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ABSTRACT

Two misconceptions about the apparent burgeoning interest in the relationship between psychology and Christianity are discussed: that the interest in this dialogue is equally operative on both sides and that those involved in this dialogue share a common set of understandings. The history of the relationship between psychology and Christianity is reviewed. An organization of the psychology-Christianity literature is proposed. Three distinctive approaches to the dialogue between psychology and Christianity are outlined: (1) the development of a Christian psychology; (2) the psychological study of religious sentiment; and (3) the use of psychological principles and methods in religious contexts. These approaches are discussed both in terms of their impact upon Christianity and in terms of their impact upon the discipline of psychology. The effects of the frequently-dominant mind set of psychology upon Christian thought are discussed within the context of schema theory. Finally it is argued that a more veritable relationship between psychology and Christianity might be achieved if the apparent obsession with the integration of these disciplines were forsaken, and instead, the singular contributions offered by each toward a greater understanding of the human condition were acknowledged. (ABL)

SCHEMA THEORY AND THE PSYCHOLOGY-CHRISTIANITY DIALOGUE: NEW THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *An organization of the psychology-Christianity literature was proposed. Three distinctive approaches to the dialogue between psychology and Christianity were outlined: (a) the development of a Christian psychology, (b) the psychological study of religious sentiment, and (c) the use of psychological principles and methods in religious contexts. These were discussed both in terms of their impact upon Christianity and in terms of their impact upon the discipline of psychology. The effects of the frequently-dominant therapeutic mind-set of psychology upon Christian thought were then discussed within the context of schema theory. Finally it was argued that there is a need for a perspicuous elucidation and preservation of both psychology's and Christianity's unique contributions to our understanding of the human condition.*

In the past 20 years we have seen an increasing interest in a dialogue between psychology and Christianity. The number of individuals diligently working to further this dialogue has grown steadily. There are presently

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several organizations which provide forums for the presentation and discussion of opinions, data, therapeutic techniques, integrative models, etc. pertinent to this dialogue (e.g., Division 36 of the American Psychological Association, the Christian Association for Psychological Studies, the Lumen Vitae International Commission for Psychological Studies, the American Scientific Affiliation, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, the Guild of Catholic Psychiatrists), and there are an expanding number of journals dedicated to publications in this area (e.g., *The Journal of Psychology and Theology, The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, The Journal of Religion and Health, Pastoral Psychology, The Journal of Psychology and Christianity, The Journal of Pastoral Care, Lumen Vitae, The Bulletin of Mental Health Chaplains, Review of Religious Research, The Journal of Values and Ethics in Health Care, International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*). As Pascoe (1980) has stated, "Currently one of the most active areas of psychology is the relationship of psychology and religion..." (p. 13).

Two Reasonable Misconceptions

This apparent burgeoning of interest in the relationship between psychology and Christianity can easily leave an individual with two misconceptions. First, one can be quickly led to believe that the interest in this "dialogue" is equally operative on both sides (i.e., both among Christian leaders and among psychologists) --- after all, the very term "dialogue" implies a *mutual exchange* of ideas. Second, one might naively infer that when various individuals are engaged in this psychology-Christianity dialogue, they are each involved in a common enterprise; in other words, that

they each share a common set of understandings, goals, and objectives subsumed under the topic of "the integration of psychology and Christianity." If we are to clearly apprehend the nature of the present relationship between psychology and Christianity, it would be valuable to develop a better understanding of these two misconceptions, and it is toward this end that the first portion of this paper has been written.

One-Sided "Dialogue"

With regard to the first misconception mentioned above, it might be helpful to take a brief look at the history of the relationship between psychology and Christianity. A little over a century ago, psychology, philosophy, and the study of religion were essentially considered part of the same discipline. As such, psychological study consisted of little more than the pursuit of philosophical understandings of the mind, the body, and the soul. However, with the establishment of the first experiemntal psychology laboratory in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany, by Wilhelm Wundt, psychology struck out on its own, seeking to establish itself as a science. In pursuing its expressed intent of objectively studying the mind and its structures, psychology aroused largely the same sort of reaction from the Christian churches as did the more traditional scientific disciplines. In the midst of this "relationship" between psychology and Christianity (which largely consisted of a cool war of suspicion and individualistic separatism), there emerged an overtly antagonistic perspective in psychology --- psychoanalysis. Freud (e.g., 1913, 1927, 1939) variously suggested that religion is a "universal obsessional illusion" that neurotic individuals have contrived in an effort to cope with the difficulties of living, that God is a

"deified father image" whom immature people have invented in their hopes of being comforted in the midst of the uncertainties and powerlessness of life, that the supports and consolations of religious beliefs serve as a tranquilizer ("a sleeping draught") for the masses, and that the religious figures of God and Satan are nothing more than the projection of the superego and the id onto another world. [It should be noted here that such suggestions have a certain rational psychological appeal, but as Jeeves (1976) has poignantly stated:

> Is God, then, nothing more than a fantasy father figure? For some people he may be; in which case that will tell us something interesting about the person who holds that belief. But it certainly will not tell us anything about the existence of God (p. 169).]

