

STORY | THEOLOGY | VOICE

FULLER

INTEGRATION



“As Christians, we are enjoined to love God and love people. Part of the love of both is sharing the gospel, drawing more people to God through Jesus Christ. Muslims are people—they are people God loves. It’s not that God will love them when they become Christians; God loves them now. We are called to do the same. How can we love them if we don’t know about them?”

—J. DUDLEY WOODBERRY, DEAN EMERITUS AND SENIOR PROFESSOR OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

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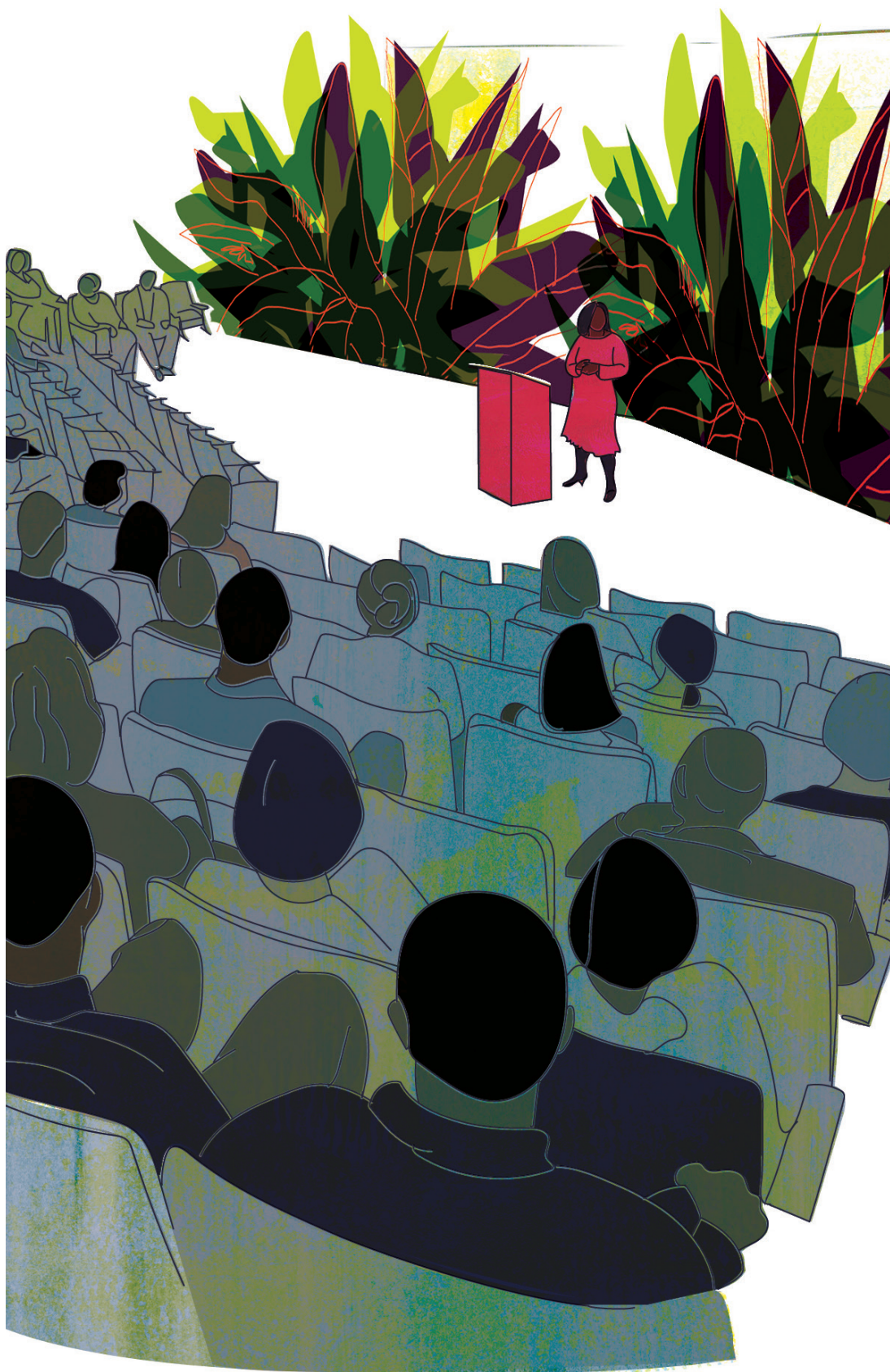
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THE INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY AT FULLER

