

# Integrating psychology and christianity

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



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Psychology is the science most directly concerned with the study of behavior as stated by mouly “ Psychology is a relatively young, multifaceted discipline devoted to the study of the mind, with its related processes, and human and animal behavior” (Mouly 1973, 3). Psychology attempts to describe, understand, predict, and change behavior. Christianity on the other hand is a religion stemming from the teachings of Jesus in the first century AD. With the bible as it its principal tenets are that Jesus is the Son of God, and that God’s love for the world is expressed through Jesus death on the cross.

Whereas psychology deals with human behavior governed by the mind and Christianity with the teachings of Christ. There are possibilities for integration of the two elements into a larger defined set; it is also putting units together so that they work together as a whole. Healing solutions for a hurting nation through psychology integrating is, to restore to health or soundness; cure a means of solving a problem or dealing with a difficult situation, in Jamaica.

According to Holmes, An integrated psychology will be defined by the differences that Christianity makes to a person of the psychologist, the elements of his thought, and his methodology. We can synthesize these factors by saying that Christianity should alter the person of the psychologist and the basic approach he takes to his task (1975, p. 56) This view raises the issue, the sort of impact Christianity should have on psychologist while carrying out their duties.

Holmes makes the suggestion that honest commitment to the Christian faith should be a dynamic force for the psychologists wanting to seek an understanding of truth which innately increases his self-confidence in the

accessibility of other truth, in spite of what these truths are. Holmes believes that whenever psychologist are able to accept truth, it will bring unity to their thought life, increase their perceptiveness and sensitivity, deepen their scientific commitment to honesty and integrity, and more so, increase their wisdom and empathy for others, which is pivotal to healing a hurting nation.

The imperative question to be asked is how psychology and Christianity can be integrated toward providing healing solutions for a hurting nation. This is crucial since it is exceptionally evident that in our contemporary world, our societies are beleaguered with various problems, ranging from social, behavioral, spiritual, including even psychotic behavior. Fundamentally both Christianity and psychology have a huge role to play to combat these problems. They can do this in a distinct manner while their principles are still synchronized.

Since all truth comes from God, Christians should respect and endorse factual research that statistics have proven to be accurate. Equally, psychologists should copy the high ethical standards, principles, empathy and respect to the profession as outlined in the framework of Christ (the role model whom Christians follow). If they can do this, then it can guaranteed that they will break new frontiers in the profession of psychology; and the beneficiary, of course, will be the people of this nation who are hurting.

Synonymous with the “ Truth of God” concepts stated by Holmes, carter asserts the integration of psychology and Christianity is desirable: Who would deny, for instance, that humanistic psychology’s current emphasis on self-esteem and self-acceptance is not forcing the church to clarify the implications and meaning of concepts such as depravity, humility, pride, and

self-love in the light of the need for a sense of dignity and worth? And who would deny that the interpersonal focus of social psychology and group psychology has not made a deep impact on the church's understanding of community and body life, Carter (1979, 17-18)

I am in full agreement with Carter as he spoke to many aspects of everyday living. For instance, in our Jamaican context psychologists are often called guidance counselors, parents call on them to answer a variety of questions such as: Is my child's development normal? How should I discipline my child? What can be done about the AIDS problem? Psychologists are called upon to consult in all manner of situations, from setting up programs for residential facilities for delinquent teenagers, to prison reform, youth groups for churches, schools who have experienced violence, and churches reeling from the discovery of sexual abuse in their midst.

The almost never-ending list mirrors the woes of end-time humanity. These issues require both the spiritual support of Christianity and the scientific approach of psychology. I too postulate the view, like Holmes, and Carter, that all truth originates with God. He is the source of truth about the natural world. As psychologists, and other scientists, discover the truth about the natural world, including human beings, they are providing rays of light from Almighty God which should be used to enlighten our problem ridden nation, with knowledge of the behavior of human beings.

Furthermore, if a teacher files a complaint about a disruptive student and the student is then referred to a psychologist, who then comes up with a suitable diagnosis, to help the child; was the psychologist wrong to help that child? Likewise, if a pastor offers prayer to a gunman and through the word of God

helps him to change; isn't this providing healing solutions for a hurting nation? It is clear then that Christianity and psychology serves its purpose in healing our hurting nation. While a number of psychologists and Christians agree with the concept of integration, there are others who view it differently.

