Critique Paper:

Integration vs. Christian Psychology Approaches to Faith Integration

John Harrichand

Liberty University
Abstract

There has been a longstanding debate between theology and psychology (Francis, 2005). Since Christians began practicing psychology they have expressed a strong desire to integrate their faith into their profession, and this is even more so today with a greater number of Christians involved in the field psychology/counseling (Beck, 2003). This paper will present a critique of two approaches to integrating the Christian worldview (theology) with the worldview of science (psychology): the Integration Approach and the Christian Psychology Approach. Following this critique, an expanded analysis will take place focusing on the Integration Approach, the counselor’s choice for integrating theology and psychology in relation to epistemology, cosmology, philosophical anthropology, the practice of psychotherapy, and personal life.
PART I

Models of Integration

Psychology, the study of the soul, has been rejected by mainstream society as having anything to do with focusing on the “soul”. However, Jesus embodies Christian soul care, by taking on human flesh, accepting the task of transforming the lives of humanity, His creation, through the act of repentance and devotion (Greggo & Sisemore, 2012). The present state of affairs relating psychology and theology has seen the development of a chasm between faith and the study of individuals scientifically (Greggo & Sisemore, 2012). Johnson (2010) views this chasm as an intellectual crisis facing the church; he outlines five views/approaches to integrating psychology and theology in an effort to address this problem. Two models of faith integration, the Integration Approach and the Christian Psychology Approach, seek to bridge the chasm that has developed between psychology and theology, and will be addressed briefly below.

Integration Approach

According to Johnson (2010) the Integration Approach understands that a relationship exists between Christian faith and contemporary psychology. An integrationist, someone holding to this approach, believes that both the disciplines of psychology and theology differ in the ways they address human nature, human development, what goes wrong with humans, and how humans can recover from those wrongs (Johnson, 2010). The Integration Approach developed in the 1970s, with the work of Narramore (1973) who argued that integration involved the combining of God’s Word (special revelation) with general revelation (study of psychological sciences). In 1973, Collins also worked to develop the Integration Approach, i.e., psychology that was biblically based, placing psychology on a foundation that is consistent with and founded on the Bible. Contemporary integrationists include Jones (2010) and McMinn (2012).
Jones (2010, pp. 116-117) states that there are no concrete steps to integrating Christian thought and scientific exploration; however, he provides several elements marking an integrative approach:

i) The integrationist begins by anchoring him/herself in biblical truth, rigorously and self-critically pursued, i.e., being confident in biblical truth and having humility, ensuring that he/she is not pressing God’s Word to say things that it does not say.

ii) The integrationist must be methodologically rigorous in the conduct of science and in relational argumentation, i.e., know the tools of scientific inquiry and commit to the highest possible standards.

iii) The integrationist should pay attention to the tension between what seems to be learned from psychology and what is derived from Christian faith.

iv) The integrationist should seek to conduct science and the profession of psychology in a way shaped first and most foundationally by his/her Christian convictions.

v) The integrationist should be tentative, patient, and humble.

**Christian Psychology Approach**

The Christian Psychology Approach has resurfaced as a major integration approach, due to the work of Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, William Alston, Christian philosophers like C. Stephen Evans, and psychologists like Van Leeuwen and Vitz (Johnson, 2010). The focus of Christian Psychology adherents (Evans, 1990) is on developing theories, research, and practice on human beings that stem from Christian beliefs, i.e., practicing soul care by relying on Christian theological resources instead of secular therapeutic modalities (Johnson, 2010).

According to Langberg (2012, pp. 110-112) true Christian psychology is based ultimately on knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ’s personality, who provides a detailed picture of a fully functioning human being, i.e., Christ embodies humans as they are meant to be in this world. The adherents of the Christian Psychology Approach rely on historic Christian writings, which include the Bible, seeking to uncover the implicit psychology found therein. Christ alone is truth, wisdom, kindness, patience, justice and mercy. As such, the Christian psychologist/therapist must represent the character of Christ. Christ’s character actively works in shaping the therapist, the client, and the therapeutic relationship. The character traits of a Christian psychologist/therapist are cultivated by worship, study, and prayer (Langberg, 2012).

**Differentiation of Integration and Christian Psychology Approaches**

In differentiating between the two identified approaches: Integration and Christian Psychology, the working definition of each will be outlined, followed by a table comparing the two approaches using descriptors of a good model.

