
LIVING ON THE BOUNDARY: SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

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For Christian psychologists to move from their marginalized position with mainstream psychology, they must be able to substantively demonstrate the unique insights that the integration of psychology with Christian theology offers to the discipline. To do this, Christian psychologists must be able to *show*, not just *claim*, the authority of Scripture by demonstrating its explanatory power on psychology's terms. Three factors in psychology's new zeitgeist provide both opportunities and challenges to demonstrating Scriptural authority: a growing cultural interest in spirituality, postmodernism, and novel approaches to cognitive science. Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST) is provided as a concrete example where Christian thinking provides greater understanding of an emerging psychological theory, thus demonstrating explanatory power and providing Scripture a more authoritative position.

The theologian Paul Tillich often described himself as living "on the boundary." For Tillich, the boundary was between philosophy and theology, between essence and existence, between Europe and America, and between the findings of science and theological revelation (Rogers, 1977). Psychologists who are Christians also find themselves on the boundary, sharing some of Tillich's boundaries but also adding a few more: between commitments to empirical research and commitments to other forms of knowledge (including revealed knowledge), between modernism and postmodernism, and between basic tenets of the Christian faith and contemporary spirituality. As one of these Christian psychologists, I find that living on

the boundary is sometimes uncomfortable, perhaps because the boundary itself seems narrow and delicate. At other times, living on the boundary holds unusual promise and is therefore exciting, especially when the boundary begins to fade and only one field of vision slowly appears to emerge.

The very nature of the boundary itself seems to be shifting between a psychology that has treated religion, including Christianity, with little regard, and the signs of a new-breed psychology that is at least willing to consider religion worthy of study. The boundary thus appears to be less sharply defined than in the past and evangelicals, though still on psychology's periphery, may have a greater opportunity for impact on the discipline. Nevertheless, living on the boundary of psychology and Christianity remains precarious, for it is a narrow boundary and, for the evangelical, much is at stake. Those evangelicals who take seriously our calling as professionals in the field of psychology must be careful not to fall into either the abyss of a narrow psychology that according to David Myers (1992, p. 12) "shields itself from deep understandings" nor a narrowly conceived theology that "shields itself from new understandings." Evangelical Christian psychologists feel a pull in both directions because the arguments on both sides of the boundary are compelling.

What often makes this such an uncomfortable boundary for the evangelical is the desire to maintain the authority of scripture yet remain committed to a discipline that utilizes a radically different epistemology. One can make the case that if Christians are going to have any substantial impact on psychology, it will have to be done, despite serious presuppositional implications, on psychology's epistemological terms. This suggests to some that the authority of scripture will be undermined. My answer to such concerns is that our understanding of scriptural authority must be broadened beyond typical evangelical pronouncements and that boundary living, in one sense, calls for

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an even greater commitment to scriptural authority—a commitment that does not negate a belief in the sufficiency and primacy of scripture, but actually complements this understanding.

Scriptural Authority

Evangelicals are rightly concerned about biblical authority. At the heart of all other doctrine, the evangelical holds dear the prominent position of scripture as a source of God's self-disclosure, that is, indeed, a *special* revelation. Given the specialness of special revelation, it is for the evangelical granted authority. For those who live on the boundary of psychology and Christianity, there are at least two meanings to the notion of scriptural authority: (a) a "high view" of scripture, and (b) the "explanatory power" of scripture. What I propose here is that evangelicals have emphasized the first of the two conceptualizations, largely from a defensive posture (perhaps justifiably so as a reaction to the late 19th Century's sting of "higher criticism"), at the expense of the second. But for those of us living on the boundary, both conceptions of authority are crucial. And, furthermore, it is only the latter conception that will allow evangelicals to have a greater impact on their professional discipline.

A High View of Scripture. The first conception of scriptural authority is the common one that we hear from evangelical theologians; the high view of scripture argues that scripture is authoritative because it holds regulatory force (i.e., it regulates my belief system and is thus a primary if not solely sufficient source of my "control beliefs") resulting from its inerrancy as a product of divine inspiration found in its human authors. As Clark Pinnock (1971) points out:

The authority of Scripture is the watershed of theological conviction, and its importance to a sound methodology is incalculable ... the central problem for theology is *its own epistemological base*. From what fountain head does theology acquire the information from which she forms her doctrinal models and tests her hypothesis? What is the *principium theologiae* which measures and authenticates the subject matter for theology and preaching? No endeavor in theology can begin until some kind of answer is given. The sheer weight of this crucial question has kept and will continue to keep, the debate over biblical authority at the center of the theological arena in our era. All issues pale before this one. It is the continental divide in Christian theology. Everything hangs on our solution to it. (p. 11)

From an evangelical perspective, there is no doubt truth in what Pinnock has to say. And, indeed, a high view of scripture is foundational to evangelicalism. Theology has good *intradisciplinary* reasons

that we are all familiar with why such a high view must be preserved. Furthermore, to do good integration, we must first do good theology (and good psychology for that matter). Otherwise, we are just increasing the odds of mistakenly identifying conflict, when indeed no conflict may exist. It appears to exist only because of poor hermeneutics or poor science. Good theology and good psychology will bring us closer to the truth about the objects of our respective domains of study, scripture and human nature/behavior (generically defined)—and the objects of our study are *not* in conflict.

