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Issues in Integration: A

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Discussions of Christian counseling have identified several distinct definitions for what makes counseling Christian. Worthington (1986) suggests that the two major emphases of definitions revolve around context and content. By contextual definitions, counseling is Christian when it occurs in Christian and religious settings—churches, parachurch organizations, and the like. Worthington, Dupont, Berry and Duncan (1988) suggest that Christian counseling techniques (content) can be grouped into three categories. The first of these emphasizes the goal of counseling as conversion and discipleship or spiritual growth. In terms of content, Worthington, et al. distinguish two emphases; the first includes techniques derived from Scripture and the spiritual guidance literature; the second involves focus on Christian topics or issues as an emphasis of therapy or counseling.

Crabb (1978) and Kirwan (1984) are examples of persons who emphasize the goals as what is distinctive about Christian counseling.

An alternative proposed by Bufford (1992) is that what makes counseling or psychotherapy Christian is that it or the agents providing it are consecrated or set apart for the purpose of service to God and fellow man; this is a motivational explanation. This goal surely can include evangelism and discipleship, but it much broader; it includes service, which may not have the outcomes of evangelism or discipleship either as an immediate or long term goal.

Collins (1988) suggests that what makes Christian counseling includes unique assumptions, goals, techniques, and counselor characteristics. Among the unique assumptions are those of a Christian worldview; this implies that the therapist him/herself is Christian, though this important emphasis is more often assumed than stated explicitly.

Powlison (1992) suggests that there is no place for psychology in Christian counseling. According to Powlison, “ the interpretive categories that psychologists use are highly distorted... They inevitably end up feeding covert of overt idolatries (Powlison , 1992; p.212). Thus Powlison is both for Christian counseling and against Christian psychology; this places him within the Christian anti-psychology movement.

Table 1

Defining Christian Counseling

Context

Church setting

Parachurch setting

Content/Interventions (Means):

Techniques derived from

Scripture (Theology)

Spiritual guidance

Spiritual formation

Church traditions/practices

Techniques avoided if contrary to Scripture

Issues/topics of focus involve Christian faith

Motivation/Goals

Goal: Conversion, Discipleship/Spiritual Formation

Goal: Service to God, fellow persons (=consecrated counseling)

Counselor characteristics

Assumptions/worldview

(Personal relationship with God)

Ecclesiastical role (i.e., pastors)

Table 2

A Brief and Selective History of Modern Psychology
and its Integration with Christian Faith

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
1879	Wundt's lab; beginning of modern psychology
1904	Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale developed
1949	Boulder Conference sets guidelines for clinical psychology
1957	Tournier published <i>The meaning of persons</i>
1965	Fuller Graduate School of Psychology founded
1969	Rosemead Graduate School of Psychology founded
1970	Jay Adams published <i>Competent to counsel</i>
1973	<i>Journal of Psychology and Theology</i> started
1975	<i>CAPS Bulletin</i> (now <i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>) founded
1976	APA Division 36 Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues founded
1977	Western Baptist Clinical Psychology program founded (now GDCP at GFU)
1979	APA approved Doctor of Psychology (Psy.D.) degree
1982	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i> begun
1988	First International Congress on Christian Counseling
1990	Rech Conference on Graduate Training in Christian Psychology (Jones, 1992)
1992	Second International Congress on Christian Counseling
1993	Wheaton Doctor of Clinical Psychology program begun

Note: dates mostly reflect conservative Christian views and events; adapted from Bufford, 1992.

Table 3

Integration Directions for the 90's

1. Integration theory development
 2. Continued polarization among Christian approaches
 3. Lay counseling development
 4. Mental health prevention in the church
 5. Measurement of Religious constructs
 6. Increased influence of psychology of religion
 7. Process studies of Christian counseling
 8. Outcome studies of Christian counseling
 9. Further study of religion and health
 10. Empirical study of mental health and demonic influence
 11. Training of scholars and teachers in Christian settings.
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Table 4

Themes in Christian Psychology and Counseling

1. Christian anti-psychology movement
 2. Biblical counseling movement
 3. Christian lay counseling
 4. Pastoral counseling/psychology
 5. Missionary psychology
 6. Psychological measurement of Christian constructs
 7. Christian marriage and family education/counseling
 8. Christian recovery movement
 9. Professional psychotherapy/counseling for Christians
 10. Professional psychotherapy/counseling with Christian values
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Table 5

Spiritual Disciplines

1. Concrete meditation
 2. Abstract Meditation
 3. Intercessory Prayer
 4. Contemplative Prayer
 5. Listening Prayer
 6. Praying in the Spirit
 7. Scripture: Counselor Pro-Active
 8. Scripture: Client Pro-Active
 9. Confession/repentance
 10. Worship
 11. Forgiveness
 12. Abstinence/fasting
 13. Deliverance
 14. Solitude/Silence
 15. Discernment
 16. Journal keeping
 17. Obedience
 18. Simplicity
 19. Spiritual History
 20. Healing
 21. Celebration
 22. Service
 23. Rest
 24. Fellowship
-

(Adams, 1993; Adams, et al., 1991; Bufford, 1994; Moon, et al., 1991; Stratton, 1992)

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