

## BIOFEEDBACK

A common medical complaint with which doctors are challenged is headaches. When a patient complained of such to me I would place my hand on the back of their neck and feel for tight muscles and tender points at the base of the skull where the neck muscles attach. When there was tenderness on the skull I could be reasonably sure that that person had excess tension of the neck muscles, and the pain was a result of the chronic contraction of these muscles. The point on the skull where the muscles attach becomes sore and contributes to the headache. I would advise the patient to practice relaxing these muscles several times a day, to massage the neck muscles, apply moist heat, and to attempt to discover initiating stress factors that led to the tenseness.

In the 1960's, I read in medical journals of another method of treating people with stress headaches. This method was called *biofeedback*. Simply stated, it was a procedure where electrodes were attached to the muscles of the neck, which in turn would be attached to an oscilloscope indicating electrical nerve impulses stimulating the neck muscles. With conscious effort, an individual could learn to reduce the excess nerve impulses and tension in the muscles, and the headaches would cease. Biofeedback sounded harmless and possibly might work better than the method I used. The procedure was not done by physical therapists in my area and so I never prescribed this treatment method.

Migraine headaches usually occur from a different physiological dysfunction than tension headaches. They occur on one side of the head, and usually are preceded by symptoms of dimming vision on one side and strange sensations at various locations. Sometimes apparent weakness of certain muscles will be manifest. These symptoms occur, it is believed by physicians, as a result of artery constriction over one side of the brain; after a few minutes, the same vessels will dilate resulting in pain. Many factors, including mental stress, can trigger such a headache. Present-day therapy involves using medicines to cause constriction of the dilated artery with varying degrees of relief. This type of headache may last from a few hours to days. It is often incapacitating, affecting the ability to attend school or work. Migraine headaches are notoriously difficult to treat.

Medical literature has featured articles telling of the use of "biofeedback" as treatment for migraine headaches. These articles reported that up to 80% of patients with migraines received great relief by using biofeedback treatments. It sounded like good, safe therapy, and I never had any adverse thoughts against such a method. Over time, it was shown that many other physical ailments, such as high blood pressure, some gastrointestinal disorders, asthma, neuromuscular disorders such as post-stroke rehabilitation, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, anxiety states, Reynaud's phenomena, etc., have been helped with the use of biofeedback.

In the 1980's, I began to be aware of different types of medical treatments referred to as alternative or complementary medicine. I had concerns about those treatments as it appeared to me that hypnotism—spiritualism was probably the source of their power. When reading articles and books written by Christian authors explaining the nature of certain alternative therapies, I would notice that biofeedback was included in the list of treatment methods those books advised against.

In 1987, the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists presented a report of a study entitled *The New Age Movement and Seventh-day Adventists*. In this paper is a section dealing with various medical treatment methods that were

believed to be *spiritualistic* in nature. Three times the word “biofeedback” is mentioned as one such method. I found that this same labeling of biofeedback occurred in several other books written to expose spiritualism in alternative medicine methods. I was surprised and questioned this label against biofeedback. It occurred to me that I needed to do some in-depth study of biofeedback and to arrive at my own conclusion on this issue. I will share with you my discoveries.

Before proceeding with biofeedback investigation I wish to establish the definition as to the word biofeedback. It is possible in this discussion for confusion to occur between the word “monitoring” and “biofeedback.” “Monitoring” refers to some mechanical or electrical device, such as an electroencephalogram, electrocardiogram, or electromyography which reveals electrical biological functioning. Applying electrodes to neck muscles and to an oscilloscope, wearing any type of apparatus to reveal physiological functioning such as a blood pressure monitor, is using a monitor. When I use the word *biofeedback*, I am speaking specifically to a method that uses a combination of monitoring and adding a mental act to facilitate an altered state of consciousness. This is usually achieved by use of *muscle relaxation*, *deep breathing exercises*, use of a *mantra* or repetitive sentences/phrases, and by use of *visualization*.

The special paper prepared by the Biblical Research Committee listed several sets of questions that need to be answered as a person studies medical treatment methods to determine if they are *spiritually* safe. The committee took these questions from Dr. Warren Peters’ book, *Mystical Medicine*. They are excellent questions. No single question should determine the issue, but several questions, when answered, should give evidence of a spiritualistic relationship before you finalize judgment.

*The first set of questions was:* Where did the method come from; what is its source? Does it have mystical roots? With what other therapies is it often associated? What did the founder believe? What is the life story of the founder or founders?