At the heart of a good education in either discipline will be courses on good methodology—hermeneutics in theology and research methods and statistics in psychology (though unpopular those courses may be). Pinnock (1971) instructs that an evangelical biblical hermeneutic

is a process of meaning-extraction, of bringing out the sense of the Bible by means of principles Scripture itself supplies...when we approach Scripture as Christ did, in an attitude of total trust in all that it teaches, a sound hermeneutic results. We strive to discern the truth of each particular scripture in light of the whole of Scripture, regardless of what extrabiblical fact or idea may be bearing upon the text. Divine authorship implies complete reliability and assures us the Bible will not ultimately contradict itself. (pp. 209-210)

The traditional hermeneutical approach subscribed to by Pinnock (1971) is a model of doing theology proper and thus involves working primarily with the claims of the text itself. But such an intratextual declaration is not, in itself, totally sufficient as an authoritative claim for those Christians who reside as ambassadors to another discipline. The authoritative veracity of scripture, to be truly persuasive to boundary sitters, requires both faith and sight, not unlike the biblical examples of Gideon and Thomas. While a high view of scripture may suffice for an understanding of scriptural authority for the evangelical theologian, as a Christian integrationist living on an interdisciplinary boundary I must find an additional criterion by which I can declare the authority of scripture. The second criterion will not contradict nor replace the high view of scripture as a foundation for scriptural authority; rather it will supplement the first criterion and act in concert with it.

Authority as Explanatory Power. "If evangelical Protestants do not overcome their pre-occupation with negative criticism of contemporary theological deviation at the expense of the construction of preferable alternatives to these, they will not be much

of a doctrinal force in the decade ahead” (Henry, 1966, p. 9). This concern of Carl Henry’s four decades ago about the evangelical role in the theological arena applies well to the integration enterprise today. The integrationist must show that, indeed, a Christian understanding adds overall explanatory power to the phenomenon under investigation—in our case, the understanding of the human person. In fact, one reason why the evolutionary model is so alive and well in psychology (as well as in all life sciences) today is that it holds immense explanatory power. If only integrationists could develop a system with such explanatory power!

My concern is similar to Henry’s. By assuming a defensive posture that somehow has had to “prove” scriptural authority (e.g., the endless theological debates centered around scriptural minutia), the evangelical has frequently lost sight of the true *specialness* of special revelation; that is, the special insight into God’s meaning and purpose behind the creation. All too often, special revelation is presented not in juxtaposition with general revelation, but rather as a superordinate clause that provides the exact formula for handling epistemological conflict *when* (not *if*) it happens. It is as if we are dealt a hand with the ace of spades, knowing that we can play it with authority whenever we deem best. It is in this sense that evangelicals too often think of scripture as authoritative. I want to suggest that scripture is authoritative also because of what it has to offer—its unique insight and the potential explanatory power of such insight—and not just because Christians believe they hold some sort of ultimate trump card that negates the value of all else.

If indeed God is the author of all truth, as evangelicals are quick to claim, a good Christian epistemology should be open to every legitimate and reliable source of knowledge. And, indeed, Scripture itself points to other legitimate sources of knowledge (Matt 12:22f; Luke 11:14f; Phil 4:8) so we need not be concerned that we are somehow undermining the role of special revelation. Furthermore, when theologians discuss the sufficiency and primacy of Scripture (based upon Scripture’s inerrancy and resulting regulatory force over other beliefs), it is often understood as the only defining criterion of the *basic essentials* of Christian faith and practice (Packer, 1958, 1996). Thus, while Scripture should be given final and ultimate authority in matters of faith and practice directly relating to that faith (e.g.,

moral behavior), it does not mean that other sources of knowledge are not helpful or perhaps even necessary. In this sense psychology can provide insight to theology.

But even more pertinent to my argument here is that the integrationist living on the boundary must be cognizant of the limits of Scripture’s sufficiency and primacy. That is, though Scripture appears to be clear and direct in how we are to live moral lives, it is less clear (and less authoritative), for example, about basic cognitive and affective psychological processes—but nonetheless, it might have something to add to our understanding of such processes.

I propose that if indeed God is the author of all truth and not just the author of special revelation, and if indeed there are multiple sources of knowledge that leads us into a greater understanding of that truth, then the authority of scripture must be evaluated not only by its own claims that appeal to just one source of knowledge (revelation), but also by claims from other sources of knowledge, including reason and empirical knowledge. Once scripture also gains explanatory power through these other sources of knowledge, it gains authoritative status. Perhaps no one is in a better position to help scripture reclaim its lost authority in an age of science than those of us living on the boundary of Christianity and science.

Before moving beyond this section, I should add a brief caveat. I do not propose that by expanding the explanatory power of the Bible, we are somehow going to “prove” the Bible to be true. This should not be our motivation. Rather, I propose that as the explanatory power of the Bible is truly expanded, it will simply be given greater authority as a source of knowledge. As ambassadors to the academic world, those of us living on the boundary are in a unique and privileged position, but with all of the responsibilities that accompany such privilege, of making the case for scriptural authority not just by the claims of the text itself, but by demonstrating through all epistemological channels the benefits to our understanding of taking the text seriously. We are called to not just *claim*, but to *show* scriptural authority within our respective disciplines. In a nutshell, the integrationist (of theology and psychology in this case) is left with the question, “what does integration offer the discipline of psychology?” Only when we can substantively answer that question do we deserve a broader hearing.

A Nondialogical First Step: The Scientific Study of Religion

The much respected social psychologist and methodologist Donald T. Campbell (1976) once claimed that “present-day psychology and psychiatry in all their major forms are more hostile to the inhibitory messages of traditional religious moralizing than is scientifically justified” (p. 1103). What is significant about this quotation is the context and not the content of Campbell’s statement—as significant as the admission of psychology’s myopic guilt might be. This statement was part of Campbell’s introduction to what turned out to be a highly controversial presidential address to the American Psychological Association at a time that fit squarely within the Cold War era between psychology and religion. Today, there are discernable signs that religion in general, and religious claims in general, are given more weight in scientific discourse than in decades past. In the field of psychology, such change has occurred to the point that just last summer a book was published by the American Psychological Association (APA) on Judeo-Christian perspectives on psychology, with four evangelicals counted among the thirteen contributors.

