

How to Minister to the Inner Family

A COMMON EXPERIENCE

I will call this person Gene, though he is a composite of several with whom I have worked. His reply to my opening question, "How can I help you?" was: "Part of me loves my wife, but part of me seems to be threatened by her, even to hate her. And part of me loves myself, but then there are voices within me that condemn me, especially when I do or think certain things. I can't even figure out whether I am totally committed to Christ since part of me seems to be committed, but other parts don't. What's wrong with me, anyway?"

What Gene was describing may be likened to an inner family made up of a variety of parts, subselves, or subpersonalities each with a different attitude and response to various persons and events in his life. This concept of the inner family is developed in a very helpful article by Richard Schwartz, a prominent family therapist, and in a book entitled *Subpersonalities* by another prominent therapist, John Rowan. Schwartz says in his article, "In my own work, I find it most useful to conceive of one's inner life as an internal family, in a loose, metaphorical sense. In this family, the Self is like the central executive of a loyal clan containing a wide range of members, from needy children to meddling older relatives. Indeed, if asked, most clients can conjure up an image of each part or sub-self... and the visages of the personified parts range from very young to old and haggard."¹

Earlier in the article, Dr. Schwartz cites the findings of Michael Gazzaniga, a prominent researcher on the nature and workings of the brain. According to Gazzaniga, "The brain actually consists of an undetermined number of independently functioning units or 'modules' with specialized functions" that we access unconsciously at different times for various purposes as we go about the tasks of living. These modules shape both our cognitive and emotional functioning in such a way that our inner family can be seen to "consist of a group of 'modular selves,' clusters of related beliefs, feelings, and expectations about the world" that govern our everyday behavior.²

In his 1990 book, Rowan similarly defines a subpersonality as "a semi-permanent and semi-autonomous region of the personality capable of acting as a person."³ Furthermore, Rowan traces the concept throughout psychological literature, making a good case for treating this theory as a well-attested psychological concept. A popular, though not fully developed, version of this theory was published by Eric Berne and labeled "Transactional Analysis" as early as 1961.⁴ Since that date it has become common for many to speak of the "parent," "adult," or "child" parts of the human person. Similarly, Richard Dickinson refers to certain parts of the human person as the "inner child" and "inner parent."⁵

With this working knowledge of the inner family, we can see that Gene was identifying certain aspects of his own internal life and was puzzled by the conflicting attitudes embodied in the diverse parts of himself. Probably all of us can identify with him to some extent.

Rowan contends that the fact that we can experience such internal conflict indicates that we have more than a single subpersonality. These subpersonalities, then, form a continuum in the human person. "At one end of this continuum are fluctuations in mood, interpreted as a state of mind organized around a particular emotion.... Further along the continuum, but still well within the range of normal experience, are the roles and ego states and subpersonalities within which individuals perform state-specific tasks and life activities...."⁶ Farther along the continuum, according to Rowan, are the

subpersonality states that are not normal and require therapy. These will be our concern in this chapter.

If Rowan, Schwartz, Gazzaniga, and others who are analyzing human personality in this way are right, *all of us, whether normal or abnormal, are much more complicated than we usually think. "In a sense, we are all multiple personalities."*⁷ According to this analysis, such abilities as talking to ourselves, holding differing opinions and attitudes at the same time, even of assuming a different persona as we adopt various roles in diverse settings, demonstrate the presence of subpersonalities within each of us.

Such an analysis rings true to me as I consider how I regularly conduct internal conversations with myself or, according to this theory, with my subpersonalities, especially during times of conflict. It also helps me explain differences in my behavior that occur when I am teaching as compared to playing with my grandchildren, when I relate to my wife as compared to talking with my students or counselees, and when I am worshipping as compared to playing softball.

I see such complexity as God-given, and this analysis as an insight into the way he has made us marvelous creatures as human beings. As we approach the question of bringing healing to those with deep-level dysfunction, then, we are not asking whether there are various internal parts in a person, but rather how those parts or subselves function, with the goal of integration and wholeness for the complete person. In ministering to people, we have found it possible to talk to subpersonalities other than the main Self in *nearly everyone*.

For example, I have frequently been able to talk to the six- or eight- or twelve-year-old part of a client to get information concerning how that person felt during a particularly traumatic episode of her or his life. But not all such subpersonalities I have talked to have been hurting. Some seem to have had rather normal experiences. Therefore, rather than treating the existence of such internal subpersonalities as pathological, as many have, we will here regard it as normal, given the complexity of the human personality.

Returning to Gene, he wanted to know whether the kind of internal conflict he was experiencing was normal. He suspected it was not and thought there was something radically wrong with himself. As we worked together, however, he came to see that the problem was not that there were so many parts to himself, but that some of these parts had sustained damage earlier in his life. His problems, then, could be handled under the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit by helping the damaged subselves toward functioning in a more integrated way with his relatively healthy and normal subpersonalities.

To help understand these subpersonalities better, we need to consider the term "inner child." This term is used in at least three different senses in inner healing and psychological literature. Some use it to refer to immature aspects of a person's personality (see Dickinson, *The Child in Each of Us*). Others, particularly those in the "recovery movement," see the inner child as "the sensitive, vulnerable part of ourselves" that should be discovered, healed, and then nurtured throughout our lives in order for us to achieve wholeness, emotional health, and our creative potential (for example, Lucia Cappachione, *Recovery of Your Inner Child*). Still others find the term a convenient label for one or more subselves created by persons as a kind of storehouse of reactions to negative experiences in their past, especially in their childhood (see Rita Bennett, *Making Peace With Your Inner Child*, and David A. Seamands, *Putting Away Childish Things*).

The concept as we are developing it here is most like the latter usage, though we see the existence of such internal parts as normal rather than pathological. The fact that

some of these subselves sustain damage and, therefore, need to be ministered to makes the following discussion important in a treatment of deep-level healing.

Many have found that attitudes and behaviors of parents and other significant persons in their lives are often represented by the attitudes and behaviors of certain subpersonalities as well. These may be called "inner parents." In the inner family, then, the inner child or children of a particular person seem to encapsulate attitudes and behaviors reminiscent of their reactions to those significant others represented by inner parents—responses that may get triggered even in adult life when we encounter those people or others who remind us of them.

I have, for example, been fascinated and frequently disturbed by the immaturity of my own reactions as an adult to authority figures who remind me of my father. It helps me to think of a part of myself as embodying a "little boy" who responds unconsciously even now to such authority figures as a much younger "me" responded to my father. When this happens, the coordinator part of me, what Schwartz calls the "Self," has to take over and remind myself that I am now an adult and that the authority figure I am reacting to is not my father. I am no longer a little boy and do not have to respond unthinkingly in the dysfunctional way I did as a little boy in relating to my father.

