

Pulpit & People

**Essays in honour of William Still
on his 75th birthday**

edited by

Nigel M. de S. Cameron

Warden of Rutherford House, Edinburgh

and

Sinclair B. Ferguson

*Associate Professor of Systematic Theology,
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

**RUTHERFORD HOUSE BOOKS
EDINBURGH**

*Published by Rutherford House,
Claremont Park, Edinburgh EH6 7PJ, Scotland*

ISBN 0 946068 18 6 cased

0 946068 19 4 limp

Copyright © 1986 Rutherford House and Contributors

This edition published 1986

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of Rutherford House.

Typeset by The Tweeddale Press Group, Berwick upon Tweed.
Printed by Martin's of Berwick.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INNER HEALING

MONTAGU BARKER

In the 1970's there was a burgeoning of talking treatments, more technically known as psychotherapies or counselling programmes, directed at the elimination of emotional ills and problems from people's lives. A more recent survey quoted an American article headed "The Me Decade" describing the demand which people had for alteration of their lives. The author asked

... What did they want to eliminate from their lives? Why, they took their fingers right off the old repress button and told the whole room: my husband, my wife, my homosexuality, my inability to communicate, my self hatred, self destructiveness, craven fears, puking weaknesses, primordial horrors, premature ejaculation, impotence, frigidity, subservience, laziness, alcoholism, major vices, minor vices, grim habits, twisted psyche, my tortured soul.¹

The same survey with the title 'Let's talk about Me'² spoke of these therapies offering

... Not merely therapy but personal growth, character transformation, psychological rebirth and even mystical experience.³

Immediately Christians are alerted, for words like growth, transformation and rebirth are surely the prerogative of Christian teaching and not psychological healing. The reaction of some Christians is to eschew all psychological insights and to insist on scriptural prescriptions for all emotional ails. Others however seek to reinterpret specific psychological healing approaches in Christian terms. Both approaches run into difficulties; the former by denying all the factors contributing to our personalities and by seeking miraculous healings of psychological problems or hurts, or tending to see such problems as evidence of demonic activity requiring exorcism, often with disillusionment and occasionally tragic consequences;⁴ the latter by developing elaborate training schemes for psychological spiritual healing approaches which have brought disillusionment and been severely criticised even in those circles which previously espoused them.⁵ But the fact remains that people *do* want to talk about themselves as never before. In our Post-Freudian era, society has become accustomed to psychological explanations of behaviour. People have an expectation of being

1. T. Wolfe, 'The 'Me' Decade', *New York Magazine*, 23 August 1976, pp. 26-40.
2. A. W. Clare, with S. Thompson, *Let's talk about me*, BBC, 1981.
3. *Idem.*, from dust jacket.
4. M. G. Barker, 'Possession and the Occult — a psychiatrist's view', *Churchman* vol. 94 no. 3, 1980, pp. 246-253.
5. D. MacInnes, 'Comments on the work of Christ in the Healing of Primal Pain', *Theological Renewal* no. 7, October 1977, pp. 11-14.

offered solutions to all their problems as never before.

Christians are not immune to these influences and indeed may have an even greater expectation following the Charismatic Movement with its emphasis on change and renewal at an individual and corporate level within the church. It is not surprising that there is an explosion of Christian counselling approaches running parallel to and often in reaction to similar secular agencies. Some of the problems cited by the author of 'The Me Decade' might not be talked about so openly by Christians but the tendency to expose the deepest, most private, and guilt-producing parts of our lives and memories is being encouraged even in public albeit with safeguards in meetings for healing involving exorcisms or sessions for inner healing. It is important therefore to recognise that the present surge of interest in healings producing personal change and self actualisation is a phenomenon of contemporary Western Society and not a specifically Christian phenomenon. This is not to deny the deep spiritual hunger which may underlie this quest and which the Freudian revolution sought to rationalise but succeeded only in exposing in a new way.

