

**Does God Heal *In Utero* Wounding?  
Theological Rules of Thumb and Application**

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**Introduction**

A theologian's tasks are several: to examine beliefs and determine how they line up with God's Word and God's nature; to construct practical theological models and relate them to real life; and to articulate the nature of God, His relationship with us, and what we believe as Christians (G&O pp. 38-39, 49, 80, 104). These tasks are accomplished through elaboration and application of a theological method that is in some ways unique to the individual, and in other ways borrowed from and shaped by the theological methods of those who have preceded us in these tasks.

In this paper, I will illustrate how I have drawn from the theological perspectives of each theologian I have studied this semester, to elaborate my own theological method. I will then demonstrate how I have applied that method to an issue I encounter in ministry on a regular basis: God's healing work with regard to *in utero* wounding, which I have seen Him accomplish through inner healing ministry sessions, where God speaks His truth to the lies and judgments we take into our heart while still in the womb.

I consider my theological method to be "rules of thumb" I have gathered from the collective wisdom of many great theologians. These rules of thumb not only have helped me demonstrate that *in utero* healing is in line with what we know about God and His Word. The rules of thumb have also helped me see the care that must be taken in presenting this theological perspective of *in utero* healing to the Body of Christ.

One could argue I have selectively taken what appeals to me, and applied it in a way that reaffirms what I already believe. One definition of theology is “faith seeking understanding” (G&O, p. 24). I have faith that God heals *in utero* woundings and have confirmed this faith through experience. I have received His healing in this capacity many times, and I have seen Him heal many others in this way. I have seen lies and judgments identified, repented of, and brought to death at the Cross, replaced immediately by God’s truth. I have then seen the good fruit of this transaction in the lives of those who have experienced this healing, myself included. I therefore have faith that God heals *in utero*. I am seeking theological understanding of what I have already experienced, and I believe that is a valid starting point for discussion.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that circular reasoning could be offered as a valid argument against what I have done in elaborating and applying my theological method to *in utero* healing. I would counter, however, that I have drawn from a number of theologians who seek to understand God and examine various issues from a wide range of theological perspectives. Having studied the full perspective of each theologian, I have taken care not to lift these individual “rules” out of context. Also, it is important to note that the rules of thumb that I have distilled from the theological perspectives of each theologian line up with the Word of God and with His nature.

Moreover, considering that these rules of thumb instill some caution and call for deeper explanations, I would argue that the theological method I have set out here leads to a more balanced theology than I would have without it. This framework helps me articulate in theological terms what I have experienced of God in the area of *in utero* healing, and stretches me to examine *in utero* encounters from a range of theological viewpoints. In the spirit of the

Wesleyan Quadrilateral, this framework requires me to run the issue through a number of theological perspectives and “rules.”

I acknowledge there is a lot more to be done in developing a theological perspective on the issue of *in utero* healing. This paper is a starting place for discussion. I believe we could call this paper, per McGrath, a “cognitive proposition” that opens a dialogue in which others in the Body of Christ might wish to engage. The fruit of what I have seen God accomplish through *in utero* encounters of healing makes it worth the effort to open this dialogue.

### **The Great Theologians**

In this section of the paper, I will describe several theological perspectives of the great theologians who have shaped my theological method. This is not a full description of the theology of each one, but rather a brief description of their theological insights that have impacted me the most. Following each description, I list the rule of thumb I have drawn from the theological perspective described.

#### **GRENZ & OLSON**

Grenz & Olson emphasize relevant theology (pp. 99-100). They suggest we need to express Christian beliefs in a way people can understand. They encourage theologians to address concerns of contemporary culture. They also recommend that we draw on the body of secular knowledge to explain theological concepts.

From Grenz & Olson, I draw the rule of thumb: Make theology relevant.

#### **WESLEY**

Wesley emphasizes Scriptural integrity (Gunter, pp. 44-46). For Wesley, the Bible is a coherent whole, with all parts interrelated, and all tied together in a unifying theme: God's message of Salvation (Gunter, pp. 53, 132). Wesley shows how the Salvation message not only is reflected throughout the entire Old and New Testament, but also how this message gives meaning to every passage of Scripture. Therefore, for Wesley, Salvation is God's primary message that weaves Scripture into a coherent whole.

Wesley also practiced theology using a Quadrilateral method. He assessed issues on the basis of four points: Scripture, tradition, experience and reason, with all points interrelated and with Scripture being primary. The importance and primacy of Scripture for Wesley is seen in his many uses of it (Gunter, pp. 41-61). Scripture was a starting point for his preaching and teaching. For Wesley, ideas were best explained in Scriptural language, because of the authority it carried, and he defended ideas in Scriptural terms. He also referred to Scripture to define theological terms and used Biblical stories to illustrate ideas.