DAMAGED SUBPERSONALITIES

Probably because they are more disturbing to us, we are more likely to be aware of our damaged parts or subselves than of those that are better adjusted. Take, for example, a person whose internal family includes a confident, well-adjusted subself, a tender, loving subself, a condemning subself, and a "poor me" subself. It is likely that that person will be more aware of and troubled by the latter two than by the first two. Those who interact with this person regularly will also be more troubled by the latter two. Seeing this person as a singular, uncomplicated being rather than as made up of several subselves, then, leads both to misjudgment and to confusion about the exact nature of the person's problems.

Gene, for example, found himself in the situation of one of Dr. Schwartz's examples: "If a husband says 'I hate you' to his wife in the midst of an argument, she is likely to think, even after his post-fight apologies, that down deep he really does hate her since 'he wouldn't have said it if he didn't mean it.' In other words, people tend to mistake the parts they activate in each other for the whole person... Similarly, if a sad, hopeless part of the wife is activated by her husband's anger and overwhelms her, she may conclude that that part is all she really is."⁸

Gene was helped considerably when he was able to see that different parts of himself could take control at different times and that only parts, not the whole, were dysfunctional. By working toward better cooperation between the parts under the direction of the Self, then, we made great progress toward helping him solve his personal problems.

To understand how our subselves can become damaged, it is helpful to realize that within each person, imprinted on the brain, is a lifetime record of experiences and that person's reactions to those experiences. Often, a subpersonality is built largely around one or more damaging experiences. This is particularly true in childhood when we are most vulnerable. Uncontrolled emotional responses that appear unwarranted in a current situation may indicate that there is such a subself or inner child within, responding out of pain from the past. It is these damaged parts, subselves, or inner children that need deep-level healing.

When there is damage, especially that of abuse, one of the functions of these subselves is to hide the memories from the conscious "overseer" Self. God has built into us the ability of certain parts of us to protect other parts. One may picture, then, an abused subself building walls inside to protect the coordinating or overseeing part of the total person from the traumatic memory, so the person is free to go on with life in as normal a manner as possible. When this happens, it may look on the surface as if the Self is in denial concerning the abuse. In reality, however, the Self may simply be protected from the memory by a subself.

UNDERSTANDING DISSOCIATION: A COPING MECHANISM FOR DAMAGED SUBPERSONALITIES

When such walls exist between subpersonalities and the self, psychologists have come to refer to the condition as dissociation. *The term dissociation is the technical label used by psychologists to designate the very human ability to move away mentally from whatever is going on around us and to lose ourselves in something else.* We all dissociate from real life from time to time. When we daydream to the point where we do not hear the phone ring or someone calling our name, we are dissociating. In itself, dissociation is not a negative thing. Indeed, it can be a useful mechanism that allows us to concentrate or relax when we need to.

There are, however, degrees of dissociation that far surpass daydreaming or getting lost in a movie or book. These extreme forms involve the building of walls between subselves and the Self and the producing of new subselves to encapsulate damage in such a way that few or none of the memories and feelings are shared with the conscious Self. Though these more extreme forms of dissociation serve the valuable purpose of enabling the total person to survive difficult, usually abusive, situations, they typically become problematic later in life. The person who dissociates to the extent of producing pathological multiple personalities or angry inner children will usually require deep-level healing at some point.

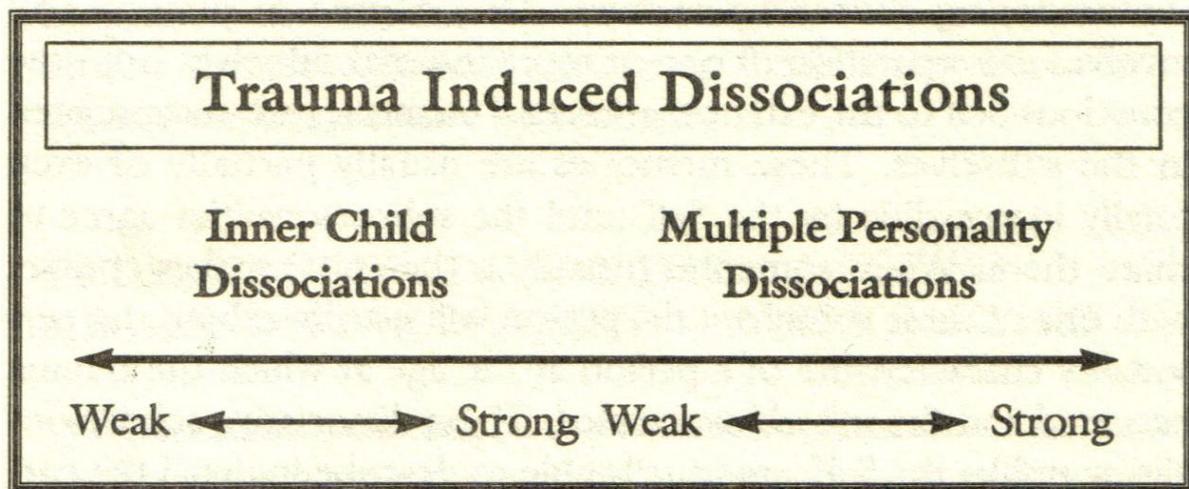
With an eye to these more extreme forms, we will define dissociation as *the human ability to separate off certain experiences from the mainstream of life and to encapsulate them in an alternate consciousness that functions to a greater or lesser extent separately from the main consciousness.*

We are concerned here, then, with the God-given ability to build mental and emotional "walls" around abusive experiences that keeps people from being consciously aware of, or even remembering those experiences. This degree of dissociation involves the separation of one or more internal subselves from the conscious Self to the extent that certain memories are encapsulated in the subselves. These memories are usually partially or even totally inaccessible by the Self until the subpersonalities agree to share them. When someone (usually a therapist) makes contact with one of these subselves, the person will usually exhibit the personality characteristics of a person at the age at which the trauma occurred and the subself dissociated. These dissociative subpersonalities, unlike the Self, are usually able to describe in detail the particular problem(s) that led to their being created.

The degree of dissociation in response to trauma seems to depend on at least two factors: the severity of the abuse and the creativity of the person. When the abuse is great and the person very creative, the walls between the various subselves and the coordinating part of the total person are built very high and thick. This results in Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) in which there is, for many parts of the Self, a greater distinctness and completeness to each subself than in lesser forms of dissociation, such as inner children. When the abuse is less, though separation of subselves is a factor, the

barriers between the subselves are not as difficult to take down. In both cases, though, we are dealing with dissociative reactions to trauma, not with the much milder and temporary dissociation of watching a movie or reading a book.

