

Chapter 17

Healing as Restoration of God's Original Intent

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Practitioner

Robert T. Sears, S.J., Ph.D., received his Doctorate in Spiritual Theology from Fordham University in 1974. He is an Adjunct Professor at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University in Chicago. He is also active in doing pastoral counseling, spiritual direction and giving healing retreats.

Training

My dissertation (*Spirit: Divine and Human, the Theology of the Holy Spirit and its Relevance for Evaluating the Data of Psychotherapy* [Fordham, 1974]) treats the theology of the Holy Spirit of Heribert Muehlen (a German Catholic theologian who specialized in the theology of the Holy Spirit) in relation to Freud, Jung and J.L. Moreno's views of therapy. My psychological training was in Psychodrama (group psychotherapy founded by J.L. Moreno), and through study and teaching of C.G. Jung and Theology, Family Systems and Healing, and more recently training in the Restoration Therapy of Serafina Anfuso, Ph.D.

Journey of Integration

My search began during theological studies in Frankfurt, Germany. In seeking the link between therapy and theology I participated in a Psychodrama Congress in Barcelona, Spain and afterwards sought training by Dean Elefthery, M.D. and his wife Doreen. Moreno's group therapy methods were developed by *role-reversing with God* and he led me to see God's and the community's role in healing. At Fordham, I was attracted to Muehlen's theology of the Holy Spirit as *We* in the Trinity, for it grounded the creative community I saw as basic to healing. During this time also, I became involved in the Charismatic Renewal, as well as the revival of the original way of giving the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius. During this time, I was introduced to deliverance prayer while working with a person who was both schizophrenic and oppressed by *legions* of demons, and I participated in a workshop on Deliverance given by Francis MacNutt and Fr. Rick Thomas, SJ. I was discovering the practice of healing/deliverance prayer while searching for a theology to undergird it.

I began teaching theology in 1972 in Chicago, where I was introduced by David Augsburg, to Murray Bowen and Family Systems therapy. Bowen correlated well with Muehlen's theology of the Holy Spirit and with Moreno, and I began using healing prayer for the families of persons I was counseling. In teaching "Trinity and Grace," I developed a theology of faith development correlated with the stages of salvation history (see Sears, 1976, 1983) which helped integrate human development with God's way of healing. I joined the Association of Christian Therapists (ACT) in 1981, and became part of a discussion group on inter-generational healing, and another group practicing deliverance prayer. With that help, I could envision healing as cooperating with the interpersonal power of the Holy Spirit, leading each person, as Israel, through suffering and individuation to creative community and love, modeled on Christ's life.

Context

The context of this illustration is a spiritual direction/counseling ministry in a graduate school, the Institute of Pastoral Studies. The directee, whom I will call Lisa, was a student in pastoral counseling who had attended a course I had given which raised issues she wanted to deal with. She came bi-weekly for some 14 sessions, and later brought her husband for a session and referred her sister. I chose her case because of the more extended yet somewhat concentrated time involved in it (I often see people for one or two sessions for intervention prayer to support another therapist, or for an extended spiritual direction time once a month).

Goal

Lisa wanted help with a pervasive depression, and with her relationship with her husband whom she had married two years previously. She had had 6 months counseling before her marriage and again after her marriage, but the depression persisted.

Theory/Theology

God's plan for us is revealed in Genesis and fulfilled through the death/resurrection of Jesus. We were to form a creative community of self-giving love of male and female, and be fruitful in the image of God's Trinitarian love (see Sears, 1984). God gave us stewardship of creation, and the freedom to make choices that would influence subsequent generations and even the earth (see Sears, 1990, 1994). All this was lost when our first parents distrusted God's love and chose their own way. Alienation from God led to anxiety and shame and disrupted male-female and sibling relationships through blame, control and clinging (the man and the woman), jealousy and hatred (the siblings) and domination rather than harmony with nature. This