Wesley's theological perspective also emphasizes that God's desire is to change our heart. Sanctification and transformation are seen throughout Wesley's writings. Indeed, Wesley's life and ministry were transformed through the way God touched his heart deeply at Aldersgate and gave him a new understanding of God's grace and love.

From Wesley, I draw the rules of thumb: Examine issues in the context of God's creation/redemption story; don't seek meaning in Scripture apart from the context of God's creation/redemption story; run every issue through the Quadrilateral, and recognize that Scripture is primary; and realize God's desire is to change our heart.

MCGRATH

For McGrath, doctrine interprets spiritual experience. Doctrine describes spiritual experience in terms that relate to the biblical context. Therefore, when an individual has that experience, it is not seen as a random experience, but rather it is recognized as part of a long history of recognizable experiences between individuals and God (p. 70). Through the individual's doctrinal understanding of the experience, the individual is tied into the full biblical body of understanding, meaning and relevance to Christian life and community.

This is applicable for those inside and outside the Christian community (p. 69), as long as the doctrine doesn't use exclusionary language not understood by those currently outside of that Christian community. Doctrinal interpretation makes God-related experiences something tangible, not fleeting, that becomes a part of or builds up the faith and Christian identity of the person having the experience (p. 71).

From McGrath, I draw the rule of thumb: Describe all experiences in the biblical context.

## ORIGEN

Origen reminds us that Jesus is the plumb line by which we must assess all ideas (*De Principiis*). A plumb line shows us the straight up-and-down central point, our "true north." The plumb line is like the resting central point of a pendulum – all that swings off in one direction or the other, even a little, is not truth. Jesus is our only measure of truth.

Therefore, with Origen we can ask – Does a given theological proposition reflect the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? Is Jesus at the center of that proposition? Is Jesus glorified in that proposition? I would add – Does the proposition reflect an understanding of Jesus as Word, Creator, Son of God, Savior, Redeemer and King?

From Origen, I draw the rule of thumb: Recognize Jesus as the plumb line to measure all ideas.

## ATHANASIUS

Athanasius explains that Jesus restores God's image in us (McDermott, p. 46).

Athanasius gives a beautiful illustration of an individual re-sitting for a portrait that has faded or been rubbed out. He argues that Jesus is the only One who could "re-sit" for our portrait, to have the image of God restored in each of us.

From Athanasius, I draw the rule of thumb: Know that God is in the restoration business.

## AUGUSTINE

Augustine's primary message is this: God is good! In expounding on this message, Augustine reminds us that God's presence and love are powerful. God's presence is the only way to overcome the lies we believe and the battles we wage with evil. Even when we struggle with sin, God's grace is big enough to draw us to Him. As we respond to His grace, we find a change of heart. God resides in us as we invite Him in. (*Confessions*)

From Augustine, I draw the rule of thumb: Realize that only God's presence in us helps us overcome sin.

## AQUINAS

I find most compelling Aquinas's argument about the presence of an "uttermost" force (*ST 1, Q 2*) that calls each of us into a more perfect state of being; that intensifies the good qualities in each of us; and (I would conclude) that brings restoration to our lives. This is compelling to me because through experience, I have seen and felt this transforming work of Christ, and I cannot find any other force in nature that would explain it – especially when the natural order of things tends toward decay and corruption.

From Aquinas, I draw the rule of thumb: Recognize that God calls us to a more perfect state of being.

## LUTHER

Luther argues that we cannot just hear the Word but also must take the Word into our heart. We must receive the Word personally. Luther states it powerfully: “A person who wants to be saved should act as though the Bible was written for him alone, and there was no one else on earth” (McDermott, p. 82).

From Luther, I draw the rule of thumb: Know that we must take the Word into our heart.

## SCHLEIERMACHER

While I disagree with much of Schleiermacher’s theological perspectives, I appreciate his perspective on inner awareness. Schleiermacher argues that we each have an inner awareness of God, and this awareness is planted in us by God Himself. God gives us this ability to seek and draw near to Him. I disagree with the conclusions Schleiermacher draws from his understanding of our God-given awareness. Nevertheless, I can appreciate, learn from, and witness to, by experience, our innate sense of God’s existence and the way He tugs at our heart with His presence.

From Schleiermacher, I draw the rule of thumb: Acknowledge our God-given inner awareness of God.

