

# Childhood Memories? (Or the "Power of Suggestion"?)

- Roseanne Barr Arnold shocked the pagan world with her story that she had "remembered," through the help of a psychotherapist, that her parents had sexually abused her as a child- something she never dreamed of before the counseling sessions. These horror stories have entered the Church also, with the help of "Christian" psychotherapists helping their patients to "remember." Yet neuro-scientists caution that seemingly long-buried memories can be pure fantasy or distortions. Some critics say that repressed memory has become a fad diagnosis, used wrongly and sometimes harmfully to explain all manner of so-called psychological suffering. Psychotherapists lead patients to believe they are abused, sexually or otherwise, when they are not. False memories can, and often are, planted through mere tone of voice or the phrasing of a question (Isa 30:1,2; Psa. 1:1) [3/15/92, [Calvary Contender](#)].

- Across America parents are receiving phone calls and correspondence that plunge them into a nightmare of accusations of abuse and incest. These are not parents of young children or teenagers. They are parents of grown children who throughout their lives had had no recollection of being sexually molested by their mother or father. These adult children, usually daughters, now claim to remember precise details of one of their parents sexually abusing them. Where do they get such ideas? Where do those sordid memories come from? What brings them to the surface? Inner healing and other forms of regressive-type therapy lurk behind this surge of family horror stories. At first, the parents are stunned. They are being accused of sexual exploits that they declare they would never even think of doing. But when they try to talk to their son or daughter they are accused and condemned without a trial-all based upon alleged memories discovered through inner healing.

With the media accentuating and exaggerating the numbers of women who have been molested, nearly anyone who cries "incest" is believed without question. And why should anyone doubt a grown woman's sudden "recall" of a memory hidden in her unconscious? After all, isn't the memory like a tape recorder or computer that faithfully records and retains every event in some

deep unconscious vault of the mind? Aren't there reliable techniques that enable a person to recall past events accurately? Or, are there some problems with those assumptions?

- While many writers of pop psychology continue to equate the human mind with a tape recorder or computer, those are poor and misleading analogies. Dr. John Searle, in his Reith Lecture "Minds, Brains, and Science," explained: "Because we don't understand the brain very well we're constantly tempted to use the latest technology as a model for trying to understand it. The computer is probably no better and no worse as a metaphor for the brain than earlier mechanical metaphors. We learn as much about the brain by saying it's a computer as we do by saying it's a telephone switchboard, a telegraph system, a water pump, or a steam engine." Medical doctor-researcher Nancy Andreasen, in her book *The Broken Brain*, declares that "there is no accurate model or metaphor to describe how [the brain] works." She concludes that "the human brain is probably too complex to lend itself to any single metaphor."

Current research demonstrates that computer memory and biological memory are significantly different. In his book *Remembering and Forgetting: Inquiries into the Nature of Memory*, Edmund Bolles refers to the human brain as "the most complicated structure in the known universe." He says:

"For several thousand years people have believed that remembering retrieves information stored somewhere in the mind. The metaphors of memory have always been metaphors of storage: We preserve images on wax; we carve them in stone; we write memories as with a pencil on paper, we file memories away; we have photographic memories; we retain facts so firmly they seem held in a steel trap. Each of these images proposes a memory warehouse where the past lies preserved like childhood souvenirs in an attic. This book reports a revolution that has overturned that vision of memory. *Remembering is a creative, constructive process. There is no storehouse of information about the past anywhere in our brain.*" (Emphasis added.)

- Unlike a computer, the memory does not store everything that goes into it. First, the mind sifts through the multitude of stimuli that enter it during an actual event. The time, later events, and even later recall, color or alter memories. During the creative process of recall, sketchy memories of events may be filled in

with imagined details. And, an amazing amount of information is simply forgotten-gone, not just hidden away in some deep cavern of the mind. Memory is neither complete nor fixed. Nor is it accurate. As researcher Carol Tavris so aptly describes it: "Memory is, in a word, lousy. It is a traitor at worst, a mischief-maker at best. It gives us vivid recollections of events that could never have happened, and it obscures critical details of events that did." Yes, memories can even be created, not from remembering true events, but by implanting imagined events onto the mind. In fact, it is possible for implanted and enhanced memories to seem even more vivid than memories of actual past events.

