Institute for Christian Teaching

THE BIBLE AND PSYCHOLOGY

Donna J. Habenicht

Symposium on the Bible and Adventist Scholarship
Juan Dolio, Dominican Republic
March 19-26, 2000

THE BIBLE AND PSYCHOLOGY

Donna J. Habenicht
Professor of Educational and Counseling Psychology
Andrews University

Introduction

Modern scientific psychology is a relatively young, multifaceted discipline devoted to the study of the mind, with its related processes, and human and animal behavior. The science of psychology can be investigated from many different perspectives, including such diverse areas as visual perception, computer models of the brain, chimpanzee speech, mental health issues, learning theory, parenting practices, moral character, human development, or social psychology.

Psychology also speaks to many aspects of everyday living. Psychologists are often called upon to answer questions such as: Is my child's development normal? How should I discipline my child? What can be done about the AIDS problem? What causes dyslexia? Do you think my child might have been abused at the day care center? What is the best way to help people stop smoking? How can I train my dog to be more obedient?

Psychologists are called upon to consult in all manner of situations, from setting up programs for residential facilities for delinquent teenagers, to prison reform, youth groups for churches, Head Start programs, schools who have experienced violence, and churches reeling from the discovery of sexual abuse in their midst. The almost endless list mirrors the woes of end-time humanity. These woes have driven much of the research.

Psychology and the Search for Truth

Psychology considers itself a scientific discipline, strongly based on research. However, many areas are really a "soft science" because human beings are very complex and relationships dependent

on many variables, some of which are difficult to control and to measure. Psychological data related to human beings are rarely as clear or definitive as mathematical or chemical data.

The search for scientific truth has guided psychology since its infancy. What does the research say? Decisions of school psychologists and counseling and clinical psychologists are, as often as possible, based on the research findings related to the problem. Clinicians are expected to have a good grasp of research methods and data analyses. A significant number of research questions appear on the national licensure examination.

As a Christian psychologist, I find two Bible verses appropriate to this search for truth: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6) No doubt the original meaning of these verses did not relate to psychology, but I think they can legitimately be extended to the psychologist's search for truth.

In my study of psychology I have discovered the truth of the following statement from the pen of Ellen White in the book *Education*: "It is a fact widely ignored, though never without danger, that error rarely appears for what it really is. It is by mingling with or attaching itself to truth that it gains acceptance...." (1903, p. 231). The field of psychology presents numerous opportunities for the mingling of truth and error. A Christian psychologist must be constantly on the alert for this blurring of truth. I believe the Christian psychologist must have a solid foundation of biblical knowledge in order to discern the whereabouts of this fine line between truth and error.

I believe that all truth originates with God. He is the source of truth about the natural world, including human beings, as well as truth about the soul and the hereafter. Again, another statement from the book *Education* is instructive: "As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world's great thinkers reflect the

2

rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world" (White, 1903, p. 14).

As psychologists, and other scientists, discover truth about the natural world, including human beings, they are discovering rays of light from God. These rays of light—discovered truth—can be used to illuminate our knowledge of human beings. Our task is to discern which discoveries reflect the Sun of Righteousness.

All discovered truth needs to be compared with revealed truth in God's Word. Generally the scientific discoveries of psychology illuminate details about the development and functioning of human beings which are not found in God's Word, the Bible. For example, how infants become attached to their care givers, the details of how children learn, how stress affects the body, and FMRIs which track the functioning of the brain comparing how dyslexics and normal children process reading. This information has practical application in helping people live more productive and healthful lives. The Bible does not speak to these details. Rather, it focuses on the story of God's dealings with human beings throughout history, especially as related to the resolution of the sin problem.

Psychology gets into trouble, from a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) viewpoint, when it attempts to explain why humans develop and change as they do. Evolution undergirds the focus of mainstream psychology. The sin problem does not figure in any explanations for behavior or human development. Neither does the need for a Savior who might renew an individual's mind enter into discussions of behavior change or therapy for psychological problems. Thus, the Christian psychologist senses a need to integrate his or her knowledge from psychology and from theology. How do they fit together?

Integration of Psychology and Christianity

During the last several decades, Christian psychologists, recognizing that truth and error comingle in psychology, have wrestled with the issue of the integration of psychology and Christianity. Because of the diversity of psychological studies, it is impossible to consider a single model for the integration of faith and learning in psychology. Psychologists interested in counseling or therapy have been the most active in the integration dialogue, with a few voices emerging from other areas of psychology.

This period of integration activity can be divided into three distinct eras: unsystematic activities until the early 1970s; a period of intense model building during the late 70s and the 80s; followed by a relatively stagnant period during the late 90s. The Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) was organized 25 years ago for the purpose of pursuing the integration dream. Their *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* and the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* from Biola University have provided formal vehicles for this dialogue.

A number of significant books on the topic of integration were published during the 80s and early 90s, such as: *The Person in Psychology: A Contemporary Christian Appraisal* (VanLeeuwen, 1985); *Psychology Through the Eyes of Faith* (Myers & Jeeves, 1987); *Marriage Counseling: A Christian Approach to Counseling Couples* (Worthington, 1989); *Modern Psycho-therapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Jones & Butman, 1991); *Christian Perspectives on Human Development* (Aden, Benner & Ellens, 1992); *A Christian Theory of Personality* (Vitz, 1994); *Psychology in Christian Perspective: An Analysis of Key Issues* (Faw, 1995). Some of these books are intended as readers to accompany psychology courses, such as introductory psychology, human development, and different types of therapy.

Is there agreement today on the integration of psychology and Christianity? No. There is not even agreement on the meaning of the term integration, let alone the process or content of such a model or models. Does that mean we give up? No, again. The Summer, 1996, issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* was devoted to the topic: Integration Revisited. It provided a historical overview of the endeavor.

Six Christian psychologists who have been prominent in the dialogue were asked to contribute to this special issue. Each was asked to discuss the following topics: Personal background and development as a Christian psychologist, the relationship between Christianity and psychology, changes in Christianity and psychology, evidence of progress in the integration dialogue, and future directions. Their reflections accentuate the differences inherent in the dialogue. Some express optimism about what has been accomplished and about the future, while others lament slow progress. All comment about the disintegration of psychology in general, largely because the influence of postmodern thought has diluted or denigrated the search for truth.

The urgency of the integration dialogue may also have been diluted a little by the new interest in religion and spirituality in clinical and counseling psychology. While I would not suggest that a majority--or even a significant minority--of psychologists are actively involved in this new area, enough has been published to temper the prevailing dictum that "psychologists are not interested in religion". Some of the titles I have seen include: *Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology* (Shafranske, 1996); *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Richards and Bergin, 1997); *Integrating Spirituality Into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners* (Miller, 1999); *Spiritual Resources in Family Therapy* (Walsh, 1999); *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*

(Richards and Bergin, 2000). All except Walsh were published by the American Psychological Association.

How much the Christian psychologists, in particular CAPS and the graduate programs at Fuller, Biola, and Wheaton, have contributed to this interest is difficult to assess. I suspect that their writings over the past three decades have had some impact, but that the New Age movement and multiculturalism have probably had a greater influence on the current thinking about religion and spirituality in mainstream counseling and clinical psychology. Suffice it to say, it is no longer taboo to talk about religious and spiritual interventions in client work. While our definitions of "religious" and "spiritual" may differ, this is certainly a great step forward.

During the last couple decades psychologists have also discovered some areas which sound distinctly religious–forgiveness, altruistic service instead of self-centeredness, self-respect instead of self-esteem, for example–and have altered their thinking in other areas so they are closer to a Biblical viewpoint—a reconsideration of how to deal with anger and the role of guilt in mental health, for instance. Not everyone agrees with the new ideas, but the good news is that the ideas are present in the literature and recognized by practicing and theoretical psychologists.

The Bible and Psychology

Psychology has come a long way since Freud. Even so, mainstream psychology today is definitely not biblically based, never has been, and probably never will be. Even though some ideas may resemble biblical thought, the psychological version did not originate in the Bible nor is the Bible the source for evaluating psychological theory and practice, as it might be for the Christian psychologist. The Bible was not written as a psychological treatise. It does, however, provide many

stories and instructional materials which illuminate God's way of dealing with human beings–God's psychology in action, if you please.

Which brings us to the main question to be addressed in this paper: What can the Holy Scriptures contribute toward teaching and scholarship in the field of psychology?

My thoughts on this question will be divided into four main sections: (1) Integration models, (2) Christian presuppositions and fundamental psychological issues, (3) Theoretical models and Christian presuppositions, and (4) Biblical examples of psychological principles. Finally, I will end with some thoughts on how the study of psychology has enriched my understanding of God and strengthened my faith in His revelation. My comments will reflect the areas of psychology with which I am most familiar: Counseling, moral character and religious development, and lifespan human development.

Integration Models

Many different models for the integration of psychology and theology (Christianity/the Bible) have been proposed. Each approaches the integration process with different assumptions and goes about the process differently, naturally with different end results.