A renowned German brain physiologist, Oscar Vogt of the Berlin Institute, during the 1890’s was using hypnosis in guided sessions. Some of the people in the sessions learned to put themselves, for a self-determined time, into a state similar to the hypnotic state they achieved with the doctor’s guidance.<sup>1, 2</sup> Vogt found he could have these people, in their auto-hypnotic practices, treat and alleviate many different stress-like medical disorders with which they were afflicted. In the early 1900’s, Johannes Schultz, a psychiatrist and neurologist in Berlin, continued the work that Vogt started. This state of self-hypnosis was called “autohypnosis.”

Schultz wanted to perfect autohypnosis because it would eliminate the tendency of the participant to develop dependence on the hypnotist. It was recognized that the state of self-hypnosis could be induced by 1) using certain basic verbal formulas repeated over and over by the individual desiring autohypnosis; repeating these phrases contributed to developing a state of pronounced 2) *relaxation* of the muscular and vascular systems, as did practicing 3) *deep, slow breathing*; 4) *visualizing* colors, objects, and abstract concepts.

This is followed by meditating on one’s own feelings or on the image of another person, and finally, at the deepest level, *one may interrogate and get* “answers from the unconscious” levels of one’s own nature, as Schultz put it.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Wolfgang Luthe had been a student of Schultz, and continued the work after Schultz’s death. Luthe called autohypnosis *autogenic training* in a book authored by Schultz and Luthe (1959). In the early 1960’s, Dr. Joe Kamiya of San Francisco attached an electroencephalograph

to college students' heads to see if they could, at will, change their brain wave patterns. He found they could. He came up with the word *biofeedback*.

He studied the brain waves of Zen meditators and proposed that it might be possible to develop a 'psychophysiology of consciousness.'<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Kamiya presented a lecture at the Psychophysiological Research Society meeting in 1965, which was attended by one, Elmer Green, Ph.D., a physicist and psychologist. It was the first time Dr. Green had heard of biofeedback. He was inspired to investigate this ability to self-control brainwave patterns.<sup>5</sup>

There were many therapists who dabbled in the use of autogenic training, but one outstanding investigative group led the way to what we now call "biofeedback." Dr. Green, along with Alyce Green, M.A., a psychologist, and Dale Walters Ph.D., a colleague, were investigators at the Menninger Foundation, a psychiatric institute in Topeka, Kansas. In 1965, they began to explore the autogenic techniques in their research. Dr. Green developed electronic devices to monitor physiological changes while people were in autogenic training. They could see changes in the rate of nerve impulses, muscular tension and relaxation, temperature of the skin in specific locations and brain wave amplitude and rates.

From these studies of autohypnosis or biofeedback, brain wave monitoring studies were done. By *muscle relaxation*, *deep slow breathing*, and use of *mantra* phrases along with *visualization*, a certain brain wave rate called *theta* could be achieved. It is at this level of brain activity that the autohypnosis takes place. Dr. Green stated the following:

In my view theta training is a form of accelerated meditation—and the benefits to students are incalculable. They range from better physical functioning, to improved emotional balance, to sharpened intellect, to true creativity—to the solution of insoluble problems in unpredictable ways, coming into mind as from another dimension.<sup>6</sup>

With the addition of electronic monitors, a person could see evidence of changes in his physiology as he practiced the *autohypnosis* or *autogenic training*, or as it is now called, *biofeedback*. The Greens' work and writing for scientific journals has made biofeedback well known, and has rapidly increased belief in, and use of, this technique.

At this point in our discussion of biofeedback the difference should be made clear again between "monitoring" some physiologic function of the body versus "biofeedback." Monitoring of blood pressure, skin temperature, brain wave, or heart by appropriate mechanisms is not biofeedback. Biofeedback is a procedure wherein monitoring various physiologic activities of the body is done, but the critical difference is the added emphasis of combined use of *muscle relaxation*, *deep slow breathing*, *visualization* and *repeating a mantra word or phrase*. These practices together can bring about an altered state of consciousness, bringing the mind to a neutral or stilled state, opening it for spirit control.

Dr. Elmer and Alyce Green refer to biofeedback as "Western Yoga."<sup>7</sup> In their book, *Beyond Biofeedback*, both Elmer and Alyce express their belief in the "energy concept" of the cosmos and its relationship to man. They have, from youth, studied and practiced the astrological concepts of the East. In their book preface (p. xix) they state:

From our viewpoint, the development of full human potential starts most easily with mastery of *body* energies (through internal control of images, emotions, and volition), and the process can be extended to energies which influence the outside world.”<sup>8</sup>

The book tells the story of their life, which is deeply entrenched in the Eastern teachings. I quote again from their book *Beyond Biofeedback*:

