

Position Paper: PST001

AN EVALUATION OF THEOPHOSTIC PRAYER MINISTRY

If you are only interested in a “bottom line” statement of CRI’s conclusions and position on Theophostic Prayer Ministry, please read the following synopsis. For an in-depth explanation of the grounds for these conclusions, please read the attached CRI position paper, “An Evaluation of Theophostic Prayer Ministry.”

SYNOPSIS

After an exhaustive evaluation, CRI detects nothing unbiblical about the core theory and practice of Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM). The theory is elegant in its profound simplicity, and the anecdotal reports of its effectiveness in practice justify further investigation; nonetheless, much more scientific research needs to be done before even the more modest claims of TPM can be validated, and some of the extravagant claims seem unlikely ever to be established.

CRI does have several peripheral concerns about TPM, but we have been favorably impressed by founder Ed Smith’s openness to constructive criticism and change. We caution Christians who practice or receive TPM to be discerning about Smith’s past teachings on the sin nature, sanctification, and satanic ritual abuse, and to be aware that, despite major improvements, there are still aspects of Smith’s teaching on spiritual warfare that CRI does not endorse.

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OF
THEOPHOSTIC PRAYER MINISTRY

by

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AN EVALUATION OF THEOPHOSTIC PRAYER MINISTRY

Theophostic Prayer Ministry (TPM) is perhaps the fastest-growing approach to inner healing or healing of memories in evangelical churches today.¹ TPM has generated both enthusiasm and concern among Christians across denominational lines,¹ and CRI has received hundreds of requests for information on it.

Founder Ed Smith says that Theophostic Prayer Ministries is a for-profit business that does not “solicit donations, gifts or contributions for its support. It is primarily a publishing company that produces training materials, books and video tapes for pastors, mental health professionals and lay ministers. We have distribution centers in several foreign countries and have trained people in over 120 countries worldwide.”² He offers training seminars at TPM’s Campbellsville, Kentucky, headquarters (called the Alathia³ Equipping Center), in other locations around the country and the world, and by video recording. About 1,000 training manuals per month consistently have been sent out for the past several years to people interested in facilitating TPM sessions.

Smith holds a doctorate in pastoral ministry from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a master’s degree in education (with a focus in marriage and family counseling) from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. After serving for 17 years as a Southern Baptist pastor, he embarked on a full-time counseling practice.

TPM began in 1996 when Smith reached an impasse in his ability to help adult victims of childhood sexual abuse. He could help them realize intellectually that whatever they experienced in their past was no longer threatening them in their present, but he could not help them to feel that truth emotionally. One night he was driving home from a group session and he cried out to God, “I can’t do this anymore.”⁴ Smith says that in answer to this desperate prayer the Lord opened the Scriptures to him so that he could see that the missing ingredient in his counseling ministry had been the Lord Himself. He had acknowledged God before and after each session but the sessions themselves did not allow for the presence of the Spirit of Christ. Once Smith began to invite Jesus into his sessions, Theophostic Prayer Ministry was born.⁵ *Theophostic* is derived from two Greek words that together mean “the light of God.”

THE BASIC THEOPHOSTIC THEORY AND METHOD

One of the elements that make TPM a radically new approach to healing emotional pain is the central place practitioners seek to give the Spirit of Christ in the sessions. Even the skeptic would have to acknowledge that the sessions proceed as if three parties were involved: the facilitator, the recipient, and Jesus. The role that Jesus is believed to play is better understood in light of the core theory behind TPM.

1 TPM thus far has largely operated below the radar screen of the secular psychotherapeutic community. Current efforts to test its claims scientifically could change that. It is similar to other inner healing approaches in that it is used both by lay ministers and licensed counselors (see n. 15).

2 <http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=29>.

3 *Alathia* is the Greek word for truth.

4 Edward M. Smith, *Healing Life’s Deepest Hurts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 2002), 17.

5 This is not to suggest that the entire system was received in one flash of illumination. Through practice, research, theorizing, application, and learning from mistakes, Smith continues to revise and refine his approach.

TPM is based on the premise that one's present emotional pain is usually rooted in the past—not in past experiences per se, but in the interpretations one assigns to them. Smith argues that when people are traumatized, Satan will often supply them with a false interpretation of the event. For example, if a young girl is sexually molested by her father, Satan might whisper in her mind at some point afterward, "You didn't cry out for help. You must have wanted it. You're dirty."⁶ Now, as an adult, the molestation survivor is unable to engage in healthy marital relations because of feeling sexually defiled.

In Smith's view, it is not required that severe trauma be at the root of emotional pain—it instead may stem from the harsh or incessant criticism of a parent or teacher, the cruelty of classmates, the humiliation of a public failure, and so on. In other words, not only the grievously abused but all of us possess memories that are based on lies or false impressions (i.e., lie-based), which are at the root of much of our present pain and irrational, undesirable behavior. Such memories typically recall childhood experiences, but there are exceptions. Whenever a present situation is close enough to a past traumatic experience, it can trigger that lie-based thinking and we may react out of proportion to the circumstance. If a man's father was constantly critical of any decision he attempted to make on his own, he may lose his temper when his wife innocently asks him what he's doing because he thinks she's questioning his judgment.

Drawing on current brain theory,⁷ Smith argues that such primal traumatic experiences with their false interpretations are registered in the right side of our brains, while our ability to understand data intellectually and objectively is the function of the left side of our brains.⁸ He believes this explains why he was having no success convincing adult survivors of sexual abuse that they were no longer in danger: in order for them to be delivered from the emotional power of those lies they would need to learn the truth experientially, in a manner similar to how the lies were implanted in their brains.

Theophostic Prayer Ministry therefore unfolds along the following lines: after receiving the recipient's permission to do so, the practitioner invites Jesus into the session and asks Him to reveal His truth about the memories that will be brought to mind. The recipient is then asked to try to identify the memory where she (or he⁹) first felt the emotions that are troubling her in the present (e.g., feeling unloved). She does this by closing her eyes and mentally drifting back through time, following the "smoke trail" of the pain until she reaches a significant memory that matches the pain (e.g., her single mother turned over custody of her to a resentful aunt in order to pursue a relationship with a man who didn't want the child). The practitioner encourages the recipient to describe the memory and then to describe how that remembered experience makes her feel (e.g., "I am all alone"). This is where the lie is manifest.

The practitioner asks the recipient to rate how true the interpretation of the experience she has just described feels to her. If it feels very true (e.g., 10 on a scale of 1 to 10), he suspects he may have found the original lie and encourages the recipient to feel and "embrace" (i.e., experience and own) that painful interpretation of the event. He then asks Jesus what He wants the recipient to know about the memory content she has just surfaced. The recipient waits on Jesus for an answer, and, predictably, a vision, words, or realization will be impressed on her mind. This answer may be biblical truth (e.g., "I will never leave you nor forsake you") or factual truth (e.g., she might have been deserted as a child but she now

6 Smith makes it clear that by "Satan" he means an evil spirit in Satan's service, just as Scripture also often collectively refers to the forces of evil as Satan or the Devil (e.g., Eph. 6:11–12). Smith further makes it clear that such false beliefs do not always originate from demons—they often originate from one's own mind (e.g., a child who blames herself for being abused, as children often do) or from other people in one's life (e.g., the mother of a child who has been abused by her father, or the father himself).

7 See E. James Wilder, "Current Brain Theory and Basic Theophostic Ministry," *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry* 1 (2003): 15–19.

8 Wilder's development of this hypothesis (in *ibid.*) is far more complex than my use of the common right brain/left brain distinction might suggest. It is speculative and may not be accurate in fine detail, but it does seem plausible that the basic premise is correct: a different part of the human brain registers knowledge learned through experience than that which registers knowledge learned through education.

9 I am giving preference to the female pronoun here only because it is awkward continually to use "he or she," and more TPM clients thus far have been women than men (though many men have received TPM), due most likely to the fact that TPM largely grew out of Smith's ministry to female survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

has a loving husband and many caring people in her family and church who are there for her). The practitioner then again asks the recipient whether the previous interpretation of the experience feels true, and, again, predictably, it no longer feels true at all (e.g., 1 on a scale of 1 to 10). The practitioner keeps the session focused on that memory until the recipient can remember it with “perfect peace” (i.e., with no hint of the emotional pain and conflict previously associated with it).

If such peace is not achieved, then the practitioner assumes that the original memory or further lies are yet to be uncovered, and the process is repeated through as many memories and lies as necessary for the pain to be completely healed. Smith says that with an experienced facilitator, resolution of lie-based pain in a specific area of memory can usually be achieved in one session, although other lies may need to be dealt with before overall improvement is noted.¹⁰

Smith’s interpretation of what is happening in such sessions is that in the same experiential manner in which the lie was first accepted Jesus now replaces it with His truth. He says that people who go through this process are healed in the area of their emotional lives that Jesus touched—if a situation similar to the original one now comes up, it no longer triggers the same irrational and harmful emotional reactions. He further maintains that this healing is both lasting and maintenance free. Recipient and facilitator testimonials in support of these claims abound in TPM literature and during TPM events.

EVALUATION OF THE BASIC THEOPHOSTIC THEORY AND METHOD

CRI finds nothing inconsistent with Scripture in TPM’s core theory and practice. It certainly fits the biblical worldview to hold that believing lies oppresses or injures people and replacing those lies with truth frees or heals them. The theory that the emotional pain that haunts so many people’s lives (including Christians) is rooted in false beliefs associated with past experiences rather than the experiences themselves seems elegant in its profound simplicity, and the proposal that Satan is often the source of those lies while Jesus supplies the truth that dispels them is again consistent with Scripture (e.g., John 8:44; 14:6; 18:37). This emphasis on conforming one’s beliefs to truth is entirely biblical (Ps. 43:3; 51:6; Prov. 23:23; 1 Cor. 13:6; Eph. 4:14–15, 25; 5: 8; 6:14¹¹), and the complete dependence on Christ in ministry to the hurting that TPM advocates, to the point of giving Him the central place in that ministry, is commendable at least in concept and warrants consideration.

CRI is also intrigued by the numerous public testimonies of practitioners and recipients¹² for TPM’s lasting efficacy in dealing with a wide variety of emotional and behavioral problems, including depression, general anxiety, anger issues, phobias, panic attacks, sexual addiction, and eating disorders. The frequency of such testimonies calls for further investigation, but anecdotal evidence is entirely insufficient to establish TPM’s claims. To demonstrate that TPM gets results superior to all or most other varieties of inner healing/therapy and is not simply reaping the common benefits of counseling (e.g., the placebo effect and the therapeutic value of catharsis in a caring environment), rigorous scientific testing is needed. Researchers have already conducted some surveys and case study research that provide favorable results for TPM,^b but much more extensive and rigorous testing (e.g., randomized control group studies) will be required to establish its claims. CRI thus finds no problem with Christians engaging in TPM per se, but at this early stage of the research we are unable to endorse TPM’s specific claims of efficacy.

10 Ed Smith, in an e-mail message to me, November 24, 2004.

11 It could be argued that some of these passages are referring specifically to the truth of the gospel, Scripture, or Christ Himself, but it seems self-evident that the exhortations to adhere to truth carry over to all aspects of life; or does anyone really want to argue that only biblical truth matters and believing falsehoods about temporal things is unimportant? Truth (i.e., that which is true) is a seamless web in which the things of God cannot be separated from the things of His creation, which is why we say that all truth is God’s truth. As the apostle John affirms, no lie belongs to the truth (1 John 2:21).

12 These are present in TPM materials, on the Internet (in Web sites and chat rooms), at Christian counseling conventions, and in any number of Christian settings. My greatest exposure to them was at the TPM basic training seminar I attended in Campbellsville in May 2003.

Addressing Basic Concerns about TPM

There are, however, specific concerns that Christians could raise regarding TPM's core theory and practice that should not be ignored here. These include:

1. Does TPM engage in "psychoheresy"? When Ed Smith first founded this ministry, he called it TheoPhostic Counseling but later changed it to Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Smith admits that part of his motivation for doing this was to protect Theophostic practitioners from litigation,¹³ but in any case, "prayer ministry" is much more descriptive of what goes on in a Theophostic session than is "counseling," which often connotes advice-giving, leading, or "directive" psychotherapy. Smith clearly and repeatedly instructs TPM practitioners to avoid counseling assiduously in all Theophostic sessions. The first principle in the Theophostic Ministry Guidelines, which are available online at the Theophostic Web site, affirms, "Theophostic Ministry is prayer not counseling. Therefore I will not be offering you counsel but rather interceding with you to God. I will be ministering with you in prayer seeking to help you discover with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the root sources of the emotional pain in your life."¹⁴ It is true that counseling has a broader range of meaning than simply "giving advice," and in some of these senses TPM sessions could be called counseling. There is a significant difference, however, between TPM on the one hand and Freudian, Rogerian, and other "nondirective" psychotherapies on the other hand: the sole function of the Theophostic practitioner is to facilitate the recipient's encounter with Jesus, and it is believed to be Jesus who does the actual therapeutic work. That hardly sounds like any known model of psychology.