## BARTH

While I have concerns that Barth's theology sometimes takes the human out of the human-God relationship, his writings are filled with wisdom, exhortation and valuable insights. Barth's writings have the biggest impact on me with regard to God's self-disclosure. Without taking it to the extreme and disregarding our role in our relationship with God, I find great value in Barth's observation that we know about God because God chooses to reveal Himself to us. For Barth, the initiative of revelation comes from God. He explains that we might approach God from our own perspective, but true revelation will always come on God's terms. While I do believe God wants our full participation – I believe this is not only borne out by Scripture but also is not entirely rejected by Barth, either – I appreciate Barth's perspective that we know all that we know of God because He chooses to disclose Himself to us.

From Barth, I draw the rule of thumb: Realize all understanding comes from God.

#### GRENZ & FRANKE

Grenz & Franke offer their theological perspective within a world context of postmodernism, relativism and deconstructionism. In the midst of what might seem a free-for-all approach to God, Grenz & Franke attempt to distill certain principles around which theologians might find agreement or at least be willing to dialogue, despite the postmodernist abhorrence of absolute truths. Of the conclusions Grenz & Franke draw in this postmodernist environment, the most persuasive to me are their descriptions of the way they believe God speaks to us through Scripture – for His purposes – and the corporate as well as individual ways God addresses us.

From Grenz & Franke, I draw the rules of thumb: Allow God to speak through Scripture; realize God speaks through Scripture to help us live out His creation/redemption story; understand that God speaks to us as a faith community as well as individuals.

## Rules of Thumb

Following is the list of theological rules of thumb I have drawn from the great theologians I have studied this semester. I can follow this list and apply it in my daily life and ministry. This list represents a theological method I can use to assess ideas and formulate theological propositions.

While I understand this list represents only a partial theological method, I believe it is an effective starting place for discussion of ideas. Each of the rules of thumb must be utilized in connection with the full list, not taken in isolation. Utilizing the full list adds substance and depth to this method and helps counter the partiality to create greater effectiveness.

1. Allow God to speak through Scripture. (Grenz & Franke)
2. Realize God speaks through Scripture to help us live out His creation/redemption story.  
(Grenz & Franke)
3. Examine issues in the context of God's creation/redemption story. (Wesley)
4. Don't seek meaning in Scripture apart from the context of God's creation/redemption story.  
(Wesley)
5. Run every issue through the Quadrilateral, and recognize that Scripture is primary. (Wesley)
6. Realize all understanding comes from God. (Barth)
7. Understand that God speaks to us as a faith community as well as individuals. (Grenz & Franke)
8. Know that we must take the Word into our heart. (Luther)
9. Realize God's desire is to change our heart. (Wesley)
10. Acknowledge our God-given inner awareness of God. (Schleiermacher)

11. Make theology relevant. (Grenz & Olson)
12. Describe all experiences in the biblical context. (McGrath)
13. Recognize Jesus as the plumb line to measure all ideas. (Origen)
14. Realize that only God's presence in us helps us overcome sin. (Augustine)
15. Recognize that God calls us to a more perfect state of being. (Aquinas)
16. Know that God is in the restoration business. (Athanasius)

### **Practical Ministry Application: God's Healing *In Utero***

Christian inner healing ministry, inspired by John & Paula Sandford of Elijah House, among others (Theophostics, Immanuel Approach, Cleansing Streams, etc.), invites a prayerful setting where God is allowed to reveal the lies we hold deep in our heart, and to replace them with His truth. Through inner healing, we are invited to position ourselves for sanctification and transformation, or walking out our Salvation (Philippians 2:12).

The Christian inner healing ministry in which I serve, via Elijah House but based out of our local United Methodist Church, is founded on God's biblical laws of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7), judgments (Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 2:1), honoring (Deuteronomy 5:16), and the law of increase (Hosea 8:7). Because of Christ's work on the Cross, when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior, we are saved, once and for all. This work is positionally done for us and gives us assurance of our eternal Salvation. However, parts of our heart and spirit, and even our physical body, do not "get the memo." I liken this to the reaction of a long-time prisoner of war who is set free, but has trouble understanding the war is really over.

When we allow lies and judgments to take root in our heart, which often starts at a young age, this affects our ability to receive all that God offers us through Christ. It even affects how

we see God, and what we expect of Him. When we see “bad fruit” in our life, we know there’s a bitter root (Hebrews 12:15) or lie behind it.

Through inner healing ministry, we invite the Lord to shed light on where this bad fruit is rooted in our heart or spirit. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we then recognize the root and repent for the ways we have judged others (and God) and for the lies we have believed. We allow Jesus to take His axe to the root and replace the lies with His truth and with His Holy Spirit.

After the root is gone, we no longer have to manage our behavior, control our impulses or “work” to be like Jesus in that area of our life. The bad behavior and impulses are gone because of the power of the Cross applied to that particular root. That part of our heart has finally “gotten the memo,” and now we are able to walk in freedom, wholeness and resurrection life in that area.