Needless to say, such overt derisions of religion on the part of Freud did nothing to enamor religious authorities to psychoanalysis (or psychology). But possibly the more telling and long-lasting effects of Freud's religious sentiments may be seen in the eld of psychology itself. His seeds of religious antagonism were sown in a rich pro-scientific soil predominant in psychology at that time, giving rise to a religious antipathy that is still prevalent today. Thus, while the early leaders of psychology in the United States were actively engaged in the research and discussion of religious themes [e.g., William James, generally considered the father of American psychology, wrote *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James, 1902); G. Stanley, the first president of the American Psychological Association, published an article entitled "The Moral and Religious Training of Children and Adolescents" (Hall, 1891), and he wrote the book, *Jesus, the Christ, in the Light*

of Psychology (Hall, 1923)], interest in religious topics among psychologists began to wane around 1930 (Gorsuch, 1988) and little has happened since to suggest that religion (in general) or Christianity (in particular) have impacted the mainstream of psychology.

The dearth of present interest in religious areas of inquiry among psychologists is evidenced in the following examples. Boring's (1950) classic history of psychology (a massive work which is required reading of nearly every graduate student in psychology) makes only a passing reference to the psychology of religion; a discussion of psychology and religious issues is rare in introductory psychology texts (Bergin, 1980a; Ruble, 1985; Sexton, 1986); the psychiatric literature has given but scant attention to the interface of psychology and religion (Bergin, 1980a; Pattison, 1978a); and psychology ranks high as a nontheistic discipline (Beit-Hallahmi, 1977; Henry, Sims, & Spray, 1971; Ragan, Malony, & Beit-Hallahmi, 1980). In fact, Kotesky (1980) has bluntly stated:

> In general, psychology has attaked Christianity. The founders of the three major forces were atheists and attacked the Christian faith either openly or in private journals. Watson called Christianity a "myth," Freud called it a "neurosis," and Maslow called it "crap" (p. 44).

As Rambo (1980) has stated, "There is a cognitive strain on the person who wants to be both a Christian and a psychologist" (p. 64).

In view of the prevalence and significance of religion in the lives of numerous Americans, some psychologists have bemoaned the present nontheistic state of affairs in psychology. For example, Hogan (1979) wrote in the *APA Monitor*:

> Religion is the most important social force in the history of man.... But in psychology, anyone who gets involved in or tries to talk in an analytic, careful way about religion is immediately branded a meathead; a mystic; an intuitive; a touchy-feely sort of moron (p. 4).

Similarly, Malony (1985) reflected upon his experiences working in a therapeutic setting:

> In the hospital where I was the chaplain I attended the weekly staff meetings where patients were diagnosed and where treatment was recommended.... Religion was not considered to be an important variable to assess in either diagnosis or treatment planning.... The disregard of religion by mental health professionals is puzzling in light of the importance of religion in many peoples' lives. Gallup polls report that over 90% of American citizens believe in God and over 50% belong to some religious organization. A component of life in which over 50% of the people are involved would seem to be crucial to assess (pp. 1-2).

But despite such consensual appeals to reason, religious topics remain on the fringes of psychology.

It should be obvious from the foregoing discussion that in the "dialogue" between psychology and Christianity, there has not been an equal expenditure of energy by professional psychologists, on the one hand, and pastors, ministers, and church leaders, on the other hand. But rather, the vast majority of the interest and effort has come on the part of church leaders. While there are likely several possible explanations for this (some of which will be covered later in this paper), it is important that we not labor under the misconception that psychologists are as interested in religious topics as

many religious leaders are in psychological topics.

Three Approaches to the Integration of Psychology and Christianity

With respect to the second potential misconception mentioned above (i.e., that those who are working toward an integration of psychology and Christianity share a common perspective and a common set of goals and objectives), it would be overly simplistic and overtly inaccurate to categorize all of these efforts under a single rubrik. In fact, there appear to be three primary distinctive approaches to this integration of psychology and Christianity that are present in the literature: (a) the development of a Christian psychology, (b) the psychological study of religious sentiment, and (c) the use of psychological principles and methods in religious contexts.