- Under certain conditions, a person's mind is open to suggestion in such a way that illusions of memory can be received, believed, and remembered as true memories. Hypnosis , guided imagery, inner healing , and age regression therapies (such as primal therapy) are as likely to cause a person to dredge up false information as true accounts of past events. In a state of heightened suggestibility, a person's memory can easily be altered and enhanced.

Because the power of suggestion is so very strong in regressive explorations and in groups that encourage remembering and reliving the past, some of the same things happen in hypnosis. Bernard Diamond, a professor of law and clinical professor of psychiatry, says that hypnotized persons "graft onto their memories fantasies or suggestions deliberately or unwittingly communicated by the hypnotist." Not only may they have new memories, but Diamond declares that "after hypnosis the subject cannot differentiate between a true recollection and a fantasy or a suggested detail." He notes that court witnesses who have been hypnotized "often develop a certitude about their memories that ordinary witnesses seldom exhibit." Diamond declares, "no one, regardless of experience, can verify the accuracy of the hypnotically enhanced memory."

- Hypnosis in its various forms often occurs in unexpected places in which a person may be led into a trance state without realizing that it is hypnosis. Therapists who attempt to help clients remember events and feelings from their childhood often use hypnotic techniques that actually move clients into a trance state. They may deny using hypnosis, but guided imagery and other techniques used in leading a person back into the past are hypnotic induction devices. Dr.

Michael Yapko, author of *Trancework*, says: "Many times therapists aren't even aware that they're doing hypnosis. They're doing what they call guided imagery or guided meditation, which are all very mainstream hypnotic techniques."

The suggestions, the emotions, and the focus on feelings in the past rarely produce true memories. In various forms of regressive therapy, the therapist attempts to convince the client that present problems are from past hurtful events and then proceeds to help the client remember and re-experience hurtful events in the past. However, rather than positive change, many false memories are produced. Some writers, such as Campbell Perry, indicate that such techniques as the eliciting of memories, relaxation, and regression work are often disguised forms of hypnosis. In introducing his paper on controversies regarding the False Memory Syndrome (FMS), Perry describes some of the procedures that: "... appear to be strongly linked with the development of a subjectively convincing memory that a person (usually a woman) was sexually abused during childhood by (usually) her father, that the putative memory has been repressed, only to seemingly resurface during the course of 'recovered memory' therapy. Special emphasis is placed upon the role of 'disguised' hypnosis in eliciting such memories -- that is, upon procedures that are characterized by such terms as guided imagery, 'relaxation,' dream analysis, regression work and sodium amytal represented as 'truth serum.' All of these appear to tap into the mechanisms thought to underlie the experience of hypnosis." Leading questions, direct guidance, and voice intonation are enough to serve as an induction into the trance state for many individuals. Mark Pendergrast says: "The 'guided imagery' exercises that trauma therapists employ to gain access to buried memories can be enormously convincing, whether we choose to call the process hypnosis or not. When someone is relaxed, willing to suspend critical judgment, engage in fantasy, and place ultimate faith in an authority figure using ritualistic methods, deceptive scenes from the past can easily be induced." (See Parts 1 and 2 of "False Memory Syndrome: Creating Memories" In Volume 1, [Numbers 1](#) and [2](#) of the *PsychoHeresy Awareness Letter*.)

- The certainty of pseudomemories and the uncertainty of real memories render such activities as hypnosis and regressive explorations questionable at best and dangerous at worst. Because memory is so unreliable, methods of cure that rely on unearthing so-called hidden memories not only open up the possibility of

human creativity, but also expose the mind to possible demonic suggestion. Even though the hypnotist or inner healer may wish to protect the person from receiving false material, he cannot avoid implanting human suggestion. Nor can he prevent demonic suggestions from entering the vulnerable mind of the person who is in a heightened state of suggestibility. Therefore, it is very possible that people who remember verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or incest by regressing are remembering an illusion or distortion of reality, a destructive suggestion accidentally placed there by another person, or created through a combination of stimuli, such as from a nightmare, or worse yet, implanted by demonic influence. (The possibility of lies and fantasies being engrafted onto the memory remains. That is because of the involvement in occult activity, which is forbidden in the Bible.) The pain and agony of false memories is then augmented by the pain and agony of reliving false and enhanced memories, leading to a seemingly endless cycle of regressive exploration and therapy.