In their work with individuals over many decades, Elijah House prayer ministers have discovered that we make judgments, believe lies, and plant other seeds of bitter roots in our heart and spirit, not only in childhood and infancy, but also as early as conception. Scientific evidence has shown that in the womb, babies are aware of and able to respond to the internal and external environments. A baby in the womb can sense a mother’s emotions of anger, hurt, stress and fear. The baby can also hear and respond to screaming and chaos in the external environment in which the mother is carrying the unborn child. In the womb, based on what we sense around us, we might make a judgment or believe a lie: “I am not wanted.” “The world is not safe.” “It is better not to be born.” “Father is an angry man.” All of these judgments and lies affect not only how we enter the world and respond to our family and to life, but also they affect how we see God.

For a person who is struggling as an adult, or as a teenager, the root of that struggle might be a judgment made or a lie believed *in utero* (in the womb). Not all judgments or lies go back to

the womb, and Elijah House-based inner healing does not involve digging around in the past. We allow the Holy Spirit to lead. We begin with the fruit that is present in the person's life today – what brought the individual in for ministry – and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the root, so the individual can acknowledge, repent, and receive the Lord's healing. If the root is not *in utero* and the individual does not require healing there, the Lord will not take us there.

However, it no longer surprises me when the Lord takes a person *in utero* to show them the root of a behavior manifesting in their present daily life. I have received deep and incredible *in utero* healing from the Lord in ministry sessions, and the changes have been profound and lasting. I have also seen incredible fruit of God's *in utero* healing in other individuals, and I have ministered in sessions where God takes the person *in utero* to minister healing. Not only through Elijah House but also through other Christian inner healing ministries, *in utero* healing from God is seen more and more in prayer ministry sessions.

To experience God's *in utero* healing is to know the truth of it. God does heal *in utero*. I am a walking testimony of it. I have faith for God's *in utero* healing because of my experience.

However, for people who have not experienced *in utero* healing from God, it might sound too crazy to be God. (Whereas I say it is too crazy *not* to be God – we are not creative enough to make this stuff up.) For many individuals, the subject of *in utero* healing would be uncomfortable to discuss, if not completely unbelievable. It might sound too much like New Age theory or pop psychology or witchcraft.

I would like to understand theologically what I already know by faith. I do not want to see people miss out on the healing God has for them, simply because I cannot explain it in theological terms that would be acceptable to more individuals. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to apply my new theological method to God's *in utero* healing.

The question is: Does God really heal *in utero*? Let's see what my new theological framework has to say about it.

### **1. Allow God to speak through Scripture.** (Grenz & Franke)

Elijah House offers a thorough Scriptural basis for their Christian inner healing ministry. The teaching does not isolate a few verses. Elijah House has mined the depths of God's Word to find His message of inner healing repeated again and again and again. I will not repeat the many Scripture verses here, except to reiterate those listed above: God's biblical laws of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7), judgments (Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 2:1), honoring (Deuteronomy 5:16), and the law of increase (Hosea 8:7), bitter roots (Hebrews 12:15), and to add Jeremiah 17:9 ("the heart is deceitful and wicked").

Scripture is filled with God's message to us of the consequences of judgments we make and lies we believe. Through Scripture, God speaks of our sin nature (Romans 3:10) and of curses passing through the generations (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 23:2). God does not indicate that our judgments and sin are a learned behavior, acquired as we get older. It seems evident, through His Word, that sin is with us from conception, and even before (generational curses).

God also makes clear that He is with us from conception (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5). We know He is not constrained by time or space. If all our days were ordained by God and written ahead of time in His book, (Psalm 139:16), why would we expect that God would not bring His healing to areas of our heart and spirit where we were wounded and where we reacted with sinful judgments and belief of lies in the womb?

### **2. Realize God speaks through Scripture to help us live out His creation/redemption story.** (Grenz & Franke)

God's creation and redemption story, as He narrates it throughout Scripture, is purposed around our healing, transformation and restoration. He makes clear through His Scriptural narrative that He intends to restore each of us – if we will let Him – into the life He originally intended for us. To the degree that we got off track in the womb, that is the degree to which I believe He desires to restore us, right down to the roots.