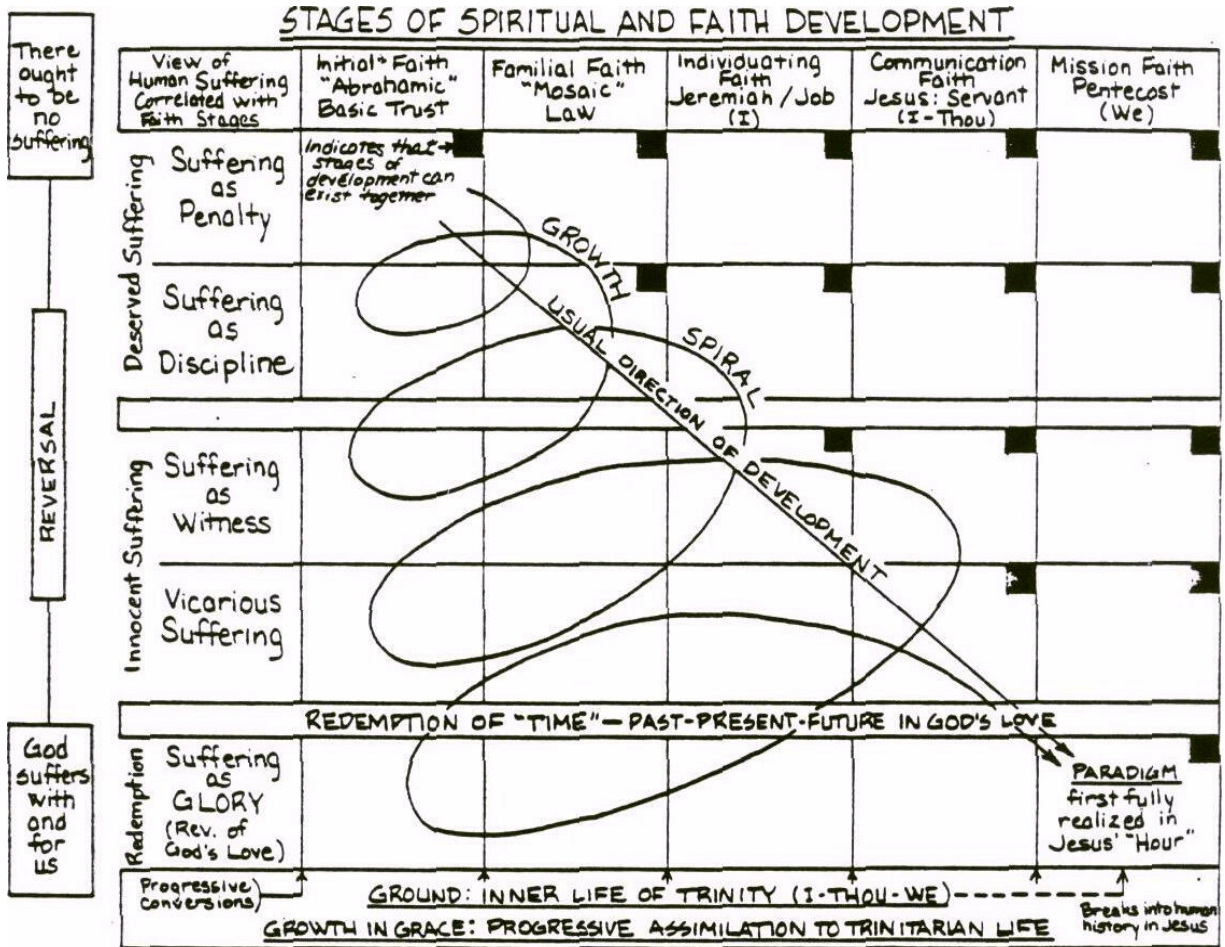
sinful pattern was handed down in history from parents to children, and is still operative when not corrected by God's redemptive love.

