

# BLESSED ARE THE *PURE* IN HEART

A Critique of *The Wounded Heart*, by Dr. Dan B. Allender

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# BLESSED ARE THE *PURE* IN HEART

## Critique of *The Wounded Heart*, by Dr. Dan Allender

The subject of child abuse has received much attention in the recent literature of Christian counseling. There is a desperate need for material that addresses this issue from a fully *biblical* perspective, rather than one which attempts to integrate the flawed teachings of psychology (particularly Freudian) with the truth of God's Word. Dan Allender has degrees in both theology and psychology, along with a personal history of having suffered abuse as a child. Dr. Larry Crabb, in his foreword, calls *The Wounded Heart* "a stimulating illustration of how to think biblically about topics not directly addressed in Scripture" (p. 11). Compared with the other currently available literature on this subject, *The Wounded Heart* is a *better* attempt to be biblical. Dr. Allender brings out the issue of sin, and the need for repentance, far more adequately than do other authors. However, there are still weaknesses in his general approach, and we must question the underlying assumption that abuse is not "directly addressed in Scripture." Discernment is more difficult, yet *even more important*, in reviewing a book that comes close to presenting a biblical view, yet falls short.

The author should be given credit for the many excellent biblical points that he makes at numerous points in *The Wounded Heart*. At the same time, we need to closely examine the areas of weakness.

### Allender's Critique of *Christian* Solutions

The author notes several responses to abuse in the Christian community which he believes do not contribute to godly solutions. He notes the discomfort of facing the sins of both ourselves and others, and that doing so "seems to discount the finished and sufficient work of our Savior" (p. 14). He rightly turns from the secular path, focused as it is on self-assertion and boundaries, resulting in a "more self-centered humanist" (p. 14). Then, however, he claims that the "so-called Christian alternatives" are "even worse" (p. 15). He mentions three of these at the outset, but covers several others later in the book. His general concern is well summarized when he says:

"The tragedy is that the adult who wants to deal with his or her past sexual abuse must be willing to confront an internally and externally fierce battle fought by Christians against other Christians." (p. 28)

In today's psychologized church, this is hardly the case. However, let us review Allender's "so-called Christian alternatives."

"Denial-based" forgiveness is a response based on attempts to forget your past (p. 15):

"The Christian community...feels disposed to deny any data that casts doubt on God's presence or willingness to act for the sake of His children." (p. 16)

Allender claims that "hiding the past always involves denial" and "denial of the past is always a denial of God" (p. 15). Meanwhile, "the unclaimed pain of the past presses for resolution, and the only solution is to continue to deny" (p. 15). The victim, Allender says, always wonders--*legitimately*--where God was (p. 16). The author answers the "denial" response by saying:

"Let us as Christians acknowledge without shame that regeneration does not alleviate, or in fact diminish, the effects of sin quickly or permanently in this life. If we accept that, we are free to face the parts of our souls that remain scarred and damaged by the effects of sexual abuse without feeling that we are denying the gospel." (p. 16-7)

In a later chapter, Allender comments briefly concerning a woman who appears free of "symptoms" and uses 2 Corinthians 5:17 to claim that her salvation has removed all the impact of her past abuse. He describes several *sinful* patterns in her manner of relating to others, *sins* she does not see clearly. He claims that:

"An argument from observation...does not address the serious theological question raised by her assertion of 'no effect.'" (p. 142)

"The passage mentioned, 2 Corinthians 5:17, cannot be used to argue that one's past, the consequences of one's own or others' sin, are erased and no longer play a part in the life of the present." (p. 142)

We are faced in these comments with the issue of *sanctification* and its relationship to *justification*. It is important to study the biblical view concerning *how* regeneration effects the life of the believer on earth. Sanctification is a key concept. Its relationship to justification, as well as its distinction from justification, must be clearly understood. The "so-called Christian alternatives" just explored both evidence confusion in the relationship between justification and sanctification. A later section will explore sanctification more fully. For now, let us note that *biblical* clarity is needed, not the addition of psychology to the Bible.

Another concern is raised in the author's discussion of contempt, when he says that "the Christian community often encourages self-contempt as a means of increasing holiness" (p. 63). Sanctification is once again a prominent issue, along with the manner in which one ought to view *self*. The sections on

dignity, depravity, and self-concept will help to clarify the proper view of self. Self-contempt is as much a *self-focus* as any other "selfism," and does not represent biblical humility.

Another key "alternative" is **pressured demands to love**:

"The typical pressured-love solution involves being nice, not causing conflict, and pretending relationships are fine as the evil charade unfolds. Under this version of Christianity, the abused person feels secure and dead." (p. 17)

"Far too often the abused person is commanded to do good or to love their abuser without exploring the complexities of what it means to love or what may be blocking the God-given desire to love." (p. 18)

"In reaction to a culture that sees love as whim based on the unpredictability of emotion, some Christians have opted for a decision-based, emotionless act of the will to be nice and unoffensive." (p. 18)

The author expresses concern over the Christian teaching that good emotions will follow an act of the will (p. 18). He asks what it really means to love one's enemies, noting cases where a former child abuse victim takes a perpetrator to court, or cuts off contact with an abusive father who continues to deny the abuse (p. 17).

There are some very real concerns here. The Bible does not picture love as totally void of all emotion or as an apathetic act of the will. At the same time, love is not *merely* warm feelings, and it *does* involve some acts of obedience to God even when the individual does not "feel like it." The biblical counselor does not address emotions as the *primary* issue, but expects that godly emotional responses will follow after the counselee has seriously examined his own heart under the searchlight of God's Word. Emotions reveal the condition of the heart and point out areas that need further examination and change.

Another "solution" is **dramatic spiritual intervention**, where "the strategy is to cast the demons out through the ritual of exorcism" (p. 19). The victim seeks a quick cure, looking to a strong, authoritative person to provide it and painlessly resolve the problems (p. 19). However, the author cautions against such quick cures, stating that they "never resolve the deep damage" (p. 19). Rather, "the initial washing of the wound will not be sufficient if the infection is not treated by even stronger medicine" (p. 20).

We can fully agree that the exorcism of demons is not the righteous way to respond to abuse. Additionally, change (sanctification) does indeed require much time and effort, and it is not painless. Here the author's concerns are well founded. This "quick fix" fails to examine the *heart* and response of the person who has been abused.

Finally, the author offers this concern about superficial

solutions:

"The most common error in some Christian groups is to ignore the problem or offer true solutions in a trite way. But people struggling to face their problems honestly make an equally destructive error if they spurn spiritual solutions because they appear simple and irrelevant to the complexity of the problem at hand." (p. 173)

Well said. The good biblical counselor does not offer "trite" solutions to serious problems. It takes time, work, and struggle. Perhaps some persons, truly wanting to be biblical, have wrongly glossed over heavy problems. However, we must guard against adding the speculations of unregenerate men (psychology) in order to respond to the battles of this life. Biblical counseling involves much well researched exegetical work in the Scriptures, and significant time invested in the lives of other believers. There is nothing "trite" or superficial about *that*!

#### **What is Abuse and How Does It Happen?**

This book addresses adult victims of abuse, rather than children and adolescents, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on females (p. 21). The author defines abuse as follows:

"Sexual abuse is any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or psychological) between a child/adolescent and an adult when the child/adolescent is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or any other person." (p. 30)

Two broad categories are distinguished: "sexual contact and sexual interactions" (p. 30-31). The latter does not involve physical touch and is thus more difficult to acknowledge. However, the author makes strong statements about the serious damage caused by any abuse:

"The categories imply a continuum of severity, but all *inappropriate sexual contact is damaging and soul-distorting*." (p. 31, emphasis in original)

Included here are sexually abusive words and other subtle abuses that do not involve physical contact (p. 33). The damage is claimed by Allender to be equal to that of physical molestation.

The author notes that often a victim will defend or ignore the perpetrator, make excuses for him, minimize the damage, or place him in "a category that explains away the harm" (p. 35). He is biblically sound in stating that all such excuses and explanations, such as the abuser's childhood, must be silenced (p. 35).

In addition to defining abuse, Allender maps out a general four-stage process that typically occurs, though he acknowledges

that each case is unique (p. 74). Such a process normally begins in a "relationally distant and empty" home which is "a breeding ground for deep soul hunger" (p. 75). This home lacks two factors: First, "a sense of being enjoyed for who one is rather than for what one does," and second, "respect of one's being that permits the opportunity to develop uniqueness and separateness from other members of the family" (p. 75). Furthermore, there is often serious "role confusion," which "tears away a child's childhood and replaces it with adult burdens" (p. 75). Such role reversal is "further complicated by repeated violations of the child's boundaries and individual rights" (p. 76).

A word of caution should be noted here. A godly family will not lack warmth in relationships, and children will have opportunities to develop the gifts God has given specifically to them. However, we must guard against going too far astray in emphasizing *being* over *doing*. Just as our justification is grounded in God's grace rather than our works, a godly parent continues to love his child when that child sins. However, obedience must not be entirely discarded. The psychologist's typical focus on being, as opposed to doing, can easily encourage an overly lax attitude toward sin.

Another caution concerns the issue of "separation" and "boundaries," a heavy emphasis among psychologists. This author stresses a "legitimate ownership of our body and our being" (p. 76). Although Allender focuses much of his book on loving relationships, the emphasis on "separateness and individuality" can feed into the natural desire for autonomy which is the root of man's sin nature. Some separation is godly, as when a man leaves his mother and father's home to cleave to his wife. However, the emphasis of psychology adds unnecessary fuel to the fires of sinful independence.

The empty home, claims Allender, sets the scene for abuse of the child, who is "depending on the parent's physical provisions for life" plus "psychologically intertwined in the push and pull of the parent's every offer or refusal to provide nurturance and support" (p. 77). Thus begins the first of the four "stages" of abuse.

**(1) Intimacy/Secrecy.** At this point, the perpetrator develops a special relationship with the victim prior to actual assault, offering secrecy and privileges to enhance the intimate bond being formed (p. 79-81).

**(2) Appropriate Physical Contact.** This is a seductive stage which desensitizes the child over a period of time so that the progression of abuse is not recognized (p. 83). The child enjoys a sense of comfort during this stage, which the author calls "the process of silencing the victim and sealing his or her fate" (p. 84).

**(3) Sexual Abuse.** At this point, actual abuse occurs, described by Allender as:

"...the final blow that sabotages the soul in a climactic betrayal, mocking the enjoyment of relationship and pouring

contempt on the thrill of passion." (p. 85)

The child may experience sexual arousal, "betrayed by his own body" (p. 85-86). As terror and desire are concurrently experienced, the confused victim feels "powerless, crazy, and ashamed" (p. 86):

"The movement between rage and pleasure may be erratic and severe, resulting in significant personality changes in a matter of moments." (p. 87)

Some victims experience a "self-induced hypnotic trance" which is called "dissociation" or "splitting" (p. 87).

(4) **Continued Abuse.** The perpetrator maintains secrecy through the use of both threats, to promote fear, and promised privileges, to ensure loyalty (p. 89).

#### **Powerlessness - Betrayal - Ambivalence**

The author devotes a major section of the book to describing the various types of damage that result from abuse. Three major categories are covered: powerlessness, betrayal, and ambivalence. Appendix 1 describes each of these in detail. This section of the paper offers some comments and critique in each area.

**Powerlessness.** Certainly we can agree that the child in an abusive situation is severely limited. However, the adult who is a Christian is not so helpless. Christ has not only paid the penalty for sin, but has broken its power as well (Romans 6:1-14). This is important and glorious news for the abused person.

We must seriously question here the author's comments about self-doubt and loss of self. The Bible instructs us never to trust in the flesh, but only in the Lord (Jeremiah 17:5-8). Some limited level of trust in others is appropriate, but trust in God must always, always be the anchor of the Christian life. The psychological focus on a "sense of self" is fully answered for the Christian, who has been purchased with the blood of Christ and recreated in the image of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:28-29; Ephesians 4:22-24).

**Betrayal.** The child abuse victim has indeed been betrayed by his parents. The abuser has sinned against him, and so has the non-offending parent. The hypervigilance, suspicion, and commitment to safety noted by the author are all *sinful responses* on the part of the victim. To his credit, the author does address the sin of self-protection in the victim, and he calls for repentance. The issues here, primarily concerning *trust*, are again fully answered by the gospel. We must beware of the psychologist's tendency to assume that trust in God is dependent upon one's trust in parents (or other people).

**Ambivalence.** It is critical to note here that the problem of ambivalence has its roots in Freudian theory. (See the critique, "Freudian Frauds," to understand why we dare not trust the speculations of this atheist!) Conflicting emotions are not the

major problem imagined by psychologists.

Concerning the repetition of the past, abused children may develop patterns of response that are carried into adult years through the operation of habit, but it is biblically wrong to assume that the victim "identifies" with the aggressor and that he is doomed to repeat the past. Proverbs 26:11 is incorrectly cited to support Freudian theory here. That proverb says that the fool repeats *his own folly*, not the sins of others committed against him. Furthermore, the Scripture is fully sufficient to instruct, convict, correct, and discipline the believer in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus such habitual patterns can be corrected and broken *through the study and application of God's Word*, without any Freudian additions.