(A) The Development of a Christian Psychology. The first of these three approaches is consonant with the contention of numerous writers (e.g., Arnold & Gasson, 1954; Bergin, 1980b; Braybrooke, 1965; Koch, 1974; Madden, 1962; Misiak, 1961) that it is crucial to examine the tenets and prescriptions of any discipline (and of particular relevance to this discussion, psychology) in view of its foundational assumptions. It is from these basic inherent presuppositions that each discipline derives its view of human nature and advances its agenda for human and social change. This approach to the integration of psychology and Christianity has led several authors to the conclusion that the foundational philosophical assumptions of psychology are incompatible with those of Christianity (for example, see Bergin, 1980b; Collins, 1977; Kotesky, 1980, 1983; Pascoe, 1980; Vitz, 1981). In one notably succinct example of this approach, Vitz (1981) identified the following seven assumptions as laying the "ground rules" for psychology: (a) atheism/agnosticism,

(b) naturalism, (c) reductionism, (d) individualism, (e) relativism, (f) subjectivism, and (g) knowledgism.

In the face of such "isms," what is the solution for the integration of psychology and Christianity which is proffered by these dissuading theorists? The logical solution typically suggested is to formulate a new psychology, a psychology built upon a foundation of Christian presuppositions. As Pascoe (1980) has stated:

> Integrating psychology and Christian thought in this manner causes a structuring of thinking concerning matters of psychological relevance around an explicit Christian presuppositional base. A Christian world view provides a frame of reference for analyzing psychological thought.... More specifically, this approach can be described as a manner of "thinking Christianly" about psychological matters (p. 25).

Several such Christian psychologies have been proposed (e.g., Adams, 1970, 1973; Backus, 1986; Bergin, 1980a; Collins, 1977; Pascoe, 1980; Strong, 1977; Vitz, 1981), and in each case the authors have attempted to examine psychological variables through a lens deriving from a Christian mind-set. As Farnsworth (1981) put it, this sort of

> Conformability Model reinterprets psychological findings or reconstructs the discipline of psychology from the perspective of theological findings.... It means that psychological inquiry and/or conclusions are filtered through a general Christian perspective or detailed set of [theologically-derived] "control beliefs" (p. 4).

In other words, proponents of the development of Christian psychologies contend that if psychology is to be integrated with Christianity, then the acti-

vities within the discipline of psychology must be regulated and directed by Christian thought. Christian presuppositions must supplant the present philosophical bases of psychology.

From a practical standpoint, such an approach to the integration of psychology and Christianity could be justified as both valid and valuable. As Vitz (1981) has argued, "Something like this is absolutely needed.... Unless a Christian model of psychology is found, Christianity will continue to lose millions of souls to the message of secular psychology" (pp. 142-143). Thus from a pragmatic perspective, offering the Christian populace a viable alternative to the basic tenets of psychology has much merit, and the development of a Christian psychology (or psychologies) may be a vital antidote to the potentially pernicious effects of psychology among Christians today.

However, two related comments should be offered at this point. First, once such a Christian psychology has been developed, one could legitimately ask whether it really is psychology. Certainly it would be *a psychology*, but would it be *psychology* --- would it be true to the discipline of psychology? Is it possible to coalesce psychology with Christianity without doing significant damage to the essential nature of psychology as a discipline?

The second comment of relevance here dovetails with the first. Once such a Christian psychology has been developed, is it reasonable to anticipate its influence to be felt in the mainstream of psychology? For example, Collins (1977) has argued:

> It is time for us [psychologists] to realize that psychology will be strongest in the future if it dares to acknowledge God and to build on a theistic undergirding. Only then will psychology be able to realize

its maximum effectiveness in understanding mankind and helping the world to be a better place in which to live (p. 196).

Certainly many members of Division 36 strongly resonate with Collins' hopeful words, but realistically speaking, there is a dearth of manifest evidence to support the tenability of such a suggestion. In fact, it would be flagrantly naive of us to foresee (at least in the near future) the prospect of Christian presuppositions infiltrating psychology in any significant way. Thus while an explicitly Christian psychology may well be a valuable development for practical application in numerous Christians' lives, we should not be inclined to surmise that such a Christian psychology will be congruous with the discipline of psychology itself nor that its impact upon psychology will be significant.

(B) The Psychological Study of Religious Sentiments. The second of these approaches to the integration of psychology and Christianity has historically been the primary avenue of dialogue between psychology and Christianity. The explicit objective of this approach is to enhance our psychological understanding of religious variables. Efforts in this area to comprehend and to explain the "whats, whys, and hows" of religious beliefs, behaviors, and experiences have essentially evolved along two separate tracks. First, numerous psychologists have employed scientific logic and empirical methodologies to the understanding of religious variables. An individual working within this empirical approach (which has typically been referred to as "the psychology of religion") might be interested, for example, in the relationship between religious beliefs and mental health, the effects of familial and educational variables on religious development, the psychological ante-

cedents and consequences of religious experience, the relationship of religious beliefs to helping behavior, the role of religion in adult social relationships, etc. Summaries of the literature in this area may be found in Batson and Ventis (1982), Meadow and Kahoe (1984), Paloutizian (1983), and Spilka, Hood, and Gorsuch (1985).

