Questioning Jung & Freud

Occult Practices, Anti-Biblical Assumptions, and the Question of Who Informed Modern Psychology

Alisha Bradley, M.A. | October 2026 | Revised edition

Independent working paper. This is an inquiry from a Christian biblical worldview. It separates documented history, biblical interpretation, and questions for future research. It has not undergone peer review.

Why I Am Asking This

I have spent years studying psychology, working with people, and asking questions about the mind. And lately I keep coming back to one question: **Who informed the people who taught us how to understand it?**

We learn names like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. We study their theories. Their language has made its way into classrooms, counseling rooms, books, and everyday conversations. But how often do we stop to ask what shaped their understanding of the human person in the first place?

Because I believe the source matters. If someone is interpreting the human mind through a spiritual practice that Scripture forbids, I cannot simply call that practice a harmless source of insight and move on. And if someone builds a theory of the person while treating faith in God as an illusion, I want to ask what that framework might be missing.

I am not arguing that every idea either man had is false. I am asking whether we have examined their foundations as carefully as we have repeated their conclusions.

Jung Was Not Simply Interested in the Occult

Let me begin with what can be documented. As a young medical student, Carl Jung attended séances involving a cousin who claimed to communicate with deceased personalities. His 1902 dissertation was titled *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*. It studied the experiences of a young woman who presented herself as a medium. These are not rumors; the Library of Congress documents this history, and the dissertation itself survives. [1, 2]

So when I say Jung engaged with occult practices, I am not using the word simply to provoke. **Séances, mediumship, and attempted communication with the dead are precisely the kinds of practices Christians have to examine through Scripture.**

Years later, Jung undertook intense inner explorations that became the material for his *Black Books* and *The Red Book*. He recorded visions and conversations with figures within those experiences. His method of engaging inner images became associated with what he called active imagination. The Library of Congress traces how he developed these writings. [3]

I want to be careful here: a recorded vision or an imagined dialogue is not, by itself, proof that an external spirit was present. Jung understood much of this through his own account of the psyche. But from a biblical lens, I still have to ask whether deliberately seeking guidance through such encounters can cross spiritual boundaries Scripture warns us about.

> ***Giving an experience a psychological name does not automatically answer the spiritual question.***

What Does the Bible Call These Practices?

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 names divination, sorcery, mediums, spiritists, and calling up the dead among practices Israel was forbidden to pursue. Leviticus 19:31 warns against turning to mediums and familiar spirits. Isaiah 8:19 asks why people would seek the dead on behalf of the living rather than seek their God.

Those passages matter to me. I do not read them as merely ancient cultural preferences. I read them as a warning about **where we go for spiritual knowledge**.

So when I examine Jung's séances and the mediumship documented in his earliest work, my biblical judgment is clear: **the practices themselves belong to categories Scripture prohibits.** That is my theological assessment. It is different from claiming that historians have proved which spirit, if any, was present at a particular séance.

And that distinction does not soften my concern. It sharpens it. We can name the practice honestly, examine what Jung believed it meant, and still ask what happens when experiences formed around forbidden spiritual inquiry enter the history of psychological theory.

But Freud Raises a Different Problem

I do not want to pretend Freud and Jung had identical histories. The evidence for Jung's participation in séances and his exploration of occult phenomena is much clearer than a claim that Freud built his theories through the same rituals. That would be an inaccurate way to tell the story.

Freud presents a different question. In *The Future of an Illusion*, he treated religious beliefs as expressions of deep human wishes rather than accepting them as divine revelation. The Library of Congress preserves this central feature of his argument. [4]

From my Christian perspective, that is not a neutral starting point. If the human being is created by God and has a spirit, what happens when we begin by explaining belief in God primarily as a psychological need?

What becomes visible through that lens? And what disappears?

With Jung, I am questioning the place of occult practice and spiritual experimentation in the development of his thought. With Freud, I am questioning a framework that explains religion without beginning from the truth of biblical revelation. **Both deserve scrutiny, but not for identical reasons.**

Okay, But What Did This Change?

This is where the question becomes bigger than two men.

Jung's ideas about symbols, dreams, archetypes, the unconscious, and individuation helped shape analytical psychology and influenced later conversations about personality, meaning, and the inner life. Freud's theories of unconscious conflict, defenses, and early experience influenced psychoanalysis and the wider history of psychotherapy. Their ideas did not become every treatment used today, and modern mental-health care draws on many other traditions and bodies of evidence.

Still, theories influence what a practitioner looks for. They help decide what counts as a clue, what a symptom means, and what kind of change seems possible.