There are probably in excess of 200 named counselling or therapy approaches, all claiming to heal and lead to fuller understanding and changed behaviour. In the view of one observer those counselling approaches which carry a Christian label such as healing of the memories or inner healing are not to be differentiated except in so far as they cater for the person with a religious world view as opposed to a secular world view. In fact it has been shown that there is value in this as the closer the philosophy of the healing approach is to that of the sufferer's perception of what is wrong with him, the more effective is it. Of course by the same token the secular sufferer would be helped more by a secular approach.⁶

How then are we to evaluate the approach outlined in such books as *The Experience of Inner Healing*⁷ or indeed any of those experiences leading to a person claiming wholeness or integration of personality? That there is an experience which is common to many and called inner healing needs no comment. That it is a gift of God has been argued by some. That it is merely a religious variant of the contemporary search for help for hang-ups would be held by others. Accordingly let us examine the subject of Christian experience.

I would see Christian experience as the total expression of our thoughts and behaviour and awareness as Christians. This is influenced by the Holy Spirit as he speaks through the Word. This is further influenced by our theology which is our interpretation of the Christian faith and which may in turn be influenced by our own personal drives and psychological needs, in other words, our personalities. If Freud has taught us anything it is that our experience

6. J. D. Frank, *Persuasion and Healing, A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*, Revised Edition, 1973. Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 327.

7. R. C. Stapleton, *The Experience of Inner Healing*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1978.

in its broadest sense is influenced by our upbringing, by our families, by our culture and training, and I do not find that our experience as Christians is any less likely to be influenced by these factors. Indeed, to deny this would be to call in question our own Christian understanding of discipline, training and the family. These factors produce the personalities in which the Holy Spirit begins his work.

What then are the psychological factors influencing Christian experience? In other words — what makes us tick? First of all there is our genetic potential. By this I mean our inherited potential or predisposition. This is not something which is complete and immutable at conception, but our genes do contain the potential of our appearance, our intelligence and our personality, though this is constantly modified by other factors. Perhaps this is best illustrated by reference to the interaction of intellect and Christian experience. The person of lower intelligence thinks in a very concrete way. He takes an absolute approach to situations and the Christian life may appear very simple and black and white. The person of higher intelligence is more likely to be an abstract thinker and he will be concerned with the relationship of the Christian faith to philosophy, culture and business. Secondly, psychological studies have demonstrated that group and cultural pressures do influence attitudes such as honour, shame, sexuality and the expression of emotions. But the influences which are best researched are family relationships. We know that separation from the mother may produce a person with an impaired ability for stable relationships. Such an individual may have difficulty in expressing love and in receiving love in adult life. We know that when a father is absent from a home when the child is at puberty, such a child may subsequently have difficulty in sexual adjustment, with a higher incidence of sexual problems and broken relationships. We know that an experience of bereavement early in life produces an impaired ability to meet stress later in life, so that the depression could be two or three times greater in such a person than in someone who has not been bereaved. Such individuals from disturbed or broken families are more likely to show impaired relationships in later life. They will be met in church life among parsons and people alike. They are often tense, rather withdrawn, people, who protect themselves emotionally or over-depend on others. Some will fasten upon the minister as a father or husband substitute. Many will have a chronic lack of assurance, constantly trying to do better than their best. Many will take their distorted views of parenthood and fathering and project these upon God. But these are the very people who may be drawn to the warmth of a Church fellowship and although the fellowship can begin to minister to them often their approach to the Christian family is impaired and even destructive.

The impact of training on personality is too obvious to comment on at length, but people from rigid backgrounds often themselves have a rather perfectionist yet pessimistic personality. People from more

