrying deep wounds they neither asked for nor deserved," although in some cases pain is the result of willful sin [218].

Smith defines wound as:

"...any act or word inflicted by others upon the wounded person, which has been embedded with a misinterpretation or lie." [218]

Distinguishing sin, he says:

"When I use the word sin, I am referring to any behavior we engage in as a result of choices we make which are less than God's ideal desire for our lives." [218]

Smith goes on to claim that sin often results from "vain attempts to relieve ourselves of our pain" [218]. He cites one of the Greek words for sin, *harmatia*, which means to "miss the mark."

"When we seek to heal ourselves, we 'miss the mark' and never know the full restoration God intends for us." [218]

Thus Smith seems to define sin in terms of the relief from emotional pain that we fail to receive from God, rather than in terms of failing to live our lives to glorify God (2 Corinthians 5:15). The focus is reversed, and there is nothing in his definition of sin that acknowledges man's rebellion against God.

In terms of remedies, Smith differentiates between sin (our choice) and wounds (inflicted apart from our choice) [221]. He says that both require divine intervention, but of a different type: the cross for sin, and "the touch of a risen Lord" for wounds [221].

"Woundedness must be healed by an experiential reality of the presence of the Lord Jesus in the historical moment." [221]

"Our wounds are not dealt with by the death of the Lord but through the pain He endured, for 'by His stripes we are healed.' The payment and remission of sin requires His death while *our afflictions and emotional woundedness require He suffer*. He suffered death to free us of our sin but *He suffered pain in order to heal our emotional woundedness*." [221, emphasis added]

These fine-line distinctions, between sin and wound, then between suffering death and suffering pain, are not to be found in Scripture. The Bible does explain that Jesus took on human flesh and is therefore able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 2:14-15, 3:14-16). However, the overwhelming focus of Scripture is on the sacrifice He made for our *sins*. That sacrifice included physical suffering as He went to the cross, but the goal was to make atonement for sin. Notice how 1 Peter 2:21-25 begins with a statement of Christ's suffering but then leads directly to a statement that He bore our *sins* on the cross (2:24) so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The Scripture from Isaiah 53, cited above, is quoted here in 1 Peter 2:24 so as to unpack the preceding phrase, i.e., our being "healed" by His wounds means that Christ has atoned for our sins and enabled us to live for righteousness. There is no hint in this text that our wounds require a different sort of remedy. The whole passage about Christ's suffering and death presupposes that sin is the fundamental problem.

### **"Lies" as the Explanation for Sin**

Smith traces sin to "faulty thinking" and believes it will inevitably resurface if the lie is not identified and removed. The pattern he suggests is (1) some temptation or situation that triggers an original lie, (2) emergence of a matching emotion, (3) the enemy provides a "workable solution" for those feelings, (4) confession and repentance, but with only temporary success [219]. He traces his view of sin back to the first man and woman:

"In the Garden of Eden, the first wrong step the couple made was not the sin but rather listening to the lies of the serpent." [230]

Smith fails to see that listening to the serpent, rather to God, was in itself sin. His solution for sin is to correct the sinner's thinking:

"People's hurtful behavior is rooted in lies they believe to be true. If the lies are removed and replaced with truth, it will make no sense to continue such behavior." [346]

Certainly, it is important for every believer to spend time learning *God's* truth, as revealed in His Word. However, this rather simplistic explanation/solution, where sin is attributed almost solely to *thoughts*, does not do justice to all that Scripture reveals about the motives of the heart. In the Garden, it is true that Eve believed the serpent's lie, and that Adam followed after her. However, Genesis 3 also shows us how Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, delightful to the eyes, and desirable for wisdom (3:6). In the New Testament, the love of the world is similarly described, in terms of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Passages such as Romans 1:18-32 teach us about sin as the worship of the creation in place of the Creator. Sin is not reduced to merely the believing of a lie. The serpent's lie is one critical factor in the fall of mankind, but it is not the whole picture.

Smith differentiates between the guilt that results from sin and the "false shame and guilt" that results from believing a lie [222]. He defines the basic problem, not in terms of the actual event (such as sexual abuse) but in its interpretation:

"The child will self-destruct by repeating the lie over and over to himself throughout his entire life." [33]

"The controlling factor which hinders our lives is not in the memory itself, but the lie (false interpretation given about the event) embedded in the wound." [59]

Smith misses the point made in Romans 1, that sinful man has exchanged God's truth for a lie. There is an element of sinfulness in "believing the lie" that is completely absent from the theophostic approach.

Smith makes a significant distinction between sin committed prior to salvation, and sin thereafter. The former, he says, occurs because we are sinful, but the latter *because the mind is deceived by lies* [4]. Smith attributes incredible power to such "lies," offering something of a blanket explanation for all of our sins:

"The lies embedded in our memories are powerful forces which impact everything we do. It is nearly impossible to act outside of the lie's persistent controlling restraint." [58]

"As long as the lie remains, we are destined to sin or at least live a crippled life of self-effort, controlled behavior, emotional burn-out, and defeat." [117]

"Whenever a lie is put in place through a life event, this lie becomes the grid from which the brain makes its future choices." [61-62]

Here are the ways in which Smith claims a "lie" can affect us in the present:

1. Interpretation of life around us [59].
2. Choosing relationships [60].
3. Creating perpetual life themes that replay [61].
4. Transferring pain, shame, guilt, and fear into presenting relationships, hindering intimacy [62].
5. Creating an "insatiable void" which the person tries to fill with sex, money, food, people, career, drugs [63].

As we consider a couple of these alleged consequences in more detail, we see how Smith explains all sorts of sin in terms of "lies" traceable to early life experiences.

For example, here is how Smith explains problems relating to other people:

"If we remain in a relationship long enough, the people with whom we relate will eventually do something that will trigger and access an original wound. This trigger does not have to be very closely related to the original. Once the memory is accessed, out will come the lie, gushing forth its ugly emotions." [62]

"I have discovered marital conflict has little to do with the marriage. Marital conflict has to do with individual woundedness which is being stirred up by another's actions." [62]

Based on this mindset, Smith tries to lead people to their "original woundedness" [62] rather than looking at relationships in terms of what is happening in the present. For example, here is how he advises married couples:

"First, I would help them reframe their conflicts by refusing to view their partner as the source of their pain but rather as the trigger that connects them with their own suppressed woundedness.... Second...they will need to view their partner's hurtful behavior as symptomatic of his or her own woundedness." [361]

Smith explains excessive behaviors in a similar manner:

"Addictions, obsessions, and compulsions are usually rooted in lies." [63]

To his credit, Smith says that he does not subscribe to the "medical or disease model" for alcoholism [65]. However, he claims that such behaviors "are a vain attempt at healing a wound apart from God's grace by masking the pain" [190]. He reads his lie-based theory onto this type of sinful behavior:

"I believe if you are able to access the memory which contains the lie and expel it with truth, all you will have left is the physical addiction. I believe physical addiction is temporary and will diminish with an extended passing of time." [65]

"The reason people are 'always' alcoholics, drug addicts, or foodaholics is because the lie remains embedded in the memory." [65]

Theophostic ministry presupposes that sin is *caused* by lies that people believe as the result of interpreting early life experiences. Although children may indeed misinterpret life, there is much more to sin than what people think and believe. James 1:13-16, for example, explains the progression from lust, to sin, and finally to death. Smith mentions this very text and the chronology presented, but here is how he describes the first step on the path to actual sin: The initial desire is rooted in what the person falsely believes to be true. This deception, in turn, is rooted in "experiential knowledge" [230]. Smith notes the Greek word for "being drawn aside" in James 1, comparing the progression of sin with fish bait [230]. While this is an accurate observation about the Greek word in James 1:14, where the sinner is carried away by his own lust, the text does not trace the lust itself to faulty thinking or to the sins of other people in the sinner's childhood.

#### **Truth: Logical or Experiential?**

In moving from the "lies" that allegedly underlie sin to "truth," we see again how Smith defines truth in terms of individual experience rather than God's revelation:

"The problems people bring with them into counseling are not the result of their having a lack of truth. Most people possess more truth in their logical minds than they will ever practically apply. The problem is not their lack of truth which keeps them in bondage but rather their inability to embrace the truth they already logically know." [34]

Smith explains sinful choices in terms of choosing to adhere to "experiential knowledge":

"In the moment of decision, I dissociate from the logical choice of truth and fixate on the experiential knowledge rooted in falsehood. This explains why a person would give up his family and career for a night with a prostitute." [47]

Does it really *explain* such serious sin? Again, such "explanations" of sin bypass biblical teachings about the rebellion and lusts of the heart.

### **Unconfessed Sin and Receiving Truth**

Smith believes that unconfessed sin can be a barrier to receiving personalized "truth" during theophostic ministry:

"God will not speak a freeing truth to one who holds onto sinful behavior whether it be a conscious act or not." [161]

"Another reason people do not receive truth in their ministry session may be due to unconfessed sin." [106]

Smith explains that "Theophostic Ministry cannot remove appropriate shame and guilt" [161]. Where unconfessed sin blocks the process of receiving truth, Smith has the person confess, repent, and ask forgiveness [161], and he helps them "to see their utter helplessness in ever overcoming it themselves" [147]. He also tries to lead the counselee "feel" forgiven [161]. In such circumstances, here are the steps Smith recommends [105]:

1. Make sure person is willing to let it go.
2. Ask them twice.
3. Lead them through the prayer of confession.
4. Return to the memory.
5. Stir up any residual emotion (shame, guilt, etc.).
6. Ask the Lord Jesus to reveal His truth.

Where is anything like this in Scripture? Smith seems to contradict himself elsewhere when he says:

"The Bible says we are only responsible to '*confess our sins*' in order for God '*to forgive us our sins and cleanse us of all unrighteousness*' (1 John 1:9-10)." [147]

The admonition in this passage says nothing about any requirement to stir up memories and emotions, or to receive some individualized revelation. Believers are instructed to confess their sins, knowing He is faithful to forgive and cleanse -- period. Smith can cite no Scripture instructing Christians to take an extended journey into the past to uncover the sins of others.

In addition to his comments about true unconfessed sin, Smith discusses the "false guilt and shame" of people who have



done nothing wrong, saying that "logic and reason" cannot talk them out of it [238]. Sometimes, according to Smith, guilt or shame is not genuine but comes from "lies embedded in childhood memories" [161].

"The shame and guilt from a lie are so believable that the power of the lie keeps the person from hearing God." [161]

"If we choose to act out differently from the perceived truth in our conscience, we will suffer the consequences of guilt, condemnation, and scolding from our conscience." [214-215]

Smith asks the person to pray a prayer confessing such perceived "sin." [161] Nevertheless:

"False guilt cannot be removed with confession of sins one did not commit. False guilt is removed by hearing the truth of one's innocence from a holy and righteous God." [161-162]

Frankly, Smith's discussion about sin leads inescapably to the conclusion that theophostic ministry is not even intended to address this fundamental problem of mankind. Instead, Smith's approach centers almost exclusively on the so-called "false" guilt and shame allegedly arising from the sins of others.

### **Trichotomy and Sin**

Smith's radical three-part view of human beings has significant impact on his view of sin. He says that sin "separates our *spirit* from God" and "is made powerful by the lies which are stored in our minds making it a struggle and to do what our righteousness in spirit desires" [47, emphasis added]. In looking at Romans 7:15, he says:

1. Our righteous *spirit* desires to act righteously but is limited to the information of the *soul's* experiential knowledge.

2. When our *spirit* chooses to act, its options are limited to the *soul/mind* memory information.

3. The result: our behavior is less than righteous."

[205, emphasis added]

Again, this theory essentially holds that a Christian is *unable* to live a godly life *unless* he undergoes Theophostic Ministry and identifies the "lies" and "wounds" in his past that allegedly hold him captive in the present. Smith's radical division of the inner man facilitates a viewpoint that allows a believer to be separated from God, and yet saved, at the same time. The spirit

is righteous but supposedly in bondage to the soul, bound to the lies of the past.

### **The Role of Emotions**

Like many approaches grounded in modern psychology, theophostic ministry places undue emphasis on emotion. Relief from emotional pain is a goal held far higher than overcoming sin and living a godly life. Smith traces lack of joy to two sources, both of which concern the person's relationship to God. First is unconfessed sin, and second is "the lies which we embrace as truth" [361]. The latter is the overwhelming focus of theophostic ministry. In a nutshell, Smith focuses on the relief of emotional pain resulting from flawed thinking.