According to Jones (2010):

Integration of Christianity and psychology (or any area of “secular thought”) is our living out – in this particular area – of the lordship of Christ over all of existence by our giving his special revelation – God’s true Word – its appropriate place of authority in determining our fundamental beliefs about and practices toward all of reality and toward our academic subject matter in particular. (p. 102)

According to Roberts and Watson (2010), Christian Psychology is:
[A] psychology that accurately describes the psychological nature of human beings as understood according to historic Christianity. The Bible … special and authoritative … [is] the fountainhead of Christian ideas, including psychological ones…[T]he foundational work in Christian Psychology … require[s] a careful rereading of Scripture, in the light of some of the [past] great Christian psychologists … [to] sniff out a biblical psychology that effectively speaks to current circumstances. (p. 155)


Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Integration Approach</th>
<th>Christian Psychology Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>View of Truth</td>
<td>All truth is viewed as God’s truth, i.e., Scripture and Science all reveal God’s truth</td>
<td>The Bible is viewed as holding a special and authoritative place, i.e., it is the foundation upon which Christian Psychology is based (Roberts &amp; Watson, 2010). Truth is found in God’s Word-the Bible, and in Jesus Christ-the Word made flesh (Langberg, 2012).</td>
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<td>View of Mankind</td>
<td>The Integration approach</td>
<td>The view of Mankind is inferred</td>
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<td>The Integration Approach</td>
<td>The Integration Approach values interdisciplinary communication, both faith and science provide insight into human functioning (Jones, 2010; McMinn, 2012).</td>
<td>Christian Psychology allows for interdisciplinary communication, identifying contemporary psychological research as an added resource for instilling biblical virtues (Roberts &amp; Watson, 2010).</td>
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<td>Theory of Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation is inferred, existing on two levels: 1) the client- i.e., hope and trust in God’s goodness; and 2) the counselor- i.e., showing empathy, positive regard, and being genuine (McMinn, 2012)</td>
<td>Motivation is inferred from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount; it focuses on being transformed into Christlikeness, as broken humanity comes to know and love God (Roberts &amp; Watson, 2010).</td>
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<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
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<td>Consideration</td>
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<td>View of Health</td>
<td>Formulations of God’s image provide the best template of how a fully functioning person looks like, gentleness, desiring</td>
<td>Health/well-being is viewed in terms of embodying biblical traits</td>
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<td>View of Illness</td>
<td>Illness/psychopathology stems from humanity’s rebellion against God, leading to our brokenness (Jones, 2010). Illness involves having an unhealthy sense of self; lacking awareness of one’s brokenness, and/or unwholesome relationships (McMinn, 2012).</td>
<td>Illness/psychopathology is extrapolated from the Sermon on the Mount, and includes a disposition towards anger, revenge, lust, hatred, etc., all of which point towards dysfunction (Roberts &amp; Watson, 2010) and being opposed to living a life of Christlikeness (Langberg, 2012).</td>
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<td>View of Recovery/Cure</td>
<td>The focus is on: 1. developing a healthy sense of self; 2. maintaining awareness of one’s brokenness; and 3. engaging in rewarding and close relationships (McMinn, 2012).</td>
<td>Recovery/cure is operationalized by instilling the client with biblical virtues (Roberts &amp; Watson, 2010). It involves being continuously transformed into Christlikeness (Langberg, 2012).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Counselor and Counseling Techniques</td>
<td>The counselor seeks to reflect Christlikeness in therapy,</td>
<td>The counselor is one who is knowledgeable of God and His</td>
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founded on a Christian view of persons. He/she works from a position of being tentative, practicing patience, and humility (Jones, 2010). The counselor also practices being adaptable, fluid, and sensitive to truth, both God’s Word and Works (McMinn, 2012).

| Techniques | Word and embodies Christ. He/she must be capable of explaining traits of dysfunction and traits of health, and know how to guide a client towards the latter (Roberts & Watson, 2010). The counselor is a model of God-dependence, practicing incarnational work (Langberg, 2012). |
| Therapeutic relationship | Techniques, taken from the Sermon on the Mount, involves the practice of being poor in spirit, gentle, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, peaceful, persecuted for the name of Christ, etc. (Roberts & Watson, 2010). They also involve helping the client hold him/herself responsible by gently and repeatedly exposing him/herself to biblical truths, and studying Scripture (Langberg, 2012). |
| Showing care and concern for the client | The use of contemporary theories and strategies; and the use of prayer and Scripture (Jones, 2010; McMinn, 2012). |
PART II: Integration Approach

The counselor’s approach to faith integration, the integration of theology and psychology, takes place through the Integration Approach (Jones, 2010; McMinn, 2012), also referred to by Entwistle (2010) as the Allies model. This is the approach of choice because it establishes that there is an underlying unity of human nature; and it utilizes both theological and psychological methods to investigate and understand truth (Entwistle, 2010). The Integration Approach will be discussed in more detail below, using the words: integrationist and counselor interchangeably.