It is true, however, that TPM incorporates in its theory and approach concepts found in some schools of the wide field of psychology.¹⁵ These include the idea of a subconscious, the belief that psychological and emotional problems can be rooted in the past and that revisiting such past experiences may be necessary to resolve those problems, and the describing of such problems as wounds that need to be healed. TPM also uses psychological terms to describe phenomena believed to be encountered in the sessions, such as repression, dissociation, and abreaction (the acting out of repressed emotional conflict in sometimes extreme words or behavior).

Some Christians will reject TPM simply for its use of elements of psychotherapy, since such Christians reject all forms of psychotherapy. Still other Christians who accept some forms of psychotherapy will reject TPM because they do not believe in revisiting past experiences to deal with present problems, or they disagree with some other aspect of its theory and practice. These positions are certainly legitimate options within the broader field of orthodox Christianity.

We must caution, however, against the extreme view of Martin and Deidre Bobgan of Psychoheresy Awareness Ministries, which holds that any attempt to integrate any of the vast and often disparate elements of psychotherapy with theology constitutes "psychoheresy" and a distortion of the Christian faith.¹⁶ (The Bobgans do accept the validity of some aspects of psychology apart from psychotherapy.) Not surprisingly, the Bobgans have published a book accusing TPM of heresy.¹⁷ They even have published a book titled *CRI (Christian Research Institute): Guilty of Psychoheresy?*¹⁸ simply because we published a four-

13 Ed Smith, in an e-mail attachment to me, December 13, 2004.

14 <http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=9>.

15 TPM is used by both professionally qualified counselors and lay ministers. The professionals use it because they believe it is an effective form of therapy and they will likely bring their additional resources to bear in helping the client apart from the TPM session; lay people can use it because the training Smith offers is sufficient to facilitate a TPM session, and he advises them not to use psychological terms or make diagnoses, and to refer the clients to professionals if they present problems that go beyond the scope of TPM. Mental health professionals who use TPM and lay ministers (e.g., in a local church that provides TPM as one of its ministries) are encouraged to establish relationships in which the professionals can provide supervision and consultation for the lay ministers.

16 See, e.g., Martin Bobgan, *The Psychological Way/The Spiritual Way* (Minneapolis: Bethany Press, 1979), and Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1987).

17 See Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Theophostic Counseling: Divine Revelation? OR PsychoHeresy?* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1999).

18 Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *CRI (Christian Research Institute): Guilty of Psychoheresy?* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1998).

part series in the *Christian Research Journal* that did not concur with the Bobgans' wholesale rejection of psychotherapy.¹⁹ We did indeed concur with many of the Bobgans' criticisms of psychotherapy, but we found that there are insights in the overall field of psychotherapy that are derived from God's truth in general revelation, and these can be incorporated by discerning Christians into a Christian worldview and counseling approach.

The Bobgans argue that most forms of personal and emotional problems are rooted in our relationships with God and need to be resolved through repentance and Christian discipleship. We would agree that Christians often resort to psychotherapy for problems that should be dealt with through Christian discipleship. We further concur that many Christian psychotherapists do not discern unbiblical elements adequately in the theories and techniques they employ. We do believe, however, that there are some traumas Christians have suffered in their lives that properly can be described as emotional wounds and that do call for some kind of wise and biblically informed therapy. We do not believe that the Bobgans or any other antipsychotherapy writers have constructed a biblically and logically coherent argument against this premise.

Christian counselors²⁰ have often observed that when such Christians attempt to deal with their problems through simple repentance and discipleship, the underlying wound remains unhealed and continues to create emotional pain and relational conflict in the Christian's life. Might it be that the problem needs to be dealt with on a different level? They can continue on the treadmill of repentance and relapse ad infinitum, but if there is a way to get at such wounds and allow Jesus to heal them, why should a Christian resist this? (This argument assumes there is a biblical basis for holding that Jesus would participate in the process—see concern no. 3.)

2. Does TPM involve recovered memories and visualization, both of which are unreliable and dangerous? These concerns have been raised by the Bobgans, Christian journalist Jan Fletcher,²¹ and several others. CRI is certainly sympathetic with such concerns in general. We have published articles warning about the dangers of recovered memory therapy as a form of illicit directive counseling that can implant suggestions in clients' minds leading to false memories and false accusations against innocent people in their lives.²² We have also published articles that warn against the dangers of visualization and guided imagery as activities that potentially can lead to altered states of consciousness, demonic delusion, false views of reality, and occult attempts to manipulate God, Jesus, and reality according to one's own desires or understanding.²³

Such concerns are certainly relevant when evaluating TPM, since forgotten memories are sometimes recovered and visions are one way that recipients allegedly receive truth from Jesus. To accuse TPM of practicing recovered memory therapy and visualization, however, is to betray either ignorance or a bias against TPM that refuses to be corrected by clear and consistent facts. The official Theophostic Ministry Guidelines (see note 14), which are given out to all practitioners as well as to recipients, include the following principles for the practice of TPM:

19 See Bob and Gretchen Passantino, "Psychology and the Church" (Parts One through Four), *Christian Research Journal* 17, 3 (1995) through 18, 2 (1996) (<http://www.equip.org/free/DP220-1.htm>, <http://www.equip.org/free/DP220-2.htm>, <http://www.equip.org/free/DP220-3.htm> and <http://www.equip.org/free/DP220-4.htm>).

20 Including this writer, whose counseling experience spans a 33-year period and includes directing a Christian hotline and counseling center, providing pastoral counseling, and counseling occult and cult-related problems through CRI.

21 Jan Fletcher, *Lying Spirits: A Christian Journalist's Report on Theophostic Ministry* (self-published, 2004), which is available for free online at <http://www.lyingspirits.com/lyingspirits.pdf>.

22 See, e.g., Bob and Gretchen Passantino, "The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson (Part Four: Spiritual Warfare and the Myth of Satanic Conspiracies and Ritual Abuse)," *Christian Research Journal* 21, 4 (1999) (<http://www.equip.org/free/DA084.htm>).

23 See, e.g., John Ankerberg and John Weldon, "Visualization: God-Given Power or New Age Danger?" (Parts One and Two), *Christian Research Journal* 19, 1 and 2 (1996) (<http://www.equip.org/free/DN388-1.htm> and <http://www.equip.org/free/DN388-2.htm>).

- I will avoid all forms of guided imagery and or directed visualization and seek to allow you to have a genuine healing experience prayerfully directed by the Holy Spirit without information input on my part.
- I will not make ANY suggestions as to what I think your memory content may contain. I will avoid making suggestions as to what I assume your lie-based thinking may be and thus allow you to make this discovery yourself while relying on the Holy Spirit and through my asking NON-DIRECTIVE questions.
- I will only ask questions that are reflective of the actual memory content or other pertinent information that you alone have surfaced and avoid questions that are leading or reflect my assumptions.
- I will not attempt to interpret or give explanation to ANY information that you surface. Rather I will encourage you to listen and receive understanding from the Spirit of Christ. I will not interpret your dreams, visions or other inner-mind realities but rather encourage you to follow any negative emotion that may be behind these realities and seek to find the true original memory source.
- I will ask NON-DIRECTIVE questions to help you discern the lies you may believe in your memories. For example, if you say, "I feel all alone and abandoned." I might ask, "Why do you feel all alone?" You may reply, "Because they all left me." I might say, "Why do you think they left you?" You might respond, "Because they hate me?" I might ask, "Why do you believe that they hate you?" You might say, "Because I am worthless and no good?" etc. I will avoid ALL suggestive questions such as, "Do you think you may have been abused?"
- I will not supply you with what I may think God wants you to know during the ministry session. I will keep my "words of knowledge" to myself until you have arrived at perfect peace in your memory as a result of your receiving truth from the Holy Spirit. I will defer my opinions and thinking to the Spirit of Christ, trusting Him to provide you with His truth and only use my words of insight for confirmation after you have received truth from Him.
- Should I personally have some visual picture appear in my mind that I believe is related to your memory, I will not report this to you lest I implant ideas into your thinking that are not your own. Should your experience cause me to see images or pictures, I will keep them to myself.
- I will do my best not to hinder your healing by inputting my personal assumptions, insight or thinking that is directive or leading in nature. I will keep my "words of knowledge" and "prophetic insight" to myself and only share this information after the Lord has brought you into perfect peace by way of His truth and intervention. My desire is that you have a genuine encounter with the Spirit of Christ. He alone is the only one who can truly release you of the emotional lie-base [sic] pain in your life.
- I will avoid changing, augmenting or repackaging the Theophostic Principles and seek to apply the principles as they have been taught in as pure a form as possible to avoid misrepresenting this ministry and confusing the Body of Christ. Should I choose to do otherwise, I will clearly state my doing so to those with whom I minister so that they will not be mislead [sic] as to what is genuine Theophostic Ministry and what is not.

I spent a week in May 2003 at Alathia observing an entire Theophostic basic training seminar and witnessing numerous actual TPM sessions. Never once did Ed Smith veer from these principles. He emphasizes them repeatedly throughout Theophostic literature, including the basic Theophostic training manual. (It should be clarified at this point that TPM uses the term *directive* in a limited sense and does provide structure and direction to its sessions, such as putting supposed truth received from Jesus to biblical and other tests. These issues will be discussed in more detail below, especially in note 72 and under concern no. 4.)

Most of the memories revisited in TPM sessions were known to the recipients prior to the sessions, but occasionally memories do surface that can be called "recovered." From the standpoint of critical observers such as CRI, these memories could indeed be false and are a legitimate cause for concern, but there are several aspects to the TPM approach that mitigate this concern (see the section on "Satanic

Ritual Abuse”). This valid concern notwithstanding, there are several significant differences between TPM and recovered memory therapy per se, which Ed Smith demonstrated in an article in the Theophostic journal that is also available on the TPM Web site.²⁴

To the charge that TPM involves visualization, Fletcher adds a laundry list of occult practices, including mysticism, hypnosis, divination, and Gnosticism.²⁵ She specifically worries that the recipients’ drifting back through past memories opens them up to altered states of consciousness (ASCs) and lying spirits (hence the title of her book). As CRI’s specialist in research of ASCs, mysticism, and the occult for the past 28 years (having previously been converted to Christ from such experiences), I find no foundation for Fletcher’s concerns. She stretches the meaning of the word Gnosticism (which is the quest for Self-knowledge; i.e., the knowledge of one’s own supposed divinity) beyond recognition in order to apply it to TPM (which is simply seeking the “knowledge” of the harmful lies that the individual believes). Mysticism likewise involves the quest for experiential union with the Divine and presupposes that experience is the ultimate test of truth, neither of which features applies to Theophostic.²⁶ She does not appear to understand what divination is²⁷ and confuses it with spiritism.²⁸ To charge TPM with spiritism, in turn, begs the question of whether the “spirit” they seek to “open themselves up to” is a lying spirit or Jesus. If the Jesus sought in TPM is the Jesus of orthodoxy (and everything I have seen indicates that He is²⁹), then what TPM does should rather be called what Smith calls it: prayer.

Visualization is an active use of the imagination to harness creative energy that can be used as a stepping stone to make contact with spirits (whether “Jesus” or some other entity). Such an approach to encountering Jesus is fatally flawed because the subject is the one who determines what Jesus says or does. This critical flaw can be found in many varieties of inner healing, but not in TPM.

Unlike visualization, in TPM the subject is in a state of passive trust in the Spirit of God and there is no active effort to shape the spiritual experience. This passivity, on the other hand, is not the dangerous passivity of hypnosis or other ASCs, where a trance state is cultivated that can lead to a loss of ego boundaries (i.e., blurring of the subject/object distinction), a feeling of oneness with the universe, and the intrusion of spirit entities into the thought void that has been deliberately created. The TPM process by contrast is a simple drifting back from memory to memory with the goal of locating the original lie, in faith that at that point Christ will replace the lie with His truth. This activity neither empties the mind of content (as in meditation) nor uses the imagination as a springboard to the spiritual realm (as in visualization). It would seem the only legitimate concern that can be raised about this process is whether such faith is presumptuous. If it were, then what the subject experienced would be the product of his or her own mind rather than a true work of the Spirit of Christ.

