then he had to cope with the new emotion of guilt for having blamed them. The problem was resolved when the wife and neighbor were called in the same day, and all three embraced in an expression of love and forgiveness, thanking God for a miracle. The patient’s grief work was over, and so was his drinking.

UNRESOLVED GRIEF

Still other patients in the course of their mourning move from the trauma level to reconstruction, skipping over their feelings of depression, hostility, and guilt. Eventually they find themselves in a state of unresolved grief, with the need to return at a later date to complete their mourning. This is exemplified by a patient whose wife divorced him. He walked out, leaving her with all their possessions, thinking that his unreasonable generosity took care of his guilt. He acted out his hostility sexually by immediately remarrying. Almost within days of the second marriage, all of his unresolved feelings were transferred to the new relationship in a distorted form, and alcohol took over. He had to return to the depression he felt from the loss of his first wife, and work through the hostility and guilt underlying the depression. Only then was he able to resolve the transference and have a significant relationship with the second wife without alcohol.

To some people, separation means rejection or punishment. Thus, the person doesn’t feel worthy of new relationships and is incapable of finding them. He has no strong acceptance of himself. Consequently, he may identify with the departed one and take upon himself the characteristics of that person. If the loss was a death, he may even feel that he too has cancer, heart trouble, or whatever caused the death.

One alcoholic person’s father died when he was four years old, and the mother idealized her departed husband. The boy attempted to take on the fantastic image of his father rather than be himself. This blocked his development as a person, and he could not free himself, for he could never come up to the “godlike” qualities of the father. In time he began to rely more and more on alcohol in order to resolve his feelings of low self-worth and self-esteem. Before he could go on to reconstruction and be himself, he had to go back through all six phases of grief and unlock his hostility for having had to try being someone else just to please his mother.

THE DYING

Too frequently the need of a dying person to do grief work is overlooked. How often in dealing with alcoholic persons in the final stages of cirrhosis of the liver do we give them that opportunity? Many of these individuals suffer a death far more terrifying than it would have been if someone were there to help them do their grief work. The dying, too, need to pass through all six phases. When they do, the peace and