
GOD AS CAUSE OR ERROR?: ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY AS CHRISTIAN VOCATION

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Christian psychologists can find it challenging to work in the context of secular psychology, with its presuppositions of methodological naturalism and its secularizing values. Unthinking engagement with the secular field of psychology can result in significant problems that must be carefully navigated by the Christian scholar. The doctrine of providence is briefly presented as an important theological foundation for an academic vocation in psychology. This is followed by a discussion of potential pitfalls, including secularization, an implied "God-of-the-gaps" theology, distorted notions of God's ways of working in the world, an incomplete picture of humanity, and the adoption of secularizing values. Following this, issues in philosophy of science foundational to the current discussion will be reviewed, and, finally, some suggestions for a vocational practice of psychology will be outlined.

What does it mean to be a Christian in academic Psychology? As Johnson (1997) has so clearly spelled out, "the lordship of Christ over all of a Christian's life is an assumption basic to Christianity" (p. 11). This, of course, includes an individual's vocation as an academic psychologist. But what does it look like, in practice, to bring Christ's lordship to the practice of psychology? A variety of answers have been posited in response to this question, and where any given psychologist lands is influenced by context and vocation, as well as variations in theological and epistemological commitments. The purpose of this article is to articulate one vision of what is involved in practicing academic psychology in a way that reflects a commitment to Christ's lordship over this domain of life.

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The vision presented here begins with two assumptions. The first assumption is a position of ontological realism, but with epistemological modesty. In other words, this approach will appeal to those who acknowledge the existence of objective truth, but recognize some limitations in our ability to apprehend it. In this way, it differs both from a traditional modernist view, and from a radical postmodern approach which would question the existence of objective truth. The second is that it is desirable to be engaged in the larger field of secular psychology, in a way that is salt and light to the discipline. Because of this emphasis on engagement, the approach advocated here differs in some ways from the approach known as Integration. This emphasis will also preclude positions that are more radical in their departure from what is normative in our discipline, as the desire is to engage, rather than alienate or remain on the fringes of psychology.

Integration is the pursuit of an accurate view of reality, guided by the belief that incorporation of knowledge from both special and general revelation is necessary in achieving this goal. As it is traditionally practiced, integration is done for the sake of benefiting the Christian community. This form of integration encompasses two disciplines: psychology and theology, and consequently embraces two sources of data (psychological data and the biblical text), as well as two epistemological methodologies (scientific methodologies and biblical exegesis). Integration is epistemologically more complete in comparison to other approaches to knowledge that are more limited in their methods of acquiring truth (including the position advocated here), and it could be argued that an accurate view of reality, and consequently an integrative mindset, are necessary for living life well.

The Integration perspective differs from the position that will be presented here in the sources of data and in the epistemological methods that are consid-

ered legitimate.¹ In spite of Integration's epistemological advantage, in an academic world formed in the context of modernist values, the ability to pursue knowledge integratively is limited and other strategies become necessary. In this secular context, the biblical text is not considered data (though some would concede that it might have heuristic value), and "knowledge" is defined more narrowly as the results of scientific investigation. Consequently, Christian practitioners of academic psychology within a secular context often seek the more modest goal of building the larger body of psychological knowledge represented by the field of (secular) psychology while at the same time attempting to bring their Christianity to bear on their vocation. This attempt often takes the form of addressing topics within psychology that are religious in nature (e.g., conversion), or that have religious significance or are derived from religious commitments (e.g., forgiveness). An implicit agenda is often to advocate within secular psychology for the importance of the religious and spiritual dimension of persons. With respect to sources of data and epistemological methods, practitioners of this orientation "play by the rules" of their discipline, embracing methodologies and sources of data that are consistent with current practice in psychology.

The purpose of this paper is to examine carefully this latter position of vocational psychology in the context of active engagement with the broader field; to point out some potential pitfalls and outline some suggestions for the vocational practice of academic psychology in which Christian beliefs and practice can be brought more actively to the table. While this approach might approach Integration, it can be distinguished from the integrative perspective outlined above in the more limited role allowed the biblical text, and in a focus on the study of God's mediated, rather than his unmediated workings in nature.