3. Does TPM illegitimately presume that Christ is willing to cooperate with the process? As far as CRI is concerned, a major question regarding the legitimacy of the TPM approach is whether participants’ trust that Jesus will answer their prayers for emotional healing is warranted. If Jesus is cooperating with the process, then the apparent successes of TPM become readily explainable and many of the concerns raised by critics become groundless. If, on the other hand, there is no basis for assuming Jesus would respond to their requests then at best TPM is getting some positive results because participants, while

24 Ed Smith, “Comparison of Theophostic Ministry and Recovered Memory Therapy,” *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*, Spring 2004, 44–48 (<http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=3>).

25 See chapter four of her book, *Lying Spirits*.

26 Fletcher cites a letter from Smith to theologians Philip Monroe and Bryan Maier and concludes that Smith thinks that TPM should be evaluated by practical experience rather than by dogma or theology. (Fletcher, 67, 85.) In context, Smith was not arguing that TPM should be accepted because it works, regardless of biblical and theological considerations, but rather that the Theophostic process should be evaluated on its own terms, apart from *his* theological interpretation of it. In other words, it is possible to practice TPM without agreeing with Smith’s views on the sin nature, sanctification, and so forth. As will be explained below, this is precisely the conclusion that CRI has reached after evaluating TPM.

27 Divination involves using various tools of symbolic interpretation for the purpose of reading the fates and gaining hidden knowledge.

28 Spiritism involves voluntary possession by spirits for the purpose of gaining special knowledge or power.

29 See, e.g., the “Author’s Statement of Faith” in Smith, *Healing*, 7–9.

mistakenly believing that it is Jesus who is revealing truth to them, are nonetheless facing truth about their past experiences and thus finding some release from the false beliefs that caused them pain.

Unlike the Word of Faith movement and some other teachings that presumptuously “claim” the presence and power of Jesus for various purposes, it seems that a case can be made that TPM’s trust that Jesus responds to participants’ in-session prayers is biblically warranted. Theophostic prayer is predicated on the assumptions that (1) if we ask our Father for a loaf of bread, He will respond with bread and not a serpent (i.e., we will receive what we need through the agency of His Spirit rather than what would harm us through the agency of a demon: Luke 11:9–13); (2) if we ask for wisdom, we will receive what we request as long as we don’t doubt that God will answer us (James 1:5–6); (3) likewise, if we ask for anything according to His will we can be assured that we will receive it, as long as we ask with confident expectation (1 John 5:14–15; Mark 11:23–24); and (4) whereas God may have a positive purpose for leaving us in physical or circumstantial afflictions, He has no positive reason to leave us languishing in Satan’s lies, and so if we are willing to face the truth about such beliefs, He is willing to reveal it to us. This seems to be a fact that is both intuitively true, based on the character of God revealed in Scripture, and that can be inferred from the combined teaching of the following Scriptures: Psalm 25:5, 8–14; 84:11; Hebrews 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:3–4; John 3:19–21; 7:17; 1 John 1:5–7; 3:8 (cf. John 8:43–47, etc.).

As Smith put it when I raised this question to him, we know God wants us to walk in truth and light, not in deception and darkness. When we meet His criteria—when we’re willing to face the truth and do His will—He will “show up.” He further stated that TPM is not manipulating God; it is manipulating ourselves to a place where we can receive what God wants to do for us. Theophostic prayer for healing of emotional pain caused by believing lies therefore may be a legitimate exercise of stepping out on faith in God’s promises and Fatherly love rather than an act of presumption.

This does not make TPM an infallible process. I observed TPM sessions wherein the recipients reported answers from Christ that seemed quite credible and others wherein the answers seemed quite dubious.

4. Does TPM function as extrabiblical revelation? Some Christians understandably would have difficulty accepting the notion that Jesus so directly, explicitly, and regularly answers specific requests for truth about issues in our lives. A very legitimate concern would be that these extrabiblical visions of, and words or realizations from, Jesus would begin to rival the Bible as a source of authoritative revelation in the believer’s life.

The Bobgans maintain exactly this in their book on Theophostic ministry. In the first chapter, which they titled “TheoPhostic Counseling: Latter-Day Revelation from God?” they assert that Smith claims he received TPM as a revelation from God. Smith, however, emphatically denies this: “I am not saying I had a divine revelation, because I did not. I simply began to understand Scripture where I had not before” (emphasis in original).³⁰

A natural question to ask Smith is, “How did the church survive and grow for two millennia without TPM?” His reply is that God “has always used the events of our lives to trigger our lie-based thinking and surface our inner pain” as part of His overall work of sanctifying and healing His people.³¹ He cites Isaiah 53:5 as one proof text that Jesus is in the inner healing business and 2 Timothy 2:25–26 to show that He also is in the business of setting people free from the lies of the Devil.³² Smith clarifies that he “merely took what God does on a regular basis with His children and put it in a systematic format.”³³ He compares the role of the TPM practitioner to the men who brought the paralytic to Jesus for healing in Mark 2:1–12. He admits, nonetheless, that “the truth is, Christians who faithfully submit to the work of God in their lives will mature spiritually whether or not they receive Theophostic ministry.”³⁴

30 *Healing*, 17.

31 This quote appears in the as-yet-unpublished revision of the *Theophostic Prayer Ministry Basic Seminar Manual*. At the time of this writing, the manual is not yet in its final form and portions of it may be deleted before publication, and so it will serve no purpose for me to cite page numbers.

32 Smith acknowledged in correspondence with me that this passage is not describing TPM per se and that the people under discussion are false teachers, but he maintains that the passage nonetheless has implications for TPM.

33 *Basic Seminar Manual*.

34 *Ibid.*

Smith further clarifies that no new truth is being revealed to TPM recipients. God is instead personalizing for them the truth already revealed in Scripture. “We do not need new truth,” he writes, “because the written Word contains all the truth we need.”³⁵

There are built-in constraints in the Theophostic process (when followed correctly) that should prevent TPM from leading its adherents away from the Bible. Smith stresses that TPM is meant to complement and not replace Bible study and the other means of Christian discipleship. He regularly emphasizes that TPM experiences are not to be accepted at face value but rather to be put to the test. The criteria for testing the experiences include conformity to Scripture and the fruit or results of the experience in the believer’s life.³⁶ One of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry Guidelines reads: “I will be careful to discern and call attention to any aspect of ‘truth’ or visual you might receive during a ministry session that does not appear to be authentic and or Biblically consistent. Should this happen, I will encourage you to determine what is true or not and where the false information originated.”

In TPM’s *Basic Seminar Manual* Smith further cautions practitioners that just because Jesus makes Himself available for the specific purpose of emotional healing doesn’t mean people can take advantage of His availability for additional purposes, such as personal guidance, new revelation, clarification about Scripture, and so forth. He cautions that such a use of Jesus is comparable to channeling or spiritism, forbidden in Deuteronomy 18:9–14, and therefore any “Jesus” who would indulge such requests is “another Jesus” and should be rejected.

That said, Smith does seem rather naïve about the capacity of Satan to produce a convincing counterfeit. He affirms that a “demon-jesus” will not “feel” loving, caring, safe, and so forth, but rather will “feel” empty, cruel, condemning, and distant.³⁷ My advice to Smith is that “feeling” tests are completely unreliable and he should stick to the doctrinal tests advocated by Scripture (e.g., 1 John 4:1–3), which he also advocates.

Ed Smith is a Southern Baptist with no direct connections to the charismatic movement or charismatic theology, and yet it seems that charismatics would more likely feel at home with TPM than would non-charismatics.³⁸ If one can reconcile charismatic visions and prophecies of Jesus with biblical authority, one should also be able to reconcile TPM experiences with biblical authority. If one views any contemporary words from Jesus as a threat to biblical authority, one will likely have red flags go up with TPM.

It is the position of CRI that the Bible leads us to expect the gifts of the Spirit to continue through the church age (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:10³⁹), and that these gifts include direct manifestations of the Spirit of God (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:24–25); nonetheless, like the New Testament church of Corinth, the contemporary charismatic movement has been littered with abuses. These abuses include allowing prophetic words to become a source of new doctrine, accepting them as nearly infallible and therefore not applying them to thorough tests for scriptural and logical consistency, and elevating them to a central place in the Christian life that should only be occupied by God’s sure and complete Word, the Bible. These same principles should apply to spiritual manifestations through TPM.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. Fruit include the following changes in the recipient: experiencing perfect peace in the area where there was once pain and conflict; having a sense of compassion rather than any former bitterness, anger, or desire for retaliation toward the perpetrators; and undergoing a permanent transformation in the area of her mind that received ministry, so that nothing triggers the old reactions anymore.

37 *Basic Seminar Manual*.

38 Indeed, one survey found that 79 percent of TPM practitioners professed to practice glossolalia (speaking in tongues). (Fernando Garzon, “Theophostic Ministry: What Is It? Who Is Using It? What Does the Research Show?” *Reformation and Revival Journal* 13, 3 [Spring 2004]: 105.)

39 I realize that this is the very biblical verse (and virtually the only one) that noncharismatics use to argue that the “sign” gifts of the Spirit would cease after the completion of the New Testament canon; yet in the full context of vv. 8–12, “perfection” clearly refers not to the canon but to the comparative “adult” state the believer will attain on his or her glorification with Christ at His Second Coming (cf. vv. 11–12: do we who have received the canon now see face to face and know fully as we are fully known? Both simple reason and Scripture passages such as 1 John 3:2 answer *no*).

5. Does TPM place experience and feelings over Scripture and logic? To the question of whether TPM functions as extrabiblical revelation can be added the related question of whether it values experience and feelings above Scripture and reason. This is how seemingly all of Smith's critics understand TPM. For example, in "Theophostics [sic]: Unbiblical Teaching Wedded to Mystical Experience," Bob DeWaay writes: "He teaches that feelings are the ultimate test of reality and that they trump any of our beliefs that are based on the objective teachings of Scripture."⁴⁰ This is far from true, and yet to an extent Smith deserves this reaction because in the past he has not been careful in his choice of terms to describe TPM. He has spoken of "logical thinking" as an obstacle that can keep a person from moving forward, of moving from logic to experience, and of how people need to experience Jesus, not hear more information.⁴¹ I have raised this concern with Smith and he is making efforts to correct this in the revised edition of TPM's basic training manual.

Thorough exposure to TPM materials makes it clear that Smith places the Bible over all other sources of knowledge and does not promote irrationalism. Many of Smith's statements that seem to promote experience or feelings over logic are actually promoting one apprehension of logic over another in the context of what works in emotional healing. This can best be explained by citing the common Christian distinction between "head knowledge" and "heart knowledge." Head knowledge is a merely conceptual understanding of biblical truth that makes no difference in a person's life because its profound spiritual relevance is not grasped. Heart knowledge is when the relevance of the same truth impacts the Christian's entire being, including the experiential and emotional levels. In this sense, truth can be in the head without being in the heart, but it can't be in the heart without being in the head. What is understood by the heart is just as logical as what is understood by the head, only its spiritual relevance is appreciated more fully.

This translation of truth from mere conception to deeply felt conviction occurs when the Holy Spirit illuminates the believer's heart to understand the spiritual meaning of Scripture (see, e.g., Eph. 1:17-18). It also occurs when the believer puts his or her faith in the Word into practice (see, e.g., James 1:22-25). According to Ed Smith, it further occurs when the Holy Spirit shines the light of truth into the darkness of deception that had been holding a Christian in emotional pain (what Smith calls a "Theophostic moment"). It could be that in all three of these cases the Spirit of Christ is implanting truth into that part of the human brain that registers experiences (the Holy Spirit's illumination of the Word itself being an experience), and that this helps explain the vast difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge.

In the Theophostic sessions I observed, logic was always employed and never put on the shelf as the recipient became convinced of the truth that put his or her past experience in a new light. Oftentimes these truths came straight from the Bible; in any case, they needed to pass the test of scriptural consistency and were rejected if they didn't. Sometimes, it is true, the recipients were stuck in their own finite and fallible conception of logical truth and needed to be moved on to a place where they could see their situation from a more divine and truly logical perspective. This, I am convinced both from the context of his teachings and from directly discussing it with him, is what Ed Smith meant when he unwisely spoke of moving people from logic to experience.

This does not mean that Smith is innocent on all counts of placing undue emphasis on experience. He is in the process of making some significant course corrections, but at least in the past he has inappropriately interpreted several biblical passages in light of his TPM experience (e.g., finding too many examples of Theophostic principles in Scripture⁴²). He has stressed the value of receiving experiential truth from the Holy Spirit in a Theophostic moment to such an extent that he has (unintentionally, I am convinced) devalued receiving inspired truth from the Holy Spirit in Scripture. He has also been excessively influenced by experience and phenomena in the formation of certain peripheral TPM positions that CRI finds problematic (e.g., his views on sanctification, satanic ritual abuse, and spiritual warfare discussed below).