Eck (1996) proposed an organizing framework for a multifaceted process of integration which could be a starting point for thinking about the issues of integration. Table 1 is an adaptation of his chart. Note that the paradigms propose five main models for integration: In the first, Psychology and Theology reject each other, making integration impossible. In the second model, Psychology and Theology reconstruct each other, rejecting either the supernatural or the natural scientific in the process. In the remaining three models, Psychology and Theology each consider the other legitimate, but relate to each other through transformation, correlation, or unification, depending on the model.

7

Eck (1996) also provided suggested representatives for each of these models, except for the unified process, for which he did not find a representative.

Eck proposed his models after the fact. The models were developed from a study of the integration writing in existence at that time. Some psychologists disagree with Eck's proposed models and his classification of representatives. This is part of the integration dialogue.

Some well known psychologists completely reject theology as a source for truth. Among them are Freud, Skinner, Watson, and Ellis. Since their theories are so well known, many people believe that all psychologists reject the Bible. Jay Adams outspokenly rejects psychology as a source for truth. These extremists cannot be part of the integration dialogue because they have rejected one side or the other.

As I review the integration literature, I find it relatively easy to discover which model different proponents of integration seem to be following. But this might be a much more difficult mental exercise for psychology students who are novices to dissecting integration models. I believe it is a very worthwhile activity to assign readings, asking students to analyze the author and discover the integration model used. Naturally, this assignment is preceded by a discussion of the integration issues and the proposed models for integration.

My graduate students in psychology have generally been intrigued by the area of integration and have produced some very interesting models for learning theory, counseling theory, and moral character development theory. Attempting to integrate psychology and the Bible is not an easy task. The transformation and correlation models have been most popular with my students, although we have also attempted unified models.

Table 1

Organizing Framework for Integration Process

Paradigms	Integration Models	Conceptual Relationship
NON-INTEGRATIVE		
Rejects Process	Psychology rejects Theology as source for truth.	No integration possible.
	Theology rejects Psychology as source for truth.	No integration possible.
MANIPULATIVE INTEGRATION		
Reconstructs Process	Psychology reconstructs Theology. Eliminates the supernatural.	Integration produces a theologically informed psychological system.
	Theology reconstructs Psychology. Eliminates the natural scientific.	Integration produces a psychologically informed theological system.
Transforms Process	Psychology transforms Theology. Both legitimate.	Both legitimate. Integration involves first filtering or altering world view of theological data.
	Theology transforms Psychology. Both legitimate.	Integration involves first filtering or altering world view of psychological data.
NON-MANIPULATIVE INTEGRATION		
Correlates Process	Psychology correlates with Theology through levels. Both legitimate.	Integration involves deepening one's awareness through multilevel analysis of the data.
	Psychology correlates with Theology through linkages. Both legitimate.	Integration involves creating linkages between related data from each field.
Unifies Process	Psychology unifies with Theology. Both legitimate.	Integration involves seeking unified concepts and living them out in the world.

9

To my knowledge, no one has developed a widely accepted, completely integrated, model of psychology and the Bible. Mini-models exist, but not a major model. Psychology is a very complex discipline. Few, if any, major models are being developed today for any area of psychology. The mini-model is the trend. A major integration model may not be possible. At least, this area deserves the attention of Adventist scholars, who have not yet contributed very much to the integration dialog among Christian psychologists.

Christian Presuppositions and Fundamental

Psychological Issues

As we attempt to look at psychology through the eyes of the Bible, our first task is to identify the presuppositions of a Christian (Seventh-day Adventist) world view. As Blamires (1963) so clearly stated, the Christian mind sees everything differently because of these presuppositions.

Christian (SDA) Presuppositions

Since an entire paper in this series has been devoted to the Christian world view, I will only briefly review the Christian (SDA) presuppositions which seem most important for the interface with psychology. We need to have them fresh in our minds so we can examine the fundamental psychological principles through Christian eyes. I am indebted to Pascoe (1980) for inspiration for this section.

God is central to all truth. All truth comes from God, the Creator (Gen 1:1; Ex 20:2; Ps 24:1-2). God's truth comes through revelation (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21) and is discovered through serious inquiry into His Word (Heb 11:6; John 5:39). God's truth is authoritative (2 Tim 3:16). It is truth because God *is* truth (John 1:14;14:6;1 John 5:20). The Christian accepts the reality of God through faith (John 1:12; 1 Cor 1:20-21; Heb 11:1,2,6). No absolute, incontrovertible proof can be

offered for the existence of God. God is, always has been, and always will be (Isa 46:9-11; John 5:26; Heb 13:8; Rev 1:8). The Christian believes that truth exists and it can be discovered through God's Word (Ps 119:142; John 17:17). Truth is essential. Truth gives focus to human life; it provides an anchor in a chaotic world (Ps 119:105,130; John 8:31,32).

Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6) to which all Biblical truths are connected. He is the primary focus of God's revelation of truth to humankind (John 5:39,46). Jesus is the answer to the sin problem (John 3:16; Rom 5:18-21). He provides redemption and the power for change (2 Cor 5:17). Through Christ, we can better understand our present life, and we can look forward to eternal life (John 6:35,47; 7:38).

God supernaturally intervenes in human history. All human history must be viewed in light of the supernatural intervention of God (Dan 2:28). He existed before the creation of the world and will always exist (Ps 90:2; Col 1:17; Heb 13:8; Rev 1:8). God sustains the world (Acts 17:25,28;Col 1:17) and He also intervenes supernaturally in the lives of individuals (Dan 2:-27; Acts 9:4-18; 12:6-11), often through the work of the Holy Spirit and angels (Acts 2:4; 13: 4;16:6,7; Ps 91:11,12; Heb 1:14). God will intervene to put an end to the sin problem and to restore this world to its original perfection (Rev 7:17; 21:1-4).

Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26,27). Man and woman were created with individuality, power and freedom to think and to act (Gen 1:26-28; Deut 30:19; Ps 8:6; Eph 2:10). They are not machines set in motion and left to function mechanistically. Human beings were created different from animals (Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8:6-8; Matt 10:29-31), with the ability to communicate with God (Gen 3:8-13; 18:16-32; Ex 33:11; Matt 6:5-13; Acts 27:23-25). They were also created in God's image, free, with an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit (Gen 1:26; 1

Thess 5:23; Rom 12:1,2; Matt 10:28; 1 Cor 7:24). They were created completely dependent upon God for life and breath and everything else (Gen 2:7; Acts 17:25,26,28). Human beings were created to live in community as the body of Christ (Gen 1:26-28; Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 12). Three aspects of humanity—creation, fall, redemption—must be considered to achieve our complete personhood in Christ. For the Christian, all true identity comes from the person's relationship with God (John 15:4-6). Only in that relationship can we attain perfection through Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:13; James 1:4). Without God, the self is incomplete.

Human beings chose to rebel against God. Humans were created perfect moral beings, capable of choosing between good and evil (Gen 2:16,17). Adam and Eve, when tempted by Satan, chose to disbelieve and disobey God (Gen 3:1-13), thus breaking their relationship with God and changing their perfect nature to one with a bent toward evil (Rom 5:12; Rom 3:23). They brought the curse of death upon themselves and their descendants (Gen 3; Rom 6:23).

Human beings are involved in a constant struggle between good and evil. Because of Adam and Eve's choice, Satan dominates the world at this point in human history (Gen 3:16-19,22; Rom 1:28-32; 1 John 5:19). All of us are guilty of choosing evil (Rom 3:10-18). We are naturally inclined that way (Rom 7:14-24; 8:7-8). Only Christ can rescue us from Satan's grasp (Rom 7:24,25; 8:1; Gal 1:3-5; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 John 5:18). The Christian's moral order centers in God, not humanity. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and Jesus' two "greatest commandments" (Matt. 22:37-40)—not human reasoning—should form the basis for moral and ethical decisions and everyday living.

The knowledge of God provides purpose and meaning for life. Without a knowledge of God and His Word, life on planet earth becomes purposeless, meaningless, and disheartening (John

12:46; 15:5-7). With God there is purpose and meaning to life (John 8:12; 17:13;Rom 5:2; 8:28; 1 Pet 1:8). Events are moving toward God's climactic intervention to eliminate evil (2 Cor 4:17-18; 1 Cor 15:24-26,53,54; 2 Pet 3:7; Rev 21:3-5) and restore perfection (2 Pet 3:13,14; Rev 21:3-5). Death is only a brief interlude between now and the resurrection (Eccl 9:5; Job 19:25-27; John 11:11-43; 1 Cor 15:42-44, 51-54; 1 Thess 4:15-17; Rev 20:6) when Christ comes to take His loved ones home (John 14:2-3). Trials and suffering have purpose in the life of the Christian (1 Pet 4:12-16; James 1:2-4)–they lead us to know God better (Rom 8:17,28). They are a part of the process of restoring God's image in us (Job 5:17;23:10; 2 Cor 4:17,18). As part of God's great plan for the redemption of this fallen world, our lives have purpose and meaning as we share God's love with everyone in our sphere (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:7-8).