It can be challenging to work in the arena of secular psychology with its presuppositions of methodological naturalism and its secularizing values. Engagement with the secular field of psychology can result in significant problems that must be carefully navigated by the Christian scholar. In order to thoughtfully consider these problems, it is necessary to have an understanding of the ways in which God works in the created world—the theological doctrine

of providence. Consequently, a brief overview of the doctrine of providence will be provided, followed by a discussion of potential problems. Following this, issues in philosophy of science foundational to the current discussion will be reviewed, and, finally, some suggestions for a vocational practice of psychology will be outlined.

PROVIDENCE AS A FOUNDATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL VOCATION

Providence is the doctrine that God preserves creation, and guides and directs the universe toward the fulfilling of God's purposes (Dowe, 1997; Russell, 1998). It builds on the doctrine of creation by stressing, not only that God is the cause of the existence of all that is, but that God is the cause of the meaning and purpose of all that is. A distinction is generally made between God's preservation of the world in upholding all of creation, and God's government of the world through control of all areas of creation to bring about God's purposes (Dowe, 1997; Erickson, 2001). Biblical evidence suggests that bringing about these purposes includes controlling nature, guiding and directing animal creation, human history and the destiny of the nations, the circumstances of the lives of individual persons, and even the free actions of humans (Erickson, 2001).

Further distinctions can be made in the ways in which God exercises providential government of the world. Moreland (1997) distinguishes between two ways in which God acts to bring about these purposes: through indirect, mediate, secondary causation, and through direct, immediate, primary agency. Tracy (1995), drawing on quantum mechanics, breaks this down even further:

1) God acts directly in every event to sustain the existence of each entity that has a part in it, 2) God can act directly to determine various events which occur by chance on the finite level, 3) God acts indirectly through causal chains that extend from God's initiating direct actions, 4) God acts indirectly in and through the free acts of persons whose choices have been shaped by the rest of God's activity in the world. . . . God can also 5) act directly to bring about events that exceed the natural powers of creatures, events which not only are undetermined on the finite level, but which also fall outside the prevailing patterns and regular structures of the natural order. (p. 14)

Moreland and Tracy recognize that, in addition to preserving the world's functioning, God can also intervene to bring about specific purposes, and he can do so either through ordinary mechanisms, or through the interruption of ordinary mechanisms. Tracy's distinctions, in particular, serve to illustrate

¹Although it should be noted that the same individual may utilize both approaches, depending on the context in which the work is done, or the target audience. In this sense, they are pragmatic positions that can be complementary, rather than value positions that are incompatible.

the complex ways in which God's actions occur.

Governmental providence of the unmediated sort—acts which fall outside of the general structure of the way the world works and have traditionally been referred to as miracles—has been of particular concern to scientists. The problem is that miracles contradict the notion of the world as a unified and autonomous whole with a closed, deterministic system. Kaufman (as summarized by Tracy, 1995), for example, holds that “the idea of a direct act of God is unacceptable for us because such an event would involve a gap in the order of nature; it could not be sufficiently explained in terms of antecedent finite events, and so would constitute ‘an absolute beginning point’ for a novel causal series” (p. 6). Tracy and others point out that this objection is based on an outdated Newtonian perspective on ontology that is naturalistic in nature; that, in fact, notions from contemporary natural sciences support the possibility of a world with an open structure, which would allow for God's unmediated interventions.

The purpose in this brief overview is to clarify the distinctions between the preserving and governmental aspects of providence, and of mediated and unmediated interventions, as a foundation for exploring how they interface with the task of psychology.

PROBLEMS FACING THE CHRISTIAN IN ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY

From a Christian perspective, the primary problem with the academic practice of psychology in the secular realm is that it doesn't credit God with normative, regular ways of acting in the world, and it completely ignores God's non-normative interventions in creation.² This can be problematic in a number of ways.