Brad D. Strawn,
Evelyn and Frank Freed Professor of the Integration of Psychology and Theology
and Guest Editor



In the courtyard of the building where I teach is a bronze sculpture of a Greek *psi* combined with a Christian cross. A plaque nearby reads, “Planting the cross in the heart of psychology.” From its beginnings in 1964, the School of Psychology at Fuller has been about this endeavor known as “integration.”

Decades ago, some found it outlandish when Fuller offered the first accredited doctoral program in clinical psychology with a Christian emphasis. Psychology, philosophy, and theology were in fact kindred disciplines until they were unhinged from one another in the late 19th century; the work of what might be called “reintegration” began way back then. Nevertheless, some in the Chris-

En el patio del edificio donde enseño, hay una escultura de bronce de la letra griega psi combinada con una cruz cristiana. Una placa en el lugar dice, “Plantando la cruz en el corazón de la psicología.” Desde sus comienzos en 1964, la Escuela de Psicología de Fuller se ha enfocado en lograr este esfuerzo conocido como “integración.”

Décadas atrás, algunas personas consideraban extravagante que Fuller comenzara a ofrecer el primer programa doctoral acreditado en psicología clínica con énfasis cristiano. La psicología, la filosofía y la teología eran en efecto disciplinas similares hasta que se separaron a fines del siglo diecinueve; el trabajo de lo que podría llamarse “reintegración” comenzó en ese periodo. Sin embargo, algunas personas en la comu-

제가 가르치는 건물 안쪽 뜰에는 그리스 문자, psi의 형태를 십자가와 맞물려 표현해 놓은 동상이 하나 서 있습니다. 동상 앞, 명판에는 “십자가를 심리학의 마음 중심에 심으며” 라고 한 짤막한 설명이 붙어 있습니다. 1964년, 개교 이후, 풀러 신학교내 심리학부는 바로 이 하나됨의 원칙을 구현하기 위한 노력을 멈춘 적이 없습니다.

수십 년 전, 풀러 신학교에 기독교 정신에 입각한 임상 심리학 박사과정 프로그램이 처음으로 생겼을 때에는 의아해 하는 주변의 시선이 없지 않았던 것도 사실입니다. 19세기 후반까지는 심리학, 철학, 신학의 개념을 따로 떼어 생각하는 일이 드물었습니다. 통합을 말하는 현재의 논의도 사실 오래 전에 이미 그 기원이 존재한 셈입니다. 그럼에도 불구하고, 심리학과 신학을 연계하여 이해하고자 하는

tian community perceived Fuller's alliance of psychology and theology as new and possibly dangerous—wondering, as Fuller's former chair of integration Alvin Dueck references Tertullian, “What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?”

Over the last half-century, critics and naysayers, and there have been many, worried about Fuller's integration project. Some worried that psychology was a secular science that ignored its philosophical and ethical underpinnings and was at odds with Christian theology. Others worried that our scientific emphasis—with its quantification and logical positivism—would override theology and a Christian faith that could not be measured empirically. Critics' questions always seem

to circle around the same theme: “When psychology and Christian faith are integrated, which trumps the other?”

The Fuller School of Psychology has never approached integration with this adversarial posture. While a number of different integration models have been developed within or alongside Fuller (several are described in the articles that follow), the enduring central commitment of our work has been to bring the best of Christian theology (faith and practice) into honest conversation with the best of psychology (science and practice).