“During those years Alyce and I read continuously in the fields of metaphysics, parapsychology, and theosophy, searching for and constructing a framework of ideas that would correspond with our own experiences and at the same time be reasonable in terms of a possible science in which mind and matter were not forever separate.”<sup>9</sup>

The practice of using *mantras*, *muscle relaxation*, *rhythmic deep breathing* and *visualization* to induce changes in brain wave patterns and induce physiological function change is of concern. The use of mantras (repetitive phrases), relaxation, deep breathing and visualization is an integral part of Eastern religions and has long since found its way into Christianity with the use of prayer beads, and more recently, in various styles of prayer, often referred to as *contemplative prayer*. Even Bible verses can be used as mantras. The Eastern religions use mantras to alter consciousness; actually, they eliminate thinking. Body and/or muscle relaxation practices are integral to hypnosis techniques. *The Indian gurus have warned that rhythmic deep breathing is a time-honored method for entering altered states of consciousness and for developing psychic power.* Visualization (forming a mind picture) is a method of attempting to change and manipulate the physical reality by mental pictures. Dave Hunt, in his book, *Seduction of Christianity, Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days*, states:

Shamanistic visualization is an attempt to create or manipulate the physical world by the practice of “mental alchemy”. It is based upon the ancient sorcerer’s belief that the entire universe is an illusion (called *maya* in Hinduism) created by the mind.<sup>10</sup>

One leading proponent of visualization, Adekaide Bry, says that it can be used to create whatever you want. Visualization, as practiced in this pagan philosophy, is an attempt to mimic God’s power of creation—by the breath of His mouth.” (Psalms 33: 6).

The ancient roots of this type of thinking can be found in Greek mythology. Dave Hunt tells in *The Seduction of Christianity* that the Egyptian god, Thoth, (to the Greeks, Hermes), taught that the physical world could be transformed through *mental imagery*.<sup>11</sup> Also of bygone times has been the use of *visualization* in yoga to create reality with the mind and achieve union with the supreme Hindu god, Brahman. Also mentioned is the comment that visualization is a widely used technique in psychic healing.<sup>12</sup> It is a regular practice in training psychic healers. Do not confuse visualization, (which is an attempt to bring something into reality, or into materialization by the thought itself) with our creative ideas, plans and mental activities that we use to work, design and function by every day. That is not what is referred to by the word “visualization.”

Chapter 47 of Isaiah warns us of the end result of trusting in sorceries and enchantments. Evil and desolation and final destruction by fire will be our lot. The astrologers, stargazers, and sorcerers will not be able to save us. It is very clear that the most prominent investigators and authors on the subject of biofeedback are deep believers in, and practitioners of, Eastern mysticism.

*Second set of questions:* What company does this technique keep? Who uses it and what other therapies accompany its use? From the above information we see that biofeedback developed out of hypnosis, actually is hypnosis under a different name. In the book, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Body-Mind Disciplines* by Nancy Allison, chapter 4 titled, “Mind/Body Medicine,” lists the names of therapeutic techniques that are associated. They are—“Biofeedback Training\*, Guided Imagery\*, Hypnotherapy\*, Interactive Guided imagery\*, Psycho-neuroimmunology\*.”<sup>13</sup>

Chapter 4 of *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mind-Body* opens with the following paragraph:

Mind/body medicine is a contemporary term used to describe a number of disciplines that study or approach, healing the physical body, transforming human behavior, by engaging the conscious or unconscious powers of the mind. While: “mind/body medicine” is a term used in this section of the encyclopedia to describe a growing field of study and practice in contemporary Western medicine, it is also used by others to describe ancient Eastern disciplines such as yoga, meditation, traditional Chinese medicine and subtle energy therapies. The variety of disciplines that comprise mind/body medicine in this encyclopedia combine a theory of the relationship between body and mind that has much in common with these ancient Eastern disciplines with Western scientific models of biology and chemistry....<sup>14</sup>

The use of biofeedback started with therapists employing hypnosis-type therapies, and its use has extended into many health disciplines.

*Third set of questions:* What is the ultimate direction that the therapy is headed? Am I led toward Jesus Christ or away from Him? Do I still need Him as a Savior, or have I become my own savior? Biofeedback is considered to be the yoga of the West.<sup>15</sup> It is based on the same principles as *yoga* of the East. The basic principle is that within “SELF” lies all the wisdom of the universe. The body has all the intelligence and power to heal itself and also to grow into a higher consciousness called the “Supreme Self.”

The following quotation is from a letter from Dr. Elmer Green to Mr. Ihori, a Japanese businessman who wrote enquiring about the theory of biofeedback, and if it would be applicable to his employees. The reply to Mr. Ihori is summarized as follows: Deep within the unconscious mind of each person is hidden the “Source of Creativity,” which has the solution to all human problems. It is known by various names such as “Tao” (the way) in China, “True Self” in Zen, Jiva in India and in Tibet “Lotus.”