These presuppositions undergird the Christian's thinking about everything in the world. How do they affect what we think about psychology?

Fundamental Psychological Issues

Almost thirty years ago, Wertheimer (1972) proposed eight fundamental psychological issues which every theory must address. Each is central to understanding how a psychological theory views human beings. Each foundational issue may be viewed as a continuum or as two opposing ends, with theories aligning themselves anywhere on the continuum or ends. Psychological theories describe their views of human beings and how they develop and change, while the Christian presuppositions describe how God views human beings, as understood through His Word. As we examine the eight fundamental psychological issues in the light of the Christian presuppositions, we will better understand the task of the Christian psychologist who wishes to integrate her professional and religious knowledge.

The Individual as Master or Victim of Fate

The individual is viewed as purposive and active in searching for goals and creating personal meaning in life (free will) OR the individual is seen as the behavioral product of accidental forces and experiences which shape existence through chance (determinism). When approached from the Christian presuppositions, this one seems quite clear. God created human beings with free will--the ability to think, to make choices, to search for goals, and create meaning in life (Gen 1:26,27). Certainly God did not intend human beings to be victims of fate. Rather He intended them to master circumstances and make wise choices.

The original behavioral approach (à la Pavlov, Watson, and Skinner), which clearly states that human beings are, indeed, shaped by the conditioning they have experienced, seems to be predicated on the belief that human beings can best be described as mechanistic. They have little free choice and are the product of the conditioning they have experienced. More recent learning theorists (Bandura, for example) have attempted to bridge the gap by introducing elements of individual choice into the conditioning paradigm.

The Bible seems to be full of illustrations of the behavioral approach (Deut 6 & 7; Ex 20:5; Gal 6:7), just as it is also full of free will and choice (Josh 24:15; John 7:17). Could it be that the human beings God created are both subject to being conditioned and able to exercise free will and choice? If we do not get hung up on the issue that humans are solely mechanistic, in order to accept some behavioral principles, we can accept the whole view. Human beings were created to exercise free will and personal choice (Gen 1:27). That is their primary mode, we might say. But present day human beings are also subject to the laws governing conditioning. We can acknowledge this without believing that they are solely mechanistic in nature.

Is this conditioning effect a product of sin? Was it present before the fall? I do not know. I do know that it is present today and can be of great use in child rearing, changing habit patterns, and many other aspects of life. Behavioral principles are the reason we tell people participating in the Breathe Free program to avoid their favorite chair where they smoked before and to go for a walk after dinner instead of sitting down to relax. It's a principle of classical conditioning.

I also believe very firmly in the exercise of free will and individual choice. Interestingly, sometimes behavioral principles can be used to make choices easier. God is committed to choice and free will. It is His modus operandi. But He also used behavioral principles in His dealing with human beings. Can we be wise and use both to help people choose God's way?

Human Nature as Good or Evil

Simply stated, psychological theories view the moral nature of human beings as inherently good, or evil, or neutral (as in *tabula rasa*). Those who view human beings as evil believe people are born thoroughly depraved, egocentric and inalterably evil. They constantly pursue their own selfish needs. The child has inborn antisocial impulses that adults must teach him to curb. Those holding the "good" view, believe human beings are born noble, naturally attracted to the good, creative, compassionate, and generous. Moral development occurs quite naturally, if the child is shielded from the evil in society and draws from his own inner resources of goodness. Then there are those who use none of these words, but describe human beings as a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, at birth, neither good nor evil. Each person becomes what life writes on his or her slate, or what their environment causes them to become.

Psychological theories also speak of an actional nature. People are active, passive, or interactive in relationship to their world. They perceive the environment as having an effect on

humans and their moral natures. The active theorists believe that people reach out to influence their world, while the passive theorists describe people as being acted on by their world. The interactionists believe that people interact with the world–their world influences them and they in turn influence their world.

The moral and actional natures combine to describe human nature. None of the major theoretical schools of thought agree on both the moral and actional nature of human beings. Psychoanalytic theory (Freud) views human nature as evil and passive, while the behaviorists (Skinner) view it as neutral and passive. Cognitive theorists (Piaget and Kohlberg) view human nature as good and interactive. Social learning theorists (Bandura) believe human nature is neutral and active, while the humanists (Maslow, Rogers) view human nature as good and active.

Again, we do not have an exact match between the Christian (SDA) presuppositions and a particular theory's view of human nature. My graduate students in character development have generally concluded that we believe human nature is some combination of good and evil and it is probably interactive with its environment.

They appear to be in good company. I quote from *Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*,

> "Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do....When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil" (1988, p. 78).

Later in the same book, another comment appears: "In spite of the Fall, there remains a sense of human dignity. Although marred, the divine likeness was not completely obliterated. Though fallen, corrupt, sinful, man is still God's representative on earth" p. 93.

I am especially fond of the clarifying statement about the nature of human beings on page 29

of *Education*:

> "As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul
> receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a
> perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these
> principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree
> of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. There is in his
> nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this
> force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can
> find help in but one power. That power is Christ" (1903).

These statements do not agree with the descriptions of either good or evil moral nature as

described by psychological theory. The perfection, fall, restoration sequence is not present in

psychological theory, nor is the image of God. The humanists and the cognitive theorists seem to

give the most dignity to human beings, while the psychoanalysts believe them to be totally depraved,

with no hint of or desire for goodness. No theory describes restoration in the biblical sense.

This is a crucial area for the interface between the Bible and Psychology. The Christian

psychologist must be very careful here, especially as he or she works with people to effect change in

their lives. What the psychologist believes about the moral and actional nature of human beings vastly

influences the manner in which he or she approaches therapy.

I have heard Seventh-day Adventist counseling and clinical psychologists state their position

thus: "I am a Christian who is a psychologist, not a Christian psychologist." In effect, they are

separating psychology from theology, living their lives on two separate tracks--their professional life

and their religious life. A prospective teacher once told me, in response to my question about his

views on the integration of psychology and religion, "I don't see where they interface. One is

religion, the other is psychology. They don't have anything to do with each other." I respectfully

disagreed. Psychology and religion both describe the moral and actional nature of human beings. If we consider that the nature of human beings is a foundational issue for selecting counseling methods and for child rearing practices, then religion and psychology have a great deal to do with each other.

Parts vs. Whole

Psychological theories tend to fall into either the parts or the whole camp. The parts, or andsummative, approaches try to understand any phenomenon by looking at the sum of its known parts. The parts do not interact or influence each other. They are simply analyzed separately. The whole, or transsummative, approaches believe that the whole is something different from the sum of its parts. The parts interact and influence each other, creating a new whole. The parts have influenced each other to make the whole. Music provides a enlightening example. The "Moonlight Sonata" is much more than the sum of the notes on the pages. The total effect includes the way the notes are influenced by rhythm, harmony, and expression to create a whole musical experience.

A human being, created by God, is much more than the sum of its parts–eyes, ears, cells, heart, mind, etc. The parts create the whole as they influence each other and interact to make the living being, created in the image of God . The parts are understandable only as they contribute to the whole.

Truth is not decided by putting together smaller pieces to make the whole. Truth is more than the smaller pieces–it is the whole. The whole actually gives meaning to its component parts.

Likewise, God's view of human beings includes the totality of their experience (Ps 139; 1 Thess 5:23), all that they are, have been, and can become. An isolated experience does not define the person, in God's eyes. Christ calls us to wholeness and unity in love (1 Cor 1:10; Phil 1:27; 2:2;

Eph 4:1-6, 1 Cor 13). We grow in completeness in our relationship to Christ. God's Word very clearly indicates that we must bring the totality of ourselves into this relationship (Deut 6:5). If we keep parts of ourselves outside of the relationship, we cannot experience the transsummative nature of being one with Christ. We restrict our personhood. The redemptive relationship helps us mature in wholeness (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:12-16).

God is also interested in the small parts of his human subjects. He knows infinite details about each person—when they were conceived (Ps 22:9-11), the hairs on their head (Matt 10:30), their thoughts (Ps 139:2), and their architectural preference for a heavenly home (John 14:2,3)—more than any human can ever know. But the details do not define the person. God's redeeming grace brings about the transformation of the parts into the whole, a creature made in God's image.

Mind vs. Body

This issue is so central to psychology that theorists can be classified according to the emphasis they place on the study of the mind or the study of the body. Is human behavior explained by the mental events inside the person or by the underlying neurophysiological events? Psychology has dealt with this issue in various ways. Materialistic views look at the body and use objective measures. Idealistic views tend to be phenomenal and use subjective methods, such as introspection. Parallelistic views hold that mental and bodily processes occur in parallel fashion, but do not necessarily influence each other, while the interactionist view believes that the body influences the mind, and the mind influences the body.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that each human being is an indivisible union of the body, soul, and spirit, which "function in close cooperation, revealing an intensely sympathetic relationship

between a person's spiritual, mental and physical faculties. Deficiencies in one area will hamper the other two" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...*, 1988, p. 84).