The articles that make up this theology section of *FULLER* magazine demonstrate that commitment. You will read of science

as it is used in the service of developing Christian virtues; how neuroscience does (and does not) inform religious experience; how psychology can equip those in ministerial settings to care for themselves in order to more effectively share and embody the gospel; what Christian faith has to add to the clinical practice of counseling; and even how we can use theology to critique psychology as it plays out in cross-cultural settings. Through it all, one should see that the integrative project is not a debate but a dialogue in which genuine learning, growth, and transformation take place as these two ancient disciplines of study, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, attempt to serve the kingdom of God.

nidad cristiana percibieron la alianza de Fuller entre la sicología y la teología como algo nuevo y peligroso - preguntándose, tal como el previo presidente de integración de Fuller Alvin Dueck hacía referencia a Tertullian, “¿Qué tiene que ver Jerusalem con Atenas?”

Durante los últimos cincuenta años, personas críticas y negativistas, y han habido muchos y muchas, tenían preocupación sobre el proyecto de integración de Fuller. Algunas personas objetaban que la psicología era una ciencia secular que ignoraba sus puntales filosóficos y éticos y no se condecía con la teología cristiana. Otras personas se preocupaban de que nuestro énfasis científico -con su cuantificación y positivismo lógico- superara a la teología y a una fe cristiana que no pudiera

ser medida en forma empírica. Los cuestionamientos de las personas críticas siempre parecían circular alrededor del mismo tema: “Cuando la psicología y la fe cristiana se integren, ¿cuál superará a la otra?”

La Escuela de Psicología de Fuller nunca encaró la integración con esta postura adversa. Mientras que un número de diferentes modelos de integración han sido desarrollados dentro de Fuller (varios son descritos en los artículos que siguen a continuación), el compromiso central permanente de nuestro trabajo ha sido incorporar lo mejor de la teología cristiana (fe y práctica) en un diálogo honesto con lo mejor de la psicología (ciencia y práctica).

Los artículos que conforman esta sección de teología de la revista *FULLER* demuestran

ese compromiso. Podrá leer sobre ciencia y cómo se utiliza en servicio del desarrollo de las virtudes cristianas; cómo la neurociencia informa (o no informa) sobre la experiencia religiosa; cómo la psicología puede ayudar a aquellas personas que sirven con su ministerio para cuidar a su propio ser, a fin de compartir y representar más eficientemente al evangelio; lo que la fe cristiana tiene para aportar a la práctica clínica de la terapia; y hasta cómo podemos utilizar la teología para analizar la psicología en un marco intercultural. A través de todo, se puede ver que el proyecto integrador no es un debate sino un diálogo por el cual se produce un genuino aprendizaje, crecimiento y transformación mientras estas dos antiguas disciplinas de estudio, bajo el Señorío de Jesucristo, intentan servir al Reino de Dios.

풀러 신학교의 움직임에 대해, 몇몇 기독교 커뮤니티의 반응은 그리 호의적이지만은 않았습니 다. 전 심리학 대학원내 통합 (Integration of Psychology and Theology) 의장직에 있었던, Al Dueck 교수의 말을 빌리자면, 당시 회의적 태도는 마치 Tertullian의 질문처럼 “아테네와 예루살렘이 무슨 관계가 있던 말입니까?”를 묻는 듯 했습니다.

지난 반세기동안, 풀러 신학교가 펼쳐왔던 심리학과 신학의 통합적 연구를 두고 많은 사람들이 비평하고 반대해 왔습니 다. 어떤 이들은 심리학의 비종교적 성격상, 철학, 및 윤리적 기준이 적용될 수는 없음을 강조하며, 심리학과 기독교 신학은 상충된 가치를 가질 수밖에 없다고 주장하였습니다. 또 다른쪽에서는 심리학의 과학적 사고방식, 즉 수량적 해석방법과 논리 실증주의 등의 배경이 과학적 실험으로는 측량할 수 없는 기독교 신학의 본체, 그 믿음의 원칙과는

결국 함께 존재할 수 없음을 지적하였습니다. 비평의 목소리는 다양해도, 저변에 자리한 공통적 질문은 “심리학과 기독교 믿음이 연합될 수 있다면, 과연 둘 중 어느 쪽이 우선인가?”를 항상 물어 왔다고 보여집니다.