Mahoney (1976) offers several characteristics of a scientist: intelligence, creativity, logical reasoning skill, experimental acumen, objectivity, and neutrality, loyalty of truth, humility and willingness to suspend judgments until the facts are in. Christians have been often times characterized by some as possessing the opposites of these qualities, in that many Christian beliefs require suspending logical judgment, and sacrificing objectivity and neutrality to claim the real "truth".

Looking at Mahoney's arguments from a scientific perspective, one could argue that it would be dangerous to integrate Christianity and Psychology as there are many contradictions. These contradictions suggest that if Christianity should merge with psychology it might create a more chaotic society; so instead of finding solutions to the problems, it might create additional problems; for whereas a psychologist might want to use a proven therapy to solve a particular problem, the Christian would probably want to use prayer or other religious rituals.

Mahoney's watch words (intelligence, creativity, logical reasoning skill, experimental acumen, objectivity, neutrality, loyalty of truth, humility and willingness to suspend judgments until the facts are in) for describing a scientist's character are all rooted in the physical realm not spiritual. Some

may argue that he leaves no room for any religious intervention. Is he suggesting that Christians do not possess any of these?

If he is saying that Christians possess some of these character traits, then there would be common ground for integration, On the other hand, if he is suggesting that Christians have none of these qualities, then “ true” integration cannot take place. Contrary to Mahoney, I am of the view that integrating psychology and Christianity would be beneficial to the healing of a hurting nation. B. F. Skinner a prominent Harvard behaviorist who was against the conception of integrating Christianity with psychology.

Skinner (1971) argued that psychology as a science must study exclusively the effects of external forms of events on observable behavior, and not study such inner variables as need for achievement, test anxiety, and religious belief unless those variables can be redefined as concrete behaviors, in doing so skinner rejected whole heartedly the argument of integration. It is mind view that this argument put forward by skinner is not reliable as skinner limited psychology to only overt behavior, he failed to mention that psychology looked at covert actions.

So to argue that integration cannot occur because psychology is limited to overt actions is no way true, and I believe is that the attempt by skinner to limit the fact that integration of psychology was unavoidable and necessary to heal a hurting nation. In concluding, the question is: if there are so many contradictions and differences with Christianity and Psychology, how can there be any integration, and if integration should occur, when? In scrutinizing the arguments posited by both groups, I believe that it is

possible for both Christianity and Psychology to provide healing solutions for a hurting nation.

This can be accomplished by not looking at their views but the effect they have on people's lives: look at the answer they cannot give and recognized that while each of them boast about what is correct, they are both are pieces of the puzzle of God . How to deal with this is not saying that they should abandon their methodologies; but this is saying that the only way that they will heal a hurting nation is through unity. Unity is synonymous with integration, and truth is not absolute or inapplicable, hence there are many ways to solve the same problem.

Both psychologist and Christians need to be acquainted with the role of God's " creation grace" in culture and science and a significant element of truth that we need to help a hurting nation is to remind people, about who they really are; It is by integration for a common goal, That Psychologists and Christians can teach people that they are created in the image and likeness of God; so they will know that everything is God's especially, psychology and Christianity; and that the mission of both psychology and Christianity to tell a hurting nation that both disciplines are genuinely connected to all of life, that they are one with all people, and that they are never separate from God.

There is no doubt that the integration of psychology and Christianity would prove beneficial to my area of study which is guidance and counseling, As a Christian I am wholeheartedly in favour of the integration of both areas, since integration allows psychology and Christianity to guide the ways in which I counsel my clients which would result in optimal results. It is as a

result of integration of my Christian faith and psychology that healing would come to my clients.

I believe it is of paramount importance for psychologists and Christians, to demonstrate to people that they live in a world of magnificent abundance, where there is enough for everyone, and that it is in sharing the most, not in hoarding the most, that the most is received. People need to know that God's blessings are to benefit everyone. They should know that there is nothing that they cannot accomplish, that the deception of illiteracy can be exterminated, and that all anyone really needs, according to the psychologists and the Christians, in their therapy is to close their eyes and believe that they will be able to gain healing solutions from psychology and Christianity.