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TEACHINGS IN TRANSITION:
RECENT CHANGES AND REMAINING CONCERNS
WITH THEOPHOSTIC PRAYER MINISTRY
Part Two in a Two-part Evaluation

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SEE PART ONE FOR SYNOPSIS OF ENTIRE EVALUATION

In part one we considered five questions that appropriately arise when Christians examine the core theory and practice of TPM: (1) Does it compromise Christian faith by its use of psychology? (2) Does it involve recovered memory therapy and visualization? (3) Does it illegitimately presume Christ is willing to cooperate with its process? (4) Does it function as extrabiblical revelation? (5) Does it place experience and feelings over Scripture and reason? After close analysis and a few caveats, the answer I offered to all of these questions was *no*. TPM per se is not compromising Christian faith with humanistic psychology and occultism, but rather operates within the parameters of orthodox Christian theology.

This does not mean that CRI endorses TPM's theory of emotional pain or its claims to efficacy. These can only be validated by long-term, extensive, randomized control-group studies, which we have encouraged TPM founder Dr. Ed M. Smith to continue pursuing. What this does mean is that CRI finds no biblical problem with Christians receiving TPM as such.

CRI does have concerns, however, about some of the teachings and claims Christians will be exposed to when working through TPM materials. For the sake of Christians who may participate in TPM as a result of our conclusions about its core theory and practice, we feel obliged to comment on its peripheral problems, as well as the steps that Ed Smith has taken to address these concerns.

TPM'S PERIPHERAL PROBLEMS

When I speak of TPM's "peripheral" problems, I do not mean that they are unimportant; rather, I mean that they are not essential to the theory or practice of TPM. 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.

Over the past three years CRI has engaged in far-reaching dialogue with Smith about the concerns raised below. He consistently maintains that he will change his stance on a subject if he becomes convinced that it is flawed, and his follow-up on this promise has been exceptionally good. At his request we critiqued a draft of the revised *Theophostic Prayer Ministry Basic Seminar Manual* that Smith published in 2005. It contains extensive changes from the previous edition, some of which Smith made before we established contact with him and others of which he made as a result of our input. It should be understood, then, that Smith's theology is "in transition" (as he often puts it), and that the critique below is in response only to TPM's published teachings up to February 2006.

An Inadequate Explanation for Sin in Believers

In his writings published prior to his dialogue with CRI, Smith affirmed the historic Protestant belief that unregenerate human beings have a persistent inclination toward evil, but he departed from most Protestants on what happens to people when they are regenerated. He took Pauline language that is usually understood 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 understood 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 an inherent inclination toward evil? One could easily draw this conclusion from TPM's pre-2005 literature, but Smith clarified to me his belief that the same inner principle of sin that enslaves the unsaved continues to exert its pull on believers.[1] He rejects the term *sin nature* to describe this inner principle 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 ultimately leads them to repent and obey God. We find this explanation to be biblically acceptable, and Smith explicitly stated this view in his revised 2005 (current) training manual;[2] although, as we shall see, his previous emphasis still comes across in the current manual.

Even in his earlier works Smith made it clear that sinlessness is impossible for Christians in this life. The explanation he gave for this was rooted in his version of *trichotomy*, a belief he still holds, which is that humans are composed of three distinct but connected elements: spirit, soul, and body.[3] Smith views the spirit of the Christian as his 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 all memories, including lie-based memories.[4]

Smith maintains 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 the lies in their thinking with truth, 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 that to tell Christians that they have no internal source of righteousness (the indwelling Christ) is to consign them to spiritual defeat; however, to tell them they have no sin nature is to leave them unprepared for the battle that lies before them.[5]

Scripture 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).[6] The context of Romans 7 supports,[7] and 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 influence of Christ.

Smith's previous description of the flesh in Romans 7 and elsewhere as merely the appetites of the body that a Christian suffering in lie-based pain turns to for relief[8] does not do justice to the profound dynamics that lead Christians into sin. Paul rather recounts finding a principle of evil within himself that led him into the very sin that he did not want to practice (vv. 19-23).

