

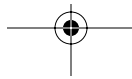
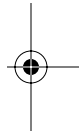


Introduction

GOOD COUNSELORS LISTEN MORE THAN THEY SPEAK. Believing writers should do the same, we have been listening for many years, trying to understand the opportunities and challenges of an integrative approach to psychotherapy.

We have listened to our colleagues. An ambitious book such as this may have two author names on the front cover, but it reflects the wisdom and work of numerous others who have taught, mentored, encouraged, critiqued and inspired us over the years. The contemporary movement to integrate psychology and Christianity has been championed by various godly men and women; we have been influenced by them and are privileged to call many our friends. Scholars have been doing important integration work over the past several decades, credible graduate programs have been developed, thoughtful Christian clinicians provide therapy that is sensitive to both psychology and faith, church communities have been helped by psychological principles, useful books have been written and scientific journals established, and the Christian Association for Psychological Studies has grown in depth and number. Indeed, psychology as a discipline has done well in considering integration, perhaps better than other academic disciplines. It is upon this foundation—formed by the insights and hard work of many dedicated scholars, clinicians, pastors, authors and educators—that we have developed *Integrative Psychotherapy*.

We have listened to our students. The integration of psychology and Christianity has become an important force in higher education—Christian colleges educate undergraduates in models of integration and theories of personality, most seminaries offer counseling courses and degree programs, countless masters programs offer degrees in Christian counseling or psychology, and various integration-based doctoral programs prepare students to become licensed psychologists. Students often make enormous sacrifices to study integration. They come to their training with a passion to learn an integrative approach to psychotherapy—one built on a Christian worldview—and too often they are offered only a variety of psychological models derived from nonreligious worldviews, a smattering of theology courses, and a charge to go out into the world





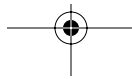
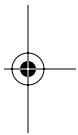
and do good integration with what we have taught them. It need not surprise us that most students do very little integrative work after graduating. They have learned important information about psychology and Christianity, but they have not been taught what they came to study: the integration of psychology and Christianity as it relates to counseling and psychotherapy.

We have listened to pastors and others committed to church ministries. From storefront churches in crowded urban areas to sprawling suburban megachurch campuses to rural community chapels, pastors and church leaders face the same challenge of finding help for hurting parishioners. Everywhere Christian leaders are asking the same question: “Who can I trust to help care for the souls in my congregation?” Too often the Christian psychologist or Christian counselor across town turns out to be untrustworthy—a wolf in sheep’s clothing, someone who has bought into a nonreligious psychological worldview and yet attempts to build a practice by soliciting referrals from pastors. Perhaps the problem is not malice on the part of the therapists; often these are graduates of our integration-based graduate programs and seminaries just doing what they have been trained to do.

We have listened to our clients. People in pain take enormous risks to overcome inhibitions and admit their problems to a stranger. Some potential clients may still let their fingers do the walking through the Yellow Pages, or their mouse do the clicking through superpages.com, but most clients choose more carefully. They talk to a friend, a pastor, a physician, asking particular questions so they can find a trustworthy helper in a time of need: “I’m looking for a good counselor—do you know of any?” Often they add a coda, “It needs to be a Christian,” because the general public is more attuned to religious matters than the psychological community (Shafranske, 1996). When clients come for help they are sometimes surprised by how little faith is considered in therapy, even by therapists who promote themselves as Christian therapists.

We have listened to our critics. Biblical counselors argue that integrationists do not take Scripture and Christian doctrine seriously enough. Most of us in the integration movement respond by calling biblical counselors naive and uninformed, and sadly, we often do it without even reading their books or articles or developing relationships with biblical counselors. One might question who is really naive and uninformed under these circumstances. We Christian psychologists have too often maligned these critics without hearing their arguments, and so we have forgone the possibility of transformation and growth.

We have both spent many years in church-related service, clinical practice, reading and studying psychology and theology, and teaching doctoral students in clinical psychology. *Integrative Psychotherapy* represents our effort to articu-





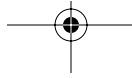
late a model of psychotherapy that is faithful to both Christianity and psychology. It took almost three years to write, and the ideas behind it took almost three decades of listening, study and experience to develop.