It should be pointed out, however, that psychology’s engagement of religion and theology is as an equal partner—and hardly should it be. That is, despite rather persuasive arguments from contemporary philosophy of science that scientific knowledge is not categorically separated from other forms of knowing, we can expect that, *in practice*, mainstream scientific researchers, even those sympathetic to the claims of Christianity, will approach this subject matter from a rather limited scientific perspective. Religious experience will be investigated only from the perspective of accrued knowledge gained from the standard acceptable methodology of the social scientific disciplines, including psychology. The dominant point of reference for psychologists will be science and not religion. The simplicity of such a recognition should not be confused with the importance of its implications, including the fact that we should not expect that mainstream psychology will embrace a dialogical or interactive mode with religion, at least not until we convincingly can make the case, *on scientific grounds*, that such interaction will be fruitful. Instead, psychologists will likely approach this topic as any other topic—cautiously, with skepticism, and within accepted scientific models of investigation. We

can also expect that the “legitimacy” of studying religion and spirituality will, in the final analysis, be judged by the scientific community through standard scientific criteria (see Larson, Swyers, & McCullough, 1998). Many scientists, including psychologists, resonate with the opening words of theologian and scientist Ian Barbour in chapter 1 of his book *Religion in an Age of Science* (1990). “The first major challenge to religion in an age of science is the success of the methods of science. Science seems to provide the only reliable path to knowledge. Many people view science as objective, universal, rational, and based on solid observational evidence. Religion, by contrast, seems to be subjective, parochial, emotional, and based on traditions or authorities that disagree with each other” (p. 3). Though what is reported by Barbour is an uncritical modernistic understanding of science, it is clear that many scientists of all epistemological stripes are convinced of the usefulness of scientific methodology.

Those living on the boundary can react in one of two ways. One reaction might be that ultimately, such a rigid adherence to an either-or nondialogical approach, where the value of religious teachings are determined only by the terms of science, is not only imperialistic and myopic, but eventually is also subject to the law of diminishing returns. In this sense, religion is little different than most any other applied topic of interest to psychologists that has come and gone; once the research ideas begin to dry up, once researchers get hopelessly bogged down by methodological minutia, once it is difficult to find many statistically significant results or where the effect sizes remain disappointingly low, or once funding agencies lose enthusiasm for the religion variable, then it will be time to move on to another applied topic. But this pessimistic view is just one possible scenario.

However, the argument can be made that we are indeed on the verge of opening interdisciplinary parlance. A postpositivistic philosophy of science that teaches that scientific theories are underdetermined by facts, that data are not bare but are rather theory and value-laden, that science is a human and cultural activity, and that advancement in science is ultimately measured not by the accumulation of facts but rather by theoretical refinement, is far more commensurable to religion than the positivistic philosophy of psychology as science that was so thoroughly dominant until the past few decades. Still, however, for the content and truth claims of religion to be taken seriously, it is necessary that religion be

shown to be a unique variable with substantial explanatory power that can supplement in a non-threatening manner a scientific understanding of human experience. Thus, it is argued that a nondialogical approach, though limited, is likely a necessary first step to jump-start even the potential for interaction between religion and science.

ENCOURAGING SIGNS FOR THOSE LIVING ON THE BOUNDARY

Any effort to demonstrate the explanatory power of a psychology integrated with Christian thought has benefited greatly during the past two decades by an unusual degree of favorable change that has swept across psychology and its related disciplines, a change described by Richards and Bergin (1997) as a “new zeitgeist” that is conducive to incorporating the study of religion and spirituality into psychology’s research agenda. Such change has been precipitated by many factors, three of which will be discussed here: the recent emphasis on spirituality, postmodern thought, and research in cognitive science. None of these factors are independent of the other two.

Three Confluent Factors

The New Spirituality. It is hardly news that we are witnessing a persistent and perhaps even renewed commitment to religious and spiritual belief in our culture as a whole (Gallup, 1994; Gallup & Castelli, 1989). Though I caution later of a developing perspective in western society—one that tends to polarize in a simplistic fashion an individual (read “good”) spirituality versus an institutional (read “bad”) religiosity—there is evidence (Zinnbauer et al., 1997) suggesting that the majority of Americans see themselves as both spiritual (most frequently viewed only in personal or experiential terms such as a belief in or relationship with God or a higher power) and religious (most frequently understood in terms of both personal beliefs in or experiences with God or a higher power and institutional beliefs and practices such as church membership or attendance). As Hill et al. (2000) state: “it appears that many individuals approach the sacred through the personal, subjective, and experiential path of spirituality; it is also apparent that this experiential path often includes organizational or institutional beliefs and practices” (p. 16). So what we have then is clearly a cultural interest in matters spiritual which may

help legitimate, at least to some extent, what religion brings to our pursuit of knowledge.

Postmodernism. Psychology, like many other scientific disciplines, has encountered a transition from a rigid positivistic philosophical adherence to a more permeable epistemology that allows for other sources of knowledge, including knowledge socially constructed (Gergen, 1985, 1994; Howard, 1986; Manicas & Secord, 1983), the validity of which is a foundational premise of postmodern thought (Grenz, 1996). The essential indeterminacy of nature expounded in Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, the disruption of the commonsensical notion that time and space are absolute by Einstein’s Special Theory of Relativity, and the reluctant acknowledgement forced upon us by Quantum Theory that scientific inquiry is limited, all have had a ripple effect on psychology-as-science. Add to this Thomas Kuhn’s well-known and controversial arguments (but highly regarded by some) that (a) science too is socially constructed, even as it defines reality (i.e., a belief system, or *paradigm*, that prevails in the given scientific community as to what constitutes the legitimate domain of science) and (b) that progress in science is best realized through paradigm shifts—creative bursts that allow the scientific community to view reality in perhaps a refreshingly new manner (i.e., a *scientific revolution*).