The author does correctly note that "addictions" are actually idols. Biblical counseling stresses the examination of idols of the heart--powerful desires that take precedence over the desire to love and serve God.

**"Core Images."** In each of the three areas discussed, the author focuses on a view of self as incompetent, undesirable, and vile. He is not clear enough on the biblical view of self as inherently sinful. When Isaiah was caught up into the divine council, he was overwhelmed with his own sin (Isaiah 6:5). The psychological emphasis on loss of self, poor self-concept, building up self, and "reclaiming" self, does not properly account for the radical nature of sin, which *should* be acknowledged by every believer. The underlying assumption, that man's nature is pure and innocent, simply is not biblical.

### **The Impact of Abuse**

One of the major problems encountered in the psychological approach to abuse is the focus on *unconscious* forces that supposedly drive behavior:

"The damage of past abuse sets in motion a complex scheme of self-protective defenses that operate *largely outside of our awareness*, guiding our interactions with others, determining the spouse we select, the jobs we pursue, the theologies we embrace, and the fabric of our entire lives." (p. 21)

The general orientation is highly unbiblical. The existence of the "unconscious" is not scientifically valid, and certainly not biblically valid. The Scripture teaches that man holds down the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18), attempting to drive God from his consciousness, but he is morally responsible for that "suppression." Not even the unbeliever, and certainly not the *Christian*, can rightly use "unconscious defenses" as an explanation for his behavior--not as a child, and definitely not as an adult. This type of Freudian explanation--and Freud is the *root* of this complex blame-shifting scheme--is highly destructive of the biblical concept of personal responsibility. Note especially how



the above quote encompasses even "the theologies we embrace," leaving little room for God's gracious intervening revelation to bring salvation and sanctification to the believer.

**Dignity and Damage.** The author states that "in every case of abuse, the dignity and beauty of the soul have been violated" (p. 36), and that:

*"With all other factors being equal, damage will be in direct proportion to the degree that it disrupts the protection and nurturance of the parental bond."* (p. 36)

Child abuse is a horrendous sin against our almighty God (Matthew 18:6). However, it is not so much the inherent "dignity and beauty of the soul" that are violated, but *His image*. That is the root reason why sins against children are such an abomination in the sight of God. We must guard carefully against confusing an inherent "dignity" with God's image.

Parents do indeed have a solemn responsibility before God for the care, admonition, and nurture of their children. Yet we must beware of the assumption that parental failure directly causes sinful behavior in their children. God sees the abuse, and He is more than able to be a Father to the fatherless. Responses of victims are greatly varied, and not necessarily "in direct proportion" to the severity and extent of abuse.

**Fight or Flight.** Allender notes that a victim may respond with a "commitment never to be hurt again by the abuser (or anyone else like him)" and thus develop a hard exterior (p. 40). He may do so either through *fight* ("angry, man-hating zeal") or *flight* ("quiet complacency") (p. 40). Note carefully that these are responses for which the person bears responsibility. Elsewhere, the author rightly recognizes the sinful nature of such self-protection.

**"Symptoms" - General.** The author notes "significant signs" of abuse as including "depression, sexual dysfunction or addiction, compulsive disorders, physical complaints, low self-esteem, and particular styles of relating" (p. 145). He says that:

*"A balanced perspective on these symptoms allows for an open, non-dogmatic tension between seeing abuse behind every personal and relational problem and being naive about the high level of incidence and the damaging consequences of past abuse."* (p. 145)

Yes, a "balanced" perspective is needed, and at least this author does not see abuse lurking behind every problem. Nevertheless, he is highly focused on abuse and its "damage" and consequences. He makes much of the need to recall specific incidents of abuse. We must exercise extreme caution here, acknowledging at every turn the sinful nature of man that underlies his responses to abuse, in attitude and deed. Because man is a sinner, he responds sinfully to being sinned against. This is fundamental.

**Depression.** Relying again on Freud, the author defines

depression as "rage turned inward" (p. 146) and "learned helplessness" (p. 145). He also calls it a "despondent view of oneself, the world, and the future" with "little hope for understanding, help, or change" (p. 145). He claims it is characterized by "selfless selfishness," "selfless revenge," and often a "swing between feeling helpless, alone, and unworthy to feeling cheated, abandoned, and angry" (p. 145-6). It is said to be a "cycle that many abuse victims pass through before major memories return" (p. 146). "Self-doubt" is again an issue:

"What is denied in depression is the accuracy of one's intuition that injustice has occurred, the legitimacy of one's longing for justice, and the knowledge of what would right the wrong." (p. 146)

As noted earlier, trust in self is not a biblical goal. It is the standards of God's Word, and nothing else, that determine whether an injustice--or rather a *sin*--has occurred. Anger may be a component of depression, but depression is not necessarily "rage turned inward." The answers to depression are not to be found in Freud, or any other psychological theories, but rather in the inerrant Word of God and trust in the sovereign Lord who works all things according to the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11). While this may sound simple, or even "trite" to the psychologically informed, it is not *simplistic*. It takes much time in the study and application of Scripture, and much faithful practice, to overcome sin in a godly manner.

**Sexual "Dysfunction" and "Addiction."** The author says that some victims experience sexual struggles, but others do not "because their soul is radically absent during physical acts of sexual intimacy" (p. 147). Sometimes, "it is only when a sense of self returns that sexual problems begin to be recognized" (p. 147). Some victims experience disgust, while others appear to lack interest in their quietly rebellious attempt to avoid memories (p. 147). In addition, the author attributes homosexual orientation, sexual perversion, and sexual "addiction" to abuse (p. 147-9).

It is crucial here to bear in mind the biblical commands concerning sex, which is to occur only within the commitment of marital union. Homosexuality, perversion, and promiscuity are *sins*. Such behaviors are not *caused* by the sins of others. Looking specifically at homosexuality, the author states that "it is not that a homosexual lacks heterosexual desires" but that his "God-built passion" has been blocked (p. 149). This obscures the biblical view concerning the *extreme* sinfulness of homosexuality (Romans 1:24-27), and the glorious hope of those who have been washed of their former sins (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

**Compulsive Disorders.** Choosing bulimia as his example, the author claims it to be rooted in the "hope that something vile and shameful will be discarded" (p. 150), and he considers a "relief/revenge toward self" to be occurring (p. 151). Such an analysis seriously distorts the sinful nature of this behavior and the idolatrous desires of the heart that underlie it. (For further

reading, see *More Than Bread*, by Elyse Fitzpatrick, available through the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation in San Diego, CA.)

**Physical Complaints.** The author notes that the "division between the body and the psyche is an artificial distinction" (p. 151), and that "physical symptoms are often a sign of deep inner struggle" (p. 151).

There is indeed a close relationship between the outer and inner man. In passing, it is worth noting that psychologists support an artificial division between soul and spirit that justifies their profession and encroaches on the territory of the pastor, who is responsible for the counsel and care of the whole inner man. Pastor and physician often must work closely together when both spiritual and physiological problems exist. However, the psychologist is in competition with the church and has no rightful place in counseling.

### **"Styles" of Relating**

The author sees a high degree of correlation, or even causation, between abuse in childhood and later relationships:

"The sins of the perpetrator continue to color the victim's life through an inability to enjoy relationship, intimacy, and hope. The victim's soul feels bound to denial; the heart feels wounded and alone." (p. 73)

At the same time, a "socially competent exterior" may hide "inner emptiness and shame" (p. 73).

According to Allender, the victim may "overlook the connection between her secondary symptoms and relational style and her history of sexual abuse" (p. 144). Again, there is an *unconscious* element that is emphasized.

Several initial comments are made concerning both *personality* and *style of relating*. Some of these comments are biblical, and we ought to give the author credit.

**Personality** is defined by Allender as a:

"...flexible array of behaviors that are used habitually in dealing with both internal pain and external circumstances and relationships." (p. 152)

He goes on to note that his definition is opposed to the popular methods of "personality 'typing' that assume a person's style and behavior are static and genetically determined" (p. 152). Furthermore, while acknowledging environmental and biological factors, he expresses concern:

"...with the simplistic and fatalistic notion that people are who they are and others must simply understand and accept that they are rigidly choleric or whatever type system is used to

justify behavior. My understanding of personality assumes that style of relating can be substantially altered through repentance." (p. 152)

Here we commend the author. All too often, psychological "personality" typing can be used to justify sin as merely the "weakness" of a particular "type." Going beyond the author's comments, we should note that the Christian is being conformed to the image of Christ, not a personality type. Godly change, through repentance, is possible as noted above.

A style of relating is defined as "the characteristic manner of both offering and protecting oneself in social interactions" (p. 152). The author believes this concept is important because "it is the primary x-ray that tells us the condition of our heart" (p. 153). He notes the contrast between selfless love and the commitment to self-protection. Again, we commend him for an insightful comment. The pastor, or other biblical counselor, is vitally concerned with the condition of the counselee's heart--and so is God. Examination of behavior and emotions assist in revealing that condition so that godly change can proceed.

However, Allender digresses from a purely biblical view when he examines how styles of relating are formed. He claims that abuse "sets the scene and tone for the development of our self-protective styles of relating to others," and the "raw material used to form a style...is often found in our God-given attributes and talents" (p. 157-8). He goes on to say that "the cause is found in the heart's hatred of being alone and unloved, used and out of control" (p. 158, emphasis added). This clouds responsibility unnecessarily, and puts too much emphasis on the sins of others. The comment about the heart fails to fully recognize the sinful condition of that heart. It is more than merely a matter of being unloved and used. That definition leans toward focusing primarily on the sins of others, when it is one's own sin that should take priority.

**Specific Styles.** Three particular "styles" are differentiated in the author's analysis:

Good Girl:

1. She is kind, gentle, and keeps the peace (p. 158).
2. Inside she is "controlled, lonely, passive, and full of self-contempt" along with extreme guilt (p. 159). She may be a "professional apologizer" (p. 161), working too hard at relationships.
3. She appears outwardly organized, pleasant, but unable to ask others for help (p. 160).
4. She tries hard to please others. Her giving appears sacrificial but is manipulative (p. 161).

5. She has "disengaged herself from the wounds of her soul" (p. 161).
6. Though outwardly pleasant and detached, she is critical and hateful toward herself inside (p. 162).
7. She is committed to "pleasure and relief through faithful attendance to relationship" (p. 169).

#### Tough Girl

1. She lives behind "thick, impenetrable walls" (p. 162).
2. She takes charges and is task-oriented (p. 162).
3. Inside she is suspicious, angry, arrogant, seeing human needs as "childish and unnecessary" (p. 162).
4. She lacks interest in the thoughts and experiences of others (p. 163).
5. She attempts to maintain control of her emotions (p. 162), and is "emotionally impenetrable" (p. 164), keeping others at a distance (p. 165).
6. She is committed to "the exercise of power through control and intimidation" (p. 169).

#### Party Girl

1. She is capricious, hard to pin down, and inconsistent (p. 165).
2. She is "warm and inviting, but in a flash she can become irascible, demanding, and whiny" (p. 165).
3. Her moods are chaotic and behavior fluctuates widely (p. 166).
4. She feels but does not face her feelings (p. 166).
5. She remains in a relationship only so long as it is pleasurable; she is seductive and fickle (p. 166).
6. She lures others into relationship with resulting "enmeshment, control, and the power to destroy" (p. 167).
7. She is a "two-fisted excuse maker who may be hard and angry one moment and confused and needy the next" (p. 168).
8. She is committed to "enmeshment and control through seductive lust and/or guilt" (p. 169).

With such a broad range of characteristics, we can undoubtedly recognize some of these *sinful patterns* in ourselves and others. Unfortunately, this is not a huge improvement on the "personality types" that the author discarded earlier, but a somewhat arbitrary means of lumping people into broad categories.

The author's general analysis of these styles is that they:

"...are not only byproducts of their past abuse, but also of their futile attempt to find life apart from a dependent, vulnerable relationship with God." (p. 169).

These behaviors are *responses* to abuse. They are also *sins* which may develop apart from abuse. Indeed, they are means of attempting to live independently of God. Such attempts at autonomy are at the root of man's sin nature and can be traced back to Adam, who was not abused.

### **Dignity and Depravity**

The author calls man "an amalgamation of dignity and depravity, a glorious ruin" (p. 42). He says that:

"Every person enjoys dignity and suffers from depravity. The structure of personality is a result of the interaction of these two dynamics." (p. 44)

**Dignity** arises from being the image-bearer of God:

"Man, bearing the image of God, was made to be like God in his capacity to relate and his capacity to rule. In these capacities lies his dignity." (p. 42)

**Depravity** is rooted in man's sinful choice to rebel:

"The choice to abandon vulnerable dependence on the word of God brought man to ruin. Through all the centuries since that day, we have maintained our commitment to strive for autonomous, independent control over life, suppressing the knowledge of God in unrighteousness." (p. 43)

There is much truth in these statement, but they do require some discerning comments.