In the first place, failure to recognize God's providential hand contributes to secularization. Artigas (2002) suggests that it “leaves untouched the claim that empirical science is the only valid road to objective knowledge” (p. 114). An analogy from contemporary missions serves to illustrate this point. Missiologist Bruce Bradshaw (1994) observed that missionaries serving in humanitarian ways in underdeveloped areas have unknowingly contributed to secularization by “explaining away” supernatural attributions through their educational efforts. For example, by explaining that certain water sources cause illness, not

because of spirits but because of bacteria in the water, they eroded a supernatural worldview, replacing it with a materialist perspective. In our role as educators, we can also unknowingly contribute to secularization by failing to recognize God as the author of both mediated and unmediated ways of working in the world. For example, studying change processes in people without acknowledging God's design of these processes and guiding hand in their implementation may leave students with a limited view of God's role in change.

A related distortion may occur when we only invoke God to explain areas in which our science has not come up with good explanations. A “God-of-the-gaps” position may be implied, in which God is recognized as the hypothesized source in a psychological theory when psychological mechanisms cannot account for findings, but is not recognized as the source when intermediary psychological mechanisms are accounted for. This, again, fails to recognize God's providential role in sustaining the universe and moving creation for His purposes.

Secondly, our discipline may lead us to think in ways consistent with deism. We may unknowingly reduce even “God's primary causal activity (direct, immediate, miraculous interventions into the natural world) to secondary causality (the indirect, mediate use of natural processes to secure some divine intent)” (Moreland, 1989, p. 12). In the desire to use secular language and modes of thought in order to function in the secular world, we may fail to recognize and acknowledge God's unmediated causal role because of a desire to find “natural” causes for events. While giving lip service to God's role as creator, we may find God irrelevant for explaining events in the world.

Thirdly, ignoring God's non-normative interventions in creation creates a lopsided discipline in which many important areas of human experience are left out. The hypothesis-testing model predominant in our field is shaped by modernism and is better at addressing God's normative, repetitive ways of intervening in nature, than non-normative ways. For example, the individualized work of the Holy Spirit is difficult to study through a hypothesis-testing model. Similarly, God's choice to intervene in response to human prayer is beyond the scope of our quantitative statistical methods. In fact, His work would probably show up as statistical error in our calculations! This presents a challenge that must be carefully thought through and involves advocating for more inclusive methodologies in our field.

²The terms “natural” and “supernatural” have often been used to describe this distinction. However, this language is problematic in that it has taken on the meaning, which I wish to avoid, that God is not involved in one, and is involved in the other. God is, in fact, the author of both the natural and the supernatural.

Finally, the values of psychology may influence us in ways that ultimately make us uncomfortable with references to God's work. Our values and practice are intertwined, so that when we regularly practice within a set of secular values, we may find ourselves affected deeply by them. Geivett (2003) notes that unthinking involvement in our discipline can lead to "a reconstruction of Christian belief that is in important respects discontinuous with the tradition that gave it birth . . . it demands of Christian belief a posture of submissiveness that will sometimes require surrender to ideas that are ultimately incompatible with and antagonistic to Christian belief" (p. 7). Seeman (2003) argues that having one foot in the Christian realm and another in secular academia places a heavy psychological burden on academicians by naively expecting them to easily take on and put off different sets of values as they "leap" into one domain or the other. He warns that the collective rules embodied by our disciplines work through the routine mechanisms of peer review to enforce conformity. While advocating a balanced position in which we see unity of truth between God's Word and God's world, in practice, we may slip into giving priority to the value commitments of our field.