relaxed backgrounds often have freer personalities but may also lack the same sense of responsibility. This is seen in Christian experience in the development of conscience. The laying down of a sense of guilt and moral values relies upon training, and so the hyper-critical and tyrannical conscience is often developed in a family of rigid behaviour and meticulous training, often with an excessive sense of guilt. Likewise our habits, those repeated regular actions of life, are instilled early on in our lives and so are difficult to break. In Christian fellowships there are those Christians who are neat, meticulous individuals, who put everything into pigeon-holes and who feel guilty if they don't have regular and set times of devotions. Others are more slap dash and unpunctual and lack order in their devotional lives, and as Christians they may not be so reliable because less disciplined. They tend not to go through the same agonies in their Christian life and devotions as the perfectionists. There is the apocryphal story of John Wesley and George Whitefield, which nevertheless illustrates this point. John Wesley was brought up in a rigid High Church household where the children were ordered by the ringing of a bell and were taught by their mother to cry silently. Whitefield was brought up in the local inn and had a much less ordered life. In adulthood, they worked together and went out on their evangelistic tours, and the story is told that they arrived one night at an inn, very tired. When they reached the room which they shared, George Whitefield threw himself on the bed exhausted while Wesley got down on his knees, opened his Bible and before setting to his devotions looked very reproachfully at George Whitefield and said 'George, George, is this your Calvinism?' At 2am in the morning George woke up and found John still on his knees, fast asleep over his Bible, so he shook him and said 'John, John, is this your Arminianism?' It was not their differing theological systems, but their family backgrounds which led them in their fatigue to react with completely different attitudes to devotions. So often this sort of reaction does depend not upon our theology but upon something within our backgrounds and personalities.

Personality, then is very much the product of all these factors working together in a complex and dynamic way and we must remember that the Holy Spirit works within our God-given potential. He has to begin with us as we are, with our backgrounds and our problems. He may have a lot of very basic personality remaking to do and even if we do not recognise this our friends and relatives will. So when the Holy Spirit works in our lives, He works within the individuality of our personalities and it is this which accounts for the rich variety of Christian biography. We have the remote and logical Calvin; the warm tempestuous Luther; the fastidious and over-organised John Wesley; and the freer more liberated Whitefield, son of a publican. God used each greatly and in different ways and who would dare to rank them spiritually? Theologically they stand in absolute agreement regarding Christ and pardon from sins but their

experience of God's dealing with them personally was different. In particular their doctrinal systems widely differed and unhappily their followers were often bitter enemies. Whatever may be the true understanding regarding the Biblical passages disagreed upon, the problem in terms of division and hostility seemed so often to occur in this area of personality and experience.

Let me take this further by mentioning some phrases which have been used over the past 300 years within evangelicalism: 'Conversion experience', 'Sense of assurance', 'Entire sanctification', 'Experience of the fullness of the Holy Spirit', 'Experience of the baptism of the Spirit', 'The experience of brokenness', 'The experience of tongues', 'Sinless perfection', 'Charismatic movement', to which may be added 'The experience of inner healing', all these phrases have been associated with division and conflict within the church. All these phrases contain Biblical words but it is the use of the extra words 'experience of', 'movement', 'sinless', 'entire', 'higher', which has produced division among Christians and caused the opposing ranks to line up against each other. As we look at the history of these phrases, each one has arisen out of the deep dissatisfaction of groups of Christians as they have viewed the apparent poverty of their experience as Christians compared with what they believed as Christians. In most instances their quest was followed by an experience associated with a new joy in believing and devotion to Christ and a new love for their fellow Christians. But in each case they followed a desire to systematise their experience, then to reproduce it. In some there followed a third stage. Not only did they seek to reproduce the circumstances of their experience, but they sought refuge in their common experience and used the experience as a means of identifying each other, and as a token of entry to closer fellowship. So that whatever truth was there, it became obscured by party strife and division.

Let me take one particular experience; the experience of conversion. We are familiar with it and value it, but conversion is not one of the main Biblical themes. There is no theology worked out by theologians and there is little emphasis in New Testament preaching on conversion. The real Biblical terms are repentance, new birth, justification. Augustine much preferred the word 'change' to conversion. Luther preferred the word 'repentance'. He mentioned conversion in his whole collected works four times only and he looked upon conversion as not a single act but as something repeated through life. When speaking of conversion, Calvin spoke of it as 'Being converted to God gradually and by sure degrees of repentance' and he acknowledged that this began when we first turned to God.⁸ Conversion generally in the course of time became equated with regeneration in the minds of many but occurred with or without a

8. T. H. L. Parker, in article 'Conversion', *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson, SCM, London, 1969.

conscious experience and was due to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and witnessed to by the fruit of the Spirit.