Man was indeed created in the image of God, and he was to be "like God" in ruling over the rest of creation, while submitting to God's sovereign authority. To an extent, he retains that image even though fallen. He maintains some degree of dominion, and James exhorts Christians not to curse men, because of the image of God (James 3:9). However, we must see the seriousness of man's depravity more than this author does. Depravity is *total*, in that sin has impacted man's nature in every area--the body, the mind, the will, the desire, the emotions--*all of man*. No area is left

untouched. In fact, this is exactly why we cannot dare trust the theories of psychology, founded as they are on the speculations of unregenerate men whose minds are darkened by sin. The *Christian* is a new creation, and is being renewed in the image of Christ, who is God. It is important to understand the grave consequences of man's fall, and to recognize the total depravity that ensued. In addition, we must take into account the radical distinction between the unbeliever and the believer, knowing that the believer's status as a *new creation* has nothing whatsoever to do with any merits of his own, inherent dignity or otherwise, but everything to do with God's gracious, loving mercy. We must be extremely cautious in what we say about man's "dignity," taking great care to glorify God, not man.

Man's sin is rooted in the exchange of his role as image bearer. Rather than pursue God's glory, as he was created to do, he instead pursued *his own glory*. This is why it is so very dangerous to emphasize dignity in the manner of the psychologists. The original sin of Adam, as the federal representative of the human race, resulted in the guilt of all mankind (Romans 5:11-21), and the entrance of death into the world. He did indeed forsake dependence on God's Word, but perhaps "vulnerable dependence" is not the most accurate description. Man was expected to take God at His Word, and to obey even though God's reasoning was not obvious, but at no time was man "vulnerable" in the sense implied here. He was absolutely safe so long as he obeyed God's Word. He took no risk when he obeyed. Only when he listened to Satan and *disobeyed* did he become vulnerable. Man indeed suppresses the truth in unrighteousness, as the author states, making a futile attempt at autonomy.

### **Self-Concept**

Closely correlated to **dignity and depravity** are the author's numerous comments concerning one's concept of self. When total depravity is not recognized at the outset, various errors are bound to arise, as they do in this book.

The author states that "the concept of the self is an intuitive rather than a scientific notion" (p. 105). We must go further, by noting that it is a *biblical concept*. The believer must look to God's special revelation, the Scriptures, in order to know himself truly.

**Relationship to God.** Allender correctly notes that "my being can never be defined outside relationship with God" (p. 106). This is absolutely true. Man was created in God's image to live in covenantal fellowship with Him. He is alienated from God by his sin. Indeed, he must turn back to God and His Word to know anything about his own being. However, the author collides with Scripture when he says that:

"My identity and being find their beginning and end in something outside myself, but if I am numb to my hunger and

thirst, I will never look outside of myself for meaning or life." (p. 106)

This obscures the biblical fact that man holds down the truth in unrighteousness, and that he is *responsible* for doing so. It also blurs the biblical truth that the *Christian has already "looked outside" of himself* for life and meaning, and he has found it in abundance. This type of psychological teaching only serves to confuse the believer and hinder his sanctification.

**Self as All Good or Bad.** The author focuses again on the "unconscious" and the "denial" of emotional pain when he says:

"A sexually abused person often forfeits the experience of pain by a process of splitting, denial, and loss of memory. Splitting involves an unconscious process of segmenting memories and feelings into separable categories of good or bad. The categorization of the self as all good or all bad is then intensified by the construction of a huge barricade between the two." (p. 104)

This is hardly a biblical perspective on the nature of man, particularly in its emphasis on processes that are *unconscious*. Also, there is no biblical evidence that a person regards himself as either "all good" or "all bad." Man's tendency is naturally to defend and love himself, despite outward appearances.

**Unworthiness and Incompetence.** Several comments reveal the author's view that victims tend to see themselves as *unworthy* and/or *incompetent*:

"Abused men and women often entangle themselves in relationships with people who are not trustworthy, faithful, or loving." This is explained by Allender as "not feeling worthy to be in relationship with a truly loving man" because of fear. (p. 108)

"When an abused person feels powerless, she internalizes an image of herself as profoundly inadequate." (p. 109)

"Struggle with a poor self-image or its counterpart, narcissistic grandiosity, is another common feature of an abusive past. The picture of oneself as a weak, stupid, naive, worthless, stained, cheap whore does not produce a God-honoring, accurate self-appraisal (Romans 12:3)." (p. 152)

One problem here is that this clashes with the biblical truth of man's attempted autonomy. It takes a view of self that is *too high, too worthy, too competent*, to arrogantly attempt life apart from God. It is tempting, on the basis of observation not fully enlightened by Scripture, to buy the idea that victims see themselves as trustworthy and incompetent. But nothing could be further from the biblical truth. The Scripture cited in parentheses, Romans 12:3, *only* warns against thinking too highly of



self. It is totally silent on thinking too lowly of self. Although Allender rightly stresses repentance, and although he recognizes that the victim, too, is a sinner, his comments about self-concept distort what could otherwise be a helpful and biblical analysis.

**Self-Hatred.** Similarly, the author believes that a hatred of self arises out of an abusive background:

"Betrayal not only inflames doubt and severs relationship with our neighbor, but also inevitably deepens hatred for ourselves." (p. 133)

"It is quite possible to hate oneself for a failure (self-contempt) without ever facing the consequences, shame, and sorrow of the sin (conviction)." (p. 192)

Again, Scripture simply offers no support for self-hatred as a problem. To the contrary, Ephesians 5:29 states emphatically that *no one ever hated himself*, but loves, nourishes, and cherishes himself. Although the author rightly mentions sin and conviction, he wrongly mixes these biblical concepts with the unbiblical notion of self-hatred.

### Contempt

Much space is devoted to contempt, which Allender claims may be focused either on others or oneself (p. 61):

"At best, self-contempt is associated with a poor self-image, and other-centered contempt is seen as haughty disregard of another." (p. 61)

Contempt is defined as "condemnation, an attack against the perceived cause of the shame" (p. 61), the "desire to actively or passively destroy the person who has provoked the hunger of the soul" (p. 62). For example, suicide and overeating are claimed to be ways in which "the body is punished for existing and wanting" (p. 62). Contempt for others is evident when "fault is found with another and the motivation is not love" (p. 64). Self-contempt encompasses an "unwillingness to receive a compliment" as well as the undermining of one's own "beauty, kindness, and ability" (p. 64). Such actions give the appearance of humility, yet represent in reality "a profound arrogance in never receiving the gift of another's kindness" (p. 64).

As noted in the last section, contempt for self, like self-hatred, is a questionable concept. Suicide and gluttony are *sins*, as are the contemptible actions toward others just described. The author is closer to truth in noting the *arrogance* beyond "humble" appearances.

**Purposes of Contempt.** In general, the author believes contempt to be a method of protecting oneself from either damaging

others or being wounded again as happened in the past (p. 65). He notes that although insight helps us see "the enormity of the problem," it "does not provide the impetus to change destructive behavior" (p. 65). In fact, he sees a red flag here:

"At its worst, an understanding of motivation may lead to fascinating intrigue, self-absorptive introspection, and a focus away from issues of sin, salvation, and sanctification." (p. 65)

This warning is well founded because the "understanding" gained is grounded in principles of Freudian psychoanalysis, as is the case with most of the literature on abuse. However, when the examination of one's heart and motives is made under the searchlight of *Scripture*, the issues of sin, salvation, and sanctification are the central framework, and godly change is facilitated.

One specific purpose of contempt is to diminish shame. It serves to "energize action and movement away from the dreaded exposure" (p. 66). A later section is devoted to shame. For now, note that exposure is crucial to sanctification, but at the same time, God's plan of redemption is designed to cover nakedness and prevent shame for His people.

A second purpose is to deaden longing:

"For the woman or man who has been abused, one of the greatest enemies of the soul is the longing for intimacy." (p. 67)

"Contempt is a cruel anesthetic to longing. As long as I turn my condemnation against myself, I block the potential of your movement toward me and my longing for you to care. When I turn my condemnation against you, I am free from believing that I want anything from you. In either case, *contempt kills longing*." (p. 67)

There is major self-protection occurring here. This, too, occupies a later section of this paper. Be aware that *sin* is present, in attempting to save one's own life rather than to willingly give it up for the cause of Christ.

Third, contempt provides an illusion of control, an "explanation for past harm" and "a plan for living more safely in the world" (p. 68). The victim says:

"As long as I believe there is something I can do about my problem, then I am not constrained to feel hopeless. A contemptuous explanation provides a direction to pursue to regain control over my emptiness." (p. 69)

Again, there is self-protection, and an *idolatrous* focus on security.

Finally, the real problem is distorted by contempt:

"Contempt distorts the fact that the central human problem is sin. Other-centered contempt is the easiest to comprehend. it ignores one's own depravity and centers the blame on another person's failure." (p. 69)

Explaining further, the author says that contempt, a "counterfeit for conviction," "sounds biblical and repentant" but doesn't get to the heart of one's own "radical selfishness" (p. 70). It is the "sorrow unto death" of 2 Corinthians 7:10, rather than the godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

This particular section is rather biblical. The author here acknowledges responsibility, and distinguishes between true conviction and its humanistic imitation. He recognizes the sinful selfishness of the human heart, and the tendency to pass blame along to others while ignoring one's own sin.

Summarizing his section on contempt, Allender says:

*"Contempt hinders the work of God. It directs our sight away from our deepest longings and deflects the focus from our depravity and need for a Savior to an attack against our own or another's dignity."* (p. 71)

This is only a partial truth. Contempt indeed hinders God's work, but these comments are tainted by the author's views about hatred and contempt for *self*.

### **"Denial" and Rage**

In discussing abuse, psychologists almost always focus on the "denial" of feelings (particularly rage) and memories, pushing them into the big black hole of the Freudian unconscious. This author is no exception. It is necessary to challenge these teachings and the foundation on which they stand.

**Denial** is claimed to "separate the mind from the agony in the heart," serving as "the dividing wall between the 'good' and 'bad' selves" (p. 105). It is said to be the major hindrance to change:

*"The horror of change is that it appears to involve a death that resurrection cannot restore. Therefore, the only apparent hope is to live in denial and to believe that God wants us to be complacent, spiritualized automatons."* (p. 27)

*"There is a deep reluctance to begin the process of change by admitting that damage has occurred."* (p. 29)

The victim will "set aside the internal process of healing to ensure his or her own survival." (p. 37)

However, "a problem cannot be resolved until it has been faced," which means the acknowledgement of having been abused (p. 28). God expects us to live in truth, of course. Nowhere does Scripture

ask us to lie about real abuse, or to pretend that it did not occur. The author's sense of truth, however, has more to do with "damage" and the sins of others, rather than *God's truth in His Word*, or the truth about one's own sin. Both Scripture and sin are mentioned by the author, yet tend to be lost in the background of focusing on memory retrieval concerning the sins of others. Another problem with "denial," as previously indicated, is its roots in the Freudian theory of the "unconscious" as a black hole swallowing our painful memories. The next section, concerning memory work in therapy, will address this further.

**Rage.** The author attributes great power to the rage of a victim:

"The streams of powerlessness, betrayal, and ambivalence continue to feed the river of rage that has been held back by the dam of denial." This may produce "enormous supplies of energy for family, work and ministry" but that energy "is tainted with rage." (p. 92)

"Sexual dysfunction or compulsiveness is often a sign of undealt-with rage." (p. 149)

Note here that the rage is claimed to be buried or denied. Perhaps this *sinful response* has not been honestly acknowledged before God, but it is biblically inappropriate to imply, as psychologists do, that it is swallowed by the Freudian "unconscious" and drives current behavior without awareness of the person.

The author sees rage as coming to consciousness when the victim begins to look at the abuse:

"The pretense that the past is the past and the present is satisfying begins to crumble in the face of deepened hunger and discontent. Disappointment often turns into rage." (p. 200)

"Rage is the thrashing of the soul when it fully awakens from the nightmare lie." (p. 200)

Allender states that this rage "may be directed first and foremost toward the self" (p. 200). As noted in the section concerning self-concept, it is not biblically proper to speak in terms of hatred for self, because the human heart tends naturally toward love of self. Note, too, the sweeping speculations about the motivations of the heart that are made by psychologists, based on the imaginations of unregenerate men like Freud. Psychologists dig deeply into territories where they are unqualified. Only God, using His Word as the light and double-edged sword, is able to penetrate the heart and expose its innermost intentions (Jeremiah 17:9-10; Hebrews 4:12-13).

**Revenge.** Closely related to rage is revenge, which "exacts payment against both the perpetrator of the past harm and the victim for her supposed cooperation and ambivalent pleasure" (p.