Of all the attempts to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between psychology and Christianity, it is this "psychology of religion" approach that is most apt to be accepted into the mainstream of psychology, as intimated by the recent printing of explicit psychology of religion manuscripts in publications esteemed by the psychological community --- Donahue (1985) in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and Gorsuch (1988) in the *Annual Review of Psychology*. However, while such an approach may one day be deemed legitimate within the field of psychology and while it adds valuable information to the wealth of understanding which psychologists have concerning human behavior, this psychology of religion approach (with its heavy emphasis upon scientific/empirical methodologies) typically leaves little room for determinant Godly influence in its explanations of religious phenomena. As a result, the spiritual significance of a Christian belief, behavior, or experience may be blurred (if not completely explained away) in naturalistic terms. As Collins (1986) succinctly argued:

> As a part of scientific psychology, the psychology of religion must be scientific. But let us not assume that science is the only source of knowledge and factual data. We can become narrow and inaccurate when we cast aside such sources of information as the teachings of tradition, the sacred writings, the insights of literary observers, or the experi-

ences of deeply religious believers. A field that accepts only rigidly measured scientific data is a narrow field indeed. As Wertheimer noted several years ago (1972), we must be careful not to completely sacrifice richness on the altar of precision (p. 29).

The second way in which the psychological study of religious sentiments has evolved is through the use of non-empirical psychological theories, principles, and conceptualizations to explain religious phenomena. For example, one might take St. Paul's characterizations of love in ICor 13: 4-7:

> Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (RSV),

and attempt to recast it in terms of Rogers' (1961) conception of warm and empathic acceptance:

> I can create a relationship characterized on my part: by a genuiness and transparency, in which I am my real feelings; by a warm acceptance of and prizing of the other person as a separate individual; by a sensitive ability to see his world and himself as he sees them (p. 37).

This approach is largely based upon the assumption that psychology and Christianity provide us with two separate, but generally interchangeable, sets of terminology, and that we can use either set of nomenclature to illuminate the other. As Farnsworth (1981) put it:

> [We] take a bunch of psychological findings and a bunch of theological findings and just figuratively throw them into a bucket of water, then

> let them float around, without examination, to see what sticks to what. Or, simply line psychological findings up on one side and theological findings on the other, where they seem on the surface to be saying the same thing, point for point, and zip 'em up (p. 6).

This approach may evoke a state of disquietude in many Christians for two reasons. First, the uniqueness of the Christian message and the Christian mission may too easily be obscured in such an approach. Like a combination of dry ice and water, the indiscriminate admixture of psychological and Christian thought-forms can produce a sort of "mental fog" which makes it difficult to distinguish that which is Christian from that which is not. In a free-flowing interchange of psychological and Christian thought, Christian terms may too easily be divested of their Christian meaning and Christian lives may too easily wander from the presence of God.

A second reason that the indiscriminate interchange of psychological and Christian language arouses uneasiness in many Christians is that this approach has often been unwittingly (and wittingly) used to reduce Christian concepts to a level of symbolic and allegorical significance. A few of the innumerable examples of this should help to clarify this point.

G. Stanley Hall was an early psychologist in this country who was religiously inclined and who was well-versed in the scriptures. However, his use and interpretation of the scriptures was restricted to that of mythology. For example, Hall (1923) wrote:

> Sin is failure to hold to new insights and ideas.... Jesus is at bottom not a substitute.... Jesus' fate (the cross) was only an allegory of what really transpires in every soul that becomes regenerate and finds

again the lost trail (pp. 728-729).

Similarly, he wrote:

> I believe in the historical Jesus, but I have tried to show how even the Church can get on, if it should ever have to do so, without him, and this might possibly ultimately make for greater spirituality.... God is man and man is God.... God had been thought objective, but now is seen to be only the inmost subjectivity of man, individual and social (pp. viii; 303).

Thus Hall eliminated from his interpretation of scripture the very heart of the gospel message, the salvational significance of Jesus in the life of the individual Christian and in the life of the Church.