View of Truth

The Integration Approach rests on the premise that “God’s truths are revealed in the book of God’s Word (Scripture) and the book of God’s Works (creation),” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 205). This approach recognizes “that all truth is known by God, who is Sovereign over all things […] From God’s perspective, all truth fits together cohesively. All truth is ultimately under God’s sovereignty” (Entwistle, 2010, pp. 147-148). This means that both psychology and theology are under God’s control. The truths of Christian faith, outlined in Scripture, and referred to as special revelation forms the foundation of our understanding regarding human nature. It is not equivalent to the truth revealed in creation, general revelation; special revelation holds authority over the data provided by general revelation that is fallen and affected by the effects of sin. Both God’s Word (theology) and God’s world (science/psychology) are equal in the sense that each is open to influencing and being influenced by the other, however, they are not equal in authority, God’s Word takes precedence in the Integration Approach, as authoritative truth; it is the foundation upon with this approach is built (McMinn & Campbell, 2007)

As a branch of philosophy, epistemology focuses on the nature of knowledge (Johnson, 2010). The Integration Approach adopts a theory of knowledge that is based on a Christian
worldview. Knowledge from this worldview draws from the premise that God’s truth is given to humanity through Scripture and Creation. Within this worldview, one acknowledges the presence of a real world, operating under the laws of science and to some reasonable extent relates to the external world. This approach also acknowledges that God is the transcendent Creator of the universe, who upholds and sustains it. As Creator, God is capable of intervening within creation, which He has done through miracles, divine revelation, and His Word. Within this world, humans are situated in a context of time, space and culture; these contexts shape reality, and limit access to information, resulting in limited objectivity (Entwistle, 2010).

Epistemic inquiry, allows the evaluation of truth claims using various methods, some of which include: relational discourse, experimentation, and hermeneutics. In evaluating truth claims from God’s Word, care must be taken as one seeks to distinguish what Scripture says from what they think it might be saying, and hermeneutics helps to inform one’s theology in this process. Historical events can be explored by using: archaeology, geology, written records and oral traditions. However, limits to investigating historical events exist because science only focuses on that which is present in the physical world. The future is not completely established; based on trends and outcomes of the past one is able to have a small degree of predictive accuracy (Entwistle, 2010), but this needs to be observed loosely rather than concretely.

God has given all humanity the desire to know and understand His world. However, this ability to know is influenced by our worldviews, finiteness, personal and corporate sins, and methodological limitations among others (Entwistle, 2010). The Christian worldview of the Integration Approach allows the use of both psychological and theological domains because they are unified in relation to a common set of assumptions about the world. This is due to the fact
that their sources are based on the truths that are derived from God’s Word and world, providing a more complete picture of human nature and functioning, to which we now turn.

**View of Mankind**

Mankind is viewed as being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28, New International Version), referred to as the imago Dei, and it is on this theological assertion that the Integration Approach rests (McMinn, 2012). This means “humans reflect something about God that is not revealed in the rest of creation … represent[ing] God …[and] ambassadors of God’s interests for the world” (McMinn & Campbell, 2007, pp. 26-27). This approach provides a structure of personality divided into three categories: functional, structural, and relational (Jones, 2010; McMinn, 2012; McMinn & Campbell, 2007); each of which will be explored below.

From a functional perspective, mankind’s behavior reveals God’s image, particularly behaviors that focus on managing creation as seen in Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8. This means that humans reflect God’s image in being His representatives, His stewards caring for His good creation. This requires self-control, humans have been given the capacity to control our own urges and humans have been given the capacity to build social structures to aid other human beings in controlling their urges (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). The responsibility and stewardship of mankind, reflects God’s image (McMinn, 2012).

The structural or substantive category focuses on the “ontological nature of the imago Dei” (McMinn, 2012, p. 96). According to the Integration Approach, majesty and nobility, traits that shed light on the nature of our Creator-God, characterize human nature. In addition, the structural category focuses on the capacity for humanity to be moral and rational creatures reflecting qualities of our Creator who is omniscient (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). Added to our
moral and rational capacity, is the ability of human beings to “actively make meaning in our lives…tell[ing] our story even as we live it” (McMinn, 2012, p. 96).