However, God's intention remained and was/is restored through God's interventions in Israel and finally through Jesus' life/death and resurrection. Through Jesus' death on the cross, the Holy Spirit was released to restore our union with God. In the Spirit, God created a new family, symbolized in the relationship of Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple. Thus male-female relationships were healed. Jesus also could command the wind and the sea. He lived a healed stewardship of nature, and has given that authority to us as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit (Sears, 1990).

We recapitulate all the stages of salvation history, culminating in Jesus' death/resurrection/sending of the Spirit. I illustrate five main stages as follows (see Figure 1, taken from Sears, 1983):

1. *Initial faith* is articulated by the Yahwist, an author from David's time (see Genesis 2:3-4 and 12:1-5) who saw the root of evil as distrust in God and disobedience (original sin). Basic trust in God is needed to restore this stage.
2. *Familial faith* focuses on keeping rules and law (the ten commandments) to show faithfulness to God. Sins and blessings of parents are visited on offspring (Exodus 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 5:9-10). Reward or punishment (life or death) is incurred by keeping or breaking the law (see Deuteronomy 30:15-20).
3. *Individuating faith* is God's response when Israel broke the familial covenant and was punished by the Exile. God promised to put his Spirit in their hearts and create a *new covenant* (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24f). Each, from youngest to oldest, would know God and need to choose God (Ezekiel 18). Innocent suffering would open one to a personal encounter with God (Jeremiah and Job).
4. *Communitarian faith* introduces the notion of creating community by suffering for others and forgiving enemies, even non-Jews. It is predicted by Isaiah 53:4-6, but first realized in Jesus whose call to forgive sinners and even Samaritans and Romans brought him the hatred of the Jewish leaders.
5. *Mission faith* expands God's love to all people and all creation. It begins with the resurrection gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, and is expressed by love of all, especially the poor, despite persecution and even martyrdom.

One's living out of the stages is not as clear as they are articulated. One can be in various stages at the same time depending on the area of healing involved. Development is cyclical and the challenges of new stages (like individuating faith) take one back to earlier stages for deeper healing and restoration of the trust God initially intended. Also, breakthroughs in each suc-



Stages of Faith Development in relation to view of suffering.

187 Spiritual Direction & Prayer Ministry—Robert Sears, SJ, Ph.D.

ceeding stage affect and heal conflicts in the preceding stages. Thus, the final (resurrection) stage confers the power to restore the earliest (trust/mistrust) stage. It also heals family/ancestors/tradition wounds (second stage), reconnects us immediately to God (third stage) and enables us to bear with others that they might open to healing community (fourth stage). Finally, it heals our relation to our own bodies and all the earth/cosmos (final stage).

The five stages present a map of human development that aids discernment. In dealing with actual issues of a client, I identify nine steps (three groups of three) in opening people to the healing of these stages:

1. *Issue?* (what is the presenting problem? the pain that brings one to therapy?)
2. *Own your feelings around the hurt "wrong"* (anger, sadness, fear, guilt, shame, confusion?)
3. *Who influenced it?* (my mother? her mother? etc. See the context)
4. *Distribute responsibility* (Pray for guidance: what is yours? what others?)
5. *Repent* (change your decision/belief to God's. Ask God to help you find the *basic lie* and your *True Self*, and renounce that *vow* or *basic lie*.)
6. *Ask healing* (for the wounds that then surface: the traumas, sins, neglects)
7. *Forgive*: (5 areas: forgive God and ask God's forgiveness, forgive the other and seek their forgiveness, and forgive yourself for your inadequacies.)
8. *Intercede* (active care for those that hurt you and ancestors frees you; ask guidance what to do about hurt relationships, ask forgiveness in their name and your own)
9. *Developing grateful mutuality* across generations (goal of healing).