40 Bob DeWaay, "Theophostics: Unbiblical Teaching Wedded to Mystical Experience," *Critical Issues Commentary* 79 (November/December 2003), 4 (<http://www.twincityfellowship.com/cic/articles/issue79.htm>).

41 *Basic Seminar Manual*.

42 *Ibid.* Passages where Smith has dubiously seen Theophostic healing, principles, or analogies include Matt. 10:34-36; John 5:6; 8:32; Rom. 6:1-2; and James 1:2.

CRI'S Peripheral Concerns about TPM

It is important to clarify that when I speak of “peripheral” concerns about TPM, I do not mean that they are unimportant. Some of the theological and practical concerns we have about TPM—while not falling under the category of heresy—are very significant. By peripheral I rather mean that they are not essential to the practice of TPM. As Ed Smith acknowledges and even stresses, one can agree with the core theory of TPM described above and practice it while rejecting Smith’s interpretations of that process described below.

Such interpretations do show up frequently in TPM materials, however, and so it is important to identify and critique them. It would be a mistake not to distinguish between the baby of the core TPM process and the bath water of Smith’s peripheral interpretations, for one should neither throw out the baby while discarding the bath water nor soak in the bath water while embracing the baby.

It is also important to note that at the time of this writing CRI is involved in far-reaching dialogue with Ed Smith about the concerns raised below. He consistently maintains that he is not wedded to any of these positions and will change his stance on a subject if he becomes convinced that it is unbiblical, and his follow-up on such promises so far has been exceptionally good. We have read and thoroughly critiqued a review copy of the revised *Theophostic Prayer Ministry Basic Seminar Manual* that Smith has been working on for over two years. It will contain extensive changes from the previous edition, some of which Smith made before we established contact with him and others of which he is making as a result of our input. It should be understood, then, that Smith’s theology is “in transition” (as he often puts it), and the critique below is in response only to TPM’s previously published teachings.

1. An inadequate explanation for sin in believers. Ed Smith has a rather unique view of the relation of sin to born-again believers. Unlike some contemporary inner healing/spiritual warfare teachers,⁴³ Smith agrees with traditional Protestant theology that human beings in their unregenerate state are totally depraved (i.e., no part of their being is untouched by sin and they have a positive inclination toward evil). Where Smith differs somewhat from the traditional Protestant view is in his understanding of what happens when people are regenerated. He takes Pauline language that is usually understood by Protestants to be forensic (i.e., referring to a believer’s legal or positional standing before God in Christ, e.g., 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9) as speaking not only of imputed but also of imparted righteousness. In other words, when the Bible says believers are new creatures and the old has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17), Smith understands this to be saying that the sin nature inherited from Adam is replaced by the righteous nature of Christ.

Does this mean Christians no longer have a positive inclination toward evil? One could easily draw this conclusion from TPM literature, but in a telephone conversation with me⁴⁴ Smith clarified his belief that the same inner principle of sin that enslaves the unsaved continues to exert its pull on believers. He rejects the term *sin nature* to describe this because to him a person’s nature is who he or she is, and the true identity of believers is in Christ and not in Adam. Christians still have their old propensity to sin, but they also have a new heart that leads them to repentance when they sin and ultimately to value the things of God more than the things of the world. We find this explanation biblically acceptable, but we must nonetheless evaluate Smith’s teachings based on his published works while noting his clarifications and awaiting his promised revisions of those works.

Even in his published works Smith makes it clear that sinlessness is impossible for Christians in this life.⁴⁵ The explanation he gives in his manual and elsewhere for the ongoing presence of sin in the Christian’s life is rooted in his version of trichotomy, which is the belief that humans are composed of three separate

43 See, e.g., the teachings of Neil Anderson as discussed in Elliot Miller, “The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson (Part One: Sanctification and the Believer’s Identity in Christ),” *Christian Research Journal* 21, 1 (1998), 16–26, 43–44, 53 (<http://www.equip.org/free/DA081.htm>).

44 October 18, 2004.

45 Here he contrasts favorably with the Wesleyan belief that Christians can be entirely sanctified and attain sinlessness by a second work of grace that roots out the sin nature.

elements: spirit, soul, and body.⁴⁶ Smith views the spirit of the Christian as his (or her) true self, which perfectly reflects the moral nature of Christ. The soul, on the other hand, is the mind of the Christian, which is the repository for memories of all past experiences, including lie-based memories. He asserts that it is the pain of these lie-based memories combined with the stimulation of the “flesh” (which he describes merely as the appetites of the physical body rather than as a New Testament term for the sin nature in Christians) that drives Christians to sin.

Smith argues that Christians often sin as a form of “pain management,” resorting to the pleasure of sin to gain temporary relief from the pain experienced when lie-based memories are triggered. Christians therefore desperately need to replace their lie-based thinking with the truth of Christ, a process that Smith calls mind renewal (Rom. 12:2). When not blocked by their minds, the perfect righteousness of their spirits can shine forth.

Smith is concerned that what he calls “worm” theology, which he believes is prevalent in churches today, leaves Christians feeling that they are wretched sinners with no hope of radical change. We agree with him that such teaching exists and we share his concern, for the Bible tells believers that they “are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them,” and therefore they should “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 2:10; 4:24).⁴⁷

To deny that Christians have an internal source of righteousness (the indwelling Christ) is to doom them to spiritual defeat, but to deny that they continue to have a sin nature is to leave them unprepared for the battle that lies before them.⁴⁸ Scripture clearly teaches that Christians continue to possess the fallen nature inherited from Adam (called “sin,” “the law of sin,” and “the flesh”; see, e.g., Rom. 6:11–23; 7:14–24; 1 John 1:8; Heb. 12:1, 4).⁴⁹ The context of Romans 7 supports,⁵⁰ and Ed Smith does not dispute, that Paul was writing as a Christian when he proclaimed that “nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh” (v. 18). We know that Christ, who is Goodness personified, dwells in the Christian (e.g., Rom. 8:10), and so the flesh is clearly the Christian in-and-of himself—apart from the presence, grace, and work of Christ.

Smith’s description of the flesh in Romans 7 and elsewhere as merely the appetites of the body that a Christian suffering in lie-based memories turns to for relief does not do justice to the profound dynamics that lead Christians into sin. The apostle John identifies three basic categories of sin: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Pride or self-exaltation,⁵¹ in particular, has often been called the “root sin,” as it was a key factor in both the fall of Satan and the fall of Adam and Eve (1 Tim. 3:6; Gen. 3:6). Pride is so primal and comes so naturally to the world that one usually has to be converted and read the Bible to even see it as evil, and seeing it for what it is does not equal being free from it. It seems, indeed, to be almost as endemic among Christians as it is among the unconverted, and I think any Christian who is honest would have to acknowledge that it is only when Christ is holding sway over his entire being that pride is absent from his motivation.

It is significant then, in view of Smith’s explanation of Christian sin, that pride has nothing to do with the appetites of the body and is manifestly rooted in something more primary to human nature than lie-based

46 CRI and most theologians hold to *dichotomy*: the belief that humans are composed of only two elements. Dichotomists maintain that the terms spirit and soul usually are used in Scripture interchangeably but sometimes to refer to two different aspects of the one immaterial element in human nature.

47 All Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

48 For a thorough treatment and biblical reflection on this topic, see the sidebar “How to Win the War Within,” in Elliot Miller, “The Bondage Maker (Part One),” 22–25 (<http://www.equip.org/free/DA085.htm>).

49 The term *nature* is subject to more than one definition, but in the sense Christian theologians use it here it means disposition, inclination, or bent—the principle or law that governs one’s behavior.

50 For example, only a regenerate person could say, “I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man” (v. 22). Furthermore, if Paul were referring to his pre-Christian, unregenerate self, he would not have had to qualify his affirmation that “nothing good dwells in me” with the clarification, “that is, in my flesh” (v. 18).

51 It is not pride to recognize the truth about one’s gifts and abilities and thank God for them; it is pride to be enamored with oneself, to see oneself as superior to others and in an excessively flattering light, and to seek the praise of human beings rather than the praise of God (Rom. 2:29; 12:3; Phil. 2:3).

memories and pain. It can only be explained—along with lust and the other “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19–21)—as part and parcel of a corruptible moral condition that is inextricably connected to a corruptible physical condition: human mortality (Rom. 7:23–24; 8:23; 1 John 1:8). Note that even the most consecrated disciples in the New Testament were not free from sin (Phil. 3:12–14; James 3:2; Gal. 2:11–14); yet, theoretically, this would have been possible if the tendency to sin were rooted in a finite number of lie-based memories rather than being fundamental to human mortality.

Because Christians still do have pride, in their pride they would like to believe that their flesh is redeemable. They would like to think that if they consecrate themselves more fully, if they have more faith, or, perhaps, if they root out more lie-based memories, they will become worthy of God’s love and acceptance. This is why the experience Paul recounts in Romans 7 is meant to be instructive for all Christians: they all need to come to the end of themselves, to realize “in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing,” to abandon any hope of self-reformation, and to cry out with Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (v. 24). Then and only then can they experience the glorious deliverance Paul describes in Romans 8:2: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.”

When we despair of any attempt at establishing our own personal righteousness, we are finally ready to rest in that “righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:3–9), a righteousness that is completely outside of ourselves, located in the Person of Jesus Christ. At that point, when we know it is His righteousness and not our own, this divine righteousness can work through our lives without our taking any credit for it whatsoever, which, if we did, would plunge us back into pride and the flesh (see Gal. 2:20; 6:14).

These truths are critical to Christian growth and sanctification, and they will not fare well amid a teaching that Christians do not have a sin nature but are inherently righteous and chiefly sin because of lie-based memories. When the depth of the sin problem is not recognized, then the solution that is offered—the means of sanctification that is proposed—will be inadequate.

2. A correspondingly inadequate view of sanctification. Smith’s belief that Theophostic inner healing can contribute to sanctification seems reasonable. If a Christian man tends to snap at his wife when she unknowingly triggers some primal pain in his memory, being healed of that pain would make it easier for him to love his wife in the Christlike manner that Scripture commands (Eph. 5:25). If a major reason some Christians indulge in the sins of the flesh is to find temporary escape from lie-based pain, it makes sense that they would be less motivated to resort to those sins if the lies oppressing them were replaced with liberating truth.

It is both an observable and experienced fact that many Christian approaches to sanctification don’t seem to prevent believers from sometimes reacting and behaving contrary to their conscious beliefs and choosing, and it seems possible that TPM could bring God’s truth to these deeper layers of their psyches. In other words, TPM may be able to minister God’s truth to them as they really are, and not just as they idealize themselves to be. If a sanctification approach only works in one’s better, more rational moments, then that would leave the worst part of him unchanged.

If its basic claims are confirmed through further research, we would find no problem in describing TPM as a valid approach to healing emotional wounds that also has significant applications to sanctification. We cannot accept the proposal that Smith comes across as making in his published materials, however, that TPM is the key to sanctification.

Why Smith would see TPM in such a way is evident from his tripartite interpretation of sin in the Christian’s life described above. If the persisting problem of sin in the life of the believer is rooted in the mind of the Christian with its lie-based memories, then a practice that renews the mind by replacing those lies with truth (i.e., TPM) would be the most direct way to deal with the problem of sinning.⁵²

52 As Smith has always maintained, this would not eliminate the need for other means of Christian growth, such as Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship and accountability.

If, however, sin is ultimately rooted in something even deeper than our subconscious minds—something more fundamental to our natures—then a more radical approach to overcoming sin would be required. This is, in fact, what the Bible teaches. In Romans 6:1–14, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and elsewhere the apostle Paul offered the most radical solution possible to the sin nature: death. He taught that our old selves were hopelessly defined by sin and were only worthy of execution, and this execution was effected when Jesus Christ died on the cross. In a legal or forensic transaction God condemned our sinful selves to death in the Person of Jesus Christ. In like manner we were raised with Jesus Christ as new creatures in His righteous image. This is not a mere “legal fiction” but is declared by God’s Word to be accomplished fact (Rom. 6:1–14). The full experience of this reality awaits our own resurrections, when the Lord Jesus “will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21). Even now, however, this truth is the key to experiencing victory over the power of sin in our lives:

Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Rom. 6:11–14)

Smith has derided positional truth teaching based on Romans 6 and other passages as living in denial (i.e., proclaiming that one is dead to sin when one is actually all-too-alive to it) and has argued that the healing of lie-based memories is the only way to resolve the conflict Paul describes in Romans 7.⁵³ When the subject of gaining victory over the power and pull of sin comes up in the New Testament, however, the refrain is consistent: we are to choose daily by faith to “put on” the new self and nature that God has provided and count as dead the old (Rom. 6:11–14; 8:12–13; 13:11–14; Gal. 5:16–25; 6:7–8; Eph. 4:22–27; Col. 3:1–14).