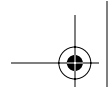
An Integrative Model

Integration is a controversial notion. Some prefer to reject psychology altogether and look for a Christian model of helping that is completely scriptural. This is an ambitious endeavor, and one that we admire, but it seems to overlook the possibility of finding truth through created order as well as in Scripture. By looking only to Scripture, these counselors foreclose the possibility of learning through contemporary science. As a result, stunning scientific advances in treating many conditions are overlooked in deference to approaches deemed to be more consistent with Scripture (for a fascinating discussion on this, see Jones, 2001, and Powlison, 2001). Others reject integration by minimizing the importance of faith. Indeed, it seems that some come dangerously close to deeming their Christian faith irrelevant as they acculturate into their roles as mental health professionals. Preliminary evidence suggests graduates of Christian doctoral programs are less likely to use spiritual interventions in their clinical work than Christian graduates of secular programs (Sorenson & Hales, 2002). This could be good news—if graduates of Christian programs are more aware of the subtle ways spiritual interventions can be misused with vulnerable clients. But it could also be bad news if graduates of Christian programs are somehow abandoning the spiritual worldview that drew them to graduate school in the first place. Much of today's Christian psychology is imbalanced in its integrative focus (Beck, 2003), failing to draw on both psychology and Christian thought.

Integrative Psychotherapy (IP) is integrative in two dimensions: theologically and theoretically. By theological integration we mean that a Christian psychotherapy must begin with a Christian view of persons. Christianity is the starting point—the fundamental worldview on which a Christian psychotherapy is based. Psychology provides a great deal of help once an adequate Christian foundation is established. By theoretical integration we refer to the general trend in the psychotherapy literature to find value in various theoretical approaches. Rarely does one find a purist cognitive therapist, for example. It is much more common to find a cognitive therapist who also values attachment theory, or a psychodynamic therapist who draws on various cognitive and behavior techniques for initial symptom relief. Integrative models are becoming increasingly popular among professionals as they realize the limitations of any single theory. In IP we integrate behavioral, cognitive and relational models of therapy.

It would be grossly overstated to say that ours is the first integrative under-



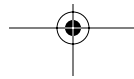


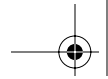
standing of psychotherapy in either of these two dimensions. Many have developed models of theoretical integration (Norcross & Goldfried, 2005). Others have developed models for Christian counseling and psychotherapy, and some with distinction. Counselors and pastors and scholars have developed helpful and innovative approaches to healing prayer and Christian counseling, or offered Christian appraisals of secular models, or provided models of biblical counseling that include occasional insights from psychology. But none of these models has gained prominence in integrative training programs, sometimes because they skim the surface of Christian doctrine—sprinkling Bible verses atop secular theories—or because they overlook advances of contemporary psychological theory and science. IP is unique in that it provides both a theoretical and a theological dimension of integration.

Avoiding Extremes

Whoever wrote that “every road has two ditches” must have lived before modern highway and drainage systems. Updating the adage to “every street has two curbs” would never work. But even in the suburbs and cities, where we have no ditches, the metaphor has lasting value. Much of life involves navigating between the boundaries on the right and the left, avoiding the extremes that render us irrelevant, fanatical or irresponsible. The task of this book—constructing a model of Christian psychotherapy—is, among other things, a task of avoiding two ditches.

At one extreme is the risk of implying that we have developed the only correct model for Christian counseling, psychotherapy and pastoral counseling. Though we believe the approach to therapy presented in this book to be theologically—and psychologically—sound and effective, we have no aspirations of joining the ranks of those who claim to have discovered the *one true approach* to Christian counseling. There is no single system of Christian psychology or psychotherapy and, it seems to us, there never will be. The Bible does not teach a single, unifying theory of personality that accounts for individual differences; that is simply not the purpose of Scripture (Jones & Butman, 1991). And any authority other than Scripture cannot possibly provide a foundation for counseling that will be agreeable to all Christians. History has proven how difficult it is for Christians to agree with one another. A parallel argument can be made on the basis of science: there are many psychotherapeutic paradigms available, but research evidence to date does not support claims of vast superiority for any one approach (Nathan, Stuart & Dolan, 2000). Thus, one of our navigational challenges in crafting this book is to avoid communicating that IP is *the* Christian approach to psychotherapy. It is not. IP is simply *one* approach to psychother-





apy, informed by Christian theology and spirituality as well as contemporary psychology.

We have already mentioned the other extreme—one that ultimately disappoints our students, churches, clients and critics. Some Christian therapists and biblical counselors seem content to abandon the possibility of a truly integrative psychotherapy. They may wonder how such a task could ever be accomplished when there are so many incompatible theories and ideas swirling about us in both the realms of psychology and Christian thought. They become segregationists rather than integrationists.

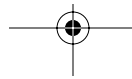
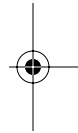
We have tried to avoid these two extremes—the one that tickles our grandiosity by suggesting we are unveiling the long-awaited answer to how all Christians should do psychotherapy, and the one that segregates faith from psychology—and in the midst of these extremes to construct a responsible and helpful approach to psychotherapy. This, of course, is no easy task. We advocate IP because it is built on two foundations we value: Christian faith and science. Christian doctrine provides the ideological structure for IP while the methods of psychotherapy, with their weighty scientific support, provide a means for identifying and modifying emotions, cognitions, behaviors and relational patterns.