Christians throughout the ages have recognized themselves in Paul's dilemma. This hopeless situation is only exacerbated when Christians try to lift themselves out of the flesh through the power of the flesh. Out of fleshly pride they would like to believe that their flesh is redeemable. They would like to think that if they consecrate themselves more fully, have more faith, or, perhaps, root out more lie-based memories, they will become worthy of God's love and acceptance. This is why the experience Paul describes in Romans 7 is meant to be instructive for all Christians: they all need to come to the end of themselves and to cry out with Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of

this death?" (v. 24). Only then can they experience the glorious deliverance Paul proclaims 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 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 outside of ourselves, located in Jesus Christ. 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, which, if we did, would plunge us back into pride and the flesh (see Gal. 2:20; 6:14).[9]

These truths are critical to Christian growth and sanctification, and they will have difficulty penetrating Christian minds that have absorbed the idea that Christians do not have a sin nature, are inherently righteous, and sin mainly 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.

A Correspondingly Inadequate View of Sanctification

Smith's belief that Theophostic "mind renewal" can promote sanctification seems reasonable, up to a point. 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 her as Scripture commands (Eph. 5:25). If a Christian woman abuses alcohol to find temporary escape from lie-based pain, it makes sense that she would be less motivated to become inebriated if the oppressive lies were replaced with liberating truth.

Many approaches to Christian sanctification don't seem to prevent believers from sometimes behaving contrary to their conscious beliefs, and it seems possible that TPM could bring God's truth to those deeper layers of their psyches. In other words, TPM may be able to deliver God's truth to them as they really are, 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 one's worst part unchanged.

If TPM's basic claims are confirmed through further research, CRI would find no problem in describing it as a valid approach to healing emotional wounds that also has applications to sanctification. We cannot, however, accept the proposal that Smith came across as making in his pre-2005 materials—that TPM is the key to sanctification.

Why Smith would have seen TPM in such a way is evident from his trichotomous explanation of sin in the Christian's life described above. If the persisting problem of sin in the lives of Christians is largely rooted in lie-based memories, then a practice that renews their minds by replacing those lies with truth (e.g., TPM) would be the most direct way to deal with the problem.[10]

If, however, sin is ultimately rooted in something deeper and 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: death. He taught that our old selves were hopelessly corrupted by sin and were only worthy of execution, and this death sentence was effected on the cross of Jesus Christ. In like manner we were raised with Christ as new creatures in His righteous image. God declares this to be not only a legal transaction, but also an eternal fact. It therefore provides the Christian with a basis for victory over sin even in this mortal life.

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).[11] If someone has not reached the end of himself as Paul did in Romans 7, then this truth will indeed do him little good; but I suspect I could gather enough testimonials of victory over besetting sins based on this truth to impress even Smith. What should be decisive in this discussion, however, is that when the subject of gaining victory over the power and pull of sin comes up in the New Testament, the refrain is consistent: by faith we are to daily "put on" or live according to the new self and nature that God has provided, and "put off" or 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).

In the years after Smith developed TPM he was zealous to interpret his new method of inner healing in biblical terms, and to place it within the context of Christian sanctification. The teaching that emerged from this effort is where many of the valid theological criticisms of TPM have been lodged. He took biblical texts and terms and infused them with meanings derived from the TPM process.

Smith's most deliberate attempt to develop a theology of sanctification informed by Theophostic insights appeared in a several-page commentary on Romans 7 that was included in *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, the previous edition of his basic training manual. Smith described Paul's inner conflict in markedly Theophostic terms: "I do believe this concept of *members* includes all that is not of his spirit man, which would include his yet to be renewed mind (which contains the experiential lies) and his physical body from which sin is played out. These subconscious members (experiential lies) are at odds with the logical truth he has stored in his conscious mind which he calls *the righteous law of his mind*" (emphasis in original).[12]

In Smith's view, Paul's deliverance (that he cried out for in vv. 24-25) came through Jesus "showing up" and revealing truth experientially, as He does in TPM; thus Smith intimately associated TPM processes with sanctification processes.[13] "We are truly limited in our thinking and the experiential lies of our subconscious minds," Smith wrote. "As the Lord is invited into the dark places, we are released to live out our righteousness which is fully known in our inner man….The law of the spirit of life (the truth that comes directly from the risen Lord) has set him free from the law of sin and death (the false law of lies that result in separation)."[14]

Recognizing that such interpretations are controversial, and not wanting to deter people from using TPM, Smith has jettisoned this and many other sections, including whole chapters, in his most recent manual. He has also scaled back on his association of TPM with sanctification. Despite these modifications, there remains an undercurrent throughout his materials that pulls the reader to TPM-like healing and experiential knowledge of truth as the most direct avenue to spiritual growth.[15]