The third category that is used to understand human nature according to the Integrative Approach is the relational category, which focuses on the image of God revealed in relationship (McMinn, 2012). Relationship in this sense is characterized as being one of love with God and with other human beings. This relationship is exemplified in the Trinity, that is, the relational character of God the Father, Son, and Spirit. God’s nature cannot be viewed from the image of man alone or the image of woman alone, but in the uniting of and relating between man and woman, the nature of God is made manifest. God created mankind to be in covenant relationship with Him, and humanity is provided with a picture of what our relationship with God should look like in the life of Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:15). Jesus provides mankind with the “only human image of God uncorrupted by sin; Jesus shows humanity what it means to live in relationship, demonstrating perfect love for God and for his neighbor culminating in his self-sacrifice on a cross (Romans 5:6-8; McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

The Integration Approach upholds that humans are finite and error prone, which brings the integrationist to humbly stand in awe and gratitude knowing that both theology and psychology provide humanity with some insights into the wonders of God’s creation and character. The ultimate expression of humanity’s purpose occurs when we view ourselves in proper relationship to God. The Integrative Approach allows for a unifies process to take place, integrating psychology and theology by recognizing that although they are distinct fields of study; they share an underlying unity, both being under God’s control (Entwistle, 2010).

From a Christian perspective, the integrationist views humans as being spiritual and biological beings who are capable of logic, and have the ability to communicate. Humans were
created as being good in the eyes of God; however, humans are now fallen and frail creatures.

The integrationist recognizes that all truth is grounded in God who created order in creating the world, and His truths are made known to humanity through relational, experimental, and/or revelational means. The creative and intellectual abilities that the integrationist possess, including the abilities that the rest of humanity possesses, comes from God and these abilities are to be used to praise God, guided by intellectual and moral virtues. Our reality is both physical and spiritual, while our experience of reality is social and psychological in nature. Therefore, limits are placed on humanity’s ability to know. The integrationist knows that these limits exist because of humanity’s finitude, and personal and corporate sins (Entwistle, 2010). This leads to a discussion of the theory of motivation; an explanation of human actions.

**Theory of Motivation**

The Integration Approach draws on the Augustine perspective of sin in understanding the reason behind human actions, i.e., mankind’s theory of motivation (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). In creation, God gifted mankind with free will but because of man’s desire (motivation) to be like God (Genesis 3) sin entered into creation, resulting in the corruption of all mankind (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). Although the Integration Approach does not explicitly outline a theory of motivation, it is inferred. Mankind is motivated to be responsible caretakers of life- our own and the lives of the rest of God’s creation, from a functional perspective. Mankind is also intrinsically motivated, being rational and moral beings, and having the capacity to think, communicate, and tell right from wrong, all of which falls under the structural perspective. From a relational perspective, humanity is motivated to desire relationship; humans are relational beings and this is evident from birth, possibly being the strongest motivation of the three perspectives (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).
However, sin as state permeates all of creation, corrupting everything; “no one escapes the damage of living in a sin-stained world” (McMinn & Campbell, 2007, p. 42). Sin as an act causes mankind to seek after self-pleasure, rather than seeking God. Although sin motivates man towards selfish ends, mankind is also motivated to live life due to hope found not in willpower, but in “trusting God’s goodness in the midst of life struggles” (McMinn, 2012, p. 90). Hope here motivates the broken to seek help through therapy and find healing. Motivation also comes from healing therapeutic relationships filled with empathy and support (McMinn, 2012) and founded on Jesus’ grace and truth (John 1:14; McMinn & Campbell, 2007). The next section will address the interdisciplinary impact resulting from the Integration Approach.

**Interdisciplinary Consideration**

Studying the character, disposition, qualities, and inclinations of humanity is known as philosophical anthropology. This area of study is of importance to both psychology and theology, and the Integration Approach allows the use of both these disciplines. The integrationist gains information on human nature and function from Scripture in the form of biblical anthropology and they also gain information from science by examining psychological theories and findings, with the aid of other social sciences (Entwistle, 2010).

Although the Bible forms the foundation for the Integration Approach, integrationists acknowledge that the Bible does not contain everything that humans want to know. Instead, God has endowed humanity with knowledge and the capacity to be rational (Jones, 2010), and it is through scientific study (psychology) that the integrationist gathers information on the nature, structure and function of human beings. The Integration Approach calls the integrationist to participate in research endeavors, being open and honest, while conducting and publishing research with dignity and professionalism (Entwistle, 2010).
Drawing from both psychology and theology, the integrationist is aware that when it comes to research both disciplines will allow for a more complete understanding of humans-in-general and their thoughts, actions, and emotions-in-particular. Both disciplines will remain independent, with psychology being used to investigate the bio-psycho-social aspects of humanity, and theology being used to investigate the spiritual and supernatural aspects of humans in relationship with God. However, both disciplines interact with each other in research through interdisciplinary integration, wherein they inform and critique each other on that which is being investigated. Psychology will be used to critique theology’s attempts that fail to acknowledge the bio-psycho-social dimensions of humans and instead views humans only from the perspective of spiritual reductionism. While, theology will be used to critique attempts at reducing all human phenomena in terms of biological constructs; theology will also be used to create hypotheses that can then be tested using scientific methodologies (Entwistle, 2010).