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AS A FOUNDATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL VOCATION

We live in a transitional age in which many of the modernist assumptions undergirding our field are being challenged by postmodern critiques. In spite of these critiques, Wertz (1999) notes that outdated philosophical notions of science continue to pervade our field, "beginning in the introductory textbooks, continuing through research training at the dissertation level, and persisting as a gatekeeper to employment in research-based academic departments" (p. 155). These outdated notions, rooted in the modernist philosophy of logical positivism, have also served as barriers to a more overt inclusion of Christian thought in our research and theoretical work.

Metaphysical naturalism ("the view that the spatio-temporal world of physical entities open to scientific investigation is all there is" [Moreland, 1997, p. 3]) and scientism (the view that scientific knowledge is superior to other forms of knowledge, or that only scientific knowledge is true or rational) are two particularly problematic assumptions rooted in logical positivism. While logical positivism has largely been discredited by philosophers of science, its assumptions continue to pervade academic psychology (often

under the name of postpositivism, which similarly espouses determinism, reductionism, and the exclusive use of hypothesis testing; Creswell, 2003).

The dominance of logical positivism is evident in psychology's methodological preference for the hypothesis-testing model to the exclusion of other methodologies. Proctor and Capaldi (2001) note that "in American mainstream psychology, the scientific method is identified almost exclusively with hypothesis testing" (p. 2). Drawing from a basic textbook in experimental psychology, Wertz notes "virtually complete agreement that '(t)he identifying mark of science lies in its method'-formulating theory and testing hypotheses" (p. 132).

In addition to the broad ontological assumption of metaphysical naturalism, and the epistemological assumption of scientism mentioned above, two more specific assumptions flowing from this narrow methodological perspective of logical positivism that impede a Christian approach are: (a) values derived from sources outside of science have no place in psychological science; and (b) science can only measure events that are orderly and repetitive.

While space does not allow for a complete overview of the literature refuting these premises, two rebuttals of these assumptions will be summarized here: (a) knowledge in psychology has often been gained by drawing on insights derived from sources other than pure observation, and a contemporary philosophy of science allows for value commitments and theological sources to inform our theory-building; and (b) knowledge in psychology has often been gained by methodologies that, while naturalistic, depart significantly from the "scientific method" derived from the natural sciences, and these multiple methodologies are a valuable part of our field (Proctor & Capaldi, 2001).

Psychology and Values

Does the inclusion of values and insights derived from Christianity into our scholarly work violate the nature of science? Here, a closer look at our actual methodologies is helpful. The reality is that values (e.g., in the utilization of paradigms; see Kuhn [1996]) and reason (in the formation of hypotheses, in drawing conclusions, and in formulating theory) have always been a part of our methodology, wanted or unwanted. When attempts have been made to avoid them in order to remain objective and empirical, the result has been an impoverishment of our discipline. After reviewing the evidence, Jones (1994) concludes

that contemporary philosophy of science has taught us that data are theory-laden, that scientific theories are influenced by value commitments, and that even our scientific method is influenced by our values (e.g., in the topics we choose to study). In contrast to the rigid positivist methodological position described above, Jones (1994) and others argue that “a contemporary philosophy of science does not support a radical or categorical separation of science from other forms of human knowing, including religious knowing or belief” (p. 11).

The point should be made here that postmodern critiques not only suggest that it is allowable to permit our values to influence our pursuit of knowledge; they suggest that it is inevitable that our values will influence our knowledge-seeking endeavors. The implication is that any attempts to compartmentalize “personal” and “professional,” “theological” and “psychological” domains of functioning or knowledge, are in fact illusory.

Psychology and Multiple Methodologies

Do our naturalistic methodologies present an insurmountable barrier to the study of all God’s non-normative ways of intervening? Here, a distinction between science’s goal of detecting causal events only in the form of repeatable, regular phenomena (derived from positivistic models of natural science), and the broader detection of causal events (more appropriate to the study of humans) is crucial. The distinction between empirical regularities that serve as the basis of prediction, and a broader search for the underlying causal structure of behavior, has been made by several authors within psychological science. Prediction and control are goals derived from a positivistic science, whereas the recognition of the complex nature of the subject matter of psychology requires the more modest goal of the detection of underlying causal structures of behavior (Hill, 1989).