풀러의 심리학부는 결코 이러한 회의적 반발감을 가지고 연합의 주제를 접근하지 않습니다. 여러 형태의 연합의 본보기가 풀러 신학교 안팎에서 그 윤곽을 드러내 오는 동안, (이에 자세한 소개는 다음 글에 이어집니다.) 그 중심에는 항상, 기독교 신학의 핵심(믿음과 실행)과 심리학의 핵심(과학과 실행)을 함께 솔직히 이야기할 수 있는 열린 대화의 장을 마련하고자 하는 풀러 신학교의 노력이 있었습니다.

풀러 매거진 이번호 신학 섹션을 통해 바로 그 대화가

가져올 수 있는 다양한 가능성들을 조명해 보고자 합니다. 이번 호에서는 과학이 어떻게 기독교적 가치관을 형성하고 발달시키는데 사용되는지—어떻게 신경과학이 신앙 경험의 인식을 하게 하는지, 어떻게 심리학이 사역자들을 도와 효과적으로 복음을 선포하게 하는지, 상담치료에 어떤 기독교 신앙의 부분이 더해져야 하는지, 그리고 신학을 어떻게 사용하여 통합적으로 사용되어지는 심리학을 비판적으로 성찰 할 수 있는지—를 읽으시게 될 것입니다. 이러한 것들을 통하여 결국 신학과 심리학의 하나됨이 단지 논쟁의 주제로 전락되어 버리기에, 그 연합이 불러올 수 있는 배움과 성장, 변화의 가능성이 너무 크다는 사실을 아시게 될 것입니다. 풀러 신학교는 그 가능성을 바라보기에, 오래된 학문의 이 두 줄기를 붙잡고 그리스도의 인도하심아래 주의 나라를 섬기고자 오늘도 노력하고 있습니다.



INTEGRATION: WHAT WITH WHAT AND WITH WHOM?

Brad D. Strawn

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Strawn is a member of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies; Society for the Study of Psychology and Wesleyan Studies (founding member and officer); Society for the Exploration of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies and Theology (founding member and associate director); and the Brookhaven Institute for Psychoanalysis and Christian Theology (faculty member). Prior to joining the faculty of Fuller's Graduate School of Psychology in 2012, Dr. Strawn was professor of psychology at Point Loma Nazarene University and also practiced as a clinical psychologist and served as vice president for spiritual development and dean of the chapel at Southern Nazarene University.

In 1953 psychologist Fritz Kunkel first used the term “integration” as a description of the interdisciplinary activity between theology and psychology.¹ Kunkel was a major pioneer in the integration movement in the 1940s and 1950s, establishing a Christian counseling center in Los Angeles as well as the Foundation for the Advancement of Religious Psychology. Integration historian Hendrika Vande Kemp notes that the term *integration* was picked up by the editors of the journal *Pastoral Psychology* and was applied to both Kunkel and later to famous American psychologist Gordon Allport.

Since the '50s the term *integration* has been used in diverse ways, including (but not limited to) the integration of psychology and Christianity, psychology and religion, psychology and theology (faith and practice, belief and life), psychology and Christian faith, psychology and spirituality, psychotherapy and theology, and even psychotherapy and spirituality.

While the term *integration* is relatively young, the scientific study of the “psychology of religion” has been around for some time.² The psychology of religion uses the science of psychology to study religion and religious experience. While some have worried that this approach may reduce religion to “nothing-but” psychology, it has produced fascinating and helpful findings on everything from the development of cults, the experience of spiritual transcendence, and religion and health to brain science and religious phenomena. For these reasons, the psychology of religion continues to be an important avenue of study.

The field of integration, however, is a more superordinate concept. While it may include the psychology of religion, it may also include the *religion of psychology*. Here religion, theology, or spirituality might be used in an attempt to

explain/critique some branch of psychology (e.g., humanistic clinical psychology) or psychological experience (e.g., struggle with sin). From the perspective of the religion of psychology, it has been argued that integration has been going on in theological circles for a long time.³

Integration may also include the application of psychological findings to areas that have import for Christian theology and life such as virtue acquisition, forgiveness and reconciliation, spiritual formation, life and health of the church and its ministers and missionaries (see the article by Eriksson, Wilkins, and Tiersma Watson), Christian marriage and families, health issues, overall sanctification, and growth in holiness—just to name a few. Integration in counseling and therapy has also grown as scholars study Christian therapists working with Christian clients, develop unique Christian counseling approaches, and explore ways to understand God's activity in the counseling moment (see the interview with Tan).