It is indeed important for Christians to have experiential, and not merely intellectual, knowledge of such truths as the attributes of God, one's own unworthiness, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the relationship with God as Father, and so forth (see, e.g., Job 42:1-6; Ps. 34:8; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 3:2; Eph. 1:17-19; 3:16-19; John 4:13). This kind of fully orbed faith clearly should be a goal for all Christians; but how do we arrive at it? On the one hand, the Theophostic process cannot be found as such in Scripture, which is not to say that it is unbiblical, but rather that it is not normative. On the other hand, Scripture often sets forth as the means for obtaining such experiential knowledge the very practices that Smith pits against it.

Consider, for example, one of the more common junctures in the Christian walk, where the Christian must take her stand by faith in the testimony of Scripture despite, rather than because of, her feelings and experience. Smith does not deny that there is value to such faith without feelings, but he depicts it as inferior to taking such a stand effortlessly, through the emotional support of experiential knowledge.[16] Scripture, however, not only presents such stark stands of faith as pleasing in the sight of God and critical to spiritual survival and growth, but also as *the eventual avenue to experiential confirmation* (Ps. 27:13-14; Rom. 4:18-22; 15:13; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; Heb. 11:1-6; 1 Pet. 1:3-9; 5:8-10). It is often not the easy times, but the extremely difficult times when the believer gains her greatest experiential knowledge of Christ (2 Cor. 1:5; 4:7-11; 12:7-10; Phil. 3:10). By continually beating the drum of one biblical truth (faith made easy by experiential knowledge) at the expense of others, Smith creates a false conflict that could discourage Christians from treading these other important, but more difficult, pathways to growth.

Smith also frequently pits self-effort against Theophostic healing as the means for achieving victory over sin. In his writings he equates "knowledge, controlled behavior, willpower, and self-effort" with "performance-based spirituality and works sanctification."[17] He contrasts this works righteousness with 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).[18]

Smith's choice of words here confuses the biblical concepts of salvation and sanctification. Both are by grace through faith, but salvation involves no human works (Eph. 2:8-9), whereas sanctification, by definition, is where human works enter 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 done 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).

It could be demoralizing to tell someone who came to Christ out of homosexuality or drug addiction (examples that Smith has used for this teaching[19]) that, although he has daily resisted his urges for years, he has not been victorious. Perhaps his sexual orientation or addiction 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.

This emphasis can also set up a false expectation of the Christian life, one that Smith himself does not hold, that sanctification is supposed to be easy.[20] 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).

To Smith's credit, the 2005 *Basic Seminar Manual* has deleted many references found in previous editions that contrasted works-based sanctification with Theophostic moments, and it makes clarifications such as, "Whenever a believer makes the choice to obey rather than sin he is experiencing victory even if it is through some effort or much effort."[21] Smith adds, "I do not want the person who may have to battle every day of his life to maintain his obedience, and does so, to feel that his success is a second-class victory or not true victory at all."[22]

The value of these helpful clarifications, however, is diluted three pages later when Smith reverts to affirming, "This is *true victory*, when I do not have to struggle, but simply walk in the power of His presence and peace" (emphasis added).[23] With references such as this still appearing in his manual and in his introductory book, *Healing Life's Hurts*, Smith has further editorial work to do before this criticism of his teaching can be put to rest.

Excessive and Unsubstantiated Claims

Smith has been understandably enthusiastic about the promising results he believes he's seen from TPM. In his zeal for his discovery, however, he has sometimes promoted it in such sweeping terms that it could be viewed not only as the key to sanctification, but as a cure-all for nonorganic[24] mental and emotional problems.

It remains to be established scientifically whether, and to what extent, emotional healing is possible through TPM. Its effectiveness with victims of child abuse receives abundant anecdotal support, with many testimonials of long-lasting healing (up to 10 years). There is also plenty of anecdotal support for TPM's ability to free people from the effects of less-severe childhood traumas.

What seems much less possible scientifically, and much less supported even anecdotally, are the claims that Smith has made for TPM's ability to cure chronic disorders that possibly have a mind-body connection (e.g., fibromyalgia[25]). Smith's past claims that TPM can provide maintenance-free healing of complex sexual and addictive disorders such as homosexuality and alcoholism are equally unsubstantiated. There has been no scientific research to support such claims and even the anecdotal evidence Smith cited usually did not encompass a sufficient period of time to mean anything.