Although this will be viewed as controversial in certain circles, in my view, milder (inner child) and more severe dissociation (MPD) can be seen as at the opposite poles of a scale of trauma-induced dissociations. (See the scale below.) Within each, then, there is a range of variation. That is, there are weaker and stronger forms of inner child-type dissociations and weaker and stronger forms of multiple personality-type dissociations. Stronger forms of inner child dissociations, however, can be difficult to distinguish from weaker forms of multiple personality dissociations. For this reason we can view them as varieties of essentially the same phenomenon. *(Here it is very important that the reader remember the sense in which we are using the term 'inner child.' See page 224 for my earlier comments on this.)*



There is a certain amount of inner healing literature dealing with inner children and a certain amount of psychological literature dealing with multiple personality disorder. Seldom, however, do these writings connect the two. Having worked with both, I find great similarities between them. Since the line between these conditions is a fuzzy one and not always distinguishable, I feel it best to conceptualize them as points on the same continuum. We will treat below first the milder forms of trauma-induced dissociations (inner child) and then Multiple Personality Disorder.

WARNING: Though in my experience mature lay counselors can be effective in working with mild (inner child) dissociation, I strongly recommend that any client who is a survivor of childhood trauma be advised to seek professional counseling. This is especially needed in dealing with MPD-level clients who require skill beyond that of any other issue we deal with in deep-level healing. Such clients should either be turned over to reputable, professional Christian counselors who specialize in MPD, or mature lay counselors should work under their direction.

For those who have experienced childhood trauma, Christian psychologist Dr. David King, who has counseled a number of people with dissociative disorders, recommends "great caution in applying these methods. For untrained and unsupervised [by professionals] lay counselors to apply these techniques could potentially cause considerable harm." Dr. King's point is that there is usually great psychological

complexity in such cases. "Any person," King says, "who has been severely traumatized has built up a very large system of parts which protect the person from feeling certain feelings and re-experiencing various aspects of the original experience. Bringing a repressed memory too swiftly to awareness by wanton application of these powerful methods will almost certainly trigger strong reactions.... The consequences could range from episodes of self-loathing and shame to overeating, rage outbursts, self abuse, or even suicide."⁹

The reason for dealing with this subject at all, in spite of such a strong warning, is that as we work in prayer ministry, we are likely to come across such phenomena. We need, therefore, to be able to recognize such disorders and to take the necessary steps to obtain the right kind of help for the counselee. According to Dr. King, however, it can be very helpful for all involved in Christian counseling, whether on a professional or a lay basis, to employ both the inner family model summarized above and prayer ministry. He says, "In my experience the Schwartz model, adapted for Christians by allowing for Jesus' participation in the healing process, is by far the most powerful method of therapy that exists for certain kinds of problems, especially those resulting from deep trauma. I am glad to see these ideas being espoused by someone in the Christian literature. I think it will provide a foundation for others to build on."¹⁰

This being true, in dealing with trauma-induced dissociation, it is at least as important for professional counselors to engage the assistance of those experienced in deep-level, prayer-centered healing techniques as it is for deep-level healing specialists to call for professional assistance. Alternatively, professionals can learn the techniques of deep-level healing and employ them, in addition to those learned in their professional training.

MILD (INNER CHILD) DISSOCIATION: JERRY AND JENNY

Jerry, a career missionary in his mid-fifties, had been in therapy for some time when he came to my colleague, Mark White, for prayer counseling. Jerry had had a difficult childhood. Unlike many who have dissociative disorders, he could describe much of what had happened. However, he had no feelings attached to those experiences. As Mark worked with him using picturing techniques, Jerry was able to see Jesus in the childhood events, but found himself as a boy unable to turn and face the Lord. Recognizing that this indicated an emotional problem, Mark asked the Holy Spirit what to do.

The impression that Mark received was that he should try to find a "child" subself within Jerry. Without prompting or instruction to Jerry, Mark began speaking to him as if he was a little boy, asking about his feelings during the abusive situations in which he was involved. Immediately, Jerry's voice was that of a small child! In a little boy's voice, a subself spoke describing in detail his feelings as he experienced the abuse. Jerry was shocked by this development. Yet with the information supplied by this dissociative part of himself, he and Mark were able to pray, and with God's help, achieve an integration of this "child" part of himself, including the feelings, with the adult Self. The picture that came to Jerry, then, was of himself as a child who was no longer ashamed to face Jesus and who even allowed Jesus to embrace him.

Now let's turn to a more severe and complicated case than Jerry's to help us learn more about ministering to those with inner children. Jenny is a woman in her mid-thirties who came seeking help for confusion and pain stemming from memories of abuse as a young adult. During our discussion of these experiences, it became obvious that she also carried memories of abuse during her childhood. As the Holy Spirit began

to help her recall these early memories, I noted that her voice often changed to that of a child when she recounted what had happened. It was, then, easy to interact with these subselves as if they were separate children living inside of her. In working with Jenny regularly over a period of months and then more sporadically for two years, we found a number of these mildly dissociated subselves, each encapsulating memories of difficult experiences and the emotions that go with them. Though these inner children had been keeping Jenny from remembering these experiences, they were not able to keep her present adult life free from turmoil.

With Jenny, I began the process by interacting with several of these inner children one by one. Jenny then continued the process on her own. In her case, it was helpful to identify each subself by age. Thus, we could label the inner child that encapsulated her six-year-old experiences, "Jenny-6;" the one who encapsulated her eight-year-old experiences, "Jenny-8;" and so on. We found that each inner subself had a series of difficult experiences to recount, most of which the adult Self could remember only in general, if at all. The inner children supplied her with detailed descriptions of traumatic events, though often they had to be coaxed to do so. The need for coaxing arose from the fact that most of these dissociated parts of herself saw their main purpose as the hiding of such facts from the adult Self.

So we dealt with each of the experiences in the ways described throughout this book. As the problems were first admitted to the adult Self, and then dealt with, each of the "children" forgave those who had hurt them. Strange as it may sound, several of them also needed to forgive Jenny for what they perceived as neglect. In addition, we sought to make sure that those subselves who were created prior to Jenny's decision to commit her life to Christ knew Jesus and were in agreement with this commitment.