148). The author considers "sexual addictions, promiscuity, and perversion" to be "ways of expression revenge" (p. 148). He recognizes the factor of sin present here, to some extent, yet claims some legitimacy for desiring revenge:

"It will require a great deal of time to help a person face the confusing interrelationship of relief and revenge, and to separate the elements of both factors that are legitimate and God-honoring from those that are destructive, illegitimate, and God-dishonoring." (p. 149)

There are dangers here. First, while *some* time is needed, as sanctification is a process rather than an instant event, the time factor is almost always stretched much too far by psychologists. All too often, "dealing with" one's rage, denial, desire for revenge, and the like, *postpones* the necessity of obedient living that glorifies God. This should not be so. Also, it is difficult to see "legitimate elements" in the human desire for revenge. God is indeed just, and we can trust Him to bring about justice in His own way and time. Scripture, however, exhorts the believer to entrust himself to the Lord and His timing. Never is a legitimate, God-honoring desire for revenge--*during this life*--advised. The imprecatory Psalms, and parts of Revelation, point to a day in eternity when God pours out His wrath in full against evil. For now, however, the believer is called to humbly acknowledge the extent of God's grace shown to him, in face of the fact that every one of us is deserving of God's judgment.

### Memory Work

This area is one of the primary concerns that I have about *The Wounded Heart*. Far too much emphasis is placed on the retrieval of memories buried in the unconscious of a victim. That emphasis rests on a Freudian foundation concerning the reality of the "unconscious" and its role in adult life, and it also presupposes that recall of abuse is a prerequisite for sanctification. These foundations are cracked.

The author believes that many victims would not recall being abused, or at least would prefer not to admit to it:

"It is easier for abused persons to deny the past, ignoring the memories, the pain, and the current struggles that may be related to the abuse." (p. 25)

He also states that the retrieval of painful memories is highly disruptive to present life:

"The process of entering the past will disrupt life or, at least, the existence that masquerades as life. The ease of quiet denial that allows the person to be a pleasant but vacuous doormat or an articulate but driven Bible-study leader

will be replaced by tumult, fear, confusion, anger, and change." (p. 26)

It is important for every believer to grow in godliness, and that includes fully and honestly facing the past in order to identify sinful patterns, or perhaps to forgive and restore another person. The author doesn't flatly deny these biblical goals, but he presses the victim too far in focusing on memories that are not already part of conscious awareness. He claims that a counselee's inability to see the connection between abuse and current behavior "is not a lack of information, but an absence of memory," and that such memories frequently emerge in counseling (p. 144).

There is grave danger here. The counselee's information about how to change, and what changes should be made, must come from *Scripture*. The emergence of memories in counseling can be tainted with suggestions from the counselor, and a desperate desire to uncover some reason for life's struggles. It is extremely tempting, in view of man's sin nature, to see abuse as the cause of current sinful patterns. Combining the inclinations of sin with the bias of therapists is highly dangerous. It can result in the creation of false memories, which may be difficult to separate from true memories. The tendency among therapists today is to urge counselees to uncover hidden memories of abuse. Note Allender's general attitude toward "frozen memories:"

"Many times the memories are accompanied with little emotion other than disbelief or incredulity. Doubt of the truth of the memory or of oneself serves as a guard that protects a fragile soul from the growing terror. It is not unusual for a person to store the first wave of memories in a deep, icy locker for an interminable period of time. The frozen memories, like ice statues, can now be controlled without fear of retribution. The arctic portions of our minds, however, are continually tempted to thaw by the warmth of the longing of the soul." (p. 37)

The workings of the human memory are complex and subject to error. Memories are not recorded like computer data (as many psychologists claim), nor are they "frozen" like ice statues which remain basically intact. Memories can be altered, with fuzzy details filled in by the imagination. Extreme caution is needed here, and that can hardly be overemphasized.

The author also attributes physical symptoms to the working of abusive memories:

"It is as if the body is warring against the soul by blocking memories or dreams that would unleash a torrent of anguish...physical armor protects against those memories." (p. 151)

Spiritual and physiological problems may truly be related to one another in complicated ways that only God can comprehend fully.

Therapists are again skating on thin ice, and engaging in highly subjective speculation, when they draw conclusions about a physical symptom being caused by some buried memory. When physical symptoms are present, it is time to see a competent medical doctor.

Fortunately, at least, the author does not recommend hypnosis or "memory healing," as so often promoted by therapists today.

**Purpose for recall of memories.** The author proposes that the recalling of memories leads to "removal of the denial, reclamation of the self, and movement toward real change" (p. 186). He considers "denial" to be "an affront to God" because:

"It assumes that a false reality is better than truth. It assumes that God is neither good nor strong enough to help during the recall process." (p. 186)

Also, cutting off the past is "also to erase part of our story, our journey, our self" (p. 186). Facing the past "enables us to see the present more clearly" and also "gives the victim a sense of legitimate control" (p. 186).

It would surely be an affront to God to lie about the past and to presume that He is less than sovereign. In some limited ways, an honest facing of the past gives us information about present sins. However, our concern here is about the expenditure of valuable time and energy in recalling abuse that is not presently conscious. Also, it is not a biblical goal to "reclaim self," which belong wholly to God, or to establish "legitimate control," which again belongs to the sovereign Lord.

**How much should be recalled?** The author calls memory retrieval a "lifetime endeavor," noting that "God will graciously return memories in His own time, according to His sovereign purposes" (p. 187). The return of memories is claimed to be slow and progressive, moving toward "a major event or experience that unconsciously serves as the foundation for the deepest shame" (p. 187). The author has no specific answer as to "how much is enough," but "the answer is ultimately whatever God desires for us to see" (p. 187).

This section is far better. Here, at least, one's entire life energies are not absorbed in chasing memories. Instead, God sovereignly controls the process. Certainly, if there is some righteous reason that God desires to reinstate some memory, He can be trusted to control its return. It is crucial here to examine the facts to the extent possible, in order to discern between a real event returning to memory, and the imaginations of one's heart. It is important not to expect revelation from God that exceeds the bounds of Scripture, where He has spoken with a clear sense of finality in this age. That doesn't mean it's impossible for a past memory to surface, merely that extreme caution and discernment is vital.

**How hard should you work on recall?** The authors recommends that the victim be open, curious, and vigilant, yet not demanding, frantic, or obsessed (p. 188). Openness is "the hunger to know coupled with the humbleness to wait" (p. 188). It cannot be

"regulated by a mere, conscious act of the will" because "memories do not normally return the moment we've prayed for God to search our heart" (p. 188). Once an event rises to consciousness, Allender recommends that you "ponder" the event by opening your mind to crucial details that will enable you to understand the internal and external damage of the abuse (p. 196). Also, "pondering looks at a memory, picture, or fact from countless perspectives in order to grasp its meaning" (p. 196).

A second recommendation is journaling, "placing the facts and feelings of an event into written words" because that "solidifies the experience and allows it to be more real" (p. 196).

A third suggestion is to converse with others, "a group of fellow travelers," because "the issues of abuse were never meant to be addressed in isolation" (p. 197). The author suggests that you search until:

"...you find a person who is neither judgmental and expecting rapid change, nor condescendingly sympathetic and concerned only with your victimization. Trust is neither something to expect nor to give too quickly; therefore, listen to your intuition." (p. 197)

Again we must proceed with caution. The believer must be open to whatever facts come to his attention--real facts. He must be careful to discern between facts and fantasy, however, and that is not easy in the area of memory retrieval. Journaling, and conversing with others, can lead much too quickly to self-absorption when the Christian ought to be serving Christ. Talking with others about the sins of one's parents, or other persons, quickly crosses the line into gossip and/or slander. Biblically, when you are sinned against, you must go *privately* to the one who has sinned, not to uninvolved third parties (Matthew 18:15-20). The author does speak extensively about confrontation of the perpetrator, covered in a later section, but biblically, the involvement of others is to come only *after* that initial private meeting has proven unsuccessful, never *before*.

### Trust

In discussing abuse, trust is always a major concern. Allender defines trust as "an empowering of another to determine our desirability and worth" (p. 54), the right to judge us. He notes that it is *idolatry* to give such power to anyone other than God.

According to the author, abuse has a powerful impact on the ability of the victim to trust, both others *and himself*:

"The victim's struggle to trust will be proportionately related to the extent her parent(s) failed to protect and nurture her as a child." (p. 37)



"Nobody can be trusted, especially herself. After all, her own desires (to be honored, valued, wanted, etc.) are what got her into trouble in the first place!" (p. 113)

Let us pause momentarily to look at this definition of trust. In the Bible, trust means to believe in, to rely on, to place confidence in someone. It isn't simply "giving" someone else the power to judge us. God has the power to judge us without our giving it to Him. When He commands trust (and He does so), He expects us to believe in Him, rely on Him, place our confidence in Him--rather than in man, whether ourselves or others. As believers, we *trust* in Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation. We do not rely on our own worth, works, or other merit.

Certainly, a parent has serious God-given responsibilities for his children, and those children ought to be able to rely on him for physical needs as well as spiritual instruction. Trust is violated when a parent abuses a child.

However, the adult child must place his trust in the Lord, *not in himself*. Allender places an unbiblical emphasis on trusting in oneself. Using *his own definitions*, such self-trust would be to make an idol of self.

**Trust in God.** To his credit, the author stresses trust in God for the restoration of a victim. He considers the following a crucial question before that restoration can take place:

"Do I believe that God is a loving Father who is committed to my deepest well-being, that He has the right to use everything that is me for whatever purposes He deems best, and that surrendering my will and my life entirely to Him will bring me the deepest joy and fulfillment I can know this side of heaven?" (p. 175)

This emphasis on trust would be even stronger, however, if the author discussed God's sovereignty more fully. The victim must recognize that God controls whatsoever comes to pass, even the abuse he suffered. His specific purposes may be less than obvious, but Scripture clearly teaches that He works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). *Nothing* is beyond His sovereign control, and His purposes are good. This may sound difficult at first, for the victim, yet it is the most comforting doctrine in the world. The *Christian* who was abused can be secure in the knowledge that God saw and knew what was happening, *saved him for eternity*, and is using even that horror for His own glory.

Allender goes on to express concern about merely giving the appearance of trust:

"It is frighteningly easy to appear trusting when in fact one is simply dead (in denial of the wounds, hunger, or struggle of the heart)." (p. 176)

"Many who hate and do battle with God trust Him more deeply than those whose complacent faith permits an abstract and

motionless stance before Him." (p. 176)

God does expect real trust in the face of real facts, not a facade. However, the psychologists must not probe too deeply. This is a matter of the heart where God alone is qualified to search and convict. The second quote is highly questionable. *We are not to hate God!* We can pour our hearts out in honest but reverent confession, and we can trust Him to forgive, cleanse, and deepen our trust. But let us beware of the psychological counsel to ventilate feelings, taken here to the extreme of hating God and calling it an expression of trust!

### **Sins of Self-Protection**

This is basically an area of strength in *The Wounded Heart*. Allender rightly recognizes the self-serving purposes in the "self-contempt" discussed earlier:

"The image of being talentless, mediocre, average, or worse is a self-serving, self-protective evaluation used for a purpose: it provides the victim with a contemptuous explanation for not being able to halt the pain." (p. 110)

Unlike so many other psychologists, he is willing to call it *sin*:

"If we ignore or trivialize our self-protective manner of dealing with people, we will inevitably overlook the deepest sin of the heart: our fallen commitment to take charge of our life so we will never be hurt or shamed as we were in the past." (p. 157)

"The pain of past abuse does not justify unloving self-protection in the present. The damage the victim does to others by her failure to love God and neighbor with all her being deserves judgment--that is, the just penalty of death and separation from God." (p. 202)

Although self-absorption seems a natural response to abuse, it is futile because it is an attempt to *find* one's own life (p. 156), rather than to lose it for Christ. According to Scripture, such an attempt results in the *loss* of one's life. The author correctly points out that self-absorption, while it seems reasonable, "inevitably leads to subtle autonomy and overt rebellion" (p. 156). This is the very heart of man's sin nature. He is also right in pointing out that the sinful failure to love God and others applies to victims of abuse as much as anyone else.

**Boundaries.** Although the author refers to boundary setting as legitimate, he acknowledges that "setting of boundaries...often leads to self-centered, arrogant, autonomous self-protection" (p. 178). (See the critique, "Boundaries: Political or Personal?" for a detailed discussion of this concept). This admission is quite

rare in psychological literature. Allender recognizes the dangers of "boundaries" far more than other psychologists who push this idea, and certainly that is to his credit.