To his credit, Smith recognizes the sinfulness of many emotional responses, but unfortunately, he attributes them entirely to flawed thinking:

"According to the Scriptures, negative emotions such as fear, depression, abandonment, hopelessness, worry, anxiety, and powerlessness are all the result of faulty thinking and misbelief." [45]

"According to the Scriptures, there is no instance in life where *these* negative emotions are righteously appropriate. For example, the emotions of worry and anxiety are never biblically acceptable in the life of the believer." [45, citing Philipppians 4:6]

There is some truth in the second quotation, as we see by reading Philipppians 4, but the Bible does not support the thesis that all such emotions are caused by "faulty thinking" rather than other factors, such as, e.g., sinful desires of the heart or idolatry.

Smith acknowledges that sometimes negative emotions may be appropriate, for example, anger at injustice or guilt over real sin [47]. However, he attributes *most* of these emotions to false guilt and shame acquired in childhood [47].

Forgiveness. Smith notes that people may still "feel" guilt and shame even after confessing sin and receiving forgiveness. He has them "stir up" their memory of the sin and focus on the shame and guilt, then "listen" for Jesus to speak [237]. Thus, where there is guilt produced by real sin, Smith credits theophostic ministry for enabling the person to *feel* forgiven, as if God's forgiveness hinged on emotion:

"Theophostic Ministry can make it possible for a person to be relieved totally from his shame and guilt. I often hear people say, 'I have always believed God forgives me of my sin. But now, I not only know it, I feel it deeply.'" [47]

Nowhere does Scripture state the necessity for "feeling" forgiven.

"Defense Mechanisms". Smith borrows from secular psychology when he encourages counselors to become acquainted with "defense mechanisms," which he describes as childhood methods of emotional survival" [103]. He lists projection, rationalization, reaction formation, and displacement [103-104]. Smith urges counselors to become equipped with information, noting that "this topic will be discussed in most general psychology books" [146]. He is correct about coverage of the topic, because these alleged processes arise from the theories of Sigmund Freud, one of the most outspoken atheists of the twentieth century who did not hesitate to voice his hatred of God. However, note that he does not direct counselors to the Scripture to learn about these alleged "defense mechanisms."

Fear of the pain in the memory: According to Smith, some people refuse to go through the process of looking at their memories because "they are too frightened, shamed, or dissociated to get in touch with the original pain" [104]. But where does God ever say that it is necessary to "get in touch" with such pain?

Anger and revenge: Smith says that both sin and lies produce negative emotions. Where sin is involved, Smith proceeds in much the same way that he does with "innocent woundedness," looking for emotions connected with the sin to surface. The only difference, he says, is in the "quality" of the emotion (guilt or revenge). He claims that people often believe the lie that they have control and security as long as they hold onto their anger [236]. He explains that "a person's sin will produce negative emotions in the same manner as a lie but of a different type" [222]. More specifically, Smith says that emotions of guilt (Adam and Eve) or revenge will emerge [222]. He cites Ephesians 4:26 and 4:31, saying that anger is righteous at the time of the original event (wound) but later it becomes destructive [218]. Smith says that revenge, similarly, has "righteous beginnings" but over a period of time becomes infested with bitterness, wrath, resentment, and anger [223].

### **Post-Theophostic Sin**

In spite of the complete, permanent, quickly-achieved freedom offered by theophostic ministry, sin continues to be a real possibility:

"It is possible for us to be set free of the lies of our history and be deceived again in other ways resulting in further pain." [117]

Again, Smith attributes sin to flawed *thinking*, bypassing biblical teachings about the heart. Sin certainly affects the

mind, but it is important to see that it impacts the entire inner man. In fact, the effects of sin are pervasive -- the outer man (the body, which decays and dies), the inner man, and the entire creation (Genesis 3:14-19, Romans 8:18-25).

### **Theophostic Ministry and Unbelievers**

In one of his chapters, Smith cautions that unconfessed sin may be a hindrance to the healing process, but he insists that it *only* impedes the healing of Christians: "God does not seem to require confession of sin from a nonbeliever" [147]. Smith urges that healing requires dealing with sinful reactions *unless the person is an unbeliever*. The unbeliever, he claims, can "hear God" and receive healing of his memories without any confession of sin [223-223]. Smith explains that the unbeliever is completely separated from God, and therefore the confession of a single sin will have no effect on his fellowship with God, because he is not in fellowship with God [223]. God simply "heals" the memories out of compassion and mercy [223]. Believers, however, need to confess their sinful responses in order to maintain their fellowship with God [223]. To support this position, Smith cites biblical accounts of Jesus healing people without requiring a faith commitment; their faith often followed the healing. He notes that Jesus often conversed with and ministered to unbelievers [223]. Smith draws an analogy between physical healing and "healing" that concerns emotions and behavior:

"He [God] does not require a person to be a believer in Christ to receive His healing." [117]

"When we are dealing with nonbelievers, God does not require them to confess their sins before he heals them. They fall into the same category as the blind man Jesus healed who did not know Christ before he was healed." [349]

Smith accommodates his counsel to unbelievers to avoid offending them:

"I have had to change my wording and terms to better communicate and not scare them [nonbelievers] off.... I ask them to be aware of a truth that will come to their minds.... God speaks to them just as He does His own." [349]

Smith also defers evangelism until *after* the healing process, saying that where unbelievers come to him:

"I do not try to lead them to accept Him until after they experience some level of healing. It is easy to introduce people to Jesus when they have been set free by His healing touch." [284]

Again, Smith compares the emotional healing of unbelievers to the blind man Jesus healed: "Jesus' healing has no strings attached" [284]. He goes so far as to advocate theophostic ministry as a model for evangelistic outreach:

"I believe that this may be a Biblical model for highly effective evangelism.... When the Church can offer the lost world tangible evidence and not just verbal promises, they will come in droves for redemption." [284]

While we can appreciate Smith's compassion for the lost, and his desire that they experience changes in their lives, there are huge problems with this approach.

First, Smith's conclusions rest on the assumption of a "medical model" for healing emotional wounds. Jesus did grant *physical* healing to many, and faith in Him often followed such healing. His miraculous healings were intended for a particular time and purpose. During His time on earth, our Lord demonstrated that He was truly God in the flesh, come down from heaven to make atonement for sin. Although God's Spirit works powerfully in our hearts to effect our sanctification, Jesus' *physical* healings of *physical* illnesses are not analogous to that process of growing in godliness.

Second, Jesus expressly stated that His sheep hear His voice (John 10:27). There is absolutely no scriptural warrant for claiming that unredeemed people are able to hear God accurately. In fact, Scripture says exactly the opposite. The gospel is "foolishness" to those who are perishing, and they cannot understand God's truth (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14).

Finally, consider what the Bible says about the spiritual condition of the unbeliever. He is dead in sins and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1), separated from God (Isaiah 59:2), darkened in his understanding and the futility of his thinking (Romans 1:21). These are just a tiny sample of verses describing the perilous and desperate condition of the unbeliever.

It is actually a huge disservice to unbelievers to suggest that they can be relieved of the effects of sin ("healed") without trusting in Christ. Such a view places sanctification (growing in holiness) prior to justification (being declared right with God, through faith in Christ). The most urgent need of the unbeliever is salvation. He does not have the Spirit of Christ, an absolute necessity if sanctification is to even begin, much less progress. It is folly to claim that problems of living can be resolved apart from Christ. There are many ways we can interact with unbelievers and offer practical ministry (friendship, food, shelter, etc.) that may facilitate opportunities for evangelism, but we dare not suggest that life apart from Christ is anything but a rocky road.

## Theophostic Theology: Salvation and Justification

"Salvation" is a broad theological term used to describe the entire process by which a believer is saved from both the penalty and power of sin because of the work of Jesus Christ: His life, death, and resurrection. Salvation is a gracious free gift from God. Even faith, the instrument by which the believer receives salvation, is described as a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It is vitally important, however, to distinguish the various aspects of our salvation. The application of Christ's redemptive work can be viewed as a "golden chain" that includes our effectual calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification. **Justification** is a one-time "not guilty" declaration by God, based wholly on the imputed righteousness of Christ (Romans 3:23-24, 5:18), who has fully earned our salvation through His righteous life, and His death on the cross paying the penalty for our sins. There is nothing the sinner can possibly do to merit justification (Romans 3:20; Philippians 3:9; Isaiah 64:6). The believer, justified by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is saved from the eternal penalty of sin (Romans 5:1, 8:1). **Sanctification** is an entirely separate process that naturally follows. There is a definitive aspect to it when the believer is initially saved, in that he is set apart to belong to God and pursue holiness (1 Corinthians 6:11). However, it is primarily a life-long process wherein the Christian grows in godliness (2 Peter 1:3-11). That process, while certainly empowered by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:5-11), involves the conscious, active participation of the believer.

Smith's manual reveals a great deal of confusion regarding the distinction between these two key components of our redemption. Again, it is true that justification is based entirely on the righteousness of Christ alone, and not in any way on our human works, efforts, or merits. It is also true that sanctification is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit, *but* unlike justification, sanctification does involve the believer's active participation. Such efforts do not *earn* eternal salvation, but are nonetheless a part of the Christian life.

One area of confusion concerns giving counsel to other believers. Smith claims that actually giving counsel, even if biblically based, is a "works" salvation. He believes the counselee will inevitably enter a cycle of defeat, return for more counseling, and ultimately fail [18]. If works are done for the purpose of trying to earn justification, it is true that the person will fail. However, God has prepared good works for believers to do (Ephesians 2:10). Such works are evidence of saving faith (James 2:14-26) and are certainly an integral aspect of sanctification. Counsel from God's Word can help the

struggling believer progress in sanctification. To call such counsel a "works salvation" is to seriously confuse sanctification with justification.

In addition, Smith confuses matters even more by viewing the whole process of sanctification in passive terms:

"Success was never intended to be achieved with a 'me and you God' approach. Theophostic Ministry is God doing it all and us receiving it all." [19]

Again, *justification* is definitely "God doing it all" and "us receiving it all," but *sanctification*, while definitely a gracious work of God's Spirit, involves us working because it is God who works within us (Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 3:20).

Smith draws a sharp line between sin and being wounded by others:

"If sin is not my fault, the cross was in vain. (I did not just say the abuse I endured was my fault as a victim. I said the reason I remain a victim is in where I look for healing.)" [23]

To his credit, Smith does acknowledge the reality of sin and the need for redemption. What he seems to miss is the fact that people who have been abused as children are themselves sinners who respond to such abuse, either sinfully or righteously. It is important to be gentle and compassionate in ministering to others who have been deeply hurt. However, it is equally important to help such people respond in a manner that glorifies God. Smith's overwhelming emphasis is on being healed from the effects of the sins of others, rather than looking biblically and responsibly at how the person has responded.

Sin is the root issue in any case, whether we are dealing with responses to the sins of others, or our own sin. Smith, however, says the cross was sufficient for "all our sins and wounds" but that they must be handled differently:

"God has indeed redeemed us from our sin, but everyday we are in the process of healing from the deep wounds we carry." [58]

"A wound is 'others-inflicted' while sin is 'self-inflicted.' A wound has at its root a lie which condemns us, shames us, and taunts us." [58]

"A wound requires a touch from a resurrected living Lord while sin requires the blood from a crucified and dead sacrificial lamb." [59]

This sort of distinction between "wound" and "sin" is not biblical. A "wound" is the sin of another person. The person sinned against is responsible to respond righteously to that sin. Smith focuses almost exclusively on being healed from the emotional pain of being sinned against, with little regard for the sinned-against person's responsibility before God, or the biblical principles that govern our responses to the sins of others.

### **Theophostic Theology: Sanctification**

Smith attempts to distinguish between theophostic ministry and sanctification when he insists that the theophostic approach is not a replacement for "Christian growth and discipleship" [171, 175]. However, Smith holds up his type of ministry as necessary to such growth:

"If I believe at the experiential level that I am worthless and no good, the logical truth that I am the righteousness of God will have little effect." [175]

"Theophostic Ministry is not about growing in knowledge but rather receiving a specific truth for the displacement of a specific lie. Theophostic healing releases us so that we might be able to appropriate the knowledge of the Lord." [171]

Using a computer analogy, Smith explains that:

"Theophostic Ministry formats the hard drive where the old program resides and reboots the system before the new is loaded. The old program cannot be accessed; therefore, it presents no problem." [175]

Although Smith claims that theophostic ministry is merely a preliminary step prior to "Christian growth and discipleship," he also claims that people need very little additional ministry as to their current attitudes and behaviors, because "when they are freed from the primary sources of their pain...when the lie is removed, the truth received clears up many of the current dysfunctions as well" [175]. Theophostic ministry thus seems to precede and essentially replace sanctification in the Christian life.