- A newspaper wire story appearing in late-August of 1992 confirms the falseness of the notion that people can have "repressed" memories of their past—typically said to involve traumatic events such as sexual abuse during childhood—that are then brought out by psychotherapists. The wire service story reports that this idea is not supported by scientific evidence, and quotes Elizabeth Loftus, a leading secular authority on memory (University of Washington psychologist): "'The idea of repression of early traumatic memories is a concept many psychotherapists readily accept,' but there is much evidence to suggest that 'memories' are false ones, implanted by therapists through the power of suggestion and then uncritically accepted by them as evidence of truth." Loftus attributes some of the popularity of the theory to a then current book, *The Courage to Heal*, which Loftus says "suggests that abuse probably happened even if you have no memories and that any demands for corroboration are not reasonable." Loftus said her research shows that it is easy to "implant" false memories.

- Grown children are even accusing their parents of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). The common thread in the majority of cases is psychological therapy. A person begins counseling with a therapist who believes that people's present distress is the result of past events. The therapist then "helps" the person "remember" so-

called "repressed memories" of abuse, including bizarre ritualistic activities from incest to sacrificing infants. As mentioned above, most of these "repressed memories" are actually what is now labeled the False Memory Syndrome (FMS). Rather than people suffering from "repressed memories," they are suffering from false memories-many created during therapy.

One story, "The Seduction of Gloria Grady," by Glenna Whitley in the October 1991 issue of *D Magazine*, revealed the horror and pain of families caught in the dilemma of accusations based on false memories. Gloria Grady had accused her parents of repeated SRA and the murder of a child she claimed to have birthed when she was a teenager. Thankfully in this case, the Gradys were exonerated in court because of testimonies by Gloria's pediatrician and others, who testified that she had never been pregnant during her teenage years. In addition, other external evidence demonstrated that such abuse had not occurred.

Gloria Grady had received her "therapy" at the so called "Christian" Minirth-Meier Clinic in Richardson, Texas. Grady's therapist, who was well-known for "discovering" hidden abuse in most of his patients, encouraged Grady "to recover those 'memories' through individual 'trance writing.'" Hypnosis and group therapy were also used. Group therapy included such activities as screaming, crying, "banging on chairs with bats, tearing up phone books and throwing them across the room." Group members would describe what they were remembering and others would repeat the same thing.

Ironically, the articles in *D Magazine* have been challenged by the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), which contended that *D Magazine* had maligned two "Christian therapists." CAPS defends its members who practice such psychological/occult therapy by advising them to carry malpractice insurance and, "Know that the evil one desires to cripple or destroy those who oppose him and help God's children to freedom." Naturally, in this context, those who oppose the evil one are the so-called "Christian" therapists. God help us!

- Regressing into the past, rummaging about in the unconscious for hidden memories, conjuring up images, experiencing the agony of such nightmares, and believing lies, resemble the work of Satan, not the Holy Spirit. An imaginary

memory created in a highly suggestible activity or environment will only bring imaginary healing. Even if the memories were truly reliable, which they are not, the solution to the problem does not lie in the past or in what other people have supposedly done to us. It is not the sins of others that separate us from God, and ultimately from each other, but our own sin and own sinful reactions.

Some claim that one must uncover memories of past abuse in order to have a right relationship with God? Where does the Bible say so? In contrast, Paul *forgot* the past and pressed on toward the prize (Phil. 3:13-14) promised to all those who love Christ's appearing (2 Tim. 4: 7-8). The past is of little consequence if Christians truly are new creations for whom "old things are passed away [and] all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Searching the past in order to find an "explanation" for one's present behavior conflicts with the entire teaching of Scripture. Though it may seem to help for a time, it actually robs one of the Biblical solution through Christ. **What matters is not the past, but one's personal relationship to Christ now**