**Coping.** Allender notes that:

"Many Christian professionals argue that the 'coping' or 'survival' behaviors a person uses in adulthood to deal with the past abuse are to be 'honored' and not exposed as sinful or illegitimate." (p. 189)

Fortunately, he sees the fatal error here:

"There is one flaw: Sin is sin." (p. 189)

As an adult..."she is no longer simply 'coping' in a legitimate way. She is violating God's highest commandments." (p. 190)

This is a rare and welcome perspective. Some caution is needed when he goes on to say that "the function of self-protection must be seen in light of both dignity and depravity" (p. 191). Thus, he says, "I affirm her choice to survive," but "her adult adaption of the child pattern is an outworking of her depravity, not her dignity." (p. 191) I say that some caution is needed, because certainly we must deal compassionately with *children* who are currently being abused by their parents. We must help them. However, God does not issue a set of double standards--one set for children and another for adults. His commands are His commands. Sin is sin. We ought to have compassion, because child abuse is a horrendous sin against both children and God, and because we are all sinners. As noted in the section on dignity and depravity, we must be biblical, treating others with love because they are created in the image of God, and it honors *Him* when we do so.

**Restoration.** Happily, Allender emphasizes the requirement to give up self-protective ways in the pursuit of godly change:

"It requires forfeiting our rigid, self-protective, God-dishonoring ways of relating in order to embrace life as it is meant to be lived: in humble dependence on God and passionate involvement with others." (p. 174)

Well said!

### **Forgiveness and Guilt**

Forgiveness is always a central issue for the adult victim of child abuse. Christian counselors almost always discuss it in the literature on victimization. Unfortunately, a purely *biblical* view is rarely promoted. This book, too, presents a psychologically slanted perspective, although this author at least recognizes that the victim, as well as the abuser, needs to be forgiven.

**Self-Forgiveness.** This is an area of *major* concern. *Nowhere*

does Scripture ever command the forgiveness of self. Psychologists, however--including this author--indicate that self-forgiveness is essential to restoration. Allender says that:

"One of the central messages of most books on abuse, this one included, is freedom from the guilt of the past abuse. What occurred is not your fault!" (p. 13)

Introducing the chapter which describes the progression of abuse, the author says that:

"The advantage in understanding the process of abuse is that it frees the abused person from unnecessary guilt for compliance and offers categories for understanding events that evoked confusion and contempt." (p. 78)

True enough. The abuse itself is the sin of the perpetrator, not the child who was sinned against. However, any sense of "guilt" for the abuse per se can be handled by proper submission to God's standards. You do not need to "forgive" yourself for a sin you did not commit, but rather to acknowledge God's standards and sort out responsibilities biblically. Promoting self-forgiveness clouds the issue considerably. It is not so much understanding the "process" of abuse, but understanding what God commands in His Word. Holding one's own standards of guilt above the Word of God is a matter that the victim must address. It is possible that such self-imposed standards, concerning responsibility for the abuse itself, may serve to cover true guilt for unrighteous responses.

A specific area of concern is the response of the body to sexual abuse, which may experience pleasurable arousal:

"His (God's) plan for arousal is perversely misused by sexual abuse, but the arousal experienced is neither sinful nor abnormal. The tragedy of abuse is that the enjoyment of one's body becomes the basis of a hatred of one's soul." (p. 86)

"Later most adults cannot forgive their body or soul for betraying them." (p. 130)

"Hatred of one's soul" is not a biblical concept, because fallen man naturally loves himself. Abuse is certainly a devastating experience, and there is no intent here to minimize the suffering endured. But again, the standards of God's Word are sufficient for determining true guilt. If the victim did respond unrighteously in some manner, as a Christian he can be assured of God's cleansing and forgiveness. It may not be a simple or painless process, understandably, but the power of God is absolutely sufficient.

To his credit, the author does state that the victim "needs forgiveness for turning her soul against life with little thought of serving the deepest well-being of others" (p. 219). Additionally, "the sweet fragrance of forgiveness is the energy that propels the damaged man or woman toward the freedom of love"

(p. 219). As we will see more fully in the section on repentance, *The Wounded Heart* stands above most other psychological literature in the author's willingness to discuss the victim's need to repent and receive God's forgiveness for unrighteous responses to being sinned against.

**Forgiveness of others.** The author notes that forgiveness is essential to the "healing process" for the victim (p. 223). He goes on to say that forgiveness is not to be commanded or pushed on the victim, but rather may take a long time (p. 224). He says that after obstacles have been removed, it is then possible for the victim to hunger for the restoration of the abuser (p. 224).

Certainly, extreme gentleness and compassion ought to be demonstrated toward someone who has been grievously sinned against. However, God's standards cannot be compromised in the name of compassion. God does command forgiveness, on the basis of the forgiveness He has extended to the victim/believer. The parable of the ungrateful servant makes this crystal clear. It is not biblical to encourage any delay of obedience.

The author spends time discussing the distinction between revenge and the righteous anger which desires justice:

"Bold love seeks to restore good and destroy evil, but such a view comes perilously close to justifying destructive expressions of rage toward the perpetrator under the guise of concern for his well-being. There is a profound difference between righteous anger and wicked revenge." (p. 225)

Citing the imprecatory Psalms for support, Allender says that it is not wrong to desire the just repayment of sin (p. 227). He also states that in Romans 12, "Paul does not condemn the Romans for wanting revenge, only for seeking it" (p. 228). However, he sees revenge as a final judgment that does not allow for restoration (p. 228). Finally, in the face of life, "evil must flee or be transformed" (p. 229).

Extreme caution is needed here. It is, on some rare occasions, possible for a human being to experience righteous anger. Even then, the response can be ungodly. We must hate evil, and we can be assured of the triumph of God's justice in eternity. However, we must guard against the desire for revenge. The author seems to allow a little too much room here, perhaps not quite recognizing the seriousness and deceitfulness of sin.

Personal confrontation of the abuser is an issue intimately related to forgiveness. Unlike so many psychologists, this author recognizes that such a confrontation ought to take place. It is commendable to note, too, that he does not promote imaginary meetings with abusers who cannot be contacted in person:

"If the abuser is unavailable or deceased, then I do not encourage memory healing, Gestalt conversations with an empty chair that represents the perpetrator, or any other means that works toward a cathartic explosion of rage and an imaginary forgiveness process." (p. 234)

Quite rightly, the author prefers to focus on current relationship(s) where similar patterns are being acted out (p. 234).

It is also encouraging to note the author's statement that the motive for a confrontation should not be self-centered, but rather "concern for the abuser and concern for those he may still be abusing" (p. 234). Allender deviates here from much of the *Christian* psychological literature, and certainly his perspective is a welcome relief from the psychologized, self-focused distortion of forgiveness that is normally offered.

Another helpful point is the author's recommendation that confrontation be delayed until the victim has experienced honesty and repentance in her own life (p. 235). This is certainly in line with the exhortation of Matthew 7:1-5, where one's own sin must be faced (the "log") before confronting another's sin (the "speck").

More specifically, Allender recommends that confrontation begin with a rebuke of the abuser, which will hopefully include these elements: details of the abuse, acceptance by the abuser of responsibility--without shifting blame, plus dealing with current relational failures (p. 236). If the abuser is unwilling to repent, acknowledge responsibility, and work toward a new relationship, then, says Allender, the relationship cannot be restored (p. 237). If repetitive attempts prove futile, he recommends eventually severing the relationship. He claims this decision to be:

"...a respectful choice to honor the abuser with the consequences of his own destructive choice, in hope that loneliness and shame will draw his cold heart back to the fire of relationship (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)." (p. 237)

Here we have a serious weakness in the author's teachings, which are otherwise such an improvement on those of others in his field. The Scripture in 2 Thessalonians is within the context of the *church body*. It does not support a private "excommunication" of an individual. Church discipline is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, but I recommend Jay Adams' book, *Handbook of Church Discipline*, for further reading. Also, when abuse is addressed, we are often talking about *parents*, who are to be honored for their positions, even if it is necessary to confront their sin.

**False memory possibilities.** Another grave concern here is the authenticity of the memories of abuse. Many people know they were abused and there is no lengthy process to recall memories. However, in today's psychological climate, many parents are being accused of abuse based on their adult child's sudden recall of "memories" during the process of therapy--where no memories existed earlier. The human memory is not infallible, and not exact. Families are sometimes split apart by "memories" that may or may not represent truth. Parents are easily convicted without the benefit of a fair trial, or a diligent attempt to independently verify the facts of the alleged abuse. Counselees ought not to be encouraged to sever relationships with their families based on

"memories" encountered for the first time in therapy. They may well be doing a serious injustice to innocent persons. The False Memory Foundation has been established to help families who have been devastated and torn apart by highly questionable therapeutic techniques.

## Shame

Shame is another topic typically covered by books concerning abuse. It is extremely important to examine the views of psychologists in this area and compare with biblical truth.

Allender calls shame the "dread of being known" (p. 44) and sees it as a key motivation for human behavior:

"Dignity and depravity may be the raw elements of the human personality, but another reality serves as a driving force that motivates fallen man: *shame*." (p. 440)

Noting the interpersonal nature of shame, he says further that:

"Shame has been called by Jean-Paul Sartre a hemorrhage of the soul. It is an awful experience to be aware that we are seen as deficient and undesirable by someone whom we hope will deeply enjoy us." (p. 44)

Shame dates back to the fall of man. Adam and Eve, according to the author, "became self-conscious" when they ate the fruit (p. 46). They "knew that their rebellion deserved death, and they fled from the presence of God" (p. 47). Their exposure "led to an arrogant attack against God" (p. 47). Adam, says Allender, "poured his shame-based rage on God and through contempt nullified the need for humble repentance" (p. 57).

Relating that original sin to following generations, Allender says:

"As children of Adam and Eve, we bear not only their likeness to God as image bearers, but also their desire to be autonomous and their propensity to hide, blame, and attack when caught. As a result of the Fall we despise standing vulnerable before God and others; therefore we find countless ways to flee from His presence and avoid being seen." (p. 47)

"If we avoid His look, then perhaps we will be able to flee from the consequences of our sin." (p. 66)

Drawing on this biblical data, the author calls shame "a dreaded, deep-seated, long-held terror come true...what we have feared has actually come about...we've been found out" (p. 47).

After these general comments, Allender relates shame to abuse, claiming that shame is more prominent in victims:

"Sexually abused people often feel marked for life. The exposure of the past abuse sets them apart from normal, supposedly unstained, undamaged people." (p. 48)

"The abused person, facing deeper shame than most people, is even more apt to resort to radical deflection to hide her wound and her commitment to self-protection." (p. 57)

The author considers shame to be intertwined with the longing to be loved and to experience intimacy:

"...the part of ourselves we hate the most is our longing to be wanted and enjoyed." (p. 49)

"Longings are wed to abuse, abuse begets shame, and shame is inextricably related to a hatred for one's own hungry soul. Any significant abuse causes the victim to despise the way he or she's been made: a person wired for deep, satisfying, eternal involvement with others and God." (p. 49)

"We ignore the issue of depravity and feel shame about our longing for what God intended us to enjoy." Instead, "we should be heartbroken, humbled, shamed when we do not worship the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength." (p. 50-1)

Shame is considered to be a key factor in self-hatred:

"A godly response in the face of abuse is to grieve--for the perpetrator's sin and for the damage done to our soul; but the natural response is to cower in shame, condemning our own soul for being so foolish as to hope, want, or risk." (p. 51)

The author makes a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate shame:

"Legitimate shame exposes depravity, and illegitimate shame shines a light on some element of dignity." (p. 48)

"Legitimate shame is the same inner experience as biblical humbling. It is the recognition of our state as desperate and our response to our rebellious condition as deplorable, deserving condemnation and death." (p. 51)

"Legitimate shame (facing our failure to trust God) is the basis of our return to the Father," which ensures that no one can shame or disgrace or possess our soul." (p. 57)

Allender notes the consequences dreaded by the person who is ashamed, particularly rejection and lack of love:

"Another element involved in shame is the anticipated outcome



of being found out: *rejection*. Rejection is almost always a byproduct of being seen as deficient, even when the exposure involves a failure of minor proportions." (p. 53)

The fear is that "if our dark soul is discovered, we will never be enjoyed, nor desired, nor pursued by anyone." (p. 53)

"The fear involved in shame is of permanent abandonment, or exile." (p. 54)

The author also sees shame as "the outcome of a failure in trust" (p. 54), which he defines as empowering another to judge our worth:

"Shame is experienced before the one I've entitled or given the right to judge me." (p. 54)

As noted earlier, he correctly sees this as *idolatry* when anyone other than God is given such power.

**Critique.** Biblically, shame is the dread of our *sin* being exposed before God. In his discussions concerning the fall of man, the author recognizes this biblical perspective. In the sense that man dreads exposure before the living God, shame could indeed be said to motivate much behavior.

It is unfortunate that the author brings in the definition of atheist existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Atheists have nothing to add to God's Word, but rather show us how man holds down the truth in unrighteousness and seeks to escape the judgment of God. Shame is not a "hemorrhage in the soul," and does not concern merely another human whose approval we desire, but rather is intimately related to our relationship with God.

Allender also distorts the biblical view of shame when he relates it specifically to abuse victims. There is nothing in Scripture which suggests that someone who is sinned against experiences more shame than others. Shame concerns *our own sin*. Man hides his sin, not his wounds, from God's *judgment*.