Cosmology is the science that explores nature, structure and the origins of the world in its entirety. From the perspective of the Integration Approach, the counselor subscribes to supernaturalism, which accepts the naturalists’ view that matter exists as made manifest in our material world. However, supernaturalism also believes that this material world is not self-existent, rather it was derived through creation by God the maker of heaven and earth; God occupies the supernatural world. The Christian worldview informs the counselor that from time immemorial God the transcendent Creator was present, “distinct from, independent of, and superior to nature” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 99). Therefore, God is self-existent and everything in existence-natural and supernatural, were/are created and sustained by Him. Knowledge of the supernatural world is understood in terms of our natural world, it is in nature itself that humans
are invited to look past that which is material and see the One who is supernatural, God the Creator (Entwistle, 2010).

From the psychological perspective, philosophical anthropology posits that humans are biological beings, shaped by our genetic makeup and neurological physiologies. Humans are also social beings, influenced by the social and cultural environments within which we inhabit. Both the biological and environmental elements that shape our humanity assist us in comprehending phenomena that are part of normal human functioning and phenomena that are abnormal psychological occurrences. Psychology provides the counselor with a “framework from which to think about the complexity of human nature and functioning” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 123). This is because psychological theories incorporate a wider variety of perspectives, using an array of epistemic methodologies, to provide a more comprehensive account of humanity as bio-psycho-social beings, which is gained through scientific investigation.

From the theological perspective, philosophical anthropology provides humanity with further insight into the meaning and direction for life itself, an aspect that psychological perspectives cannot provide. Through theological reflection, the integrationist and the rest of humanity are provided “with access to a dimension that is essential to understanding who we are, our relationship with God, and how we ought to live among other things” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 124). A Christian worldview, allows the counselor/integrationist to view humanity with a sense of wonder and awe, which leads to praising God.

The Integration Approach allows the integrationist to gather information on the nature, structure and function of human beings using scientific means. For “when science is understood as a descriptive rather than a normative process” (Entwistle, 2010, p.102) and when supernatural events are understood as not being violations of the laws of nature; one is able to understand that
Christian and scientific worldviews are compatible with each other. This compatibility makes it possible for the integrationist to use both psychology and theology to form a greater understanding of humanity. In particular, psychological explanations provide an understanding of the way human beings function within our natural/material world. Theological explanations recognize the psychological explanations for human functioning, knowing that it is in the design of God our Creator that we derive our existence and purpose (Entwistle, 2010).

Within each discipline, the book of God’s Word (theology) and the book of God’s Works (science), there will be intradisciplinary integration, wherein the integrationist monitors whether the theory and praxis used for each discipline pair up with each other and seeks to make sure that they do. This will be practiced because the integrationist, adhering to a Christian worldview-which states that humans are spiritual beings, will ensure that they address spiritual concerns pertaining to their field of theology, when participating in research investigations. Similarly, by adopting the view-that humans are biological beings, the integrationist will seek to incorporate biological interventions and other sciences that provide information on human beings and their behaviors, in research and therapy, and not seek to just focus on theological investigations alone. The Integration Approach therefore accepts truth both from God’s Word and God’s World (Entwistle, 2010), but maintains the authority of the Bible (McMinn, 2012). The following section will provide a discussion of the Integration Approach to health.

View of Health

According to McMinn (2012), health (psychological) is best understood from the theological focus on the image of God; “Jesus…provides us the perfect picture of God’s image” (McMinn & Campbell, 2007, p. 43). From a functional perspective, health is seen in having the capacity to manage God’s world, including one’s life and circumstances. From a structural
perspective, health is seen in utilizing one’s rational and moral capacities in functional ways creating meaning in his/her life. From a relational perspective, health is seen in the intimate ways humans care for, confide in, and show genuineness and acceptance in relationships, reflecting the love of God for creation (McMinn, 2012). Both the functional and structural views of health focus on the individual, while the relational view focus on health at the familial and societal levels. Drawing from Roberts and Watson’s (2010) approach to health, it can be inferred that happiness, regardless of physical and psychological limitations, signifies health, which springs fourth from being “grounded in the new creation that comes in Jesus” (p. 159).

From the perspective of theology, the integrationist is made aware of the fact that humans are created beings, without the capacity to survive on our own abilities. Humans are finite beings who find health by completely depending on our Creator-God, for everything. This awareness should therefore bring us to stand in awe of God, grateful that although He sustains the universe, He also seeks to provide for finite beings like us. Health also comes by having a willingness to serve God in praise and worship, being in loving relationship/communion with God is integral to the well being of all humans (Entwistle, 2010). A discussion of illness in relation to the Integration Approach will now follow.