This distinction between a narrow focus on empirical regularities, and a broader focus on causal events, is made by proponents of realism, the “new philosophy of science” (Manicas & Secord, 1983). Bhaskar’s (1975, cited in Hill, 1989) realist theory of science proposes “an ontological realism but an epistemological relativism” (p. 67). Because of the complexity of human behavior, and the fact that it is an open system in which many levels of causality are relevant, Bhaskar argues that “the substantive domain of psychology is the underlying causal structure of behavior, and not empirical regularities” (p. 71). This critique of predic-

tion as the goal of psychology is also echoed by a number of other influential psychologists (see Proctor & Capaldi, 2001 for a review).

The emphasis on underlying causal structures, rather than strictly repeatable patterns has important implications that allow greater freedom to Christians in scientific psychology. Because of its emphasis on the identification of causal structures broadly understood, it opens the door for exploration of a broader range of God’s providential activity. It does so in two ways: (a) by moving away from a positivistic emphasis on observation as the source of hypotheses, consequently allowing our science to be informed by theological sources, and (b) by allowing the utilization of a broader range of methodologies. For example, a number of qualitative approaches such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) avoid the reductionism of strict hypothesis-testing models, while also articulating stringent procedures for deriving theory and meaning from the qualitative data.

Bhaskar’s model, like Wertz (1999) articulates a model of doing science that acknowledges the important role of philosophical and theoretical reasoning, particularly in the first stage of identifying the components of phenomena. Consequently, it opens the discipline to data from alternative knowledge sources, rather than overly relying on restrictive definitions of acceptable data (i.e., those that are tied to observations). These clarifications regarding philosophy of science allow for theoretical work that draws from special revelation to derive testable hypotheses, then using the methods of our discipline to pursue them. For example, taking into account the biblical emphasis on the telos, or the end goal of humans can lead to a study in personality theory of meaning—a line of inquiry that has been developed very successfully by Emmons (1999).

Bhaskar’s (1975) model also opens the door to alternate methodologies that are not focused on repeatable events, which allow for the exploration of a number of different causal structures. An example might be Miller and C’de Baca’s (2001) concept of “quantum change,” which utilizes a combination of methodological approaches to explore abrupt change processes. It should be noted that a variety of methods have historically been used in advancing our knowledge in psychology, and, after the brief reign of the hypothesis-testing model (adopted during the time of the behaviorists), postmodern epistemologies are making these alternate methodologies more

appealing. They have co-existed with (and in some cases, preceded) a positivistic hypothesis-testing model. With the widespread critiques of our methodology characteristic of our postmodern age, and the compelling insights regarding the ways that we “know” from a variety of sources (e.g., Polanyi, 1974), they are slowly finding their way into mainstream psychology (see Wertz, 1999) through the socialization process described by Thomas Kuhn (1996).

In summary, the philosophical challenges to utilizing methodologies which allow for broader causal explanations are slowly giving way to a more open philosophy of science. While the broader array of quantitative and qualitative methodologies currently utilized in psychology continue to be naturalistic, and consequently more suited to identifying God’s mediated rather than unmediated ways of providentially working, they do allow for these mediated ways to be explored in both the normative structures with which he upholds the world, or in non-normative interventions which are mediated through ordinary mechanisms. Although some might object to leaving God’s unmediated activity outside of the realm of psychological science, two points should be noted. The first is that God’s mediated activity comprises most of the subject domain that is of interest to psychology; in fact, God’s mediated activity of the preservative type probably constitutes the bulk of our subject matter. Other disciplines, such as history, have a much more difficult challenge, in that their subject matter by necessity contains more of God’s governmental providence. Moreover, the inclusion of a broader range of methodologies, such as qualitative research, allows us to study God’s mediated (i.e., through ordinary mechanisms) activity of the governmental type, as in Miller and C’ de Baca (2001). A second point is that our field’s inability to use its limited methodologies to identify God’s unmediated activity (i.e., interrupting ordinary mechanisms) does not preclude overt openness to the possibility of this type of activity occurring. In fact, this position is what is advocated in the following section.

