

# TheoPhostic Counseling vs. the Christian Faith

Garth D. Wiebe, 5/20/00

As a preface to this, yet another expose of yet another false teaching that has infiltrated the church, I want to say that I take no pleasure in this sort of writing. Dealing with the cults and the occult is the "ugly" side of ministry, and I happen to be gifted in seeing through the phony false doctrines that religious charlatans propagate under the pretense of Christian ministry. I would much rather be in the studio, working on beautiful music, or doing sound for a drama production, designing a new Garth-o-meter for drama rehearsals, or helping the wife and kids with building kitchen cabinets or the play stoplight, or playing the piano, or any number of other things. But while Satan, our adversary, is in the world, seeking through ever ingenious cunning to gain inroads into the church of the living God, we are also called to expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness (Eph 5:11).

I confess I have fallen short of dealing with this when I should have, however. When my wife received a brochure from a good friend last fall, she looked at it, made a face, and showed it to me. I read a few paragraphs, said something to the effect of "What is this garbage? What will they think of next? Throw that thing out." I supposed that we were done with it. As nearly devoid of compassion and genuine heartfelt concern that I am for those in our very own congregation, I didn't think twice about the prospect of close family friends of ours being drawn into something far worse than "garbage". That fact came to stare me in the face many months later, after these friends were already indoctrinated through extensive courseware, and beginning to "minister" to others the fruits of the teaching.

Now, some will think of me as being judgmental (which is a judgmental thing for them to think, by the way), or self-righteous, or unnecessarily harsh because of the language and tone of this paper. These should stop at this point and read the short epistle of Jude and compare, before continuing, and be prepared to show how this paper is fundamentally different in its approach.

So just what is it that I am talking about?

Yet another new and spiritually dangerous method of psychotherapy involving occult visualization techniques has wormed its way into the modern day church. According to its founder, Dr. Ed Smith, a man professing 17 prior years of experience in psychological counseling, this methodology that he has called "Theophostics" (i.e. "God"- "light") was a direct revelation from God to him in 1996. The implication of this is that God waited nearly 2000 years while "hurting" people stumbled about in their emotional pain, waiting for Ed Smith's (or rather, God's) breakthrough in psychotherapy.

Cloaked in an enticing story of success, dozens of personal testimonies, a maze of New Testament scripture citations that you would think were specially written nearly 2000 years ago for such a time and methodology as this, along with a disarming recitation of a standard statement of the Christian faith and denial that this is just another method of psychotherapy, visualization, or guided imagery, Theophostics is presented as nothing less than breakthrough Christian counseling.

But it is just another demonic attack on the integrity and sufficiency of the Christian faith, and an open door into the spirit world of the occult.

To begin with, Ed Smith leads his clients to go where we are told as Christians not to go: The past. In the apostle Paul's ever encouraging epistle to the Philippians, written from his prison cell, Paul says in Phil 3:13, "...But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things." Paul also writes "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17)

We who are born again are to be forward-lookers, not backward-lookers. Unless you have committed some sin in your past that requires restitution or reconciliation to demonstrate to those you have wronged your repentance as a godly witness to all, there is really nothing of value back there to dwell on.

It cannot be emphasized enough that this idea of digging into the past is totally foreign to the whole counsel of scripture, including the entire Old and New Testaments. There is not one single instance, let alone teaching, of digging into the past to deal with some hidden or perceived emotional trauma in the entire bible, with the exception of exposing sins committed, and that for the purpose of challenging the sinner to repentance. Save that exception, the counsel of God is always to disregard, discard, and forget the past, focusing instead on the present and the future.

Borrowing from the wisdom of man found in all the godless atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, skeptics, and sexual perverts who have used their godless imaginations over the last century to explain man's spirituality apart from God, disguising it under the aura of the pseudo-science of psychology and pseudo-medical practice of psychiatry, the church has in the last few decades been lured into man-centered, rather than Christ-centered teaching and counseling that is based on the foolish and vain inventions of these secular mystics, starting with the teachings of Sigmund Freud a mere century ago.

But what does the bible say? "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." (Col 2:8)

Such teaching and counseling always puts man, the sinner, at the center of God's plan, love and affection. The believing Christian is then coached to look inward at himself and backward at his past, rather than outward towards his fellow man and Christ, and forwards towards our heavenly calling to be full-time worshippers of God and partakers of His radiance and glory, which we don't deserve.