Most of our interactions proceeded something as follows: once I had identified, say, Jenny-8, I would ask if eight-year-old Jenny would agree to talk to me. I would then describe myself as a friend of the adult Self who was trying to help her with some of her problems. An eight-year-old voice would respond, "Okay." After further conversation designed to build rapport, I would then ask if there was anything bothering her that I could help her with. I might suggest that Jenny had told me that her eighth year had been a difficult one, so we thought Jenny-8 might be able to fill us in on some of the details. Though sometimes shy and distrustful at first, Jenny-8 would eventually talk about the abuse that had taken place during that year and we would deal with forgiveness of the perpetrator(s), and her relationship to the adult Self and to Jesus. Our goals were to heal the pain, to take care of all reaction problems, such as unforgiveness, and to work toward integration of this dissociated part with the Self.

My first interaction with Jenny-13 was especially dramatic. Adult Jenny had been working through this process on her own. She had found it relatively easy to speak to the various subselves within herself without the need for me to be present. But one day she called me to ask for an appointment because her thirteen-year-old would not talk to her. In her picturing, adult Jenny could not even get Jenny-13 to face her. In fact, the picture she got was of Jenny-13 running away whenever the adult Self tried to approach her.

When adult Jenny arrived at my office for help, I introduced myself to Jenny-13 and asked if she would talk to me. After awhile, she reluctantly agreed and I asked her what was bothering her. She confessed to me that she was ashamed to talk to the adult Self but would not tell me why. Our suspicion was that she was hiding some abusive event or series of events. I asked her then if she knew Jesus. She said she did, so I asked if she would agree to stop her running and to talk to adult Jenny if Jesus was present.

After some coaxing, she agreed. In that context, she eventually shared with adult Jenny the abusive events she had been hiding. Contrary to Jenny-13's fears, then, adult

Jenny accepted her, assured her that she was not guilty, and they got to be friends. Soon after this event, Jenny was able to incorporate (technically "fuse") Jenny-13 into her main Self so that they are no longer separate.

HELPFUL TECHNIQUES FOR MINISTERING TO THOSE WITH INNER CHILDREN

Jenny's growing-up years involved a lot of sexual, physical, and verbal abuse. She grew up in an alcoholic family with a father given to long absences or drunken rages and a mother who was emotionally unavailable to her. Such childhood experiences frequently lead to the dissociation of one or more of a person's subpersonalities in order to enable the Self to survive.

In cases such as Jenny's, the predominant emotion hidden with the pain is likely to be anger. Those who grow up in other types of situations often carry inner children whose primary emotion is loneliness, fear, insecurity, the need to control, or some other negative emotion, accompanied by low self-esteem and self-rejection. As adults, then, such people will often find themselves reacting more like damaged children than mature adults, indicating the need for integration and deep-level healing. Yet they may go for many years without recognizing the source of the problem or what to do about it. This was Jenny's constant experience until we discovered the dissociative parts of her and dealt with their problems.

Those who minister deep-level healing will before long confront dissociative parts, subselves, or inner children in their clients. Unfortunately, this is a common phenomenon. But the positive aspect of this is that getting acquainted with inner children can help us identify our adult client's root problems and lead to effective ministry.

Though we have to regard as unproven theory our attempts to analyze exactly what is going on psychologically, it is my experience, as well as that of Drs. Rowan, Schwartz, and King, that these subselves are typically distinct enough for another person to communicate with them. Furthermore, these dissociative parts of a person are usually created as "containers" in which to hide disagreeable experiences and the emotions that go along with them. Working with these dissociative subselves, then, to bring healing to such deeply hidden experiences, needs to be an important concern of all of us involved in deep-level healing. Whatever arrangement such clients make with professional counselors, we must be concerned to see them dealt with under the power of God. For only then can freedom come at the deepest levels to damaged people.

For the most part, once contact is made with a subself, the lay counselor can follow the same patterns of inner healing discussed elsewhere in this volume. There are, however, a few specifics to keep in mind.

Making contact. The counselor has to discover or "make contact with" the damaged subself. If you suspect such a subself is present, first ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to find "him or her," then ask the adult Self for permission to talk with that part. You can then address the subself as you would a normal person of that age. If you are not sure whether a damaged subself is there, you may ask something like, "Is there a little boy [girl] here who would be willing to talk with me?" Often such hurt parts of the self, especially inner children, are fearful of being discovered lest they be treated as badly as they were in the past. They may, therefore, have to be coaxed and assured that they can trust the lay counselor and the adult Self.

Working on one's own. Much of the work with subselves can usually be done by clients on their own. Often, whether in the lay counselor's presence or on their own, they will be able to picture the subself at a specific age or stage of life. Guide them to note such

things as posture, facial expression, and manner of speech. They may also notice or ask where the inner child is. The child may be hiding or in the dark for some reason. Often, important facts concerning the problems that need to be solved are indicated by what the person sees or hears concerning such matters.

Accepting Jesus. Dissociative subselves may not know Jesus as Savior, especially if they were created before the person accepted Christ. If so, they can be led to commit themselves to Jesus. I don't know what the theological implications of this are. All aspects of a person benefit, however, when subselves surrender to Jesus.

Forgiving the abuser(s). In my experience, it appears that forgiveness granted by a subself "at the age" at which the abuse occurred is often more complete and effective than if the adult Self simply grants the forgiveness. Granting forgiveness is difficult, especially for victims of abuse. Understandably, it is often a long-term process for adults. When an inner child forgives the abuser(s) for things that happened at the inner child's age, however, it is often quicker and less difficult.

Dealing with subselves at any age. As indicated, subselves can be any age. The fact that most of the abuse that leads to dissociation tends to happen to children, however, leads to the tendency to refer to these parts of the self as inner children.

Acceptance and love. It is essential that these parts of the Self be accepted and treated well both by the lay counselor and client. Clients are sometimes so "freaked out" by the presence of dissociative subselves that they do not at first make them feel safe. This is one of the reasons why caution is in order in such ministry and why professional counseling should be sought by the client. These subselves usually remain hidden out of shame, anger, fear, guilt, or other negative emotions. They may have been badly hurt and are, therefore, unwilling to trust easily. Unless they are assured they will be accepted no matter what has happened to them or what they may have done, they will probably continue to hide. Further, as Dr. King points out, if inner healing is pursued too aggressively, it can trigger negative emotions in a way that is detrimental and possibly even dangerous to the client.¹¹ As we saw with Jenny above, if the inner child is reluctant to come out, it is often helpful to invite Jesus to be present to mediate between the Self and the subself. When Jesus is present, inner children will often be more willing to reveal to the one ministering and to the client what they are feeling and needing.

