The Integration of Psychology and Christianity
By Martin Stokley

Introduction

In this essay we shall consider the question of whether psychology is a valid tool and source of information for Christian ministry. We will engage in a critical way with all the arguments regarding the possibility of integration. We shall begin by asking why it is even necessary to think about whether integration is possible. This will lead us to thinking about what the discipline of psychology looks like and how we can define what psychology is. We will then critique various models of interaction between psychology and Christianity. From here we will move to considering the doctrine of Sola Scriptura and as to whether this completely rules out the use of psychology, as some have suggested. We will then begin to consider how integration can be undertaken in a sophisticated way. This will also lead us to being aware of how we should think clearly about psychology. In the Appendix we will specifically consider three passages which are said to rule out the use of psychology in Christian ministry.

What we shall find in this essay is that integration is certainly possible but it needs to be done in a careful and not unthinking way. Along the way we will find ourselves asking the important question of how psychology may be used in Christian ministry. We will make some specific observations about the use of psychology in Christian ministry, pointing out pitfalls to avoid and the need to keep the limitations of psychology in perspective.

Why is it necessary to think about the question of the integration of psychology and Christianity?

Some people may wonder why it is necessary to consider whether and how it is possible to integrate psychology and Christianity. For them the answer is obvious and is affirmed with an unreserved ‘yes’. Their acceptance of anything psychological and it’s incorporation into ministry is wholesale and uncritical. Yet perhaps the question of integration is not quite as obvious as it at first seems. Consider the following:

- Psychology as a separate academic discipline has only been around since the opening of the first psychology laboratory by Wilhelm Wundt in 1879 at the University of Leipzig. For around 1900 years the church wasn’t without the resources it needed to help solve people’s problems or to help people live a godly life. It didn’t have to wait till Freud, Rogers etc. till it could minister adequately. Therefore it is argued that psychology is not to be viewed as necessary and Christian pastoral care is not dependent on psychology for its existence. Yet the power of psychology and counselling continues to grow in the church. In fact, as Bridger and Atkinson comment, “Such is the mystique and power of counselling that both ministers and laity increasingly judge themselves inadequate to carry

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1 Before then psychology was generally a sub-part of philosophy or religion and it wasn’t empirical.
2 Adams, How to help people change, p.36
3 Ibid., p.32,
4 Adams, How to help people change, p.34; Bobgan & Bobgan, Psychoheresy, p.34
out the pastoral task without recourse to some kind of professional training in counselling technique. Given that the Christian church has survived and grown for the best part of 2000 years without such professionalization, this would be faintly amusing if it were not so disturbing.\(^5\) (Although maybe against this point we would want to acknowledge even though academic and clinical psychology was not existence for nearly the first 2000yrs of the church, the teaching of the church and theologians did draw on the psychological understandings which were available at the time of writing eg. conscience, motivations etc.)

- The relationship between psychology and Christianity can be cast using the words of Tertullian “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between Academy and the church? … With our faith, we desire no further belief.” For Tertullian human thinking and Biblical truth could not be reconciled. In other words putting this into the modern arena you either choose psychology or Christianity, not both.\(^6\) Some people would argue that we shouldn’t see Jerusalem and Athens in complete opposition and it is possible to reconcile them, is this true for psychology and Christianity?

- It is claimed that the scriptures are sufficient for salvation and for equipping for every good task including pastoral care and counselling\(^7\). Therefore psychology is not needed. Does use of psychology automatically mean a claim that the Bible is deficient for understanding and transforming people?\(^8\)

- Psychology and psychotherapy incorporates values either openly or covertly in its theories and language.\(^9\) Even Roger’s person-centred counselling theory which claimed to be non-directive is covertly directive\(^10\) eg. It encourages everyone to do what is right in their own eyes\(^11\). Do the overt or covert values of psychology match up with Christian values?

- Areas of knowledge overlap in psychology and Christianity (eg anthropology, human transformation and behaviour) so that interaction is inevitable.\(^12\) However, how do we deal with contradictions?

- Some psychologists have been openly antagonistic towards religion eg. Freud saw religious belief as illusions.\(^13\) How do we respond to their, at times, aggressive attacks?

- There are those who would argue that psychology sometimes fulfils a religious role, or in other words it sometimes has a religious character. At these moments it attempts to replace one form of religion with a type of

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\(^5\) Bridger and Atkinson, *Counselling in context: Developing a theological framework*, p.9

\(^6\) Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.11

\(^7\) eg. See Adams, *How to help people change*, Chapter 4; W. A. Mack in eds. Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, pp.43-48

\(^8\) Powlison in eds. Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.63

\(^9\) Myers, *Psychology*, pp.48-49


\(^11\) To use a phrase from Judges 17:6 & 21:25

\(^12\) Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.61

humanist religion. If this is the case, should we be wedding together two ‘religions’?

- The word integration can mean many different things and this can lead to confusion. What are we integrating? “Do we integrate psychology and theology, psychology and Christianity, faith and learning, faith and practice, or all the above? And what is our goal? Is it to relate one field of study to another, to harmonize two approaches to understanding and changing behaviour, to reach some kind of unification, to develop a coherent and competent theory of counselling?”

It is because of observations and claims like these that it is not wise to offer an unthinking affirmation to the integration of psychology and Christianity. In fact, there is a section of the Christian community who are more cautious in their answer to the question of the possibility of integration and feel that the answer is not necessarily as obvious as people sometimes suggest.

This section of the Christian community can generally be split into two groups. The first group is made up of those who see the relationship between psychology and Christianity as being possible but limited by some very definite boundaries usually determined by theological truth. The second group is made up of those who stand against the use of psychology (the anti-psychology movement), seeing psychology as a source of heresy. Whilst it might be especially tempting to completely disregard the anti-psychology movement as naive and theologically unsophisticated at the outset, it is important that we listen to the voices of those with whom we may disagree because they might just have something important to say to us. We ourselves would be being naive if we thought that there is absolutely no truth in anything the Christian anti-psychology movement says without examining their claims. It is also possible although we might not agree with the general stance of the anti-psychology movement they may say some very truthful things about psychology and the churches use of psychology.

The responses to psychology in the Evangelical community therefore range from uncritical acceptance to complete rejection. It is because of the above criticisms about the ways which psychology and Christianity have been related that we need to ask the question what the proper relationship between psychology and Christianity should be.

**What is psychology?**

We have seen why it is important to ask the question of the possibility of integration between psychology and Christianity. However, before we go any further in our discussions it is important to make a couple of comments of clarification about what exactly the discipline of psychology is and covers.

The discipline of Psychology cannot be defined simply as the study of human behaviour. To distinguish it adequately from other disciplines such as anthropology, history etc. psychology needs to be defined more tightly as involving scientific

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techniques. The academic discipline of psychology is therefore defined as “the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes”. Within the discipline of psychological science there is great diversity of content and perspectives, ranging from a biological perspective at one end towards bordering on social science perspectives at the other. The range of subjects and aspects of behaviour studied by psychology is wide and this means that there is not one all encompassing theory of psychology, but many different theories covering different aspects of behaviour.

Another important distinction to make is between scientific psychology and popular psychology. Many people who are labelled in the media as being “psychologists” are not involved in scientific research and have not made any contribution to the discipline of psychology. Stanovich also comments that:

“Few people are aware that the majority of the books they see in the psychology sections of many bookstores are written by individuals with absolutely no standing in the psychological community. Few are aware that many of the people to whom television applies the label of psychologist would not be considered so by the American Psychological Association or the Association for Psychological Science.”

This then leads to the perpetuation of pseudoscience (something which appears to be scientific but is in fact not) presented as psychology. Stanovich goes on to say:

“Many pseudosciences are multimillion-dollar industries that depend on the lack of public awareness that claims about human behaviour can be tested. The general public is also unaware that many of the claims made by these pseudosciences … have been tested and proved false.”

Popular science needs to be distinguished clearly from scientific psychology. The claims of popular psychology may be scientifically based or not. It is therefore naïve to assume that everything that is claimed as psychological truth in the media or popular books is actually true. In fact the issue of pseudoscience is an important issue in the domain of clinical psychology. It is good to always ask what the scientific basis for a claim of popular psychology is. If there is no evidence then the claim is simply speculation.

Another important distinction which will be of use to us in our discussion of the integration of psychology and Christianity is the distinction between scientific psychology and psychotherapy. The term “psychotherapy” is notoriously hard to define because of the diversity of theories and techniques of psychotherapy. However, a good working definition of “Psychotherapy” is the science of people helping. We will see that some of the concerns of the anti-psychology movement

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16 For a discussion of this see Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, pp.6-7
17 Myers, *Psychology*, p.2
18 Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, pp.2-3
which leads to their rejection of psychology are in fact concerns with the sub-domain of psychotherapy. Scientific psychology tends to be descriptive in nature, whilst psychotherapy tends to be prescriptive in nature.

Models of the Interaction of Christianity and Psychology

We have now seen that asking questions about the relationship between psychology and Christianity is important. We have also clarified what exactly we mean by psychology. We will now move onto look at the possible different ways of interaction.

There are various schemes for describing the different ways of the interaction of psychology and Christianity. Here we shall use the one laid out by Narramore and Carter. Their scheme sums up the possible different models of interaction in a very simple way.

The ‘Against’ Model

In the ‘against’ model of the interaction of psychology and Christianity can be summed up in the following way:

- There is an outright rejection of psychology
- The conflict between psychology and Christianity is seen as inherent and cannot be solved. Reconciliation is not possible. You end up with an either / or position. The foundations and teachings of the two disciplines are antithetical to one another.
- At its extreme this view says that the sole source of truth is revelation and not science or reason. Human reason is fatally distorted by the noetic effects of sin and doesn’t have access to truth apart from revelation.
- Psychology is not seen as a science at all.
- Maladjustment results from our sinful nature (a spiritual cause) and therefore there is no need for psychotherapy.
- Psychotherapy becomes a substitute for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit (sanctification).

Christians who subscribe to the against model become part of the anti-psychology movement. Good examples of Christian teachers who fit into this category would be Jay Adams and Martin Bobgan.

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26 Here we will concentrate on Christian responses to Psychology. Narramore and Carter also apply these models to describe the psychology’s responses to Christianity but these are not important for the purposes of our discussion and so we shall not mention them.
27 For a more in depth discussion see Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, pp.71-80; Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, Chapter 9
The core arguments used to support the ‘against’ model can basically be split into four categories:

- The sufficiency of scripture (Sola Scriptura)
- Belief that there are two sources of counsel – God and satan
- Psychology is bad science
- Integration is syncretistic

We shall return to the question of the sufficiency of scripture below because the importance and complexity of this argument demands a deeper discussion. However, we shall examine the claims of the other three arguments now.