If research one day could establish that TPM recipients have recovered from such profound conditions without relapse for, say, 15 years or more, then TPM would land a place on the therapeutic map and provoke a literal revolution in psychology. Until then, Smith should be circumspect about the claims he makes, or he will invite skepticism and scorn from counseling professionals. For example, professional counselor Rick Sholette comments, "We cannot isolate a traumatic injury to our non-physical self and

surgically remove it without addressing the personal thoughts, feelings, values, attitudes, behaviors, goals, priorities, roles, relationships, wishes, motives, effort levels, interests, investments and more that have attended such pain for years or maybe decades.…It seems to me that *Smith fails to sufficiently account for the systemic nature of serious wounding experiences and instead offers a simplistic quick-fix to complicated issues*" (emphasis in original).[26]

Smith does, however, make numerous qualifications regarding the limits of TPM's efficacy. He acknowledges, for example, that not everyone experiences rapid and radical change after receiving TPM: "Where there is a void or absence of education in life skills, relational graces, life management, parenting responsibilities, money management, sexual orientation, etc. Theophostic Prayer Ministry does not claim to offer any support.…This is where ongoing processes in cognitive therapy, biblical counseling and discipleship can play an active role in ongoing ministry."[27]

Smith also says he has listened to CRI's concerns about making unsubstantiated claims. In his introduction to the revised *Basic Seminar Manual* he states, "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."[28]

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). Next to Smith's teachings on the sin nature and sanctification, this emphasis on SRA has been CRI's greatest cause for concern with TPM.

The heyday of SRA claims predates the birth of TPM 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 to treat problems such as depression and anxiety. During these sessions the therapist and client typically would work through displays of abreaction (e.g., wailing, writhing, vomiting, cathartic withdrawal, and vile and abusive speech) to uncover supposedly repressed traumatic memories from childhood. The memories told lurid tales of unspeakable sexual, psychological, and physical abuses at the hands of trusted people in the child's life 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.

At the height of the SRA hysteria speculations were rife about a global, all-powerful satanic conspiracy. SRA "survivors" accused parents, pastors, teachers, and other authority figures 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.[29] Hundreds more have never been cleared.[30]

During the 1990s both Christian and secular authors and groups (including CRI[31]) published critical evaluations of 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 did occur, there was 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.[32] Public support for SRA claims soon declined, and today true believers in SRA are mostly limited to die-hard contingents of some therapeutic communities.

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 SRA stories. Smith and other TPM facilitators have experienced this phenomenon numerous times. CRI continues to view recovered SRA memories with profound skepticism and suspects that if they are not implanted through directive therapy, then they are most likely originating from the minds of clients who have heard such stories and are desperate to become the center of attention. Smith, however, does not believe that these alternative explanations

adequately account for most of the cases he has observed personally.[33] Smith and I have discussed the evidence both for false memories and repressed memories, which are considerations that bear heavily on this debate.[34]

CRI's concern about TPM's promotion of SRA beliefs is mitigated by several factors. First, although Smith still is inclined to believe that ritual abuse occurs (whether by Satanists or other evil people), he has been rethinking and backing away from some of his teachings and practices in this area. During this period of reevaluation, he has pulled his Level II Advanced Training from the market, which was his primary vehicle for teaching on SRA.[35]

Second, the TPM Guidelines (discussed in part one of this series) and all TPM training materials emphatically forbid the facilitator to ask leading questions or offer diagnoses, which should reduce the occurrence of implanted SRA memories. A TPM facilitator who is committed to SRA intervention may opt to disregard the Guidelines, but such blatant disregard for TPM principles presumably would be the exception and not the rule.

Third, Smith's approach to dealing with SRA claims is among the most restrained and least sensational we have seen with SRA believers. He warns against (1) getting caught up in the victim's "reality" and assuming "*that the information surfacing in a victim's memory is totally accurate or even accurate at all*" (emphasis in original); (2) taking any action against the alleged perpetrators "unless you have evidence of crimes committed that would hold up in court"; and (3) seeking "to expose, rescue, or inform" alleged victims based on information that surfaces during the sessions. "In doing so," he warns, "you may very well be caught up in falsehood yourself."[36]

Fourth, the TPM process is not even considered successful until the recipient is free of all bitterness toward her perpetrators. Under such conditions, the recipient is less likely to seek justice for wrongs she believes she endured.