In steps one to three, one identifies the issue and one's feelings around it. In step three, writing a genogram, an illustration of one's family tree, can help one see the influence of parents, ancestry, culture, etc. That opens one to the familial context (my 1st and 2nd stages). Steps four to six focus on personal responsibility and develop individuating faith (my third stage). This gets at what a recent religious therapist has called the *basic lie* (see E. M. Smith, *TheoPhostic* (God's Light) therapy). This core *lie*, which becomes a kind of self-fulfilling *vow*, needs to be changed in light of God's redemptive love in Jesus. Repentance releases the lie and opens to God's truth. Deliverance prayer (for occult or ancestral bondage) may be needed to release the enslaving lie. Releasing the lie opens up the deep pain the lie was covering. One

then needs to open to God's healing and ask for it. Steps seven to nine then move one out to bring healing to others, a mark of communitarian and mission faith (my 4th and 5th stages). Having received some healing, one can now forgive the other, God and oneself and open to be forgiven oneself. By forgiving, one sides with God's compassion and gains confidence to intercede for the other that he or she might receive the healing one has experienced. Finally, our awareness of God's healing love can expand to embrace all reality and lead to an ever increasing gratitude - the ultimate sign of healing.

Methodology

The actual method used integrates family systems thought, Jungian insights and faith development in light of God's Word and Scripture. In the initial interview(s) the person's history, especially as related to God, is taken and a genogram constructed. I look for the issue, the blocks that hinder healing (individual and familial), and the positive resources for healing (including the person's spirituality and trust in God, their education and openness to truth). I begin and end a session with prayer, asking for God's enlightenment for the session and praying for healing of the issue(s) discerned.

To illustrate, I will use my own experience of healing. A sense of inadequacy and depression I felt seemed to be rooted in a decision I made very early, perhaps even in the womb, that I *would not be a burden*. I have recently become aware that my decision was a response to my mother's feeling overburdened. To disconnect from my mother's inability to welcome me was an understandable response in the womb, but as an adult I had to accept responsibility for my choice and let it go. Since I was no burden to God, I needed to release the lie that I was a burden. We are responsible for our own responses to painful situations, and cannot blame our parents. Still, I was unable to change the decision by myself. What I did, and what I encourage others to do, was give God permission to change my decision. That is a form of repentance. In letting the decision go, I opened up the pain of my mother not being able to be fully present to me. I then needed to trust that God would make good what my mother could not do - I needed to *seek healing*. Healing came, and is still coming, in a variety of ways: through the intercession of a woman friend, through various healing services, through a therapy training group that I have been part of for several years now. My healing is linked to others' healing. Since my God-image was connected to my parental experience, I had also felt I was a burden to God. That changed as I got a deeper appreciation of Jesus' ministry.

After experiencing that healing I could really *forgive*. Forgiveness is a key to healing as therapists are more and more discovering (see a recent is-

sue of *Family Therapy Networker*, "The Journey to Forgiveness" (Layton, Crenshaw & Tangari, Wylie, 1998)). But I have found that we cannot forgive fully until we open ourselves to forgiveness, and to the healing of the wound that hurt us. God needed to begin to heal that mother deprivation before I could let go of the hurt and anger of not receiving the mothering I needed and still need (as we all need parenting). Forgiveness then leads to intercession, as I pray that my mother receive what she could not give to me. And ultimately it leads to gratitude for all aspects of my life, seeing that God brings good even from the hurts.