**Belief that there are two sources of counsel.** Jay Adams derives this argument from the story of the fall where Adam and Eve were given a specific command from God and then tempted to follow satan’s ‘counsel’ which confused, distorted and stood against God’s counsel. He claims that there is no neutral counsel and he identifies psychology with satan’s counsel.

The first thing that we have to recognise about Adams argument is that his comments are directed specifically towards psychotherapy (or counselling) and do not necessarily apply more generally to scientific psychology which is essentially descriptive (and not prescriptive) in outlook. We find this problem a lot in the anti-psychology literature. A failure to clearly distinguish between psychology as psychotherapy and psychology as scientific description leads to a lack of clarity to what is being rejected.

We also have to recognise that there is an element of truth in what Adams says. Scripture does proclaim God as the source of truth and satan as the father of lies. Adams’ mistake comes when he equates psychology with falsehood. He doesn’t allow the fact that fallen, fallible and finite people, including non-Christians, are able discern or stumble across some measure of truth by God’s grace. Likewise fallen, fallible and finite people, Christian and non-Christian may equally well affirm falsehood. Jones and Butman say it well:

“‘There are two sources of counsel in the world, God’s and Satan’s, and we should follow God’s counsel. But God’s counsel is not always synonymous with the counsel of a Christian, and Satan’s counsel is not synonymous with the counsel of a non-Christian. Rather we would identify God’s counsel with the truth, and Satan’s counsel with falsehood. Thus sometimes a so-called secular approach to understanding a given topic may be nearer the truth than the distorted understanding of a particular Christian person.’”

Psalm 1:1 is also referred to in the literature in regard to the two sources of counsel. The counsel of the wicked is claimed to be the counsel of non-Christian psychologists. This results in the total rejection of psychology. Again we find that

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29 eg. See Adams, *How to help people change*, esp. chapter 4; Hindson & Eyrich (eds.), *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counseling*, Chapters 1-3
30 Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption*, pp.5-10
there is a misapplication of the text going on. The very most this text could rule out is
psychotherapy. It cannot rule out the more generally descriptive scientific psychology
because this verse focuses on advice and plans\textsuperscript{32} (prescription). However, it is
questionable if this text completely rules out all psychotherapy because it is possible
that psychotherapy as a discipline could contain righteous or unrighteous advice. It
seems as if the most that Psalm 1:1 can rule out is following the advice of a
psychotherapist who is determined that we should live a lifestyle which is against
God. Again what we find is the need to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Descriptive psychology does have something unique to say to us in terms of human
functioning and it doesn’t always simply tell us only what God has told us all along.
However the reality of the two counsels shows us that when psychology treads on the
prescriptive domain God’s counsel must always have primary place and this keeps
psychotherapy in its proper place.

**Psychology as bad science.** Martin and Deirdre Bobgan are the people who state this
view most clearly in their book “Psychoheresy”. They define psychology as being
“according to the tradition of men”\textsuperscript{33} and deny that psychology generally has a
scientific character at all. In their critique of the scientific nature of psychology\textsuperscript{34} the
Bobgans draw on both the writings of secular and Christian authors and it is again
important to understand that their critique is aimed fairly directly at psychotherapy
and psychiatry, rather than a research based scientific and descriptive psychology of
human functioning. It is impossible to deny the truth of some of the issues that the
Bobgans and other people have raised and we have to agree that there are many
examples of bad science presented as psychology. In psychology it is easy to find
easy examples of bad reasoning, speculation, personal opinions presented as facts, guesses,
theories in contradiction each other, use of ideas which are neither provable or
refutable using scientific methods, conflicting descriptions and techniques, bias
against or hostility towards religion (eg. Freud) etc. We also have to acknowledge that
in psychology there is the problem of moving from description of human behaviour to
prediction of human behaviour, all that can be given are statistics for possible
outcomes.\textsuperscript{35} A definite prediction (eg. that this specific person will develop panic
disorder) in an individual case based on cause and effect is not possible.

Another issue that contributes to the perception of psychology as bad science is the
acknowledged “scientist-practitioner gap” in clinical psychology at the moment.\textsuperscript{36}
Practitioners use techniques or theories which are scientifically unfounded or have
been proven scientifically to be false. The training of therapists may include
‘psychological’ theories but it tends to include little or no scientific training. The
evidence for and validity of psychological theories taught is rarely discussed or
questioned. The training also doesn’t equip the therapists to think scientifically. This
leads to scientific knowledge not informing practice and therefore we see a rise in
pseudoscience being presented as science. Lilienfield, Lynn and Lohr comment:

\textsuperscript{32} See NIDOTTE on the Hebrew word for counsel in Psalm 1:1
\textsuperscript{33} Bobgan & Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, p.4
\textsuperscript{34} See Bobgan & Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, Chapter 3
\textsuperscript{35} Bobgan & Bobgan, *Psychoheresy*, pp.147-149; Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, pp.175-182
\textsuperscript{36} Lilienfield, Lynn & Lohr, *Science and pseudoscience in clinical psychology*, (New York: Guildford, 2004); pp. xiv-xv, 2-3
“As many authors have noted some practitioners in clinical psychology and related mental health disciplines appear to be making increased use of unsubstantiated, untested, and otherwise questionable treatment and assessment methods. Moreover, psychotherapeutic methods of unknown or doubtful validity are proliferating on an almost weekly basis.” 37

They also note that the self-help industry also adds to the problem of the unscientific foundations of psychological theories:

“This industry produces hundreds of new books, manuals, and audiotapes each year … many of which promise rapid or straightforward solutions to complex life problems. Although some of these self-help materials may be efficacious, the overwhelming majority of them have never been subjected to empirical scrutiny.” 38

We can see that those who stand against the integration of Christianity and psychology have some very valid points about psychology being bad science. The Bobgans rightly question whether psychology contains more confusion than truth. 39 However they tend to ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater’ by saying we should reject psychology altogether. In contrast to the Bobgans it is probably better to say that it is possible to gain true knowledge from revelation and experience (science). However it is important to both acknowledge the limitations of the discipline of psychology and also to recognise that because “science is a human activity, and since humans are fallible, science is fallible.” 40 Jones and Butman say:

“… we must acknowledge that some areas of psychotherapy are neither good science or good reason, good intuition or anything else; they are rather examples of slipshod argumentation and speculation. Some psychology, and some psychotherapy writings, are simply good for nothing.” 41

We have to affirm that some psychology is bad science but empirical methods are still valid ways of discerning truth. The possible fallibility of a discipline does not mean we should reject it in totally, if this were the case we would have to reject theology as well because there are many examples of bad theology over the history of the church.

Narramore and Carter sum it up well “the many problems and limitations of psychology must not blind us to the value of an ongoing study of human behaviour.” 42 The problems of psychology should not lead to us rejecting psychology in totality but should make us determined to identify good psychology and only use that in the integration process.

Integration is syncretistic. This argument against the integration interprets systems of psychotherapy as religious in character. The Bobgans say that “Because psychotherapy deals with meaning in life, values, and behaviour, it is religion in

37 Ibid., p.2
38 Ibid., p.2
39 Bobgan & Bobgan, Psychoheresy, p.31
40 Jones and Butman, Modern Psychotherapies: A Christian Appraisal, p.28
41 Ibid., p.29
42 Narramore and Carter, The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction, p.17
theory and in practice. Every branch of psychotherapy is religious. Therefore, combining Christianity and psychotherapy is joining two or more religious systems. Psychotherapy cannot be performed and people cannot be transformed without affecting a person’s beliefs. Because psychotherapy involves morals and values, it is religion." Adams makes the same general point as well:

“When counsellors speak of values, behaviour, attitudes, and beliefs, as indeed they do, they transgress on the territory that God staked out for the Bible and its practitioners.”

The Bobgans also offer perhaps a healthy corrective to seek to remind us to keep the humanity of psychologists in perspective:

“Jesus is ‘the way, the truth, and the life,” not Freud, Jung, Adler, Maslow, or Ellis or other such men.”

The Bobgans coin a term ‘Psychoheresy’ which stands for psychological heresy. They expand further:

“It is a heresy because it a departure from the fundamental truth of the Gospel. The departure is the use of the unproven and unscientific psychological opinions of men instead of absolute confidence in the biblical truth of God.”

Later in their book the Bobgans rightly emphasise that God calls his people not to follow other religious ideas or other systems of morality. They then go on to proclaim the use of psychology as idolatry because they are incorporating the theories of man. For them psychological systems “have more in common with false religion than science. They are offing other religions – religions created by fallen, unredeemed men and religions based upon such philosophies as determinism, atheism, agnosticism, secular humanism, Gnosticism, and occultism.” It is the subjectivity that they see which causes the Bobgans to condemn all psychology.

We cannot deny that there are overlaps between the psychology and Christianity because they have subject matter in common, for example both deal with attitudes, behaviour, the process of change, anthropologies etc. It is better to think of psychology and theology as two disciplines whose areas of study overlap rather than two disciplines with distinct areas of study.

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43 Bobgan & Bobgan, Psychoheresy, p.23
44 Adams, How to help people change, p.38
45 Bobgan & Bobgan, Psychoheresy, p.6
46 Bobgan & Bobgan, Psychoheresy, p.7
47 Ibid., p.118
48 Ibid., pp.119-120
49 Ibid., p.122
50 Narramore and Carter, The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction, p.15; Bridger and Atkinson, Counselling in context: Developing a theological framework, p.127
This means that psychology and psychotherapy can hardly be considered value free. Different psychological theories have different worldviews and “Each psychology’s interpretive system is embodied in a set of categories and labels that map onto life lived. Norms and ideal set standards, against which diagnoses are made and toward which therapies aspire in seeking to alter life lived into something more worth living.” These norms and ideals may coincide with Biblical norms and ideals or not.

There is also another area of overlap in psychology and Christianity. Bridger and Atkinson sum it up well:

“Just as a professional priestly caste exists in religion to explicate the mysteries of transcendence to faithful believers, so the same is true in counselling. The counsellor initiates the counsellee into the mysteries of ‘the truth’. By means of mysterious and magical formulae couched in specialist language the innermost mysteries of the human self are opened up. But, as in religion, this can only happen with the aid of a trained mediator or quasi-priest – the counsellor.” Although we would not want to push this analogy too far (counsellors do not consciously set themselves up in the priestly role) we can certainly see that there is some truth within it.