This does not eliminate all cause for concern, however. If the alleged perpetrator is innocent, the TPM recipient's choice to forgive him for wrongs he didn't actually commit would not prevent harm from being done to their relationship by her believing he committed those wrongs. If he is a significant person in her life, then the consequences of this false belief would be severe.[37]

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 relationships and to innocent people's lives, CRI cautions against getting caught up in this aspect of TPM. Directive therapy cannot be ruled out entirely 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.'"[38]

Unbiblical Spiritual Warfare Teachings and Practices

TPM's stance on spiritual warfare was once a major concern for CRI. Deliverance from demons, breaking demonic curses, and other unbiblical and superstitious practices were heavily emphasized in TPM teaching and practice. 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 are more likely to be his former colleagues in the Christian deliverance movement.

In his revised 2005 training manual Smith fully elaborates his belief 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.[39] Deliverance from 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.[40]

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

- He believes that Christians can be *demonized*, although he uses the term generally to refer to demonic influence, which, in its most severe instances, can involve inhabitation of a person,[41] but never involuntary control of that person. CRI, on the other hand, believes the term is never used biblically for mere external influence but always carries the meaning of *both* inhabitation *and* involuntary control; and, while Scripture teaches that Christians can be influenced by demons, it does not allow for them to be possessed. What CRI finds most problematic in deliverance circles is the belief that Christians can be controlled by demons and therefore need to be exorcised. For Smith, however, even the rare indwelling demon can only exert influence through telling lies, and Christians have the power to resist that influence.[42]
- 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.[43] 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 rulership of the physical earth.[44]
- 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 accomplished victory will not be complete until the second coming (Rev. 20:2-3). Christians therefore are still called to battle the Devil (Eph. 6:10-18;[45] Matt. 16:18), which Smith denies.

Despite CRI's ongoing differences with Smith on some spiritual warfare issues, we are encouraged by his movement toward a more biblical paradigm. The virtual absence of deliverance ministry, of unhealthy preoccupation with the demonic and excessive belief in its power, and of superstitious approaches to spiritual warfare[46] is refreshing, and we pray that other deliverance practitioners will follow Smith's lead.

A NEED FOR DISCERNMENT

In many previously published critiques of TPM, concerns have been raised with which we at CRI concur and have even expanded on in this evaluation; nonetheless, CRI's conclusions about TPM are generally less negative than those of previous critiques. The greatest reason for this disparity is the distinction CRI makes between the biblically sound core theory and practice of TPM and its problematic peripheral teachings, a distinction that was not made in any previous evaluation. Some critics will simply disagree with us that the core theory is biblically sound, but many others have failed to see that the problems they have correctly identified in TPM publications properly belong to the periphery and are not essential to the practice.

To illustrate this point, let us consider the core practice of TPM as described by Ed Smith himself:

> The Theophostic prayer ministry process contains four primary components that are essential to bringing about mind renewal, subsequent release of emotional pain and the presence of peace. These components are: *1) identifying the person's current <u>presenting emotion</u>, 2) encouraging the recipient of ministry to identify the <u>original memory</u> holding the falsehood, 3) discerning the lie-based thinking or <u>lie</u> message held in the memory which is causing the emotional duress, and 4) offering the exposed lie up to the Lord to receive His <u>truth</u> perspective.*[47] (emphases in original)

If these four components are the essential ingredients of TPM, where do Smith's controversial views on the sin nature, sanctification, satanic ritual abuse, and spiritual warfare necessarily fit into the practice? The answer is that they do not: someone who disagrees with Smith on all of these issues can still engage in the four essential components of TPM. That person would simply need to forego the problematic peripheral teachings when they come up in TPM training materials, which they do much less often in the revised 2005 training manual. When they do appear, often in modified form, Smith usually identifies them as his own personal theology and stresses that the reader can take or leave them while still practicing TPM.

In addition to discerning these teachings, the TPM participant also should be aware that some of these peripheral problems emerge from the experiences themselves: some people receiving TPM "recover"

memories of satanic ritual abuse; sometimes phenomena occur that suggest demonic possession. We urge all TPM participants to maintain a healthy skepticism when confronted with such phenomena.