To be sure, if a Christian sets out to walk in the new nature by faith and still finds herself thinking, feeling, and acting according to the flesh, something is wrong (e.g., unrepentant sin) and she needs to go back to the Lord in prayer to deal with it. There are, nonetheless, countless Christians (myself included) who will testify from experience that positional truth is the most fundamental answer to the problem of sin in the Christian life.

As acknowledged above, this does not mean that replacing lies with truth in our memories will not greatly aid the sanctification process. It is not an either-or situation. God has established many elements in the Christian life for our spiritual growth, including prayer, internalization of Scripture and putting it into practice, positional truth, abiding in a yielded relationship to Christ that produces the fruit of the Spirit, the fellowship of the saints and the ministry of their gifts, and (it can be argued) inner healing. These provisions are intended to complement each other and it is a mistake to set one against another.

Some TPM critics have charged Smith with portraying lie-based thinking as a more important issue in the life of the believer than sin.⁵⁴ In other words, they believe he views Christian growth more as the healing of the Christian from past victimization than as the Christian taking increasing responsibility for his or her life and choices. This is a valid concern because secular psychotherapies do tend to posit deterministic explanations for human maladjustment rather than sin, and these assumptions have often been uncritically integrated into Christian counseling.

Smith answers this question by affirming that this too is not an either-or situation. Lie-based thinking and sinning are interrelated, and both need attention. People will tend to sin more when they are in emotional pain, but they are still responsible for those actions and need to repent; yet, healing of their pain will help them in their battle against sin.

⁵³ *Basic Seminar Manual*.

⁵⁴ Among others, this concern was raised by Phillip G. Monroe and Brian N. Maier in “Trauma and Embedded Lies: A Theological Appraisal of Theophostic Ministry,” a workshop presented at the World Conference of the American Association of Christian Counselors in Nashville, September 27, 2003. My thanks go to Angela Geyer, who attended this workshop, for sharing her thorough notes with me.

Smith believes that the cross is the answer to sin and that “mind renewal”⁵⁵ is the answer to lie-based thinking. Since TPM is a mind-renewal ministry, its emphasis naturally is on healing rather than repentance, but repentance is still a vital issue in the Christian life. He stresses the need outside of TPM for discipleship and accountability relationships where obedience and sin issues can be addressed.

Even within the TPM context, personal responsibility does come up. One chapter in TPM’s *Basic Seminar Manual*, titled “When the Wound Is Self-Inflicted,” deals with emotional pain resulting from one’s own sin. Instructions are given for handling these issues within the TPM session and they include, as needed, leading the recipient through prayers of confession and renunciation. TPM principles are used for such purposes as helping recipients (e.g., women who have had abortions) truly believe they’ve been forgiven and helping recipients identify the root lies that give particular sins ongoing power over them (e.g., people who have addictions).

Smith is to be commended for not neglecting sin, repentance, and personal responsibility in the context of ministry to the wounded. He and other Christians who use TPM should remain mindful, however, that such a ministry focus can easily lead to an excessive emphasis on victimization. This is one reason why any actual or perceived emphasis by Smith or other practitioners on TPM as *the* key to sanctification is of particular concern: such an emphasis in a ministry largely concerned with healing unjustly inflicted wounds would naturally skew the entire concept of sanctification toward inner healing rather than personal responsibility.

This skewing can only be worsened when Smith pits self-effort against Theophostic healing as the means for achieving victory over sin. In his writings he repeatedly equates “knowledge, controlled behavior, willpower, and self-effort” with “legalism and works salvation.”⁵⁶ To this works righteousness he contrasts the “easy” and “maintenance free” victory that results when people receive truth experientially from Christ, as in a Theophostic session. He stresses, in fact, that “true victory is the absence of battle and struggle....Victory does not require me to defend the same territory in future battles” (emphasis in original).⁵⁷

Smith confuses here the biblical concepts of salvation and sanctification, which are not identical in operation. Both are by grace through faith, but salvation involves no human works (Eph. 2:8–9), whereas sanctification, by definition, is where human works come into the picture and become important. In other words, works done *for* salvation are unbiblical but works that flow *out of* salvation are quite biblical and a sign of true salvation (e.g., James 1:14–26). The goal of sanctification is good works, and these are works that we do, even though they are always in response to the work that the Holy Spirit is doing in us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12–13). Self-effort and self-control in this sense may indeed be a fruit of the Spirit rather than a sign of legalism or works righteousness (Gal. 5:22).⁵⁸

Smith cites the example of Andrew, who told him “that even though he had abstained from homosexual practices for the eight years he had been a Christian, he felt tempted with strong urges every day. Still, he felt that he was victorious because he had not succumbed to any homosexual behavior.” Smith concludes that “Andrew held the mistaken belief that abstinence means victory. This is not victory. Victory occurs when the battle and struggle are over—for good. Andrew was not free of the battle.”⁵⁹ Smith also states, “I do not believe that ‘once an addict, always an addict.’ I do not remember the blind man Jesus healed saying, ‘Even though I can see now, I will always be a blind man.’ ‘Once a blind man always a blind man’ is a falsehood.”⁶⁰

55 It needs to be mentioned that Smith’s equation of the renewing of the mind mentioned in Romans 12:2 with Theophostic healing is open to debate. The passage, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect,” makes no reference to lie-based memories. It seems very possible that the passage is rather referring to a mind renewal that occurs through meditation on, and application of, Scripture. It’s true that Scripture is not mentioned explicitly either, but such an interpretation fits nicely both with not being conformed to this world and with proving what the will of God is. It could also be, however, that Paul is referring to something that is larger than either of these interpretations and encompasses them both.

56 Smith, *Healing*, 39.

57 Ibid., 43.

58 It should be noted that Smith says he agrees with this point and will clarify his position in the upcoming edition of his manual.

59 Ibid., 19.

60 Ibid., 58–59.

There are several problems with Smith's reasoning here. First, it has yet to be established scientifically that maintenance-free healing is even possible with conditions such as homosexuality and substance addiction (see "Excessive and unsubstantiated claims" below). Encouraging people to believe that they can achieve maintenance-free healing from these conditions may be setting them up for a fall.

Second, the argument from analogy equating Jesus' healing ministry in the Gospels with Theophostic healing does not follow. There are substantial differences between Jesus' physical healing ministry and inner healing ministry, such as the nature of the healing (a physical miracle versus the replacement of lies with truth) and the role of thinking, choice, and habits in the recipient.

Third, although it apparently did not happen in the case of Andrew, it could be very demoralizing to tell someone that although he had successfully resisted homosexual urges every day for eight years, he had not been victorious. Perhaps his homosexual orientation is so deeply integrated into his personality structure that abstinence is the most for which he can hope. He needs to be encouraged and affirmed for his perseverance in the face of constant temptation.

Fourth, Smith confuses the concepts of healing and victory. Andrew's successful resistance of temptation was victory in biblical terms. It may be that later he was touched by Jesus such that he no longer experienced homosexual desires and his inner war was over, but this would be a deliverance or healing worked by Jesus and not a victory obtained by Andrew. Victory, by definition, involves battle, and is something that the Christian—equipped with the power and provision of God—needs both to achieve and maintain. This is why, in his classic teaching on the believer's battle with the Devil, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to "take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm" (Eph. 6:13).

Fifth, this emphasis potentially can set up for believers a false expectation of the Christian life, one that Smith himself does not hold,⁶¹ that sanctification is supposed to be easy. I dare say that if Andrew's healing of his homosexual orientation has lasted, the Lord has allowed Satan to find other ways to turn the heat up in his life. Through God's providence the Christian life has a way of becoming extremely difficult at times for such purposes as refining and proving our faith and developing our character (see, e.g., 1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-13; James 1:2-4; Heb. 12:1-13; and the entire book of Job). Jesus' resistance of temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane was anything but easy, and that very fact seemed to make His submission to the will of God all the more victorious.

It needs to be reiterated that this critique of Smith's teachings on sin and sanctification is based on his previously published works and may not reflect his current views; indeed, after reading a prepublication draft of this document he assured me that he agrees with me on all of the points I made above. He says that he has always agreed with me on many of these issues and on others his interaction with me has helped him to become more balanced. After we carefully examine Smith's soon-to-be-released manual revision, we will consider where changes in our evaluation are appropriate and include them in our upcoming two-part article on TPM in the *Christian Research Journal*.

3. Excessive and unsubstantiated claims. Ed Smith is understandably enthusiastic about the promising results he believes he's seen from his practice of TPM. In his zeal for TPM, however, he sometimes promotes it in such sweeping terms that it could be viewed not only as the key to sanctification, but as a cure for all nonorganic mental and emotional problems.

It remains to be scientifically established whether, and to what extent, healing is possible through TPM. Its effectiveness with victims of child abuse receives abundant anecdotal support, with a good number of

61 Smith has affirmed in conversation with me his belief that suffering and perseverance are necessary aspects of Christian growth. Despite his belief in maintenance-free healing of inner pain and the easy deliverance that healing can bring from many sins, he believes Christians still have to endure physical pain and circumstantial difficulties, some of which may last a lifetime. He further believes that Christians are responsible not to sin when emotional pain is stirred up in the many areas where they have yet to receive healing; since they will never be completely healed of their lie-based pain in this life, the need to obey God when emotionally provoked to sin will remain an ongoing feature of their sanctification process.

the recipients saying their healing has lasted for many years (up to nine). There is also plenty of anecdotal support for TPM's ability to heal people of the effects of less-severe childhood traumas, the kinds that all of us suffer. It seems possible, though far from proven, that virtually everyone might be able to benefit from TPM in some area of his or her life.

What seems much less possible scientifically, and much less supported even anecdotally, are the claims that Smith has made of TPM's ability to cure chemical imbalances and chronic disorders that possibly have a mind-body connection (e.g., fibromyalgia). Psychology professor and clinical psychologist David Entwistle rightly observes that Smith's "contention that most TPM recipients will no longer need psychopharmacological intervention portends knowledge of epidemiology and medicine that are [sic] utterly unsubstantiated by empirical research, and outside of the realm of Smith's stated training and experience."⁶²

Smith's claim that TPM can provide maintenance-free healing of profound and complex personality disorders such as homosexuality and alcoholism is equally unsubstantiated. There has been no scientific research to support this claim and even the anecdotal evidence Smith cites usually does not encompass a long enough period of time to mean anything. For example, Andrew wrote Smith to report, "I have not had one homosexual urge in over three months and I have not had to work at it!"⁶³ but Smith has not heard from Andrew since. Andrew's testimony is impressive in its own right, but no more so than others that are encountered in "ex-gay" literature. Experience teaches that it is possible for Christians who struggle with various besetting sins to have such a profound experience with the Lord that the temptation to the sin goes away for a while, and this can be very encouraging to their faith, but in most cases it returns, and that's when the more profound sanctification work must take place.

If indeed it can be established one day that, after having received TPM, Andrew and many other ex-gay Christians have remained free of all lapses back into the gay lifestyle for, say, 15 years or more, and the same with alcoholics and drug addicts, then TPM would truly land a place on the therapeutic map and provoke a literal revolution in psychology. Even secular psychologists and Christian skeptics of psychotherapy would have to sit up and take notice, since no other approach to these problems has come close to achieving such results. Until such a day comes, however, Smith should be much more circumspect about the claims he makes, or he will invite skepticism and scorn from counseling professionals that could dissuade them from taking TPM seriously.

In fairness to Smith, he says he has listened to CRI's concerns about this and is willing to wait for the scientific research to be completed and to limit any future claims to that which can be substantiated from the research. He states in his introduction to the revised *Basic Seminar Manual*, "During the early years I prematurely raised the banner before there was any scientific evidence to substantiate what I was claiming....In retrospect, I regret that I did not wait to see what the research discovered. The truth is that I made these bold claims because I was seeing then and continue to see dramatic changes in the emotional state and behavior of deeply wounded people."

4. Acceptance and furtherance of satanic ritual abuse claims. It is impossible to interact with TPM training seminars and materials for long without encountering discussion of satanic ritual abuse (SRA), especially in TPM's advanced training seminar. Next to Smith's teachings on the sin nature and sanctification, this emphasis on SRA is CRI's greatest cause for concern with TPM.