PSYCHOLOGY AS CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Avoiding the pitfalls outlined above requires, above all, that we keep clear our goal of making Christ Lord of our vocation. The accomplishment of this goal involves a number of components: becoming part of a community of believers to influence our field, increasing our knowledge of philosophy of science in order to challenge the “rules” of our discipline,

increasing our theological understanding of how God works in our world, and carefully acknowledging the limitations of our epistemological methods.

Participation in the Redeemed Community

Geivett (2003), in a paper challenging secularizing influences in the humanities, outlines what he calls the redemptive model. He calls for “the emergence of a community of scholars who have experienced the transforming effects of regeneration in their scholarly activities, and who *collectively* [italics mine] function as salt and light in the often dark and bleak world of the academy” (p. 11). His vision is for scholars who take seriously the fact that they have “something distinctive to say about what it means to be human, and how to be fully human” (p. 10), and who collaborate in seeking to push the disciplines back in the direction of pursuing knowledge for the sake of human flourishing. This he sees as a task of redeeming the disciplines. In psychology, the opportunity for community and collaboration among Christian academicians is afforded through participation in organizations such as the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), as well as specific groups such as Biola University’s Institute for Research in Psychology and Spirituality (IRPS). A community approach to living out our vocation as Christians, not coincidentally, also has the advantage of drawing on the different strengths of the members of the community. The vocational approach outlined here allows for different members of the community to collaborate, with some emphasizing the important task of earning a hearing in our discipline through rigorous work, others doing the intellectual labor of formulating sophisticated philosophical ideas to undergird our labors, and still others bringing theological expertise to the field. Interactions with other Christians in our discipline can also provide the “supporting ligaments” (Ephesians 5) that encourage us to be bold in representing Christ, humble in our knowledge claims, sharp in our theology, and Christ-like in our interactions with others in our field.

Challenging the Rules

Secondly, the proposed approach to psychology involves knowing when to challenge the rules, rather than merely playing by the rules. A Christian vocation in psychology does not require a departure from reliance on methodological naturalism (although I have argued here for a more inclusive methodological toolbox than has been used in the past), but rather

advocacy of a sophisticated philosophy of science for psychology, and a voice of reality pointing out how our discipline actually gathers knowledge (which necessarily departs from a narrow scientific methodology utilized in the natural sciences). This includes, as mentioned above, interaction with many sources of ideas, including religion and spirituality.

Jones (1994) provides an example of this challenging of the rules in an *American Psychologist* article advocating improved relationships between psychology and religion. He postulated three forms of interaction between these domains, of which the second and third are of particular interest here. The critical-evaluative mode of functioning involves a relationship in which each discipline can serve as an external evaluator to the other and in that way help models and paradigms of each discipline to be appropriately self-critical. This is particularly critical in the area of underlying values and assumptions. Jones' third form of interaction is the constructive mode in which one discipline can contribute to the other by suggesting new modes of thought that transform an area of study by shaping new ways of perceiving the data, and new theoretical perspectives. Both of these modes of interaction are legitimate and valuable ways in which the Christian scholar can engage his or her beliefs, that do not violate the norms of our discipline.

Hill (1999), building on Jones' (1994) concept of constructive interaction, provides several rich examples of ways in which religiously-derived understandings can benefit the larger field of psychology by promoting understanding of basic psychological and social processes. For example, the recent interest in virtues in positive psychology has opened the doors for input from religion and spirituality. Clearly, the Christian tradition has much to say about the virtues that could enrich psychology's understanding of their nature. This example, and others, demonstrate that the understandable defensiveness with which Christians have engaged in academic endeavors may no longer be justified. Our religious commitments, which, by the very nature of how we "do" knowledge are brought into our work as psychologists, are no longer unwelcome sources of biases, but rich sources of theoretical contributions.