Suddenly the epistemological barriers between science and religion no longer seem quite so insurmountable. Though maintaining that the results of this shift in construing what it means to call psychology (or any discipline for that matter) a science is ambiguous at best, one positive implication identified by Van Leeuwen (1996) for Christians in academic psychology is that

truth is no longer reduced to what is empirically or analytically demonstrable, with everything else (e.g., revelation literary and artistic productions) considered so much subjective ‘nonsense’ in terms of truth value. If all research is equally autobiographical, then the discipline’s gatekeepers are no more justified in rejecting well-crafted theories based on a Christian worldview than ones coming from a feminist, socialist, sociobiological, or any other standpoint. (p. 155)

From this, she concludes that religionists in general and Christians in particular are “now less marginalized in the wake of postmodern philosophical shifts” (p. 155).

Cognitive Science. A third development in psychology is the recently broadened conceptualization of human consciousness (Eccles & Robinson, 1984;

Sperry, 1988), based on contemporary research on the brain and cognition, that appears to be more conducive to a religious understanding of human nature. For example, Sperry, who takes a multilevel view of the mind/body relationship distances himself from both the dualist and materialist positions. Arguing that consciousness cannot exist independent of physical events, yet holding that mental states and physical events are dissimilar, Sperry contends that mental states are higher-level, holistic, and emergent yet law-abiding properties of the brain, that are causally effective downward, making use of but not violating the laws of lower levels of human existence. Barbour (1990) maintains that Sperry's position on human nature, by guarding against both a materialist reductionism and a mind/body dualism, is compatible not only with contemporary views of science but also with a religious worldview. Though the process theology proposed by Barbour as especially integrative with this expanded conceptualization is hardly evangelical, it does appear that the recent theoretical developments in cognitive science have helped create a new and more religion-friendly zeitgeist in psychology.

The Challenges Ahead

From the New Spirituality. These same three confluent factors also present hurdles, especially for the evangelical, as we attempt to establish a constructive relationship between religion and psychology. Though I argued earlier that the common tendency to polarize religion and spirituality is in part a social mispersonification, there is no denying that the religious landscape is changing in western society. What is emerging is a new breed of spirituality that is increasingly distinct from traditional, and certainly evangelical, belief structures. As a result, classic secularization theory in the sociology of religion has been revised to suggest not the elimination, but rather the transformation, of religion in contemporary society. This transformation is what Hunter (1983) calls the "deinstitutionalization of religious reality" (p. 14) as he describes the quandary of American evangelicalism. It appears that the term "spirituality," distinctively different and holding for a more positive connotation than the term "religion" (Pargament, 1999), has become the favored descriptor of this privatization of religious experience.

Some scholars (e.g., Turner, Lukoff, Barnhouse, & Lu, 1995; Sheldrake, 1992) see the gestation period

for this transformation as the 1960s and 1970s, a period that reflected among other factors a growing disillusionment with the established church and other religious institutions. Others, most notably historians of religion (e.g., Silk, 1998), remind us that such religious individualism characterizes much Christian experience and can be traced back at least to the Reformation's emphasis on the removal of the church or clergy as a mediator in favor of a direct and personal approach to God (see Tillich, 1952, pp. 160-163). Regardless, we can say with assurance that much contemporary religious life in the United States is captured well by Bellah and his associates (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985) in their description of the young nurse "Sheila Larson," who claimed that her religion is a belief in God unencumbered by church attendance and other social features. Rather, "It's Sheilaism. Just my own little voice" (p. 221).

To study only the functional benefits (or liabilities) of such privatized religion as "Sheilaism" is of limited value. While simply having virtually *any* religious or spiritual belief regardless of content, has potential implications for psychological study, the problem is that by empirically studying something so broadly defined as "just one's own little voice," the distinctive characteristics of religion and spirituality are lost. Such a functional-only concept of religion begins to sound strikingly similar to an earlier generation of humanistic psychology: authenticity, individuation, and self-actualization. If this field, however, is to truly move forward, we must extend our research agendas beyond strictly a functional analysis of religion and spirituality and begin investigating the *substance* of religious and spiritual belief. In other words, as we begin to more fully address, with regards to the now well documented link between religion and both mental and physical health, the *why* question (i.e., "Why is religion good for your health?"), we must eventually come to grips with the specific personalized content and "grammar" of the religious or spiritual experience, whether clearly understood and articulated by the individual or not.

Once the questions get to this point, the doors for integrative work begin to creep open and those living on the boundary have an opportunity to step forward. Are evangelical scholars ready?

From Postmodernism. I suggested earlier that the sweeping inroads into psychology and the social sciences by postmodern thinking provides a potential platform for Christian psychologists. My impression

is that those psychologists, who question the modern scientific worldview in favor of a contextualized social constructionism, are inviting Christians (as well as everyone else) to the party, with the understanding that no one at the party is to be too visible or allowed to make exclusive claims. After all, everyone at the party has their own legitimate take on the world and it's probably good that all in attendance try to see where the others are coming from.

In theory, postmodern psychologists are skeptical about the possibility of genuine advance in our understanding of persons; thus all positions theoretically have an equally legitimate stake and it is difficult to argue for the merits of one position over another. In practice, however, it is the exercise of social power (in this case, the party's gatekeepers) that determines who and how positions are provided respect and a listening ear, reflecting "a process of intellectual and professional disunification or disintegration" (Jones, 1996, pp. 138-139; see also Vande Kemp's, 1996, pp. 162-165, discussion of the "forces of disintegration" in psychology). If this analysis of postmodernism is at all correct, the future does not bode well, for there are several inherent messages within Christianity, some valid and some (mis)perceived, that because they run so contrary to the course charted by psychology's gatekeepers, will likely keep Christian psychology from being a power broker within the discipline. For example, these inherent messages include an emphasis on respecting and following authority, an exclusive claim to knowing Truth, belief in the existence of eternal damnation, and conservative positions on politically inflammatory issues such as sexual orientation. Postmodernism's current challenge to the dialogue between psychology and the Christian faith will likely intensify in the years ahead (Carter, 1996).