In communicating love and acceptance to the inner child, it is usually helpful for the adult Self to apologize for not acknowledging the existence of this inner part earlier on. While this may sound bizarre to many readers, it is important to realize that the inner child typically feels that the way the Self has apparently ignored it indicates something is badly wrong with it. To overcome this problem, the Self usually needs to spend time with this inner part, supplying the safety, acceptance, and love it felt deprived of.

Reparenting. Disaffected inner children usually need nurturing and "reparenting." This term refers to the ability of adults to commit themselves to be parents to parts of themselves more adequately than their own parents were as they were growing up. This often requires the adult to spend a good bit of time with the inner child or children. This can usually be done by clients on their own once the major issues have been addressed and worked through. Eventually, the child and adult may decide to fuse or integrate. This often happens automatically once enough inner healing has taken place.

When inner children are discovered, either the lay counselor or the client can converse with them as would be appropriate with any real child of that age. It may be helpful to use a nickname the child had, as long as it did not hold negative connotations. Such dissociative subselves will need to be listened to, comforted, and befriended. Allow them to express the emotions they have been holding, then encourage them to give their hurts to Jesus for healing. To some extent the lay counselor, but mostly the client and Jesus, can supply what was lacking in acceptance, nurture, and love. With Jesus we can supply such things as comfort in distress, a trusting relationship in loneliness, love and acceptance in place of rejection, freedom to cry or grieve, attention to remedy neglect, hope and forgiveness in place of hopelessness and self-condemnation.

The goal of integration and wholeness. When damaged sub-selves experience healing, there comes a time when they want to integrate with the Self. Though this time should not be rushed, the lay counselor should watch for it and welcome it. When both parties are ready, I simply ask Jesus to fuse them. After each such integration, the Self begins to move toward a degree of wholeness and emotional maturity that he or she has never known previously. Though this wholeness does not happen overnight, learning to live in an integrated way usually begins to pay large dividends right from the start. The immature emotional reactions that used to characterize the person's life no longer happen so frequently. There is a new sense of freedom, even though the process of integration has just started.

One pitfall in seeking integration and wholeness is that, as mentioned earlier, the material revealed by inner subselves may be surprising or alarming to the conscious Self. (Once again, this is why professional counseling can be so helpful, in addition to long-term prayer ministry.) We need to be alert to this possibility and help clients to accept such information so they, in turn, can communicate acceptance and support to the subself. Integration should not be sought until both the Self and subself are in full agreement about being joined. In addition, it is important for the client to thank the damaged part for his or her hard work in holding the painful feelings and hiding the traumatic experiences for so long. Often both the conscious Self and the inner subself need to ask forgiveness of each other—the Self for not paying attention to the hurting subself, the latter for causing overreactions in many situations.

A commitment on the part of the Self to pay attention to the subselves from now on goes a long way toward healing and integration. Before integration takes place, the knowledge of life experiences (especially the good things) that have happened since the inner children were created can profitably be communicated to the subselves, providing them with a good deal of hope. Those things that build the inner child's faith to the level of the conscious Self are particularly helpful. In this transition from dissociation to cooperation and integration, the Self can be nearly an ideal parent for inner children, providing opportunities (often through picturing) that the person never had as a child, as well as the appropriate discipline in love that may have been lacking. Let Jesus and the Self reparent the child inside and many exciting changes can occur.

UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER

As I have indicated, when the inner parts, subselves, or inner children we have been discussing are hurt, they often move into dissociation. The kind of dissociation discussed above is, however, mild compared to what psychologists call Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). Though treatment of MPD should always be directed by trained and experienced professional therapists, it is not unlikely that readers of this

book who launch into inner healing will find themselves faced with it from time to time. We need, then, to be able to recognize the problem, if for no other reason than to refer the client to the right kind of professional. As we have seen, though, prayer ministry can make a valuable contribution of its own to the total therapeutic process in dealing with dissociative disorders.

The psychological establishment seems to be coming to the conclusion that MPD is much more common than previously believed, especially among those who have experienced ritual abuse and incest. And since ritual abuse usually has a spiritual dimension to it, when people coming out of such a background seek healing, they often turn to prayer ministry. This increases the chances that those of us engaged in deep-level healing through prayer will be faced with people suffering from MPD. This has certainly been the experience of the lay counseling group I'm a part of.

The following is designed to assist us to understand enough of the problem so we can refer people to professionals and assist them in the therapeutic process. Those with MPD (as well as those with other problems) usually profit greatly from receiving both prayer ministry and professional counseling on a regular basis.

Professional Christian counselors, therefore, are likely to encourage their people to continue working with those who are seasoned and tested in deep-level healing and willing to make a long-term commitment to the client. As I write, I am involved regularly with four clients who have MPD. This brings me into a relationship with three professional Christian therapists, each of whom seems to highly value my role in the process of helping our clients to freedom. And I certainly value their professional expertise and insight.

MPD involves a high level of dissociation. Virtually impenetrable walls are built between subselves and the Self to protect the latter from the devastation of being conscious of abusive experiences. With such experiences segmented off into distinct alternate consciousnesses, the Self can often lead a fairly normal life, as if the abusive events had never occurred. There usually comes a time, though, when the surfacing of disturbing memories or some other mental or emotional dysfunction alerts persons who have been protected in this way to the reality that all is not well at the deep levels of their being. They then become prime candidates for deep-level healing.

As with the inner-child kind of dissociation but with greater intensity, the dissociation of MPDs is a defense mechanism, usually employed unconsciously, against the kind of psychological disintegration that could occur if the person retained a consciousness of the abuse. Like the weaker forms of dissociation, the consciousnesses that get split off can be memories (of specific events or whole periods of time), feelings (such as those thought to be wrong, dangerous, or shameful), or even bodily sensations that relate to abusive events. When children are forced to cope with circumstances beyond their ability, this form of defense can enable them to escape destruction from the immediate trauma. This method of coping may, however, result in deep trauma later in life when the subselves seem to weaken in their ability to protect the Self from the memories.

At the MPD end of our scale are full-blown alternate personalities (called "alters") who have identities, memories, and emotions that often differ completely from those of the host or core personality (the personality most often in control or "out"). In the milder form of dissociation (inner children) described above, the Self usually had at least a general knowledge of the events known in detail by the dissociative subselves. Sometimes, the adult Self will have rather detailed knowledge of the events but, because of the existence of the inner child, be disconnected from the emotions he or she felt

when the abuse happened. With MPD, however, the encapsulation of knowledge of the events and of the emotions associated with them is usually much more complete.