As we saw in the section on revelation, Smith downplays God's written revelation (Scripture) and emphasizes an individualized, non-logical approach to knowledge, both in terms of what is already known by the counselee and what he needs to learn in order to progress:



"Logical truth will not override the power of experiential knowledge in our memory. We need experiential truth from the living Lord Jesus." [172]

"If my childhood experiences have taught me that I am worthless and no good, cognitively teaching me otherwise as an adult will have little impact. You can have me memorize all the verses that declare that I am the righteousness of God, fully acceptable through Christ, holy and perfected in Him, and I will still walk in defeat until my experiential lies are displaced with experiential divinely-provided truth." [172]

Fortunately, Smith admits that sanctification can and does occur in believers who have never applied or even heard about the theophostic approach:

"The truth is that Christian growth and maturity occurs in the life of the Christian who is faithful and seeks the face of God whether he ever learns of Theophostic Ministry." [171]

### **Instant Sanctification**

Smith says he was originally uncomfortable with such "rapid healing" [173]: "I believed emotional healing and recovery was a process" [174]. Now he makes astounding claims to offer permanent, instantaneous transformation of lives through the methods of theophostic ministry. He claims that "instant release of pain" will occur in a person's "traumatic memory," i.e., "complete healing and recovery" [6]. At the same time, Smith distinguishes the "healing of memories" approach from theophostic ministry, which allegedly offers instant and complete release from all of the emotional turmoil associated with a particular memory, but not all of the "woundedness" in a person's life. Smith denies that theophostic ministry will "heal memories," because the memories themselves do not require healing [7]. Nevertheless, theophostic ministry requires an excursion into the person's past memories:

"...we will see instantaneous recovery memory by memory in each session. The process only takes as long as there are lie-laden memories to be resolved." [12]

Note, however, that if there are many painful memories, this could take a long, long time.

Citing Ephesians 4:23-24, Smith says there are "two separate renewing events" that are to occur, a renewal of the mind and a renewal of the spirit: "be renewed in the spirit of your mind (process); and put ye on the new man (spirit), which after God is created (completed work) in righteousness and true holiness" [204, Smith's augmented translation]. This passage does say to

be spiritually renewed/transformed in your mind. However, the "put on" of verse 24 should be read with the "put off" of verse 22, which Smith doesn't mention. There is a process here wherein the believer is "putting off" his former manner of conduct and "putting on" godly behavior [204]. Smith denies the progressive nature of sanctification when he says that:

"Christian growth and maturity is not a process of becoming more like Jesus because we are already as much like Jesus as we will ever be if we are in Christ through rebirth and grace.... Christian growth and maturity is not a 'becoming' but rather a 'revealing' of what we already possess in Christ Jesus." [205]

Where Smith parenthetically refers to a "completed work," the reference is to *regeneration*. That, indeed, is a completed work in the believer, who has been "made alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5). The Christian is a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, regeneration is one of the initial aspects of redemption, occurring prior to faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification. Regeneration is not the equivalent of sanctification. Smith does not clearly distinguish important theological concepts. His theophostic method, when used with a believer, necessarily occurs *after* regeneration (at least in the life of a believer; see comments in previous section regarding unbelievers). Since it involves the Christian's ongoing manner of life, and not the ground for eternal salvation, it should be viewed as a substitute for biblical sanctification.

Elsewhere, Smith compares his approach to merely "tolerable" recovery, substituting "recovery" for sanctification and (again) ignoring the progressive nature of Christian growth:

"Tolerable recovery is linear or progressive while healing and genuine recovery is punctilious and present." [23]

Biblically, *justification* is "punctilious." It is a once-and-for-all declaration by God that the sinner is "not guilty," because Christ has paid the penalty for sin and His righteousness is imputed to the believer. *Sanctification* is ordinarily described in the New Testament in progressive terms, although it has a definitive aspect in that the new believer is set apart to belong to Christ (e.g., see Acts 15:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; Ephesians 5:25-26; Acts 26:18; Hebrews 10:10). The "healing" offered by theophostic is basically an alternative to biblical sanctification, because it involves progress in living rather than the initial faith in Christ through which eternal salvation is received. However, the believer must beware of this alternative, with its focus on relief from emotional pain (*healing*) rather than real progress in godly living (*holiness*). Christians should also be wary of a method that promotes "instant gratification," in view of the many scriptural teachings about

how God tests our faith through suffering and trials (James 1:2-4 and 1 Peter 4:12-19, to cite just a couple of texts).

### **Healing or Holiness?**

Here is how Smith describes the progress of his counselees prior to Theophostic Ministry:

"They would say they were in better shape, their pain was manageable, their memories less intrusive, but they would also admit residual emotional discomfort." [21]

Notice how Smith's terminology is laden with medical terms such as "pain" and "emotional discomfort." Progress in the Christian life is described in terms of "healing" and feeling better rather than "holiness." This is a fundamental point of departure from the biblical view of sanctification.

Here is one way that Smith summarizes his approach:

"Theophostic Ministry is a process of divinely accomplished miracles because I believe that unless Jesus chooses to act and heal nothing significant can or will happen. In its simplest description, it is merely moving aside and allowing the Spirit of Christ to expose darkness with light." [13]

One of Smith's chapters is titled "Turning on the Light." In a nutshell, this involves an excursion into the past (childhood) to uncover specific "lies" resulting from the wounds inflicted by others, followed by a personalized revelation of truth directly from God.

**"Turning on the Light."** The "light" Smith wants to turn on is not so simple as flipping a switch. Smith lists several "hindrances to receiving the truth," including revengeful emotions, failure to identify the "original lie," logic, demonic interference, "dissociation," "defense mechanisms," fear, unconfessed sin, need for the counselor's acceptance, and personal "woundedness" of the counselor [92-93]. (With all of these obstacles to surmount, perhaps the theophostic method is not really so instantaneous after all.)

Revengeful emotions (such as anger, hate, revenge) are one of the key hindrances Smith discusses. He says these were "righteously appropriate when the event occurred" but if not handled promptly, then later "they turn inward and eventually become bitterness, hate, or wrath, which is sin" [93]. According to Smith, "revengeful emotions are not rooted in the lie but rather in the truth," because the person really was hurt by another person [93]. He insists that such emotion will ultimately come back to haunt the wounded individual:

"Anger which is not righteously expressed at the time of the event will perpetually be vented anytime someone or something reminds us of the injustice." [94]

Anger may present long-term difficulties and emerge more than once along the theophostic recovery road:

"Anger is not something that is removed all at once with one global confession. Anger tends to be stored in specific memories as a result of individual incidents." [80]

Smith's solution involves a journey into the "darkness" to "stir up" the stored negative emotion:

"Stirring up the anger, hate, and revenge in the memory and then allowing Jesus to reveal words of truth will accomplish complete release." [93]

Smith says that although God removes these revengeful emotions immediately when they are confessed, the person may not emotionally experience that release. He claims that a person may confess sin and be forgiven "yet still feel guilty and not forgiven" [94]. Thus the process is highly focused on painful emotions, and Smith is suspicious of memories that are not accompanied by them:

"If a person feels no pain in a memory that should have pain, then something is wrong.... When the pain is not present, then some level of dissociation or repression is present and must be removed.... Numbness and nothingness is not healing." [110]

Smith's solution requires a continued experience of emotional pain rooted in the past:

"The first step to take is remembering and embracing the reality of the event and letting go of denial.... Any form of counseling or ministry that bypasses the pain is incapable of moving a person out of denial." [110]

There is not so much as one verse of Scripture that exhorts believers to "feel their own pain" as a prerequisite to godly living. Yet emotional pain and past memories are the foundation on which theophostic stands (or falls).

"Turning on the light" is better described as "turning on the *darkness*," because it is a process centered on uncovering "lies" the person has accepted as true, lies resulting from wounds inflicted by other people earlier in life. Smith claims that "a lie will manifest itself through a person's present behavior and attitudes about his current life" [129]. Although Smith acknowledges that real pain may occur as the result of current circumstances [159], he warns that "Theophostic Ministry

cannot remove the pain in one's present situation without first removing the original lies" [158]. Note, once again, the focus on removal of "pain" (healing) rather than living for God's glory (holiness). Sinful behavior in the present is explained away by the past sins of *others*:

"I am convinced nearly all present tense conflict in marriages and other relationships has little to do with the relationship. Almost always the current conflict is rooted in historical woundedness." [158]

"In **every** case where an affair was present in a marriage, I have discovered people who are wounded with lies. The affairs were merely an attempt to relieve themselves of their deep hurt." [158-159, emphasis added]

Smith also discusses the "emotional overload" that allegedly results from a combination of present pain (such as a spouse's unfaithfulness) and past childhood pain (such as abandonment):

"Emotional overload occurs when the mind accesses former pain from earlier memories and lies into the present situation, creating more emotional distress than the situation should warrant." [160]

Smith notes that "Theophostic Ministry cannot heal true mental illness" [170], apparently considering "true mental illness" to be brain damage or some other physical problem resulting in a mental disorder [170]. However, he claims that "most people have been labeled with mental illness when in fact they were suffering from lies" [171].

**"Evidence of True Healing."** Smith describes the characteristics of the true "healing" that is expected to result from Theophostic Ministry. As we examine them, we should consider how such evidence compares with the biblical teachings about sanctification.

**1. True healing is permanent** [176-180]. Smith describes a session with a woman he worked with who returned with frantic feelings of hopelessness. He claims to have discovered the presence of demonic powers, and he proceeded to command the "spirit of hate" (for her rapist) to leave, along with "seven more spirits all attached to different sins to which she confessed and found release" [177-179]. Smith explains: "They must have sensed they were very near to being evicted and felt the only thing left to do was deceive her into killing herself" [179].

**2. True healing results in lifestyle change** [180-181].

"...true healing should not require attention to maintain it. If it does, it ceases to be divine and is self-effort." [180]

"A person's daily behavior is often changed immediately after a session using Theophostic Ministry." [180]

**3. True healing provides the power to confront the monsters in our lives** [181-183]. This section is about confrontation of abusers, something Smith used to discourage until the person had gained enough inner strength [181]. He describes counselee who confronted her abusive grandfather following only two sessions [182]. Now, he views such confrontation as optional, to be pursued only at the counselee's discretion:

"I am not suggesting that victims even need to confront their abusers. I actually leave this up to the victims." [182]

"They see the abuser from the eyes of Christ. I watch spontaneous forgiveness occur as they receive the truth of Jesus in their traumatic memory." [183]

**4. True healing impacts one's present relationships** [183-184]. As an example, Smith claims that most couples having marital troubles are actually in "conflict with their original wounder and in bondage to the original lies" [183]. Therefore, when those "original lies" are handled, present relationships automatically improve [183]. Smith says that: "When we heal the past, we redeem the present" [183].

"If you have to 'work at' having a happy marital relationship, your effort is a good indication you have wounded memories containing lies which need to be expelled." [183]

**5. True healing does not require any effort to maintain. It is maintenance-free** [184]. Previously, Smith found that recovery was slow and gradual, and that people with deep trauma always had some "residual pain" even after intensive work [184]. This is what he calls "tolerable recovery," which "usually requires an ongoing effort to maintain" with the threat of relapse. "True healing," he claims, occurs without effort to change, and thus requires no effort to maintain.

The Bible says that believers, having been regenerated by God's Holy Spirit, are created to be like Christ in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24). Galatians 5:22 lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These are evidence of the Spirit's gracious work, i.e.,

sanctification. Some of Smith's "evidence of true healing" faintly echoes biblical truth. Sanctification is permanent, but the process is not complete until we enter into glory. There are lifestyle changes that evidence God's gracious work in our hearts. Relationships are impacted, as we learn to love and forgive one another. However, sanctification is not "maintenance free." Believers are diligently involved in the process (see 2 Peter 1:5-11). Smith has substituted the "healing" of emotional pain for sanctification, which often involves trials and suffering that God has ordained for His good purposes (1 Peter 1:6-7, 4:12-19; James 1:2-4).