Case Illustration

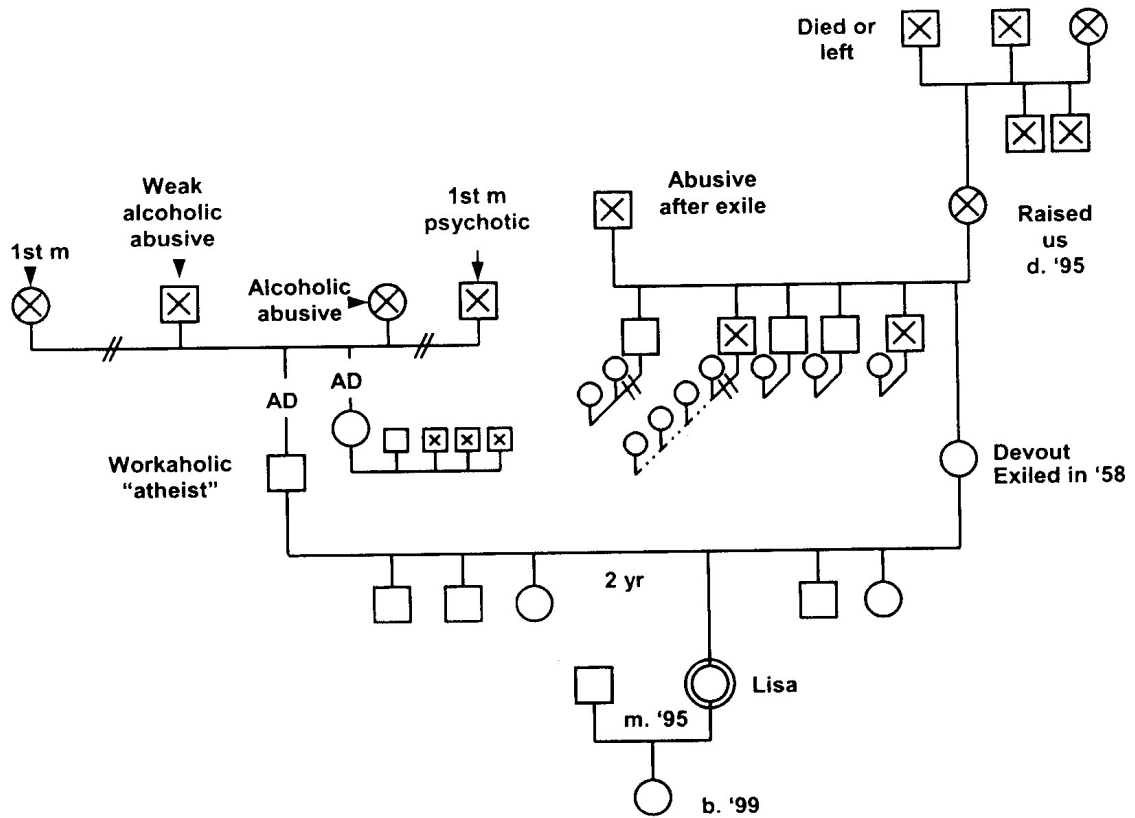
Lisa's history

Lisa's maternal grandparents lived with them permanently from the time Lisa was in fourth grade. The three girls were raised very strictly as women by her Hispanic grandmother. They were *very religions* and her sister never dated.

Because of the restrictive home situation, Lisa had been depressed in High School and had difficulty coping. The depression was less pronounced in college where she was freer. After college, several events occurred to bring her again into depression. The boss where she worked became abusive, her boyfriend disclosed he was gay, and her friend and roommate (*Carol*) left her to be with Lisa's younger brother whom she had been dating without Lisa's knowledge. Lisa felt deeply betrayed, especially since her family said nothing to her brother about his action. She spent a year in denial and filled her life with work and socializing every night. She sought help from a priest and the church, but with no success, which increased her depression. She then went to a counselor and after a year or so with him quit her job and went to Spain to live with her older married brother. There she read *A Course in Miracles* (for an evaluation of this book see Sears, 1999), devoutly prayed the rosary and spent time in church. She began to work on her own healing. During a visit to Lourdes, she heard the words, *I will send somebody to help you* and the next day in Paris, she met her future husband. While in Spain she became sick and on returning to the USA was diagnosed with hypoglycemia. After a year of trying to resolve her problems herself she became more depressed and returned to counseling. A year and a half later she got engaged and then married. Through counseling the depression lifted enough for her to cope, but a basic anxiety remained even after her marriage. It was after a year and a half of marriage that she entered the graduate program in pastoral counseling at Loyola, and in her second year sought spiritual direction and healing.