As an example, I will produce a typical case and call her Abby. She came with no awareness that she was a multiple. This is the usual situation, since it is the job of alters to hide all information concerning the hurtful events, including the fact that they are hiding it, from the "host" or "core" personality. As Abby described the fact that she could not recall certain parts of her life, however, and that sometimes there were short periods of time even in the present that she could not account for, I began to suspect that we were dealing with MPD.

We spent our first few sessions, before we were certain that Abby was a multiple, dealing with the usual inner healing matters. There were events she could remember in which she was hurt, so we dealt with these and turned over to Jesus any anger and unfor-giveness. As is usual with abused persons, there were also a few demons to deal with in her core personality, so we weakened and cast them out in the way described in chapter twelve. To attempt to get at the gaps in her memory, I then began to probe to see if there were any more personalities there.

I asked Abby if she had ever been called by any other names. She said, "Yes, my dad used to call me 'Sweetie' and an uncle called me 'Pudge' because I was a bit heavy when I was younger." Often other personalities in a multiple will be called by names used by the abusers or even by others close to the person during childhood. When a name is uncomplimentary, it is advisable to get the personality to agree to change it. In this case, I asked if there was a person named "Sweetie" there who would agree to talk to me. Without waiting for an answer, I introduced myself and stated that I was there to see if I could help with some of the wounds she had experienced. I mentioned that Abby had invited me and asked if Sweetie knew Abby.

Soon, a youthful voice replied that she was Sweetie. I asked how old she was. "Eleven," she replied. Sweetie did know Abby, but was angry at her for not paying any attention to her. She was also angry at men in general and her father and uncle in particular for the way they treated her—and again at Abby for not at least comforting her. I tried to explain that Abby didn't know Sweetie was there but that I was sure she would treat her better now that she knew. I asked if there were any others there. Sweetie knew of a three-year-old named Cathy as well as another child, age unknown, named Joey. But she couldn't tell me if there were any others.

In such cases, the first order of business for me is to ascertain that the alter knows Jesus. So I asked Sweetie this question. She said she didn't know him herself, but she did know that Abby had a relationship with him. "Would you like to know Jesus," I asked. She replied in the affirmative. So I led her to the Savior.

Next, I probed to see if there were any demons present. Experience has shown that abused alters are almost always demonized. So I asked Sweetie if she was aware of any beings that came around and tried to get her to do bad things. She asked, "Do you mean those black things?" I said I thought they might be the ones I was referring to and asked her for permission to talk with them. She gave me permission, and I prayed silently for the Holy Spirit to show me what to do. The word "abuse" came into my mind. So, looking into Abby's face, I commanded any spirit of abuse to come to attention. Within a few minutes, this spirit answered that he was indeed there, so I began getting information from him concerning what rights he and any others had to live in this alter. The demon told me that Sweetie was angry at the men who had misused her sexually.

Disengaging from the demon, then, I asked Sweetie if she would agree to forgive the men who had hurt her. After some discussion as to what this meant and how to do it, she consented and forgave them. I then recalled the demon. He was now considerably weaker because Sweetie had forgiven the men who had abused her. So, using the

procedures in chapter twelve and in my book *Defeating Dark Angels*, I was able to bundle several (hopefully all) of the demons together and cast them out. Sweetie remarked that she felt much different, much lighter and less fearful, after that. As we have continued to work with the "family" of alters inside of Abby, Sweetie has proven to be a delightful little girl.

This is how we got started with Abby. Since it was clear that she (and we) needed professional assistance, we contacted a therapist who is experienced in dealing with MPD. Together, we and the therapist have continued to work with Abby and the several alters we have so far discovered within her.

God has apparently built into humans, especially in our childhood years, an ability to defend ourselves by dissociating whole chunks of our experience into compartments quite separate from the core personality. Christian psychologist James Friesen, a specialist in dealing with multiple personalities, tells us, "Dissociation is the most wonderful protection against pain that any child could ever develop. There could be no more effective defense—the child pretends the traumatic event happened to somebody else, and then ... Poof!... COMPLETELY forgets about it. It is gone."¹² This fact enables many to continue to function under very difficult circumstances.

A common scenario is for a child to respond to abuse during the first few years of life by walling off separate alters designed to contain the memories of abusive events, either singly or in groups. Perhaps some of these alters are made from subselves already in existence, while some are created specially to contain the memories. This strategy, then, becomes the person's primary way of dealing with trauma and is resorted to quite unconsciously whenever the trauma of an event is too great. Severely abused children often get into the habit of dealing with even relatively minor crises by splitting off alternate personalities. Friesen states, "MPD usually begins in childhood in response to stress and abuse. The child encapsulates and organizes each part of herself, the resultant splits becoming personalities, each with its own life, history, feelings, and behaviors. Their various personalities may also have verifiable differences in physiology, neurology, and immune system characteristics, which can be proven when the multiple switches."¹³

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) offers a clinical definition of MPD with three components: 1) The existence within an individual of two or more distinct personalities, each of which is dominant at a particular time; 2) the personality that is dominant at any particular time determines the individual's behavior at that time; 3) each individual personality is complex and integrated with its own unique behavior patterns and social relationships.

Friesen lists four factors contributing to the development of MPD. First, a biological factor allows about 25 percent of all children to dissociate—splitting off parts of their memory and personality. Second, for this 25 percent severe early childhood abuse can trigger MPD. About 85 percent of MPDs, usually women, have been sexually abused at a very young age. Third, if a pattern of continuous abuse and lack of nurture continues, this unsafe environment encourages the child to continue to use this severe form of dissociation as a defense mechanism. Fourth, these children are highly creative and intelligent, with the creative ability to develop such a rich and complicated inner life.¹⁴

MINISTERING TO THOSE WITH MPD

Following are several important points to remember in ministering to those with MPD:

Like working with several clients. Ministry to those with MPD follows the same pattern as that outlined for any other deep-level healing. In this case, however, it is as if we are dealing with several distinct clients all in the same body. That is, each alter must be treated as a separate individual. MPD personalities, more so than subselves with milder dissociation, are usually quite complete personalities, each with different memories and emotions, likes and dislikes, and even habits. Friesen says, "Every alter is a real personality with real problems. Each has real feelings to work through and real needs that must be attended to.... Every alter is important. Any alter can sabotage treatment if it is not given the same respect as the others. Be careful not to let any alter convince you it is bad—it may be contaminated because of cruelty and it may have spiritual problems, but it is not inherently bad. It belongs to the system, and has an important job to do for the system."¹⁵

It is important to recognize that each alter has been created out of a specific need. Some have been incredibly traumatized, while others appear not to have a care in the world and serve to keep things organized or perform certain tasks. Get to know them as they appear. Find out their stories one by one—but do not push for more than they want to share. Just like any other person who has been injured, they need the healing touch of Jesus in their lives and will benefit greatly from acceptance, love, and prayer.