The fear of rejection, of being unloved by others, is certainly painful. We must love one another, and not respond with scorn to those who are experiencing deep hurt. However, this view reflects a fear of man, and a focus on self. It is important to gently lead a victim/counselee to the reverential fear of the Lord, and a focus on serving and pleasing *Him* rather than self. The author does give recognition to this biblical truth when he notes that we ought to feel shame when we do not worship God with our whole hearts.

The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate shame is questionable at best. What the author defines as "legitimate" shame is reasonably in line with Scripture, but "illegitimate shame," like ideas of self-hatred and self-forgiveness, is not rooted in God's Word. This "shame" is claimed to be a *feeling* of shame for desiring the relationships that God intended for us to

enjoy. Yes, God did create us for relationship with both Himself and others. However, it is inappropriate to consider shame as a *feeling* rather than a certain knowledge that one has sinned in the sight of God.

In relating shame to *trust*, the author is correct in stating that it is idolatry to trust in man rather than God, and that "legitimate" shame has to do with our failure to trust Him. However, shame does not result from the failure of a trusted human being, but rather from our own sin.

Finally, it is central to any biblical discussion of shame to note that God has, in Christ, covered the sins of believers so that they need not ever be ashamed again. They are free to approach the throne of grace in time of need, knowing that the blood of Christ has purchased their redemption. A solid biblical understanding of shame, and God's solution, is crucial to the restoration of any abuse victim.

### Sin and Repentance

In stark contrast to most literature concerning abuse, Larry Crabb's foreword identifies our own sin as the biggest problem, rather than the sins committed against us. Also noted is the need for forgiveness, as opposed to wholeness, and repentance, rather than insight, as the "dynamic in all real change" (p. 10).

Recognizing that something major is wrong inside the victim, Allender says:

"The enemy is *sin*, that fallen, autonomous striving for life that refuses to bow to God. *The enemy is the internal reality that will not cry out to God in humble, broken dependence.* It is the victim's subtle or blatant determination to make life work on her own by refusing to acknowledge or let God fulfill her deepest longings." (p. 41)

This enemy, sin, is contrasted with the *apparent* enemy, "the passion to be lovingly pursued and nourishingly touched by a person whose heart is utterly disposed to do us good" (p. 41).

Allender also notes the apparent reasonableness of sin as a response to abuse:

"Sin...seems like the most reasonable, rational, common-sense response to a fallen, frightening, and potentially dangerous world." (p. 59)

This is reminiscent of Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that *seems* right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Certainly, to the *unbeliever*, sin seems the most rational response. However, it is important here to remember that to the *Christian*, sin is no longer a reasonable response under any circumstances.

To his credit, the author recognizes that sin is an issue of the heart, and not merely outward behavior (p. 157). We must

examine the sins of the heart as well as our deeds.

**Definitions of Repentance.** The author offers us several:

1. "The process of change begins with honesty, which is a form of repentance...memories return that rip apart the pretense of a happy childhood or a loving family." (p. 199)
2. "The abuse victim is never called by God to repent about the past abuse." (p. 201)
3. "Repentance is a surprising, wholly unexpected experience that is rarely, if ever, a simple choice of the will to do right and not do wrong." (p. 201)
4. "Repentance is an internal shift in our perceived source of life." (p. 202)
5. "Ultimately, repentance is a hungry, broken return to God." (p. 202)
6. "Repentance often begins with dissatisfaction...seeing that our efforts to make life work have taken us to the pigpen" (p. 202-3, citing the prodigal son parable as example)
7. Repentance is characterized by "a sorrow that glows with passion, energy, and other-centeredness." (p. 206, citing 2 Corinthians 7:11-13)
8. "Repentance involves admitting that we were victims who were unrighteously deprived of life." (p. 210)
9. "Repentance involves the response of humble hunger, bold movement, and wild celebration when faced with the reality of our fallen state and the grace of God." (p. 204)
10. "Repentance flows from the energy of being stunned, silent, and without excuse for the harm we've done to ourselves and others and for breaking the heart of God." (p. 204)

Some of these statements are more focused on the sins of others, rather than one's own sin (first, second, and eighth above). Even the fourth, fifth, and ninth quotes, while rightly recognizing dependence on God, lean toward seeing the repentant person more as a victim than a sinner.

The seventh statement, concerning sorrow, is much better; we will cover sorrow and grief shortly.

The sixth statement, concerning dissatisfaction, needs comment. The prodigal son was brought to repentance through adverse circumstances wallowing in the pigpen, and God may use such difficulties to bring a person to his knees. However, satisfaction or the lack of it is not the *main focus* of repentance. This again

places the sins of others ahead of one's own sin. In the story of the prodigal son, he was not a victim, but is portrayed as having a loving and generous father. His descent into the pigpen is clearly the result of his own sin.

Concerning the role of the human will, repentance is indeed not a mere decision of the will to do right. It absolutely requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the initial repentance that leads to eternal salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). While God commands all men to repent (Acts 17:30), it is necessary that He also enable that repentance.

The final statement is good in its emphasis on being "without excuse" and having displeased God.

**Repentance and Sorrow, Sadness, Grief.** Godly sorrow often accompanies repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10), and must be distinguished from the worldly sorrow that leads to death. The author spends considerable time on this issue, making specific distinctions between sorrow, sadness, and grief, which he believes are all a part of the restoration process.

First are his definitions of these three:

*Sadness* is "an experience with disappointment," usually "current loss with regard to unmet hopes." (p. 208)

*Grief* involves "the loss of something deeply important that cannot be regained or replaced" (p. 208) such as "the loss of childhood," which "cannot be replaced, or recovered through surrogate parents or therapy" (p. 209).

*Sorrow* involves "recognition of damage done to others." (p. 209)

As noted earlier, sorrow may indeed accompany repentance. The author, however, sees a more complex process, wherein victims may:

"...begin the process of repentance without even realizing it, when they acknowledge hurt and sadness in current relationships." (p. 209)

He claims that this sadness "is not sufficient to produce redemptive change...grief is a necessary next step" (p. 209):

"Grief intensifies the sadness by facing the irretrievable loss. The abuse victim will never be able to relax fully in another's care without at least a hint of discomfort and anxiety. Suspicion and strains of paranoia will exist as long as her sin nature exists. Grief admits there are scars that can be removed only in heaven." (p. 211)

Where, we must ask, does Scripture teach such a view of repentance? Nowhere does God reveal a three-step progression of sadness-grief-sorrow to come to repentance. And nowhere does the Bible hint that a person must acknowledge his losses, due to the sins of others, in

order to repent of *his own sins*. Furthermore, the author's words here seriously distort the hope that God gives in His Word, by his absolute statements that the victim will *never* be able to relax, *always* have suspicion and "strains of paranoia." Is God inadequate here? Is He unable to sufficiently comfort His own?

Discussing sorrow in particular, the author says that it "begins to melt the victim's calloused hatred toward herself and others" (p. 201). Grief may then lead either to godly sorrow or the sorrow unto death spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:10. Both routes, Allender claims, involve the "reclaiming" or "re-owning" of "the lost parts of the soul." In the first case, this is done by crying out humbly to God, but in the second instance, it involves building a case against the abuser and ultimately against God because He did not intervene to prevent the abuse (p. 201). All of this is a terrible confusion of the biblical view of sorrow. Nowhere does Scripture endorse, directly or indirectly, the "reclaiming" of "lost parts of the soul." The believer is bought by the blood of Christ and fully owned by God alone. Also, godly sorrow has nothing at all to do with melting of callous self-hatred. Sorrow unto death may indeed involve building cases against both the abuser and God. The biblical perspective does not complicate the issue of sorrow by bringing in psychological notions of self-hatred and reclaiming oneself.

In all fairness, the author *seems* to be aware of this weakness in teachings about "reclaiming:"

"Without a radical commitment to seeing our entire existence as wrapped up in furthering God's purpose in other people's lives, recovering our souls can strengthen the tendency to think more about all that happens within and to require that others treat us with tenderness and respect." (p. 204)

This is a very real danger. How much better it would be to scratch the psychological teachings about reclaiming self, and to follow a path of restoration that is purely biblical!

**Repentance and Penance.** These two concepts do indeed need to be carefully separated. Though bearing surface similarities, they are radically different. Here are contrasts the author makes:

Repentance

"Admits helplessness." (p. 205)

"Humble declaration of longing."  
(p. 205)

"Softens." (p. 205)

Penance

"Presumes the ability to make amends on one's own."  
(p. 205)

"Self-abasing declaration of arrogance." (p. 205)

"Hardens." (p. 205)

Summarizing the difference between the genuine conviction associated with repentance, and penance, Allender says:

"Genuine conviction of sin...leads to a softening of the heart that dispels other-centered contempt in the wake of the recognition that we are no better, at core, than those who have abused us. Self-contempt is Satan's counterfeit for true conviction." (p. 206)

We can commend the author for his recognition that the victim is as much a sinner as the abuser. Penance, we can agree, is a counterfeit for genuine repentance and conviction of sin. Concerning the admission of "helplessness" noted as characteristic of repentance, we ought to make note of what Scripture says concerning the "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8). We cannot pay for our own sins, but we must obey the biblical commands to produce fruit that evidences our repentance. In this sense we are not "helpless."

**Repentance and Trust.** The author believes that repentance involves a "refusal to mistrust" (p. 210). This does not necessarily mean that the abuser is to be trusted again:

"The problem with mistrust is that many persons are not worthy of trust, or at least deep trust; therefore, to encourage an abuse victim to trust is tantamount to asking her to more deeply doubt her intuition and to open herself to more abuse." (p. 210)

Allender considers the opposite of mistrust to be care rather than trust (p. 210). He says that while trust is conditional, care is not (p. 211). He states that the victim is "neither gullible nor stupid" in learning to sincerely care about the welfare of the perpetrator:

"Repentance, or a refusal to mistrust, reengages the God-given desire to care, to be kind, to comfort, and to be concerned about the temporal and eternal destiny of those who have harmed us." (p. 211)

It is a welcome relief from other psychological literature to encounter this level of concern for abusers. We ought to note briefly, however, that trusting one's own intuition is not biblical, and that sometimes, *for the cause of Christ*, the victim who is a believer must be willing to endure further abuse. The Bible calls this *persecution*, and Jesus said that the Christian who is persecuted for His sake is *blessed*. Also, God alone is worthy of our full trust. Any trust placed in others must be strictly limited.

**Repentance and Emotion.** The author sees a strong correlation between repentance and the ability to feel strong emotion, equating "deadness" with sin:

"In essence, the choice to be dead is the choice to turn one's back on the Author of life, to deny Him the opportunity to touch our lives deeply and to use us fully according to His

good purposes." (p. 207)

Describing a particular counseling case..."repentance for her meant to cry out to God for grace so she could admit what was true: she hated sex, her husband, her abuser, her counselor, and God...it was a deeply moving point of repentance--a refusal to be dead--for her to admit that God preferred hot or cold passion to the lukewarm publum of her dutiful obedience." (p. 214)

"A victim refuses to be dead when she gives herself permission to acknowledge and feel the reality of both past and present." (p. 208)

"To acknowledge that it is unbecoming and unworthy to be dead will free her soul to face sadness, grief, and sorrow--and ultimately, joy." (p. 208)

In addition, Allender believes that passionate emotion can appear dangerous to victims, allowing the possibility of "rage and lust, violence and promiscuity" (p. 213).

Certainly, the failure to fully trust God is sin. Ungodly emotions need to be examined under the searchlight of Scripture, faced, confessed as sin, and cleansed. The person who trusts God deeply will weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15, which the author quotes as support). Emotions are a proper aspect of the inner man, given by God. However, repentance must not be equated with the ability to feel emotions. The ability to feel deeply is not something to be valued so highly for its own sake, above obedience to God's commands. That is how it is presented in this book, however, along with most other psychological literature on abuse. The emphasis in biblical counseling must be on obedience to God's commands, including repentance for sinful emotions. Nowhere does Scripture require a passionate demonstration of emotions as an integral part of repentance.

**Repentance and Actions.** The author refers back to his "good girl," "tough girl," and "party girl," in order to provide examples of how repentance might be shown in behavior:

Good Girl: "...instead of deferring choice to others she will begin to take hold of her desires and preferences by strongly...saying she would prefer not to eat at a certain restaurant." (p. 215)

Tough Girl: "...will pursue feedback rather than intimidate those around her into never expressing their anger and hurt." (p. 215-6)

Party Girl: "...will choose to return to relationships she has defrauded and acknowledge her tendency to bail out." (p. 216)

The author claims that repentance will be shown differently by those with different "styles" of relating to others:

"...so that it is impossible to make conclusions about what are the 'right' things to do or not do on the road toward change...all that can be said is that change for any style of relating will never involve the choice to pursue sin."  
(p. 216)

We can agree that repentant behavior never involves sin. The second and third examples above are best. The first smacks of the self-centered "codependent" teachings which are unfortunately so popular today. The major weakness here is the thought that it is impossible to determine what is right. It is possible, because we have the revelation of God's Word. There are different sins, of course, and accordingly different specifics about what needs to be changed. Yet in every case, Scripture is sufficient to instruct, convict, correct, and train in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Summarizing, Allender says that the one central quality of repentance is "the purposeful movement of a humble, hungry heart toward a God who will receive and lift up" (p. 216). It is "a shift in perspective as to where life is found" and "a deep recognition that life comes only to the broken, desperate, dependent heart that longs for God" (p. 217).