The heyday of SRA claims predates the arrival of TPM on the scene in the mid 1990s. In the 1980s and early 1990s allegations of SRA usually emerged during counseling or therapy sessions that employed hypnosis, guided imagery, or some other form of directive therapy. The sessions were intended to treat many of the problems that TPM also deals with, such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. During these sessions the therapist and client typically would work through severe displays of abreaction (e.g., wailing, writhing, vomiting, cathartic withdrawal, and vile and abusive speech) to uncover

62 David N. Entwistle, "Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry 2: Ethical and Legal Issues," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, 1 (2004): 38.

63 *Healing*, 20.

supposedly repressed traumatic memories from childhood. The memories told a lurid tale of unspeakable sexual, psychological, and physical abuses at the hands of trusted people who were actually Satanists. The abuse was said to be part of ritualized Satan worship and often included deliberate and sadistic efforts to program the victim so that she (or he) could unconsciously be of service later in life to the conspiratorial designs of the satanic cult. Some SRA conspiracy advocates believed that multiple personalities (“alters”) were deliberately created to better serve such nefarious purposes, while others believed multiple personalities were God’s gift to protect the core person from the trauma of intolerable cruelties.

At the height of the SRA hysteria speculations were rife about a global, all-powerful satanic conspiracy. Many families, churches, and communities were divided as the “SRA survivors” and sometimes their therapists accused parents, pastors, teachers, and other authority figures in a child’s life of horrendous crimes. Law enforcement officials often took these allegations seriously, leading to many arrests and prosecutions and some incarcerations. Many of the accused were later vindicated, but often too late to restore their families, careers, and reputations.⁶⁴ Hundreds more have never been cleared and remain in prison and/or are living as convicted felons and registered sex offenders.⁶⁵

During the 1990s both Christian and secular authors and groups (including CRI⁶⁶) published books and articles that critically evaluated SRA claims. They pointed out that directive therapy and a phenomenon called false memory syndrome were sufficient to explain most of the accounts of SRA, that even if some isolated cases of satanic ritual abuse do occur there is no objective evidence for a vast satanic conspiracy, that flawed arguments (e.g., the evidence is missing because the conspirators hid it) were used to support such a conspiracy, and that the details of the conspiracy bore striking resemblance to the accounts of alleged Satanists-turned-Christians that were later proved to be fraudulent.⁶⁷ It is not simply that positive proof *supporting* SRA claims could not be produced; rather, positive evidence *disproving* important cases and assumptions was published. Public support for SRA claims soon declined, and today true believers in SRA are mostly limited to die-hard contingents of some therapeutic communities. Thousands of therapists and clients who once believed in SRA no longer do so.

It is clear that there remains a population in the larger counseling client pool that will, if given the opportunity, display abreaction and tell gruesome stories of satanic ritual abuse (or similar kinds of explanatory paradigms, such as white slavery trade, extraterrestrial experimentation, and past-life regression). It remains a matter of debate whether these stories are rooted in (1) the minds of the therapists and implanted through directive therapy, (2) the minds of counselees who are familiar with such claims and are desperate to become the center of attention, or (3) actual abuses (apart from discredited claims such as a global SRA conspiracy). It seems certain that all three of these explanations have some merit and the real debate is over the extent to which each one is true.

Ed Smith is aware of the possible explanations but does not believe the former two adequately account for most of the cases he has personally observed:

I don’t hear these comments from people who have spent thousands of long horrendously long [sic] hours ministering to deeply traumatized and mentally and emotionally distraught people, wading through their intense horrific memories filled with physical and emotion [sic] abreaction. Those of us who have held the hands of others while they violently shake and tremble, throw up, gasp for air, scream in terror and display all manner of psychological, physical and spiritual duress, know that the original source of such pain could not be someone’s fabrication or mental

64 See, e.g., Jon Trott, “Satanic Panic: The Ingram Family and Other Victims of Hysteria in America,” *Cornerstone*, vol. 20, issue 95 (1991), 8–10, 12.

65 This fact comes from Gretchen Passantino, a Christian authority on SRA claims, who was kind enough to provide me with extensive feedback to the first draft of this document.

66 See Bob and Gretchen Passantino, “The Bondage Maker (Part Four),” and Bob and Gretchen Passantino, “The Hard Facts about Satanic Ritual Abuse,” *Christian Research Journal* 14, 3 (1992): 20–23, 32–34 (<http://www.equip.org/free/DO040.htm>).

67 See, e.g., Bob and Gretchen Passantino and Jon Trott, “Satan’s Sideshow: The True Lauren Stratford Story,” *Cornerstone*, vol. 18, issue 90 (1990), 23–28 (<http://www.cornerstonemag.com/features/iss090/sideshow.htm>), and Mike Hetenstein and Jon Trott, *Selling Satan: The Tragic History of Mike Warnke* (Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1993).

implantation. We also are privileged to witness these same people enter into perfect peace as the Lord of Glory resolves the turmoil with the presence of His peace.⁶⁸

Smith does not argue for the existence of a global Satanist conspiracy. He believes there are evil people who intentionally torture their victims for purposes of control, but he does not claim to know why they do this, whether for satanic ritual, lust, power, or some other depraved purpose.

When I asked him if he had any objective evidence for repressed memories or SRA, he cited a client whose totally repressed memory of child sex abuse was later verified by the grandfather who did it, and by her cousins who also were abused by the grandfather. They had always remembered the abuse but had remained silent about it. He cited another client who claimed that Satanists had penetrated her sexually with a knife, and when Smith sent her to a doctor for an examination the doctor confirmed tissue damage in her body that was consistent with her story. Did Smith consider the possibility of self-mutilation?⁶⁹ He says that he did, but other circumstantial evidence supported the woman's claims. Smith was certain that none of his clients had any exposure to SRA literature.⁷⁰

Because claims of SRA are typically outlandish, whereas the objective evidence to support them is typically elusive, and because of the damage they can do to innocent people's lives, CRI cautions against getting caught up in this aspect of TPM. Of the three possible explanations for SRA claims noted above, directive therapy cannot be entirely ruled out even in the case of TPM. As Bob and Gretchen Passantino observe, it is possible for directive therapy to occur when the therapist has no awareness that he or she is leading the client: "Directive therapy can be as subtle as a meaningful silence, a nod of approval, or an assurance that the client is 'believed.'"⁷¹

That said, CRI's concern about the emphasis on SRA in TPM materials is mitigated by several factors. First, the TPM Guidelines quoted above and all TPM training materials unequivocally discourage asking leading questions as well as making any diagnosis. It is certainly still possible for directive therapy to happen at times on more subtle levels, and there's no way to prevent some facilitators with strong commitment to belief in SRA from disregarding the guidelines, but any such occurrences are in conflict with the principles of TPM.⁷² This central and repeatedly emphasized guideline against leading the recipient should significantly reduce the number of false SRA claims that emerge.

68 Ed M. Smith, "SRA Essentials," *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry* 1 (2003): 27.

69 [Notice: The following footnote contains graphic and potentially disturbing descriptions of a crime scene.] In her response to my first draft Gretchen Passantino wrote: "Sometimes physical evidence that seems incredible to us, or that seems that it must come from one explanation only, is actually neither. That is one reason it is very important to consult those with greater experience base and evidential resources. For example, there was a fatality scene in New York City, which at first glance appeared to be a homicide with the female victim having been disembowled through her vagina with a butcher knife. Further investigation, the autopsy, and a conscientious coroner later revealed that it was a suicide. A key to the coroner was that she had layers of scar tissue in her vagina from years of self-mutilation that had actually been documented by video camera numerous times when she was hospitalized for mental illness. The case has been written up by the coroner. (See Vernon J. Geberth, *Sex-Related Homicide and Death Investigation: Practical and Clinical Perspectives* [Boca Raton, LA: CRC Press, 2003].)"

70 To which Gretchen Passantino replies: "Although frequently people will tell me that they did not get their memories from therapy, in virtually all cases their definition of a therapeutic origin is far too narrow. They may honestly know that they have never sat through hypnosis by a licensed therapist who is well-known for promoting repressed memory therapy, but they almost certainly have been favorably exposed to such a scenario—perhaps through a victim's support group, sharing of similar stories through Al-Anon attendance, or even by watching Oprah, Jerry Springer, or the old Geraldo Rivera talk show. Frequently, too, they will be favorably introduced to this kind of explanation for their problems through testimonials and/or spiritual healing experiences at church or a church-related event like a retreat or prayer group."

71 Passantinos, "Hard Facts," 22.

72 It could be argued that all therapy is directive and so TPM's claim not to be directive is misleading. It is true that all therapy or inner healing ministry is goal-oriented and thus provides a structure and direction to lead the recipient to that goal. In TPM the facilitator not only provides direction for how the session should unfold, but also redirects if something the recipient supposedly is receiving from Jesus is unbiblical or otherwise clearly false. The claim of being nondirective simply means making every effort not to feed any content into what the recipient is surfacing from his memory and receiving from Jesus. This distinction seems to be significant, since much of the objection to "directive therapy"—especially with regard to SRA claims—has to do with the therapist implanting ideas in the client's mind.

Second, Smith's approach to dealing with SRA claims is among the most restrained and least sensational we have seen with SRA believers. His second of several guidelines for working with SRA advises:

Operate in the arena of tangible truth. This is by far the most important guideline that you MUST follow lest you quickly find yourself in a very bad place.

- Live your life in the world of the tangible, not in the victim's reality. Trust in the Lord with all your heart but regard what the victim says as possible, but very likely tainted reality.
- As you are given information by the one reporting the SRA memory ask yourself this question, "Do I know without a doubt (based on hard core physical evidence) that what has been told is indeed fact or is it only the person's reality?" Then live your life based on what is tangible fact and do ministry in the person's reality what ever it may be. If you find yourself living in the person's reported reality you will find yourself feeling, acting and governed by that which may or may not be entirely true. Avoid this at all cost.
- Never assume that the information surfacing in a victim's memory is totally accurate. Unless you have evidence of crimes committed that would hold up in court, do not take any action. It is easy to be caught up in the victim's reality. Operate on tangible truth. Let your goal be to lead the wounded person to the presence of Jesus for His truth and peace. If what they have reported is true and you lead them to freedom a great victory has been won. If what they have reported is not totally accurate but is infested with lie-based thinking and they find freedom this is still God's purpose. If the victim identifies others as victims, DO NOT seek to expose, rescue, inform etc. such people with this information. People move toward freedom by choice. If you run ahead you will create major problems. It is not your job to convince anyone of anything. In doing so you may very well be caught up in falsehood yourself. Let what is reported be what it is: the person's reality. (emphases in original)⁷³

Smith once thought differently, but he now believes that memories are nothing like videotape records and that they contain a lot of inaccuracies. He maintains, however, that even if the memory is unreliable, the belief producing the pain is real.

TPM focuses on the lies associated with memories and not the accuracy of the memories themselves. Someone may not accurately remember the details of the situation where he first believed a debilitating lie about himself, God, or others, but if that lie is replaced with truth, TPM holds that he will still experience healing.

Third and related to the previous point, the proper concern of TPM is with the recipient's internal world of thought, not with her external world of relationships. The goal is to replace her false beliefs with truth so that she can grow as a Christian, not to seek justice for her. The process is not even considered successful until the recipient achieves a state of perfect peace about whatever happened to her and is free of all hatred and bitterness toward her perpetrators. Under such conditions, the recipient is unlikely to seek justice for wrongs she believes she endured.^c

If indeed the supposed perpetrator is innocent, simply not being publicly accused of wrongs he didn't commit will not make up for the harm done to the relationship if the recipient still believes he did commit those wrongs. If this is a family member, then the consequences of this false belief would be severe. This is one concern raised by Fletcher that I believe is valid,⁷⁴ and it is not relieved by the mitigating factors previously noted.

73 Ed M. Smith, "Walking Wisely When Ministering in the Realm of SRA," 3-4. This article was publicly distributed by Smith during 2004 and will be published in a 2005 issue of the *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*.

74 See Fletcher, chapter 2. It must be noted that Fletcher has gathered in one book every conceivable concern that could be raised about TPM, no matter how weak or theologically and philosophically diverse, and her often unsubstantiated conclusions seem driven by an inexplicable anti-TPM agenda that inevitably puts Smith in the worst possible light.

Smith and I have been discussing the evidence both for false memories and repressed memories.⁷⁵ Smith has frequently affirmed that false information can surface during a TPM session,⁷⁶ and he is currently working on revisions for the TPM training manual that will more proactively address this concern. I have advised him that after a session where previously unremembered abuses come to mind, it should be a standard procedure for the practitioner to encourage the recipient to seek independent proof for the memory before believing it.