It is safe to say that the field of integration has exploded since the early 1950s with the development of masters' and doctoral-level training programs specifically aimed at integration training, and with the development of professional journals, professional organizations, and international conferences specifically focused on integration. Even secular organizations such as the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association are now recognizing the importance of religion and spirituality in mental health, and their publishing houses produce books and journals every year on integrative topics. It could be argued that integration is a subdiscipline in the larger field of psychology.⁴

Despite the long history and work in integration, the task has not been without its detractors.

NEWT MALONY'S MODEL OF INTEGRATION



tors and critics. Some have simply argued that Christianity, faith, and theology should have nothing to do with psychology. They have seen psychology as a secular enterprise whose agenda was usually incompatible with Christianity and at worst was in the business of the eradication of religion.⁵ Practitioners from this school of thought, such as the “biblical counseling”⁶ proponents, argue that they find everything needed for mental health in the pages of the Bible and subsequently reject theories and findings emerging from secular psychology.

It should also be noted that there are some in the field committed to relating psychology and theology that don’t care for the term *integration*. They worry that *integration* sounds like making one discipline out of two, perhaps forcing one on the other while doing violence to both. Or they may question the primary integrative assumption that we are dealing with two separate disciplines to begin with.

Still others, while not rejecting the project outright, have recognized a persistent and unanswered question. The question boils down to which, if either, of the two disciplines is privileged, and what are the implications of such privileging?⁷ On one end of the continuum, psychology explains away theology/Christian faith and trumps any conflict between the two by relying on the power of science while never acknowledg-

ing science’s limitations. On the other end of the spectrum, theology is conceived as the queen of the sciences and trumps psychology whenever there is a conflict, relying on the power of revelation and ultimate Truth, while never acknowledging that theology is an interpretive process.

MODELS

With this question operating in the background, it is understandable why the early years of the integration task (like the development of any new scientific discipline) included building models of integration. The Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary was established in the years 1964–1965 with the primary goal of integration, so it makes sense that faculty began to build models of integration. Paul Clement, one of the early faculty members in the School of Psychology, developed a tripartite model of integration based on “theory, research, and practice.”⁸ Integration meant that theology must impact a psychologist’s work at each of these three levels. Newt Malony, who joined the psychology faculty in 1969, also had a tripartite model: he discussed “integration at the level of principles, of profession, and of person, the 3Ps.”⁹ The diagram [above] indicates that these two models can be combined, suggesting that theory, research, and practice may be important at each of Malony’s levels of principles, profession, and person, while theology influences all.

“When I gave the integration lectures years ago, the title was the somewhat dated term ‘the Nature of Man.’ I argued that it wasn’t the nature of man; it’s the nature of people. There’s no such thing as a person alone. . . . It is indeed the life of the church where Jesus is expressed, where we learn about him; that’s where we’re corrected through comments other people make, sermons and the like, and that’s really a place where we need to grow.”

+ **RICHARD GORSUCH** is a senior professor of psychology. This quote is taken from an *Integration* panel convened for the School of Psychology’s 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)



A seminal book in the recent history of integration is the edited volume by Eric L. Johnson, first published as *Psychology & Christianity: Four Views*, now in its second edition with a fifth view added.¹⁰ In this book, integration is considered one particular view of engaging psychology and theology while advancing at least four others. This has been a widely used text at both the graduate and undergraduate level, although it could be argued that this approach further complicates an already complicated terrain. Perhaps it is best to continue to speak of *integration* as a superordinate principle with many available methodologies for how to practice it. And while this approach and the views have been critiqued (even by each author, which was the format of the book), it has opened up the idea that there is more than one way, or more than one correct way, to conduct integration. Perhaps we should speak of “integration methodologies” rather than the singular “integration.”