How does one bring out this hidden Source of Creativity? By putting the *body at complete rest*, the *emotions at peace*, and the *mind stilled* while conscious and ready to receive impressions from the creative center of the subconscious mind.

Biofeedback is an efficient, effective manner of bringing out this “Source” by having the person place him/herself in the theta brain-wave status. This is demonstrated through the electroencephalographic (EEG) feedback wherein an electrode is applied to the left occipital area of the scalp, over the visual part of the brain. The final remark in Dr. Green’s letter to Mr. Ihori states:

In my view theta training is a form of *accelerated meditation*—and the benefits to students are incalculable...<sup>16</sup>

Richard Willis, in his book *Holistic Health Holistic Hoax?*, tells of the experience that Drs. Malcolm and Vera Carruthers had in their autogenic training classes conducted in England. They reported that everyone that became completely relaxed wanted to “go further.” The doctors realized that the western approach, such as autogenic training or biofeedback, brought a level of treatment that meshed with the traditional spiritual practices of the East, similar to Eastern meditation. They then moved from autogenic training to the practice of yoga and meditation. The Carruthers felt that autogenic training is the best way to develop inner awareness, and this led them to seek the best Eastern meditation practices.<sup>17</sup> Willis tells us that:

The most popular form of Eastern meditation practiced by millions in the West is Transcendental Meditation (TM) which originated with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.<sup>18</sup>

In this form of meditation, a mantra word or phrase is given to the student by the instructor. This *secret mantra* is repeated over and over in the mind as one rests in a comfortable position. The mantra is to facilitate bringing the mind into a “passive” attitude. The student is advised to meditate twice a day for 20 minutes. By using this style of meditation, physiologic changes occur. Herbert Benson M.D, writes in his book, *The Relaxation Response*, that a hypo-metabolic state would occur within three minutes of starting transcendental meditation and the oxygen consumption of the mediator would be reduced by 20%, signifying a profound relaxation response.

The words given to be repeated, the mantra, are actually names of Hindu gods and one is calling on those gods to possess oneself. I made mention of this fact at a seminar I was conducting on the subjects of this book in the state of Massachusetts where there is a large ashram for training people in transcendental meditation. A young gentleman came to me afterward with a puzzled expression on his face. He asked me:

How did you know that the names given in the secret mantra were names of Hindu Gods? I worked at the Transcendental ashram and became a member. When I was initiated I knelt before an altar with idols of pagan gods and was given their names for my mantra.

In this belief system for health and healing, there is no room for a Creator God. There is no room for understanding the forces of darkness—of Satan and his angels, no place to understand that Satan has been allowed great power to influence man, and no room to understand that Satan has been allowed power over electrical forces. E.G. White wrote of the result of this type of teaching as follows:

None are in greater danger from the influence of evil spirits than those who, notwithstanding the direct and ample testimony of the scriptures, deny the existence and agency of the devil and his angels. So long as we are ignorant of their wiles, they have almost inconceivable advantage; many give heed to their suggestions while they suppose themselves to be following the dictates of their own wisdom... There is nothing the great deceiver fears so much as that we shall be acquainted with his devices.<sup>19</sup>

*Fourth set of questions:* Does the treatment method follow known laws of physiology? Does it teach and direct the patient to seek to know and follow God’s laws of health?

Hypnosis, autogenic training, or biofeedback, do not operate by any known laws of physiology. However, there are physiological changes that do occur through the autonomic nervous system in an individual. The explanation is that the body knows how to heal itself when it is told to do so. The practitioner's use of these modalities seldom gives appropriate attention to the underlining causes of disease.

The treatment methods spoken of in this book, and many more that have not been mentioned, have no basis in known laws of physics or chemistry. All have come about as a result of a theory based on pagan religious beliefs, and a false understanding of the origin of the universe and man. For 100 years, proponents of these methods have tried their best to reconcile these methods with known science. They have failed. Dr. Green mentions in his book that he took postgraduate studies in physics at UCLA so as to be able to demonstrate a scientific connection between his beliefs and experiences in Eastern mysticism and the physical laws that modern science recognizes.<sup>20</sup>

Eastern mysticism's declares that all substance of the cosmos, earth, and man originate from universal energy, and is said to be divided into seven levels (frequencies), or densities of energy. The question arises, why is it not possible for science, with its delicate instruments, to detect this energy force? These energy levels are labeled by author Green, E-1 through E-7. E-1 refers to the transformation of energy into the physical universe, including the human body. The higher levels (frequencies) of energy that are written about have to do with the mind and consciousness, that is "higher consciousness." Science has no instruments to detect these supposed higher levels of energy and Green tells us why they are not measurable by science:

Humans have all the parts and can therefore detect a greater spectrum of energies. Instruments are made of minerals, and lack the transducer components needed for detection of E-2 through E-7 energies. In other words, living beings are coupled to the cosmos better than scientific devices, which are, after all, quite limited tools.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the above is God's way. We follow His spiritual and physical laws to maintain health. We look to God for the power to heal. He is our Creator and Sustainer and Redeemer.