It was not until the seventeenth century that the experience of conversion became a controversial issue. At that time the church was filled with many who were doctrinally correct but without any indication of spiritual life. The German pietists in their spiritual struggling and agonisings had a sudden experience of active commitment and this became associated with an experience of assurance of divine grace. Somewhat later the Moravian Brethren had the same assurance but they had gone through no strugglings. They had only the immediate joyful apprehension of a loving Father, so much so that the pietists doubted the reality of the conversion of Count Zinzendorf the Moravian Leader. Each party sought to stereotype its experience of conversion and assurance and then use this as the test of new birth. It is partly from this background that modern evangelicalism is descended, and there are still churches where a certain kind of conversion experience is expected, and even demanded, and by a process of suggestion and exclusion the pattern tends to be repeated. The more suggestible the individual the more readily will the experience be reproduced. The less suggestible the individual, the greater may be the difficulty in reproducing the expected experience and consequently the greater the distress for that individual. This was particularly noteworthy in the Kentucky Camp Meetings of the nineteenth century in the United States. Whole families with adolescent children were marched off to these yearly meetings, and then in response to a week's preaching all the children returned soundly converted every year. That was the way it was done. This is still seen in some denominations in Europe, where sudden conversion experiences are particularly valued.

There was a questionnaire on conversion given to some theological students some years ago. Among the students of a particular Baptist College, ninety seven per cent of the students had had a conversion experience. The majority of them had had a sudden conversion experience. Within the evangelical Anglican College studied, ninety three per cent of the students had had a conversion experience but only fifty per cent of them had had a sudden conversion experience. Within an Anglo-Catholic College fifty per cent of the students had had a conversion experience but none of them had had a sudden conversion experience. Even among evangelicals with the same theology of regeneration the frequency of the actual type of conversion experience may be very different according to church background.

The suddenness of our experience of conversion may be an accident of our backgrounds and personalities, but the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives is not. It is not the *experience* of conversion but the *fact* that we have turned and continued to turn to Christ which is truly the sign of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

In Christ we become new men and new women. As Christians we have new models in our relationships. We have a new power and a new

teacher in the Holy Spirit, with a new hope in the resurrection of the body. But we still have our old genes, we still have our old family backgrounds and even the best of families are still affected by the fall. Accordingly all the problems from our families and all that has gone into making us has to be retrained, retaught, and redirected. But we do not have to cling to our old models of behaviour. We do not have to obey the impulses to behave in the way which we previously accepted. We do not have to act out our instinctual drives. There is a new law there, a new model and a new power and in this sense we are free from the law of sin and death.⁹ We are not obliged to reproduce experiences. God has given us his word, he has surrounded us by his people and in them he has given us new models.¹⁰ But we must begin where we are.

In Romans chapter 8 we read that all creation is subjected to futility, in bondage to decay and groaning in travail and not just creation but ourselves. We along with creation wait with eager longing for the glory that is to be revealed.¹¹ And the work of all who minister and pastor is to prepare men and women for that day. But there is a tension between what we are and what we hope to be. There is a tension between what we preach and what we accept within the fellowship. There is a tension between what we show to others and what we do in ourselves. The people of God and the Christian world have always known this tension, as did Paul. The Roman Catholic church made two standards — that of the religious life for those specially determined and the secular life for the rest. Protestantism has tended to deal with the tension by producing recurrent perfectionist sects with their ever more defined experiences, constantly seeking for an ever clearer and indisputable evidence of regeneration. Paul describes what we now experience in Romans chapter 7. He describes what we shall experience in Romans chapter 8 and I suppose we could say that in Romans chapter 12 to 16 he speaks of how we act and behave in the meantime. There is no doctrine of 'experience' in the Bible. There is a revelation of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit whose presence and power in our lives we may experience in a host of ways. The actual experience of Christians does not normally cause division until that experience is made normative for others and is given a special significance or used as a proof of a special relationship with God. The test of the presence of God the Holy Spirit in our lives is the presence of the fruit of the Spirit. Luther once prayed: 'God give us the experience of being freed from experience.' He saw himself how experience is a dangerous mentor and guide. One Scottish theologian of a hundred years ago said:

There are innumerable moulds in God's world. Why do we coop up God's

9. Rom. 7:13-25.

10. 1 Thess. 1:6-7.