Classic model building, however, seems to be running out of steam. In their quest for clarity models often minimize uniqueness and particularity. As the title of this article implies, if one is integrating two disciplines, with what is one integrating? There are numerous branches in psychology and theology. What branch of theology (e.g., systematic, practical, ethical, etc.) is being integrated with what branch of psychology (e.g., research, clinical, developmental, etc.)? The permutations are numerous and the exercise is not semantic, as the outcomes have real-life implications.

Integration can also be problematic when integrators don’t particularize their theological tradition. Much of the early work in integration was conducted from a Reformed theological tradition, which left Christians from other traditions feeling perplexed by some of the assumptions and conclusions. Books and articles have been written on clinical and

counseling theories, psychopathology, family therapy, and even particular psychological approaches, with subtitles such as “A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal,” or “Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach,” or “A Christian Perspective.” And yet it is clear that it is impossible to do a comprehensive Christian anything as that would mean including all theological differences. The theological tradition and commitments of the integrator have enormous implications for how one understands and goes about the integrative task. So we have argued for “tradition-based integration,”¹¹ in which integrators begin with a confessional theological stance. For example, think of the differences between Reformed and Wesleyan traditions when it comes to understanding counseling and its relationship to human freedom and God’s sovereignty. Because no integrative model is encyclopedic or monolithic enough to handle all the differences in both theological traditions and the various branches of psychology and theology, perhaps we could be more humble when it comes to some of the integrative “views” or “models” we espouse. Perhaps we should recognize that our view may be more or less equipped to aid in specific types of integrative endeavors (e.g., clinical settings, research settings, or ecclesial settings) and even within particular theological traditions.

INTEGRATION AS PROCESS, RELATIONAL, DIALOGICAL, AND INTRAPERSONAL: WHOM ARE WE INTEGRATING WITH?

The complexity of the integration task above has moved some thinkers away from classic model building and toward process, relational, dialogical, and intrapersonal integrative ways of *thinking*.

Integration as process. Warren Brown has advanced a process of integration based on the idea of resonance.¹² This approach is



+ “As a community psychologist I believe that effective education does more than simply educate students—it also acts as a conduit that helps to create, sustain, and improve our communities. Accordingly, I believe it is essential in my role as director of clinical training and PhD program director in Fuller’s School of Psychology to focus on educating and encouraging students to develop into responsible, caring, and contributing citizens.” —Tina R. Armstrong, assistant professor of clinical psychology

founded on the Wesleyan quadrilateral developed by Albert Outler.¹³ Outler attempted to capture John Wesley's implicit procedure when dealing with multiple authorities in the search for Christian truth. The four domains are Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. These four domains are put into conversation whenever one is trying to capture the truth about God, human creation, or theological concepts. This process implies that each source of authority has a valid voice and that truth is best conceptualized somewhere at the intersection of all four. While it is certainly true that Wesley privileged Scripture, at times he relied on the other domains to assist him in interpretation. Brown separates "reason" into two categories, reason and science, to allow for methodological differences between empirical science and philosophy and logic.

As the diagram indicates [following page], each of these domains can be imagined as radios emanating sound waves toward one another with truth residing at the intersection. Brown suggests that when the waves become resonant, truth comes into focus. If our understanding of truth is fuzzy, it indicates that the domains are not resonant, and we will need to "fine tune" one or more of the domains to bring truth into greater clarity. Brown notes that each domain has information limits. We can't ask neuroscience to speak to the telos of human nature any more than we can ask Scripture to tell us about the structural or functional nature of the brain. Brown's approach is unique among integration models in that (a) it provides a *process* for the discovery of truth (no domain trumps another but the clarity of truth indicates the right use of each domain); (b) it is a hybrid of modern and post-modern sensibilities in that Brown recognizes that while there is such a thing as "truth" it will always be partially known; and (c) it is a "tradition-based" approach anchored within a particular Christian tradition (Wesleyan) although not limited to it. Brown also notes that resonance is a community endeavor. No

one person can be an expert in all fields. For this process to work, there must be relational dialogue between individuals steeped in the various domains.