Since I had known Lisa from previous course work, I could enter immediately into the background of her issue in her family system. In working

Figure 2: Lisa's Genogram



with her genogram (see figure 2) she began to see the pattern of abandonment that was one root of her depression. Lisa's maternal grandmother was brought up by her mother and grandmother. Her biological father either left the family or died. Lisa's mother was exiled from her country when she was twenty, and her mother's father became abusive after the exile.

Another root that appeared was the abuse of power by those in authority. Lisa's father was the older of two adopted children, and knew his stepfather sexually abused his younger sister, who later had a series of failed relationships with men. Both her father and his sister were physically (and sexually?) abused by their adoptive mother who stripped them and beat them as punishment. Lisa's father turned against God and claimed to be an atheist. He coped with life with his mind and was not emotionally available in the family.

I asked Lisa about the part God played in her history. She said that she did not pray to God as much as she used to but was more reflective. She felt abandoned by God and relied more on herself. She claimed to have more *hope than faith*, and tended to want to control things. Still, she was open and desirous of having me pray healing prayers.

Processes and Healing Interventions

Having attained the person's background, I look for indications from the directee's experiences and dreams to locate what is surfacing for prayer. In one of the early sessions, Lisa was talking about her father and how he was compulsive and intellectualized everything. She also felt uncomfortable with older men, indeed with men in general. She had a dream in which her husband (Bill) decided it was time for him to grow up. Bill would go to his father and tell him. Bill needed Lisa to come with him, which meant he had to find another wife. Lisa felt she had to go with Bill, but it was not her role. I helped Lisa see her dreams in a Jungian way, as most often representing parts of her own psyche. This empowered her because she saw the dream as a call to individuate from her family-- which was not permitted in her family. In the dream, her masculine side (Bill) had to grow up, to reconnect with her father in a mature way and with her feminine side. This moved her toward individuation and to a more mature and equal way of being a wife.

Our prayer, which she found very empowering, addressed both the internal split between her masculine and feminine sides, and the need to reconnect maturely with her father. It went something like this: "Lord, I thank you for your love of Lisa. I ask you to cut her free from the felt neglect of her father so she can recover her own strength. I sever her off from her father's neediness and dominance. Open her to her own masculine strength." Lisa was coming to grips with her own independence and was seeking God's healing (see my steps 4 to 6). She felt empowered when I moved to step 7

and asked her to pray with me for her father that he would be able to forgive his father's incest. "Lord, we stand in for Lisa's father and ask you to release him from the bondage of unforgiveness. Give him the fathering he needs so he can forgive his father and be cut free to find his own strength." Aware of the importance of praying for ancestors (see McAll, 1982; Linn, 1985), I also invited her to pray for the grandfather's healing, asking God to release him from his sin of abuse. We also prayed that her father could forgive his mother's abuse and the wound in his God relationship that resulted from his mother's superficial religiosity. Finally, we prayed that Lisa herself could forgive her father and the *betrayal* of her first boyfriend so she could be free to reunite with her own rejected masculine side. I asked her to express that forgiveness in her own words, and I in turn offered forgiveness in God's name.

There also seemed to be a *vow* involved, a basic *lie* not to trust men. She was able to renounce the vow. I had her write it out in imagination and give it to Jesus on the cross as is done in restoration therapy. We then prayed to God to integrate those masculine qualities in her. "Lord, open Lisa to receive into herself her masculine strength and welcome her wholeness."