**Consequences of Failure to "Heal."** Smith claims there are "unavoidable consequences" for failing to heal, and that people often carry deeply buried wounds completely unaware of those "symptomatic consequences" [185]. Thus one of the alleged consequences is the repression of painful memories, which continue to trigger emotions and influence behavior:

"We can suppress our memories so deeply that we may not be able to access them, but the lie and its pain can and will access us each time anything remotely similar to the original event occurs in our present life." [185]

This "remotely similar" occurrence could be merely a look or a word [186]. The person suffers but cannot understand why:

"The trouble with repressed memory is that people have to suffer with all the pain yet lack the memory picture to understand it." [187]

Another consequence Smith cites is that "deep wounds are often misdiagnosed and given futile prescriptions and labels" [187]. Smith says he is not opposed to the temporary use of medications to relieve painful emotions, but he does not look first to chemical explanations. He assumes, instead, that "lies" are the source of pain [187]. Labels merely identify symptoms, not root causes [187].

Note how all of these consequences are defined in terms of "wounds" and ongoing emotional pain. There is nothing here about serving and glorifying God, being a light in a dark world, evangelism, or other important "consequences" of godly living. In fact, Smith would interpret even positive Christian behavior in terms of past trauma, as when he claims that "churches often mistake 'spiritual gifts' with woundedness...for example, the inability to say 'no' in a codependent person is often mistaken for the gift of service" [190]. The motives of the human heart are complex, known fully only to God (Jeremiah 17:9; Hebrews 4:12). Believers can be easily sidetracked by a method like theophostic that diverts their attention away from living to

glorify God, coloring every thought and deed with the alleged powerful influence of past wounds.

### **The Theophostic Process v. Biblical Sanctification**

Sanctification is a life-long process that includes the believer's participation, yet it is a gracious work of God's Holy Spirit. Theophostic ministry claims to be empowered by God but is described primarily in terms of changing the believer's *thinking* through a process that casts aside logic and searches long-lost childhood memories of the sins of others. Smith says: "The 'why' is always rooted in the lie. Remove the lie and you eliminate the 'why'" [15]. The theophostic process begins with emotional *pain*, rather than *sin*, and seeks explanations based on the sins of other people.

As Smith describes the process, he distinguishes it from visualization techniques guided by a human counselor:

"Guided imagery is visualization created and guided by *the therapist*. Theophostic Ministry is **not** guided imagery but rather divine intervention in the false interpretations of a person's mind." [19]

Further explaining this distinction, Smith says that "Theophostic Ministry does not seek to redefine the reality of the event" [20]. What it does is described in terms of "three essential components" [39-57]. It begins with current emotions (the "historical emotional echo"), moves backward to the original memory "pictures" that matches, and then supposedly uncovers the "embedded original lie" that drives current behavior. Finally, after receiving an individual revelation of truth from God, the once troubled individual is assured that he will enjoy a permanent, effortless "recovery."

**1. Emotional Echo.** Smith presents a picture of the "cycle of emotional pain" wherein the slightest present conflict is traced back to some painful event in the past [40]:

"When present trauma strikes, it will tap into many other unresolved areas of memory which contain pain." [40]

"The similarity need only be remotely alike for the brain to pull all the old emotions from the previous event into the present situation." [40]

Smith says the process is similar to a person stepping on a crooked black stick believing it to be a black snake [41], then reacting accordingly--as if the stick really was a snake.

Smith cautions that people may find it difficult to believe that their present emotional pain results from some past event rather than what is happening in the present:



"Many people will have a difficult time accepting the fact the pain they feel is coming from a historical wound and not from their present relationship or circumstance.... Their present situation is not the source of their pain but rather the trigger which has opened the window of their former wounds." [41]

Smith apparently sees this as good news that brings freedom:

"If it were true that others actually were responsible for the emotional pain in life, I could never be free to feel joy or peace until they changed their behavior. I would be totally emotionally dependent on their behavior and attitudes." [41]

This is a strange statement, because Smith *does* hold other people responsible--not the people involved in a counselee's current life, but those who have wounded him many years ago. This is not particularly good news, because it involves a somewhat "touchy-feely" journey into the past with few road signs along the way, casting logic to the wind while hoping to discover the "right" memory. Our joy and peace certainly do not depend on other people changing their behavior -- not because of childhood roots, but rather because of the eternal hope we have in Christ.

**2. Memory Picture.** This is the "historical memory picture which matches the emotional echo," the "memory event which feels the same way" [41]:

"These surfacing emotions are merely 'echoes' of long-suppressed (possibly repressed) memories." [41]

"When using Theophostic Ministry, we primarily use the emotional feelings to lead us to the hidden memory.... The emotions that the person is feeling are a form of memory. This emotional trail will lead back to the event once you learn how to follow it." [42]

"All it takes for one to experience an emotional memory is for something to happen remotely similar to the original event. When this occurs, the encoded emotional pain will come out. When the wounded person hears someone say something or something happens to them which may be remotely similar to the original event, the emotional aspect of the memory will be triggered." [43]

Smith seems to tie *all* present emotions to some past event:

"I believe every emotion we feel in the present is a preconceived interpretation, based upon an earlier memory event." [44]

"...when I 'feel' in the present, I am actually remembering the past." [45]

Citing Romans 12:2, Smith claims that: "The mind places direct limits on how we live" [48]. Therefore, he says, "I need my soul/mind to be cleansed from the 'lies' in my memories" [48]. Rather than deal biblically with real life situations and people using God's truth, Smith drags his counselees into the past seeking explanations for current events:

"One of the primary roles I play as a helping facilitator in this process is to help people let go of the current difficulty and follow the emotion back to the original memory picture. Once the strong emotion in their present state is identified, I will invite them to drift back to any earlier events that might carry the same emotional pain." [50]

Smith defines "secondary memories" as earlier events in adult life rather than childhood:

"Secondary memories contain feelings which are common with the original memory and wound. The reason these secondary memories feel like the original wound is due to the 'cloning' of the original lie." [50]

Smith focuses only briefly on these "secondary" memories, using them exclusively as a stepping stone to drift further back, into childhood. He asks his counselee to "focus intently upon the current situation and emotion," then "disconnect from the current situation but remain focused on the emotion" [51]. He believes that the "right" memories will emerge in this process:

"Rarely does a memory surface which has no relevance to the lie being sought." [51]

**3. The Original Lie.** Smith places enormous emphasis on the power of "lies" that a person believes as the result of the sins of others:

"The lie is the belief statement which is planted in a person's mind during a time of trauma." [52]

The "lie" allegedly drives present behavior and does not respond to reason:

"The present fear is coming from a particular lie...embedded in the memory.... The lie is activated every time he is reminded of the original episode through present situations which are somewhat similar. The lie cannot be dealt with logically." [52]

"Since we are in the process of healing, the lie-rooted wounds remaining are still active and hinder our walk." [59]

"With Theophostic Ministry, people are led away from rational, logical thinking into the darkness of their original memory and taught to embrace faulty thinking." [66]

Smith explains that the person logically knows that the lie is false, but he "feels like" it is true:

"A positive indicator of whether you have identified the lie is in how true it feels, not how true it logically may be." [52]

Smith equates this process of stirring up *darkness* with "taking every thought captive" in 2 Corinthians 10:5:

"The act of taking captive the thought will 'stir up' the darkness, producing an increase in emotional intensity. It is in this darkness that the Lord of truth enters with the keys to freedom." [66]

The context in 2 Corinthians gives no indication that taking our thoughts captive in obedience to Christ will "stir up darkness." Smith has to presuppose the truth of his theory and read it onto the text to draw this conclusion.

Using Philippians 1:6, Smith says that:

"Complete healing occurs as the lies, not the memories, are removed. There is no need to investigate every memory a person has but rather every lie. Every lie will produce its own emotion. God will be faithful to bring into our lives outside stimuli to stir it up so we can find it." [78]

Smith goes into elaborate detail about several types of lies, in addition to the "original": metamorphic, cluster, clone, memory-linked, guardian, splinter, osmotic, thematic [72-85].

Smith's sweeping claims regarding the uncovering of the "original lie" are nowhere more apparent than in his application of the theophostic approach to marital conflicts. Rather than address real life issues, he claims that:

"If you remove the lies, you remove the '*triggers*' which are setting off their conflict. Marriages tend to take care of themselves once you pull out the pain caused by the wounds and lies." [125]

Smith explains what he believes happens to a wife whose husband has committed adultery: "...the brain goes back into the memory database looking for similar situations and brings out pain from

a conglomeration of events" [127]. This is an unfortunate explanation of the effects of real sin committed in the present, and a good illustration of the fallacies inherent in the theophostic approach. One's own sin, and reaction to the present sins of others, are all traced back to the past. Certainly people form habits and draw on past experience. However, Smith's all-encompassing explanations fail to take account of the heart, and man's rebellion against God. What results is a massive blame-shifting scheme that minimizes the gravity of one's own sin and maximizes the sins of others. There is little here about the believer's radical reorientation, to live for God and His kingdom rather than merely to please self. Theophostic Ministry promotes an unbiblical focus on self and painful emotions that is not supported by Scripture.

Smith describes a pastor who cited Philippians 3:13 as a challenge to Theophostic Ministry, saying that the past should no longer have power in a believer's life. Smith insists that "the Apostle Paul is not referring to his wounded past but rather to the accomplishments of his past," i.e., "Paul was saying that all his great accomplishments are worthless in achieving righteousness" [82]. Then Smith says "we later discovered...this pastor had a difficult childhood which was causing him trouble in his family and present ministry. The lie, 'My past is behind me,' was keeping him from accessing his suppressed memories and pain" [82]. Paul did acknowledge in this passage that his past accomplishments were to be regarded as nothing in terms of true righteousness. However, Philippians 3:12-4:1 is a passage that calls believers to look forward with a heavenly perspective. These verses emphasize our heavenly citizenship (see 3:20). Even if this particular text were not a reference to "past pain," it falls far short of offering positive support for Smith's approach. Other relevant texts should be considered. For example, Hebrews 12:1 exhorts believers to lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, in order to run the race that God has set before us. Focus on self, pain, and the past is an encumbrance. Furthermore, there simply are no Scriptures commanding believers to journey into their past and dwell on the pain others have caused them. Theophostic Ministry, and other similar psychological approaches, must twist Scripture in order to defend such a distorted view of sanctification.

### **The Role of Human Effort**

Smith criticizes a particular "theology" of "a God who helps us." He says that he wants people to see they need more than help:

"They are totally helpless apart from God doing it all. God does not help us overcome. He has already overcome and we must receive it." [162-163]

Jesus Christ has truly overcome (John 16:33), and believers in Him also overcome the world (1 John 5:5). Salvation is wholly the work of God (Ephesians 2:8-9), and sanctification is a gracious work of the God's Spirit (John 15:5, Romans 8:5-11). However, Smith advocates a level of passivity that is not justified by Scripture. He denies the rightful role of human activity in sanctification, as evidenced by an abundance of New Testament exhortations (e.g., Ephesians 4:1, 4:17-24; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

Smith distances his approach from methods like the 12-step programs which equate "abstinence" from some behavior with victorious living:

"Many people confuse the state of being in abstinence with victory. This is not victory. Victory is when the battle is over and the struggle is no longer present." [16]

"When one's victory is dependent on the ability to maintain abstinence, it is just a matter of time before self-effort will be inadequate." [17]

"We have mistaken victory and freedom with abstinence. Abstinence is rooted in self-control and self-effort. Healing is an act of God.... Abstinence is not victory. Abstinence is a constant battle." [184]

Smith rejects the 12-step view that a person remains an "alcoholic" (or compulsive whatever) his entire life [22]. We can agree that a radical change occurs in the believer (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). However, Smith omits human effort altogether from the "recovery" he promotes:

"You can be free and recovered. No effort is necessary for you to attain it. No effort is required of you to maintain it." [24]

Effort appears to have no role whatsoever in godly living, according to Smith:

"Much of what we Christians do that we call victorious living and spiritual maturity is simply human effort and nothing more than what any non-believer could do with a little personal discipline and self effort." [157; nearly identical statement on 226]

Apparently, the only "effort" required is to resurrect memories of past pain. Here is how Smith would advise a person during one of his sessions:

"Your main responsibility is to stir up the pain and terror of the memory and focus on it." [28]

There is a grain of truth present, in that sanctification is a gracious work of God's Spirit in the believer. Self-control is one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The imagery of fruit describes natural growth rather than a labor-intensive manufacturing process. Christian sanctification is certainly not equivalent to the works-righteousness "abstinence" approach of 12-step philosophy. However, our battle with sin will not be completely "over" until we enter eternity (Ephesians 6:10-20; Romans 7:14-25). Meanwhile, we have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into God's kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9), and our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Our fundamental allegiance has been reversed. Christ has broken the power of sin, in addition to paying the penalty (Romans 6:1-14). We have been spiritually resurrected, having been made "alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-6). We "work out our own salvation" because God is powerfully at work within us to accomplish His good purposes (Philippians 2:12-13). Theophostic Ministry fails to account for the legitimate role of human effort in the process of sanctification, taking passivity to an unbiblical extreme.