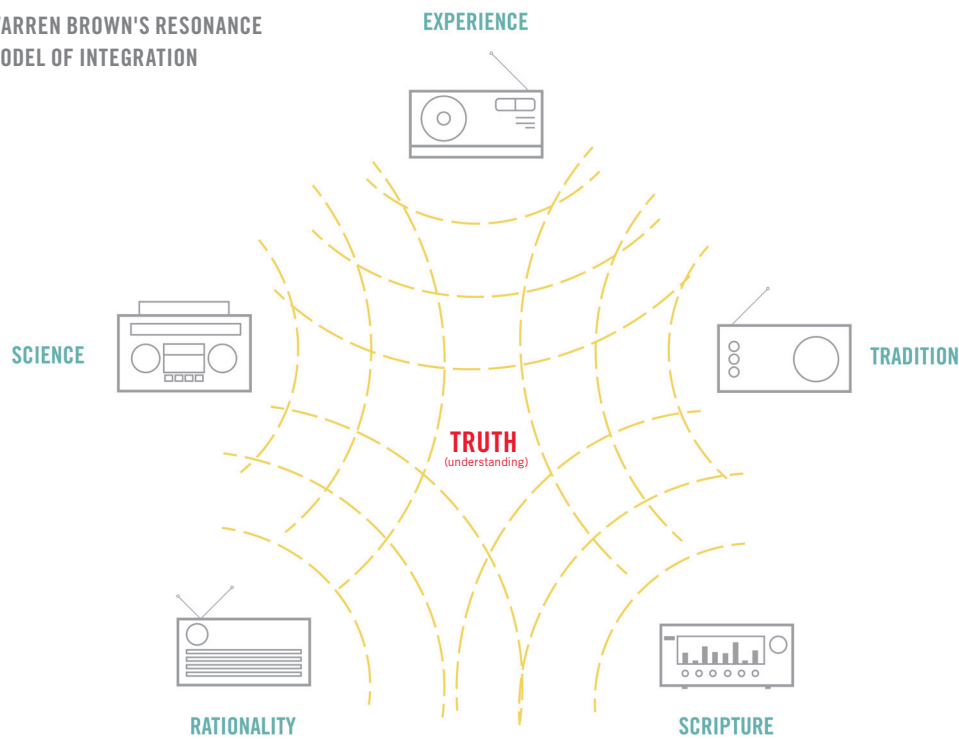
Integration as relational. In a recent article, Sandage and Brown point out that disciplines don't integrate, people do.¹⁴ They argue for what they call "relational integration," in which relational issues take center stage. Their challenge is for integrators to think overtly about the *content* and *process* of the relational dynamics that occur between psychologists and theologians who attempt integration. If integration is truly to be communal and relational it will include interpersonal conflict, destabilizing of one's perspective, recognition of the other, and the practice of such virtues as humility, justice, and forgiveness. They advocate for a "differentiated relationality," which is integration "that prioritizes relational connection between differentiated integrators . . . [and] highlights a dialectical balance for interdisciplinary work between (a) maintaining personal identity and disciplinary integrity and (b) fostering authentic relationship, dialogue, and mutual influence across disciplinary boundaries."¹⁵ They refer to this process as "relating with differences," and clearly it is not for the faint of heart. Like Warren Brown's approach, this relational model resists monolithic understandings or explanations of integration but provides a *process* model for how integration can be hospitable to both disciplines and to the integrators themselves.

Integration as dialogical. Al Dueck is also in this process-oriented relational camp when he suggests that we move from thinking of psychology and theology as disciplines to viewing them as *cultures*.¹⁶ While he recognizes that there are variations and subcultures within cultures, each culture has a more-or-less common language and grammar. Integration is therefore not abstract theological and psychological model building, but a kind of cultural immersion

in which integrators learn the language of the other culture—having actual dialogues with and learning from the other. Integration becomes a cross-cultural dialogue. For Dueck, integration is a kind of peacemaking process between cultures. (See Lee's article on peacemaking as a metaphor for integrative therapy.) This is to move integration from the situation of Babel where all differences are collapsed into one language (psychology or theology), to a Pentecost celebration of diversity and exploration, which makes learning a richer, thicker, and more relational process. This anthropological approach is not only process, relationally, and dialogically oriented, but implies that integration is hard and long work! It is hard to learn another language, let alone the dialects, customs, metaphors, and humor they contain.

