

# Different approaches to psychology and christianity theology religion essay



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Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity, written by David N. Entwistle, is a thorough examination regarding the integration of psychology and theology, in which both attempt to understand human nature.

Integration is described as “ a thing that we discover when we are uncovering the fundamental unity that God created,” as well as “ something we do as we create ways of thinking about, combining, and applying psychological and theological truths” (Entwistle, 2004, p. 19).

An individual’s worldview is one’s life perspective, which filters their reality. Both the psychologist and the theologian bring their worldviews and presuppositions into their separate methodologies and goals. The author’s theocentric model unites theology and psychology, as both have similar concepts that derive from God’s created world. In order to attain a holistic perspective of human nature, both are necessary (Entwistle, 2004).

Before psychology was classified as a science, it had deep roots in philosophy and religion, though it was not successful in dealing with serious psychological disorders (Entwistle, 2004, p. 44). During this time the church leaders were deemed the “ spiritual physicians,” caring for the souls of men. (Entwistle, 2004, pp. 44-45). The church leaders were involuntarily pushed into the back shadows with the rise of psychology, when curiosity began to embark upon the unconscious of man, moving psychology from examining the sensory systems of man to examining the mental processes of man (Entwistle, 2004, p. 49).

Integration needs to recognize and discern the “ unity of all truth”, that is that all truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found. A comprehensive

integration will involve, according to the allies paradigm, a holistic perspective on how human beings “ live, learn, think, feel, believe, and relate to each other and to god” (Etwistle, 2004, p. 239). The book of God’s word (scripture) and the book of God’s works (creation) never conflict, but the interpretations of man may be inconsistent at times (Entwistle, 2004, p. 262).

Human nature is complex and multifaceted. Psychology and theology must be integrated because human beings are integrated in themselves. It is erroneous to build truth upon just a few strands of the whole tapestry, lest we lose sight of the entire being. Integration must consist of the faithful reading of both books, examining with careful exegesis and hermeneutics, and re-evaluating psychological reasoning, data and theories. We must learn to be comfortable with the fact that there will be some level of uncertainty and ambiguity we will always have to live with (Entwistle, 2004, pp. 273-274).

## **Concrete Response**

My husband and I were pastoral leaders in a church where anything outside of the church was not considered ministry. We were told that God wanted us to work in full time ministry, which meant working full time with no steady pay.

I didn’t have any formal training in the bible nor in counseling, yet I preached and counseled. Everything was “ by faith,” with the false belief that all knowledge and healing exclusively comes through the Spirit of the Lord. All of the teaching and counsel given stemmed from the leader’s hurts and experiences. This was of no benefit to the parishioners, especially to those

who had genuine mental health issues. My husband and I eventually moved away to another state.

Whenever I tried to give counsel, I found that religious people either felt they did not need it, or believed I was somehow not spiritual enough. I also found that nonreligious people tended to be disinterested in hearing anything about God. Every time I opened my mouth, I seemed to find my foot in it.

Five years after we left that church I enrolled in Liberty University to continue my education in psychology, still deeply struggling with my anti-psychology beliefs. I finally choose to go into professional counseling. I desired to be equipped and effective in counseling. Over the years I have come to know Christians who have had real psychological issues, but they only sought out “ Christian counsel.” Most still have those issues today, still hiding behind religion.

## **Reflection**

With the integration of theology and psychology, are we attempting to create a separate “ Christian psychology?” If so, would this “ Christian psychology” be less effective for those who are not Christians, or do we require conversion before they are able to “ partake of God’s wisdom?” If so, are we withholding the very grace and graciousness of God, forgetting that fact that His sun rises on the evil as well as the good (Mat. 5: 45).

I also wonder if integration is realistically possible with all the various perspectives underneath the umbrella of Christian theology. Christianity has numerous opposing theories and conclusions, similar to secular psychology. I

don’t believe full integration will ever be possible, but I am confident that <https://assignbuster.com/different-approaches-to-psychology-and-christianity-theology-religion-essay/>

Spirit filled Christians have the power and ability to discern and act in such a way to work towards the healing and wholeness of each client.

Entwistle was very constructive in stating the importance and possibility of integration (in which I disagree). He outlined various historical as well as contemporary viewpoints concerning integration, giving his opinion on which ones promote a holistic perspective. He also suggested several useful methods of integration.

Although Entwistle acknowledged the metaphysical work of the Holy Spirit in integration, I was disappointed that he didn't make this a significant theme. I find it is important to integrate, yet believe that full integration may be impossible. I would have also liked to have read more about the pitfalls of being unequipped in ministry when dealing with mental health issues.

## **Action**

Given that each human being is complex, counseling can be problematic. A holistic approach is the only way one can tap into the inner intricacies of man. I would plead with every Christian counselor to continuously examine their hearts. Due to the nature of our society and culture today, I would suggest they carefully consider every aspect of their client (body, soul and spirit). If not, they may do more harm than good.

I am determined to work out my biases, as well as my resistance to change from anti-psychological thinking. I will continue to strive to gather all truth, which is God's truth, from every relevant discipline. My main goal as a counselor is to be equipped and ready to pull out the most effective

treatment from my relentless inner-integration. I believe every effective  
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Christian counselor must be filled with the knowledge of God's will " in all wisdom" as well as " spiritual understanding" (Col 1: 9-17), so to bring forth instruction with zeal and fullness from his or her inner storehouse. This will ensure the impartation of both fresh wisdom and ancient wisdom (Mat 13: 52 KJV; Wordstrudy). For one without the other stands deficient.