Smith's deviation from the Bible is perhaps best explained by his substitution of healing for holiness. For example, he says that "...the act of suppression and repression is burying our wounds rather than looking to the *stripes of Jesus* for healing" [163]. Smith also says that it is a sin to keep in place "defense mechanisms" established as a child as a means of survival [163]. The entire theophostic system is built on the assumption that people are "wounded" and in need of "healing," rather than sinners in need of salvation. This digression from biblical truth leads to a multitude of errors, including an unscriptural view of human activity in sanctification.

### **The Role of Truth**

God has given us His Word--His *truth*--so that we, as believers, might live godly lives, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16). Yet Smith downplays the role of such truth:

"The problems people bring with them into counseling are not the result of their having a lack of truth. Most people possess more truth in their logical minds than they will ever practically apply. The problem is not their lack of truth which keeps them in bondage but rather their inability to embrace the truth they already logically know." [34]

Smith leaves room for some sort of truth, but rather than going to Scripture and helping people apply it, he identifies individual "lies" from the past that need to be replaced with some particular, newly revealed "truth":

"When you heal the past, you redeem the present. If you seek to change the present and do not change the original

lie, you have only developed a stopgap in the person's behavior." [34]

"Genuine recovery is divine and relapse is not possible unless the person deliberately goes against the implanted truth in their souls, which is unlikely. Before their healing, destructive behavior was natural due to the lies implanted in their minds. With the lies removed, relapse makes no logical sense." [22, citing Romans 6:1-2 and Romans 12:2]

It appears that there is--and yet there isn't--a role for truth in the "recovery" process. As we observed earlier in considering revelation, Smith pushes Scripture aside in favor of individualized truth received directly from God upon accessing the "right" memories and identifying the "right" lies. Throughout the process, Smith seems to completely ignore the present, as if current problems will evaporate automatically once the past issues are resolved through his methods.

### **Theophostic Ministry On Your Own**

Smith includes a chapter about using theophostic privately, without another person's involvement. He says that to do this ministry on your own, you must first [270]:

1. Read his book and attend the basic seminar;
2. Use the ministry with others; and
3. Receive personal ministry from others for your "primary woundedness."

Smith warns strongly against ever dealing with "deeply traumatic memories" on your own, explaining that:

"When the pain is great, the mind will not cooperate by going to these memories. The mind is designed to avoid pain and will resist such efforts without the help of an outside person." [270]

The chapter on this topic is about dealing with "splinters" (smaller lies) after the "primary trauma memories" have already been handled [270]. The suggested steps are essentially the same process as that outlined earlier in the book [273-274]. Smith would continue to trace all present emotions to the past:

"I believe that every emotion we feel in the present is a preconceived interpretation based upon an earlier memory event." [271]

This chapter also includes some "special instructions" for couples who want to use Theophostic Ministry on their own. These

words of advice are primarily concerned with seeing marital conflicts in terms of past woundedness rather than the present situation [278-280]. Smith interprets every sort of human conflict or other personal problem in terms of the past sins of other people.

### **Theophostic Theology: The Role of Demons**

This area of theology is one that Smith repeatedly emphasizes in his manual. Some of his points are biblical, and certainly any reader of Scripture would concede the reality of evil spiritual forces. However, there are disturbing aspects to Smith's theology, which is shaped by his experiences rather than Scripture.

Smith claims to encounter demonic interference about 40 percent of the time in his ministry [148]. He says that he has never been so aware of, or harassed by, evil as he has since using this counseling method:

"I am constantly being bombarded with thoughts I do not wish to think, with pains I did not have before, with oppressions I have to pray away." [199]

On the basis of experience, Smith has altered his theology as to the manner in which demons can be involved in the life of a true believer:

"I used to believe a demon could not dwell in a person who possessed the Holy Spirit. I still believe it is impossible for a demonic spirit to inhabit a Christian's spirit. It is the spirit of the man which is regenerated and made new. The memory banks and other areas of one's mind are being made new. The darkened areas of our minds can be indwelt by spirits. This I know without any reservation. **I have encountered too many demonic spirits face to face inhabiting true born-again believers to believe anything else.**" [97, emphasis added]

"If you should encounter a manifestation of a demonic spirit in a person whom you truly believe to be a born-again Christian, **you may have to rethink your theology; I did.**" [98, emphasis added]

"It has been my observation that much of what is written concerning demonic concepts is experientially based rather than Biblically founded. This is understandable since demonology is Biblically limited even though much interest is presently being given to the subject." [287]

Note how Smith bases his theology on his experience, rather than interpreting his experience by the theology God has given in His



Word. Notice the term "biblically limited," yet remember that God has given everything necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3-4). Would God have left His people subject to being inhabited by demons, even contrary to specific passages in His Word (Romans 8:9, Matthew 12:25-29, Mark 3:23-30, Luke 11:17-26)?

Smith warns not to "create a theology of demons based on personal experience" yet he candidly admits to taking a "pragmatic approach." He says:

"If the principles others have developed result in people gaining freedom and the ability to live victorious lives in Christ, I assume what they do contains at least some element of truth, **even though such truth may have no Biblical precedence.**" [287, emphasis added]

Smith attempts to defend his "no biblical precedence" truth regarding the demonic realm by citing some of the same worn-out arguments used to defend the use of modern psychology:

"The fact is, not all truth is necessarily Biblically verifiable...." [287]

"Not all truth is recorded in the Scriptures but all truth is from God." [287]

Smith quotes James 1:17 as support [287]. That verse tells us that "every good and perfect gift" comes from God. But is information about demons, based solely on personal experience and without scriptural support, a "good and perfect gift" from God?

Smith claims that "non-biblical information can be very helpful when dealing with the enemy" and affirms the use of approaches that have no biblical model but are "built on the general principles of Scripture" [287]. In defense of his view that the Scriptures are not the source of *all* specific truth, Smith refers to space travel and mathematics as examples [288]. These subjects, however, are only possible because of the physical laws of nature that God has established, and they do not involve "life and godliness" in the same manner as counseling psychology or study of the demonic realm. The analogy does not hold up.

### **Tracing the Demons**

Smith goes through the biblical account in the garden, where Satan appeared to Eve in the form of a serpent [289]. He says that at the fall:

"Man lost his place of authority and fell to the third position which Satan formerly held. Satan moved to Adam's place of authority and became the ruler of this earth. The chain of command changed." [290]

Smith cites Luke 4:5-6, where Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. He says that Jesus did not rebuke Satan, because he was speaking the truth:

"Jesus knew that mankind had indeed handed over to Satan all authority that had formerly been given them by God." [290]

However, the work of Christ radically altered the picture:

"All things change when the 'new Adam' appears and purchases back for fallen mankind the position he lost in the Garden." [290]

Smith says that redeemed man has an even higher position, seated with Jesus at the right hand of God, based on Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6 and 2 Timothy 2:12 [290-291].

Even with all this in mind, it does not follow that demons can inhabit believers. In fact, such a view seems inconsistent with the current position of redeemed man.

### **Demons in Theophostic Ministry**

Smith assures his readers that they will undoubtedly have to deal with demonic realities if they adopt his approach:

"I am convinced if you use Theophostic Ministry, you will, as I often have, encounter cases which will not change with anything you do apart from taking authority over the demonic presence in Jesus' name." [287]

However, he explains the presence of demons on the basis of his "lie-based" theology, saying that they are there solely because of a person's flawed thinking:

"The demon is only there because of the deception in the person's mind. Remove the lie and the demon has nothing to hold on to. We NEVER have a problem with demons leaving once the lies are removed. We NEVER have demons acting out in destructive ways, or causing the person to act out in ways that we do not permit." [98]

Smith considers demons to be a source of messages [137], saying that he has "been face to face with thousands of fully-manifested demonic spirits" [137]. He sometimes allows them to use the person's vocal chords, but never allows them to "act out physically or cause bodily or mental pain" [137]. Smith takes authority over demons when he encounters them, but cautions that:

"Until you are highly skilled in spiritual warfare, do not allow the demon to speak" [137].

Smith also warns the uninitiated to be alert to certain imitation tactics:

"Expect for demons to masquerade as Jesus or to appear visually in the person's mind looking like Jesus. But simply listen to what the 'demon-Jesus' says and does. They really are not very good at imitating Christ." [137]

"When there is the presence of a demonic spirit in the person's memory, the spirit will often take on the form of Jesus." [366]

Here is one way that Smith differentiates the real Jesus from the imposter:

"If they report the presenting Jesus has no feeling or is flat, angry at them, rejecting, hostile, or evil, you know you are dealing with an imposter." [366]

Elsewhere, Smith uses the term "spiritual advocate" to include rebuking spiritual forces during a session, and taking authority over the "spirit of confusion" [196]. He says that Satan's one last weapon is deception: "Satan's attacks on me are targeted to my woundedness and lies I believe" [200]. Smith acknowledges the Word and blood of the Lamb as our weapons [200].

Smith recognizes that Satan and his demons are defeated enemies and that their efforts pass through God's permissive will and are used to accomplish His purposes:

"Satan is not a hindrance to your growth and sanctification but rather a tool in the hand of sovereign God releasing you from your bondages." [201]

We can agree here, noting that God used the greatest evil in all of history to accomplish our redemption (Acts 2:23-24).

### **Answers to Critics and Comparisons**

Smith seems to compare his position with those who do not even believe that demons exist, rather than those who acknowledge demonic reality but believe the biblical evidence does not allow for the indwelling of a believer by demons [288]. In answering those who would criticize his emphasis on the demonic, he resorts once more to pragmatism:

"Some are accusing me of finding a demon under every rock. I invite these same people to climb into the trenches of the severely wounded and face the enemy as I have. I can say as the Apostle Paul, 'I have fought the good fight.'" [148]

Smith distinguishes his methods from traditional deliverance ministries which claim we are at war with the devil. He says that the real problem is the lies we believe, and that removing demons is no problem once those lies are exposed and replaced with truth [291].

Nevertheless, if you are unable to agree with Smith's theology, take heart. He assures readers that: "Theophostic Ministry will work whether you hold these same views about demonic interference or not" [148].

### **Biblical Response**

There is no doubt that believers are engaged in spiritual warfare in this life (Ephesians 6:10-20). The devil and his associates (demons) actually exist, as attested by many Scriptures. Adam and Eve sinned when they believed the serpent in the Garden instead of obeying God. Jesus encountered demons during His time on earth, and He cast many of them out. When He returns to usher in the eternal state, these evil beings will be cast forever in the lake of fire (Revelation 20). As Smith rightly acknowledges, Satan is a defeated enemy, and his power is subordinate to a sovereign God who uses even evil to accomplish His good purposes.

However, acknowledging this dark reality does not mean that true believers can be inhabited by demons. Such a view is inconsistent with Scripture. The Christian, by definition, has the Holy Spirit living within (Romans 8:9). The person who does not have the Spirit does not belong to Christ at all (Romans 8:9). It is preposterous to think that God's Holy Spirit would ever become a "co-tenant" with demons, indwelling the same individual. Such a result is excluded by the parallel gospel texts wherein Jesus rebukes those who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul (Matthew 12:25-29, Mark 3:23-30, Luke 11:17-26).

Smith has allowed his theology to be shaped by experience, rather than allowing *God's* theology, as revealed in His Word, to shape his interpretation of events. This reverses the approach that Christians should take to life.

### **Theophostic Theology: Forgiveness**

Smith says that he regrets the manner in which he previously counseled people to forgive those who had wounded them:

"Forgiveness is a necessary part of the total healing process, but it is not the first thing one should attend to, nor is it done in a moment." [155]

Now, Smith believes that forgiveness will occur naturally when people see their wounders from Jesus' perspective [155]. His view of forgiveness centers around the person who has been wounded, rather than on the other person or the relationship.