11. Rom. 8:22-23.

grace in narrow man-made channels, and say this is the way God has worked and will work? His greatness is no-ways displayed more illustriously than in the spreading out of His gifts in a thousand different ways. There is a manifoldness in His operation that surely proclaims the beauty of His holiness.¹²

It is from this perspective that we should look at some of the contemporary approaches to healing within the Charismatic Movement, notably the experience of Inner Healing referred to earlier. This is an approach to healing which leans heavily upon modern psychological theories and practices.

There are of course great difficulties in biblical terminology and interpretation as soon as we begin to speak of 'Healing' today. In some writings salvation and healing seem to be used almost synonymously. However exponents of Inner Healing define the term as a 'Healing of the soul . . . a healing at both the spiritual and the emotional levels'.¹³ There are those whose backgrounds and family experiences appear to be so devoid of love and caring that they can recall only a rejection and inconsistency from their parents. Accordingly they feel they cannot break through the blank despair of never experiencing joy and peace and would therefore attribute lack of assurance and growth in the Christian faith as well as their lack of joy and peace in the Lord as being due to these earlier experiences. It is to the needs of these individuals apparently stunted and retarded in their emotional and therefore their spiritual development that the practitioners of Inner Healing have offered particular help and to whom they have turned their special attention.

The argument goes as follows. These people require Inner Healing, that is healing of the mind, will, heart and emotions as something apart from physical healing.¹⁴ Just as the Lord healed when he was on earth so can he heal today and not just our bodies but all the emotional scars of broken hurtful or absent relationships in the past. As Christ comes in salvation so does he come in healing of the deepest and inmost parts of our being. Christ can be brought into the most hurtful and murkiest parts of our pasts with transforming power bringing 'release', 'new transparency' and a 'real knowing that God loves you'.¹⁵ Such writers as Father Scanlon outline the approaches and techniques which can be acquired in achieving this. He claims:

We have prayed for women who hated men, men who rebelled against all authority that figures in their life, men and women who are convinced they were unlovable and acted that way, men and women who wouldn't place trust in anyone else, alcoholics, dope addicts, schizophrenics, those whose lives were substantially impaired by fears of darkness, being alone, failure, sex, and most commonly those with dominating feelings of guilt

12. W. Knight, ed., *Colloquia Peripatetica, Conversations with Rabbi Duncan*, Oliphant, 1907, p. 111.

13. R. Faricy, *Praying for Inner Healing*, SCM, 1979, p. 5.

14. M. Scanlan, *Inner Healing*, Veritas Publications, 1977, p. 9.

15. *Idem.*, pp. 55-61.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INNER HEALING

and inferiority. In every case where there was a series of contacts there has been improvement. In each category mentioned there has been a person substantially or fully healed as best we can determine.¹⁶

Ruth Carter Stapleton in one of her books heads a chapter 'There is a solution to every problem'.¹⁷

However, words of caution must be placed alongside these claims. The emphasis upon the sacrament of penance and its equation with the sacrament of spiritual healing is striking in the writings of Roman Catholic practitioners. The Jesuit theologian Robert Faricy links inner healing with the sacraments of penance and anointing of the sick and claims that inner healing is the renewal of these sacraments.¹⁸ It is difficult not to feel that these specific probings and guidings associated with the process of being led through the stages of inner healing by the healer are derived from the techniques of the confessional and have a similar psychological ritual.¹⁹ Such an approach is alien to those from a Protestant tradition but the same dissection of past experience and behaviour with its steps to healing are to be found in Mrs Stapleton's books.²⁰ However while ritual can be valuable in helping us incorporate truths into minds and behaviour the very practice of rituals is well known to produce subjective release in anxiety and tension in situations with no spiritual dimension.