From Cognitive Science. Despite the aforementioned views of Roger Sperry, among others, regarding a broader understanding of human consciousness, cognitive science also presents itself as a formidable hurdle. The Christian psychologist Jay Brand (1997) reviews the literature from neuropsychology, computational cognition, neural networks, and evolutionary psychology and concludes that through the recent advances in these fields, there is now sufficient evidence to encourage the reductionist to think that he or she may account for most complexities of human experience. Brand sees a strict scientific adherence to the principle of parsimony as the chief culprit that encourages such a reductionistic

view and presents a challenge to Christians who accept science as a legitimate source of knowledge:

Succinctly, the challenge is this: If we wish to retain a scientific approach to the mind/body problem, we will eventually need to abandon either the necessity of supernatural intervention and spirituality in our proximal accounts of individual behavior, or the principle of parsimony in the theoretical construction of those accounts. Currently, at least in this author's estimation, those who take both the biblical perspective on human psychology and its scientific alternatives seriously, have not adequately addressed how crucial will become the principle of parsimony in the maintenance of their uneasy truce. (p. 242)

So, what I have identified are three distinct yet overlapping factors that both facilitate and also inhibit the full study of psychology informed by theology, and vice-versa. Certainly other factors could be discussed, including a parallel set of factors that both encourage and discourage theology's willingness to dialogue with psychology. However, as a psychologist, I am far more comfortable speaking about the limits of my own discipline and, hence, will therefore unidirectionally discuss theology's potential contributions to contemporary psychology.

WHAT DOES THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY WITH CHRISTIAN THOUGHT HAVE TO OFFER PSYCHOLOGY?

Jones (1994) postulated three modes of interaction between religion and science. The first mode is a dialogical mode where neither religion nor psychology can dictate to the other how to define and interpret its task, thus avoiding either a religious or scientific imperialism. The second mode is a critical-evaluative mode where each discipline can serve as an external evaluator to the other and thereby help major models and paradigms be appropriately self-critical, especially about underlying assumptions. It seems to me that those living on the boundary of integration of Christianity and psychology have spent a disproportionate amount of their time functioning in either or both of these two modes and have neglected Jones' third mode, the constructive mode. The constructive mode of interaction, when relating religion to science, for example, "... should occur when religious belief contributes positively to the progress of science by suggesting new modes of thought that transform an area of study by shaping new perceptions of the data and new theories" (p. 194). A constructive mode of interaction, whether theoretical or phenomenological, is not imperialistic. It does not suggest that theology is to replace or

even discount science or change science's fundamental nature. Nor does this constructive interaction mode suggest that science replace, discount, or alter theology's fundamental nature. It does contend that the scientist and theologian must be open to a *transformation of how to think about* their primary subject matter when the other domain of study has something positive to contribute to an understanding of the phenomena under investigation. An attitude of epistemological humility (Carter & Naramore, 1979)—whereby we expand disciplinary boundaries through conjunctive analysis and perhaps release territorial comfort zones—is necessary for such interaction to be truly constructive.

It seems to me that if we ever hold out any hope of reestablishing scripture's authoritative claim beyond any declarative statement of a high view, then we must do so through a constructive mode of interaction. What does integration have to constructively offer psychology? Elsewhere (Hill, 1999), I have suggested a number of possibilities. I will now focus on one of those possibilities in greater detail, utilizing Jones' (1994) constructive mode of interaction.

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THEOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL INQUIRY: FUNCTIONING AS KNOWING PERSONS

In the last portion of this article, I will review a psychological theory of how knowledge, including religious and scientific knowledge, is constructed. The review of this theory serves two purposes: (a) to demonstrate that both science and religious faith utilize the major processes outlined in the theory, suggesting that scientific and religious knowing are less differentiated than commonly supposed, and (b) to provide a concrete illustration of a constructive mode of interaction—in this case how religion or theology can help transform the perceptions of data and theory in psychology.

The Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST) proposed by Seymour Epstein (1993, 1994) suggests that when human beings function as knowing persons, they utilize in an adaptive fashion two parallel but interacting modes of information processing: (a) a rational system that is primarily conscious and often free from affect, and (b) a largely unconscious experiential system that is closely attached to affect. The rational system is analytic, reason oriented, involves conscious appraisals, encodes reality in abstract

symbols and words, and is slower in processing but more rapidly changes than the experiential system. In contrast, the experiential system is holistic, affective (pleasure-pain) oriented, involves associationistic connections, encodes reality in concrete images, and is more rapid in processing but more slowly changes than the rational system. Everyone utilizes both information processing modes, though people differ in terms of how effective, how frequent, and under what circumstances each mode might be utilized (Epstein, Pacini, Denes-Raj, & Heier, 1996).

Despite common misconceptions, both religion and science are no different than other types of human experience in that they employ both the rational and experiential modes, though perhaps to varying degrees. Epstein (1994), for example, contends that religion is well suited for communicating within the experiential system and calls for psychologists to investigate religion as a means to test CEST's distinction between the two modes. Indeed, Ozorak's (1997) claim that religious faith can be conceptualized as "an emotional landscape of primordial strength and simplicity upon which we erect structures of reasoned belief" (p. 199) argues well for both the primacy of the experiential mode but also as well the subsequent utilization of the rational mode in religious experience. In contrast, science may give priority to the rational mode, though experiential mode processing is far more involved than commonly presumed (Brown, 1977; Howard, 1985, 1986; Jones, 1994, Laudan, 1984).

A provocative aspect of CEST are four postulated *implicit* belief systems, each associated with a basic human need. Each need requires satisfaction, which is assessed primarily (but not entirely) on the experiential level (hence, these are identified as "implicit" belief systems). The four implicit belief systems with the related four basic needs include: (a) the degree to which the world is perceived as benevolent or malevolent (associated with the basic need to manage pleasure and pain); (b) the extent to which the world is perceived as meaningful or meaningless (associated with the need to develop a coherent conceptual system); (c) the degree to which the self is worthy or unworthy (related to the need for self-esteem); and (d) the extent to which the social world is comforting, trustworthy and dependable versus dangerous and undependable (associated with the need for relatedness).