First, he focuses on shifting responsibility to the person who caused the hurt, regardless of that person's intent:

"...if we are to heal, we must separate the 'good' person from the act and the wound.... True healing will not come until the one wounded acknowledges his deep wounds and allows the one who wounded him to be responsible whether the wound was intentional or not." [155]

Smith anticipates a lack of response from the other party:

"The wounder rarely repents or seeks restitution. The most common response is denial and defense for their actions." [156]

Furthermore, Smith's view of forgiveness does not require any attempt to reconcile:

"It is necessary for the wounded to forgive the debt of the wounder, but whether or not there is reconciliation with them is outside the power of the wounded." [156]

Most disturbing is Smith's emphasis on emotion. He used to have a counselee claim "by faith" to have forgiven his offender, even if he didn't "feel" such forgiveness. Now, however, he says that "our emotional state will always expose our true belief" [239]. Smith cites Hebrews 11:1, which says that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen" [239]. Then he says that:

"Much of what we do in our Christian lives is not faith but rather choice, obedience, habit, ritual, or merely peer pressure." [239]

Smith differentiates obedience without faith, i.e., without assurance or confidence, from obedience with faith in the outcome:

"As we obey God, we discover that He is faithful, which in turn strengthens our faith.... Faith is knowing that God will do what He has promised to do, whereas obedience is choosing to act." [240]

"The Apostle James suggests that genuine faith results in confident obedience." [240]

Smith rejects a "sin-based" theological view that emotional distress is rooted in sin and should be addressed by confession

and repentance. He thus rejects a "'by faith' jump into the dark approach" in getting people to act rightly [240]. He also rejects the "traditional view that feelings could not be trusted" [240]. He says that he trusts his feelings because "feelings are very accurate in revealing the source and root of our faulty belief system" [241]. Applying this feeling-emphasis to forgiveness, he says:

"If all we do is confess our sin and not address the lies from which the sin is rooted, we are **destined** to repeat the process throughout life. In the same manner, to forgive the wounder without addressing the root issues will fulfill our obedience obligation but will not release us from the inner toxin of the lies we embraced." [241, emphasis added]

Smith believes that forgiveness comes "as a natural by-product of receiving personal release from pain through the receiving of truth in memories" [241]. He says that he does not have to cite Scripture passages on forgiveness, ask counselees to forgive "by faith" in spite of their feelings, or "reckon" themselves to have forgiven. He views the forgiveness that naturally occurs to be much "like the king who 'felt compassion and forgave the servant his debt'" [242].

Emotions may indeed reveal the state of a person's heart. At the same time, obedience to God's Word is not contingent on "feeling like it." The believer who is struggling to forgive *does* need Scripture passages on forgiveness, contrary to Smith. God's Word is living, active, and powerful, not merely for intellectual knowledge, but for conviction, correction, and disciplined training in righteousness, and for judging the innermost intentions of the heart (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12). Passages on forgiveness are exactly what is needed, in order to understand the riches of God's grace, and thus to forgive others in the same manner as God has forgiven us. Forgiveness is not so much a natural by-product of getting emotional relief, but rather a by-product of understanding the depths of God's grace, i.e., the forgiveness the believer himself has already received.

### "Forgive" - Greek Word Studies

Smith apparently has some familiarity with the original biblical languages, as he makes references to them throughout his book. In considering forgiveness, he cites the following Greek words commonly translated "forgive" or "forgiveness": charizomai (verb), aphiami (verb), aphasis (noun). He uses *The Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, by Lawrence O. Richards (Zondervan 1985). To those who have no training in Greek, these citations give his analysis an added sense of authority. Careful discernment is needed to see that even where his translation of a particular word is valid, Smith nevertheless reads his own theories, tainted by psychological theory, onto Scripture.

Following is a comparison of Smith's definition(s) with three Greek lexicons:

Arndt, W. F., Gingrich, F. W. and Danker, F. W. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979.

Thayer, Joseph Henry, D.D. *The New Thayer's Greek-English Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981.

Kittel, Gerhard and Friedrich, Gerhard (editors), translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (abridged in one volume). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985.

Charizomai: [verb]

1. Smith: "to be gracious," "to give freely" [242], as used in 2 Corinthians 2:7,10, 12:13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13, 3:13; "to cancel a debt" (Luke 4:42-43).

2. Arndt/Gingrich: (a) to give freely or graciously as a favor, of God; (b) give = remit, forgive, pardon; (c) show oneself to be gracious to someone.

3. Thayer: (a) to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent (Galatians 3:18); (b) to give graciously, give freely, bestow (Luke 7:21, Romans 8:32, Philippians 2:9, 1 Corinthians 2:2, Philippians 1:29), and where a debt is referred to, to forgive (Luke 7:42), to graciously restore one to another who desires his safety, to preserve for one a person in peril.

Aphiemi: [verb form]

1. Smith: forgiveness of sins, debts, crimes; dismiss, release, leave, or abandon. He cites Romans 4:7 and notes that this word is used 49 times in the NT, 44 of these in the Gospels, for "forgive." However, the second meaning ("dismiss") is far more common [243].

2. Arndt/Gingrich: (a) let go, send away; (b) cancel, remit, pardon the loan (used in religious sense of divine forgiveness); (c) leave, give up or abandon (figuratively), let go or tolerate.

3. Thayer: A(a) to send away, to bid to go away or depart; A(b) to send forth, yield up, emit; A(c) to let go, let alone, let be, disregard; (b) to leave, not to discuss a topic now (used of teachers, etc.); (c) to omit, neglect; (d) to let go, give up, a debt, by not demanding it, to remit or forgive (MATTHEW 18); (e) to give up, keep no longer (Rev. 2:4); (f) to permit, allow, not to hinder; (g) to give up a thing to one; (h) to leave, go away

from one; (i) to depart from one whom one wishes to quit; (j) to depart from one and leave him to himself, so that all mutual claims are abandoned; (k) to go away leaving something behind; (l) to leave one by not taking him as a companion; (m) to leave on dying, leave behind one; (n) to leave so that what is left may remain.

4. Kittel (p. 88): to let go, pardon; release from obligation, penalty, or debt. In Matthew 18, Kittel says the word is used in a secular sense as meaning "to remit" or "to forgive." In a religious sense, to remit or forgive sins (Mark 1:18, Matthew 5:24). In Matthew 18, Kittel says the word is used in a secular sense as meaning "to remit" or "to forgive." In a religious sense, it is used to remit or forgive sins (Mark 2:5ff) or trespasses (Matthew 6:14) or iniquities (Romans 4:7).

Aphesis: [noun form of *aphiemi*]

1. Smith: Used 17 times in NT, 15 of these meaning "remission." He cites Matthew 26:28, Mark 1:4, 3:29; Luke 1:77, 3:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 5:31, 10:43, 13:38, 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14, Hebrews 9:22, 10:18). The word is used for "freedom" or "release" twice in Luke 4:18.

2. Arndt/Gingrich: (a) release from captivity; (b) pardon, cancellation of an obligation, punishment, or the guilt of sin.

3. Thayer: (a) release, as from bondage or imprisonment; (b) forgiveness or pardon of sins (letting them go as if they had not been committed).

4. Kittel (p. 88): forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4, Matthew 26:28, Acts 2:38, 5:31, 10:43, Colossians 1:14).

Smith says that in Matthew 18, where the king forgave the servant a large debt, "*aphiemi*" was used by Jesus as meaning to "release" or "cut off" sin. On this basis, Smith says that forgiveness has nothing to do with reconciliation of a relationship, but only with the removal of an indebtedness: "It is true that the debt intact will hinder the relationship, but removing the debt is no guarantee of the relationship improving or even changing." Smith says that in Matthew 18:21-30, where Peter asks Jesus how many times he must forgive, Peter must have been concerned about not seeing any change in persons forgiven many times [243].

Smith describes eight principles of forgiveness based on the Matthew 18 parable about the king's forgiveness of the servant. However, although these "principles" contain elements of truth, they are not truly based on Matthew 18 or any other Scripture, but rather a subjective, psychologized view of forgiveness that focuses on self. In terms of the original Greek, Smith emphasizes a passage that uses "*aphiemi*" rather than



"charizomai." The latter verb focuses more on the grace and kindness that God has shown believers in Christ.

**PRINCIPLE #1: "Forgiveness is not a means of changing another but rather the avenue of release for the one holding the debt" [244].** Smith assumes that the admonitions Matthew 18 are based on a particular situation in Peter's life:

"Apparently someone in Peter's life was an ongoing source of trouble that he wanted to cut off." [244]

Smith's view of forgiveness centers on granting relief to the person who was wronged, with little or no consideration for the welfare of the other:

"Forgiveness only has the power to change the one forgiving, not the one being forgiven. It releases us of the bondages that enslave us through our holding the note of the debt but may or may not impact the one who is indebted." [244]

"If Peter forgives this person seven times seventy (490 times), he will still be in the same place as he is now. The number of times we forgive will have little or maybe no impact on whether the person will act differently in the future." [245]

It is good that God's forgiveness does not follow this pattern! Believers are instructed to forgive *just as God in Christ has forgiven them* (Ephesians 4:32). God's forgiveness is not an exercise in futility wherein He releases Himself from bondage. God reconciles us to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), graciously restoring us to fellowship with Him. Smith has bought into the one-sided psychologized view of forgiveness that focuses primarily (or even exclusively) on self.

**PRINCIPLE #2: "Forgiveness requires we take an account" [245].** Smith further explains the need to identify and acknowledge the debt:

"We cannot forgive a debt we do not know exists or if we do not know what the amount is on the note. This is why with Theophostic Ministry we follow the emotional trail back to the source and origin." [245]

There is a grain of truth here, in that forgiveness requires recognition that another person has sinned. However, the Bible does not exhort us to follow some "emotional trail," but rather to identify sin in terms of the standards expressed in Scripture.

**PRINCIPLE #3: "The debtor does not have the means to repay the debt" [245].** Again, this statement has some truth. We cannot repay God for our sins. Christ made the required payment,

satisfying divine justice, on the cross. Unfortunately, Smith views the "debt" in terms of emotional wounds and perceived needs:

"The problem with wounds is that they are bottomless and nothing will ever satisfy them." [246]

"This void [need for love, approval, acceptance] is not a true need but rather a wound that must be healed." [246]

When King David sinned grievously against God and repented, he did not express his sin in terms of some "wound" needing to be healed. Rather, he acknowledged that his sin was against God (Psalm 51:4), even though other people were also hurt. Similarly, our sins are against God. Smith seems to omit God when he discusses our forgiveness of one another.

**PRINCIPLE #4: "Anger is a normal reaction to injustice but must be released before freedom will come" [246].** In the biblical parable, Smith says that king was not only angry, but overreacted by commanding the servant to be sold into slavery along with his wife and children. Smith says the initial anger was a "healthy response" to the servant's irresponsibility in getting himself into such debt [247]. However, "anger is an emotion for which the Christian community has little tolerance" [247]. Smith cites the familiar Ephesians 4:26, saying that: "The length of time you hold on to the anger and what you do with it has much to do with whether it becomes sin" [247].

Here is how Smith explains the effects of holding on to anger over a long period of time:

"Satan wants us to dwell on anger day after day and do nothing about it. He wants us to turn the anger inward and bury it deeply. The reason is so that later when something else happens that is remotely similar, the demonic forces will take the 'opportunity' to stir up this old anger so that we will react inappropriately and express more anger than the situation calls for." [247]

"Until the anger is expressed and released by the Lord Jesus in the context of the original event (memory), we are destined to perpetually 'dump' on whoever happens to trigger it." [247]

We can agree with Smith that not all human anger is necessarily sinful, and that clinging to it, even if originally righteous, is dangerous. However, nowhere does Scripture require or even suggest that believers must revisit some "original event" in order to handle sinful anger, nor does the Bible teach that we are "destined" to continue a sinful pattern of "dumping" anger until we take that sort of excursion into the past. This

teaching is much more consistent with Freud (an outspoken atheist) than biblical truth.

**PRINCIPLE #5: "The integrity and sincerity of the indebted wounder is not critical for true forgiveness to be administered" [247].** Here is Smith's assessment of the indebted servant:

"When he said, 'I will pay back the full amount,' he lied and revealed a heart of deceit and robbery. He knew that he could never repay his debt and had no intention of ever doing so." [248]

While it is true that the servant lacked the ability to repay his debt (18:25), it is silent as to the servant's intent. A natural reading of this passage reveals desperation, as the king commands that all of the servant's possessions be sold, including his wife and children. The king responded with compassion, much the way God graciously responds to the desperate plight of sinners in need of His mercy.

