



Comparing the Views Christians Take to Psychology

By Eric L. Johnson

A Talk at Covenant Seminary



Why different views?

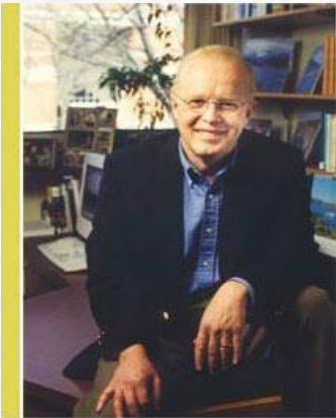
Modern psychology produced a profound scientific account of human beings and developed complex ways of dealing with psychological problems without God

This created a crisis for the Church, that resulted in different understandings of how to resolve it

Levels-of-Explanation Model

Major representatives

David Myers



Malcolm
Jeeves



Warren
Brown

Everett
Worthington



Most common position among Christian psych faculty at X'n and secular colleges

Levels-of-Explanation Model

- Humans are best understood in terms of a hierarchy of levels or disciplines that should not be combined
- Therefore, one's theology or faith should not affect the other levels or disciplines. Just do good science.

Theology
Psychology
Biology
Chemistry

Integration Model

Major representatives

Bruce Narramore



Mark McMinn



Stan Jones



Steve Sandage

Dominant approach at Christian graduate schools

Integration Model

Common Slogan

“All Truth is God’s Truth”

Key Insight

Christians should integrate psychological truth with truth from the Christian faith

Limitation

Seems to imply that *all* secular psychology is true

Integration Model

☛ Comparing Quality of Integration

1. *Strong Integration*

Christian thought makes a real impact

Examples: Jones & Butman, McMinn, Sandage

2. *Weak Integration*

Christianity makes little to no impact

Examples: No one claims this as their position, but it is more common than SI

Integration Model

Strengths

1. Takes science and research seriously
2. Allows Christian faith to reinterpret psychology
3. Recognizes the role of God's "creation grace" in culture and science
4. Seeks to engage the culture and impact contemporary psychology and mental health
5. This model is the best for X'n's who wish to work in today's public mental health

Integration Model

Weaknesses

1. Assumes a dualistic separation between biblical research and research on human beings
2. Assumes that modern psychology is the only legitimate version of psychology. Ignores influence of secularism on modern psychology
3. Minimizes the distorting effects of sin on human understanding = the “Antithesis”
4. Does not equip Christian counselors how to utilize distinctly Christian resources when working with Christian clients

Christian Psychology Model

Major representatives: Classical

Apostle
Paul



Augustine

Julian of
Norwich



Soren
Kierkegaard

Christian Psychology Model

Major representatives: Contemporary



Robert
Roberts

Larry
Crabb



Diane
Langberg



Leanne
Payne



John Coe

Agenda of Christian Psychology

- The ongoing development of distinctly Christian psychological theory, research, and soul-care practice
- To provide a Christian *alternative* to modern psychology—where possible—by *beginning with* the psychology of the Bible and the Christian traditions
- Spiritual formation into the image of Christ is the primary goal of human life
- Uses distinctly Christian resources to promote healing and development

Christian Psychology Model

Strengths

1. Aims to develop a Christian version of psychology that can compete intellectually with modern psychology
2. Challenges the dominance of secularism over contemporary psychology through participation and engagement
3. Works with non-X'n clients using common grace resources, but uses Christ-centered, redemptive grace resources with X'n clients

Christian Psychology Model

Weaknesses

1. Past focus has tended to be on Christian literature (biblical studies, theology, spirituality, and Christian philosophy), and very little distinctively Christian research has been done thus far
2. Danger of forming a Christian psychology ghetto isolated from modern psychology and counseling

Biblical Counseling Model

Major representatives

Jay Adams



David Powlison



Robert Kellemen



Heath Lambert
ACBC



Jeremy Lelek
ABC

Biblical Counseling Model

Common Slogan

“The Sufficiency of Scripture”

Key Insight

Scripture is all we need for Christian counseling bec/
it is God’s soul-care guidebook

Limitation

Seems to imply that the Bible is *scientifically*
sufficient and its content directly addresses *all*
counseling matters comprehensively