Much empirical research by social and behavioral scientists over the past several decades has focused

on constructs that comprise these belief systems and needs with little if any consideration of what theology or philosophy has to offer, despite the fact that theologians and philosophers have for millennia led the ongoing search for a scholarly understanding of such basic human needs and beliefs. The effort here is a small attempt to encourage others to address this oversight by suggesting that religious experience and the theological underpinnings of such experience have much to constructively offer a psychological understanding of these implicit belief systems and their associated needs.

1. The Degree to Which the World is Perceived as Benevolent or Malevolent.

In psychological terms, this belief structure is perhaps most thoroughly investigated in terms of research on optimism and pessimism. Both optimism and pessimism are stable personality traits with implications for physical and psychological health (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Generally, research shows that optimists fare better than pessimists on both health (Peterson, Seligman, & Vaillant, 1988; Scheier & Carver, 1987; Seligman, 1991) and achievement related outcomes (Peterson & Barrett, 1987), though researchers also caution about the ill effects (e.g., unnecessary risk-taking, less vigilance) of a naive optimism (Burger & Burns, 1988).

Does an intrinsic Christian faith promote either a sense of optimism or pessimism? If so (in either direction), then what is it in the faith experience that promotes such a greater sense? There is not a conclusive empirical answer to the first question though one study (Sethi & Seligman, 1993) suggests that a “fundamental” type of religion (such as orthodox Judaism or Calvinism), may promote more optimistic explanation of events.

With regard to the second question, most intrinsically religious (i.e., where religious faith is one’s “mastermotive”—Allport, 1950) individuals see God as highly active, utilizing multiple channels, and working through or with natural factors including one’s own behavior (Smith & Gorsuch, 1989). Hill (1995) suggests that this particular pattern of attributional logic, by providing a sense of hope especially when one faces adversity, may prevent an overwhelming sense of pessimism.

The basic psychological need associated with this implicit belief dimension, according to CEST, is the management of pleasure and pain. Such a need has

been postulated within the classical psychoanalytic tradition as the most fundamental of all guiding principles for living. Of course, in its most extreme and traditional form, the psychoanalytic position sees pleasure as instinctually rooted in the singularity of the individual unencumbered by the necessary requirements of social living. In fact, the psychoanalytic perspective maintains that for many it is through religious teachings that such social requirements are unconsciously internalized and serve to counter the pleasures of biological gratification.

The balance of pleasure over pain is a notion commonly used by psychologists to conceptualize or even define happiness. For example, Parducci (1995) defines happiness as a “theoretical summation or average of the separate pleasures and pains experienced over whatever period is being considered” (p. 19). But, of course, such a definition is frustratingly elusive in that the terms “pleasure” and “pain” are slippery with a multitude of definitions and interpretations. For example, pleasure is often associated with such hedonistic notions as wealth, achievement, freedom from work, success, or power, yet Myers (1992) reports a plethora of studies that suggests that such constructs are, at most (even when taken in combination), only slightly correlated with happiness. So, if there is legitimacy at all to defining happiness as some sort of experiential ratio of pleasure to pain it is necessary to adopt a broader understanding of pleasure than its commonly perceived association with wealth, success, or leisure.

The need to manage pleasure and pain is also addressed theologically. To the psychologist, however, theology adds an interesting twist in that what is pleasurable may not necessarily be defined as good. For example, it may be that the experientially-based sense of pleasure is perceived by the Christian as either something good or something bad. Though perhaps strongly felt, this evaluation, because it is rooted in the arational experiential system of knowing (i.e., holistic, associationistic, crudely differentiated, self evidently valid, etc.) may not be easily articulated. For some Christians on at least some (but likely not all) issues, experiential knowing of a given issue brings closure and subsequent rational processing, if done at all, simply confirms the experientially-based judgment.

For example, though a study (a rational processing mode) of how the word “pleasure” is used in the Bible suggests that the experience itself can be morally positive (e.g., many scriptures refer to God

as a pleasure-loving God), the very idea may be viewed with caution by some Christians through their experiential processing mode—perhaps because of strong associationistic connections with a “worldly-pleasure,” or through concrete and stereotypical images of “pleasurable” living (carousing, lust, etc.), or through a general sense that it “just doesn’t feel right” to enjoy life’s pleasures. Further cognitive elaboration by the rational system may confirm (e.g., a concern about an excessive focus on the self or that such pleasure can lead to idolatry) or qualify (e.g., we are created in the image of a God who finds pleasure in the creation or that pleasure in the beauty of the creation brings one closer to the Creator) the experiential assessment.

Bassett and Hill (1998) propose a model that links the study of affect with specific Christian constructs. They suggest that for the intrinsically committed Christian, two general dimensions of affect well-established in the empirical literature (positive affect and negative affect) are supplemented by the bi-polar dimension of constructive and destructive affect which, in turn, are determined by perceptions of God’s character. That is, if the affective experience is congruent with perceptions of God’s character and brings God pleasure, then it is constructive within the Christian experience. On the other hand, if the experience is believed to be incongruent with God’s perceived character, it is a destructive experience. The Bassett and Hill model maintains that all emotional experiences have the capacity to be morally ambidextrous and are typically assessed at both a reflective (the rational mode of knowing) and nonreflective (the experiential mode of knowing) level.

Parducci’s (1995) discussion of the simplified life of a nun, Sister Chantel, provides an excellent example in demonstrating not only the rational and experiential systems at work, but how such systems may operate in the life of a committed believer. Parducci reports that Sister Chantel has chosen the life of a hermit in a small cave in the south of France to experience (in her own words) “a closer, more loving relationship to God, without the distracting intellectual dogma of the monastic order.” Once a month she hitches a ride to the nearest town to sell the woolen socks she has knitted since her last market day, earning the necessary \$30 to meet her basic needs until the next monthly trip.