God's story of redemption is also a story of repentance. Where bitter roots keep us in bondage to sin, God's desire is that we take responsibility for planting those seeds of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15), that we repent (Matthew 3:2), and that we allow Him to take His axe to the root (Matthew 3:10). Does it seem strange or unfair that an unborn baby is held accountable for the way that child perceives and judges the world? Scripture's response is that this is part of the sin nature into which we all are born. We reap what we sow, from day one. Only the power of the Cross can stop our reaping, and it is God's heart, through Christ, to do so. He has done this positionally for all who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, but it is our job to walk this out and appropriate our Salvation to every part of our heart and life. The Holy Spirit convicts us of where bitter roots still cause bad fruit to grow in us, and we respond by repenting and taking those roots to the Cross.

### **3. Examine issues in the context of God's creation/redemption story. (Wesley)**

If God's heart is to redeem – not only in heaven but also on this earth – what the enemy has stolen, why should we think that would not include what the enemy stole in the womb? We need to look at God's creation and redemption story to understand that it applies to the here and now, not just to our future in heaven. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10 NIV).

#### **4. Don't seek meaning in Scripture apart from the context of God's creation/redemption story. (Wesley)**

This is just a starting point, but I would apply this rule of thumb to looking at Scripture verses taken out of context and offered as objections to the idea that God heals *in utero*. I cannot offer a thorough examination within the scope of this paper. However, I will start with one example.

In Matthew 19:14 and Mark 10:15, Jesus teaches us that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, we need to be as little children. This Scripture verse might be offered as an objection to the idea that God searches even the formative parts of our heart, set in childhood, infancy, and in the womb, asking us to repent so that He can bring healing.

I believe that a deeper reading of this text, however, in the context of God's creation and redemption story, indicates that Jesus is referring to childlike faith in God as our Father. It is God's restoration of childlike faith – stolen by the enemy – that I see in people *after* they confess and repent for *in utero* and childhood judgments and the lies they have believed since conception, and *after* God brings healing to those areas.

Based on the biblical creation and redemption context, therefore, I believe the admonishment of our Lord in these Scripture verses refers to our stolen birthright of childlike faith in God as our Father. I believe it is evident that God goes back to the very beginning, the moment of conception, to redeem that birthright for us (Romans 8:15); otherwise it would not be a complete healing and restoration. God did this work on the Cross, once and for all, but because of His grace and love, He helps us appropriate the work of the Cross to every hidden part of our heart (Psalm 139:23-24; Hebrews 4:12), until we are “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20) in every part of our heart (even the parts first formed in the womb, as being “crucified” indicates complete death of self) and transformed into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

**5. Run every issue through the Quadrilateral, and recognize that Scripture is primary.**  
(Wesley)

My application of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in this paper is just a starting point. I need to look more extensively at each area, and especially at tradition, in fleshing out this perspective. Nevertheless, I offer here an overview of what it would look like to run through the Quadrilateral the question: Does God really heal *in utero*?

Scripture is primary in the Quadrilateral, and the previous rules of thumb have looked at Scriptural answers to this question. What about reason? In addition to the logic woven through the previous discussion – a God who restores would restore completely, from conception – we can look to secular science for further evidence of the belief that God heals *in utero*.

Studies on brain stem formation indicate that our initial understanding of the world is recorded and set in place in our brain stem, which is the first part of our brain to form in the womb. This recording continues to exist in our brain stem, affecting all our subsequent perceptions of the world – until, I would argue, God brings healing to our misconceptions that distorted that recording. One might ask – Why would God create us this way, that our first perceptions of the world would be flawed? The answer is that God did not create us for a sin-filled world, but rather He created and designed us to live in glory with Him for eternity.

National Geographic has created a film entitled, *In the Womb* (2005) which shows an unborn human baby from the earliest embryonic stage responding to internal and external stimuli. In watching this film, our reasoning would tell us a baby in the womb is capable of sensing harmful stimuli and therefore making pre-verbal judgments about disturbances in the surrounding environment.

The Quadrilateral also asks us to consider our experience with the theological idea in question. I have ministered to individuals and heard reports from others who have experienced *in utero* healing from God while in prayer ministry sessions. I have seen the good fruit that resulted from these experiences.

Likewise, I have been on the receiving end of several prayer ministry sessions in which God helped me identify lies I believed and judgments I made *in utero*. He bypassed my brain, spoke directly to my spirit through visions, words and impressions. I confessed and repented, based on what He revealed to me. What He showed me was later confirmed by conversations with my mother – as has been the case with others I have ministered to or from whom I have heard reports. Most importantly, I have seen and experienced dramatic Christ-like changes in my own heart and life as a result. My experience with God's *in utero* healing has given me the faith that now seeks understanding through this theological framework.

Wesley likewise looked at tradition for theological evidence on a particular matter. Wesley focused particularly on the Bible and Early Church, as what he considered the purest sources of tradition, closest to the ministry of Jesus. The Bible is certainly filled with references to the healing work of Jesus during His lifetime, as well as to the healing work of the Holy Spirit through the disciples and the Early Church. I am not aware of *in utero* healings, per se, although I would love to research this further.