From all that we have said it is hard to deny that there is a certain religious character to psychotherapy especially, and also probably other areas of psychology.

We have to acknowledge that there is some truth in the syncretism argument against the integration of psychology and Christianity. Syncretism does happen. Christians have sought to blend unproven theories, different psychological worldviews, different value systems and different beliefs about the meaning of life with Christianity.

However it is important to realise that the much of what we have said about syncretism above should be more appropriately applied to psychotherapeutic area of psychology rather than psychology in general. There is the danger that we underestimate the fact that some psychology is scientific (ie. empirically based). Whilst we should reject anything which does not match up with Biblical truth or values, the arguments and analogies above do not completely rule out the use of a descriptive and scientific psychology. Bad integration does happen and it can be syncretistic, however good thoughtful integration can be done also which is based on scientific psychology and Biblical truth.

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51 Powlison in eds. Johnson and Jones, Psychology and Christianity: Four Views, p.205
52 Bridger and Atkinson, Counselling in context: Developing a theological framework, p.87
53 Roberts in eds. Johnson and Jones, Psychology and Christianity: Four Views, p.238
We have so far looked at three of the arguments against integration and concluded that none of them fatally wounds the idea that integration is possible. They do however give us food for thought and encourage us to begin to think wisely about how we go about integration. We shall return to the question of the sufficiency of scripture below. We now move onto the next of Narramore and Carter’s models for the interaction of psychology and Christianity.

The ‘Of’ Model

The ‘Of’ model of the interaction of psychology and Christianity can be summed up in the following ways:54

- Essentially a psychology of religion. The true meaning of scripture is found in its psychology and not theology.
- Rejects the supernatural aspects of religion and takes a naturalistic approach to religion. Tends to downplay the need for redemption and any mention of sin, but says that religion may still contain psychological insights that are useful.
- Tend to elevate science above the authority of the Bible.
- It tends to press the theories of psychology onto scripture without too much questioning of whether they actually fit or not. Perhaps demythologising the text to make it more scientific.55

This model of interaction tends to be more appealing to those with a more liberal theology. The major problem with this model of interaction is that it forces Christianity and theology into a psychological mould. It ignores the distinctiveness of both theology and psychology and therefore is not a true interaction. One discipline is manipulated or essentially lost so it becomes acceptable to the other.56 We will therefore reject this model of interaction because it does not respect the distinct and different natures of psychology and Christian theology.

The Parallels Model

The ‘Parallels’ Model of interaction can be summed up in the following way:57

- Psychology and Christianity parallel each other in their concepts but there is little effort to dialogue.
- Both are seen as valid disciplines of study and the territory of each is respected. This may mean that it is maintained that psychology and theology are separate and therefore do not overlap. Both are affirmed but are isolated from each other. It may also mean that they do overlap and it


55 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.213

56 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.213

is possible to align the concepts of each, but each concept is only valid in its discipline. The same (equivalent) truth is expressed in both disciplines but in different ways.

- There is no essential conflict between religion and psychology.

This model is good in that it emphasises the importance of scripture and psychology but interaction is considered impossible.\(^{58}\) Its problem is that it doesn’t allow for the unifying of knowledge and so can lead to the forcing of concepts of one discipline on to the other.\(^ {59}\) It can also lead to a fragmented view of reality and truth. There is then the danger in this model of assuming that for psychological problems you go to a psychologist and for spiritual problems you go to a pastor.\(^ {60}\)

It is this lack of recognising the unity of knowledge that causes us to reject this model as adequate, especially given that psychology and theology both have there origin the creator God.

**The Integrates Model**

The ‘integrates’ model can be summed up in the following way:

- There is no necessary dichotomy between the sacred and the secular.\(^ {61}\)
- We can use the truths of psychology if they do not contradict Christian belief.
- Knowledge of human functioning can be gained from bother science and scripture all be it using different methodologies.\(^ {62}\)
- Psychology can have a part to playing in showing us how our fallenness is expressed in thinking, relationships, behaviour etc.\(^ {63}\)

The basic assumption of the integration model can be summed up in the statement ‘All truth is God’s truth’ and this is a common justification for integration given in the literature. The justification of this statement can clearly be derived from the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of the unity of God. God as creator is the author of all truth in world and the unity of God means we would not expect to find contradiction in God:

“… and this establishes a basic unity of all truth, whether found in scriptural revelation or scientific experimentation. Given this unity of truth, it is possible to integrate truth arrived at from different sources and with different methodologies.”\(^ {64}\)

Reason, revelation and scientific method are all valid ways of searching for truth in the world God has created.\(^ {65}\) Integration then becomes about discovering the already

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\(^{58}\) Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, p.94

\(^{59}\) Ibid., p.100

\(^{60}\) Ibid., p.12

\(^{61}\) Ibid., p.224

\(^{62}\) Ibid., p.135

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p.147

\(^{64}\) Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, p.13

\(^{65}\) Ibid., p.103
existing “fundamental unity of the world God created”\textsuperscript{66}. Ultimately we should expect to find congruence and no conflict between all the sources of knowledge.

This is especially true in the case of theology, whose epistemology is revelational, and psychology, whose epistemology is empirical.\textsuperscript{67} Entwistle states it well:

“Where psychology and theology are concerned, this a matter of recognising that the two disciplines are allies simply by virtue of the fact that they derive from a common sovereign. God gave birth to the subject of psychology (human behaviour) when he created human beings. God granted us the foundations of theology when He gave us his word. Since both psychology and theology are his subjects, the book of his works and the book of his words respectively, they reflect larger truths that are held in his hand. While our perception of those truths is imperfect, the truths themselves are ultimately unified; our models will not be perfect because our knowledge is incomplete and our assumptions can be incorrect, but the reality behind our model possesses an underlying unity.”\textsuperscript{68}

Two other arguments are made to justify integration in the literature. Firstly, Larry Crabb espouses the concept of ‘spoiling the Egyptians’ in reference to how the Israelites left Egypt, taking with them material possessions from the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{69} Crabb advocates using this passage as an analogy from which he draws the principle that we can therefore take from the social sciences whatever truth we find, just as the Israelites took from the Egyptians. Crabb also uses the story to note the danger of integrating secular psychology in a bad way may draw people away from God (The Israelites took attitudes from Egypt which led them away from God). The fallacy of this argument is shown by Eyrich and Hindson:

“No doubt this writer intended to simply use this figure of speech in an allegorical sense. However, the allegory fails to do justice to the clear meaning of the biblical text from which the concept is taken. In the biblical text (Exodus 12:35-36), this spoiling of the Egyptians was clearly a matter of borrowing \textit{material} things, not socio-cultural concepts. In fact, when the Israelites did borrow such concepts they build a golden calf and an idol, and God punished them for it.”\textsuperscript{70}

Crabb’s argument is therefore not a good argument therefore for integration. The other argument which is used to justify integration is the use of the theological concept of ‘general revelation’. Special revelation is the truth which God has revealed through the Bible. General revelation is said to be the truth that God has revealed to all people naturally in the world. Psychology is said to come under this second category.\textsuperscript{71} However it is important to realise that this moves beyond the traditional theological concept of general revelation which refers to God revealing something of

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\textsuperscript{66} Entwistle, \textit{Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity}, p.19
\textsuperscript{67} Narramore and Carter, \textit{The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction}, p.53
\textsuperscript{68} Entwistle, \textit{Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity}, p.175
\textsuperscript{69} For a summary of Crabb’s view see Hurding, \textit{Roots and Shoots}, p.295
\textsuperscript{70} Hindson and Eyrich, \textit{Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling}, p.20
his existence and character to all people through all time (Romans 1:19-21).\textsuperscript{72} After examining passages like Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:19-21, Acts 14:15-17 and Acts 17:28-28 Thomas makes this penetrating remark:

“Those illustrations suffice to show that the content of general revelation deals with God and various aspects of His being and activities. Any efforts to widen the scope of general revelation to include information or theories about aspects of creation, man, or anything else besides God do not have support from the Bible, which limits the scope of general revelation to information about God.”\textsuperscript{73}

The term ‘general revelation’ refers not to the content of the revelation (ie. that God reveals all things) but the scope of the revelation (ie. that God reveals it to everyone). We can see therefore that this is not a good foundation upon which to build an argument for the integration of psychology and Christianity.\textsuperscript{74} The proposal of all truth being God’s truth based on the doctrine of creation and the unity of God is a more solid foundation. We can see therefore that integration of elements of psychology into Christian thought and practice is certainly possible.\textsuperscript{75}

There can be a tendency for people once they accept we can integrate psychology and Christianity to start using psychology in a way which ignores the rich resources of Christianity. It is easy to become so caught up in psychology that people are analysed and categorised from psychological point of view whilst biblical analysis’ and categories are ignored, discarded as irrelevant or seen as incorrect.\textsuperscript{76} True integration draws the truth out of both disciplines, seeking a holistic view of truth, and uses the insights of both.

Integration can also be done in an uncritical and unthinking way which borrows “psychology” from everywhere and anywhere and mixes it with Christianity without thinking about the veracity of the “psychology”. This kind of integration will accept the statements of psychologists or psychiatrists at face value without asking what the evidence is for their statements or asking if they are expressing more opinion than truth. We would affirm that ‘All truth is God’s truth’ \textbf{but:}\textsuperscript{77}

- Not everything that someone claims to be truth is truth.
- Truth exists in varying degrees of certainty. Some truth is only tentatively held.
- No one person has a complete and absolute knowledge of their discipline. There is no-one who knows everything there is to know about their

\textsuperscript{72} Robert L. Thomas, \textit{General Revelation and Biblical Hermeneutics}, The Masters Seminary Journal 9/1 (Spring 1998) p. 6
\textsuperscript{73} Robert L. Thomas, \textit{General Revelation and Biblical Hermeneutics}, The Masters Seminary Journal 9/1 (Spring 1998) p. 11; See also Thomas’ other criticisms of the attempt to broaden general revelation in the same paper.
\textsuperscript{74} Entwistle also makes this point in Entwistle, \textit{Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity}, pp.96-97 footnote no. 30
\textsuperscript{75} Here we use Robert C Roberts definition of integration which can found in eds. Johnson and Jones, \textit{Psychology and Christianity: Four Views}, p.137
\textsuperscript{76} Hindson and Eyrich, \textit{Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling}, p.15
discipline therefore one person’s claims cannot be accepted as being totally authoritative at the outset without examining them.