Another psychologist who has frequently been credited with pro-religious sentiments is Rollo May. However, just a single exerpt from May (1967) should quickly illustrate his inherent non-Christian intent, despite the use of Christian themes in his psychological analyses. For example, May stated that we need to "look at the myth of Adam as the writers of Genesis presented it;" if we do, then we will find portrayed therein the "birth of human consciousness." More specifically, May wrote:

> Under the "benevolent dictatorship" of God, Adam and Eve exist in the Garden of Eden in a state of naive, prehuman happiness.... But what do they gain as they bid goodbye to Eden? They gain differentiation of themselves as persons, the beginnings of identity, the possibility of passion and human creativity. And in place of the naive, nonresponsible dependencies of infancy, there is now the possibility of loving by choice, relating to one's fellowmen because one wants to, and hence

with responsibility. The myth of Adam is, as Hegel put it, a "fall upward." It is, indeed, the emergence of human consciousness (p. 219).

Clearly such a reinterpretation of the fall of Adam and Eve (as well as May's intimations concerning the very nature of our relationship to God), while intriguing in its rationalist novelty, is blatantly contrary to the Christian understanding which is ours through hundreds of years of a rich Christian tradition.

Using a similar garment of psychological thought-forms, Jung has reclothed the liberating power of the grace of God as an endogenous self-liberating "water of grace flowing from the unconscious." In Jung's (1971) words:

> The Christian West considers man to be...dependent upon the grace of God.... The East, however, insists that man is the sole cause of his higher development, for it believes in "self-liberation".... [In the West] man...still bothers about sin and tortures his imagination with a belief in absolute gods, who, if he only looked deeper, are nothing but the veil of illusion woven by his own unenlightened mind.... It seems to me that we have really learned something from the East when we...feel capable of evolving out of ourselves with or without divine grace.... We must get at the Eastern values from within and not from without, seeking them in ourselves, in the unconscious..., the self-liberating power of the introverted mind.... We depend upon the unconscious psyche or the "grace of god" --- names make no difference (pp. 488, 490, 496).

Such an exposition of God and the transforming power of His grace as deriving from the introverted source of our own psyches may have a certain titillating

intellectual appeal to the twentieth-century Christian who has all too often been swayed by the selfist ideology of our present age (for an elaboration of this theme, see Lasch, 1979; Vitz, 1977; Voskuil, 1983; Wallach & Wallach, 1983), but there can be little doubt that such an interpretation militates against the transcendent reality of God inherent in the traditions of our Christian heritage.

The uniqueness of the Christian gospel can easily be obscured in an equivocal blending of psychological and Christian interpretations of the human condition. We may at times be too much like Esau, who gave up his birthright for the immediate satisfaction afforded him by a bowl of soup (Gen 25). We may be too quick to accept that which accommodates our modern sensibilities, when what may be needed is a perspicuous interpretation and manifestation of the gospel. As Kahoe (1987) succinctly stated in his APA Division 36 presidential address:

> Theologians for thousands of years have been speculating on the human condition, and undoubtedly had gained some significant insights into the bases of human action. For psychologists with a 100 year history to put this aside in an effort to rediscover the wheel with their own resources seems rather inefficient and arrogant (p. 2).

The Christian gospel offers a distinctive interpretation of life, and if this unique interpretation of the human condition is to be elevated for all to see (and ultimately to respond to), it cannot be obscured in a fog bank of psychological thought-forms.

(C) Psychological Principles and Methods in Religious Contexts. The third approach to the integration of psychology and Christianity has centered

upon the practical application of psychological principles and techniques (especially those deriving from the counseling areas of psychology) within church settings. This approach has most often been referred to as pastoral counseling or the pastoral care movement. For several years now the number of individuals diligently working toward greater pastoral care and counseling within the Christian churches has grown rapidly. [For a relatively brief, but fairly comprehensive, history of the development of this pastoral care movement, see Pattison (1978a; 1978b).] As long ago as 1975, Haugk and Hong (1975) reported that already the majority of texts (56%) recommended by seminaries for their students were specifically directed to counseling and pastoral care issues. More recently, several suthors (e.g., Hesselgrave, 1984; Meyer, 1980; Propst, 1986) have attested to the rapid growth of the pastoral care movement; in Meyer's (1980) words: "It is clear to even the most casual observer that pastoral counselors and pastoral counseling centers are burgeoning across the country" (p. 148). It is now the case the the vast majority of seminaries provide a large menu of counseling-related courses as an integral part of their curricula, and seldom does an individual graduate from a seminary program without some training in pastoral psychology or Christian counseling.