Thousands, I was shown, have been spoiled through the philosophy of phrenology and animal magnetism, (*hypnotism, autogenic training, biofeedback*), and have been driven into infidelity. If the mind commences to run in this channel, it is almost sure to lose its balance and be controlled by a demon.<sup>22</sup>

Some will be tempted to receive these wonders as from God. The sick will be healed before us. Miracles will be performed in our sight. Are we prepared for the trial which awaits us when the lying wonders of Satan shall be more fully exhibited? ... We must all now seek to arm ourselves for the contest in which we must soon engage. Faith in God's Word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ.<sup>23</sup>

*Fifth set of questions:* Who receives the credit for healing, God the Creator or Satan the created? Dr. Green states the following:

Why did biofeedback prove helpful in the treatment of so many and varied disorders? Suddenly I realized that it isn't biofeedback that is the 'panacea' –*it is the power within the human being to self-regulate, self-heal, re-balance.* Biofeedback does nothing to the person; it is a tool for releasing that potential.<sup>24</sup>

Contrast this statement with the following comment:

Jesus has not taught them this philosophy. Nothing of the kind can be found in His teachings. He did not direct the minds of poor mortals to themselves, to a power which they possessed. *He was ever directing their minds to God, the Creator of the universe, as the source of their strength and wisdom.*<sup>25</sup>

Five sets of questions show positive answers for identifying spiritualism in biofeedback. I no longer wonder why it has been listed as such in Christian books that have been written to expose the devil's wiles. The special report by the Biblical Research Committee included biofeedback as a procedure that we should shun. You will have to decide for yourself if biofeedback is a procedure you would choose to use. My goal is to present enough documented information in order for you to make an intelligent decision.

You may have noticed that the testimonies of people, as to the value of different treatment methods, or the personal experience of individuals who experienced relief and apparent healing from use of various alternative healing modalities, have not been included as testing criteria. This book does not present the idea that these methods do not work. The purpose of the book is to help us in answering the question, *who makes it work, what power is behind it?*

E.G. White in 2- Selected Messages page 52-53 gives testimony supporting the statement in the above paragraph. Apparent healing or miracles are not proper tests as to the source of power.

The man who makes the working of miracles the test of his faith will find that Satan can, through a species of deceptions, perform wonders that will appear to be genuine miracles. It was this he hoped to make a test question with the Israelites at the time of their deliverance from Egypt.—Manuscript 43, 1907.

...we may be among the number who will see the miracles wrought by Satan in these last days, and believe them. Many strange things will appear as wonderful miracles, which should be regarded as deceptions manufactured by the father of lies.—Letter 136, 1906

We need not be deceived. Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. These Works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ.—Letter 57, 1904

I would like to present one additional bit of information to help you in making your decision about whether biofeedback is good, rational treatment, or if it falls into the domain of the mystical. Dr. Green, in his book *Beyond Biofeedback*, has an entire chapter on the use of "volition" in biofeedback therapy. Synonyms for volition are "the will" or "to choose." A person must first *choose* to participate in biofeedback, for without this willingness, the treatment will be ineffective. The following is from the book, *Beyond Biofeedback*.

Fundamental among (man's) inner powers, and the one to which priority should be given, is the *will's* central position in man's personality and its intimate connection with the core of his being—his very self....<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Green also states:

Volition (will) is at the heart of the mind-body problem.<sup>27</sup>

Attitude is a critical feature in biofeedback training, because volition (will) is influenced by what one believes.<sup>28</sup>

Elmer and Alyce Green are correct in their assessment of the power of the will. It is vital in deciding which power will control us.

Through the right exercise of the will an entire change may be made in the life. By yielding up the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust, is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God.<sup>29</sup>

The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway. The will is not the taste or the inclination, but it is the deciding power, which works in the children of men unto obedience to God, or unto disobedience.<sup>30</sup>

Every human being possessed of reason has power to choose the right. In every experience of life God's word to us is, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," (Joshua 24:15). Every one may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil...<sup>31</sup>

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