- “Every psychological theory makes assumptions about the nature of human being and human dilemmas. Many of these assumptions are clearly contrary to biblical affirmations and have met disapproval in the Christian community.”

Integration must therefore be done in a sophisticated way which takes into account the limitations of human knowledge, the noetic effects of sin, the boundaries of the disciplines etc. We shall return to look at how we go about the task of integration in a mature way later in our essay.

**Sola Scriptura and integration: The sufficiency of scripture**

We have seen that many of the arguments against the use of psychology in Christian ministry are certainly not compelling. However, here we must return to the question of the sufficiency of scripture and the use of psychology in a more in-depth way. The principle of the ‘sufficiency of scripture’ is one which is used by the anti-psychology movement for the complete rejection of psychology. The argument is justified in the following ways:

- Scripture is authoritative and inerrant and therefore it should be seen as the standard for matters of faith and practice. This means that scripture is sufficient in the area of counselling. It is possible to hold the authority and inerrancy of scripture without holding to the sufficiency of scripture but for these people scripture becomes fundamentally deficient and of limited value in issues of living. They end up believing that the Bible is “sufficient for justification, but not for sanctification.”

- For those who hold to sufficiency of scripture they see that “God has given us – in our union with Christ and his word – everything that is necessary for living and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)”

- Because the Bible claims its own sufficiency “secular psychology has nothing to offer for understanding or providing solutions to the non-physical problems of people.”

- “True the scriptures do not contain everything. They are not a textbook for electrical engineering, shipbuilding (unless you are building an ark), aeronautics, or a hundred-and-one other disciplines. But they are adequate as the textbook for living, and for changing our living to conform with God’s requirements.”

- “To postulate some necessary connection or dependency relationships between psychology and Christian counselling … is to
  1. deny the Bible’s claim to sufficiency
  2. deny Christ’s adequacy as a Counselor;

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78 Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, p.37
79 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, pp.25-26
80 Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.19
81 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.43; Adams, *How to help people change*, p.29
82 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.50
83 Adams, *How to help people change*, p.31
believe that God left His church for over 1900 years without the necessary resources to solve human problems and live a godly life.”

• The sole source of truth is seen as revelation and science or reason are not applicable.

Appealing as this position may seem, it is not above critique from the point of view of the scriptures that are used to uphold it and from the point of view of the history of doctrine of Sola Scriptura.

We will start by examining the history of the doctrine of Sola Scriptura. Keith Mathison in his book ‘The Shape of Sola Scriptura’ gives an overview of the doctrine and how it has been understood from the early church. Here we summarise some of the important parts of his work which are relevant for our purposes:

• In the early church the words ‘scripture’ and ‘tradition’ were used interchangeably.
• Interpretation of scripture became determined by the ‘rule of faith’ which was handed down from the apostles to make sure heresy did not creep in.
• In the early church scripture was seen as the final doctrinal authority when interpreted rightly (according to the rule of faith). The emphasis being that scripture was the only source of revelation. Although there are hints of scripture and tradition being seen as two separate sources of revelation.
• Over church history there have been various views on scripture and tradition as being sources of revelation:
  Tradition 0 (No place for tradition) – An individualistic view where there is no room for tradition at all. The Bible is the sole source of revelation and the reader interprets it with the help of the Holy Spirit. This leads to radical individualism in interpreting scripture.
  Tradition 1 (One source of revelation) – There is one source of revelation which is scripture and there is the traditional way of interpreting that according to the rule of faith. This view was found in the early church and also adopted by the magisterial reformers. It says that “Scripture is our sole God-breathed authority, and this makes it our sole inherently infallible authority.”
  Tradition 2 (Two sources of revelation) – As well as scripture there is an extra-biblical source of revelation. This was tradition which is handed down from the apostles. There are therefore two sources of revelation.
• Much of Evangelicalism has adopted Tradition 0 and has also managed to convince itself that this was the doctrine of Sola Scriptura held by the reformers.

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84 Ibid., p.36
85 Narramore and Carter, The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction, p.76
86 Mathison, The Shape of Sola Scriptura, p.19
87 Ibid., p.23
88 Ibid., p.31
89 Ibid., p.39
91 Mathison, The Shape of Sola Scriptura, p.165
92 Ibid., p.149
• Evangelicals tend to hold to ‘solo scriptura’ (or an extreme form of Tradition 0) instead of Sola Scriptura. “Instead of being defined as the sole infallible authority, the Bible is said to be the ‘sole basis of authority’.”\textsuperscript{93} No other authorities are allowed.

• Tradition 1 is the view which is most consistent with the early church and with the reformation. Sola Scriptura can therefore be defined as the doctrine that “Scripture must be confessed as the sole source of revelation; it must be confessed as the only infallible, final and authoritative norm of doctrine and practice; it is to be interpreted in and by the Church; and it is to be interpreted according to the \textit{regula fidei}.”\textsuperscript{94} No other sources of revelation are needed for doctrine and scripture is the sole source of revelation for Christian faith and life. (Notice that this doesn’t rule out other sources of knowledge).

• “There is a difference between saying that scripture is the only source of revelation needed for the Christian faith and life and saying that Scripture is the only thing needed for the Christian faith and life. There are a number of different things needed for the Christian life. Scripture is one of these and it has a unique role in that it our source of divine revelation.”\textsuperscript{95} If we push this point to its natural conclusion we can see the possibility of other things being useful for the Christian life.

• It is important to realise that although Sola Scriptura insists that “Scripture is the one final and authoritative norm of doctrine and practice … there are other authorities which are subordinate and derivative in nature.”\textsuperscript{96}

• “The meaning of the word ‘sola’ in relation to ‘scriptura’ is not absolute. It points to those characteristics that are unique to scripture. It does not mean that Scripture is to be taken in isolation from the Church and the rule of faith.”\textsuperscript{97}

We have here pointed out the relevant parts of Mathison’s expounding of the doctrine of Sola Scriptura which pertain to our discussion of the integration of psychology and Christianity. What we see is that the basis for anti-psychology movement’s call for the rejection of psychology is the \textit{solo scriptura} principle and not the more traditional \textit{sola scriptura} principle. They have used an extreme version of \textit{solo scriptura} principle that not only rejects tradition, but also rejects other sources of knowledge. Sola scriptura focuses on the possible sources of divine revelation and declares scripture as being the only final authoritative source of revelation. Sola Scriptura and the sufficiency of scripture properly understood do not rule out the possibility of psychological science on the condition that scripture remains the final authoritative norm. Other sources of truth can be authoritative if we allow them to be subordinate to scripture as the final authority. This means that reason and empiricism can be sources of knowledge and truth and there is no contradiction with the sola scriptura principle.

The doctrine of Sola Scriptura does proclaim that scripture is sufficient (as the sole source of authoritative divine revelation) for justification, as well as describing the goals and process of sanctification. We have to agree that psychology is not necessary

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p.238
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., p.281
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., pp.257-258
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p.260
\textsuperscript{97} Mathison, \textit{The Shape of Sola Scriptura}, p.305
for either of these. However Sola Scriptura does keep the door open by allowing other authorities subordinate to it and so scientific psychology may provide useful insights into life which in turn may provide insights into sanctification as well (eg. descriptions of how fear manifests itself, a description of alcoholism, how people manipulate and control etc.) Psychotherapy which is coherent with the counsel of God is also allowed using the sola scriptura principle.

In Appendix A we will look at the various biblical passages in the anti-psychology literature which are held up as ‘proving’ the sufficiency of scripture and entail a necessary rejection of all psychology. What we find is that many of these scriptures have been mishandled both in terms of exegesis and application. Although they may contain implications relevant to the doctrine of the sufficiency of scripture they do not contain anything which necessitates a complete rejection of psychological science.

Towards Mature Integration

We have now seen that the use of psychology in ministry is certainly a possibility. There are no theological reasons as to why the use of psychology should be completely ruled out. We have also begun to see that the integration of psychology and theology is itself not an easy thing, with Roberts we have to agree that:

“Integration is problematic not because it absolutely cannot be done but because the snares and pitfalls awaiting those who try it are so insidious.”

It is therefore essential that integration is done in a careful and sophisticated way. This is what we mean by mature integration. Integration needs to be done in such a way that it recognises the pitfalls, the limitations and the false steps which can so easily trip us up. Mature integration says that due to the unity of truth, psychology (both scientific psychology and psychotherapy) and theology can be brought together but it must not be done in a naïve and unthinking way. The dangers of integration are manifold:

- Christianity can be forced to accommodate to psychology. There can be syncretism of Christianity with psychology. Or there can be subversion of Christianity by psychology.
- “… secular thinking or Christian thinking may be accurate or inaccurate, logical or illogical.” So we need to analyse both adequately.
- “… the effects of original sin permeate every aspect of human function and experience, including our thinking; error and self-deception have thus been added to the finitude of our creation as delimiters of human knowledge.” This means that even if someone observes something accurately it is possible for them to interpret in wrongly. We need to take into account the noetic affects of sin and the reality that because of sin humans have the tendency to distort truth.

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100 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.11
101 Ibid., p.14
102 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.40
• Non-Christians can sometimes teach things which are against Christianity and if we are not careful these can be taken on board, especially if it is not obvious at a first glance that what is being taught is against Christianity.

• We can confuse God’s revelation with thinking about that revelation. “…the failure to distinguish the validity of theological interpretation from the authority of scripture is a common error that persists today.”

• As finite human beings we are limited in experience and perception (ie. we are not God!) and this means that our knowledge is always finite and limited. There is the danger that in the process of integration that we think our knowledge is sufficient when it is not.

• “Although we need to see all truth as God’s truth, it remains the case that much counselling that calls itself Christian amount to little more than an attempt to dress up therapies which in their fundamentals run contradictory to Christian theology.”

All of these dangers do not mean that we cannot hope to understand our world or ourselves at all. However, a mature integration is one that acknowledges all these dangers, that exercises “epistemic humility” and seeks to minimise their effects as far as is possible. A mature integration is also one that is very aware of the methodological limitations of the disciplines it is trying to integrate (ie. the limitations of the scientific method used in psychology or the limitations of what knowledge can be achieved by theological method). We can see that critical realism therefore needs to be the base for evaluating both psychology and theology, and not a naïve realism which assumes things are automatically true.

To integrate in a mature way actually needs a good education in psychology and a good knowledge of theology. Any attempt at integration will be poor if we are ignorant about Christian tradition and theology, or if we are ignorant or unsophisticated about the nature and findings of psychology. Therefore mature integration will involve extensive research into what psychology and theology actually says beyond the popular presentations which can be found in many bookshops and in the mass media.