The current emphasis in psychology on the study of the brain and on cognitive psychology may eventually pose a serious threat to the Christian psychologist and the integration process. Cognitive psychology is interdisciplinary, including neuropsychology, computational cognition, neural networks, evolutionary psychology, and contemporary approaches to consciousness. The literature combining these areas suggests that the complexities of the human mind and human experiences can be explained by purely physiological processes, using rational/empirical methods. These views are based on an evolutionary axiom: The purpose of the evolution of human beings is the urge to survive, to reproduce the species. In contrast, the Christian axiom might state that one important reason for the creation of the mind involves our relationship with God, who speaks to us through our minds.

"Cognitive science promises a purely natural explanation for the origin, development, organization and construction of all the complexities of human minds and consciousness, ultimately resting only on physical law" (Brand, 1997, p. 238). This would include conscience and moral decisions. If this becomes reality, then the Christian psychologist must decide between the more complex biblical explanations of the mind or the law of parsimony urged by scientific endeavor.

Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

Some psychologists study people from a subjective viewpoint using cognitive, introspective, experiential, and phenomenological methods. Others use purely objective methods–the study of observable, external behavior. Thought processes are not considered appropriate for study because they cannot be observed externally.

The Holy Scriptures suggest that the internal matters more to God than the external (1 Sam 16:7; Prov. 23:7). Our thoughts and motives are primary, although our actions are not discounted (Mark 12:43,44; Matt 25:31-46). The right actions for the wrong internal reasons become wrong actions, too. The whole picture becomes wrong. Right actions for the right reasons–help the hungry because you are helping Me (Matt 15:1-9; 25:45)–are God's way toward wholeness. The Christian strives to know the mind of God, to think His thoughts and to translate those thoughts into every day actions (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:6-8).

Past vs. Present

How much does past experience account for present behavior? Explaining the meaning of a psychological event can place strong emphasis on what a person has learned and how he or she was conditioned, or on ahistorical insight as an avenue to understanding the event. Present oriented views emphasize freedom of choice in the immediate situation. Past oriented views are mostly concerned with the person's history of reinforcement and learning.

It seems to me that the Bible supports the present oriented view more than the past oriented one (Isa 1:18; Acts 17:30). Grace can wipe out all the evil of the past and give the person a new beginning without the tendencies of the past, although the scars of past experiences may remain. God looks at the person as he is now, not as he was in the past (Acts 3:17-20; Rom 5:9; 1 Cor 12:27). Although God does consider the person's past–where she was born–when deciding what would be best for her future, He also wipes away that past–"neither do I condemn you"–and focuses on the future–"go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Nature vs. Nurture

Contemporary psychology does not ignore the influence of either nature or nurture on the person. The debate consists in the extent to which an individual's behavior is determined by his genetic makeup or his past learning experiences. Are people's lives determined by their genes, or do they have some say about the matter through how they deal with life's experiences?

I believe God's Word stresses the importance of nurture–any tendency to evil can be overcome through the grace of Christ. Our individual genes are not an excuse for wrongdoing. Certainly we are creatures with a genetic makeup, made this way by the Creator. But we are more than pawns of genes–we have choices to make (Josh 24:14,15) and Divine assistance available at any moment to help us live with our genes and our human tendency to sin (Heb 2:17,18; 4:14-16).

Simplicity vs. Complexity

Psychological theories tend to focus on simplicity or complexity--a few general laws which are easy to understand, or many complex explanations for psychological events. The simple explanations focus on sensation, learning, perception and motivation, while the more complex explanations look at psychopathology, affect, and the unconscious.

Again, we might explain God's view as a combination of simplicity and complexity. Certainly, salvation has a simple directive–believe and be saved (John 3:16; Mark 16:16; Acts 16:31). But explaining how the person came to believe or disbelieve is certainly complex. Overall, the Bible probably leans toward the complexity of human beings, considering their genetic makeup, life experiences, cultural background, sin tendency, and the influence of the Holy Spirit and God's grace on their ultimate choices.

Our examination of the Christian presuppositions and the fundamental areas of psychology has highlighted some of the issues the Christian psychologist must face as she tries to integrate her professional training with God's Word. How does this work out when evaluating learning theories, therapy models, parenting styles, personality theories, or moral development stages? Theory is fine, but what happens in a real-life helping situation? How do the Bible and psychology combine in the work of the Christian psychologist?

The Bible and Psychological Theory and Practice

In this section I will look at a few selected areas of psychological theory and practice and briefly discuss how the Bible might inform each area. Within the limits of this essay, it is not possible to examine any area in depth. Rather, I will briefly summarize some important issues and make suggestions for further thought and exploration.

Counseling and Clinical Psychology

As mentioned earlier, counseling and clinical psychologists have written the most about the integration of faith and practice, so it seems appropriate to begin with this area. I would like to suggest that the Christian psychologist must be aware of at least four different questions impinging on the practice of psychotherapy: (1) How might the Christian presuppositions inform the choice of a therapeutic model? (2) What might a comprehensive Christian counseling approach include? (3) How is it possible to select therapeutic modalities responsibly and be true to the Christian presuppositions? (4) What is the role of the Christian psychotherapist in a spiritual venue? I am greatly indebted to Jones and Butman (1991) for their insights on all four of these questions.

The first responsibility of the Christian psychologist is to acquire a Biblical view of the nature of human beings and how God intervenes to help people in trouble. Having done this, the Christian

psychologist must next examine each proposed psychotherapy model, comparing its philosophical assumptions and its models of personality, health, abnormality, and psychotherapy with the Christian presuppositions and God's total view of human beings.

This step requires a great deal of clear thinking and evaluating of each aspect of a therapy model. Ideally, this evaluative process would occur at the graduate school level, but most Christian psychologists are not trained in programs with a Christian world view. Those who are have a distinct advantage in this process, although some Christian schools are more intentional than others about helping their students work through this evaluative process. Most psychologists come to grips with their psychotherapy model after they have confronted the realities of practice. Their previous experience of evaluating models could be very useful at this point.

Jones and Butman (1991) have done just such an appraisal of psychotherapy models. Each major model is carefully and thoroughly compared with the Christian presuppositions. At the end, they conclude that "none of the theories can be rejected out of hand, but none can be wholeheartedly endorsed by the Christian counselor" p. 380. Each theory is lacking when compared with God's view of personhood, but some come closer than others to the Biblical viewpoint. One of my graduate students (Leader, 1994) summarized Jones' and Butman's 417 pages of appraisal in a succinct and informative 14-page chart which is very useful for a quick look at the most important issues.

While God's Word has a great deal to say about personhood, it does not propose a specific psychology, as we speak of it today. We need the specificity of a comprehensive model of psychology in order to best help hurting people. What would such a model include, if there were one? Jones and Butman (1991, p. 397-8) suggest the following:

A deep appreciation of the value of being human and of individual human beings;

A vision of our need for a love relationship with our Creator, attainable only through the forgiveness offered through the death of Jesus Christ;

An understanding of the essential place of the work of the Holy Spirit in ultimate healing;

An understanding of our fundamentally relational natures and need for love and acceptance, including the importance of family and community for us all;

A balance of emphasis on thinking, feeling and behaving, as each has a clear and important place in human life;

An appreciation of the power of sin and evil;

An understanding of the influence of a spiritual world on day-to-day human functioning;

A respect for human freedom and agency, yet one which recognizes limitations to human choice as well;

An appreciation of habit, skill and learning;

A balanced attention to within-the-person and external-to-the person influences on human action;

A vision of life that suggests there can be meaning to suffering and that we are called to pursue something more than our personal gratification;

A respect for individuals that is grounded in God's love for each person, yet without a worshiping of the individual disconnected from others;

A commitment to holism in understanding the person, but with a sufficiently developed set of specific postulates about molecular processes in personality to guide actual intervention and the change processes;

A respect for our intrinsically moral natures and the value of obedience to appropriate authority, pre-eminently to God and his Word;

A respect for physical and nonphysical aspects of existence;

An appreciation but not a deification of rationality, balanced with an equally appreciative understanding of our 'transrational' aesthetic, symbolic and story-telling natures;

A recognition of our need to worship and be committed to the one who transcends all that we can know or imagine; and

A love for Christ's body, the church, and a commitment to furthering the church's work in this world.

Such a model does not exist, may never exist. So the Christian psychologist is faced with the task of evaluating the existing models and constructing a working model which will include the most important imperatives of Biblical thoughts about personhood and the change process.

Psychological eclecticism holds promise for this endeavor. *Eclecticism* was defined in 1958 by English and English as the "selection and orderly combination of compatible features from diverse sources, sometimes from otherwise incompatible theories and systems; the effort to find elements in all doctrines and theories and to combine them into a harmonious whole" (p. 168).