Clearly pastoral psychology and Christian counseling have become mainstays in many of our Christian seminaries and churches. But what could account for this relatively rapid and vigorous interest in and implementation of pastoral counseling within the Christian churches? The reasons that one might offer are numerous and diverse: (a) many pastors find themselves inundated with members of their congregations who are debilitated by emotional

and psychological disorders, and they see the pastoral care movement as a much-needed solution to a very real problem; (b) many Christians are coming to view the use of psychological findings and therapeutic techniques as valuable tools in assisting Christians to better understand and cope with the realities of the twentieth-century world in which they inevitably find themselves; (c) in order to reach modern men and women, some would argue that the gospel message may be made more socially relevant by clothing it in the garb of psychological concepts; (d) some Christians contend that the clear, concise, and practical (although at times simple) answers so often provided by individuals within the pastoral care genre are "a breath of fresh air" in the midst of what is often seen as "the irrelevant esoteric theological stuffiness" of the Christian gospel; (e) in the middle of a culture in which God is all too often seen as remote, many people have begun to doubt that the Christian gospel has as much to offer toward the amelioration of daily human suffering as does psychology; and (f) several individuals have reasoned that Christianity is good and valuable, psychology is good and valuable, integrate them in a practical system of pastoral care and we will naturally obtain something better and more valuable.

The above rationales are often seen to legitimate the present proliferation of the pastoral care movement within Christian contexts. However, this point of view has not gone unchallenged. For example, one of the dominant influences upon pastoral counseling has been the humanistic work of Carl Rogers (Aden, 1985; Lapsley, 1970; Mitchell, 1985) -- as Lapsley (1980) stated, "Rogers' impact on the pastoral care movement need not be documented or rehearsed --- suffice it to say that no other psychologist has been near

him in influence on that movement" (p. 5). With this in mind, it should be noted that little time need be spent perusing the religious and psychological literature before an individual will be confronted by one of several clarion warnings concerning the potentially pernicious influence of a secular humanistic philosophical orientation within the Christian churches (e.g., Adams, 1970; Bergin, 1980b; Bobgan & Bobgan, 1979; Brownback, 1982; Hitchcock, 1982; Kilpatrick, 1983; Vitz, 1977). Furthermore, from a slightly different tact, several authors (e.g., Benson, 1984; Campbell, 1975; Jeeves, 1976; Strupp, 1976; Vitz, 1977) have warned that Rogers and other promulgators of the humanistic perspective have extrapolated far beyond the bases of scientific truth. As Campbell (1975) put it in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association:

> Present-day psychology and psychiatry...are more hostile to the inhibitory messages of traditional religious moralizing than is scientifically justified.... In the areas of disagreement (as to how people should live their lives, child rearing, sex, duty, guilt, sin, self-indulgence, etc.), we are unable to experiment or in other ways to put well-developed theories to rigorous test. On these issues, psychology and psychiatry cannot yet claim to be truly scientific and thus have special reasons for modesty and caution in undermining traditional belief systems... On purely scientific grounds, these recipes for living [that have been evolved, tested, and winnowed through hundreds of generations of human social history] might be regarded as better tested than the best of psychology's and psychiatry's speculations on how lives should be lived. This argument comes from a natural-selection theory of social evolution.... (p. 1103).

In addition to these philosophically-based and empirically-based arguments against the continually-growing influence of the pastoral care movement in the churches, various other authors (e.g., Browning, 1976; Jeeves, 1976; Pruyser, 1976; Rambo, 1980) have lamented (in the words of Rambo, 1980) that "much that passes for 'pastoral' psychology is really nothing more than the passive accommodation of religious leaders to the accepted wisdom of the psychological and psychiatric community" (p. 128). In other words, some individuals are convinced that much of what goes on in the name of pastoral counseling is in reality little more than the wholesale incorporation of psychological principles and techniques into the daily ongoing life of the church. To the extent that this is the case, we will witness a progressively more psychological message emanating from the pulpit and we will more and more come to see the role of pastor defined as that of a psychological/pastoral/counseling practitioner.

A More Subtle Concern

From the foregoing discussion it should be obvious that there are numerous, diverse, and frequently-valid concerns surrounding the various approaches to the integration of psychology and Christianity. However, there is one issue that has not yet been directly addressed. It is an overriding concern that stands in need of greater consideration by Christian leaders, for its influence is more subtle and possibly more far-reaching than any of the concerns discussed above. In the remainder of this paper it is my intent to address this concern and to offer for our consideration an alternative for the relationship between psychology and Christianity which may circumvent many of the issues that have been raised.