This use of philosophy of science, then, involves utilizing knowledge about epistemology and metaphysics to critique the outdated modernist "rules" of the discipline from within the discipline. In the case of psychology, it requires carefully distinguishing metaphysical naturalism from the use of methodologies

that are primarily naturalistic, and pointing out biases based on scientism. This may include a critique of metaphysical naturalism, given the demise of Newton's "closed system." It also involves noting the obvious gaps between the exclusive "ideals" of the discipline and the ways in which we actually acquire knowledge, and an advocacy of multiple methodologies based on postmodern critiques of modernism. Finally, it will involve defending the use of ideas and values drawn from religious commitments in the practice of scientific psychology. Since research has demonstrated that values are an inevitable part of our method, the most ethical way to do science is to make these explicit (Jones, 1994).

Moreland (1997) advocates a theistic (natural) science in which theological models of primary causal divine agency regarding some natural phenomenon could enter into scientific methodology: in scientific discovery, where theories guide research, in scientific explanation that postulates God as the primary causal agent of an event, and in scientific confirmation, where scientific discoveries are used to confirm God's authorship. While I have argued in favor of the first of these three areas, I would advocate that the latter two be left outside of the boundaries of what we call science, and form part of the larger interdisciplinary endeavor of integration. There are three reasons for advocating this position. In the first place, and following O'Connor (1997), it seems that allowing for a theistic explanation within the domain of psychology might detract practitioners from pursuing what science does best: seeking out God's mediated ways of working in the world. After secondary causality explanations are exhausted, the integrative scholar can then explore the interplay of these areas in order to gain a fuller perspective of reality. The second reason is that, as of yet, a methodology for detecting God's unmediated, non-normative ways of working in the world has not been articulated. Consequently, using God's agency to explain what we cannot explain through our naturalistic methodologies could lead to a new version of God-of-the-gaps. Finally, this position would likely stop dialogue with psychologists who are not Christians. It may be that in the future, postmodernism will change psychology enough that our discipline will be open to theories incorporating God's primary, as well as secondary causality, and we will develop sophisticated methodologies for doing so. Some individuals may desire to move in this direction, by participating in the relatively marginalized areas of psychology that are strongly postmodern in their ori-

entation. However, if our intent is to remain engaged with the field, then these last two areas should be exercised within the interdisciplinary domain of Integration, or the newly emerging Christian Psychology movement (see <http://www.christianpsych.org>).

Developing a Theological Grounding

Thirdly, there is also a need for sophistication on the part of the psychologist in areas of theology that impinge on his or her discipline so that we can recognize theories incompatible with Christian belief and utilize insights from theology in the practice of research and in theory-building. As noted above, values do in fact affect our ways of pursuing knowledge, and the Christian should be intentional about forming his or her value system in a way that reflects Christian belief and practice. It behooves the Christian specializing in the study of humans to know, at a minimum, what our belief system says about both the nature of humans (anthropology; see Van Leeuwen, 1985, and Evans, 1977) and how God works in humanity (the study of providence). Depending on the psychologist's area of specialty, other theological topics would certainly also become relevant (e.g., ecclesiology for understanding human relatedness, Christology in formulating theories of health or maturity, pneumatology in exploring change processes, etc.). The more grounded theologically, the more intentional and successful the Christian scholar can be in bringing these theological insights into the pursuit of knowledge in psychology in the ways described above.

Practicing Epistemological Humility

Finally, this knowledge of philosophy of science and providence theology should lead to epistemological humility on the part of the Christian psychologist. Our writings, scholarly presentations, and teaching should reflect an acknowledgment of our methodological limitations, in order to avoid the secularizing influence and deistic tendencies described earlier. This modesty is all the more appropriate in our quantitatively-oriented discipline, given that our inability to identify 100% of the variance in any area of human functioning should serve to remind us of our limitations. As Russell (1998) states, "The statistics found in our equations are *not* [italics in original] just a shorthand for inordinately detailed calculations of underlying causal processes. Instead, they indicate that there is no exhaustive set of underlying natural causes" (p. 54). This, of course, leaves open the possibility of God's unmediated providential work, which is consis-

tent with post-Newtonian views of the world as an open structure.