**View of Illness**

The Integration Approach reminds mankind of being sinful and fallen. Sin must be acknowledged as having an individual component, which includes but is not limited to “lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, anger, envy, and pride” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 129), and a communal component, which includes “racism, prejudice, materialism, discrimination, [and] loosening sexual standards” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 130) rooted in one’s culture. Sin is what affects our
relationship with God; it alienates us from one another and it is the cause of suffering/illness in the world. The fall of humanity into sin has resulted in the consequences of illness and death.

Sin, according to this approach, is viewed as both a state and an act. As a state, sin, referred to as “original sin” is an antecedent to the sinful choices (thoughts and actions) of mankind. Here, sin is a condition that has corrupted all of creation, influencing all aspects of mankind’s existence. Our environment, childhood experiences, genetic makeup, character traits, and all aspects that shape us as individuals have been corrupted by the state of sin; continuously impacting our behaviors, difficulties, and mental/physical disorders/diseases that humanity struggles with on a daily basis. Sin as a state has tainted humanity, motivating us to pursue self-love rather than loving our Creator-God; this has resulted in mankind being disposed to factors affecting our sociological, psychological, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, resulting in sickness and death (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). As a state, sin, can be seen in the behavioral patterns passed down from generation to generation recorded in Old Testament passages like Exodus 20:5 and Numbers 14:18, where God states that He will punish the children (generations to come) of parents who sinned against (hated) Him, however, this is not made explicit by the founders of the Integration Approach and can only be made inferentially.

As an act, sin, motivates mankind to make choices that reward personal interests, while placing God and others second to self. The Bible (Romans 3:23) makes it clear that all humanity has sinned. Sin is bidirectional, resulting in one individual (people group) hurting another, who seeks to repay the hurt experienced; this leads to devastating consequences regarding the relationships we have with others, as well as, affecting our own mental capacity. Therefore, “sin changes everything: relationships, biological factors, cognitions, rationality, the capacity for willful change and so much more” (McMinn & Campbell, 2007, p. 42). Sin has broken
mankind’s relationship/attachment with God, resulting in human experiences of shame and excessive and unrealistic guilt (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). Therefore, the biological, psychological and social factors that explain illness are a consequence of the state of sin and sinful actions in our world (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

Spiritual warfare is not explicitly discussed in the Integration Approach, but it can be inferred because McMinn and Campbell (2007) state that the world that we live in is dominated by sin (Romans 7:24) but God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to save humanity (John 3:16) and Christ continues the work of redeeming His creation. This means that humans lack the capacity to save ourselves because the battle being waged is not against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12).

According to the Integration Approach, guilt, when it leads humans towards humble remorse and confession, plays a beneficial role in human functioning. However, one’s faith can negatively affect guilt resulting in it being excessive and unrealistic (McMinn & Campbell, 2007); this is when faith can become pathological resulting in illness. The following section will address the area of recovery/cure from the Integration Approach.

**View of Recovery/Cure**

According to McMinn (2012) recovery/cure in relation to Christian mental health stems from focusing on three dimensions: developing a healthy sense of self; having an awareness of one’s brokenness, originating from humanity’s brokenness; and engaging in healthy and rewarding close relationships in relation to God and other human beings.

Focusing on the functional perspective, at the biological level, integrationists recognize the managerial challenge by God, being able to function effectively in relation to His creation. Failure to perform as God’s stewards in relation to environmental stressors/circumstances
affecting thoughts and behaviors is met with interventions that address first, medical causation-the possible biological/developmental nature for dysfunction (Friedman & Thase, 2009, Greenspan, 1997), and secondly, psychological causation targeting one’s thoughts and behaviors with evidence based practices to create a healthy sense of self (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

From the structural perspective, psychological functioning is further addressed, because human thoughts and behaviors: mankind’s rational and moral capacities reflect God’s nature of being in the world. Humans are endowed with the capacity to find meaning in our existence, however, because of the state of sin in our world and in our actions, we are sometimes unable to find meaning in life. Therefore, therapy, the use of secular theories and interventions, including cognitive-behavioral (Martell, 2007) and family systems (Murdock, 2007) theories, aid in the process of meaning making, from the brokenness in one’s life (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

From the relational perspective, the integrationist is informed that relationship with God gives mankind special status in God’s creation. This perspective addresses both the social and spiritual domains in counseling because it focuses on the way humanity uses the structural capacities of morality and rationality, in the construction of relationships with God and others (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). God in His love and grace did not leave humanity to be consumed by sin, He sent His only Son Jesus Christ-the Second Adam, to redeem creation and reconcile humanity back to Himself, providing humans with hope as we live in this broken world (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). Recovery/cure in relationships is addressed using representations of God and attachment theory (Noffke & Hall, 2008).