Further, since the abuse suffered by MPDs tends to be greater than that of those with inner children, it is often more difficult to deal with issues such as unforgiveness, anger, and hate. So those who minister need to exercise great patience in helping them work through those issues.

The alters will be organized into a family. When starting to work with a multiple, there is usually no way of knowing how many alters there will be. There may be a handful, tens, or, in rare cases, many more—all organized to more or less keep internal order. In this internal system, Bryant, Kessler, and Shirar observe, "You can be certain that ages will vary and roles differ... just as they do in any family system."¹⁶ Though this fact will seem strange to the inexperienced, as in a family, one or more of the personalities will usually be of the opposite sex from the core personality.

Those with MPD "lose time." When an alter other than the core personality is out, the core person is spoken of as "losing time." That is, since the person cannot account for what may have happened during the time the alter was in charge, the time is "lost" to the host. Though such an experience seems weird to most of us, as Friesen says, "People who have grown up with MPD are accustomed to losing time, and think it is the way everybody lives."¹⁷

Alters are often "frozen" in time. Alters, like inner children, often lack information about the host person's current life situation. But it often is much more difficult to bring them up to date. Time has stopped for many of them, and they frequently live as if they are still back in the abusive situation. When dealing with memories of abuse, they may believe it is still happening when, in fact, it was several years earlier. Thus, they may be feeling abused and unsafe even in your presence. Helping them to feel safe and in the present, then, becomes an important priority in working with multiples. So does the need to bring about greater communication between the alters and the core personality and between them and the counselor.

One aspect of the time problem is the way in which alters recall events. Often, the mere mention of the abuser or the event will trigger what is called an abreaction in which the person experiences all of the sensations of an abusive event as if it were

taking place right now. Often the best thing to do when this happens is to simply wait, providing comfort and safety until the abreaction is over. Being there, helping them with time and safety before, during, and after such events is most important and the basis on which whatever else we do is built. If it seems best to bring them out of the abreaction, the switching chairs exercise described in chapter six usually works well. Whether or not you bring them out of the experience, you need to encourage them to tell you what happened, while you continue to show them that it is a memory and not actually a present event. Again, invite Jesus to come and heal the pain—physical and emotional.

Providing safety, support, and affirmation. Bryant, Kessler, and Shirar point to four things anyone attempting to help a multiple needs to supply. Multiples need 1) to know they are believed; 2) to know they are safe and supported; 3) to be gently helped toward the truth that the abuse was the fault of the abusers, not something they deserved; and 4) to affirm that it is all right to feel as they do about the abuse.¹⁸ Once their right to feel angry and resentful toward their abusers is affirmed, then we need to carefully and lovingly lead them to forgive.

Working in tandem with a professional therapist. Since there are more complications with MPDs than with other types of clients, it is imperative that the client also work with a professional psychologist. Not all therapists understand MPD, however. The client should, therefore, be careful about whom he or she chooses to work with. Since Satanic Ritual Abuse and other types of abuse seem to be on the rise, it is important that we who work in deep-level healing attempt to find reputable Christian psychologists who have experience with MPDs, so we can recommend them to our clients. An increasing number of helpful books dealing with MPD are coming out. Though written from a non-Christian point of view, the one by Bryant, Kessler, and Shirar is an excellent clinical treatment. Friesen's *Uncovering the Mystery of MPD* is, in my opinion, the most helpful from a Christian perspective.

Integrating or Fusing Personalities. As with milder forms of dissociation, the ultimate goal for those with MPD is to become one whole person. While there are some who do not agree with this or think it is not possible for every multiple, studies by specialists : such as Richard Kluft and Frank Putnam have shown that nonintegrated multiples do not attain the highest level of functioning and continue to be triggered by outside stimuli or internal emotional cues (see Kluft and Putnam's books listed in the bibliography).

Fusion, the process of uniting the personalities, occurs as healing takes place. Sharing of information, memories, and feelings, as well as breaking down the amnesic barriers that often exist between alters, are steps in the process of integration. Friesen tells us, "Fusion is the point at which two or more alters actually become one. Fusions can occur spontaneously in places other than therapy, but it seems safer and more predictable if they are accomplished during the therapy session. The use of imagery facilitates the process nicely. Imagery is the tool, but the alters need to be willing to make it happen. (*Joining* is a good synonym.)"¹⁹

When the various alters become significantly healed from their trauma, they may or may not wish to join with the host person and become one. There might be fear that fusion means the "death" or obliteration of one in favor of the other. What it actually brings, however, is the blending of all of the qualities and characteristics of both into a normal Self-subself relationship. Thus, the core person gains all of the memories (good and bad), emotions (pleasant and unpleasant), and strengths and weaknesses of the alter who joined. Given that all that is gained is not necessarily positive, it is imperative

that each alter (along with the Self) be in full agreement with the process and that all of the trauma be worked through first to insure successful fusion. When personalities are fused prematurely, they will usually split again.

When alters are ready to unite with the host person, I normally ask Jesus to come and do it. The person often reports a picture or various sensations. In one fusion, the core person reported seeing herself standing facing the alter. Both of them were mostly transparent, like transparent fish, allowing her to see the complementarity of the parts she contained and those of the alter. Then she saw Jesus place one hand on her shoulder and one on that of the alter. As he drew them together into one, she saw both her inner parts and outer body come together to form a single person. Though this was a unique moment for both my client and myself, it has not been repeated in subsequent fusions. We need to recognize that each host person, as well as each alter, is unique and the way the process of joining was accomplished once will likely never repeat itself exactly. Flexibility is important, and the characteristic creativity of such persons is often seen in the fusion process.

After such integration has taken place, it will take a while for all segments of the new combination to get used to the newly fused person. We, and they, dare not assume that fusion solves all the person's problems. It does resolve some, but raises others the person has never dealt with before as he or she struggles to cope with new feelings, attitudes, and abilities. But usually the person reports enhanced functioning soon after.

DEMONIZED ALTERS

The same kind of abuse that produces multiple personalities, often results in demonization. This is not hard to understand, since the conditions that push people to this level of dissociation are the same as those that allow demons in. I have found that approximately 75 percent of the alters of MPD clients I have worked with are demonized. Alters usually carry their own demons and have to be dealt with as separate demonized persons in keeping with the principles outlined in the following chapter and articulated in greater detail in *Defeating Dark Angels*. Here are some tips for those working with demonized alters.