Biblical or factual verification always should be required before accepting a claim that emerges from subjective experience. Spiritual and psychological sources for phenomena are often elusive and insidiously deceptive. They lead people to accept many unbiblical and fantastic beliefs, such as UFO encounters, past lives, visions of Mary, and visitations from nonphysical entities. Naïve subjectivism is a major problem in American culture and, too often, in the church. Such Christian conformity to the thinking of this world is the opposite of *mind renewal* in the biblical sense (Rom. 12:2). We are called to be a part of the solution rather than the problem.

NOTES

1. Ed M. Smith, telephone conversation with author, October 18, 2004.
2. Ed M. Smith, *Theophostic Prayer Ministry Basic Seminar Manual* [hereafter *BSM*] (Campbellsville, KY: New Creation Publishing, 2005), 43.
3. CRI and most theologians hold to *dichotomy*: the belief that humans are composed of only two elements: spirit/soul (i.e., immaterial) and body (i.e., material).
4. See part one for an explanation of lie-based memories.
5. 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: 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): 22-25 (http://www.equip.org/ free/DA081.htm).
6. 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.
7. For example, only a regenerate person could say, "I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man" (v. 22, NASB [here and throughout]). 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).
8. Ed M. Smith, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, 4th ed. (Campbellsville, KY: Alathia Publishing, 2000), 232-35.
9. On reading a draft of this article, Smith affirmed his agreement with this and most of the points made both in this section on sin and the one following on sanctification; our evaluation, however, ultimately must be based on his published work.
10. Smith has always maintained that this would not eliminate the need for other means of Christian growth, such as Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship and accountability.
11. This derision has been toned down in the current manual, but it still occurs. See Smith, *BSM*, 162, 262, and 292.
12. Smith, *Beyond*, 234.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 235–36.
15. See, e.g., Smith, *BSM*, 279.
16. See, as one of many examples, ibid., 262.
17. Edward M. Smith, *Healing Life's Hurts* (Elk Horn, KY: New Creation Publishing, 2005), 59; Smith, *BSM*, 279.
18. Smith, *Healing Life's Hurts*, 65.
19. Regarding homosexuality, see Edward M. Smith, *Healing Life's Deepest Hurts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 2002), 19. This example was deleted from the latest revision of this book, but the example regarding addiction stands. See Smith, *Healing Life's Hurts*, 58-59.
20. Smith has affirmed to me that perseverance through suffering—whether from illness, circumstances, or as-yet-unhealed lie-based pain—is an important and enduring aspect of Christian growth. See, e.g., Smith, *BSM*, 19.
21. Ibid., 21.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 24. See also 43, where a similar statement is made.
24. By this I mean *nonbiological*; that is, psychological problems that originate in one's thought life rather than in one's physiology.
25. Ibid., 292.
26. Rick Sholette, "A Brief Evaluation of Theophostic Ministry (TPM)" (self-published paper, 2005), 8.
27. Ed Smith, "How Does TPM Help Where There Is Absence of…?" Theophostic Prayer Ministries, http://www.theophostic.com/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=60.
28. Smith, *BSM*, 7.
29. See, e.g., Jon Trott, "Satanic Panic: The Ingram Family and Other Victims of Hysteria in America," *Cornerstone* 20, 95 (1991):8-10, 12.
30. The source of this fact is 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.
31. See Bob Passantino 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): 10-19 (http://www.equip.org/free/DA084.htm); and Bob Passantino 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).

32. See, e.g., Bob Passantino, Gretchen Passantino, and Jon Trott, "Satan's Sideshow: The True Lauren Stratford Story," *Cornerstone* 18, 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).

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

34. 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).

35. See Smith, *BSM*, 318.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Smith does address this concern in the revised 2005 edition of his manual. See Smith, *BSM*, 276.

38. Passantino and Passantino, "Hard Facts," 22.

39. See Smith, *BSM*, chap. 10.

40. 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).

41. Smith, *BSM*, 204.

42. See, e.g., ibid., 212.

43. See, e.g., ibid., 206.

44. See 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).

45. Smith acknowledges that Christians still need to resist the Devil, but he weakly argues that this is not battle, since it is not offensive.

46. For example, 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.

47. Smith, *BSM*, 63.