The Integration Approach draws on and addresses the functional, structural, and relational categories/perspectives to understand humanity and health, to exact change. The consequences of sin in creation and mankind’s need for redemption are fundamental truths that
provide the unifying thread for the integrationist to understand health, illness, and recovery (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). The following section addresses the counselor’s role in therapy and the use of techniques from the perspective of the Integration Approach.

Counselor and Counseling Techniques

Jones (2010) an advocate of the Integration Approach shares his personal journey towards integration. As a student at a public university he was made aware of the “tension and incongruity between the voices of psychology and of [his] Christian faith” (p. 102). He was taught to live with the tension of keeping science and religion as separate entities because “science dealt with facts but religion with values” (p. 103). His encounter with Jay Adams, the founder of the biblical counseling movement, left him more confused after Adams told him to forsake psychology and remain faithful to the Bible. Valuing both Biblical truth and teachings on the human condition from science, Jones became aware of Gary Collins’ work that reinforced his position on integration. The vision of Integration by Collins, resonated with Jones, it called:

Christians to draw on the riches of Scripture to develop, … a fundamentally Christian understanding of the human condition, and … build psychology in a way that honors God and functionally places Jesus as Lord over our work as psychologists (p. 104).

This vision is seen in the definition of integration that Jones (2010) and McMinn (2012) share.

The counselor’s goal is to be God’s faithful servant by acknowledging God’s sovereignty over the world, discerning the underlying unity of truth, and using it to bring glory to God (Entwistle, 2010). As an integrationist, the counselor will incorporate both psychology and theology in psychotherapeutic interventions, “confronting personal and social issues that are within the scope of mutual concern” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 219). This will bring praise to God
because the counselor will be sharing a message of hope and reconciliation, while administering grace and healing to the individuals they interact with in psychotherapeutic practice.

The counselor seeks to follow ethical guidelines, contained in professional associations’ ethical codes, like the American Association of Christian Counselors (2014) and the American Counseling Association (2014), and Christian convictions making sure not to compromise and/or bring dishonor to either their faith community or their professional community (Entwistle, 2010). God is the ethical system for humanity to follow; having God as their moral center, the counselor is able to see the world in which they live as good, reflecting the beauty of the One who is truth and the source of all truth; God (Entwistle, 2010).

The Integration Approach provides techniques and interventions outside the scope of secular therapy; in particular, Recursive Schema Activation (RSA) can be used in addressing trauma allowing for acceptance and understanding of faulty schemas, while incorporating Bible passages of the old and new selves in Ephesians 4 and 6, and Colossians 3, as metaphors (McMinn, 2012). The counselor can also use prayer, confession, and meditation as spiritual interventions in the Integration Approach (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). This approach also informs the counselor’s theoretical orientation, allowing for the use of secular theories like, attachment, person-centered, developmental, cognitive-behavioral, and family systems theories using a Christian accommodative approach, integrating biblical teachings, Christian theology and religious imagery in therapy and treatment (Jennings II, Davis, Hook, & Worthington Jr., 2013). In addition, the Integration Approach allows the counselor to incorporate therapeutic interventions from secular theories that have been established as evidenced based treatments for particular mental health problems (Worthington Jr., Johnson, Hook, & Aten, 2013).
By integrating theology and psychology, the counselor is able to provide a contemplative and mindful psychotherapeutic approach, engaging “clients with an attitude of being with” (Nolasco Jr., 2011, p. 70). This is done by exemplifying a “non-anxious presence, unconditional acceptance, and an unflinching belief in the power of faithful accompaniment in bringing healing and transformation” (Nolasco Jr., 2011, p. 72). The counselor is aware that human beings-clients, who seek out psychotherapy, come because they have tried solving their problem(s) on their terms without acknowledging their utter dependence on God to take care of whatever their situation might be. Applying the CROSS acronym- curiosity, receptivity, openness, stillness, and surrender; the counselor is able to suffer with their clients and display true empathy and compassion for them. The counselor understands that both parties-counselor and client are part of God’s creation, made in His image, having both been subjected to estrangement due to sin but remaining on the journey towards God their Creator, who seeks to make them new. It is this recognition that allows the counselor to provide hope to the client; this understanding assists the counselor in working with those who suffer being God’s human instrument of change and healing in the lives of those encountered in therapy (Nolasco Jr., 2011).