Smith clarifies in the *Basic Seminar Manual* that he no longer believes that it is Jesus who reveals the memories to recipients (which, if believed, would make the memories more difficult to question, although he has never claimed that anything received in TPM is infallible but rather must be tested): "I never ask Jesus to reveal memory information, figure it out or show the person his or her memory. If He were to do this, He would be violating the person's will since it is his or her own choosing (at some level) that is keeping him or her stuck." As previously noted, the vast majority (Smith surmises 98 percent⁷⁷) of the people that receive TPM surface memories that were known to them prior to the session.

5. Unbiblical spiritual warfare teachings and practices. If this position paper had been written a few years ago, TPM's stance on spiritual warfare would have been CRI's greatest concern next to the teachings on the sin nature and sanctification. In 2001 *Christianity Today* wrote: "Some critics fault Theophostic for its approach to the demonic. Smith teaches that demons, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, may inhabit and influence a Christian's mind. These demons often work to keep people enslaved to what Smith calls the 'lie-based thinking' causing their pain. He teaches that these demons have to be expelled for a client to see full relief."⁷⁸ Deliverance of demons played a major role in the TPM process and training, and many beliefs CRI considers unbiblical and superstitious were included, such as belief in the power of demonic curses and the need for believers to break them.

Since around 2002 Ed Smith has so radically changed his thinking and approach in this area that our remaining concerns are relatively minor; indeed, his biggest critics on this topic now will likely be his former colleagues in the Christian deliverance movement.⁷⁹ He now believes that when the Bible says Satan was rendered powerless at the cross of Christ (Heb. 2:14) it means this in the most literal and unqualified sense: Satan was stripped of all of his power as god of this world and the only influence he is still able to exert is the influence we give him through believing his lies.⁸⁰ Deliverance of demons and other sensational spiritual warfare antics are now considered distractions to the TPM process. In practical terms Smith's approach to dealing with the demonic is very close to what CRI recommends in Hank Hanegraaff's *The Covering* (W Publishing Group, 2002) and in various articles that have been published in the *Christian Research Journal*.⁸¹

Smith has already publicly explained his changes of thinking on the demonic in his seminars at Alathia, at the 2003 International Association for Theophostic Ministry International Convention in Minneapolis,

75 For a good treatment of the evidence for false memories I recommend Paul Simpson, *Second Thoughts: Understanding the False Memory Crisis and How It Could Affect You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). For a good treatment of the evidence for repressed memories Smith recommends Jennifer J. Freyd, *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Child Abuse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

76 See, e.g., Smith, "Comparison of Theophostic Ministry and Recovered Memory Therapy," 45.

77 Ed Smith, in an e-mail message to me, November 2, 2004.

78 Kevin Bidwell, "Deliverance Debate," *Christianity Today*, February 5, 2001, 18 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2001/002/19.18.html>).

79 At the training seminar I observed in May 2003 confusion and displeasure were evident among some people who had been using Smith's 1999 manual or were followers of other spiritual warfare teachers. Smith stated: "There's a lot of spiritual pride in the warfare movement. I'm going to get in a lot of trouble when this book [i.e., the revised *Basic Seminar Manual*] is released. Their identity is invested in it—what are they going to do?" He went on to say that there is no biblical basis for many of the practices in that movement.

80 See Ed Smith, "Post-Resurrection Passages That Support a Defeated-Devil Perspective," *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*, Spring 2004, 33–37.

81 See especially Brent Grimsley and Elliot Miller, "Can a Christian Be 'Demonized'?" *Christian Research Journal* 16, 1 (1993), 16–19, 37–38 (<http://www.equip.org/free/DD075.htm>).

and in several articles in the Spring 2004 *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*. The forthcoming revised edition of the TPM basic training manual will devote a lengthy section to expounding TPM's new positions on spiritual warfare issues.

Smith continues to hold beliefs on spiritual warfare with which CRI takes issue:

- He believes that Christians can be demonized, although he defines this word as simply being inhabited by a demon or demons, whereas CRI believes the biblical usage of the term carries the meaning of *both* inhabitation *and* control. What CRI finds most problematic in deliverance circles is the belief that Christians can be controlled by demons and therefore need to be delivered or exorcised of them, and Smith rejects this belief. For Smith demons, whether indwelling or not, can only exert influence through telling lies and Christians have the power to resist that influence. He writes in the *Basic Seminar Manual*: "I do not see the demon as the problem nor do I see exorcism as the solution."
- Smith believes that Christians have the authority to bind, loose, address, and command demons, whereas CRI finds no basis for these beliefs and practices in Scripture except in the case of dealing with the demon possessed (who, by the proper biblical parameters of the term, are not Christians).⁸² Smith believes this authority is so great, however, that a simple command is all that is necessary, and therefore he discourages the protracted and sensational battles with demons that are all too familiar in the deliverance movement.
- Smith believes that Adam forfeited his rulership of the earth to Satan and Satan held this position until Christ stripped him of his power through the resurrection. CRI holds that when Scripture calls Satan the ruler or god of this world, it is referring to his spiritual dominion over fallen humanity and not to the physical earth.⁸³
- Smith's pendulum has swung so far from the excesses of the deliverance movement that in CRI's view he now underestimates the power of the Devil. CRI agrees that the Devil was defeated by Christ's death and resurrection but, even as our redemption is assured but still in progress, so the outworking of Christ's victory will not be complete until the second coming when Satan is bound and cast into the Abyss (Rev. 20:2-3). Christians therefore still are called to battle the Devil (Eph. 6:10-18; Matt. 16:18), which Smith denies. (He does hold that Christians still need to stand firm and resist the Devil, but he does not define this as battle, since it is not an offensive activity.) Between the first and second comings of Christ the Kingdom of God is both now and not yet and exists side-by-side with the kingdom of Satan. Christians have been translated out of the Devil's dominion and thus he can exercise no power over them (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13; 1 John 5:18), but Satan continues to exercise power over the world (1 John 5:19), including the power not only to inhabit but to control or possess the unsaved (e.g., Acts 5:16; 8:6; 16:16-19; 19:11-16), which Smith also denies.

Despite our ongoing differences with Smith on some spiritual warfare issues, we are encouraged by his movement toward a more biblical paradigm in this area. The virtual absence of deliverance ministry, of unhealthy preoccupation with the demonic and excessive belief in its power, and of superstitious approaches to spiritual warfare⁸⁴ are refreshing, and we pray that other ministries in the deliverance movement will follow Smith's lead.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

To sum up our findings, CRI detects nothing unbiblical about the core theory and practice of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. The theory is elegant in its profound simplicity, and the anecdotal reports of its

82 See, e.g., Elliot Miller, "The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson (Part Two: Spiritual Warfare and the 'Truth Encounter')," *Christian Research Journal* 21, 2 (1998): 12-16 (<http://www.equip.org/free/DA082.htm>).

83 Ibid.

84 E.g., anointing homes with oil, "spiritual mapping" to battle "territorial spirits," "warfare prayers," endlessly renouncing one's own sins or the sins of one's ancestors to break the Devil's power, and verbally breaking curses.

effectiveness in practice justify further investigation; nonetheless, much more scientific research needs to be done before even the more modest claims of TPM can be validated, and some of the extravagant claims seem unlikely ever to be established.

CRI does have several peripheral concerns about TPM, but we have been favorably impressed by founder Ed Smith's openness to constructive criticism and change. We caution Christians who practice or receive TPM to be discerning about Smith's teachings on the sin nature, sanctification, and satanic ritual abuse, and to be aware that, despite major improvements, there are still aspects of Smith's teaching on spiritual warfare that CRI does not endorse.

CRI's evaluation of TPM is not complete. After the revised basic training manual is published we will examine the final changes and schedule a condensed and updated version of this paper for publication in the *Christian Research Journal*. Any positive statements in this paper concerning Smith's revision work on the manual are tentative and should not be taken even as a qualified endorsement of the revised manual once published, since we have yet to see it in its final form.

A Word to Our Colleagues in Discernment Ministry

When I first heard about TPM from other Christian writers and ministries I thought, "This is the worst of all possible worlds: pop psychology excesses, extrabiblical revelation, subjectivism, anti-intellectualism, Christian perfectionism, antinomianism (teaching against good works), the guided imagery and creative visualization used by many inner healing ministries, deliverance ministry and other spiritual warfare excesses, recovered memory therapy, and satanic ritual abuse hysteria." We could have interacted just enough with TPM materials to confirm that the expected buzz words (e.g., "Moving from logic to experience") were there and gone on to publish yet another scathing critique of TPM. We instead sought to evaluate TPM based on a contextual understanding of its primary sources, and as a result a significantly different picture emerged, although several of our initial concerns remained to varying degrees.

We next sent our initial evaluation to Smith for his comments and he immediately opened the doors wide for critique and dialogue, inviting us to send a representative to Alathia to observe a training seminar and TPM sessions firsthand. When I took him up on his offer in May of 2003 he also gave me many hours from his busy schedule for unrestricted questioning and discussion. Our dialogue has continued through (to date) 212 e-mails and a two-hour-long telephone conversation. He asked me to critique his revision of the basic TPM training manual (350 pages) and I responded with an extensive, entirely candid, and often blunt critique. He has shown me numerous rewritten sections of the manual that incorporate my suggestions to an extent that has far exceeded my most optimistic expectations.

With the intimate familiarity I now have with TPM I go back to the other Christian critiques to find the same errors repeated again and again: TPM believes in extrabiblical revelation; promotes mysticism; engages in directive therapy, guided visualization, and recovered memory therapy; is obsessed with delivering Christians from demons; and so forth. None of the critiques published since 2002 note Smith's changes on spiritual warfare and deliverance. (One staunch critic recently left me a message warning that Smith has never changed his position on anything!) Perhaps all of the critiques raise valid concerns, some are more carefully researched and thoughtfully written than others,⁸⁵ but, in our view, none of them do their subject justice.^D

85 The best theological critique of TPM we have read is *A Biblical Evaluation of Theophostic Ministry*, by the Staff of Community Evangelical Free Church Elverson, Pennsylvania, September 28, 2001, available at <http://www.cefcelverson.org/theophostic.htm>. Most of the theological criticisms the elders make are quite astute but they do not make the distinction we do between TPM's biblically consistent core theory and practice and its problematic peripheral teachings. They conclude that even if TPM "works," it should be rejected because it is not a form of ministry specifically set forth in the New Testament. We would counter that if an approach to healing emotional wounds bears good fruit in people's lives, is consistent with Scripture, and does not replace the biblically sanctioned methods of discipleship, there should be no objection to using it.

Why? Ed Smith reports that no one who has critiqued TPM has initiated direct contact and dialogue with him besides CRI. No one who believes he is an erring brother in Christ leading others astray has attempted to win him over to sound doctrine.⁸⁶ No one has gone to the source to make sure he or she understood him correctly. We did so and found him to be very approachable, reasonable, honest, open to correction, and reliable in following through with his commitments; in short, we found him to be a man of integrity.

As a result of our initiating contact with TPM, we understand it much more accurately, we have had an influence on it for the good, and Smith has been rewarded for not succumbing to the common fear of controversial leaders that everybody is “out to get them.” He opened up to evaluation by a discernment ministry and it did not end in disaster but rather in growth for him, his ministry, and his relationship with the larger body of Christ. This hopefully will provide an example both for other discernment ministries and other controversial leaders.

As a veteran researcher and editor of discernment and apologetics materials I understand that people involved in such ministry receive requests from their constituents and supporters for information on literally hundreds of groups and teachings. The pressure to reduce the number of steps necessary to produce those resources can be great, but if yielding to that pressure typically produces inaccuracies such as I have found in the case of TPM, then something is drastically amiss.

At CRI we are currently in dialogue with four different groups, and that dialogue has caused us to pull or withhold publication of our materials on some of those groups until the dialogue reaches a conclusion. Some people have been waiting for this very document on TPM for nearly four years. This is inconvenient, but we see no other option for responsible discernment ministry. The criticisms we publish can be very damaging to a teacher or group; we must do everything we can to make sure they are valid and necessary.

If discernment ministry is always about publishing criticisms of other ministries and never about helping those ministries follow Scripture more faithfully, then it cannot be biblically valid ministry (2 Tim. 2:24–26). Most ministries that we contact admittedly either are not open to dialogue or try to use the dialogue for mere public perception purposes and to postpone the publication of our critiques indefinitely.⁸⁷ If, however, even 1 ministry out of 20 responds to our initiative as Ed Smith has responded, then the effort expended on dialogue with all 20 will have been more than worthwhile.