As we seek to evaluate the intersection of psychology and theology we will find four possibilities:

• Sometimes psychology fits with current theological understanding
• Sometimes psychology raise questions theology has yet to face
• Sometimes theology will raise questions psychology has yet to research

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103 Entwistle, Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity, p.27
104 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling, p.36
105 Bridger and Atkinson, Counselling in context: Developing a theological framework, p.7
106 Entwistle, Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity, p.15
107 Ibid., p.15
108 Entwistle, Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity, pp.86-87
109 Roberts in eds. Johnson and Jones, Psychology and Christianity: Four Views, p.272; Adams also bemoans the Christian “professional” who has a graduate degree but only has a Sunday school understanding of Christianity. See Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption, p.13
110 Narramore and Carter, The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction, pp.19,20
• Sometimes psychology will provide a direct challenge to our theological assumptions

Ultimately the basic unity of truth demands coherence in all of these areas and part of the process of mature integration will to examine the claims of psychology and theology in a critical way to achieve coherence.

One way of dealing with times when psychology and Christianity seem to contradict is to simply say that anything which contradicts Biblical principles or practice should be rejected and we simply give way to the authority of scripture. However, although possibly sounding Biblical, this view does not do justice to the limitations of humanity and the reality of sin. Entwistle says:

“to assert as an *a priori* assumption that ‘scripture is the final arbiter of truth’ neglects both the reality of own fallible interpretive frameworks and the rallying cry of integration that ALL truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found.”

In some of the anti-psychology literature the critique that psychology is fallible because sin affects interpretation is strong and clear, however there seems to be a neglect in also applying this truth to the interpretation of the data of scripture. It is quite possible that our interpretations of the data of revelation in scripture are equally distorted. Entwistle therefore on this basis describes integration as being about the quest for a faithful reading of the data of creation and the data of revelation. In dealing with contradictions we need to recognise that there is a difference between facts and the interpretations of those facts. The unity of truth in God (as creator and also source of revelation) demands that the facts of scripture and the facts observed in creation ultimately will not conflict, therefore when dealing with apparent contradictions we need to look at the interpretations of those facts. There should be no contradiction between good science and good theology. What we must also be clear about is that because both psychology and theology depend on interpretation this does not mean that integration collapses into relativism. There is a real world out there and the boundaries of knowledge are determined by this real world.

When faced with a contradiction, interpretations of the both the psychological data and the Biblical data need to be examined carefully. It is not possible to always assume that theology should take precedence over psychology. The theology (or Biblical exegesis) will sometimes prove to be wrong and the psychology will sometimes prove to be wrong. If no agreement can be reached, we may need to decide to suspend judgement on the issue till more study can be done and humbly accept ambiguity for the moment.

It is important to realise that mature integration is not about the bringing together of isolated psychological and theological facts. Christians bring a specific worldview through which we can look at and examine psychological data.

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111 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.270
112 See Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.270ff
113 Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, pp.20-21
114 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, pp.296-298
115 Powlison puts this well, although we would probably want to question whether the boxes he puts integrationists and Biblical counsellors in are completely accurate. "Integrationists view Scripture as a
world view provides the lenses through which we interpret human functioning and also informs any models of counselling that we build. This doesn’t mean that we act as if the Bible is exhaustive, rather than comprehensive. Scripture is “not an encyclopaedic catalogue of all significant facts” but rather “God’s revelation of the crucial facts, richly illustrated, that yield a worldview sufficient to interpret whatever facts we encounter”\textsuperscript{116}.

Mature integration therefore recognises the Christian worldview as the lens through which we begin to view all facts we encounter in the world. Coherence is possible between these facts and the lens of the Christian worldview. In this process we find that we may need to examine our theological lenses to achieve coherence between what theology says and what we see in the world (psychology). We may need to adjust our theological lenses because we find out that they are giving us a distorted view. We may also need to adjust the way we interpret the facts as well. However the reality is that our theological eye glasses are always the interpretative lens through which we start looking at the world.

Jones and Butman helpfully characterise two ways of performing integration in terms of psychotherapy and counselling although these could be extended to psychology generally – the destructive approach and the constructive approach.\textsuperscript{117} The destructive approach assumes the model of counselling / psychology is in competition with the Christian faith. It seeks to disprove the validity of the theory and find the critical flaws in it. This can be done arguing from either a theological point of view (eg. it disagrees with Biblical anthropology) or from a psychological point of view (eg. the psychology is flawed and here is the research that shows it). The destruction approach to integration is helpful when views are raised up against God (2 Cor. 10:5) and are also helpful for protecting Christian theology and practice from being distorted or perverted. The constructive approach starts with the truths of the Christian faith and enters into dialogue with psychology to seek to build our knowledge of human functioning beyond what God has chosen to reveal in the Bible. For example it takes the distinctive Christian view of human beings created in the image of God, but fallen, and builds on this perspective with psychology. The constructive takes what is good whilst discerning what is in error. There are two stages to constructive integration: critical evaluation (sorting the bad from the good) and theory building (proposing new hypotheses which reflect and are built upon Christian presuppositions).

\textsuperscript{116} Powlison, D., in Hindson and Eyrich, \textit{Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling}, p.81
\textsuperscript{117} Jones and Butman, \textit{Modern Psychotherapies: A Christian Appraisal}, pp.20-22
Clear thinking about psychology

We have begun to explore how the integration of psychology and Christianity can happen if it is done in a careful and sophisticated way. In this section, drawing on Stanovich and Lilienfield, Lynn and Lohr, we will summarise some things about the nature and limitations of psychology which are important to grasp if we are to analyse psychological claims appropriately when we are trying to approach integration in a mature way:

- Modern psychology is diverse in its content and perspectives. The range of subjects and different aspects of behaviour studied in psychology are wide. There is not one grand unifying theory of psychology, but different theories covering small or limited aspects of behaviour. Examples of areas of studies in psychology are: Personality theory, psychotherapy, media psychology, addictions, clinical neuropsychology etc.\(^{118}\)

- Ideally psychology seeks to study human behaviour with the techniques of science. Any applications from this knowledge are then “derived from scientific methods and tested by scientific methods”\(^{119}\). However it is important to remember that psychology does at times depart from these ideals and we find pseudoscience and opinion presented as fact by psychologists. Therefore the scientific credibility of any claim needs to be assessed. This use of scientific methods means the application of systematic empiricism (systematically observing the world), the production of public knowledge which is verifiable through replication and peer review, and dealing with problems that are solvable using empirical techniques (ie. the question of ‘whether humans are inherently evil?’ is not solvable using empirical techniques).\(^{120}\)

- The criterion of falsifiability is important in assessing scientific knowledge. It is impossible to prove the truth of a theory through observation\(^{121}\), however it is possible to prove a theory false through predictions of a theory being shown false by empirical data. A theory must be falsifiable through empirical methods for it to be scientific. Good theories make highly specific prediction which mean these theories have are highly falsifiable. Confirmation of a highly specific prediction provides more support for a theory than a prediction which was general or not precise. Freudian psychoanalysis is a complicated theory that explains behaviour after the event but does not predict things in advance, therefore it is not falsifiable and so it is recognised to have little scientific usefulness.\(^{122}\)

- Case studies can be held up as proofs for certain theories / treatment. Case studies however are not sufficient for proving a particular theory because they lack comparative information needed to rule out other explanations. They only focus on one explanation and don’t allow others to be tested. A problem with case studies is what is known as the placebo effect. This is

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\(^{118}\) See Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, pp.2-5

\(^{119}\) Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, p.7

\(^{120}\) Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, pp.6-13

\(^{121}\) See Chalmers, *What is this thing called science?*, Chapters 1 & 2

\(^{122}\) See Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, Chapter 3
“the tendency of people to report that any treatment has helped them, regardless of whether the treatment had any real therapeutic element”123. Spontaneous remission is when a person recovers simply due to the passage of time. All of these need to be taken into account when considering the effectiveness of any psychological therapy. Recovery could be due to the placebo effect, spontaneous remission or a therapeutic element. It can be seen that is therefore wrong to cite a case study in support for particular theory or therapy. More extensive research needs to be done in support of the theory. It is important to realise the vividness of case studies can swing us into believing the theory without examining the research adequately and this then can open the door to pseudoscience. Case studies can be used to illustrate a point but not prove it. Case studies are also useful to indicate possible areas of research in psychology.124

- The presence of correlation between variables does not imply causation. A could cause B, B could cause A, But it could be equally that A & B are related to a third variable C. Spurious correlations are “correlations that arise not because some causal link exists between the two variables that are measured, but because both variables are related to a third variable”125. Assumptions about causation of behaviour etc. need to checked out.126

- Scientific experimentation is based on comparison, control and manipulation. Comparing results in different conditions. Manipulate the variable of interest whilst controlling the other variables. Scientists use these in order of eliminate or confirm alternative explanations. Random assignment (where experimental subjects are randomly assigned to different experimental groups) allows scientists to “rule out alternative explanations of data patterns that depend on particular characteristics of the subjects”127. It stops bias in the way people are assigned to groups. A control group incorporated into the experiment is a group which is treated exactly the same as the experimental group except for the absence of a critical factor (usually the variable that is thought to have therapeutic effect etc.) This helps give an idea of what effect is due to the placebo effect and what is due to therapeutic effectiveness.128

- Scientific knowledge generally progresses through gradual process and not great leaps (“breakthroughs”). Evidence converges on certain conclusions leading towards scientific consensus. It is important to be wary of claims of breakthroughs in the media. These should be examined and any true breakthroughs must explain both new facts and old facts together.129

- Behaviour can have multiple causes. Just because there is a causal connection between A and B this doesn’t mean that A is the only cause of behaviour B. The world is complex and there can be many contributing facts to behaviours. Just because one cause is discovered it doesn’t mean that there are not other causes. Also, just because there are multiple causes it doesn’t mean that we can dismiss any of the variables as not important.