However, I can point to the experiences recorded from the 4<sup>th</sup> century Desert Fathers and Mothers as an illustration of the intensive inner healing work they invited from God, and the good fruit that was seen as a result. It would not surprise me if one or more of these early Christian ascetics did experience *in utero* healing from God, whether or not it was identified as such or documented.

## **6. Realize all understanding comes from God. (Barth)**

Barth adds a valuable dimension to the theological examination of *in utero* healing experiences, by reminding us that all understanding comes from God. This is vital to the health, safety and effectiveness of prayer ministry. In every healing session in which I have been involved, and in the teaching of Elijah House and others who work with this ministry, the healing work is given to the Lord to initiate and complete. The prayer minister has nothing to offer. Jesus is the One who leads, reveals and does what is needed.

Christian inner healing ministry, at least every ministry that is Elijah House-based, does not permit any type of regression psychology or manipulation of the session or calling forth memories by the prayer minister. The prayer minister is not allowed to influence, force, plant suggestions, or put words in the mouth of the person receiving ministry. The inner healing minister merely facilitates an encounter between God and the individual receiving ministry. The area of concern – the visible, bad fruit – is brought before God, and the Lord is invited to shed His light and bring His truth to that situation. That is the only role of the prayer minister – to invite God and to stand in faith for the healing He will deliver. Jesus does the rest, through the Holy Spirit.

Barth's theological perspective concerning God's self-disclosure is a reminder to all prayer ministers that we need to stay out of God's way. It is also a warning that any type of *in utero* healing encounter that is reported but does not respect this principle of God's self-disclosure is not genuine – and is, in fact, spiritual manipulation, which is, by definition, witchcraft.

With Barth's perspective in mind, we also need to consider that *in utero* is just one of the many ways God heals and brings restoration and transformation. We cannot conclude that "this

is the only way” God heals, nor can we force this type of experience on anyone. God must be allowed to initiate. We can approach Him, but how He responds is up to Him, and we must receive with gratitude and humility what He offers.

**7. Understand that God speaks to us as a faith community as well as individuals.** (Grenz & Franke)

Not everyone in the Body of Christ believes God heals *in utero*. Some do not believe He heals at all today. Other Christians do not believe God desires or intends to transform us this side of Heaven. God asks that we be in unity as the Body of Christ. We cannot allow this question of *in utero* to divide us. Rather, we need to seek God for how He will reveal His heart to all of us as His people. For those who do believe God heals *in utero*, we cannot let our perspective cause division or cause us to be judgmental or hurtful to others (Galatians 5:13-15).

The implications of this rule of thumb are not just a matter for theological debate. I was sitting at a doctor’s office, and across from me a pregnant woman complained, in an angry voice, of all the grief her unborn baby was causing her. With my experience of *in utero* wounding, I was concerned for the unborn child. However, it would not have been Christ-like for me to approach the woman in that type of setting and lecture her on what her words might be causing for the baby. Instead, I prayed silently in intercession for God to surround the child with His loving Spirit, so that His Spirit would block out those angry words.

**8. Know that we must take the Word into our heart.** (Luther)

The Word says we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). Beyond that, the Word is filled with many promises of what God intends for us, as well as verses that speak of our identity in Christ. Yet we live as if we do not know the truth. Why?

We know the enemy lies to us daily. Scientific evidence shows that we began recording these lies in our brain stem while we were in the womb, before our brain was fully formed. In the face of those lies, God's Word says He formed us in the womb (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5) and He knows the plans He has for us, plans to prosper and not to harm us (Jeremiah 29:11). If we are to truly take His Word into our heart, and receive it as if it were written personally for us (per Luther), would we not require God's help to turn off that "recording device" in our brain stem? Would He not need to pour His healing into every lie that has been recorded since conception?

Against this proposition, one could argue (as Augustine might) that God could accomplish this healing in a split second – perhaps at the Communion rail – without going into an *in utero* encounter. Indeed, I believe He does this, among the many different ways He heals. God can bring deep and lasting healing through a sunset walk on the beach, or through hearing the laughter of a child, or simply through His grace. However, none of these other means of God's healing would rule out *in utero* healing as being from God.

Why would God choose to use *in utero* healing if He doesn't have to? I would suggest that if (per Luther), God wants us to receive the Bible as if He wrote it personally for us, and (per Augustine) this is the same God whose love is so powerful and personal that He would move mountains to let us know He loves us ... wouldn't this God absolutely go out of His way to speak His truth and love and peace to every single part of us, including those parts of us that have believed lies since our conception? What better way for Him to get the message to us than to hand deliver it to the very core of our being, the very first part of us that He formed?