The counselor views the Integration Approach to therapy as a process that addresses three interconnected domains of human beings: functional, structural, and relational. These domains collectively inform the counselor during the assessment and treatment processes. In each domain humans are able to understand an aspect of the nature of God; clients gain a deeper understanding of their true humanity and purpose in life (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

The first domain in the Integration Approach of psychotherapy is symptom-focused and seeks to enhance adaptive behaviors. The second domain focuses on the life stories within which a client’s adaptive behaviors are embedded, and is known as the schema-focused domain. The
third domain focuses on the interpersonal relationships that comprise the life story of each person/client, and is labeled the relationship-focused domain. The symptom-focused or functional domain seeks to answer: What sort of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors are causing problems in the life of the client? The schema-focused or structural domain seeks to answer: What is the problematic meaning or interpretation of these feelings, thoughts and behaviors discovered in the functional domain? The relationship-focused or relational domain is the area that seeks to answer: How do these feelings, thoughts and behaviors discovered in the functional domain, and interpreted in the structural domain, develop in ways that lead to problematic relationships? In therapy, the counselor adopting an Integration Approach is able to bring together theological and psychological methodologies in providing a holistic understanding of clients that better guide the process of therapy (McMinn, 2012; McMinn and Campbell, 2007).

The Integration Approach allows the counselor to practice both implicitly and explicitly depending on the clientele. If the client is Christian and provides consent to spiritual interventions, it would be useful for the counselor to provide explicit faith integration in therapy. If the client is non-Christian, this approach is still useful, because it guides the counselor more than the client. Once the counselor outlines their Christian worldview, and the non-Christian client consents to therapy, the counselor implicitly employs faith integration in therapy, in a noncoercive manner, respecting the faith difference of the client (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

The counseling relationship is highly valued in this approach for effective counseling to take place. This means that the counselor’s role is to exemplify empathy, genuineness, and positive regard. The mandate of the counselor as a Christian is to accept clients just as Christ has accepted the counselor (Romans 15:7; McMinn, 2012). Recognizing our need for relationships,
the counselor seeks to share the knowledge of God’s unconditional love for humanity with clients, embodying the love of Christ in therapy (McMinn & Campbell, 2007).

In utilizing this approach, the counselor’s role is to be the hands and feet of Jesus, the ultimate example of God’s image, embodying grace and truth (McMinn & Campbell, 2007). The counselor can be viewed as teacher. When it comes to working with other counselors/professionals, the counselor subscribing to the Integration Approach might have the role of consultant or supervisor. In the area of education and research, the counselor will perform in the capacity as a researcher/teacher. Although the Integration Approach does not explicitly address roles, the counselor is seen as flexible, assuming various roles depending on the working context, but flexibility does not detract from his/her position as an integrationist.

In relation to counselor health, the Integration Approach radically transforms the life of the counselor, resulting in the counselor having “an open mind and heart and mindful attention” (Nolasco Jr., 2011, p. 54) to God’s presence throughout life. In this place of openness and attentiveness to God, the counselor is able to embody a life of contemplation, enjoying the presence of stillness and solitude because they prepare the counselor to encounter the Creator of the universe, God. The counselor is able to foster an attitude of hospitality towards others, especially clients, by being open to the presence of God within their life. Even in moments of busyness, the counselor learns to create space in their day to slow down and breathe prayerfully; becoming more attentive and anchored in the moment. Contemplation allows the counselor to “become acutely aware of God’s unconditional and diffusive love that calls us out into the world so that others may share in it as well” (Nolasco Jr., 2011, p. 111). The counselor’s life of contemplation leads to a life of worship/devotion, desiring to live in communion with God. This life of devotion is maintained by spending time with God in solitude; spending time in God’s
Word; and through prayer, which results in a total surrender of the heart, while remaining open to the work and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Nolasco Jr., 2011).

**Conclusion**

The process of integration is an ongoing one. For the integrationist/counselor who adopts the Integration Approach, they are provided with the unique perspective of being able to incorporate methods and materials from psychology and Christian theology as they investigate human nature and function. This perspective holds the belief that God is and was present in creation, the incarnation and redemption activities. It also informs the integrationist/counselor that humans are image bearers of God, who have fallen from grace due to sin, which affects our world. However, the counselor is seen as being an instrument and servant of God, who acknowledges His sovereignty over the world. This allows the counselor to partake in research activities incorporating psychological and theological constructs, providing a better understanding of human beings. It also allows the counselor to engage in therapy, where clients come to experience the love of God and His hope and healing in their life through the mindful and contemplative life of the counselor. Finally, the counselor is able to live a life of devotion to God by cultivating a contemplative life, where they seek to still their heart, open their mind and commune with God the Creator and Sustainer of life.

The integration of psychology and theology is possible because God is the author of all truth, found in the book of His Word and the book of His world. Both disciplines regardless of their differences provide valuable insights about humanity’s nature and function. As a counselor with a Christian worldview, the desire is to provide the best possible care to clients, which will occur by combining the truths found in both disciplines. In order to understand humans as God intended us to be, it is therefore crucial to view them through an integrated lens (Murphy, 2005).
References