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123 Ibid., p.71
124 Ibid., Chapter 4
125 Ibid., p.76
126 Ibid., Chapter 5
127 Stanovich, How to think straight about psychology, p.89
128 Ibid., Chapter 6
129 Ibid., Chapter 8
One factor that influences behaviour may have a different effect when it is operating in conjunction with other factors. This is called interaction: “The magnitude of the effect of one variable has may depend on the level of another variable”\(^{130}\). It is very easy to major on one single cause because it fits with our biases than consider all factors of causation. This is especially important when considering the debate about genetic factors in behaviour or nature.\(^{131}\)

- Psychological relationships and facts are based on probabilistic trends and stated in terms of probabilities. The use of probabilistic trends means that the relationship is not necessarily a certainty. We can always find single cases which seem to invalidate relationships, however probabilistic tendencies are not invalidated by a single exception. Psychological trends are based on group trends. “Even though individual cases cannot be predicted, the ability to forecast group trends accurately is often very informative.”\(^{132}\) Psychologists are only able to make probabilistic predictions about treatments ie. that there is a higher probability of a good outcome if a certain approach is followed. Sample size is important when researching probabilistic trends. A greater sample size means a more accurate prediction because a larger sample size is more accurate estimate of the population.\(^{133}\)

- Predictions in individual cases are not superior to statistical predictions according to research. We have to be honest about the limitations of prediction and accept that some chance (ie. that at the moment it is indeterminable) is always involved. Probabilistic trends are the only way we can measure the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic methods.\(^{134}\)

- The laypersons knowledge of reputable psychological research is almost non-existent. The media does little to present accurate psychological research. Book stores tend to contain three types of books:  
  \(^{135}\)
  1. Classic psychology books (eg. Freud) which are unrepresentative of modern psychology.
  2. Pseudoscience masquerading as psychology.
  3. Self-help literature which is rarely based on controlled experimental investigation (usually rests on personal experience or case studies) and contains confusing contradictions.

- Self-help is the idea that people can overcome problems through their own efforts. Self-help material is available in various forms (books, videos, CDs etc.) and there has been an explosion of this material in the last 30 years. It is important to realise that techniques which are applied by therapists successfully are not always self-administered successfully. Compliance with the treatment procedures and follow through are big problems with self-help material. Self-help materials are sometimes accompanied by unsubstantiated claims eg. ‘deal with fear in 6 weeks’. It is important to be clear that self-help can be effective but little material has been tested and the value of a particular program can only be known by

\(^{130}\) Ibid., pp.142-143  
\(^{131}\) Ibid., Chapter 9  
\(^{132}\) Ibid., p.153  
\(^{133}\) Ibid., Chapter 10  
\(^{134}\) Stanovich, *How to think straight about psychology*, Chapter 11  
\(^{135}\) Ibid., pp.183-189
testing. Claims of self-help material should not be taken serious (even if they are made by a psychologist) unless empirical support is given.\textsuperscript{136} See the guidelines at the end of this section for important questions to ask of self-help material.

- We all have theories about human behaviour but this does not make us all Psychologists in the scientific sense. “Individual” theories about behaviour are very different from scientific psychology. Scientific psychology seeks to validate theories and techniques empirically. It is systematic and controlled.\textsuperscript{137}

- Pseudoscience gives the appearance of being scientific but is in fact not. Some of the most frequent features of pseudoscience are:\textsuperscript{138}

  1. An overuse of ad-hoc hypotheses designed to immunize claims from falsification. eg. explaining away negative findings or adding hypotheses onto a theory to plug holes in the theory.
  2. Absence of self-correction ie. not eliminating errors in theories or still using theories which have been shown to be wrong.
  3. Evasion of peer review ie. not obtaining critical or corrective feedback from informed colleagues.
  4. Emphasis on confirmation rather than refutation ie. only seeking confirming evidence for the claim and not seeking to prove oneself wrong.
  5. Reversed burden of proof ie. instead of claimant giving evidence for their theory they demand sceptics demonstrate beyond doubt that a claim is false.
  6. Absence of connectivity ie. doesn’t build on other well-established scientific principles or knowledge.
  7. Over-reliance on testimonial and anecdotal evidence.
  8. Use of obscurantist language ie. using impressive sounding or highly technical language in an effort to give their theory the superficial trappings of science.
  9. Absence of boundary conditions ie. well articulated limits under which the theory applies. Pseudoscience tries to apply the theory to anything and everything.
  10. The mantra of holism ie. that scientific claims can only be evaluated within the broader context of the claims and cannot be judged in isolation. An example would be the varied criticisms of the Rorschach Inkblot test. Clinicians defend the test by saying they never interpret the results in isolation but with all the other numerous pieces of information that they know about the person.

- It is important to ask the question: Does psychotherapy work? There are research methods to determine the answer to this question. Efficacy research is the most scientifically based and it involves randomised clinical trials with a clearly defined treatment process. It involves the use of control groups and treatment groups. Ideally the patients AND

\textsuperscript{136} Lilienfield, Lynn & Lohr, \textit{Science and pseudoscience in clinical psychology}, Chapter 14
\textsuperscript{137} Stanovich, \textit{How to think straight about psychology}, pp.197-198
\textsuperscript{138} Lilienfield, Lynn & Lohr, \textit{Science and pseudoscience in clinical psychology}, pp.5-10
researchers are blind to the nature of the treatment being administered. Efficacy research tries to make sure that only the “active” parts of the treatment are within the treatment group and the control group contains none of the “active” parts. This allows scientific conclusions but only for specific therapists, procedures and the clients that have been studied. However the slightly counter-intuitive result of efficacy research has been that psychotherapy is efficacious but there is little evidence that one therapy is significantly better than another (although there is some evidence for a slightly higher efficaciousness of cognitive-behavioural therapy). It also seems that client / therapist relationship may be more important in the efficacy of psychotherapy. Effectiveness research asks if the psychotherapy works in an actual clinical setting not just under the controlled conditions of a research project. Effectiveness research doesn’t possess the scientific rigour of efficacy research. It simply asks if the therapy seemed to work, however it is recognised that there could be various reasons for the appearance of it working including the effectiveness of the treatment, the placebo effect, natural processes of healing etc. The debate about efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy is on-going.139

In this section of our essay we have looked as some of the limitations of the science of psychology and we have also noted some important issues to be aware of which will help us analyse psychology in a critical way.

139 Lilienfield, Lynn & Lohr, Science and pseudoscience in clinical psychology, Chapter 6
Guidelines for Developing, Selecting, or Evaluating a Self-Help Program: Questions to Ask

REACH (How broadly applicable is the program?)
1. What percentage of the population having the particular problem, goal or diagnosis is this program designed to address? Are there subgroups that are more or less likely to participate in this type of program?
2. Are there data on the percentage of individuals who were offered this program who tried it? If yes, what percentage participated and were they different from those who declined?

EFFICACY (How effective is this program?)
1. Has the program been evaluated? If yes: Did it do better than a randomised or other type of control condition? Did the program produce improvements on objective measures of outcome? Were results reported for all people who began the program – or only those who like it and finished?
2. Had the program been evaluated for possible negative or unwanted side effects? If so, what were these?
3. Under what conditions has the program been administered? (Do NOT assume that results will be the same under different conditions)
   Completely self-administered; minimal therapist contact; as a supplement to regular counselling.
   What modalities has the program been tested under (eg. written form; audio or video tape; computer administered etc.)
4. What is the cost of the program – both for purchase and the mount of time required relative to other alternative programs?
5. Does the evidence for the programs appear to match the claims that are made of it?

ADOPTION (How broadly had the program been used by groups other than the authors – and have the results of these other groups been equally positive?)
1. Is there any information on the range of groups of clinicians, health systems or researchers who have used or tested the program?
2. Is there any information on the types of professionals or organisations that are likely to use versus not use this program?

IMPLEMENTATION (How easy to use is the program?)
1. What percentage of initial users of this program complete the program, and how are they different from those who do not?
2. Are there any patient, setting, or procedural considerations for which this program seems to work best?
3. Is there any way to get consultation or technical assistance with the program, if needed?

MAINTENANCE (Does the program produce long-term or lasting results?)
1. What are the longest follow-up assessments that have been conducted, and does the program still seem effective at longer-term follow-ups?
2. Have the organisations or clinicians that have used the program continued to use it?

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From Lilienfield, Lynn & Lohr, *Science and pseudoscience in clinical psychology*, p417
Clear thinking about integration

We have seen that Integration is possible if done in a mature way which takes into account the limitations of psychological knowledge and also analyses carefully any psychological claims. In this final section of our essay we shall draw together important insights from the literature about integration, the literature of those who are against integration and from what we have discussed above. These insights will help us begin to think more clearly about the process of mature integration and the principles which guide it.

- All theories or methods of people-helping carry with them systems of beliefs and ways of looking at people. They seek to explain who people are, why they experience what they do, what is wrong with human nature, how people change, what the goals for change and living should be. They even include covert or overt value systems. All of these may conflict with direct or implicit assertions of the Christian faith. Therefore theories or methods need to be examined critically.

- Some statements made by psychologist are simply opinions or speculation. Opinions or speculation need to be disregarded as unsuitable for integration until evidence for the truth of the statement is presented or found to be adequate. We need to remember that integration is about the unity of truth and not bringing together statements which are uncertain. This means we should be quick to reject anything which is stated without evidence and this could mean rejecting a large proportion of “popular psychology”.

- We need to make sure that any use of scripture in the integration process is careful and cautious. We need to be careful in drawing truth out of scripture (exegesis) making sure the scripture actually does say what we think it says. For this we need a good awareness of Hermeneutics. We also need to be cautious about reading modern day ideas back into scripture (eisegesis). For example, reading back into scripture modern day theories of psychology which were unknown to the original writer or reading modern ideas into Biblical words (such as reading a modern day view of counselling into the Old Testament uses of the word ‘counsel’).

- There is the danger of using proof-texts to justify the use of psychological theories. Using a proof-text means we do not take a comprehensive view of the whole counsel of God’s word. We believe that an individual isolated text settles every issue of truth and practical living. We neglect the fact that there may be other texts which are equally valid to the use regarding the theory. It is equally possible that in quoting the proof-text we take the text totally out of context, we forget to read the text in the surrounding passage which means we read ideas back into text which the author did not intend. Scripture needs to be handled in a systematic way in the process of integration, not simply to provide proof-texts.

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141 Jones and Butman, Modern Psychotherapies: A Christian Appraisal, p.18
142 Powlison, D., in Hindson and Eyrich, Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling, p.67
143 Entwistle, Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity, pp.96-103
144 Powlison, D., in Hindson and Eyrich, Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling, pp.76-77
• Psychology needs to be examined through the eyes of the whole sweep of the Biblical narrative: Creation, the Fall, Redemption, the End. All of these can provide important correctives and insights to psychology. Doctrine was always meant to be intensely practical and have important implications for life and living.