Smith continues to promote a self-focused forgiveness. He insists that "forgiveness is not dependent on the person wanting or asking for it" since it is a "cutting off" or "release" [248]. He claims that "forgiveness is focused on the debt, not the debtor" [248]. *What if GOD'S forgiveness were like this?* Yet Smith claims that even in 1 John 1:9:

"...the focus of forgiveness is on the sin, not the sinner. The recipient of the forgiveness in this verse is sin not sinner. It is the sin which receives the action of the verb forgive, not the sinner. God releases or cuts off the sin, not the sinner." [248]

This is a ridiculous interpretation, both grammatically and theologically. God promises here not only to forgive us but to cleanse us of all unrighteousness.<sup>5</sup>

Although it is true that God is gracious toward sinners, and He divinely initiates the process of salvation, His forgiveness is extended toward *repentant* sinners. He doesn't forgive in a vacuum purely for His own emotional relief.

**PRINCIPLE #6: "Genuine forgiveness requires we find compassion" [248].** Smith says this about the king's compassion:

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<sup>5</sup> In the Greek, "us" is in the dative case and "forgive" is in the subjunctive form following "ἵνα": in order that, or with the result that, God cleanses us of all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, *in order that* he might do two things: (1) release, remit (forgive) our sins, and (2) cleanse us of all unrighteousness. This appears to be a dative of benefit, meaning that we benefit when God releases or lets go our sins. The releasing of sins and cleansing from unrighteousness are integrally related here, with *both* being the purpose, and result, of God's faithfulness and justice.

"This 'feeling' exposed the true heart of the king and his true belief system. Where did this compassion come from? *Compassion is the benevolent action we take toward another as a result of emotional inner identification we have made with them.*" [248]

There is an element of truth in that we are to restore others in a spirit of humility (Galatians 6:1), and we comfort others with the comfort by which we have been comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1). Although compassion is not a cold-hearted response lacking all emotion, Scripture does not present it as merely a feeling or "emotional inner identification."

**PRINCIPLE #7: "Forgiveness benefits the forgiver more so than the one forgiven" [249].** Smith reads his self-focused view of forgiveness onto Scripture when he says:

"The King *released* the servant, but in reality the King was now himself free of the anger and the stresses of maintaining the note. The servant, on the other hand, was released by the King but was still in bondage to his evil heart which was displayed as he *seized* his fellow worker." [249]

Smith views this whole text through the lens of his theophostic theory:

"Jesus is suggesting here that if Peter looked closely enough at this man he might just find something with which he could identify. He might discover...that he was a lonely, hurting soul who was also deceived and wounded by lies. One way or the other, Peter was the one who benefited most by releasing the debt." [249]

In a sense, we should discover ourselves in this parable, in that we are unable to pay the penalty required for our sins. That is why we are in such desperate need of Jesus Christ. However, Smith reinterprets sin as being "deceived and wounded by lies." This view of sin is not presented in Scripture. Also, it was not the person forgiving (Peter, or the king) who received the greatest benefit. *It was the debtor.* Although the servant in the parable failed to appreciate the king's kindness, the benefit extended to him was enormous. Similarly, God's forgiveness benefits us by sparing us the eternal penalty for our sin.

**PRINCIPLE #8: "Forgiveness should not be confused with reconciliation" [250].** Smith notes that the Scripture doesn't say the King and servant ever had a relationship after the debt was forgiven [250].

"The power to forgive lies totally in the hands of the one who holds the note. The one in debt has nothing to say in whether forgiveness occurs or not. Reconciliation, however, is a completely different matter." [250]

God "holds the note," and yes, He does have complete power in extending forgiveness. However, Smith poses a wide chasm between them that is not consistent with Scripture:

"Reconciliation requires the debtor to come to the place where he is willing to confess the error of his way. Along with this confession he must give evidence of genuine brokenness and contrite heart must seek restoration and restitution." [250--exact quote, not grammatically correct]

Smith also cites Romans 12:18 (live at peace with all men) to say that reconciliation is not possible without the debtor's admission of wrong and acceptance of full responsibility [250].

While forgiveness and reconciliation are certainly not identical, they are integrally related in God's plan of salvation. Smith is right to acknowledge God's power concerning forgiveness and our involvement in reconciliation, but he is wrong to divorce these intimately related concepts. God grants forgiveness to those who believe in Christ. Justification of the sinner is through faith in Him. Faith is not identical to repentance, but true saving faith is never alone. It is always accompanied by repentance. Scripture says, in essentially the "same breath," that God, in Christ, reconciled us to Himself, not counting our sins against us (2 Corinthians 5:19). In the Old Testament, Psalm 51 is a beautiful expression of the intimate relationship among these concepts, for example: God's compassion (51:1), forgiveness (51:1-2, 14), cleansing (51:2, 7-9, 10-13), repentance (51:3-4, 17). Forgiveness should not be *confused* with reconciliation, but it also should never be divorced from it. The theophostic perspective on forgiveness is but another reworking of the psychological view that focuses primarily, if not exclusively, on the emotional benefit to self.

### **Theophostic Theology: Exegetical Errors**

Smith cites Scripture frequently throughout his writing to support his approach to ministry. Although the fact that he uses the Bible seems encouraging, the manner in which he uses it raises great concern. The theophostic approach is typically read *onto* passages of Scripture (eisegesis), rather than allowing Scripture to speak *to* the reader (exegesis). Several examples are provided here to illustrate the problem.

#### **Hebrews 12:15**

"See to it that no one of you resists the grace of God lest a root of bitterness springs up defiling many." Smith cites this verse as teaching: "To fail to heal is to forfeit the grace of God" [191]. That "defilement of many," Smith says, is the way a wounded person affects the lives of others [191]. Smith insists that it is necessary to face intense pain in order to heal, i.e., to "revisit" the "original memory," the lies, and the emotions [191].

"Resists" is the Greek *υστερον*, which means to come short of; to come late or too tardily, to be left behind in the race and fail to reach the goal; fail to become a partaker (of God's grace) [Thayer]. "Defile" is to defile in a moral sense, with *sin*. Verse 14 speaks of pursuing peace with all men, and sanctification; verse 16 states the purpose, that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau. In context, this verse urges faith in Christ for eternal salvation, but Smith reads it through the eyes of his own counseling theory. The actual text says absolutely nothing about reviewing past wounds via theophostic ministry methods. The reader has to presuppose theophostic teaching in order to find it here.

#### **James 1:21 and 2 Corinthians 5:17**

Smith talks about the meaning of "salvation" in these two verses, coming up with something entirely different than the eternal salvation of the believer:

"Salvation of the soul" (in James 1:21) "is the same idea Paul referred to in Romans 12:2 where he says, 'Be not conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind.' This transformation of the mind or soul is after the fact of spiritual rebirth of the inner man." [204]

Sanctification, our progressive growth in holy living, does occur after the initial salvation experience of being born again (regeneration). However, we need to consider more carefully the context in James to understand this verse. Note that in James 1:18, God has brought us forth, i.e., regenerated us, by the word of truth. In verse 21, there is a command to receive, or welcome, the "implanted word" which is able to save your (plural) soul. "Receive" is in the imperative perfect tense (a rare form), which most likely implies an action already begun.<sup>6</sup> The preaching of the Word is the ordinary means by which God causes a person to be born again. "Soul" is often synonymous with "life" or "person," a meaning that makes sense here in James. The Word that is "able to save your soul" is the preached Word that God normally uses to bring about eternal salvation.

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<sup>6</sup> Porter, Stanley E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992. Thayer's definition of this word: to favorably receive teaching, instruction offered, to embrace as one's own, approve, give ear to.

Smith, however, reads his theophostic theories onto the text. When he discusses emotions as being appropriately matched with whatever we believe to be true, he cites this verse as authority for "healing" of painful memories:

"To find freedom from these painful feelings, a person must experience healing of the memory itself through the exposure of the lie and through 'receiving the word implanted which is able to save (heal) their soul' (James 1:21)." [217]

This teaching simply is not in the text or anywhere in the context.

2 Corinthians 5:17, which teaches that if any man is in Christ he is a new creature, does not use either the term for soul (psyche) or spirit (pneuma). Thus, according to Smith, it does not make sense to say this text is speaking of the salvation of the spirit, as contrasted with salvation of the soul. As noted previously, Smith proposes a sharp distinction between soul and spirit that should disturb even those believers who hold to a trichotomous position:

"When I came to Christ in repentance, my spiritual man was completely made new, yet my soul/mind stays the same unless I choose to renew it." [204]

Besides the misunderstanding of how "soul" and "spirit" are used in Scripture, and his unbiblical splitting of the inner man, Smith errs by suggesting that sanctification is optional. While sanctification is not the basis for eternal salvation, which is grounded wholly in the work of Christ, is it not a process from which believers can merely opt out. It is rather a gracious work of the Holy Spirit that provides evidence that a person really is saved. Salvation is of the person -- the *whole* person -- and not merely some fragment of the inner man.

#### **Colossians 1:9 and Romans 12:2**

Smith claims that "Paul said that our behavior is limited to our thinking" when he wrote these verses [208]. Paul did not say this. Colossians 1:9 is a prayer that believers might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that they might walk (live) in a manner worthy of the Lord. Such knowledge of God's will comes from His Word. There is nothing in this passage to suggest an excursion into the past to identify wounds inflicted by others, and "lies" believed, as a prerequisite to godly living. The text also does not say that our behavior is predetermined by our thinking.

#### **Romans 5:10**

Smith translates Romans 5:10: "We were (past tense) reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be (present and ongoing) saved (healed/released) by His life." [221]

In Romans 5:9-11, there is a parallelism between justification and reconciliation. There is both an "accomplished" and an "applied" aspect to our reconciliation with God. First, because of what Christ accomplished on our behalf, we were initially reconciled to God (justification). However, "we shall be saved by His life" doesn't refer to this "accomplished" aspect, but rather is on the "applied" side. Redemption has been once-and-for-all accomplished by Christ, but there is also the aspect of our being redeemed from our former way of life (sanctification). Smith sees our "former way of life" primarily in terms of hurts inflicted by others, rather than our own sins.

Smith claims that there is a "clear distinction throughout Scripture between being saved spiritually (born again, regenerated and made new, etc.), and the process of healing or salvation of the soul" [221]. The clear distinction in Scripture is between *justification* and *sanctification* (discussed earlier). Smith reads his counseling theories onto the text. He mixes up theological concepts such as regeneration, salvation, justification, and sanctification. He tries to squeeze in his brand of psychological "healing" under the rubric of sanctification, confusing the issue by calling it salvation of the *soul* as contrasted with salvation of the *spirit*. Scripture makes no such separation between salvation of the "soul" and of the "spirit," but describes a "golden chain" of events in the believer's salvation:

Calling (Romans 8:29-30; Galatians 1:15; 2 Timothy 1:9)  
Regeneration (John 1:12-13, 3:1-8; Titus 3:5)  
Faith/repentance (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)  
Justification (Romans 3:24-25; 5:1)  
Adoption (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:5)  
Sanctification (Romans 6; Ephesians 4:22-24)  
Glorification (Romans 8:30)

### **Romans 7:14 to 8:1-2**

This passage of Romans describes the author's intense struggle with sin, but culminates with the victory and freedom from condemnation that believers have in Christ. Smith reads his counseling theories and radical soul-spirit separation onto the text, presupposing the "subconscious" and his own view that certain "lies" are the driving force behind sinful behavior.

Smith notes that Paul's outward behavior in this text does not match his inner desire, that the sin is coming from something other than his own choosing [232]. He notes the Greek term for flesh (*sarx*), which he says some mistranslate as "old nature":



"The word simply means all that is part of Paul that is yet to be redeemed and sanctified. His spirit man is redeemed and complete but his mind and body are still being held captive by the lies in his members." [232]

According to Smith, Paul "acknowledges that good does dwell in him" because the wording is "nothing good, that is, in my flesh...." Smith says the believer is "righteous in his inner man" [233]. He notes the personification of sin in this passage, rejecting the idea that sin is a willful choice:

"It is obvious that Paul is referring to something other than the traditional view of sin as outward behavioral choices but rather sin as a source or root for sinful choices. *This may be the lies of our experience.*" [233, emphasis added]

Note how Smith reads onto the text his theory regarding the lies of our past.