In the next session Lisa reported how the doctor she was seeing for hypoglycemia had inquired whether she had ever been suicidal. Though she had not been consciously suicidal. Lisa became aware that she had abandoned her body (abandonment was how her family coped!). This reminded Lisa that a psychic had told her Mom when she was in High School that Lisa would be the person who would most influence her father. For years Lisa had thought, *That's because I am going to die young*, for she could not fathom what else would affect her father in any way. She was getting in touch with her anger that her father did not respond to her. She noted a similar anger against her abusive boss. Recently, she had exploded with anger. It seemed that the previous prayer for her father had released the block to her latent anger against men, and had made her aware of a need to heal the split between her body and her *masculine* assertive ego. When we repent (my 4th step), a further need for healing surfaces (my 5th step). This session was concluded with a prayer to integrate her angry side and to reconnect with her body. With her permission, I held Lisa's hands for this prayer, since the wounded child needs touch. "Lord, I thank you for Lisa's anger and her awakened sense of the gift of her body. Help her to welcome her strength and unite her with her body." She experienced a big shift after this, and a dream indicated she was letting her guard down and becoming more receptive toward men in her life.

With growing wholeness. Lisa gained a sense of her own needs and worth. That led her to realize she would want a public apology from the men other family! Previously she felt very responsible for burdening her family.

Since the family denied negative feelings, she was ashamed to express her needs. Her parents were wealthy, but the children were taught not to ask for things and be spoiled. As she gained self esteem, she noticed in class how she was passed over for 2 days. She felt *invisible*, sad and self-conscious. However, instead of seeking prayer for her own wounded inner child, Lisa asked prayer for her niece (the daughter of her older brother) who was growing bald at 2. As with dreams, I helped her see *how projections* can also indicate parts of oneself that need healing. In praying with her for her niece, I included her own neglected inner child. A later dream showed how things then stood. She was at home by a lake with many children. A man in the dream, who was sitting on a couch and did not want to leave, also felt it was his home. This seemed to indicate a beginning integration of the masculine and her inner children. In another dream, she was in a beautiful pool and had invited a man friend in. Her parents came since it was their home. She was integrating the masculine, but was not yet in her own home.

A later dream indicated a further shift toward fuller inner authority. She found herself alone in a jumping off place. She willingly jumped, though she was scared to death. When she jumped down she passed out. Later she could stand up. It was like an initiation. She was alone. There were a lot of people around but they were not jumping!

In real life, power had been an issue. Her mother had never assumed her power in relation to her father. When Lisa initiated things (like listening to music at night) her caretaker grandmother would barge in and stop her, saying she should be praying. Her dream indicated she was coming into her own inner authority (the individuating faith stage), and we prayed to support God's individual empowerment other. "Lord, we thank you that you breathe strength into Lisa, and share your own authority with her. Help her to rely ever more on that inner authority that she might be the gift you are empowering her to be."

About this time Lisa became concerned for her older sister who had been brought up in a rigid, fundamentalistic way. Her older sister had met a young Hispanic refugee she had grown to love, but she did not know how to deal with the sexual feelings previously so rigidly repressed. Lisa herself had a strange dream in which she was with a young child (her nephew) and felt herself molesting the child. Lisa's associations with this dream called to mind her Dad's father's incest. She also thought of the desire of 4 or 5 year old children to explore each other's genitals, and of course, her own need to integrate her sexuality. In praying for her sister, we again included Lisa's own need for further integration of her masculine and feminine sides, especially to befriend her own sexual feelings which had been repressed growing up. Integrating one's sexual feelings is often part of individuating faith. Later, I did meet with this sister too, and she experienced an integration and

freedom similar to Lisa's. Lisa's healing was having a ripple effect on the family.

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Lisa got pregnant toward the end of our time, which led her to bring her husband also for a session. He came from a family where the men were abused and did not stand up to the women. By this time Lisa needed a more equal partnership, and her husband was willing to work on his issues. They since have had their baby and seem to be handling their new life well.

Discussion

This case illustrates most of the dimensions of healing that I discussed: the importance of family systems and healing of ancestors, the stages of development and the different healing needed for different stages, the steps in the healing process and the significance of dreams to indicate what areas are being brought up for healing. It shows the dialectic between praying for one's family and outer relationships and integrating one's inner parts which surface in light of those outer relationships. At the time I dealt with this case, I was only partially trained in *restoration therapy* so I did very little to help her express her emotional states to help her integrate split off parts. Still, those issues and wounded parts did surface and we prayed for their integration.