• It is important to see scripture not as a psychology textbook because the authors did not write it to be as such. Scripture does however supply “crucial background assumptions by which we can shape and judge psychological theories and conclusions.”

• Although scripture is sufficient for sanctification scripture “is not an exhaustive catalogue of every fact about every person in time and every place”. Psychology can therefore play an illustrative role in people helping, providing illustrations of human nature and illustrations of Biblical ideas which are not contained in scripture eg. seeing aspects of anger we hadn’t notice before, describing the developmental stages of child development etc.

• Psychologists may do the empirical research but sometimes we need to radically re-interpret what they conclude from the empirical data through a Biblical world view. Their interpretations of data may be distorted by sin eg. Is the psychologist really examining high self-esteem or are they really examining pride? We need to be clear that there can be different ways of interpreting data however the unity of knowledge dictates that there will be no actual conflict between the data of psychology and theology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data (Observations) of Psychology</th>
<th>Data of Theology (Scripture)</th>
<th>Interpretations of Scripture (Theology)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Conflict</td>
<td>Possible Conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will usually turn out that a lot of apparent contradictions between psychology and theology are actually not due to the data but due to interpretations and metaphysical ideas based on that data.

• It is important to realise that observation is theory-laden (eg. how do we define what we are observing) and theory led. Ultimately the question is not just if the observations of psychology agree with Christianity, the question also has to be asked if the underlying theory driving the observations is in agreement with Christian truth as well.

• Some psychological theories have a very deterministic view of human nature. A Christian worldview rightly needs to affirm personal human responsibility. We need to clearly distinguish between our past

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146 Powlison, D., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.72
147 Ibid., pp.78, 80
148 Powlison, D., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, p.80
149 Table Adapted from Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, p.22
150 Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, p.115
151 See Narramore and Carter, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, pp.38-41
determining our behaviour AND our reaction to our past determining our
behaviour. The latter allows for personal responsibility.

- The need to affirm personal responsibility is especially true in the
language we use to describe psychological problems that people have.
Language needs to be examined and used wisely because language and
ideas can have consequences. One example is the that use of the language
of ‘sickness’ or ‘mental illness’ can stop people taking responsibility for
things they can control. (This doesn’t negate that there can be certain
physically caused psychological disorders but it recognises that the terms
illness and sickness are banded about too freely when no physical
diagnosis has been made.\textsuperscript{152})

- Labels are another area where we have to be careful about the use of
language. Terms such as ‘erotophobia’ and ‘sexually conservative’ which
have been used to describe people who are sexually restrained can imply
hidden values depending on which we use.\textsuperscript{153} Questions of language also
need to be asked in relation to comparing Biblical descriptions of a
phenomenon with psychological descriptions eg. is the phrase ‘high self
esteem’ simply another way of expressing what the Bible calls pride?

- Integration needs to take into account the unique view of the nature of
human beings as seen in Scripture.\textsuperscript{154} Humanity is made in the image of
God. This image has been distorted by the fall. Salvation and sanctification
are part of the process of restoring this image to humanity. Integration
recognises the reality of sin and this will have implications for
psychological theory. Integration recognises that “in the ultimate sense all
psychopathology is traceable to sin. By this we do not mean that all
problems are caused by conscious, wilful, or personal sins but that all
problems ultimately are traceable to the split in human nature that came
with the first sin.”\textsuperscript{155} It is not simply wrong actions that are the problem
but also a broken human nature. Integrationists assume that a sound
theology is not detrimental to human mental health and it will also
promote growth and wholeness (Shalom).\textsuperscript{156}

- There is the danger that we can end up spending so much time studying
psychologists and psychology, that we neglect to study Biblical revelation
in relation to human functioning and psychology.\textsuperscript{157} To perform
integration sophisticatedly we need to have a deep understanding of both
theology and psychology. Neither should be left out. Integration engages
with both disciplines at deeper than a superficial level. If we do not think
theologically and psychologically at a deep level we will be in danger of
accepting as truth things which are not true. Theologically this has the
danger that we depart from God’s divine revelation. Therefore good
sources of academic knowledge need to be sought out to engage in

\textsuperscript{152} “Many have dishonestly used the term \textit{mental illness} to describe a whole host of problems of
thinking and behaving which should be labelled as ‘problems of living’” Bobgan & Bobgan,
\textit{Psychoheresy}, p.136

\textsuperscript{153} Myers in in eds. Johnson and Jones, \textit{Psychology and Christianity: Four Views}, p.57

\textsuperscript{154} Narramore and Carter, \textit{The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction}, pp.107-108

\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid.}, p.109

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Ibid.}, p.112

\textsuperscript{157} Adams, \textit{A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption}, pp.9-15
integration. We need to gain a sound knowledge of the good and the bad thinking in both disciplines.

- Adams rightly notes that we need to distinguish between direct commands of God in scripture and valid inferences from these commands. Some things are directly forbidden and some must be inferred from other Biblical commands. This means we need to have a good understanding of Christian ethics and what the good life looks like. Counselling methods or goals for healing can be in agreement with Christian ethics or not.

- From the Christian worldview we realise that the question of efficacy or effectiveness is not wholly a good enough criteria on which to judge a psychological theory or method. If we base our views of which psychological method is good solely on effectiveness then we are essentially using a consequentialist form of ethical argument or pragmatism. Bridger and Atkinson point out that what lies “at the bottom of varying therapeutic strategies are not simply differences about which approach will yield the best results but philosophical views about what it means to be human. And what counts as therapeutic success will in turn depend upon what it means to restore a person to wholeness.” Goodwin also notes that the question of effectiveness cannot simply be answered by asking if the client was satisfied or not. The Christian faith has a particular understanding of what is good and also what wholeness looks like. Therefore to engage in integration in a mature way we should not just consider the question of if it works (whatever this means!) but we should also consider the questions of whether its view of wholeness and its philosophical views of what it means to be human are in agreement with divine revelation. Efficacy is an important question but is not the whole question by far. We would also probably want to affirm that the doctrine of sin means that there will never be any psychological method which is 100% efficacious because method cannot overcome the problem of sin alone.

- We agree that the use of psychology in Christian ministry will be based around the idea of eclecticism (ie. choosing what is best from a range of psychological systems or techniques and not simply following one system). However it is important that these are chosen according to a unifying principle (the Christian faith) and not just combining bits from different approaches in a haphazard and contradictory way.

- Counselling and psychotherapy in the secular world tends to be problem centred but Christian ministry is broader based and is concerned with ordinary day to day living. Psychology should not just be considered as the place to turn when someone has specific problems but it may have useful insights for everyday living for Christ and sanctification as well.

158 Adams, A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption, p.18
159 Bridger and Atkinson, Counselling in context: Developing a theological framework, p.67
160 Ibid., p.61
161 Ibid., p.126
162 Ibid., p.126
• It is possible for some therapeutic techniques to be detached from the philosophies of those who created them\textsuperscript{164} ie. to use the technique does not mean we have to buy into the creators philosophy (using the empathic listening of Carl Rogers does not mean we have to accept humanistic philosophies). However even techniques can have covert assumptions about human functioning, change processes and what aims of wholeness and so we need to analyse these carefully to make sure that these are coherent with Biblical revelation.

• Psychology cannot define what is normal\textsuperscript{165}. It can only describe what the common human experience is. Christianity describes a world which was created normal and became abnormal due to sin, therefore theology has important information about what normality looks like which is not accessible to psychology. Integration may mean that psychology and theology inform each other producing a whole picture together. Theology teaches us about the fall and psychology can describe how our fallenness is manifested in distorted thinking and relationships. Theology can also help in defining what is abnormal, psychology can only define what is abnormal through majority opinion and this can vary culturally and across time\textsuperscript{166}.

• We need to be aware that promises made about the success of psychological counselling or self-help literature are sometimes unwarranted. Promises are sometimes false or are sometimes exaggerated. We need to examine the evidence for the effectiveness of a psychological technique and not simply believe hype or opinion which is presented as fact\textsuperscript{167}.

• Col. 2:8 tells us not build our lives around philosophies which are not centred on Christ. Prov. 1:7 tells us that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”. This means that at the centre of our worldview should always be God and his perspectives on life. Psychology should always be looked at and examined through the lens of this Christian worldview.

• We need to be aware that the majority view in psychology may be wrong. Valenstein in his book \textit{Blaming the Brain} takes an academic look at the history of psychopharmacology using primary sources and gives a critical view of the development of psychiatric drugs such as the ones commonly used for depression. He also critiques the different theories on how and why the drugs work using research that has been published. He comes to the conclusion that biomedical theories of mental illness (ie. ones that say mental illness is based on chemical imbalances, an example being that depression is due to an imbalance in serotonin) have yet to be proven and current chemical imbalance theories have generally have been shown to be false or wanting. Valenstein doesn’t deny that the drugs may have some positive effect but he does question the theories of chemical imbalance which have been built up around them. Valenstein’s is a minority view mostly because the people pushing the chemical imbalance theories are the

\textsuperscript{164} Roberts, R.C. in eds. Johnson and Jones, \textit{Psychology and Christianity: Four Views}, p.239
\textsuperscript{165} Entwistle, \textit{Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity}, p.141
\textsuperscript{166} Bobgan & Bobgan, \textit{Psychoheresy}, Chapter 9 & 10
\textsuperscript{167} \textit{Ibid.}, Chapter 4
drug companies the very ones who need to justify as to why their drugs are needed. (Valenstein shows this quiet effectively in his book.) The biomedical theory of mental illness has become so much an assumption of our culture that it is almost “heresy” to question its scientific underpinning. Yet Valenstein’s voice is an important one which is gradually becoming recognised by other psychologists168 and will probably become more even more important in the future. What this means for integration is that just because a view is in the minority it doesn’t mean that it is wrong. This calls us to sophisticated integration which doesn’t simply accept things because they are popular but because the evidence has been weighed and the conclusion has adequate evidence.