Schema Theory and Our Interpretation of Reality

Whenever we process information or interpret an experience, we do so within the context of existing cognitive knowledge structures, called schemata. Schema theory is an attempt to explain how schemata are derived from personal experience and how they are organized in memory; but more importantly for our purposes here, schema theory also investigates how these schemata serve as prototypes in memory and how they influence our interpretation of events (for more on schema theory, see Bransford, 1979; Glaser, 1984; Rumelhart, 1981; Shank, 1982; Shank & Abelson, 1977). As an example, we can briefly examine a trite little "story" offered by Shank and Seifert (1985) from their work in artificaial intelligence: "John went to a restaurant. He ordered lobster. He left a small tip. He left" (p.63). As Shank and Seifert suggest, there is much information that we know about John even though the explicit items of information were not mentioned. For example, we know that John ate lobster, that he was served by a waitress (or a waiter), and that he was not pleased with the service and/or the food; but yet, none of these pieces of information was ever mentioned in our short story. What this brief example suggests is that when we process information, we do so within the context of our present cognitive knowledge. When I read a paragraph (e.g., a passage of scripture) or when I experience an event (e.g., a Christian worship service; a time of Christian fellowship), I process and interpret this information within the context of what I know about the world (i.e., my cognitive schemata).

To further clarify this improtant point about how we process information, let's take a second example. Dooling and Lachman (1971) used the

following paragraph in their research on the effects of contextual information upon the comprehension and memory of prose material:

> WITH HOCKED GEMS FINANCING HIM / OUR HERO BRAVELY DEFIED ALL SCORNFUL LAUGHTER / THAT TRIED TO PREVENT HIS SCHEME / YOUR EYES DECEIVE / HE HAD SAID / AN EGG / NOT A TABLE / CORRECTLY TYPIFIES THIS UNEXPLORED PLANET / NOW THREE STURDY SISTERS SOUGHT PROOF / FORGING ALONG SOMETIMES THROUGH CALM VASTNESS / YET MORE OFTEN OVER TURBULENT PEAKS AND VALLEYS / DAYS BECAME WEEKS / AS MANY DOUBTERS SPREAD FEARFUL RUMORS ABOUT THE EDGE / AT LAST / FROM NOWHERE / WELCOME WINGED CREATURES APPEARED / SIGNIFYING MOMENTOUS SUCCESS (p. 217).

Dooling and Lachman found that the ability to comprehend and remember this passage was much greater when people were told that it is about "Christopher Columbus Discovering America" than when they were not given any contextual hints as to its meaning. Furthermore, Dooling and Lachman found that when people were not given contextual cues for the interpretation of the passage, they attempted to subjectively provide a viable context from their own ideosyncratic knowledge of the world that might enable them to personally derive meaning from the passage. To the extent that they were able to develop such a context, they were able to comprehend and remember the paragraph.

It should be obvious from these examples that when we process and interpret events, we do so from our perspective of the world (i.e., our schemeta). It is through this synthesis of our cognitive knowledge of the world with the present inputs that we derive meaning from our experience. Furthermore, when we do not have at our cognitive disposal the appropriate context for an

event, we are inclined to adopt an alternative contextual interpretation whereby meaning might be derived.

The Therapeutic Nature of Psychology-Christianity Integration

It was suggested several years ago (e.g., Ellison, 1977; Gross, 1978; Misiak & Sexton, 1971) that more and more we find ourselves living in a psychologized society. As stated by Ellison (1977):

> Psychology has grown into a giant during the twentieth century. No other age has witnessed such intense concentration upon the nature and functioning of "homo sapiens." Psychological terminology has become an integral part of the common vernacular and psychological concepts strongly influence contemporary thought (p. 424).

In the midst of this "psychologization" of Western language and thought, we have more and more come to view the vicissitudes of life in terms of psychological categories. Or in the words of Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) in the recent unlikely best-seller *Habits of the Heart*, the therapist (along with the manager) "largely define the outlines of twentieth-century American culture" (p 47). In other words, a set of psychological/therapeutic schemata have grown to such a stature of prevalence, consequence, and acceptability within our culture that they dwarf all other views of reality (except possibly that of the manager).

The general nature of this therapeutic mind-set has been captured in the following statement by Bellah et al. (1985):

> Like the manager, the therapist is a specialist in *mobilizing resources for effective action*, only here the resources are largely *internal to the individual* and the measure of effectiveness is the *elusive criterion*

> *of personal satisfaction....* Indeed, the very term therapeutic suggests a life focussed on *the need for a cure.* But a cure of what? (p. 47, italics are mine).

We find within this definition the follwoing components of the therapeutic mind-set. First, as it attempts to provide a viable framework for the interpretation of reality, this mind-set concentrates upon the internal psychological and emotional workings of the individual. Second, this set of cognitive knowledge structures emphasizes the need for men and women to be cured/healed. Third, the therapeutic schemata suggest to the twentieth-century interpreters of events (i.e., us) that the end results of this healing process are fewer blocks to personal growth, greater personal satisfaction and tranquility, less personal suffering, greater self-insight and self-knowledge, and a greater sense of personal well-being. Fourth, this therapeutic way of perceiving reality emphasizes a utilitarian view of life in which virtually all human endeavors (from virtuous behaviors to personal relationships) are evaluated based upon criteria of psychological effectiveness.