Until the eighties, psychologists viewed eclecticism negatively--a sloppy and undisciplined approach to therapy. However, research has not affirmed that any one theoretical approach is best for helping people change in all situations. Some approaches have been affirmed for specific disorders, but not for all. This has been humbling to proponents of particular theories. In the process of all this emphasis on the research outcomes of different therapies, eclecticism has become much more respectable. By the late eighties one-third to one-half of all practitioners identified themselves as eclectic in orientation (Norcross & Prochaska, 1988). The Christian psychologist can now pick and choose with respectability.

Pragmatic eclecticism proposes to pick and choose by what is "best for the client" with no regard for theoretical orientation. This is the approach most often endorsed by practitioners. However, it has some significant problems. It provides very little direction for the therapist. Well designed research studies which confirm the "best approach" are still relatively scarce, while very few clients present with one discrete problem, as in research studies. Most practitioners cannot be competent in all theoretical approaches.

Metatheoretical or transtheoretical eclecticism seems to be the approach most often endorsed by researchers and authors. This approach tries to "get behind the theory" and looks for theories or practices common to many approaches, such as common stages in therapy or the

verbal and nonverbal counseling responses which all approaches use. Most of this work has focused on the relationship between therapist and client as an explanation for the effectiveness of various theoretical approaches. Certainly this rings true for the Christian therapist. We believe in the centrality of relationships, with God and with people.

Theoretical integrationism (or pluralism) begins with one theory as a foundation and reaches out to one or two other models which can be assimilated into the major model to help enrich and expand its approach. The best known "success story" of this approach is cognitive-behavioral therapy, a well accepted and frequently used model. A further "marriage" of cognitive-behavioral and Adlerian therapy has been suggested and there might be merits to this combination for the Christian psychologist. But it would not be complete and probably would need enhancing from aspects of several other models.

The final step in this process involves examining the role of the psychologist as a committed Seventh-day Adventist. How might this impact on the vocation of psychology?

I would like to suggest that psychologists have an opportunity to help people deal with inner issues of great concern and that the line between religion/spirituality and personality/emotions is often rather blurry. In many ways the psychologist deals with sensitive issues similar to those addressed in pastoral counseling, but with the added complication that some clients have no overt interest in religion. The practicing psychologist must function as a competent professional who does not "force" his viewpoint on clients, but rather is sensitive to the client's needs, while working within the framework of his or her Christian presuppositions. This is a delicate balance, but an achievable one, as demonstrated daily by many Seventh-day

Adventist practitioners who complement the work of the church, rather than offering an alternative.

The psychologist who takes her Christian vocation seriously will want to examine how she models God to her clients, for she is in a god-like position to many of them. This is a serious responsibility which cannot be ignored. Careful study of God's characteristics and how these play out in His relationships with human beings will bring to focus many aspects of God's character which sound like "good therapy": gentle, patient, compassionate, healer, nurturer, reconciler, and servant, for starters. Jones and Butman (1991) provide an excellent discussion of these issues.

How does a Seventh-day Adventist psychologist's commitment to take the gospel to all the world impact on his practice of psychology? The therapy hour is obviously not an evangelistic campaign, but it is a sharing of the god-like characteristics of the committed Christian with a hurting person. No ethical psychologist would impose his religion on a vulnerable client. His respect for the client directs him to be open about the therapeutic methods he proposes to use and to always offer the client informed choices.

The therapist-client relationship is a delicate balance. The responsibility for this relationship rests squarely with the professional. He will evaluate every nuance of each therapeutic encounter and will always be tuned in to discover a seeker for truth. If he senses that his client wants to learn more about the Seventh-day Adventist church--as in Bible studies--and the therapeutic relationship still needs to continue, he could refer his client to a minister or active layperson for actual Bible studies. This does not rule out using the Bible and prayer as appropriate during therapy, nor does it rule out leading a person to Christ for forgiveness and salvation. But an extended series of Bible studies might bring about conflicts between the

therapeutic relationship and the proselyter role. If therapy has concluded, the psychologist might feel free to give Bible studies himself.

Every committed Christian yearns to bring the Good News to people who do not know Jesus Christ. The psychologist has many opportunities to find people with such needs. She can bring the Good News to many people, if handled discretely and within the context of responsible therapy (Wilson, 1984).

Obviously, the questions I have attempted to address in a limited way in this section provide a great challenge for the student of psychology and the Seventh-day Adventist practitioner. Much serious thinking needs to be done. Even though there may never be a "Seventh-day Adventist therapy"–and it might not even be desirable to have one–colleges and universities where psychology is taught have a responsibility to help their students gain a thorough understanding of the Biblical foundations for thinking about and helping persons. Furthermore, their students need to be skilled in evaluating and integrating therapy models. As these students move on to graduate school in secular universities, this knowledge will serve them well.

Graduate programs in psychology sponsored by SDA universities should provide their students with many opportunities to evaluate and integrate therapy models, basing their work on the Biblical model for understanding human beings within the context of their fallen natures and the restoration process. Graduate students need to be challenged to think through their approaches to therapy and how they are going to deal with the issues brought up by their Christian beliefs which are not addressed by any of the therapy models. This challenge will not

occur if professors have not addressed these issues themselves and are not committed to this process.

Which brings me to the careful selection and mentoring of professors of psychology who teach in the Adventist system. Most will have received their training from secular institutions and, in my hiring experience, have not given much thought to these issues. They will need much mentoring from senior faculty who are known for their solid thinking along Biblical lines. In my experience young professors who have trained in institutions with a Christian world view are much more open to this process.

Therapy is not the only area where an integration of psychology and the Bible can successfully occur. Moral character development, another area of interest, is actually closely related to therapy as many clients bring moral character issues with them.

<u>Moral Character Development</u>

Moral character development is an area where the interface between the Bible and psychology holds the potential to be very strong, a subject with extensive readings from both fields. Moral development was one of the earliest areas of interest in psychology and it has produced an extensive body of literature which, in many ways, complements the Biblical viewpoint. I have taught a graduate course on the Psychology of Character Development for over twenty years. My frustration with the purely secular viewpoint led me to develop a 270-page syllabus which attempts to integrate the Biblical viewpoint, Ellen White's writings on the subject, and the secular and religious literature and research. Over the years my students have produced a number of excellent models of moral character development which integrate the religious and the secular viewpoints.

While character development was an early subject of inquiry in psychology, the focus narrowed to the area of moral reasoning as Kohlberg began to dominate the field. By the seventies, psychology had thrown out character development in favor of moral development. In fact, many prominent individuals in the field were convinced that character *per se* did not exist. Character implied a certain consistency of behavior coming from inner motivation which researchers concluded did not exist. So character was abandoned in favor of moral reasoning.

The general public never abandoned the idea of character and frequently talked about it with respect to politicians, criminals, their own children, and themselves. But psychology ignored it for at least two decades, proclaiming it did not exist. A few lone voices in psychology, such as Kevin Ryan of Boston University and Thomas Lickona of SUNY, persisted in talking about character, but they were often ignored and sometimes even ridiculed.

The social scene of the nineties in America jolted psychologists out of their ivory tower, as the public clamored to understand why flawed character was so frequently on display. More sophisticated research techniques led some moral development specialists to reconsider the earlier data on the basis of which "character" was thrown out. And so today character is again a suitable subject to discuss in psychology, although not with complete acceptance . Decades of research activity were lost because the focus was on moral reasoning alone, which is actually quite different from the totality of character.

During those decades Kohlberg's theory of how moral reasoning develops generated an extraordinary amount of research and dominated the field. His focus was primarily on the development of moral reasoning during childhood and adolescence. The philosophical underpinnings of his theory have been widely criticized in both the secular and religious realms.

31

If we can get past his philosophy and his definition of justice as the overarching moral principle, and concentrate on the observed stages of development in thinking about moral issues, we can find much useful material for understanding the development of moral thinking during childhood and adolescence and for understanding where adults are coming from in their thinking about moral matters. However, I have observed that many Christian writers swallow the whole package, which I believe is incompatible with the Christian presuppositions because of its philosophical base.

The moral development research literature provides details about how children and adolescents develop morally which are not present in the Biblical account. Yet, an examination of God's dealings with people throughout the history of the Bible brings to light many examples of the stages of moral development proposed by Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1980) and others.

Throughout the history of God's dealings with human beings, love has always been His ideal (Deut 6:5). He wanted His laws to be internalized through His Spirit and to result in a relationship of love between Himself and human beings and between human beings. When people were not ready to understand this level-three way of thinking, God attempted to reach them in ways they could understand: consequences--miracles of deliverance and provision--and punishment for wrong actions, suggestive of the first level of moral development (Exodus 7-11, 14, 17, etc.). He provided a law, summarized in the Ten Commandments, and spelled out in a comprehensive system of rules which brought order to the nation of Israel, suggestive of the second level of moral development (Exodus 20). However, throughout the Biblical record, the undergirding principle of God's kingdom has always been love (Matthew 5:3-12; John 14:15; 15:7-13; Matt 22:36-40; Clouse, 1990).