- There is a danger when describing a psychological issue or problem that we only look for scripture that specifically mentions that issue eg. “There must be a verse on anorexia somewhere in the Bible”. If we go down this road we will find that some modern day psychological issues such as anorexia are not mentioned at all so we think that the Biblical truth has nothing to say on these issues. This then means that we turn to psychology feeling justified that it doesn’t matter how we approach dealing with the issue because we believe the Bible has nothing to say on it. However if we take a deeper look at the issue we find that although the Bible doesn’t have a specific verse that mentions anorexia it does have much to say about desires, slavery of sin, dealing with our hearts and not just the external behaviour, renewing our minds etc. All of these things are applicable to issues such as anorexia and so even though a first glance may suggest otherwise, it is possible to begin to build a practical theology of dealing with an issue such as anorexia. We should never see integration as being simply about finding a verse that mentions the psychological issue we are concerned with, integration is also about taking general Biblical truths or themes and seeing how they apply to a psychologically aware description of the issue.169

Conclusion

In this essay we have seen that it is possible to use psychology in Christian ministry. However the use of psychology is not a simple task there are many pitfalls, snares and difficulties which we can fall into if we are not careful. We need to be very aware of

168 eg. See Myers, *Psychology (6th Edition)*, p.714 who acknowledges Valenstein’s arguments and also that it is too simple to say that a chemical imbalance is responsible for depression.

169 “Critics and advocates of psychology often share the same view of the kind of thing Scripture is, though they differ widely in their assessment of the scope and relevancy of its contents. One side says Scripture contains everything: ‘Here are the proof texts for anorexia.’ The other side says Scripture doesn’t contain everything: because there are no proof texts on anorexia, the Bible is not about anorexia, therefore we must turn to psychology for understanding. Sound pastoral theology, contrary to both, says the Bible is about the phenomena our culture labels anorexia, but it offers something better and richer than an anorexia verse. As we learn to think thematically and systematically, we might even say the Bible is all about anorexia. For example, anorexia is one particular extension of Paul’s statement that ‘the works of the flesh are obvious.’ Though the condition we call anorexia is not specifically named, Christ teaches us to identify the kind of thing it is. We are further challenged, then to tease out the constellation of the ‘lusts of the flesh’ driving the syndrome. We have the inexpressible privilege of speaking and embodying timely, finely tailored grace to recapture those whose hearts have been captured by lies.” Powlison in in eds. Johnson and Jones, *Psychology and Christianity: Four Views*, pp.192-193
the limitations of psychology and also the limitations of theology. Theological truth
does place boundaries on our use of psychology and our psychological thinking. In
issues of conflict between psychology and theology we would expect the unity of
truth to prevail ultimately allowing coherence to be established between psychology
and theology. Integration of psychology and theology needs to be done in a careful
and humble way, always allowing our conclusions to be challenged and changed
where necessary. In terms of pastoral care and counselling we should not simply pick
up the first book or use the first theory we find but should always be prepared to ask
difficult questions about the evidence for different psychological theories before we
put them into practice. The danger being that if we do not we could end up going
down the road of ‘psychoheresy’ (to use a term coined by the Bobgans).

Appendix A – Critiquing specific passages used to reject psychology

In our examination of the ‘Against Model’ of the interaction of psychology and
theology we examined how Psalm 1:1 was used to reject the use of psychology in the
anti-psychology literature. We saw that an examination of text did not warrant a
wholesale rejection of psychology but only a possible partial rejection of certain
aspects of psychology. In the anti-psychology literature we do find other examples of
bad exegesis which are then used to justify the rejection of psychology in totality.170
Here we examine some of the common passages used and we show that (as we found
for Psalm 1:1) at the most all they can warrant is a partial rejection of certain aspects
of psychology or that they in fact have nothing at all to say to question of the use of
psychology in ministry.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and
training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for
every good work.”

Jay Adams spends a whole chapter in his book *How to help people change* (Chapter
4) arguing the sufficiency of scripture from 2 Timothy 3:16-17. However what we
find is that his arguments are along the lines of *Solo Scriptura* and not *Sola Scriptura.*
Adams also makes an error in his exegesis in that he makes the subtle jump from
acknowledging that the passage says that the scriptures make the man of God
adequate to saying that the scriptures are totally adequate such that nothing else is
needed. Jones and Butman make the point that in these verses “Scripture is not
declared to be the only and all-sufficient source for every word ever needed anytime
by anyone for any purpose related to human need; rather, it is called useful.”171 Even
more damning to the position of people like Adams is their total failure to see this
passage in its context. Koukl in his criticism of the anti-psychology movements use of
this passage shows that their exegesis collapses quite spectacularly.

We quote his criticisms here in full because the logic is incisive: 172

170 eg. See Entwistle, *Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity*, pp.197-200, who
criticises John MacArthur’s use of 2 Corinthians 12:9 as not being an justified handling of the text
The question "Is Scripture adequate?" is much like the question "Is Christ adequate?" The answer depends entirely upon what one means by the concept of adequacy. The passage in 2 Tim 3:16-17 is one that's used to argue that no other material, e.g. the writings of psychologists, is legitimate to use in assessing man's spiritual condition or the solutions to man's problems. The verse reads in the NASB: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." The reasoning goes something like this. Paul said that all Scripture was "adequate." If something is adequate, nothing more is allowed because allowing material other than Scripture--which Paul calls adequate--implies its inadequacy, contradicting Paul's statement. Therefore, nothing other than the Scripture Paul cites here is legitimate to use to help equip us; nothing else is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." This is the sole province of the Scripture. That's the argument. Here's the problem with it. The Scripture Paul has in view as "adequate" is what we know as the Old Testament, specifically--in Paul's own words--the sacred writings of Timothy's childhood (note verse 15). These are the particular Scriptures Paul identifies as being able to "give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Now if "adequacy" means that nothing more can be used, and the Old Testament is adequate by Paul's admission, then how do we justify "adding" the words of the New Testament to the fully adequate Old Testament? Even Paul's writings in 2 Timothy would have to be rejected, even the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 which make this claim. In other words, if this argument is sound, if Paul meant by the use of the word "adequate" that we are restricted from making use of any other material than what he describes here to further our understanding of man and of man's problems and solutions, we would not be able to use any writings that came after the fully "adequate" Old Testament, because anything additional would imply its inadequacy, according to this thinking none of the New Testament writings--because they add to those Scriptures Paul already identifies as "adequate"--could be admitted, including Paul's second epistle to Timothy and the very passage this whole argument is based upon. It would have to be disqualified because it would be adding to the Old Testament which Paul says is already adequate. If the Old Testament Scriptures are adequate, and if Paul means by "adequacy" that the addition of any useful information about man is wrong, then even Paul's words (as well as Peter's, John's etc.) are inadmissible. Paul's assertion casts doubt on his own assertion, thus refuting itself. Paul would be saying, in effect, "My counsel is this: You can't trust my council, even this statement." Of course this is ludicrous and self-refuting. But if this conclusion is false, the entire case--the view that asserts Paul meant to disqualify all other sources of information here--crumbles. This verse does not prove that any additional information is somehow an assault on the Scripture's completeness or adequacy, at least in the way that Paul meant those terms in this passage. Paul's teaching in Second Timothy was meant to qualify the nature of Scripture, not to disqualify the usefulness of other material.
Second, and more debilitating to [the view of scripture alone], 2 Timothy 3:15 doesn’t even teach that the Scripture is adequate. A close look at the text reveals that the words “inspired” and “profitable” describe the Scripture. However, the word “adequate” does not describe the Scripture, but rather “the man of God” who uses the inspired Scripture in a profitable way. Note carefully: “…that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Once again, the proof text itself has unwittingly been maligned to say something it just doesn’t say, given the context. What does "adequate" mean here? It probably simply means what adequate usually means, capable of giving everything that is essential. Food and air and water are adequate to keep a man alive, but their adequacy doesn't imply that other things are not useful or beneficial. John writes 1 Jn 2:27, "And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him." John's comment identifies a kind of adequacy of the Holy Spirit's teaching, but I doubt anyone would argue to dismantle the pulpit and abandon the classrooms because we "have no need for anyone to teach."

What we see it that this passage does not rule out the use of psychology at all. It states that scripture has a very important and definite role in the life of the Christian, but this does not rule out other sources of information. There cannot on the basis of this scripture be a wholesale rejection of psychology.

We have to recognise from the fuller context of 2 Timothy 3 that some people do seek counselling because of the issues spoken about in vv2-5 and Paul does imply in the fuller context that scripture speaks to these issues. However nothing in the passage completely rules out the use of psychology.

2 Peter 1:3-4

“His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature.”

This passage is another common passage which is used to ‘prove’ the need to reject psychology. We can summarise the argument by using a quote from Eyrich and Hindson:

“His Word promises to provide us ‘everything pertaining to life’ (2 Peter 1:3). Either it does, or it doesn’t. Either it is totally sufficient or utterly insufficient.”

The argument is that God has provided everything we need for life and godliness in his word and therefore nothing else is needed. The word is totally sufficient.

173 Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling, p.45
174 Hindson and Eyrich, Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling, p.24
Again however if we examine this passage we find bad exegesis. The ‘he’ at the beginning of verse 3 probably refers to Jesus Christ in verse 2. Jesus has provided us everything we need for a godly life (commentators tend to interpret “life and godliness” as a hendiadys and therefore should be written as a “godly life”) through knowledge of him who called us by his glory and goodness. God has provided everything we need through a person and the gospel, not through a book. In fact, this passage cannot refer to scripture as we know it today because the New Testament cannon had not been finalised at the time Peter wrote these words. The passage is basically saying that at the point of conversion, through grace, God has made available through Jesus Christ all the resources we need to live a life that is pleasing to him. This passage does not rule out other sources of truth to help guide us in what a godly life looks like otherwise we should reject the New Testament as well.

This passage does not ultimately have anything to say about whether psychology can be a source of truth alongside scripture or not in Christian ministry. It may place limitations on how we should think psychologically (eg. we shouldn’t suppose that psychology can add anything to the power we need for sanctification or living a godly life) however it doesn’t rule out psychological knowledge in totality (eg. descriptions of fear, how the mind works, memory, descriptions of how people cope with bereavement etc.)

Psalm 19:7-11

“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;

8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;

9 the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

11 Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.”

Wayne Mack uses these verses to proclaim the goodness of God’s word and how no knowledge produced by humans can compare.\(^\text{175}\) Mack then goes on to state Psalm

\(^{175}\) Mack, W., in Hindson and Eyrich, *Totally Sufficient: The Bible and Christian Counselling*, pp.43-44
19:7-11 settles the issue of sufficiency for him. However we would have to say that proper exegesis of this passage does not come anywhere near ‘proving’ that we should reject psychology and only look to scripture. Psalm 19 does proclaim the unique nature of God’s Word. Proper exegesis would acknowledge that the Psalmist when writing this psalm was only speaking about the Old Testament Law. Although an application to wider scripture may be made if we are careful. Psalm 19 does not rule out other sources of knowledge at all.
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