86 Many teachers who are publicly criticized complain that they were not first approached privately, in accordance with Matthew 18:15. In context, however, Matthew 18 is referring to how one Christian should respond when another Christian sins against him. Scripture elsewhere makes it clear that false teaching that has been made public needs to be corrected publicly (e.g., Tit. 1:9–13), which is why I have devoted space here even to correcting teachings that Smith has promised he will remove from his materials. There is no reason to think, however, that the principle stated in Matthew 18:15 of winning a brother should not be a concern when responding to the unbiblical teaching of Christian leaders. To initiate dialogue is an expression of concern both for the brother and for those who are and will be influenced by him if he continues to teach error.

87 We have gone around that block enough times that I believe we can spot the signs when it is happening; this has not been the case with Ed Smith.

ENDNOTES

- A Inner healing or healing of memories is “usually referred to as a counseling movement within the Christian church which involves various counseling methods that are basically used for the calling up of suppressed or hurtful memories in order to deal with them” (<http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Healing%20of%20Memories>). The origin of this movement is usually attributed to Episcopalian Agnes Sanford (1897–1982). Some well-known contemporary or recent advocates include John and Paula Sandford, Ruth Carter Stapleton, Francis MacNutt, and John Wimber. CRI finds nothing unbiblical with the premise that emotional problems rooted in the past can be dealt with effectively through a prayer ministry that invokes the healing presence of Christ. CRI finds many problems, however, with the teachings and approaches to such ministry usually associated with the movement, including all of its representatives named above. These problems include an unbiblical and potentially occult use of visualization and guided imagery (see the section on visualization in this paper), an overemphasis on victimization and an underemphasis on the role of personal responsibility and sin in one’s emotional problems, and an undiscerning use of secular and New Age psychotherapeutic concepts and practices such as Freudianism and Jungianism. For an analysis of the problems of inner healing ministry by a former advocate turned critic see Don Matzat, *Inner Healing: Deliverance or Deception?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publications, 1987).
- B One survey was of 1,354 TPM practitioners concerning the results they’ve observed with TPM as compared with other methods they’ve used. Seventy to eighty-five percent of respondents (depending on the category of emotional problem) rated TPM as most effective. The survey included anyone who had ordered TPM materials, not just people who were sold on TPM. There was no statistical difference between licensed mental health professionals (who made up about 12 percent of those surveyed) and lay counselors in any of the categories: “In other words, those with a high degree of knowledge about secular psychological techniques rated TPM as highly as those with much less knowledge of those techniques. This result was unanticipated by us as researchers.” (Fernando Garzon, Psy.D, “How Is the Research Stacking Up?” *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry* 1 [2003]: 4, 15.) The second survey is being conducted with recipients of TPM. To date, 13 outcome-based case studies of people suffering from anxiety, depression, and adjustment problems have been conducted. In 10 of the cases the practitioners were licensed mental health professionals and in the other 3 they were lay counselors working under the supervision of licensed professionals. The clients were tested on several occasions up to three months after receiving ministry. Clients were also asked to complete a satisfaction inventory, and licensed professionals who do not use TPM were brought in to assess the clients’ progress by interviewing each of them for a half hour and examining their clinical records. The test included four components: the Symptom Checklist 90R, the Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale, and the Dysfunctional Attitude Scale. On the basis of this test, 9 of the 13 were classified as recovered, 2 as improved, 1 as unchanged, and 1 as deteriorated. In their own survey, all 13 clients said they’d been helped by the prayer format and the 12 who had previously received non-Theophostic counseling or ministry all endorsed TPM as being more effective. The objective third-party reviewers classified 9 clients as very-much improved (the highest possible rating), 2 as moderately improved, and 2 as mildly improved. (Fernando Garzon, Psy.D, “Research Corner,” *Journal of the International Association for Theophostic Ministry*, Spring 2004, 10–11.) As positive as these results were, the sample thus far has been far too narrow and the testing period far too short to prove anything. Fernando Garzon, who headed the research, is hopeful that on the basis of these promising case studies a grant may be obtained to fund more extensive and rigorous testing.
- C There is in fact only one known case, that of Tom Wright of N. Yarmouth, Maine, where someone has had charges pressed against him because of memories recovered through TPM. The charges were thrown out of court. Jan Fletcher documents this incident in chapter 2 of *Lyng Spirits: A Christian Journalist’s Report on Theophostic Ministry* (self-published and available for free online at <http://www.lyingspirits.com/lyingspirits.pdf>, 2004). She also notes that Wright, James Miner of Cumberland, Maine, and several other unnamed individuals

experienced the break-up of their marriages and/or families as a result of TPM. In all but one of these cases the accusations and estrangements occurred through the ministry of one pastor. Smith's public reply to Fletcher (responding not to *Lying Spirits* but to an article Fletcher wrote in the local Campbellsville newspaper) states: "Ms. Fletcher tried to make Theophostic Ministry 'guilty by association' when she 'cut and pasted' a small portion of the full story of the church in Maine where the pastor accused one of his members of abuse. She took this isolated and very dramatic episode and held it up as though this was an example of what happens if you use this ministry approach. The truth is she failed to mention that the actual article(s) that were written about this case was very lengthy and only mentioned Theophostic Ministry in a small segment. The actual article tells about a pastor who has had continual problems with people and had questionable practices long before he took the Theophostic Ministry training. He is compared to a domineering cult figure who was controlling his members and creating trouble in town. In fairness to this pastor, this was all presented by a local journalist writing a sensational report for his paper, and what was true is hard to tell. The truth is, this was an isolated case with many additional factors other than he had taken training in Theophostic Ministry. To suggest that all of what occurred in that scenario was an example of the outcome of using Theophostic was ludicrous. Having gone through training in Theophostic Ministry does not certify, provide any level of accreditation, qualify or validate your ability to facilitate Theophostic Ministry. It simply means you have theoretically read the material and watched the videotapes. How people apply what they learn can look very different from the actual process. To use this pastor as a 'poster child' for Theophostic ministry would be like blaming the Medical University for an individual doctor's malpractice of bad medicine. If a local doctor practiced bad medicine, the medical school he attended would never be blamed especially if there were thousands of other doctors who took the same training who were successfully helping the sick. There are literally tens of thousands of people using Theophostic Ministry all around the world reporting wonderful results and yet Ms. Fletcher accentuated this solitary incident as typical." ([http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=29.](http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=29)) The rest of Fletcher's chapter contains examples of false accusations arising from recovered memory therapies that she believes are similar to TPM but that in fact had nothing to do with TPM and used techniques contrary to TPM guidelines. This also looks like guilt by association.

- D One of these evaluations deserves special attention. It is significant because it apparently represents the only professional psychological evaluation of TPM to date. In "Shedding Light on Theophostic Ministry," which appeared in two parts in Rosemead School of Psychology's *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 32, 1 (2004): 26–42, Christian psychologist David N. Entwistle's approach is entirely unsympathetic. He doesn't seem to be the least bit impressed by the core theory or the anecdotal support for TPM. He raises many of the peripheral concerns also raised in this document, such as those about unsubstantiated claims, misuse of Scripture, and satanic ritual abuse. Some of his criticisms are well placed (see, e.g., the quote cited on p. 20 of this document), but others seem unfair or unfounded, as the following five examples illustrate: First, he criticizes TPM for making assertions about memory that are inconsistent with current scientific theory and research (28), and yet the theory and research he cites (e.g., state dependent memory) do not seem to be conclusive. If Smith departs from current theory at points, how does that make him wrong? He could be on to something. He obviously was not building on current theory when he came up with TPM; the history of ideas is filled with innovative departures from the current consensus and this is how progress often is made. Entwistle further criticizes Smith for failing "to provide evidentiary data to substantiate these ideas about the neurophysiology of memory," but in fact the Theophostic journal did do this months prior to the publication of Entwistle's articles (see n. 7). Second, he takes Smith to task for personifying the mind and creating a "homunculus as an explanatory process" because Smith said, "This part of the mind knows just how or what chemical to release in order to feel a specific emotion." (Ibid.) Does Entwistle mean to say that when writing for lay people Smith can't personify the mind's functions? Isn't the same kind of personification used to explain processes throughout science (e.g., when speaking of the actions of nature or evolution as though they are consciously and intelligently driven)? Third, Entwistle quotes Smith as saying, "No less than 40–60 percent of all the females who come to me for ministry have at the root of

their pain some degree of childhood sexual molestation....My guess is somewhere around 50 percent of the female population in America has been sexually wounded." Entwistle then cites studies that show anywhere from 6 to 62 percent of females being abused, while affirming that one of the most methodologically sound studies in recent years found 27 percent of females self-reporting abuse. He concludes, "The most reliable estimates are far below Smith's claim that fifty percent of U.S. women have suffered such trauma." (30.) Note, however, that Smith was only "guessing" from his experience, not presenting this figure as a scientific "claim." Fourth, Entwistle creates a false dilemma for TPM by suggesting that the appearance of Jesus in its sessions "must be evaluated against the backdrop of guided imagery or a claim to special revelation." (36.) Put in those terms, guided imagery would be the lesser of two evils, and this is how Entwistle portrays it, suggesting that other inner healing approaches, which do employ guided imagery, are on safer ground. Entwistle doesn't seem to appreciate the fact that while other inner healing approaches manipulate Jesus and put words in His mouth, TPM assiduously seeks to avoid this. Yes, Smith unapologetically believes that Jesus is answering their prayers, but he does not consider that special revelation. Smith is right, for when Entwistle affirms that "the concept of literal apparitions of Jesus occurring in TPM clearly falls into the category of special revelation" (37) he is confusing categories. Special revelation as a Christian doctrine refers to previously undisclosed doctrinal truth made known by God in history and recorded in Scripture, which, by virtue of inspiration, is itself special revelation and an infallible and absolute authority. (See Elliot Miller, "The Christian and Authority [parts one and two]," *Forward*, Spring and Summer 1985.) As described earlier, alleged divine manifestations in TPM do not fit this description. Entwistle is free to reject TPM's claim that Jesus speaks to recipients in its sessions on the same grounds that he might reject the claims of charismatics to receive prophetic words from the Holy Spirit, but he is wrong to call it a claim to special revelation. Fifth, showing no appreciation for the lengths TPM goes to avoid planting suggestions in recipient's minds, Entwistle goes to great lengths himself to prove that this does in fact occur, but he fails to make his case. He draws most of his examples of leading the client from a 1997 client manual that Smith says he withdrew from publication partly because it contained such instances of leading. Smith says, "He had full access to my current work but ignored it and chose to focus on a booklet (*Genuine Recovery*) that was one of the first pieces I released that had much of my old thinking in it. This book is not even in print any more for this reason." (December 8, 2004, e-mail to me.) *Genuine Recovery* is one of two major sources Entwistle relies on throughout his 2004 evaluation, and he completely ignores Smith's 2002 book *Healing Life's Deepest Hurts*, which Smith says "is the most accurate representation of this ministry." (Ibid.) To further establish his thesis that TPM "may promote the creation of iatrogenic [i.e., therapist-induced] memories" (30) Entwistle cites an example in Smith's 2000 edition of his training manual in which, after the TPM process has been successfully applied to the original problem, Smith then asks the Lord out loud to lead the client to other memories that need to be healed. Entwistle suggests that "this 'prayer' may well function as an instruction to the client to produce another 'memory.'" (32.) It seems like quite a stretch for Entwistle to raise concerns about iatrogenic memories from this quote. Smith suggests no content for the client's memories but simply asks the Lord to lead the client to other memories, which, after all, is what TPM is all about. It cannot be ruled out that the client would produce a false memory at this point, but this kind of effort to please or meet the expectation of the facilitator happens in any number of counseling and ministry situations and can hardly be blamed on TPM. For still further proof that TPM may implant suggestion, Entwistle seems to indulge in a form of guilt by association. He asserts that "TPM shares many features with hypnotic induction (especially its emphasis on connecting emotional experience to a presumed historical memory) that could well account for the creation of DID and SRA accounts as well as 'memories' of the abuse allegedly underlying these phenomena." (Ibid.) In fact, this kind of association of emotion with memories may often occur in hypnotherapy but it is not hypnosis itself. The therapist must first induce a trance and then lead the client through memory regression. Asking a client to trace a memory trail per se, which is all that is done in TPM, is not an effective or standard means for inducing hypnotic trance. It would not lead to the extreme suggestibility and susceptibility to leading characteristic of hypnosis, and so there is no reason to assume that because hypnosis easily yields false memories that TPM would also.