Imagine two people listening to the same woman describe a recurring fear. One asks about childhood experiences. Another asks about learned responses and her nervous system. Another asks about beliefs and expectations. And a Christian advisor may also ask what Scripture teaches about fear, truth, spiritual struggle, and renewal of the mind.

Those questions do not all cancel each other out. But they reveal something important: **the lens shapes the questions, and the questions shape the response.**

If a theory is built from assumptions that exclude God, that matters. If an approach was influenced by practices the Bible calls forbidden, that matters too. It does not mean every resulting observation is useless. It means we should stop treating the worldview behind an observation as invisible.

What If We Started With the Holy Spirit?

Here is the question I really want to ask: **What if we started over with Scripture as our foundation?**

Not by pretending we have learned nothing about trauma, memory, development, sleep, medication, relationships, or the brain. I am not interested in dismissing useful knowledge. I am asking what happens when we put that knowledge inside a different understanding of the human person.

First Corinthians 2:11 speaks about the spirit of a person and the Spirit of God. John 16:13 describes the Spirit of truth guiding believers into truth. James 1:5 tells those who lack wisdom to ask God. For me, these are not decorative verses. They shape where I believe wisdom ultimately comes from.

I believe the Holy Spirit is the highest source of spiritual wisdom and knowledge. That is a Christian conviction, not a claim that a laboratory has established the supernatural source of an impression or revelation.

And I would want any framework built around that conviction to practice discernment rather than assume every impression is from God. First John 4:1 tells believers to test the spirits. Scripture itself gives us a reason not to accept every spiritual claim without examination.

So I keep asking: What if we asked God for wisdom before deciding we already understood the person in front of us? What if we looked at the whole person - mind, body, soul, and spirit? What if we examined patterns, beliefs, wounds, biology, relationships, and spiritual questions without forcing one explanation onto every person?

Would We Treat People Differently?

I think we might. But I want to be precise about what that means.

A biblical lens might lead us to ask about forgiveness, identity in Christ, deception, fear, spiritual practices, shame, prayer, community, and what someone believes about God. It might lead us to define healing more broadly than the absence of symptoms. It might also change the way we understand the dignity of the person seeking help.

At the same time, a spiritual impression is not a psychiatric diagnosis. It cannot establish that a person has a demon, that medication is unnecessary, or that a particular medical condition has one spiritual cause. Those are different questions, with different responsibilities. People experiencing serious symptoms still deserve appropriate medical and mental-health assessment and care.

The work I want to develop is not about replacing one unexamined authority with another. It is about asking better questions, making our assumptions visible, and studying what actually helps people.

If an explicitly Christian framework changes the way we understand suffering, we should be able to describe those differences clearly. If it leads to new practices, we should ask whether they are safe, how people experience them, and whether they improve outcomes.

The Question I Cannot Leave Alone

I am not finished with Jung. I am not finished with Freud. And I am certainly not finished asking what psychology has inherited from the people who helped shape it.

But this is where I stand today: **Jung’s documented engagement with séances and mediumship raises a direct biblical concern about divination and spirit consultation. Freud’s treatment of religious belief raises a different concern about a psychology built without accepting biblical revelation as truth.**

And if our understanding of the mind shapes the way we treat human suffering, then the foundation of that understanding deserves to be questioned.

I want to know what we would see if we began with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. I want to know what we have missed. And I want to know whether that different starting point could help us understand and care for people more fully.

> ***Because before we decide how to heal the mind, I think we need to ask who taught us how to see it.***

Questions for Further Work

Which of Jung's ideas can be traced directly to his documented spiritual experiences, and which came from clinical observation or other scholarship? How did those ideas enter later therapeutic practice? Where does Freud's understanding of religion shape his view of human suffering? How might a biblical view of personhood change case formulation, spiritual care, and the goals of healing? And how could any new approach be examined carefully rather than simply assumed to work?

Sources and Reading

[1] Library of Congress. *Before the Red Book: The Red Book of Carl G. Jung: Its Origins and Influence.* https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/before-the-red-book.html

[2] Jung, C. G. (1902). *Zur Psychologie und Pathologie sogenannter occulter Phänomene.* Digitized by Wellcome Collection. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ygd6mxfx

[3] Library of Congress. *Creation and Publication of the Red Book.* https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/red-book-of-carl-jung/creation-and-publication-of-the-red-book.html

[4] Library of Congress. *Sigmund Freud: Conflict & Culture - The Future of an Illusion.* https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/freud/ex/172.html

Biblical passages discussed: Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Leviticus 19:31; Isaiah 8:19; 1 Corinthians 2:11; John 16:13; James 1:5; 1 John 4:1.