INTEGRATION OF THEOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY:
A BRIEF OVERVIEW
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Integration of Theology and Psychology is now an Interdisciplinary specialty in colleges. The historian is confronted with extensive data to support the fact that psychologists have given the name “Integration” to this interdisciplinary task. Integration combats the forces of dis-integration with integrity. Integrity is a state of completeness, an unbroken, unimpaired condition that includes honesty, uprightness, sincerity and character. Christian therapies stress salvation and redemption, tying together the individual’s story with the gospel story.

In Christian theological tradition, this implies a transformation from outside oneself. Christian integrators generally are concerned that helping professions address both “anthropocentric” and “Theo-centric” concerns. Theists and non-theists approach these issues differently, but both assume there will be a breakdown when either the spiritual or the psychological is neglected. Efforts to reintegrate psychology and theology are a response to the separation of the disciplines in the mid-to-late 19th Century.

The common term integration to designate interdisciplinary efforts by theologians and psychologists was first used by Fritz Kunkel in reference to psychology and Christian education. Kunkel established the Christian Counseling Center at the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles in 1940. In 1952 he started the Foundation for the Advancement of Religious Psychology. He described his work as “the integration of Christianity and Psychology.” Professional societies were formed to purposely pursue integration. The APA Division 36 first met at the 1980 APA Convention to discuss
integration. Maslow and Frankl regarded psychotherapy as a type of awakening to
greater identity through “enhancing an inner awareness and intuition in both therapist and
client.” (Wittine, 1992, p.282) They recognized the therapist’s self and spiritual
worldview as important therapeutic variables. Degree programs and professorships
developed. The first APA-accredited integrative doctoral degrees were offered by the
Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1988.
Lewis Smede served from 1990-1993 as professor of Theology and Integration.

Other schools: Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology at Biola University,
California; Baylor University, Texas; George Fox College Graduate School of
Psychology, Oregon; Wheaton College, Illinois; Psychological Studies Institute of
Atlanta, and many more. Journals on Integration have emerged: Journal of Religion and
Health; Quarterly Review of Religion and Mental Health; Journal of Psychology and
Theology; Journal of Psychology and Christianity, and many more. Research, literature
and textbooks focus on religious issues in clinical psychology, including personality
theories, psychopathology and psychotherapy. National organizations and Christian
Counseling Centers and Psychiatric Hospitals have flourished and floundered.

Carl Jung is quoted as saying: “But what will the doctor do when he sees only too
clearly why his patient is ill; when he sees that it arises from his not having love, but only
sexuality; no faith, because he is afraid to grope in the dark; no hope, because he is
disillusioned by the world and by life; and no understanding, because he has failed to
read the meaning of his own existence? Among all my patients in the second half of life
– that is over thirty-five years of age – there has not been one whose problem in the last
resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life” (Jung, 1931/1933, pp. 225-226,
229). Over 400 reference works were found by Hendrika Vande Kemp, and quoted, on
the historical tradition of integration.
WORLDVIEWS:

I. Theology = study of God; faith seeking understanding. The unique object of our Christian faith = God

A) To believe God is who He says He is

B) To believe God can do what He says He can do

1.) Situations of our faith. Christians are confronted by mystery in all the central affirmations of our faith: paradox and tension, as:

a.) Believe in a sovereign, good God – live in world where evil seems to triumph.

b.) Believe in a living Lord – experience the absence of God vs. His presence.

c.) Believe in the power of the Holy Spirit – know failure in self and in the church.

d.) Believe in doing God’s will – not sure how to know it.

GOD IS ALWAYS BIGGER THAN OUR IDEA OF HIM!

Christian faith demands thinking through and living out the faith in relation to new experiences, new problems and new possibilities. Christian faith causes us to do more than think. Faith sings, faith confesses, faith rejoices, faith weeps, faith suffers, faith acts. Faith is transforming.

Descarte said: “The only reliable starting point in the pursuit of truth is self-consciousness = I think, therefore, I am” (Cogito ergo sum). Christian faith radically differs. Faith begins with God, not self = God is, therefore we are. Faith begins with God, not apart from Him = God has revealed Himself, therefore, I inquire. The work of Christian theology is a continuing search for the fullness of the truth of God made known in Jesus Christ.

II. Psychology: The science dealing with the mind and mental processes, feelings, desires, actions, traits, attitudes, thoughts, etc. The focus of psychology = Man and animals.
TECHNIQUES OF INTEGRATION: Implicit and Explicit

Implicit = religious and spiritual issues may be dealt with or interpreted when they are brought up for discussion by the client.

Explicit = more overt approach that directly and systematically deals with spiritual or religious issues in therapy, and uses spiritual resources like prayer, Scripture, referrals to church and other religious practices.

Examples of implicit techniques:

1. Genogram – family of origin
   a. family values, rituals, habits
   b. increase the ability to distinguish between thinking and feeling within self and others; direct one’s life and solve problems

2. Stories - allowing client to relate stories from background of values, family traditions, holiday celebrations, etc.

3. Metaphors – client-generated:
   a. If I could be an animal, which one would I be? Why?
   b. Associating feelings with words:
      1) achievements  2) men  3) scholarship 4) anxiety  5) women   6) God
   c. Pick a character you would like to be; talk about why you picked that person.
      Look at the picture on the wall; tell me what you see or what it reminds you of (where, what feelings) … mirror client’s emotions, play out image, how does it fit your present world? Where would you be in that picture?

Examples of Explicit techniques:

1. Prayer (before, during or after session)
   Different forms: quiet, meditative prayer, general prayer, specific needs expressed by client; prayer for healing; prayer for healing of memories, etc.

2. Scripture reading: stories (Nathan and David) and parables (emphasize one major point) from scripture. Lives that are similar to client’s story, or client-interpreted portions.
3. Referrals: Church, groups, community activities with significant spiritual input, movies.

4. Metaphors: Client-generated or therapist-generated, dealing with death, loss or grieving.

5. Bibliotherapy: Assigning reading materials that deal with specific issues client has mentioned or that therapist anticipates, will be enlightening to client. Material dealing with marital conflicts, parent-child conflict, boundaries, etc.

6. Journaling: Does not limit client’s ability to take on self-responsibility.

7. Music and Art: Client expresses favorite hymn or piece of art … tell me a story of that song or piece of art. Where are you in that story or what are you in the story? This is a good way to access childhood memories.

8. Dreams: Symbolic emotional/spiritual experience. Client-interpreted dream; projection of the dreamer; God-given; biochemical, etc.

9. Lordship:
   a. Relationship of creature to Creator; confession of sin/cleansing and forgiveness
   b. Recognition of need (woundedness, brokenness and scars)
   c. Thanksgiving and praise

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9/22/2007 – permission to use in Rescue College class: Family Systems
Answer the following questions regarding article on integration.

1. What is theology? What would you add from your own personal studies to the definition given by the author of the article?

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2. Respond to the concept that Christians are confronted by mystery in all the central affirmations of our faith. Use the article’s points marked A, B, C and D in your response.

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3. What is the work of Christian theology according to the article? Do you agree or disagree? Defend your position.

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4. What is psychology? Add your understanding as well as the article’s concepts.

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5. Explain the words “implicit” and “explicit” in the techniques of Integration.


6. Of the three examples of implicit techniques which one appeals to you the most? Explain in what circumstances you see this technique helping in counseling. Give at least three illustrations of counseling situations.


7. Of the nine examples of implicit techniques which three appeal to you the most? Explain in what circumstances you see using these techniques in counseling. Give at least three illustrations of counseling situations.