There is some wonderful truth in these statements. We must humble ourselves before God, long for Him, be broken before Him in repentance, and trust Him deeply. The author does have some biblical statements to make about repentance, but as we have noted, there are some deficiencies that cannot be overlooked.

### Sanctification

In his foreword to *The Wounded Heart*, Larry Crabb states his belief that:

"One of the great needs in the church today is to replace a model for *simplistic sanctification* with an understanding of the gospel that is both simple and penetrating, reaching with power into the realities of sinful, damaged souls."  
(p. 10, emphasis added)

Far too often, people who believe in the sufficiency of God's Word are accused of holding such a "simplistic" view of sanctification. Nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, we do want to reach souls with the power of the gospel. It is indeed simple and penetrating, though not "simplistic." It is *sufficient* to address all counseling issues, including those that concern victims, without adding the speculations of unregenerate men about the nature of man. Such additions add unnecessary confusion and complexity to the pure answers God has provided.

Much of what Allender has to say concerning sanctification is



grounded in biblical truth, but there are weaknesses due to his integration of psychology and theology.

**Sanctification and Justification.** The author rightly understands that these two are intimately related yet not identical. Justification is what happens at conversion. Because of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, the believer is *justified*. He is declared righteous in the sight of God, and his sins are not counted against him. At that point, the life-long process of sanctification begins, but is not fully completed in this life. Progress in sanctification gives evidence that justification has truly taken place, yet is never the meritorious basis for salvation.

The author correctly recognizes that sinless perfection is not achieved here on earth (p. 142), that the work of the Holy Spirit is progressive and unfinished (p. 143). He says that the process involves "both the dramatic and the mundane" (p. 142), producing "crippled warriors who are used because of their brokenness, weakness, and powerlessness (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)" (p. 143). He is right here in the sense that human glory is not to be sought, that God uses those who are not noble or mighty according to worldly standards. However, while the believer must constantly rely on God rather than on self, it is misleading to say that he is *powerless*. Extreme caution is needed here. The Christian may not be powerful or wealthy or wise or influential by the world's standards, but in discussing *sanctification*, he has the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He is not doomed to being "powerless" all of his life! Rather, Christ has broken the power of sin in his life, and he is now able to make progress in godliness.

Allender is concerned that some Christians misunderstand conversion as blotting out the impact of past abuse:

"To assume radical change on the basis of conversion is to neglect the essential relationship between justification and sanctification." (p. 142)

However, we can assume "radical change on the basis of conversion." Although *complete* sanctification occurs only in glory, regeneration is a radical event that makes possible obedience to God's standards. The unbeliever, by contrast, *cannot* either understand or obey God, nor does he desire to do so (Romans 8:7-8). The confusion occurs when people expect total sanctification to be instantaneous at the moment of conversion, rather than a process. What Allender says is close to truth, but does not quite acknowledge the radical power that actually does follow conversion.

**Sanctification and "Damage."** Allender notes that because we live in a sinful, fallen world, it is inevitable that we will be "damaged" (p. 143). Yes, it is true that we will be *sinned against*, sometimes grievously, and we will sin against others. The author expresses concern because:

"The assumption of most 'healing' approaches is that past damage can be and should be, removed in order to glorify the

goodness and power of God." (p. 143)

For biblical support, he cites Paul's thorn in the flesh. He argues that "change is possible and substantial, but not perfected until heaven" (p. 143). Meanwhile, there is always "the possibility for symptom generation or symptom return during periods of loss, stress, or repetition of past abusive dynamics" (p. 144).

We can agree that substantial change is possible, and that sanctification is not complete until heaven. However, the author's emphasis remains on the *sins of others*. Sanctification is primarily concerned with *one's own sin*. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is evidently a physical defect, not a *sinful* pattern, and not "emotional damage" from past abuse. God deliberately allowed the "thorn" to remain. Therefore, it could not have been a sin in Paul's life, because God *does* promise victory over sin, allowing no room for excuse (1 Corinthians 10:13, for example). The person who has been abused *can* be victorious over sinful response patterns. The changes are not necessarily easy or achieved overnight, but they also do not require years of therapy, memory retrieval, working through feelings, or any of the other psychological techniques that basically delay obedience to God's Word.

Note, too, how clearly Scripture informs us that the "old man" or "old self," before conversion, is to be reckoned dead and buried with Christ, something of the past to "put off" (Romans 6:6, Colossians 3:3 & 9, Ephesians 4:22-24). The person who is in Christ is a new creation, exhorted to "put on" the "new man." Again, it takes time and disciplined training in righteousness to progress in sanctification. But the psychologists are wrong to discount the power of regeneration.

**Self-Discovery, Self-Expression, Self-Protection.** The author describes the "usual route to life" as involving these three processes: feeling and owning emotions, freedom to express those emotions, and then establishing boundaries to avoid future abuse. He correctly recognizes this route to be "profoundly different" from the biblical path (p. 177), teaching what he claims to be a biblical variation.

**Self-Discovery.** More than just "reclaiming repressed feelings," self-discovery also should involve the exposure of self-serving patterns of seeking one's own comfort apart from dependence on God (p. 177). The author says that when self-discovery is biblically oriented, it focuses on how to love *others* better, and "annihilates any hope of self-justification and intensifies the need for grace" (p. 177).

There is, certainly, a biblically necessary process of *self-examination* before God, using the two-edged sword of His Word. In this process, one's own sins are confronted, and conviction occurs. The author's weakness is in seeing the "reclaiming" of "repressed" emotions, particularly rage, as a necessary step.

**Self-Expression.** The author rightly notes that the "opportunity to vent defensive accusations" is "often used as a means to seek revenge under the guise of openness and authenticity" (p. 178). Instead, "honesty of expression should always serve to

honor the other person" (p. 178). Indeed, we could cite numerous biblical exhortations concerning godly speech (Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 3:9 and 4:6, James 3:9-10).

**Honesty.** Expression involves honesty, which "takes away the need for living a life of lies" (p. 183) and is "the commitment to see reality as it is, without conscious distortion, minimization, or spiritualization" (p. 183).

However, in noting eight "truths" to be embraced by the victim, the *primary* focus of honesty is more on how the person has been sinned against (p. 183):

1. "I have been abused."
2. "I am a victim of a crime against my body and soul."
3. It wasn't my fault.
4. "Abuse has damaged my soul."
5. The resulting damage "is due to the interweaving dynamics of powerlessness, betrayal, and ambivalence."
6. The abuse is worthy of being addressed and worked through.
7. It takes time to do so and should not be rushed.
8. "I must not keep a veil of secrecy and shame over my past, but I am not required to share my past with anyone I feel is untrustworthy or insensitive."

It is expected that embracing the "internal damage" will eventually lead to the memories of past abuse (p. 184).

Allender recommends prayer, fasting, and study of God's Word to facilitate this honesty, once the decision has been made to "deal with the abuse." The purpose of prayer, he says, is to "open the door to the unacknowledged anger, sorrow, and hunger of our soul" (p. 194). It is an "invitation to the Holy Spirit to bring to mind whatever He desires to make known, in whatever way He chooses to reveal" (p. 194). Fasting is "the choice to put aside legitimate satisfaction, for a time, to concentrate on a more pressing spiritual pursuit" (p. 194). Finally, "the Word exposes, awakens, and ultimately satisfies the heart by taking it into the mind of God (Hebrews 4:12-13)" (p. 195).

Prayer, fasting, and Bible study are all essential Christian disciplines. We can also agree that God desires *truth*, and thus the victim is not expected to *lie* about his past abuse. However, the weakness here is in the *primary* focus on the sins of others. This is not the heart of sanctification. As discussed at length earlier, retrieval of memories of suspected abuse is questionable at best, dangerous at worst. The human memory is fallible, and nowhere in His Word does God require that we spend time attempting to dig up memories of the sins of others. When abuse is already a *known fact*, then the victim is to focus on responding righteously so as to love God and others. The emphasis is not on one's own "damage."

**Self-Protection and Boundaries.** Unlike many others, this author acknowledges that the "setting of boundaries...often leads to self-centered, arrogant, autonomous self-protection" (p. 178). This is a welcome admission, yet he immediately goes on to state

that he considers "boundaries" a legitimate concept, as he accepts his limitations as a finite and sinful human being (p. 178). He claims that boundaries are legitimate to better serve others:

"The objective behind boundary building...will determine whether it is consistent with loving God and others or if it is merely self-centered humanism. The objective must be to bless the other person rather than to make sure we are not abused again." (p. 179)

Good and logical as this may sound, the concept of "boundaries" is highly tainted and feeds the inherent self-focus of man's nature. (See the critique, "Boundaries: Political or Personal," for a full discussion of this issue.)

**Love.** Because Jesus summed up all of God's commands in the exhortation to love God and others, love is an integral part of sanctification. Allender devotes significant space to this crucial subject, saying that love is made possible by both the love of God and the fear of Him, the "daily intertwining of holy fear of and love for the One who purchased our redemption" (p. 220-1).

Along with this important truth, Allender also stresses the cross and the suffering of our Lord, evidence of His love poured out for us, and motivation for us to also demonstrate love:

"When we are gripped by the good news that a just God has spared us death and condemnation and restored us to eternal relationship, we will discover the motivation to love." (p. 221)

The author says that the cross doesn't directly answer the question of why our own suffering has occurred, but it does assure us of God's love.

Defining what love is *not*, the author lists "weak, fear-based compliance" (p. 221), "an absence of anger" (p. 222), and "pious other-centeredness that is devoid of pleasure for the giver" (p. 222). He notes that unfortunately, "Christians have often neutered love by putting it at odds with anger" (p. 222).

Love, also, "does not forget past harm" (p. 222). Literal "forgetting" would be unbiblical denial, but "justifying hateful distance is not biblical either" (p. 222).

In a positive sense, Allender defines love as "essentially a movement of grace to embrace those who have sinned against us (Matthew 5:43-48)" (p. 223). It is further "a commitment to do whatever it takes (apart from sin) to bring health (salvation) to the abuser" (p. 225), hating the evil in the other person while loving him and desiring his restoration (p. 226). We neither distance ourselves nor overlook the sin of the other (p. 179).

Most of the author's comments about love are basically biblical, and a welcome relief from the almost totally self-focused emphasis of other psychologists. In the literature on abuse, even *Christian* writing, very little is said about demonstrating love for others. The most important concern is that we must be very

cautious about human anger, which is all too often expressed unrighteously. In addition, the statement that love "does not forget past harm" seems incompatible with 1 Corinthians 13:5, which states that love does not keep an account of wrong. The believer is not asked to "forget" in the sense of being unable to recall, and it is also true that he must sometimes confront the sin of another with loving motives. Still, there is a proper time, when forgiveness has occurred, to no longer remember. The author does not make this clear.

### **Who is the Counselor?**

This is a crucial question. Allender does not see the pastor as having the primary responsibility to counsel the members of his congregation, and yet the Scripture clearly obligates him to do so. He is instructed to keep watch over his flock, to oversee them faithfully as a shepherd. Like other psychologists, this author sees the pastor as *perhaps* doing some counseling, but not as the one who clearly has both the responsibility and training to counsel. Instead, he believes the pastor ought to educate people, from the pulpit, about abuse and unbiblical ideas of forgiveness. Certainly the pastor can use the pulpit to talk about godly responses to abuse, and of course he must teach biblical truth about forgiveness. At the same time, he must also be available to minister God's Word in the private setting of counseling. In fulfilling his duties to keep watch over God's flock, he must help them to guard against the erroneous, unscriptural teachings of psychology! He must not send them away to another pasture to be fed the poisonous ideas of unregenerate men, but must feed them from God's pure Word, which is sufficient for counsel.

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." Acts 20:28-30

### **Compassion**

It is important to strongly emphasize the importance of being compassionate toward any person who has been grievously sinned against. We are all sinners and accordingly must exercise humility and kindness in relating to others, including those entangled in sin (Galatians 6:1-5). Note the author's statement here:

"Repentance and forgiveness are the pinnacles of the journey, but a weary traveler cannot continue without a cup of cold water--rich understanding given from the kind hearts of those she cares about." (p. 190)

Agreed--we ought not to be impatient with the progress of another. I want to especially stress this, because this paper has had to emphasize the unbiblical nature of seeing man as more basically a victim than a sinner. While this is true, we are *all* sinners, and salvation comes only through the merciful intervention of God. On the basis of God's grace extended to us, we must be compassionate to others. A helpful passage for this purpose is 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Because God has comforted us in all of our afflictions, we are enabled to offer comfort to others.