Alters may not know Jesus. As illustrated above, alters often need to be won to Christ first. Then the demons need to be cleaned out of them before we work at getting them to cooperate and eventually fuse with the core personality. For some, it is quite distressing to learn that there may be parts of themselves who either do not know Christ or actively reject him. They need to recognize, however, that these parts have had only limited and largely negative life experiences. They may not have heard or understood the gospel previously, since they probably were not aware of what was going on when the core person made this decision.

A thirty-year-old woman I'll call Diane had a six-year-old alter who didn't know Jesus. She suffered from deep feelings of rejection, inadequacy, distrust, and guilt stemming from some very difficult life experiences. Since at age six, Diane had not yet turned to Christ, however, this alter had been "left behind." As I interacted with the six-year-old, showing her love and acceptance she had not experienced previously, she came to trust me. I was then able to lead her to Christ and get her to forgive her parents who had hurt her deeply. With her permission, then, I was able to cast out a group of demons whose job it was to reinforce the above emotional problems. Soon after this session, six-year-old Diane was ready to fuse with the thirty-year-old core personality.

Victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). Those who have been victims of SRA often encounter special difficulties in accepting Jesus because of the lies they have been told about him. Satanic Ritual Abuse abusers often deliberately contaminate references to Christian beliefs by claiming they are doing things in Jesus' name or by mocking Christian claims that God will help in time of need. Thus, the very mention of God or Christ may be terrifying to some of the alters. Also the person may have been coerced into some sort of ritual of dedication to Satan and believe it is irrevocable. Many survivors of SRA have been used in various rituals and often purposely demonized. It is very important to refer to Jesus as "the true Jesus," or "the Jesus who lives in the light," or simply as "the Authority we work under" with these victims.

Sally is a woman in her forties who experienced years of the most horrible kinds of abuse as a part of satanic rituals. She, her therapist, and those of us who minister deep-level healing to her now have to deal with several dozen alters, many of whom are quite hostile and most of whom are heavily demonized. Since the leader of one of the cult groups in which she participated called himself "Jesus," several of her alters consider Jesus to be an abuser. Because such alters are reluctant to accept Christ, so far we have been unable to employ the power of the Holy Spirit from within her as we can with persons and alters who know the Lord.

Some demons have authority over demons in other alters. Though ordinarily demons seem to be assigned to a single alter, some head demons have authority over demons in other alters. When I am working on a head demon in one alter, then, I will command it to tell me if it has demons in any of the other alters. If it does, I command them to be bound to the head spirit so they can be cast out all at once. While this is not always possible, it frequently proves effective in freeing a number of alters from a host of evil spirits at once.

In working with a man I'll call Herb, we found this approach to work well. He came to me with the report that one of his alters was very violent. Though I have had good success in keeping demons from getting violent, I did not want to have to deal with a violent alter if it could be avoided. So I began working with the demons in Herb's core personality. To my delight, I found that the head demons in Herb had authority over the demons in the violent alter. By commanding the demons in the alter as well as those in the core personality to be bound together, I was able to rid the violent alter of his demons at the same time as we cast out those in the core personality. When I met the (formerly) violent alter, his comment was, "Something's changed. I'm not angry anymore!"

Demons may switch alters on the counselor. A common trick demons will play in multiples is to switch alters just when you are getting somewhere with the demons in the one you are working with. When this happens you may suddenly find yourself speaking to a very confused personality who has been unaware of what has been going on, but unexpectedly is forced to come out! To prevent this, I forbid the demons to switch alters during deliverance. This usually keeps them from playing this trick on us. Before I learned this, the more powerful demons in Sally pulled such switches on me several times.

Freeing an alter from demons often brings dramatic change. I have found that, once freed from demons, even totally hostile, depressed, or uncooperative alters usually become much more willing to work together with the one ministering as well as to cooperate with the other alters and the core personality.

In working with a woman I'll call Irene, we came upon a very angry 19-year-old alter. She was especially angry at Irene for ignoring her. As I gained rapport with that alter, I asked her if I could explore the possibility of demonic spirits in her. With her permission, then, I found some and cast them out. To our complete surprise, the 19-year-old alter immediately asked to unite with the host personality. After ascertaining that this was indeed her will, we asked Jesus to join them and he did.

STRONG WARNING: never treat an alter as a demon. Key in dealing with multiples who may be demonized is to *take extreme caution that alters not be treated, as demons*. When an alter is mistaken for a demon it can lead to further damage and set the healing process back. While demons may pose as alters and vice versa, they are actually quite different and, with practice, can readily be distinguished from one another. Demons never evoke the kind of sympathetic response that personalities can. Though they speak, act, and have a good deal of information, demons are in some ways more two-dimensional and flat than personalities. While every alter may not be likeable, especially those created to perform evil tasks, they are considerably more developed and well-rounded than demons. With a little experience, you will seldom mistake the one for the other. Friesen provides a helpful (though not infallible) chart suggesting certain of the differences between alters and demons. (See the following chart.)

Discerning Alter Personalities From Demons²⁰

Alter Personality

1. Most alters, even “persecutor” alters, can become strong allies. There is a definite sense of relationship with them, even if it starts out negative.
2. Alters initially seem [out of sync] with the person but that changes to [in sync] over time.
3. Confusion and fear subside with appropriate therapy when only alters are present.
4. Alters tend to conform to surroundings.
5. Alters have personalities with accompanying voices.
6. Irritation, discontent, and rivalry abound among alters.
7. Images of alters are human in form and remain consistent during imagery.

Demon

1. Demons are arrogant, and there is no sense of relationship with them.
2. Demons remain ego-alien—“outside of me.”
3. Confusion, fear, and lust persist despite therapy when demons are present.
4. Demons force unwanted behavior, then blame a personality.
5. Demons have a negative voice which has no corresponding personality.
6. Hatred and bitterness are the most common feelings among demons.
7. The imagery of demons changes between human and non-human forms, with many variations.

For more on dealing with demons, see the next chapter, which explains more about how demons operate and how to oppose them in praying for deep-level healing.

For Further Reading

Rita Bennett, *Making Peace with Your Inner Child*.

Doris Bryant, Judy Kessler, and Lynda Shirar, *The Family Inside*, 1-41; 44-69; 218-43.

James Friesen, *Uncovering the Mystery of MPD*, 41-67; 69-102; 205-23.

Charles H. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels*.

John Rowan, *Subpersonalities*.

Richard Schwartz, "Our Multiple Selves," *The Family Therapy Networker*.

David A. Seamands, *Putting Away Childish Things*.