Before Kohlberg's work on moral reasoning, his professors, Peck and Havighurst (1961) of the University of Chicago, developed stages of character development which encompass thinking, feeling, and acting and which I believe are quite compatible with the Christian presuppositions. Although these stages are not well known today, they still provide a basis for understanding character development which I think can be very helpful for the Christian. I suspect they will come back into focus again as the whole field is reexamining the idea of character development, instead of just moral thinking. I have often wished we could pursue a longitudinal study, such as theirs, on character development among children and youth in the Adventist church. I think it could be very enlightening.

The psychological literature acknowledges that moral character development includes moral thinking, moral feelings, and moral actions. Moral thinking has been the focus of the bulk of the research, although interest in the other areas is blossoming as the moral actions of children and teenagers stagger our sense of right and wrong. Teachers and parents are interested in guidelines for teaching values and helping children develop strong moral characters, including feelings and actions—not just dialogue about moral issues, as in the moral thinking model.

Lickona has been very active in helping both parents (1985) and teachers (1992) understand character development and how to influence it positively during childhood and adolescence. His model is a very practical one which includes moral thinking, moral emotions, and moral actions. While his writing has been for the general public and for the public schools, his ideas are very compatible with the Christian presuppositions. He himself is a very religious person and it shows in how he approaches the subject of character development, even though religion is not mentioned.

In Lickona's model, Moral Knowing includes moral awareness, knowing moral values, perspective-taking, moral reasoning, decision-making, and self-knowledge. Moral Feeling includes conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving the good, self-control, and humility. Moral Action includes competence, will, and habit. The different components of Moral Knowing and Moral Feeling are complementary.

Due to limited space, I will offer only one example of the use of both Biblical and psychological ideas on character, specifically character change during adulthood. This is a topic on which the research literature is very sparse and where the Bible offers the best explanation and solution. God's Plan vs. Satan's Counterfeits (see Table 2) is based on a spiritual approach to character change. Potential psychological and spiritual results are suggested. Many more could probably be included and other Bible verses could be used. This table is only intended as a starting point for discussion.

Conscience development is another area where the interface between the Biblical and the psychological viewpoints can be very helpful to parents and teachers who are concerned with the young. Parent-child relationships and disciplinary practices have been studied extensively by psychologists. Their insights offer much guidance to parents as they help their children grow in character. I could continue with a similar comment about almost all the topics we consider in a course on character development, except one.

Table 2

CHARACTER CHANGE FROM A SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT

GOD'S PLAN	RESULTS	SATAN'S COUNTERFEITS	RESULTS
Guilt (Holy Spirit) Acts 2:37-38	Feel guilty Sense of sorrow Motivated toward change	Eliminate guilt: No values, "dead conscience", reject voice of Holy Spirit, neurotic guilt, salvation by works, situational values	No basis for values Neurotic guilt takes over Conscience weakens Work harder to please God
Repentance Joel 2:13	Sorrow for wrong Recognize problem in life Desire for change	Eliminate repentance: No repentance, pride of opinion, false repentance, denial of wrong, self-justification and rationalization, rebellion, give up, wrong motives	Continue in wrong doing Solidify attitude of "I am right" No need for change
Confession 1 John 1:9	Acknowledgement of guilt Sense of freedom	Eliminate confession: No confession; superficial, forced, or false confession	No sense of freedom Guilt continues
Forgiveness Jeremiah 33:8 Ps. 103:3	Eliminate guilt Opportunity to start over again Joyousness & freedom from past Self-respect	Eliminate or confuse forgiveness: Can't forgive self, can't forgive others, can't accept God's or others' forgiveness.	Depreciate self, damaged people relationshipsneurot ic guilt
Restitution Luke 19:8	Move forward Improved relation- ships with others Sense of freedom Self-respect	Eliminate restitution: Too difficult–not necessary, partial restitution only	Damaged people relationships Avoid others Selfishness
Forsaking sin John 8:10,11 Restoration Philippians 2:13 Luke 15:11-22 Future potential 1 John 3:9	Growth in character Values stronger Conscience stronger Optimism for future Sense of success Acceptance of God's view of future potential Eternity with God Become more like God	Eliminate forsaking sin: No attempt to forsake evil, weak attempt with own will power, failure, lack of trust in God.	Discouragement Sense of failure Dark future Self-blame Depression No growth in character Regression in character

The Seventh-day Adventist perspective on the relationship between health and character is unique. The psychological literature does not even hint at this relationship. As I have come to understand it, the core of this relationship lies in the effect of certain unhealthy practices on the functioning of the mind. God speaks to human beings through their minds. To the extent that the mind has been damaged, to that extent communication with God is lessened. In a spiritually based model for character development, communication with God is essential for growth.

Clouse (1985) has written a significant, very understandable, book integrating psychological and religious thought on moral development. She explores the main theoretical approaches to moral development with their implications for schools, families, and churches. Her integration work is based on a "godlikeness model" strongly reminiscent of a statement from the book *Education:* "Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness–godlikeness–is the goal to be reached" (White, 1903, p. 18). Unfortunately, in a significantly revised edition under a different title (1993) the "godlikeness model" is not so clearly stated.

Psychological theory related to moral development is very complex and detailed, and sometimes difficult to understand. *Moral Psychology* (Lapsley, 1996), one of the required readings for doctoral psychology majors in the character development class, has proven to be a challenge for them. I think part of its complexity is related to the difficulty of controlling variables in such a complex issue as character development. Another part is related to the total lack of religious explanations for moral development and the attempt to explain it from a purely secular viewpoint, sans Holy Spirit, God, and the change of direction offered by salvation through

Jesus Christ. I believe the integration of psychology and the Biblical viewpoint is imperative, and a natural, for this subject.

Human Development

Moral development is a specialized area of the broader subject of human development, which involves the study of human beings from conception to death, how they grow and develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. This very well recognized and researched area of psychology provides many opportunities for the integration of psychological insights with God's viewpoint. For this discussion, I have selected two areas to examine briefly: Parenting Styles and Religious Development.

Most standard textbooks for human development courses do not discuss religious development, although it should certainly be discussed in a course with a Christian world view. *Christian Perspectives on Human Development* (Aden, Benner & Ellens, 1992) attempts to fill that void by examining various aspects of human development from a Christian perspective.

Parenting Styles

Parent-child relationships is one of the best researched topics in human development. The work which led to what we today call Parenting Styles, received its greatest impetus from the seminal work of Baumrind (1967, 1971). She identified three main parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Research by others strongly confirmed her work. In a 1985 review of more than five hundred studies on the topic, Maccoby and Martin confirmed these three parenting styles, calling them authoritarian-autocratic, authoritative-reciprocal, and indulgent-permissive. They added a fourth style of interaction, the indifferent-uninvolved parent.

The effects of these parenting styles on the outcomes of child rearing are very well established. The authoritative-reciprocal parenting style generally leads to the most positive outcomes: Acceptance of parental values and religion, strong moral character, strong self-concept, creativity, leadership ability, and high academic achievement. The authoritarian-autocratic and the indifferent-uninvolved styles generally lead to the most negative outcomes: Rejection of parental values and religion, weak moral character, low self-concept, low creativity, lack of leadership ability, poor academic achievement, and more likelihood of involvement with drugs and the counter culture in society. The outcome of the indulgent-permissive style generally is somewhere between the negative and the positive, with some positive outcomes and some negative ones.

Researchers on the psychology of religion generally accept that our adult mental and emotional images of God correlate quite strongly with our feelings about our parents and their parenting behaviors (Hyde, 1990). If this is the case, parenting style becomes a strong molder of our ideas and images of God. Naturally, adults receive other input into their images of God from their religion, but the images associated with parental behaviors are long lasting and sometimes difficult to lay aside.

Since the Bible speaks of God as a Father in His relationship with human beings, it seems quite natural that our feelings toward earthly parents might be transferred easily to our heavenly Father. Many individuals who have been involved in abusive relationships with their earthly fathers have great difficulty relating to a God who is called Father. To them, God is forever the Judge who is ready to zap them for any little infraction of His Law. Grace does not exist for them. Their image of God must be entirely reconstructed, focusing on Biblical descriptions of

a loving, caring, and merciful God who yearns to protect and save humans. They need to meet the Real God.

When teaching the parenting styles I believe it is important to also encourage discussion about God and His characteristics. In fact, I believe that one of the best ways to understand the authoritative-reciprocal parenting style is to study how God deals with His human children. The similarities between God as a heavenly Parent and the authoritative parenting style are striking. Table 3 briefly summarizes some of these ideas.

Interestingly, Ellen White also describes the authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative parenting styles, although she uses different names for them. Her descriptions are very similar to the ones used in developmental psychology today and the outcomes she describes are exactly what the research of this century has shown.