Smith rejects a "duality of nature" doctrine on the basis of this passage in Romans, finding that the believer has only one nature that desires to do good [233]. Where Paul says that there is a "different law in the members of my body," Smith believes that is "the subconscious reality of one's experiential knowledge.... Paul had no frame of reference from which to understand what we now call the subconscious reality" [234]. Note again how Smith reads his own theory (along with Freud) onto the text. Note also how he believes Paul's knowledge was lacking as to the "subconscious" allegedly discovered by modern psychology. Such a view fails to consider that God is the ultimate author of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God, our *Creator*, would not have needed modern psychologists to discover and explain the existence and power of the so-called "subconscious," nor would God lack understanding of the alleged "subconscious reality."

Smith proposes that the term "members" in this text refers to "all that is not of his spirit man," including the mind that is not yet renewed, as well as the body. The "subconscious members" are the "experiential lies" stored in the not-yet-renewed mind [234]. Once again, Smith blatantly reads his own theories onto the text, which does not say "subconscious members."

At the same time, Smith does acknowledge the truth that we sinners are not able to keep God's law:

"We have as Christian leaders kept the Church in bondage to the impossible task of keeping the law and good works. It is time we proclaim the true Gospel that says we are

incapable of keeping any part of the law whether it be the Tora or the New Testament." [235]

However, the glorious good news of the gospel is that Christ has kept the law on our behalf, in addition to paying the penalty for our sins, and His righteousness is credited to us (Romans 5:12-21).

Finally, Romans 7 must be read in context. In particular, Romans 6, 7, and 8 should be considered together. Having carefully outlined God's plan for our justification earlier in Romans, Paul now unfolds God's agenda regarding our sanctification. Romans 6 declares the work of Christ in breaking the power of sin over believers, and puts to rest the idea that we might freely sin because of God's abundant grace. On the other side, Romans 8 beautifully describes our victory in Christ, including the indwelling Holy Spirit and our eternal hope of glory. Sandwiched in between is the struggle with sin described in Romans 7, our "daily grind" during this earthly life. Christ has broken the power of sin and we are redeemed, belonging completely to Him (both the visible and the inner man), but this side of eternity we continue to battle sinful patterns, thoughts, and desires. We are "already" made new in one sense, but in another, we are "not yet" renewed as we one day shall be.

#### **Ephesians 4:26, 4:31**

In discussing the term "anger" in Ephesians 4:26 and 4:31, Smith says that the Greek uses two different words, one for "the initial flash of indignation" in 4:26, and another for anger that "has been around for awhile and has been boiling and churning" [357-358]. This is simply not accurate. The same Greek root word (*orge*) is used in both verses: the verbal form in 4:26, the noun in 4:31. There is a different (essentially synonymous) Greek word for anger (*thymos*), but the distinction Smith proposes is simply not there.

#### **2 Corinthians 10:5**

Smith claims that immersing a person in past trauma (and identifying lies) is biblical, based on this verse in Corinthians that says to "take every thought we have captive." He explains that "we are not to run from them or repress them [our thoughts]" [363-364]. Looking at this verse in context, there is no thought here of looking back into the believer's childhood to identify "lies." The Scripture simply speaks of taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ, destroying every stronghold that raises itself up against the knowledge of God. Smith, once again, presupposes his approach to ministry and reads it into the text. There are all sorts of thoughts and lies that might be "raised up against the knowledge of God." Smith assumes that his own definition is the one God has in mind here.

## Chapter Headings

Smith introduces each chapter with a text of Scripture that he believes supports the theme.

**Introduction:** Genesis 1:3 ("let there be light"). The text from Genesis begins the familiar account of how God created the heavens and the earth. Certainly Scripture uses the term "light" in other ways. For example, in 1 John, "God is light." Light in this passage corresponds with truth. Smith uses "light" to contrast with the "darkness" of lies that people believe. Unfortunately, he misuses the light/darkness analogy, e.g., by setting aside God's Word as the true source of light during counseling sessions (see Psalm 119:105).

**1 - Moving Beyond Tolerable Recovery:** John 8:36. This text speaks of the Son setting you free, when you know the truth (8:32). However, the context makes clear that the truth that sets you free is *God's Word* (8:31). Expanding the context a little further and considering all of chapter 8, we find that Jesus is speaking of freedom as the eternal life that He provides by His life, death, and resurrection. Jesus also speaks clearly of His deity (8:58). There is far more here than a psychological "recovery" process identifying "lies" accumulated in childhood.

**2 - Out of Darkness:** 1 Peter 2:9. Smith equates the "darkness" of this Scripture with past emotional trauma. In context, this verse is about eternal salvation, specifically, believers becoming God's people by trusting in Christ. There is nothing anywhere in the text or context pointing us to the sort of counseling that Smith promotes.

**3 - Three Essential Components:** Acts 26:18. This verse is ripped completely out of its context. Paul is describing his miraculous conversion that occurred when the risen Lord appeared to him, calling him to be a minister and witness to the Gentiles so that they might trust Christ and receive eternal salvation. Smith reads into this text the three "essential components" of his counseling ministry, namely, identification of the following:

(1) The "historical emotional 'echo,'" the feeling experienced when a painful memory is accessed; (2) the "memory picture" that matches the emotional "echo"; and (3) the "embedded original lie." There is *nothing* even remotely like Smith's ministry here in Acts.

**4 - Cursed be the Lies That Bind:** 1 John 1:6. In 1 John 1:5-10, there is a contrast between walking in the light and in the darkness. In context, "walking in the darkness" has to do with willful sin, not believing lies as a result of childhood trauma.

**5 - Turning on the Light: Isaiah 9:2.** Smith lists several "hindrances to receiving the truth," including revengeful emotions, failure to identify the "original lie," logic, demonic interference, "dissociation," "defense mechanisms," fear, unconfessed sin, need for the counselor's acceptance, and personal "woundedness" of the counselor [92-93]. The verse cited in Isaiah is embedded in a passage (9:1-7) that is a prophecy of the coming of Christ. The "light" is the glorious gospel, with forgiveness of sin and eternal life. There is nothing in this text that connects us to Smith's counseling approach.

**6 - Keeping Records in the Process: 1 John 2:8.** Smith advises keeping record sheets of the memory pictures, lies that have been identified, and truth received [110]. The verse cited in 1 John has nothing whatsoever to do with such record keeping, but rather concerns the commandment to love others (see 1 John 2:7-11).

**7 - The Theophostic Process: 1 John 1:5.** The "process" is described by Smith in terms of turning on the "light" so that memories can be accessed and lies identified. The verse cited, like the one above for Chapter 4 (1 John 1:6) has to do with the contrast between righteous living (walking in the light) and sin (walking in the darkness). Smith again reads his theories onto the Scripture.

**8 - Common Myths That Hinder Recovery Process: 1 John 3:19.** Smith believes that the following "myths people propagate about childhood woundedness" are actually "guardian lies" that will hinder the healing process [154]. He calls these "defenses" to protect against the pain of past memories [154].

- \* Time will heal.
- \* Forgive and forget.
- \* They never intended to hurt me.
- \* My relationship with my wounder is good now.
- \* Just leave well enough alone.
- \* It wasn't so bad.

The connection with 1 John 3:19 is anything but clear. That verse speaks of assurance before God that we are "of the truth." Seen in its context (3:13-24), such assurance is based on the love we show for others, with Christ as our example.

**9 - What Theophostic Ministry Cannot Do: James 3:14.** Smith lists a number of things theophostic ministry cannot do. Most notably, it cannot remove the emotional pain of the present without digging into the past to identify the "original lie" [158]. The text in James contrasts the gentleness of heavenly wisdom with arrogance and selfish ambition (James 3:13-18). The connection is anything but obvious.

**10 - Evidence of True Healing:** 1 John 3:19. See comments above (Chapter 8) regarding this verse. Smith seems to substitute "healing" and "recovery" for sanctification, which is evidenced by our love for others.

**11 - What are the Consequences for Not Finding Healing?:** Hebrews 12:15. See detailed comments earlier in this section. Smith claims there are "unavoidable consequences" for failing to heal, and that people often carry deeply buried wounds completely unaware of those "symptomatic consequences" [185]. Even if this were true (and we ought to question that it is), it is a huge stretch to find such a conclusion in this text regarding God's grace. The Scripture establishes responsibility for defiling others with sin, while Smith's approach seems to erase responsibility because the wounds are so deeply buried below the level of consciousness.

**12 - Role of the Theophostic Minister:** Mark 2:4-5. In quoting these verses, Smith emphasizes that Jesus saw *their* faith, i.e., the faith of the men who brought the paralytic to Him for healing [192]. It is not entirely clear how Smith connects this passage to his view of the counselor's role, except that the counselor/minister is rather passive, not actually giving counsel at all but waiting for the counselee to receive some new communication directly from God. The New Testament envisions a far more active role for those ordained to church leadership (see, e.g., Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

**13 - Renewing the Mind: Moving from Logic to Experience:** James 1:21. This chapter is about the alleged difference between "experiential knowledge" and "logical truth" [203]. See comments above regarding this verse, which is actually about the preached Word that God ordinarily uses to bring about regeneration.

**14 - When the Wound is Self-Inflicted [sin]:** Romans 3:23, Isaiah 53:6. Smith defines "wound" as "any act or word inflicted by others upon the wounded person, which has been embedded with a misinterpretation or lie" [218]. The two verses cited both state that *all* of us have sinned, going astray like sheep and falling short of the glory of God. This is how Scripture defines the fundamental problem of mankind. Smith, however, centers his ministry on wounds--the sins of *others*. Even in this chapter where sin is acknowledged, note how it is redefined in terms of "misinterpretation" rather than any willful disobedience or rebellion.

**15 - Forgiveness, the Divine Outcome of Truth and Compassion:** Matthew 18:27. Smith's view of forgiveness focuses primarily on feelings, and he chooses this Scripture due to the English translation of one Greek word, "felt compassion." This word describes an attitude of tender mercy or pity such as what

God holds toward fallen human beings. It could just as easily be translated "had compassion" rather than "felt compassion." Nowhere does Scripture condition forgiveness on the feelings of the person who has been wronged.

**16 - Theophostic Ministry and the Church:** Ephesians 3:20-21. Based on these verses, giving glory to God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ask or think, Smith lashes out at the church for clinging to "traditionalism" and not wholeheartedly embracing his approach. He apparently presumes that "beyond all we could ask or think" is the equivalent of the claimed results of theophostic ministry. However, if a church is faithful to Scripture, and skeptical about a method that tosses God's Word to the side, that is hardly a limitation on God's abilities as described here in Ephesians. God is faithful to His Word, and uses that Word, in doing "exceedingly abundantly."

**17 - Theophostic Ministry on Your Own:** Philippians 2:12. This verse describes the believer "working out his own salvation" because God is at work within him. Smith only introduces it at the conclusion, after an individual has passively endured theophostic ministry with the Bible cast to the side. This Scripture actually refutes the manner in which Smith denounces the believer's active participation in sanctification.

**18 - After the Last Session:** 3 John 4. This Scripture describes God's people walking in His truth. To Smith, it portrays individuals who have been through theophostic ministry and "then learn to walk daily in the truth of God's Word" [281]. Unfortunately, as we have seen, Smith holds a faulty view regarding how God reveals His truth, relegating His Word to a secondary position.

**19 - Principles of Demonic Realities:** Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. It is certainly true that we are engaged in a spiritual battle against forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. However, as we have seen, Smith holds an unbiblical view regarding the role of demonic powers in the life of a true believer.

## **Conclusion**

By its very name, Theophostic Ministry claims to be God's light ("theos" = God, "phos" = light). However, it is grounded in faulty, unbiblical views of revelation, human nature, sin, sanctification, and other key theological doctrines. The "light" received is not God's revealed Word, but an individual "word" that could easily be the product of sinful human imagination. The inner man is sharply divided in such a fashion that even trichotomists ought to tremble. "Wound" replaces "sin," and troubled people focus on the sins of others rather than their own responsibility before God. The theophostic process, with its

extreme passivity, surplants the biblical doctrine of sanctification in which believers participate by the power of God's Spirit working in them. Although quick and permanent results are promised by this approach, it also holds the potential for irreparable damage to relationships and families by unearthing of allegedly buried memories of the past sins of others. All that glitters is not gold, and all that claims to be "light" is not necessarily God's light. The theophostic approach does not withstand scrutiny under the searchlight of God's eternal Word.



