It is in vogue today to focus on depicting man as a victim, rather than a perpetrator of sin. While it is true that fallen man has been deceived by the devil's evil plans, man is completely responsible and accountable for his sinful behavior, regardless of who he chose to be deceived by. True repentance and peace with God is not attainable until sinful man commits in his heart to the fact that he is deserving of punishment and condemnation for every evil act and every evil intention that he has partaken in, regardless of whoever else was involved in whatever conspiracy took place. This is the concept of total depravity that fallen man must get a grip on, if

he is ever to appreciate the hopelessness of his sinful condition and his desperate need for salvation. As the well-quoted, but often not well enough appreciated scripture says:

"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Rom 3:10-18)

What this means, dear friends, is that no matter how "hurt" or how "victimized" you feel you are or have been, you deserve and have deserved every bit of it. And that pain is just a small taste of the horror and terror of hell, which is unrelenting, eternal, and irreversible, once one ends up there. And our God is not a god who sits in yonder heavens, wringing his hands at the prospect of sinful man going there. Rather, as Creator of all things, including hell, He planned it that way as the just penalty for falling short of His righteousness, His radiance, His glory. And in hell the unrepentant and unbelieving who have been sexually abused or victimized by Satanic rituals or any other horrible thing will join the unrepentant and unbelieving sexual and Satanic abusers of people, where there will be great wailing, weeping, and gnashing of teeth at the permanence of their torment and destiny, because they all rejected God's offer of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. The abused and victimized will in hell forget the temporal pain of abuse during their short temporal lives, because the agony of hell will far surpass it. And if they don't forget it, they will long to return to it, because it will seem trivial compared to the agony and torment that they will be in (see the story of rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, if you think I am exaggerating).

Take note of how Jesus Himself dealt with the question of victimization:

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.'" (Luke 13:1-5)

The "breakthrough" does not come by convincing yourself that you are and were a victim of your past and the evil acts and schemes of others. The breakthrough comes when you realize just how great God's love, his mercy, and his compassion is to have taken upon Himself the full punishment that you deserved in your worthless, ugly, depraved state of existence. Then how incredible, how totally awesome, how amazing and wonderful the full pardon for sin, the gift of eternal life, and the heavenward calling becomes to those who come to comprehend the depths to which they have fallen, and the utter hopelessness of their sinful condition. The abused and victimized believers will in heaven forget the pain of their short temporal lives, because the glorious reward of heaven, the privilege of dwelling with God, and the joy of worshipping him as they always longed for will overshadow it.

The psychologists and psychiatrists of our day would have you believe otherwise about the nature of man. They would have you believe that man is inherently good, and that he is a victim

of his past environmental influences. They would have you believe that evildoers are sick, not sinful. They teach that one should have high self-esteem, instead of low self-esteem and high Christ-esteem. They teach that one should have a feeling of self-worth, rather than God-worth and self-worthlessness. They teach that one should have a good self-image, rather than a good Christ-image and a bad self-image.

Although their teachings are from the pit of hell, and were propagated by men who had no fear of God, pastors and counselors throughout the church today have borrowed their methods and philosophy and contaminated the church with them. We hear them preach that to love others you must first love yourself, as if there were three "greatest commandments" instead of two. And the mantras of high self-esteem, self-worth, and self-image echo through the church, mere "christianized" and re-interpreted versions of the secular mystics' lies. Pastors and shepherds are waiving their privilege of counseling those in their own flock and referring them instead to these "professionals," deferring to them because of the "professionals'" years of schooling in the world's philosophy, which is seen as providing great insight into people's problems and the deep thoughts of men. Meanwhile, sermons, teaching tapes, videos, and the shelves of Christian bookstores are lined with more and more teachings that focus the believer on himself, and his own search for deliverance from his own problems, his "wounds", inner fulfillment, and anything else that will make him feel better about himself, all in the name of Christianity.

Yet what does the scripture say? It says "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth." (2 Tim 3:1-7)

Note carefully in the above scripture that "lovers of themselves" is the first indictment in a long list of sins that would characterize the last days. Note that they will have "a form of godliness but denying its power." And note how they get in and who they get control over. Enough said about that, I'm sure. And the return on the investment? "Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth."

This brings us back to Ed Smith and Theophostics, with his miracle method that he claims is revealed light from God, but in reality is just borrowed ideology from the likes of Sigmund Freud, and Smith's own 20-some years of experience trying every available method of psychotherapy, which he says was also allegedly part of God's plan for him. So now a person doesn't need a Ph.D. in Psychology or an M.D. in Psychiatry anymore to counsel anyone. If they go through Smith's teaching video series, they can get better results than either the conventional psychotherapists or the biblical counselors virtually instantaneously.

Enter "lie-based theology" vs. "sin-based theology." After setting up a straw-man that describes and generalizes existing biblical counseling methods as something other than what they really are, the straw-man is shot down, as the new "God-light" is introduced. After implicitly assuming as a premise that "hurting" people must deal with their past "wounds", "sin-based theology" is then depicted as a legalistic effort of man to overcome sin through self-effort. "Lie-based

theology" is then offered as the better alternative that says that sin is precluded by deception and at the heart of all sinful behavior in the Christian is a lie or deception. "I sin because I have been deceived."

Smith intersperses his flawed theology with statements of orthodox Christian doctrine, as all spiritual counterfeit teachings do. These statements have the effect of disarming the student and convincing him that the method is "biblical." But the focus remains on the lie of "lie-based theology."

Let us examine an example Theophostic "counseling" session: The client is said to be suffering from some perceived or contrived emotional "pain". Beginning with the presupposition that a journey into the past is necessary to remedy it, and that a "lie" lies hidden somewhere in the "dark room" of their deep subconscious, the client is directed to focus on the feeling of hurt and pain (and explicitly encouraged to throw off logic and reason during the process), and let their mind drift into the past, until the "lie" (which must be there, also by presupposition) is discovered in a dark, hidden place. Then there's this "stirring up the darkness" where the counselor encourages his client to focus on the "lie" and repeat it over and over, re-feeling and re-living the pain and emotions that are associated with it.