Furthermore the fact that a person recalls 'memories' does not give authenticity to those 'memories'. If a healer uses or has a particular interest in memories within his healing methods then the sufferer will tend to produce memories as part of the transaction between healer and sufferer. Our generation has been conditioned by fifty years of psychoanalytic doctrine into accepting the necessity for uncovering repressed memories as the root causes of behavioural and emotional difficulties. The uncovering of and gaining of insight into these memories does not necessarily change things and this has led to disillusionment and a wide spread movement within the so called modern psychotherapies of fantasizing round these memories or acting them out in some form as a way of gaining emotional release and relief. The process of inner healing involves the fantasizing of Christ within the old painful memories as a way of introducing him into those areas which have caused pain and unwanted behaviour. It is claimed that the taking of Christ back into those memories in imagination releases, cleanses and renews the old situations. This is very much like a technique whereby the current problem is put into a 'memory' which is then replaced by a good or neo-memory. Indeed this so called guided imagery technique is taught and used in some of the humanistic psychotherapies as a way of exposing hidden emotions. The exposure

16. *Idem.*, pp. 12-13.

17. R. C. Stapleton, *The Gift of Inner Healing*, Hodder, 1976, p. 101.

18. R. Faricy, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

19. R. Faricy, *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

20. R. C. Stapleton, *The Experience of Inner Healing*, pp. 162-167.

and expression of emotions in this way is not without its dangers.²¹ Nor does it mean that the associated fantasies are factual. For example the person who had no father does not become as though he had a father by imagining Jesus in all the fatherless situations of the past. He may of course be released from the bitterness of not having had a father in the past in order to be open to receive lots of different father type experiences within the fellowship in the present.

Indeed suggestion either by the healer or group probably plays a large part in the recorded experiences in such situations. While on a visit to the United States I forced myself to watch 'an hour of real live miracles' on television. As the Pentecostalist healer touched each individual on the forehead when declaring healing so did each afflicted individual fall back senseless into the arms of waiting attendants only to rise 'healed' in a few seconds. In a credo programme on ITV on exorcism in December 1980 I was intrigued to see the identical ritual and associated phenomenon during the exorcism of demons occurring in a Full Gospel Businessman's Meeting in Bristol. This group has of course strong links with American Pentecostalism. By contrast in the two House Churches (150 miles apart) visited and filmed for the programme the exorcism of the demons was accompanied by a reported experience of coughing or vomiting up of the unclean spirits. The Anglican exorcism filmed was done by a priest in full canonicals at the altar rail and was accompanied only by shudders and jerkings. The cynic may be tempted to reflect on how accommodating of Satan to behave true to form for each denomination.

The production of certain experiences and phenomena, no matter how worthy, are not in themselves evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit and using similar techniques, secular and Christian groups can produce apparently identical experiences although understood and attributed quite differently. Let me illustrate this by taking excerpts from accounts of eighteenth century Methodist groups and comparing them with similar accounts from twentieth century humanistic psychological groups. The eighteenth century Methodist states: 'My design was . . . to have a select company to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions without reserve. The humanist group leader states: 'A climate of mutual trust develops out of this mutual freedom to express real feelings positive and negative.' Again the early methodist states: 'They begin to bear one another's burdens and naturally to care for one another.' The contemporary humanist states: 'People begin caring for each other and supporting each other.' Again the early Christian fellowship is described in these terms:

When a happy correspondence between the outward walk and inward piety of believers is discovered, which can be known only by the disclosure of the interior life, we are not only prepared to comfort encourage and

21. G. Stanley. Do you know what T-groups are?, *Christian Graduate* vol. 27 no. 4, December 1974, pp. 108-111.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INNER HEALING

strengthen one another, but form an intimacy of the holiest nature a union of the strongest character.

The contemporary humanist group leader states:

Participants feel a closeness and intimacy which they have not felt even with their spouses or members of their own family, because they have revealed themselves here more deeply.