For Chantel, the presence of God is as real as the stone walls of her cave – not as a schizophrenic who hears voices or has visions but as a sensible woman who experiences this presence

as a private, subjective experience. And it is while engaging in the highly automatized activity of knitting that she most often experiences this presence. The rest of her life, the relative isolation from other people, the living in a cave, the minimal participation in the market economy, all of this simplifies her concentration upon her loving relationship with God. (p. 201)

2. The Degree to Which the World is Perceived as Predictable, Controllable, and Meaningful Versus Chaotic and Meaningless.

The fundamental need associated with this belief structure is the necessity for a coherent conceptual system to give meaning to events. Baumeister’s (1991) extensive review of the literature led him to conclude that there are four characteristics crucial for psychological well-being from making meaning: a sense of purpose, a need for value, a sense of efficacy, and an affirmation of self-worth. I will briefly discuss the first three of these characteristics, saving the last characteristic for my discussion of CEST’s third belief structure.

A Sense of Purpose. The need for meaning is found in people’s desires for their lives to have purpose, which psychologists have sorted into two broad categories: goals and fulfillments (see Baumeister, 1991). Goals are extrinsically motivated to bring about future desired circumstances and serve to organize present activities, even when unpleasant. My goal of completing this article, for example, dictates that I remain in my office to write rather than to play golf. Fulfillments, on the other hand, are intrinsically motivated and typically involve some form of positive affect that often accompanies the reaching of such goals. Thus, I remain in my office to write because of my expected sense of accomplishment when this article is finally finished. In this sense, fulfillment is better understood as a type of idea—some subjective notion of an ideal state rather than an objective condition. Baumeister (1991) concludes that “It may not be in human nature to find lasting fulfillment in the present” (p. 34).

Given that higher levels of meaning are associated with broader timeframes (Vallacher & Wegner, 1985, 1987), religious thinking allows one to be aware of events and actions, including those surrounding one’s self, at the highest and broadest possible levels (i.e., matters of “ultimate concerns”—Emmons, 1999). To glorify and enjoy God (the absolute standard of being from which all of creation, including one’s self, emanates) *forever*, as the chief end of humanity according to the Shorter Catechism,

thus creates the ultimate purposive context for making sense of anything that happens. It is this expansive and decisive nature of religious explanation that allows even the most banal of life events the capability of being imbued with religious meaning.

How might such religious thinking, rooted in such a fundamental theological construct as the chief end of humanity, supplement and even transform the psychological understanding of meaning-as-purpose? Three ideas come to mind. First, religious thinking addresses Baumeister's (1991) concern about the elusive nature of fulfillment. Christianity teaches that fulfillment is more than an idea; fulfillment is an actual experience, potentially available to anyone, found in one's eternally-based (which, presumably, includes the present) glorification and enjoyment of God. Hence, a theologically-informed psychology suggests that humans are capable of direct and tangible experiences of fulfillment, though such an experience is perhaps tainted by humanity's fallen condition.

Second, if meaning and purpose are indeed important to human existence as Baumeister (1991) contends, and if religion is capable of providing answers about meaning and purpose, then religious belief and experience may be something that people *really* care about. Not only does this suggest that religion is worthy of study in its own right by psychologists, but religion may also provide psychologists a topic upon which people hold strong belief, something valuable to the study of basic psychological processes. For example, Abelson (1988) proposes that the historical disarray of scientific research on attitudes is that researchers have not devoted "enough attention to those attitudes that make a difference to people and society, attitudes that people hold with some degree of conviction" (p. 267). By arguing that the study of strong belief has much to offer the field of psychology, Abelson recommends religion as an important, yet heretofore overlooked, domain for attitudinal research.

Third, Emmons (1999) demonstrates how an understanding of meaning and purpose experienced through spiritual and religious themes (what he calls "spiritual strivings") has important implications for such psychological processes as personality integration and setting goals in coping with stress. That is, once religious meaning is established, it can be useful in understandings of oneself and how one can effectively cope with environmental demands.

This is what MacIntyre (1981) means when he suggests that the best way to understand a person's life is to think of it as a story within the context of a larger story and that the unity of life is found in the unity of a narrative quest. To see one's life as a sensible plot not only has the power to explain, but perhaps more importantly, the power to sustain (Kilpatrick, 1987).

A Need for Value. Baumeister (1991) contends that values, understood as the legitimization or justification of behavior, are an important aspect of meaning and that religion, as a value base, "still holds strong appeal to individuals" (p. 84). Recent developments in psychology, prompted by the former American Psychological Association President Martin Seligman's (1998) observation and critique that "while plumbing the depths of what is worst in life, psychology lost its connection to the positive side of life—the knowledge about what makes life most worth living, most fulfilling, most enjoyable and most productive" (p. 2), point to new research agendas investigating human strengths and virtues. Religion is far more familiar with the study of virtues than psychology.

In fact, how a person conceptualizes what constitutes a virtue is part of a larger value system or "grammar" that is frequently defined, often explicitly, by a religious tradition. To say that Christian gratitude or Aristotelian pride or Rogerian congruence each have a "grammar" is just to say that the concepts of these virtues differ in determinate ways which can be expressed in rule-like formulae specifying the connections and disconnections of these virtues with other virtues, beliefs, experiences, emotions, motives, actions, and so forth ... To know the grammar of a virtue is to have a schematic notion of the kind of "life" lived by someone who possesses the virtue in question. (Roberts, 1987, p. 193)

Thus, for example, to understand how one might practice a life defined by Aquinas' four "Cardinal" virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, one must decipher Aquinas' grammar of what these virtues consist.

A Sense of Efficacy. Baumeister (1991) contends that through our sense of meaning, we are better able to predict and control our world around us. While this is often one of our justifications for science, which is quite adept at predicting and controlling the natural environment, Baumeister also recognizes that science is less capable than religion in regulating how we emotionally and behaviorally react to our environment, which often provides a subjective sense of control. "If people turn away from their religion, they will lose the powerful consolations, ecstasies, and moral certainties that religion can offer" (p. 183).