Biblical Counseling Model

Major Orientations

1. Nouthetic BC (Adams, Masters College, ACBC)
 - a. Generally opposed to psychology, licensure, psychotropic medication, and other X'ns
 - b. Tends towards a superficial view of sin and repentance
2. Holistic BC (CCEF, Southern Baptist Sem., ABC)
 - a. More open to psychology, medication, licensure, and especially other X'ns
 - b. More sophisticated understanding of sin and the importance of relationship

Biblical Counseling Model

Strengths

1. Biblical counseling takes the Bible's role in soul care most seriously
2. Wary of the influences of secular worldview on modern psychology; Against syncretism
3. Strives for a theocentric approach to soul care that sees sin as our worst problem and Christ's work as the cure for the sin-sick soul
4. Puts focus for soul care on the local church

Biblical Counseling Model

Weaknesses

1. Has little explored the relation between creation and redemption, and the relation between God's word in creation and God's word in Scripture
2. Emphasizes "Antithesis" (bet God and world) and its effects on modern psych. so much that it neglects implications of "Creation Grace" and its presence in modern psychology
3. Demonstrates little interest in research and psychological science

Where do we go from here?

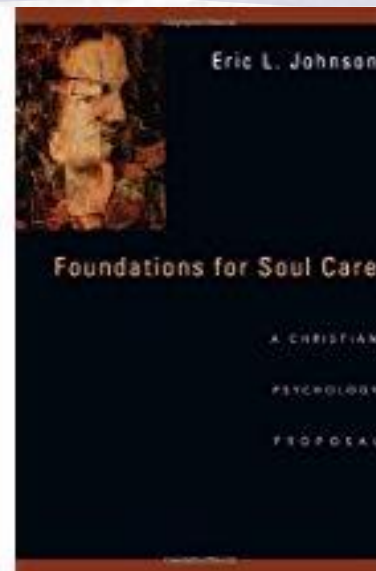
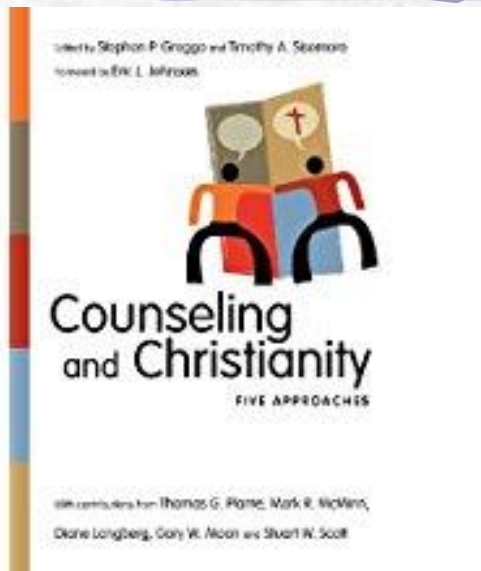
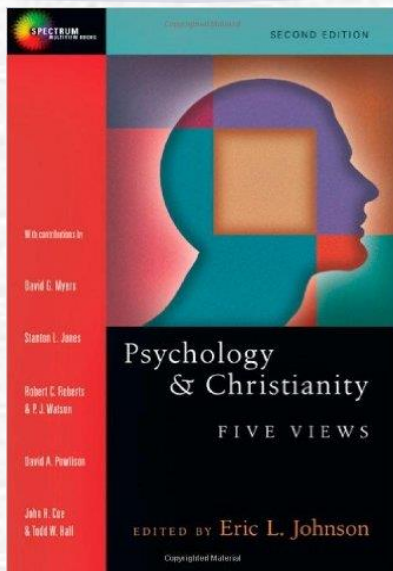
We are all brothers and sisters, and each group has something to contribute to the dialogue

There is no *necessary* incompatibility between three of these models—just difference in *calling, focus* and *location in culture*

Integration = Doing research and professional counseling in the public square with Christian integrity

Christian psychology = Doing teaching, research and professional counseling in Christian contexts (churches, counseling centers, seminaries, colleges and universities) and eventually in a postmodern public square

Biblical Counseling = Practical work in the local church that is Christ-centered and Bible-based (churches, seminaries, and Bible colleges)





**SOCIETY *for*
CHRISTIAN
PSYCHOLOGY**

The
 **Journal**

**Christian Psychology
Around The World**

What is a Christian Psychology?

Some of the main articles

- The living rhythm of healthy abilities
- The Healing No
- About Therapy Goals
- Process models and inner forgiveness