Let us give the last word to the participants of a twentieth century sensitivity group where the

Participants almost unanimously speak of marathons, immediately afterward and for years afterward as a worthwhile and moving experience, the words, 'I felt reborn' are often uttered.²²

The danger is in thinking that because we are in a distinctive Christian tradition the phenomena are of necessity of the Spirit of God and we are therefore safe from contemporary secularism. The facts are that ingredients are common to all 'healing situations' whether organic or psychological, pagan or Christian, as a result of which the sufferer has a greater chance of *feeling* better, even cured. This has been well researched and persuasively presented by Professor J. S. Frank:

The most reasonable assumption is that all forms of psychotherapy that persist must do some good. Furthermore it is likely that the lack of clear differences in the improvement rate from different forms of psychotherapy result from features common to them all.²³

Professor Frank goes on to describe these features which he has arrived at as a result of painstaking and careful research. First of all he speaks of the quality of the relationship between sufferer and healer which should include a confidence in the healer and a communication that he cares and accepts the sufferer in spite of all that he is or has done. Secondly, there should be a designated place where the healing can take place that is a place set apart from the rest of life where the sufferer can suspend his critical faculties and feel that he will not be held accountable in daily life for whatever he says and does at this time. Thirdly, there must be an acceptable rationale for the healing procedure which is shared by healer and sufferer alike. And concordance of opinion regarding the nature of the problem is essential for the fourth ingredient of healing to take place. This is the necessity for a special ritual or procedure to be followed. There must be something which the sufferer can do under the guidance of the healer. Whether it is taking pills from the doctor, receiving penances from the Priest or submitting to techniques of a Counsellor does not greatly matter for more than fifty per cent of the experience of relief and healing will come from the expectation that the ritual itself will be effective.²⁴ Mere anecdotal accounts of special healings however

22. T. C. Oden, 'The Intensive-Group Experience' in *The New Pietism*, Westminster Press, 1972.

23. J. D. Frank, *idem.*, p. 22.

24. J. D. Frank, *et al.*, *Effective Ingredients of Successful Psychotherapy*, Brunner/Mazel, 1978, p. 31.

impressive the evidence may be to us individually prove nothing except Frank's thesis. This in no way discounts the relief a person may feel after such interventions as Inner Healing but only true controls and careful recorded follow-ups such as are to be found in medical clinical trials can show whether there is an extra dimension in such approaches as Inner Healing. Even then, neither the relief of the person nor any clinical trial can provide proof of a specific spiritual dimension.²⁵

The giving of a theological framework to a technique or ritual does not necessarily indicate that that ritual is a vehicle for use by the Holy Spirit. Indeed the more we resort to techniques the more likely we are to imprison the individual psychologically and reproduce psychological stereotypes masquerading as Christian experience. This is amply witnessed to by the effects of certain types of high pressure evangelism in the past. Furthermore as in many of the contemporary healing movements. Christian and humanist, there is a tendency to dualism which is not Biblical. Human suffering is seen as either organic or spiritual and the place of physical methods of treatment is often rejected or not recognised in those people who are mentally ill and ought to be treated with anti-depressants or electro-convulsive therapy. There is ample research to show the value and necessity for physical treatments in certain well defined conditions and the total disregard of this area of treatment can be mischievous and to some extent reflects the distrust of 'drugs' and 'ECT' in some sections of the contemporary 'Your healing is within you' scene. By contrast there is an apparent complete acceptance of the theories of the depth psychologies with their insistence on repressed memories hurts and emotions as the cause and location of our hang-ups and non-ability to do what we want, shown in phrases like,

Bill had become a victim of childhood circumstances . . . he was not personally responsible for the circumstances which *made* him respond in the way he did . . . his parents were responsible through their inability to show him real affection.

This has the mechanistic quality of the philosophy of the total behaviourist. Even Mrs Stapleton confidently and uncritically accepts in her case history of a homosexual that 'It was obvious why men interested him — viz the death of his father when he was eight'.²⁶ This particular theory is not proven and at best can be only a partial explanation.