#### **Concluding Comments: The *Pure Heart***

This book appears to be closer to the Bible than many others on the market today. The author stresses sin and repentance in the victim, and he emphasizes love for others--even the one who perpetrated the abuse. However, his view of man's depravity is weak, and his focus on the sins of others, seeing man as *more fundamentally a victim than a sinner*, is misleading. Also, the claimed necessity to retrieve memories is extremely dangerous, both in focus and potential destruction of families if those memories are not accurate. A few concluding comments are in order, plus a comparison of the *wounded heart* with the *pure heart* of the Scriptures.

**The seriousness of abuse.** This book begins, in the foreword, with statements concerning the serious nature of abuse and its consequences. Larry Crabb states that a simple surrender to Christ does not immediately resolve the difficulties of abuse, although it may initiate a good process (p. 9). Our hearts are deceitful and we live in a fallen world where our reactions to sin are "deeply stained with our own fallenness" (p. 9). Allender later notes that "true hope never minimizes a problem," but "begins by recognizing the utter hopelessness of our condition and the necessity of divine intervention" (p. 97). Thus he says: "A proper focus on the deep wound is therefore neither negative nor does it promote despair" (p. 97).

A good biblical counselor does not minimize the seriousness of sin, being as it is an offense against our holy, righteous God. The sin of abusing a child is an abomination in the sight of God. The sinful *response* of that child, as he matures, also offends God. Not only can we agree on the issue of seriousness--we must see the problem as *even more serious* than recognized by psychologists. Sin is deserving of eternal death. Sin separates us from God. It is much more than a matter of being "wounded" and "reclaiming" of self, or "healing" past wounds. Focus on the sins of others tends to *minimize* the seriousness of one's own sin before God. This author, although better than most, still misses the mark to an extent that we dare not overlook.

**Hope.** While Allender makes an effort to offer significant hope, he seems to underestimate the power of God:

"Nothing can be done to take away the heartache or failed

relationships of the past, but our hope is that in Christ the past need not stain the present nor shape the future."  
(p. 169-70)

True enough, the events of the past cannot actually be altered. However, the author does not quite see the very radical changes that are brought about by both salvation and sanctification. He also does not bring out clearly the *sovereignty* of God, who has ordained every one of our days before any one of them came to be (Psalm 139:16). The victim must come to grips with God's ultimate control and take comfort in the outworking of His eternal purposes. There is *hope*, more than what Allender offers, when a victim does place his trust in the sovereign Lord and His purposes are fulfilled.

**The pure heart.** The Bible does speak of the *brokenhearted*, noting God's wonderful promises to them (Psalm 34:18 and 137:3; Isaiah 61:1). The emphasis, however, is not so much on the sins of others which "wound" the heart, but rather an attitude of brokenness before God for having sinned against Him (Psalm 51:17), along with an honest, humble desire to have a *pure, clean* heart in His sight. God does promise protection, comfort, and justice to the *righteous* who rely on Him and respond to injustice in a godly manner (remembering here that *righteousness* is from God, not from self).

The title, *The Wounded Heart*, focuses too much on damage done to the "heart" by the sins of others. Biblically, the "heart" is the entire inner man. Jesus taught that out of the heart arise all kinds of sin (Matthew 15:16-19). People have a responsibility for guarding their hearts against sin (Proverbs 4:23). Focusing on the "wounded" heart clouds the biblical meaning of the word heart. The scriptural term "brokenhearted," while recognizing that a godly person may be grievously sinned against, gives more emphasis to being *broken* in the presence of God *for one's own sin*.

Finally, our Lord said that the *pure in heart* are blessed, and that they will *see God* (Matthew 5:8). The Bible emphasizes having a clean, pure heart in the presence of God:

"Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol and has not sworn deceitfully." Psalm 24:3-4

When David committed adultery and murder, he asked God to create in him a *clean (pure) heart* (Psalm 51:10). This is what the believer must seek, victim or not.

I want to close with some biblical words of comfort to the person who has been sinned against:

"But You, O God, do see trouble and grief, to repay by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You. You are the helper of the fatherless." Psalm 10:14

"When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will receive me." Psalm 27:10

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, because the old things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

This is the glorious hope guaranteed to every believer!

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Publications Ministry, Inc.  
[www.christiandiscernment.com](http://www.christiandiscernment.com)  
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## APPENDIX 1 POWERLESSNESS - BETRAYAL - AMBIVALENCE

### POWERLESSNESS

"Abuse strips a person of the freedom to choose." (p. 98)

#### ***Causes of Powerlessness***

1. *Inability to change the "dysfunctional" family*

"A child would rather have a bad parent than no parent."  
(p. 98)

"The impossibility of being enough to change a dysfunctional family leads to the initial experience of powerlessness."  
(p. 100)

2. *Inability to stop the abuse*

"The victim could not have known what was going to occur. There was no way to stop the assault." (p. 100)

Author also notes the "impossibility of stopping abuse once it has begun." (p. 100)

3. *Inability to end the relentless pain in the soul*

This inability "involves something outside the soul" and is "the victim's inability to stop his or her own soul from bleeding." (p. 101)

"The heart aches, and there is no immediate recourse for relief, except the soul-numbing choice to abandon a sense of being alive. What a terrible choice!" (p. 101)

"We are all helpless, but only those who have been radically deprived of the inherent freedom to choose and the legitimate desire to redirect that which is wrong will know how truly powerless we are in every endeavor that matters the most to us." (p. 102)

#### ***Cost of Powerlessness***

1. *"Self-doubt is common when our efforts fail to bring results."*  
(p. 102)

2. *Despair*

"Despair is a protective blanket that shields the soul against

the cold demands of harsh self-doubt; depression is the middle ground between the pressured energy to change and the total abandonment of hope." (p. 103)

### 3. *Deadness*

"Those who abandon hope deaden their soul by cutting off the parts of it that still feel rage, pain, and desire and exiting those parts to the furthest reaches of the unconscious." (p. 103)

"It is impossible finally and completely to deaden the soul." (p. 103)

### **Consequences of Powerlessness**

#### 1. *Loss of a sense of pain*

"The struggle of being powerless in the face of overwhelming evil and emptiness is a titanic battle that seems best forgotten. The energy required to keep the iron wall of denial intact is costly and time-consuming. Therefore, it is common for the memories and feelings to be lost to the soul, buried in deep storage, rather than anguished over in a world that offers no help." (p. 105)

#### 2. *Loss of a sense of self*

"Many times the chronic patterns of lying or deceit common to abused persons arise because of a forsaken history that forces them to concoct a past and a present that has no connection to their abused soul." (p. 106)

#### 3. *Loss of a sense of judgment*

"Since she has played dead to her pain in the past, she doesn't learn what hurts her; therefore, she often unwittingly opens herself to further victimization in the future." (p. 107)

"An empty and unsure person is an easy mark for those who are looking for illicit pleasure and gain." (p. 107)

### **Core Images of Powerlessness**

"The contemptuous evaluation of ability and intelligence...serves to deaden pain and refocus attention away from what the abused person feels most powerless to do anything about: her hatred and rage." (p. 110)

## **BETRAYAL**

"Betrayal can be defined as any disregard or harm done to the dignity of another as a result of one's commitment to find life apart from God." (p. 113)

"The moment core trust is lost in a relationship, efforts to understand and nourish the other person are forgotten in a battle to control and minimize damage to oneself," either through "cynical sophistication" or "naive, childish blindness," but "in either case, relationship is violated." (p. 112)

### ***Causes of Betrayal***

#### ***1. Home***

The home is a "dangerous and unpredictable environment" which fails to provide nourishment. (p. 114)

#### ***2. Thirst***

"The victim of abuse is left thirsty and then is forced to participate in consuming something that both touches the legitimate thirst of her being, while also destroying the very aspect of her being that has been relationally aroused." (p. 115)

#### ***3. Non-offending Parent's Role***

This parent may have actively participated in orchestrating the abuse, or may have either neglected or denied what was happening. Perhaps, because of the parent's weakness, the child had nowhere to turn.

"In all three forms of nonoffending betrayal the parent(s) chose the route of personal comfort or self-protection over the parental privilege and responsibility of providing a safe environment for their child." (p. 117)

### ***Cost of Betrayal***

#### ***1. Hypervigilance***

Victims become "constantly concerned with uncovering the ill intentions" of other people, and has "profound self-consciousness about how others may see them." This leads to exhaustion and tainted conclusions. (p. 118)

## 2. *Suspicion*

The victim begins to distance herself from involvement with others: "When an abused person feels warm toward another person, it is not uncommon for him or her to suspiciously evaluate the feeling as immoral and dangerous." (p. 119)

The victim fears danger from others but is also afraid of being dangerous.

## 3. *Distortion and Denial*

The victim doubts his own feelings and "relational intuition" due to "repeated exposure to inaccurate information" (p. 119-120). He lives in "a haze of distortion, partial truths, and a lack of objectivity" (p. 119).

"Patterns of distorting facts and conclusions in one's own mind lead eventually to the necessity of deceiving others." (p. 120)

## ***Consequences of Betrayal***

### 1. *Doubt, Despair, Deadness*

"The damage of powerlessness is the onslaught of doubt, despair, and deadness that leads to a loss of a sense of self. The damage of betrayal is the deepening conviction that relationship can neither be enjoyed, trusted, nor expected to last." (p. 121)

The victim is alienated and isolated, afraid to love and sometimes replacing nearness, which "satisfies some of the ache and does not threaten the wounded heart" (p. 121-2).

### 2. *Autonomy and Safety*

The victim makes a "commitment never to want intimacy or need protection" (p. 123). Meanwhile, "while the front door is shut tight to intimacy, often the back door is left wide open to an obvious abuser" (p. 123).

"If in a core relationship, strength was exercised to use and destroy rather than to protect, why would the victim assume that in a less intimate relationship, sacrificial protection would be provided?" (p. 122)

### ***Core Images of Betrayal***

#### ***1. Weakness and Incompetence***

The victim begins to see herself as having "some terrible flaw in the soul or body" (p. 123), being "undesirable and ugly" (p. 124).

#### ***2. Self-Consciousness***

The victim may pay excessive attention to her body, health, and diet, obsessed with self-consciousness and contempt for her body (p. 124).

"The person who is endlessly 'working on herself' through another seminar, tape, or book is often the one who has the most contempt toward her own character." (p. 125)

## **AMBIVALENCE**

Allender defines ambivalence as "feeling two contradictory emotions at the same time" (p. 127).

### ***Causes of Ambivalence***

#### ***1. Pleasure with Pain***

"The very thing that was despised also brought some degree of pleasure." (p. 130)

"The ambivalence about pleasure helps explain the chronic sense of irrational responsibility for abuse." (p. 130)

#### ***2. Fantasy***

Victims may "misinterpret their longing for intimacy as lustful passion" because "intimacy once fused with abuse surfaces, to some degree or another, whenever intimacy is experienced in other relationships" (p. 132). "Frightening memories, dreams, and fantasies" may intrude, leaving victims feeling "as if a portion of their mind is not under their control" (p. 131).

#### ***3. Repetition***

"Psychoanalysts claim that man is apt to identify with the aggressor and repeat or play out the past abuse in current relationships." Thus, "the future seems doomed to repeat the past" (p. 133). Normally, "it involves the repetition of other more mundane, but equally destructive, patterns of relating to others" (p. 133).

### ***Cost of Ambivalence***

#### ***1. Shame and Contempt***

"The internal cost of ambivalence is the infusion of massive shame and contempt." (p. 134)

The "false cure" is "self- or other-centered contempt" which "protects the soul from the possibility that lust will surface and destroy. Or it propels the person into promiscuous relationships that validate what she fears may have been true: the abuse really was her fault." (p. 134)

### ***Consequences of Ambivalence***

#### ***1. Fear of Pleasure - Hatred of Longing***

The victim hates being weak, hates intimacy, and femininity or masculinity is despised or ignored (p. 135). He establishes "stiff, angry boundaries that will not permit cross traffic" (p. 136). Pleasure is cautiously controlled, and the hunger of the heart for intimacy is entangled with a revulsion for sex (p. 136).

#### ***2. "Addictions"***

Some repetitive pattern is used to handle struggles, but it "impairs personal functioning and relationships" and "cannot be stopped without extensive outside intervention" (p. 138).

The behavior provides an illusion of control for a limited amount of time, and appears to numb the hurt (p. 139).

### ***Core Images of Ambivalence***

#### ***1. Self-Contempt***

The victim, having already seen himself as incompetent and undesirable, now concludes that he is "dirty, vile, and cheap" (p. 139). Supposedly, this conclusion explains not only the past abuse but the absence of intimate relationships in the present (p. 139).

"Core images are contemptuous explanations of internal damage and maps for living out self-protected patterns of relating to others." (p. 140)