Here's an example of this "stirring up the darkness," from page 84 of Ed Smith's manual "Beyond Tolerable Recovery: Moving beyond tolerable existence, into genuine restoration and emotional inner healing. Theophostic Counseling" (1st Edition).

"Focus on that man lying on top of you forcing his penis into your little vagina. Remember the pain and the shame. Think about what others must have thought about you having sex with your abuser. Think about what they thought about you for allowing it to happen. Feel how shameful it is to do this knowing others are aware of your shameful behavior. Feel the guilt, shame, disgust. Let the shame and pain grow as intense as you can possible stand."

Finally in the midst of this monstrously evil trance the client is told to expect an encounter with Jesus in person, or at least feel the "presence" of Jesus. This conjured up Jesus-spirit then destroys the "lie" and floods the client with a feeling of peace.

To those of us who have even a little bit of familiarity with the workings of the occult, the demonic plan is pretty blatantly obvious: The devil attempts to create a scenario where God cannot be, seduce the counselee victim into a hypnotic trance, entice him into throwing away his ability to reason out of it, create enough feelings of evil that a Holy God would never associate with it, eliminate the possibility that God would enter by presumptuously commanding that God come when he calls, then inject a counterfeit Jesus-spirit guide to take control of the subject and induce a "high". Success is then proclaimed, because when the counselee comes out of it, he feels delivered and healed.

The Jesus-apparition/presence encounter is the scariest part of the whole thing. Evidently, Ed Smith thinks he has God wrapped around his little finger, such that Jesus will appear at the counselor's bidding, like a faithful pet dog.

But what does Jesus Himself say about his own appearing? "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, "There he is, out in the desert," do not

go out; or, "Here he is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it." (Matt. 24:24-25)

Smith also evidently feels that he has the demons wrapped around his little finger. In his training manual he describes how he supposedly takes advantage of the demons that he encounters during Theophostic therapy. He describes their weakness as being "boastful" and "proud", and how this weakness can be exploited to get the demons to reveal important information about what the client's fundamental problem is. But both the testimony of scripture and the evidence in the world about us prove this assumption to be very naive. In reality, Satan is a brilliant mastermind of incredibly sophisticated schemes, including deceiving people into thinking that he is not. I have often marveled at the intellectual power that the devil employs against man. In contrast, Ed Smith is a very naive, spiritually and doctrinally immature individual who grossly underestimates the power of the enemy.

I do believe Ed Smith's claim that he gets the same results in one or just a few sessions that conventional methods get over the course of months and years of effort. Most conventional methods use humanly contrived procedures over a long period of time to get a person to feel good about themselves and their own desires, and addicted to counseling and psychoactive drugs in the process. I believe that Smith is able to accomplish the same thing in a very short period of time by tapping into the supernatural powers of the occult.

When dealing with the occult one must keep in mind that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. The devil first deceives a person by putting in front of him an object of human desire. He gets one to listen to him instead of God, then rewards a person according to what he desired. Then, having lured a person out of the sphere of God's protection, he will hurt him in some other way. This is what happened in the Garden of Eden, and this is what can be expected to happen when one submits to the Theophostic method. Once lured into the realm of the occult, the object of desire, which is a good feeling about oneself concerning one's past, is granted. But with a stronghold established, the devil will then attack the person in some other way, most probably in a way that is totally unrelated, so that the person does not make the connection, remains deceived, and ends up worse off than when he started. In any case, the devil has gained a victory by getting the person to focus on oneself. And subsequent attacks by the devil in other ways will only serve to reinforce that attitude and make the desire stronger.

Suffice it to say that the wool has been pulled over the eyes of many who are far too quick to throw biblical principles and sober minded consideration away in exchange for a slew of personal (and anecdotal) testimonies, sensational claims, and unorthodox teaching peppered with bible verses yanked out of their proper context and applied to make Theophostics seem to be a solution that is both biblical and ultimately successful.

This short paper has focused mostly on the occultic aspect of the Theophostic method. An entire book and some other materials have now been written exposing Theophostics, and the reader interested in learning more can research both the Theophostic and anti-Theophostic materials to his satisfaction. These reference materials provide much more information about the doctrinal errors that Ed Smith makes and how the Theophostic method is really nothing new, but actually mimics various aspects of a number of other secular psychotherapeutic approaches that have long preceded it.

## **Secondary source references:**

*"TheoPhostic Counseling: Divine or What?"* paper by Gary Almy, MD

*TheoPhostic Counseling: Divine Revelation? Or PsychoHeresy?* book by Martin and Deirdre Bobgan

PsychoHeresy Awareness Ministries website: <http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org>

## **Primary source references:**

Ed Smith's website: <http://www.theophostic.com>

*"Beyond Tolerable Recovery: Moving beyond tolerable existence, into genuine restoration and emotional inner healing. TheoPhostic Counseling"* by Ed M. Smith (1st and 4th editions).

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:3-9)