Spiritual/Religious Development

Religious development provides another very fruitful area for integration of psychology with the Bible. An entire branch of psychology–the psychology of religion–is devoted to research on religious development and the psychological dynamics of various religious experiences. Hyde (1990) has provided a masterful summary of the research literature on the religious development of children and adolescents. In this brief discussion I can only introduce the topic and comment briefly about how a knowledge of human development may contribute to an understanding of the religious development of children and adolescents (Habenicht, 1998).

TABLE 3

GOD THE AUTHORITATIVE HEAVENLY PARENT

Characteristics of the Authoritative Parent	Characteristics of God the Heavenly Parent	Sample Biblical Descriptions of God
Communicates easily & often. Willing to listen to child's viewpoint & dialog.	God communicates with & listens to people.	Jer. 29:12 Ps. 91:15
Respects & encourages child's individuality	God respects persons, knows all about each one. He has made each one different.	Ps. 139
Encourages child to make decisions.	God is committed to individual decisions about right & wrong. He will not force the person's will.	Gen. 1-3 Prov. 1:28-33
Provides guidance; encourages & models high standards for behavior.	God's standards are unchanging, eternal descriptions of His character.	Ten Commandments 1 John 2:15-17
Disciplines with love, firmness, & personal self-control.	God is loving & merciful, but He also upholds His standards firmly.	Heb. 12:5-11 Ps. 103:3-5 Ps. 89:14
Teaches child to think & reason.	God appeals to reason, wants thinking followers.	Ps. 16:7-8 Prov. 3:5-8
Gives understandable reasons for requirements.	God explains reasons for His requirements in His Word.	Ps. 32:8 Ps 19:7-11, James 1:5
Supports child through difficulties.	God always supports through difficulties, gives strength & courage, saves.	Elijah, Job, Jesus as Saviour John 3:16, Ps. 94:18-19, Ps. 84:11
Forgives and forgets past & encourages for the future.	God forgives & buries all our sins. He focuses on our future potential.	Isa 1:18, 1 John 1:9, Jer. 29:11
Clearly shows love & support at all times.	God is love.	1 John 4:9,10,16 John 17:15; 16:7-14, 23,33; 15:9; 3:16; Ps. 23

Most of the research on religious development suggests that cognitive development plays a significant role in understanding religious doctrine, and the content of the religious instruction provided to the child. The research of my students and myself on how the concept of salvation develops confirms this relationship (Habenicht, 1996).

Aden (1992) proposed a relationship between Erikson's stages of personality development and religious development. He correlates each of Erikson's stages with a facet of religious development and suggests that mastery of a stage of personality development opens the possibility of a stronger religious development. Erikson's work has been a popular theory for integration work.

The child's stage of moral development influences motivation for and understanding of right and wrong behavior as taught in the home, church, and school. Today there seems to be a general consensus among moral development specialists that a child becomes a moral person around the age of three years. Conscience development has begun and the child recognizes the difference between right and wrong.

Many other areas of development shed light on religious development, including emotions, childhood friendships, parent-child relationships, personality development, intelligence, fears, and social development. The challenge is to bring all of this together to inform religious development (Reich, 1993). While developmental psychology provides many insights into religious development, we must not be lured into thinking that developmental psychology has all the answers to understanding the religious development of children and youth.

I believe religious faith is always a gift from God (Heb. 11:1-3), which He gives in accordance with our ability to understand and use (1 Cor 13:11). The religious faith of childhood

is a valid faith, however different it may be from the faith of an adult. Jesus himself confirmed the faith of childhood (Matt. 18:1-14). In guiding religious development during childhood and adolescence we are completely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit to draw children and youth toward the Saviour (John 16:6). We must never forget this dependence. It is the essential key to religious development.

I believe the areas of psychology introduced in this section--counseling, moral character development, and developmental psychology--are some of the most important for the integration dialog because they involve people and their ability to grow and change. God's Word has a great deal to say about growth and change in human beings.

Biblical Examples of Psychological Principles

Analyzing Biblical passages, stories, or persons from a psychological viewpoint has been a very popular approach to the integration of psychology and the Bible. Examples abound: *The Psychology of Jesus* (McKenna, 1977); the counseling techniques Jesus used with the woman at the well; the relationship between Erikson's life cycle theory and the beatitudes (Capps, 1985); and psychodrama of Biblical stories (Pitzele, 1991). Another related approach, also popular, is to search the Bible for examples of psychological principles.

I am indebted to Marion Merchant, long-time professor of psychology at Andrews University and instructor for the course Religion and Psychology, for the psychological analysis of the story of the Good Samaritan and some examples of the application of psychological principles to the Christian life which follow.

The Good Samaritan Story

The occasion for Jesus' telling of the story is the lawyer's question of how eternal life is gained. In Jesus' answer, centering in the story, He told of a seriously-wounded victim of a crime and the responses to him of three men coming upon the scene. From a psychological perspective, basic to their responses was an underlying attitude–a mixture of belief and emotion–that predisposed them to respond to the victim, in a positive way by the Samaritan and in a negative way by the priest and Levite. Attitudes reflect past experiences and, depending on their strength, predict or direct future actions. The actions of the three men thus infer something of past experiences and their differing attitudes.

Perception, a person's view or grasp of a situation, is directly associated with attitudes. Perception is strongly influenced by a number of factors, including emotions, values, that which is the focus of attention (both selective attention and selective inattention), and perceptual defense (resistance to recognizing threatening or disturbing stimuli). The Samaritan's perception of the situation obviously differed from that of the priest and the Levite. His attention was immediately, we can suppose, focused on the victim and his need, whereas the priest and the Levite's selective inattention and/or perceptual defense ignored the victim beyond initial notice (although some versions note that the Levite took a closer look).

Emotional appraisal (an evaluation of the personal meaning of a situation in terms of good or bad, etc.) follows perception and in turn (if sufficiently strong) is followed by physiological arousal, adaptive behavior, and then emotional expression. The evidence of emotional appraisal as the personal meaning of the situation to the Samaritan and his adaptive behavior is reflected in compassion on seeing the injured man, going to him, and then giving abundant and generous

aid. In contrast is the apparent appraisal's personal meaning to the priest and the Levite in their passing by "on the other side", in as much avoidance of the situation as possible.

Whether or not there was any thought of their aiding the victim, we cannot, of course, know. There was in the scriptures known to them injunctions that would have supported their doing so. Had there been any notion of doing this, however, it would have conflicted with the repugnance they apparently felt and they would, momentarily at least, have faced a motivational approach-avoidance situation. Then, having chosen the avoidance option contrary to conscience, experienced some cognitive dissonance caused by the discrepancy. The story, however, does not indicate this.

The Samaritan's compassion indicates empathy. Helping is more likely when one takes the perspective of a person in trouble and feels empathy for his plight. The altruistic motive is based on sympathy and compassion, clearly lacking in the religious priest and Levite. The Samaritan's going all out in aiding the victim is surprising. While seeing someone in trouble may motivate one to help, it is usually only if the costs are not excessive in terms of effort, risk, or embarrassment, for example. Another surprising fact, psychologically, is not only that the Samaritan helped the Jew, but the degree of his self-giving, for help is given most likely when the person in need is similar to oneself and there is a feeling of connection. There was little or no sense of connection between Samaritans and Jews, a fact obviously true for the priest and Levite, but not for the Samaritan, at least not as a deterrent to helping.

Psychology's information can illuminate some of the facts of the story, but the Bible offers the larger meanings. Jesus elicited one of these from the lawyer by asking him to identify "neighbor," thus defining the term in the law, obedience to which was essential to eternal life.

The definition of love commanded by the law also appeared in the story: full and unconditional self-giving in serving the needs of others, exemplified by the Samaritan and even more by Jesus whose statement about Himself, "I am among you as one who serves." The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 also expands the meaning of the behavior of both the Samaritan and the priest: "You have (or have not) done it unto me."

Learning is made richer and more appealing when it has greater meaning. Research reveals two types of meaning: surface and deeply-felt. Obviously, the latter is the more significant. At least three factors contribute to deeply-felt meaning, any one of which must be present: relevance, emotion, and context. The story of the good Samaritan was relevant to the lawyer's question, it evoked emotions, and it included a background of familiar information. Not only was its meaning more likely deeply-felt by the lawyer and all those listening, but it continues to have that level of meaning for us. Jesus' method of teaching was to elicit deeply-felt meaning.

Psychological Principles and the Christian Life

There are a number of psychology-related facts which are pertinent to the everyday life of a Christian. Some relate to the experience of temptation and help to explain Adam and Eve's succumbing to it and Jesus' success in meeting it. Eve and Adam came to focus only on the perceived gain and in so doing there was no awareness of what would have been strong deterrents; thus, temptation had full power. In contrast, Jesus doesn't appear to have given even a lingering thought to "gain", but immediately focused on the strongest of deterrents, scripture. Such is the power of focus and selective attention and inattention. The difference in the outcome of a temptation experience is determined by that to which selective attention is directed and what is ignored by selective inattention. . Recent research shows the immense power of our

ever-present emotions, which exert considerably more influence on our thought and action than we realize. Two of the strongest emotions are fear (any perceived threat to self) and pleasure. Incoming information relating to either of these "take the brain's superhighways" and, depending on their strength, get priority before considered thinking and thus may precipitate thoughtless and damaging action. This is at least part of the power of some forms of temptation. Knowing this should make us more careful in the kinds of situations we allow ourselves to be in. If the situation cannot be avoided, we should be on guard lest either one of these emotions overpower our conscience and reason.