### **9. Realize God's desire is to change our heart. (Wesley)**

If we believe that some of the judgments lodged in our heart began *in utero*, it makes sense that God would go there to bring change. If we do not believe our judgments began there,

we can look at the increasing fruit of God's work *in utero* and thus have to ask ourselves – how else can we explain the change of heart? Likewise, where we see the bad fruit of judgments and lies continue, despite healing received in other areas of our heart, and the only difference is that we have not allowed the Lord to work *in utero* (because we do not believe and refuse to let Him), we have to ask – is that what is preventing our healing?

I believe God would go to any length and any depth to change our heart, if we let Him. I believe, with Wesley, this is God's desire. If our heart is holding onto hurts received in the womb, I do not believe anything but our resistance could stop God from touching and pouring His healing into that place.

#### **10. Acknowledge our God-given inner awareness of God.** (Schleiermacher)

Because God has given us an inner awareness of Him, we are able to invite Him into any place in our heart or spirit that has been wounded, and we are able to feel His presence as He brings healing to that place – as if it were in real time. God is not constrained by time or space. It is our inner awareness of God's presence that enables us to invite and encounter Him in prayer ministry, and to feel His healing touch in the deepest parts of our heart that have been wounded for a long time, even since conception.

In a prayer ministry session, when the Holy Spirit reveals a judgment that was made or a lie believed *in utero*, we invite Him to show the person where He was at that painful moment. It is from His presence, and the person's awareness of His presence in that place of wounding, that the person receives healing – again, as if it were in real time. The person is vitally aware of God in that memory, and all the fear, anger, hurt, etc. disappear as the person breathes in the safety, love and peace of God's very present Spirit.

Those who receive God's healing in this way feel, afterward, as if those painful moments of wounding and judgment no longer have any bearing on them and are no longer a part of their makeup. God does not erase the memories, but He removes the painful sting and then uses those painful experiences for good (Romans 8:28; Isaiah 61:3; Psalm 30:11; Isaiah 43:19). It becomes as if the person had the fullness of joy, truth, peace and love of the Lord in that part of their heart or spirit all along, even in the face of the painful circumstances or harmful *in utero* environment. An unborn baby, fully aware of the presence of God in the womb, would not be afraid and would not make wrong judgments, regardless of what that baby sees, feels and hears. It is this overwhelming sense of His presence that God restores to the adult seeking healing, in the exact part of their heart or spirit where it was lost or stolen in the womb.

#### **11. Make theology relevant.** (Grenz & Olson)

So many problems are rampant in society today – depression, anger, death wish, dishonesty, violence, fear. Each of these can be traced back to *in utero* experiences, where nothing else explains or adequately removes the impulses. Discussion of *in utero* healing can easily be tied to – and must be tied to – these everyday issues and escalating problems, if it is to be embraced by the Body of Christ and by those who have yet to accept Christ.

As already discussed, scientific evidence of *in utero* experiences demonstrates how we get wounded. This evidence is a valuable tool for sharing *in utero* healing with people. It is also helpful to explain *in utero* healing, specifically, and prayer ministry more generally, using illustrations most people can understand. For example, earlier in this paper I referenced a prisoner of war who struggles to believe the war is over, or parts of our heart that have not yet “gotten the memo” that Jesus has saved us. In my office, I also have a picture of a heart crisscrossed by jigsaw pieces. I use this to illustrate to people how they can be filled with truth

and freedom in certain parts of their heart, while other parts of their heart still hide in darkness, confusion and a prison of lies.

Sometimes our spirit becomes captive in the womb, as we decide life is too frightening and too painful to fully embrace our birth (Isaiah 42:22; Isaiah 61:1). We choose to shut down our spirit and always feel a little withdrawn from life. This spiritual captivity *in utero* can be illustrated in many creative ways that speak to everyday life. Reflecting on my personal experiences with captive spirit in the womb (I was captive in multiple places in my spirit), and the different ways God visually showed this to me and led me through repentance and freedom each time, I believe God is the best, most creative, most practical and most effective illustrator of us all! God knows how to make theology relevant, and we can learn a lot from Him if we are open and willing to listen.

**12. Describe all experiences in the biblical context. (McGrath)**

It is not helpful (and perhaps it is even harmful) for me to share my personal *in utero* healing experiences without also knowing and explaining what the Bible has to say about God working in this way. Even though I may intend to share my stories to show the power of God to bring healing and restoration, and even though Scripture says we overcome by our testimony (Revelation 12:11), if others hear about my experiences in a “sensationalist” vein, it will not have the intended effect of witnessing to God. I need to know my audience. The Word of God does not return void, but rather accomplishes all He intends. I need to stand in the Word when I share my *in utero* healing experiences. Scripture is the vehicle by which *God’s* message within my *in utero* experiences is delivered.