One need not be a seer to perceive the infiltration of the Christian churches by this therapeutic mentality. One need only browse the local Christian bookstore, where therapeutic self-help books abound and popular religious psychology literature proliferates.. One need only be cognizant of the growing number of committed Christian men and women: (a) for whom the virtues of courage, fortitude, and charity have become blurred in the midst of their personal psychological and emotional misgivings; (b) for whom the pursuit of goodness, truth, beauty, and moral character has been

supplanted by a search for mental health; (c) for whom thoughts of loyalty, duty, and commitment have been recast in terms of personal growth and well-being; and (d) for whom suffering has become an indubitable indication that something is personally "not right" and needs to be "cured." One need only review the results of a national survey of the members of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors by Houck and Moss (1977) in which [as summarized by Pattison (1978a)] it was found that:

> Although the members identified themselves as "pastoral," most disliked pastoral and parish activities, tended personally not to engage actively in church related activities, and gave low value to pastoral aspects of their work in contrast to the high value given to the counseling aspect.... In other words, the pastoral counselor has deserted his religious background...and has joined the new synthesis of psychiatry and religion as a fellow psychotherapist (p. 18).

One need only listen to the messages all too often emanating from the pulpits in Christian churches today, messages in which personal hurts may be seen as greater pitfalls to the Christian walk than are personal sins, where inner healing is emphasized more than is inner sanctity, where the presence of authority may be viewed as spiritually more destructive than is the presence of Satan, and where believers may be encouraged to find themselves more than they are encouraged to find God.

An Alternative for Our Consideration

Doubtless there are some in the ranks of the Christian populace (and possibly even many) for whom the psychological and emotional scars run so deep that counseling is an indispensable prerequisite to their spiritual

growth and development. For these, a solid therapeutic Christian psychology may comprise a large portion of the healing intervention which they require. [For a lucid example of such a case, see Smith (1980) --- "Winter Past: A Struggle for Emotional Health."] One can only express appreciation and encouragement to those men and women who are laboring to provide such healing within Christian settings. Furthermore, there should be little doubt that there is an ongoing need in the ranks of the Christian populace for sound practical advice in a variety of areas of human living (e.g., how to work toward a healthy marriage, how to raise your children, how to better manage your time, how to develop relationships, etc.). Certainly God must take delight in the wholesome fruit of such counsel among His loved ones.

However, in suggesting the need for therapeutic Christian counseling for some and practical Christian counsel for most, I would not in any way be intimating that these be viewed as requisite to the Christian gospel. Christianity does not claim uniqueness for the therapeutic and practical benefits it provides its adherents, but for the redemptive power of a God who is alive and present in the world. We are not in need of a gospel today which has been adapted to the predominant therapeutic schemata of modernity; but rather, we are in need of a gospel in which the traditional Christian ideals of wisdom, honor, hope, courage, selflessness, and virtue are held high for all to see. Our need in the churches today is not for amateur psychologists who wear the robes of therapeutic ministers; but rather, our need is for ministers who have an unrestrained confidence in the love and power of their Lord to work all circumstances to His honor and glory. We are not in need today of men and women who see the overriding message of

Christianity as the amelioration of human suffering and the promulgation of personal health and wholeness; but rather, we are in need of men and women of discipline, endurance, and character, men and women of principle and conviction, men and women with renewed vigor who will tell all (who are willing to listen) of the saving, strengthening, and transforming love of a God who is there.

It seems that many individuals have been impelled to unite the relatively disparate disciplines of psychology and Christianity, either through a Christianizing of psychology or through a psychologizing of Christianity. Either approach has a tendency to minimize the unique significance of the capitulated discipline, and furthermore, both approaches contribute to an already pervasive therapeutic view of reality. It seems that a more veritable relationship between psychology and Christianity might be achieved if we were to forsake our apparent obsession with the integration of these disciplines, and instead, we were to acknowledge the singular contributions offered by each toward a greater understanding of the human condition. Such an approach would allow for an authentic psychology and an authentic Christian gospel. Such an approach would allow Christian men and women to both learn from psychology (just as we learn from biology, sociology, history, English literature, etc.) as well as to contribute to psychology (just as we contribute to many other disciplines), but always within the parameters of a truly faith-filled mindset in which the Christian gospel and the transcendent hand of God are habitually apprehended.

Sir Halford John MacKinder stated several years ago (1887) [as quoted in Myers (1983)]: "Knowledge is one. Its division into subjects is a con-

cession to our human weakness" (p. 8). Conceding to our human weakness, Christian men and women should be the first to explore and enhance our knowledge in every sphere of human existence, but at the same time, we should be the last to blur the distinctiveness of the Christian gospel.

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