Clearly to feel good is not wrong. Nor can it be wrong to use such techniques of healing (as outlined by Professor Frank) which help us feel better. But it is *being* good which is the mark of the Christian growing up into spiritual maturity. The mature Christian is someone who has his faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:14) and is showing work and love in serving his fellow

25. T. Martin, *Kingdom Healing*, Marshalls, 1981, p. 95.

26. R. C. Stapleton, *The Gift of Inner Healing*, p. 105.

Christians (Hebrews 6:1). When the Apostle John is answering the question as to how we may know that we have passed from death to life, he does not point to an experience but to tests of our attitude to Christ, our love for our fellow Christians and changes in our daily behaviour. Psychological release may help us here, but there is a goal beyond that for the Christian.

'Self authentication' and 'being free to be myself' may be worthwhile in enabling openness and honesty in relationships instead of a guilty servitude, and that can only be good. Nevertheless the Christian looks beyond that. He seeks an honest appraisal of himself (Romans 12:3) and is encouraged to stir up his fellow Christians (Hebrews 10:24-25) but its purpose is the producing of good works not just good feelings. Whatever feelings we may have, it is being good and doing good works which show the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and which distinguish between that which is part of our human interaction and that which is the result of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit active in our lives within the fellowship.

I am sure that if challenged those who practice Inner Healing would deny that this is a complete approach to pastoral caring. But there is a danger in an approach so attractive in what it seems to offer that it may supplant and detract from the place of preaching the word within the fellowship. It may be significant that Inner Healing approaches were developed in the context of the Charismatic Renewal within denominations which had no strong tradition of expository preaching but had a more sacramental tradition.²⁷ This is a general theme which I have discussed elsewhere²⁸ but as William Still has written:

The pastor is the shepherd of the flock and feeds the flock upon God's Word and therefore the bulk of pastoral work is done through the ministry of the Word. Only the residue of problems and difficulties which remain following the ministry of the Word require to be dealt with in private.²⁹

There is however an attractiveness in the Inner Healing approach in that here there is an attempt to think theologically and psychologically in approaching emotional suffering. While it may be fair to say that those who popularise Inner Healing seem to pay scant regard to the fact that our faulted genes and imperfect family relationships are still *facts* till we die and no amount of Inner Healing will remove those facts, yet the emphasis that Christ's salvation reaches into our past is surely Biblical. Christ has entered into our humanity, all of it, (Hebrews 2:14-18) therefore we are not wholly bound by our past and while it may still affect us we are no longer paralysed by it — but can with confidence find mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16). To fantasize with Christ has a suggestion of self deceit and of non reality for the 'New memories' are still only fantasies,

27. T. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

28. M. G. Barker, 'Biblical and Psychological Methods of Pastoral Care', in *Behavioural Sciences: A Christian Perspective*, ed. Malcolm Jeeves, IVP, 1984, pp. 230-245.

29. W. Still, *More about the Work of the Pastor*, Didasko Press, Preface.

yet the emphasis that we can deliberately and consciously replace evil and destructive thoughts with good and wholesome thoughts is surely Biblical. We are instructed to 'Put on Christ' (Galatians 3:27) and *think* about those things which are honourable, just, pure and lovely (Philippians 4:5-9).

Here is an attempt then to apply Christian teaching to the places where men and women with all their struggles and failings hurt and long for help, but so often feel that they have to go to the psychotherapy market place for aid. Here is an attempt to understand and apply the Word of God within our relationships where the minister is himself a 'vulnerable equal'.³⁰ How little preaching even expository preaching, has such a quality of immediacy and application. How few pastors are themselves members of the body and open to pastoring. There are many features of the 'Experience of Inner Healing' which should be regarded with caution like all the other special experiences instanced throughout the Christian centuries. But the fact that they recur regularly dressed up in the garb of contemporary movements surely indicates a longing of men and women to know a quality of preaching and Christian fellowship which affects our whole being and sends us out to serve the Lord in joyful service.

30. R. C. Stapleton, *The Experience of Inner Healing*, p. 201.