Comparing the Five Views Christians Take to Psychology

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Why different views?

Modern psychology produced a profound scientific account of human beings and developed complex ways of dealing with psychological problems without God. Christianity has had its own account of human and ways of dealing with psychology problems through Christ. This created a crisis for the Church, that resulted in different understandings of how to resolve it.
Levels-of-Explanation Model

- Major representatives
  - David Myers
  - Malcolm Jeeves
  - Warren Brown
  - Everett Worthington

Most common position among Christian psych faculty at X’n and secular colleges
Levels-of-Explanation Model

Humans are best understood in terms of a hierarchy of levels or disciplines that should not be combined

Therefore, one’s theology should not affect the other levels or disciplines
Levels-of-Explanation Model

Strengths

1. Takes science and research very seriously
2. Allows all scientists to contribute to their discipline, regardless of worldview differences
3. Avoids problems with misinterpreting the Bible (like the earth’s position in the solar system)
4. Has shaped contemporary psychology in areas like psych. of religion, forgiveness, and values in therapy
Levels-of-Explanation Model

Weaknesses

1. Accepts modern psychology uncritically. Secularism dominates the field and prevents Christians from making reference to their worldview values in public mental health.

2. Only worldviews allowed are secular (naturalism, Buddhism).

3. Excludes Bible from contributing to psychology.

4. Can easily lead to syncretism and the importation of modern values regarding topics like homosexuality (David Myers).
Integration Model

Major representatives

Bruce Narramore

Mark McMinn

Steve Sandage

Stan Jones

Dominant approach at Christian graduate schools
Integration Model

Common Slogan

“All Truth is God’s Truth”

Key Insight

Christians should integrate psychological truth with truth from the Christian faith

Limitation

Seems to imply that all secular psychology is true
Integration Model

Two Kinds of Integration

1. *Strategic Integration*
   Christian values influence what they do in the public square and they modify the field, but it still only amounts to integration that our secular colleagues let us get away with

2. “Weak” *Integration*
   Christianity makes less difference in one’s discourse and practice, except in ethical areas, e.g., sexual ethics
Integration Model

Strengths

1. Takes science and research seriously
2. Allows Christian faith to reinterpret psychology
3. Recognizes the role of God’s “common grace” in culture and science
4. Seeks to engage the culture and impact contemporary psychology
Integration Model

Weaknesses

1. Assumes a dualistic separation between biblical research and research on human beings.

2. Assumes that contemporary psychology is the only legitimate version of psychology. But could secularism be distorting contemp. psychology?

3. May minimize the distorting effects of sin on human understanding = the “Antithesis”

4. Poor integration undermines the lordship of Christ and the impact of redemption (esp. in counseling--examples)
Christian Psychology Model

Major representatives: Classical

- Augustine
- Julian of Norwich
- John Bunyan
- Søren Kierkegaard
Christian Psychology Model

Major representatives: Contemporary

Robert Roberts

Paul J. Watson

Diane Langberg

Leanne Payne

Paul Vitz
Christian Psychology Model

Current agenda of Christian Psychology

The ongoing development of distinctly Christian psychological theory, research programs, and soul care practice.

Seeks to offer a Christian alternative to modern psychology, where possible, by beginning with the psychology of the Bible and the Christian traditions.
Foundation 1: A *Relational* model of human life

A Four-Dimensional
Relational Model

(In contrast to the one- or two-dimensional models of secular psychology)
Foundation 2: Some kind of multi-level, hierarchical, holistic model of human nature

- **Spiritual Dimension**
  - Soul

- **Psychosocial Dimension**
  - Body/Brain

- **Biological Dimension**
Christian Psychology Model

**Strengths**

1. Aims to develop a Christian science of psychology

2. Challenges the domination of secularism over the contemporary field of psychology through participation and engagement

3. Seeks to be peace-making and bring together advocates of the different views and different Christian faith communities
Christian Psychology Model

Weaknesses

1. Focus on the past history of Christian psychology

2. Very little distinctively Christian research has been done thus far, currently based more on biblical studies and Christian philosophy

4. Danger of forming a Christian psychology ghetto that doesn’t interact and challenge modern psych.
Transformative-Spirituality Model

Major representatives

David Benner
Gary Moon
John Coe
Todd Hall
Larry Crabb
Transformative-Spirituality Model

Major Themes

Spiritual formation into the image of Christ is the primary goal of human life.

Spiritual direction provides soul care guidance to others by those further along the path.

Uses distinctly Christian resources to promote healing and development.
Transformative-Spirituality Model

Strengths

1. Christ-centered approach to the care of souls

2. Takes the Bible and Christian traditions very seriously

3. Not limited to increase in knowledge; Profound and pervasive focus on changing one’s heart and character in Christ
Transformative-Spirituality Model

Weaknesses

1. Separation between spirituality and psychology
   Relies on modern psychology/integration for psychological matters

2. More oriented to helping well-adjusted people go deeper; tends to rely more on modern methods for those with more serious problems

3. Currently favors Catholic and Orthodox spirituality over Protestant
Biblical Counseling Model

Major representatives

Jay Adams
David Powlison
Ed Welch
Heath Lambert
Jeremy Lelek
ACBC
Biblical Counseling Model

Major Themes

Counseling based exclusively on the Bible
Concern about secularism in modern psychology
So BC is skeptical about integration
Sin is the primary soul-problem in the Bible, so the gospel and repentance are the primary solutions

The local church is the primary place where Christian soul care should occur
Biblical Counseling Model

Common Slogan

“The Sufficiency of Scripture”

Key Insight
Scripture is authoritative and necessary for Christian counseling because it is God’s soul-care guidebook

Limitation
Seems to imply that the Bible has all the knowledge necessary to address counseling problems
Biblical Counseling Model

Strengths

1. Bible is God’s word for soul care; all pastors should be biblical counselors

2. Wary of the influences of secular worldview on modern psychology; Against syncretism

3. Strives for a theocentric approach to soul care that sees sin as our worst problem and Christ’s work as the cure for the sin-sick soul

4. Strong emphasis on sin and redemption

5. Puts focus for soul care on the local church
Biblical Counseling Model

Weaknesses (primarily *Traditional BC*)

1. Has not thought much on the relation between God’s word in creation (articulated by scientists) and God’s word in Scripture

2. Emphasizes the opposition of the Church and the world/modern psychology so much that it neglects the good there is in modern psychology

3. Tends to be skeptical of psychototropic medication, arguing that God uses pain to reorient our lives

4. Emphasis on every member ministry can neglect the need for expertise
Where do we go from here?

We are all brothers and sisters, and each group has something to contribute to the dialogue. Rightly interpreted, there is no necessary incompatibility between the orthodox models we have seen—just difference in calling, focus and location in culture.

Levels-of-Explanation & Integration = Doing research and professional counseling in the public square.

Christian psychology = Doing research and professional counseling in Christian contexts (churches, counseling centers, colleges and universities) and ultimately in the public square.

Biblical Counseling & Transformative-Spirituality = Practical working in the Church that is Christ-centered and Bible-based.
Where do we go from here?

United by a mutual love of Christ, and rejecting divisiveness as a work of the flesh (Gal 5:19-21), we can learn how to support one another in our respective callings, challenge each where we continue to disagree, and stimulate one another to love and good deeds (He 10:24), whatever our location in the culture.