Tenets of the Christian faith, as well as the tenets of other religious traditions, can provide adherents three different senses of control: interpretive control, predictive control, and vicarious control (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 1996). The idea that we can find joy in the midst of suffering (Isa. 12:3—interpretive control), that God provides signs for future events (Isa. 7:14—predictive control), and that all things are accomplished through the will of God (Jas 4:15—vicarious control) are examples of each.

3. The Degree to Which One is Perceived as Competent, Good, and Worthy of Respect and Love.

The associated need with this belief structure is something commonly discussed in western culture—the need for high self-esteem; that is, the need to positively evaluate the totality of inferences that a person makes about him/herself. This affirmation of self-worth is also one of the four crucial elements identified by Baumeister (1991) for making meaning out of our lives.

Perhaps when trying to understand why the need for high self-esteem is so important (besides the simple fact that people like to feel good about themselves) a brief review of a few major findings is most enlightening. First, people desire to maintain consistent views of themselves (Swann, 1987) and people with higher self-esteem seem to be more successful in maintaining such consistency (Campbell, 1990). Second, people with higher self-esteem appear to have more self-knowledge (or at least think they do), with the certainty of such knowledge associated with positive affect (Baumgardner, 1990). Third, people with high self-esteem are more adaptive to initial failure, either by trying harder (autoplastic adaptation) or by avoiding (sometimes cleverly) the same task (alloplastic adaptation) in the future (Baumeister & Tice, 1985). This is true despite the fact that both high and low self-esteem individuals demonstrate about the same degree of success or failure; therefore, self-esteem is not necessarily an accurate assessment of one's competence level (Campbell, 1981). Fourth, high self-esteem individuals appear better at setting goals at appropriate levels of difficulty and are more able to follow through on goal-related commitments (Baumeister, Heather-ton, & Tice, 1993). Finally, high self-esteem is a central component to successful coping behavior (Silver & Wortman, 1980).

Given this review, is there anything problematic with having high self-esteem? As long as everything is going well, research has uncovered little wrong with higher levels of self-esteem. However, once someone with high self-esteem experiences a challenging threat to their ego over which they have little perceived control, their ability to respond positively is often severely reduced and they may begin to demonstrate the self-defeating forms of behavior associated with lower self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 1993). Still, however, on balance, the psychological literature suggests that a higher level of self-esteem is both indicative of and a contributor one's psychological well being.

In a review of 22 studies that have empirically investigated the relationship between religion and self-esteem, Gartner (1996) found that seven studies identified a positive relationship, five studies uncovered a negative relationship, and ten studies found no relationship between the two measures. Given the different measures of religious commitment used (Gartner, 1996) as well as the conceptual confusion and definitional inconsistency of the self-esteem construct (Harter, 1983) and the potential pitfalls using traditional measures of self-esteem with a religious population (Watson, Hood, Morris, & Hall, 1985), it is little wonder that such inconsistent results have been found.

Though self-esteem is conceptually fuzzy, research now suggests that competency, autonomy, and relatedness (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Harter, 1983; Ryan, Connell & Deci, 1985) play pivotal roles in its development and maintenance. In an effort to define and measure self-esteem among Christians, Bassett, Singleton, and Altman (1996) found that the importance of identifying "spiritual gifts" (competence), the freedom and accountability for personal choices (autonomy), and both the privilege and responsibility of acceptance within a religious body (relatedness) are all contributors to the Christian's general level of self-esteem.

4. That people are supporting, accepting, and trustworthy versus threatening, rejecting, and untrustworthy.

The need for a close relationship with others is associated with this belief structure. Though tainted by sin, relationships with others are highly valued in the Bible. For example, Christians are described as brothers and sisters (Jas. 2:15) and believers as the

family of God (Mt. 23:8). As family members, we are called on to love one another (1 Cor. 13; Lev. 19:18), to show compassion and concern for those less fortunate (Jas. 1:27; 1 Pet. 3:8), to refrain from social discriminations (Rom. 1:14; Jas. 2:1-4), to confess our sins to each other (Jas. 5:16), and to forgive those who have sinned against us (Gen. 50:17-21). From a Christian perspective, fundamental to all understanding of maturity and completeness as an individual is one's relationship to God. Hence, in contrast to a humanistic psychology's emphasis on the authenticity and self-actualization of a singularly isolated individual, the Christian view is that "Life is relationship. Death is fundamentally separation, not cessation. Separation from God or others is the product of sin and nowhere more clearly illustrated than in Adam and Eve's separation from God's presence in the Garden with the resulting mutual alienation" (Carter & Barnhurst, 1986, p. 4). Though this relationship is frequently stressed in scripture and by theology through a rational mode of knowing, there is a personal and experiential aspect to this relationship as well, best characterized by the "fruits of the spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23). What results, ideally, is a spiritual mode of being that flows out of an I-Thou relationship (Buber, 1970) characterized by mutual giving and openness, intimacy, sense of vulnerability, desire to spend time together, and expression of affection. Trust and faith grows through this relationship, ever producing greater stability in the relationship itself (Carter & Barnhurst, 1986) and thereby helping meet the need for relatedness.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this article has been the role of scriptural authority for those Christians who seriously desire to engage their professional discipline. It is argued that the boundary between psychology and theology is one where scriptural authority cannot simply be declared, but must also be demonstrated, for at this boundary the two disciplines have much constructively to say to each other. It is up to those who live on the boundary to demonstrate that Christianity has something worthwhile to offer the field of psychology on its terms. I have tried to provide but one small example through Epstein's (1993, 1994) CEST model where Christian thinking has much to offer the field. Whether psychology is willing to engage evangelical scholarship is, of course, a pertinent question and one with mixed signals. It is,

however, only as evangelical psychologists accept the challenge to demonstrate and not simply declare scriptural authority that they will have earned a hearing.

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