Responding to the Challenge

Adages abound, so we conclude this introduction by plundering two more for our purposes. The first likens a good book to a good friend. If so, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Jones & Butman, 1991) has become a good friend to many Christian psychologists and their students. Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman provide an incisive Christian evaluation of the contemporary psychotherapies. Near the beginning of their book they describe two stages of constructive integration. The first, accomplished admirably with their volume, is critical appraisal—looking intently at various psychotherapies from a Christian vantage point. The second is to build a new theory of psychotherapy based on a Christian foundation. The authors issue a challenge of sorts:

We anticipate that a thoughtful reader will find this book inadequate, in that we will end with finding none of the approaches adequate for understanding human nature, while pointing out many benefits of most of the approaches. We challenge such a thoughtful reader to join in the dialog of developing the comprehensive Christian approach that we all so need! (p. 23)

Here is where the second adage comes to mind: it is about fools rushing in where angels (and other wise creatures) fear to tread. Our combined forty-five



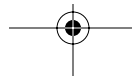
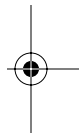


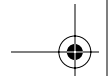
years of teaching psychology and fifty years of clinical practice have either rendered us fools or given us enough confidence to enter the dialogue that Jones and Butman suggest, or perhaps it is some of both. This book is an effort to articulate a Christian psychotherapy—one that takes both Christianity and psychology seriously, and that helps to serve hurting people through the ministries of Christian counselors, psychologists, social workers and pastors.

The first four chapters establish a theoretical frame for IP. Chapter one provides an overview of Christian doctrine, viewed from an evangelical Protestant perspective, with special attention given to three theological views of what it means to be made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). These three views of the *imago Dei* correspond with the three domains of IP: functional, structural and relational. Chapter two gives an overview of scientific findings regarding psychotherapy. This chapter will humble theoretical purists because it demonstrates that no single therapeutic approach can claim vast superiority over any other. The so-called cognitive revolution is described in chapter three, along with an overview and Christian critique of cognitive therapy—an important task because the first two domains of IP are closely related to contemporary cognitive therapy. Chapter four is where we provide a theoretical overview of IP, drawing on the doctrinal, scientific and theoretical perspectives developed in the first three chapters.

Once a theoretical foundation is established, we consider the practice of IP in the next seven chapters. Chapter five is a brief survey of assessment and case conceptualization. Chapters six and seven describe symptom-focused interventions, known as the functional domain. We pay special attention to treating anxiety disorders because they are well suited for functional-domain interventions. The structural, or schema-focused, domain of IP is the focus of chapters eight and nine. We discuss the treatment of depression in the context of describing schema-focused interventions. In chapters ten and eleven, we look at the relational domain of IP, concentrating on the importance of the therapeutic relationship in promoting change. Although relationship-focused interventions have many applications, we devote special attention to the treatment of personality disorders.

The final chapter summarizes and reiterates the integrative focus that we emphasize throughout the book while identifying various challenges and limitations to our integrative approach to psychotherapy. We intend this book to reflect both ambition and modesty, so we propose an integrative model of psychotherapy with confidence and hopefulness even as we acknowledge that there is more work to do.





References

- Beck, J. R. (2003). The integration of psychology and theology: An enterprise out of balance. *Journal of Psychology & Christianity*, 22, 20-29.
- Jones, S. L. (2001). An apologetic apologia for the integration of psychology and theology. In M. R. McMinn & T. R. Phillips (Eds.), *Care for the soul: Exploring the intersection of psychology and theology* (pp. 62-77). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Jones, S. L., & Butman, R. E. (1991). *Modern psychotherapies: A comprehensive Christian appraisal*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Nathan, P. E., Stuart, S. P., & Dolan, S. L. (2000). Research on psychotherapy efficacy and effectiveness: Between Scylla and Charybdis? *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 964-81.
- Norcross, J. C., & Goldfried, M. R. (2005). *Handbook of psychotherapy integration* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Powlison, D. (2001). Questions at the crossroads: The care of souls and modern psychotherapies. In M. R. McMinn & T. R. Phillips (Eds.), *Care for the soul: Exploring the intersection of psychology & theology* (pp. 23-61). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Shafranske, E. P. (1996). Religious beliefs, affiliations, and practices of clinical psychologists. In E. P. Shafranske (Ed.), *Religion and the clinical practice of psychology* (pp. 149-62). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Sorenson, R. L., & Hales, S. (2002). Comparing evangelical Protestant psychologists trained at secular versus religiously affiliated programs. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 39, 163-70.