Our thoughts also have a powerful effect on our lives. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" says the Good Book (Prov 23:7). "What is in our minds shapes our lives" goes an ad for a Christian bookstore. Not only do our thoughts influence our behavior, but they affect us physically. Every thought exerts a significant influence on every cell in our bodies, states psychiatrist Daniel G. Amen in his book, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*. He also states, in effect, that it cannot be overemphasized how contagious our thoughts are and how much hidden influence they exert on others. Our minds and thoughts directly affect the deep limbic systems, our own and those of others around us. Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:8 strikes to the point: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." From what impact of negative and depressing thoughts and emotions these positive thoughts would protect us, as well as the others in our lives, we do not know.

As noted in the above illustrations, God's Word provides ample proof of His ability as a "psychologist". He originated the laws of psychology. As we discover these laws, and live by them, we become whole.

Psychology and Personal Faith

Finally, the study of psychology has enriched my personal faith in many ways, too numerous to discuss in depth, so I will only hint at what has inspired me. My faith has been strengthened by...

The ability of human beings to create "in the image of God".

The millions of babies born perfectly normal.

A newborn baby's knowledge and awareness.

A tiny baby doing her best to "hook" an adult into looking her way.

The coordination of billions of brain cells.

The joy of the renewal of a sick mind, when at first there appeared to be no hope.

The resilience of children in "impossible" circumstances.

God's willingness to give human beings complete choice over their fate and His willingness to support them through their choices.

A three-year-old's prayer.

A twelve-year-old's decision to show his faith publicly.

Jesus' teaching methods and counseling techniques.

God's psychology, especially in the Psalms.

The beginnings of conscience development.

Conscience renewal at conversion.

The journey from twelve to twenty.

The research on parenting styles.

Forgiveness...and moving on again.

The capacities of the human brain.

The list could go on and on, as I marvel at the Creator's designs. During the first three years children learn more than in all the rest of their lives. They bond with their caregiver and learn to express their needs. They learn to walk, talk, and play. They learn to love, trust, and obey their caregiver, the foundation for all later religious life. They become "little people" who can relate to other children, as well as to adults. They become moral creatures with a beginning conscience and the ability to learn right from wrong. I marvel at how the Creator has tied the mother's and father's love with the development of conscience.

Even though the mind is still very mysterious, what scientists know points to creatures created in the image of God. The human mind clearly differentiates people from animals. The mind enables humans to communicate with God. New discoveries about the functioning of the brain only add evidence of a Creator's design. The capabilities of the human brain are awe inspiring. Even though computers simulate the human mind, it is humbling to remember that it takes a human mind—or many minds—to create a computer model of the brain.

I have been privileged to share some of life's most intimate moments—both joyful and sad—with adults and children. I have also been given a glimpse of the Creator's power to restore, perhaps a peek at the joy of heaven when restoration will be complete. The adult or child who struggles to overcome his past, who chooses a new way to live, and strikes out on an unknown pathway toward freedom provides a living demonstration of God's incomparable recreating grace.

There is no joy quite equal to being a partner in that recreating process. I can never doubt what Jesus can do for sinful human beings. I have seen Him in action.

REFERENCES AND SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aden, L., Benner, D. G., & Ellens, J. H. (1992). *Christian perspectives on human development*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. [A book of readings to accompany courses on human development.)

Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographs, 75,* 43-88.

Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology Monograph, 4,* 1-103.

Blamires, H. (1963). *The Christian mind: How should a Christian think?* Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books.

Brand, J. L. (1997). Challenges for a Christian psychology from cognitive science. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 16,* 233-246.

Bufford, R. K. (1977). God and behavior mod: Some thoughts concerning the relationships between biblical principles and behavior modification. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 5,* 13-22.

Capps, Donald E. (1985). The beatitudes and Erikson's life cycle theory. *Pastoral Psychology, 33,* 226-244.

Clouse, Bonnidell. (1985). *Moral development: Perspectives in psychology and Christian belief.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. [A basic text on moral development.]

Clouse, Bonnidell. (1990). Jesus' law of love and Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 9,* 5-15.

Clouse, Bonnidell. (1993) *Teaching for moral growth: A guide for the Christian community teachers, parents, and pastors.* Wheaton, IL: BridgePoint Books. [A moral development guide for Christian workers which is also useful as an introductory text on moral development.]

Eck, B. E. (1996). Integrating the integrators: An organizing framework for a multifaceted process of integration. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity, 15,* 101-115.

English, H., and English, A. (1958). *A comprehensive dictionary of psychological and psychoanalytic terms.* New York: Longmans, Green.

Faw, H. W. (1995). *Psychology in Christian perspective: An analysis of key issues.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. [A discussion of key issues in psychology from a Christian perspective which might be useful as a supplementary text for basic psychology courses.]

Habenicht, Donna J. (1996). Have they gotten the message? How children view salvation. *The Journal of Adventist Education, 58,* 4-8.

Habenicht, Donna J. (1998, March). *Religious development of children and adolescents: An integrative view.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, Chattanooga, TN.

Hyde, K. E. (1990). *Religion in childhood and adolescence: A comprehensive review of the research.* Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press. [The definitive summary of the research literature on the religious development of children and adolescents.]

Jones, S. L., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psycho-therapies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [An excellent Christian appraisal of counseling theories which could be useful for advanced counseling/therapy classes.]

Lapsley, Daniel K. (1996). *Moral Psychology*. (Developmental Psychology Series, W. E. Jeffrey, Ed.) Boulder,CO: Westview Press, HarperCollins Pub. [A comprehensive, research oriented, moral development text from a mainstream psychological perspective.]

Leader, Ermine. (1994). A Christian's summary and critique of *Modern Psychotherapies*. Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology, Andrews University, unpublished material. [Available from the author of this paper.]

Kohlberg, Lawrence. (1980). Stages of moral development as a basis for moral education. In Brenda Munsey (Ed.), *Moral development, moral education, and Kohlberg: Basic issues in philosophy, psychology, religion, and education* (pp. 15-98). Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.

Lickona, Thomas. (1985). *Raising Good Children*. New York: Bantam Books. [Excellent book for parents on moral development which is compatible with a Christian viewpoint.]

Lickona, Thomas. (1992). *Educating for Character*. New York: Bantam Books. [Excellent book for teachers on character development which is compatible with a Christian viewpoint.]

Maccoby, E., & Martin, J. (1985). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P. H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (4th ed.) (Vol. 4, pp. 1-101). New York: John Wiley and Sons.

McKenna, David. (1977). *The psychology of Jesus: The dynamics of Christian wholeness.* Waco, TX: World Books Publisher, Word, Inc.

Miller, W. R. (Ed.) (1999). *Integrating spirituality into treatment: Resources for practitioners.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. [A book for practitioners which addresses many aspects of spirituality and psychological treatment.]

Myers, D.G., & Jeeves, M.A. (1978). *Psychology through the eyes of faith.* San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers. [An excellent reader intended to accompany introductory psychology classes.]

Norcross, J., & Prochaska, J. (1988). A study of eclectic (and integrative) views revisited. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 19,* 170-174.

Pascoe, J. P. (1980). An integrative approach to psychological and Christian thought based on a Christian world view. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 8,* 12-26.

Peck, R., & Havighurst, R. (1961). *The psychology of character development.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Pitzele, Peter A. (1991). The psychodrama of the Bible: Mirror and window of soul. *Religious Education, 86,* 562-570.

Reich, Helmut K. (1993). Integrating differing theories. *Journal of Empirical Theology, 6,* 39-48.

Richards, P. S., & Bergin, A. E. (1997). *A spiritual strategy for counseling and psychotherapy.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Shafranske, E. P. (1996). *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Seventh-day Adventists believe: A biblical exposition of 27 fundamental doctrines. Washington, DC: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

VanLeeuwen, M. S. (1985). *The person in psychology: A contemporary Christian psychology.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. [A look at the person through Christian eyes.]

Vitz, P. (1994). *A Christian theory of personality.* Steubenville, Ohio: Franciscan University Press. [An attempt to develop a Christian theory of personality.]

Walsh, F. (1999). *Spiritual resources in family therapy.* New York: Guilford Publications. [Examines different spiritual resources which might be useful in family therapy.]

Wertheimer, M. (1972). *Fundamental issues in psychology.* New York: Holt, Rinehard, & Winston.

White, E. G. (1903). *Education.* Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press.

Worthington, Everett L. Jr. (1989). *Marriage counseling: A Christian approach to counseling couples.* Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. [A text for marriage counseling courses.]