**13. Recognize Jesus as the plumb line to measure all ideas. (Origen)**

Does *in utero* healing lead to the Fruit of the Spirit manifesting in us? Does it make us more Christ-like? From all reports that I have heard, seen and experienced – Yes! A question I often pose is this: Does it look like God and feel like God and reflect His heart? If yes, then it is probably God!

However, this rule of thumb, drawn from Origen's theological perspective, cautions us that all reports of *in utero* healing – along with the way it is taught and demonstrated, and the parameters of doing prayer ministry safely and properly – must line up with Jesus at the center. I am blessed to serve in a ministry which values and maintains the integrity of "Jesus as the plumb line." However, any good theology that is presented about God's *in utero* healing must be sure to include and specify these parameters, for the sake of those who were not taught this process from a ministry with biblical and spiritual integrity and accountability, and who are therefore not aware and do not take for granted the precautions prayer ministers must take.

**14. Realize that only God's presence in us helps us overcome sin.** (Augustine)

We must disregard reports of *in utero* experiences that do not involve inviting God's presence – and pray for those who have been involved. It is also important to note that when we invite God's presence, we do not know that He is going to take us *in utero* in that ministry session. That is His choice. There is another implication here as well: God's presence *does* help us overcome. If we invite Him into situations of *in utero* wounding, we know His intent is to help us overcome our struggle with the lies and sin that have been with us from the womb. This empowers us, and we stand in faith of our belief that He will do all that He sets out to accomplish.

**15. Recognize that God calls us to a more perfect state of being.** (Aquinas)

The implication of this rule of thumb is that God calls every part of us, not just some parts. Perfection is a holistic state of being. If we believe that God calls us to be transformed, that would include everything we have ever taken into our hearts and spirits – including from the womb.

Does God always need to take us *in utero* in a ministry session to restore all parts of our heart and spirit, including those wounded in the womb? No. Does every harmful experience in the womb lead to bitter root judgments or captive spirit or bondage to sin and lies? No. God's grace often takes care of those early woundings; they do not get stuck in our heart or spirit; and therefore we do not need healing in those places later on in life.

None of this suggests that God does not heal *in utero*. It does suggest that He heals His way, in His timing. When we see fruit in our life that needs healing, our job is to invite Him, step out of His way, and let Him work in us. We respond to what He shows us, and we repent where He convicts us. He is in control. Our healing, our being called to a more perfect state of being, is led by Him. We need to always be mindful of this, both as children of God receiving His ministry, and as ministers who have the privilege of sitting at His feet as He ministers to others.

#### **16. Know that God is in the restoration business.** (Athanasius)

Does *in utero* healing bring God's restoration to a person's life? If it does, then it is of God. If it does not, then it is not of God. Granted, as prayer ministers we might not see the immediate results of *in utero* healing. But we can trust that if we allowed God to be in control, something has changed for the better. As John Sandford describes it, God's manner of inner healing is similar to the old game of Pick-up Sticks. God knows exactly which stick to pull, in the right way, at the right time, to bring our healing.

We do know, from God's biblical message and from Athanasius's theological perspective that God's heart is to restore. God's Word is filled with such promises – in Isaiah and in other passages of Scripture, as well as in His overall message of the wonderful story that leads from Creation through the Cross to the New Earth. God is in the restoration business. Along with many other Christians, I have seen evidence of God at work in restoration through *in utero* healings. If the evidence that God really does heal *in utero* has held through this framework to this point; if *in utero* healing appears in line with His Word and with His heart; I would offer that *in utero* is indeed one tool available and used in incredible, life-changing ways, by our Restoring God.

## **Conclusion**

Through the process of writing this paper, I have examined and distilled from the works of many great theologians some rules of thumb that I can use and apply in my daily life and ministry. This paper is also a first step in what I hope will be a continuing discussion of theological perspectives concerning *in utero* healing. The application of these rules of thumb to the practical question of *in utero* healing has also given me greater insight into both the practical and spiritual work of theology. It has offered me a road map, as well as a test drive, on the road to searching the depths of Scripture, to seeking further understanding of what I believe by faith, and to integrating Scripture with other means of approaching God. These rules of thumb, the theological perspectives behind each rule, and my utilization of this theological method in consideration of a practical question will serve me well as I move forward in ministry, in my study of theology, and in my daily Christian life and spiritual formation.

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