Epistemological humility requires that a balance be maintained in the types of conclusions that we derive from our work. Vande Kemp (1986) warns against a form of scientism known as "psychologism," a confusion regarding the limits of psychology, in which psychological constructs are seen as primary, in the sense that they are given the power to confirm or disconfirm the truth of concepts outside of its disciplinary parameters. In 1918, Wells (cited in Vande Kemp, 1986) articulated two ways in which this can play out in a psychology that attempts to include God. The first of these is the "pragmatic fallacy," in which finding evidence for the emotional or biological effect of a religious belief is seen as a criterion of the truth of that belief. The second error is the "fallacy of false attribution," which consists of attributing religious experience to a supernatural force in cases where the experience is merely physiological. As Vande Kemp also noted, this attempt to extend the psychological data to "unwarranted ontological and theological assertions" (p. 102) runs both ways: a reductionistic bias could lead to the inappropriate conclusion that a religious belief or experience is not related to God's involvement. Vande Kemp's conclusion is that the Christian psychologist should avoid the temptation of using psychological methods to prove or disprove metaphysical concepts. Her bottom line appears to be that psychological methods cannot identify concepts outside of the material realm. To attribute experiences to God is to step outside of the bounds of psychology.

While certainly concurring with Vande Kemp that psychologism has contributed to abuses among both pro-religionists and anti-religionists, it seems that a delicate balance can be maintained in avoiding making psychological data the arbiter for metaphysical truth (given its inability to do so), while also explicitly allowing for other sources of causation. If we are to maintain methodological naturalism as a key distinguisher of scientific inquiry, then it behooves us to make explicit that there are other causal agents at work that cannot be detected by our methodologies, and that may include God's direct agency. Failure to do so implies a position in which undetected causal agents are assumed to be natural (ontological naturalism), and this is dismissive of God's role in His world.

CONCLUSION

My intent in this essay is to encourage Christian scholars in psychology to be mindful of the ways in which they live out their vocation as psychologists, to promote awareness of potential pitfalls of practicing within mainstream psychology, and to suggest some ways in which our discipline allows for a Christian practice of psychology.

An interesting model for challenging our discipline comes from the area of feminist psychology. Feminist psychologists are men and women who advocate within psychology the feminist values of inclusiveness, collaboration, and social action. Through the intentional use of community for support and change, they have experienced some success in challenging positivist and postpositivist assumptions, advocating for a variety of methodologies to pursue truth, and exposing power dynamics in academia. While still seen as a “fringe” movement by some, many feminist psychologists are now in key positions of influence in our field, serving as editors, reviewers, and department chairs, even in exclusive scientist-practitioner programs, where they exercise their influence to continue changing the field (Stewart & Shields, 2001). We can learn important lessons from this movement regarding the power of advocating as a community, the legitimacy of advocating for our values, the need for a change agenda with the expectation that this will take time, effort, and will involve setbacks, and the encouragement that change can happen. The field of psychology is changing, and Christian scholars need not feel apologetic about the reforms they desire of psychology.

A thoughtful practice of psychology involves working with others in the redeemed community to model Christian practices and refocus our discipline with insights regarding human functioning derived from our theologically-grounded view of human nature. It also involves utilizing good philosophy of science to advocate for a rightful place of values and religious beliefs in the practice of science, and drawing on a sophisticated theology to inform our practice. Finally, the vocational practice of psychology involves recognizing the limitations of our psychological methods and carefully acknowledging God’s mediated and unmediated hand in the piece of His created order that we study. Perhaps we can, in this way, “give God the glory” as both primary and secondary cause, while avoiding the relegation of God to error.

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