Let me highlight some of the dynamics that I find operative in this case as in others I have dealt with. First, when Lisa sought spiritual direction and healing, she was open to prayer, but she was also open to addressing her human psychological wounds and acknowledging her part in the process. She did not separate spirituality from human maturation as can happen, and so was empowered by adding prayer to a *higher power* to her counseling experience.

Secondly, Lisa was helped to see a major block when she was introduced to the importance of what Boszormenyi-Nagy (1973) calls *invisible loyalty*. In praying for her father and her grandfather, and extending forgiveness to them, she gained *positive entitlement*. She could begin to be freed from her invisible enmeshment with her father and heal her own inner split between body and spirit, masculine and feminine. She also became freer to connect more deeply with her husband without experiencing disloyalty to her father. Such rejunction with father and mother is essential for a person to be free to commit to anyone else fully (See Sears, 1983).

Thirdly, we find interlocking steps in the healing process. The prayer for her father and her own rejected masculine side led Lisa to recognize she had abandoned her body in the same moralistic way as he had. Her anger with her father (and herself) surfaced and we prayed to integrate it in greater self-assurance. Our prayer for integration with her body opened up her need for family (the mother side?) and her feeling of being overlooked and invisible

in her class. In praying for her niece who was two (Erikson's age of autonomy/shame when Lisa's own shyness might have begun) we were strengthening her own sense of self-respect. Her dreams indicated a growing sense of being *home*, that is, in touch with her true self and inner authority. That led her to the sense of needing to *jump into the unknown*, feeling all alone, with the type of aloneness and *dark night* common to individuating faith. As she experienced her own authority, she was drawn to pray for her sister (the step of intercession) and invite her husband to further autonomy. Both indicate the creative mutuality of *communitarian faith* and show how the healing moved her to restoring the creative mutuality God forever intends.

Finally, prayer was integral to each step and each healing brought her to a deeper view of God's love and desire to heal. Our initial prayer was more petition to separate Lisa from enmeshed *familial* relationships. We gradually moved to a deeper sense of God's involvement in her healing and a more personal trust in God. This growing trust led Lisa to be willing to forgive and intercede for others. She was moved beyond the self-focus typical of *A Course in Miracles* to a more mature interpersonal faith of Christian tradition. We are restored in the image of God's triune love.

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Key Words

1. *Restoration Therapy*: A group therapy, developed by Serafma Anuso (1993, 1994), aimed at restoring initial bonding through prayer and a no JAB (no Judgment, Advice or Blame) group process using various techniques to release false selves (one's "space suit") and reintegrate one's isolated "inner children."
2. *TheoPhostic Counseling*: A Spirit-guided healing process, developed by

Rev. Ed Smith (1999), that moves from one's pain to core memories and "lies" to praying for God's truth to replace the lies. Experience shows this lie heals the root of one's pain.

3. *Enslaving lie*: All lies enslave for they are at the root of sin, and sin enslaves. Ultimately, evil spirits have a hold in us only through lies. When the lie is exposed by the truth rooted in Jesus, one is set free (Jn 8:31-4).
4. *Occult bondage*: Negative addictive patterns of experience caused by the influence of evil spirits given entry through wounds, habitual sin, involvement in some form of occult practice (witchcraft, Satanism, spiritualism, etc.) or through ancestral inheritance. Deliverance prayer, or a command in the name of Jesus Christ, is then needed, but always together with healing ministry (MacNutt, 1995).
5. *Positive entitlement*: A term used by Boszormenyi-Nagy to mean the value and merit gained in a relationship by offering due care such as being grateful for gifts received, forgiving, taking steps to help or understand another. Such entitlement frees one to differentiate without disloyalty. (see Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy & Barbara Krasner, *Between Give and Take: a Clinical Guide to Contextual Therapy* (NY: Brunner-Mazel, 1986).