Hopefully one can see in these later approaches—tradition-based, resonance, relational, and cultural—the commonality of *process* (i.e., how one goes about the task), *relationality* (i.e., it is people/cultures that integrate, not disciplines), and *dialogue* (i.e., integration is so big that it can't be done by solitary individuals but requires groups of people and cultures in dialogue with one another). *With whom are we integrating?* We are integrating with a distinct other that speaks a different language (e.g., theological tradition and disciplinary dialect); a real person, not just a theory, but a stranger bearing a gift that we can learn from and with whom we can both be changed. In fact, this is one of the unique contributions of the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. There is great heterogeneity among the psychology faculty theologically, clinically, in terms of research, etc. And there are also the built-in dialogue opportunities of being situated within a three-school seminary (theology, psychology, and intercultural studies). While these cultural differences can be challenging, at times leading to miscommunication and even hurt feelings, they can also provide the opportunity for a Pentecost experience where

WARREN BROWN'S RESONANCE
MODEL OF INTEGRATION



differences are celebrated and new learning takes place.

While it is impossible in such a short space to adequately describe historically or culturally the integration project between psychology and theology, hopefully the reader has gained a glimpse of the work that has gone on over the years, the issues at stake, and an appreciation of the seriousness with which those in the field approach the task. Integration is a calling for many, and the articles in this section of *FULLER* magazine will give further glimpses into the integrative world of research, clinical practice, and theory.

Integration as intrapersonal. But as noted above, disciplines don't integrate—people do, which brings us to integration as intrapersonal. For many years thinkers and writers have recognized that integration is about character, which includes the personal formation of the

therapist, professor, or researcher.¹⁷ A Christian integrator is someone who is working on his or her own integrative journey of faith. Christian integrators will take personal responsibility to thoroughly engage their particular faith traditions and practices in holistic ways that bring about theological and psychological formation. If Dueck is right that integrators must immerse themselves in both cultures, then integrators are anthropologists who are changed by this immersion. It is not enough to be objective observers outside the fray. Christian integrators are embodied and embedded, in that they pray, read Scripture, and serve the needs of the neighbor with other believers in the body of Christ. This is the only way to bring integration from intellectual contemplation into day-to-day living. In this way we will be better equipped to know what we are integrating, with what, and with whom.

ENDNOTES

1. See Hendrika Vande Kemp, in collaboration with H. Newton Malony, *Psychology and Theology in Western Thought, 1672–1965: A Historical and Annotated Bibliography* (Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1984).
2. For example, see *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James.
3. See Eric L. Johnson, ed., *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), esp. chaps. 1 and 4.
4. H. Vande Kemp, "Historical Perspective: Religion and Clinical Psychology in America," in *Religion and the Clinical Practice of Psychology*, ed. E. P. Shafranske (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1996).
5. While this has been true of many writers, perhaps none so popularly captured the public's imagination than Sigmund Freud himself, who saw religion as an illusion that a mature society would eventually outgrow.
6. See David A. Powlison, "A Biblical Counseling View," in Johnson, *Psychology & Christianity*, 245–73.
7. S. J. Sandage and J. K. Brown, "Relational Integration, Part 1: Differentiated Relationality between Psychology and Theology," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 43, no. 3 (2015): 165–78.
8. See H. Newton Malony, in collaboration with Hendrika Vande Kemp, *Psychology and the Cross: The Early History of Fuller Seminary's School of Psychology* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 1995).
9. *Ibid.*, 123.
10. Johnson, *Psychology & Christianity*.
11. Brad Strawn, Ronald W. Wright, and Paul Jones, "Tradition-Based Integration: Illuminating the Stories and Practices that Shape Our Integrative Imaginations," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 33, no. 4 (2014): 300–312.
12. Warren S. Brown, "Resonance: A Model for Relating Science, Psychology and Faith," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 23 (2004): 110–20.
13. For a detailed look at the quadrilateral, see W. S. Gunter, S. J. Jones, T. A. Campbell, R. L. Miles, and R. L. Maddox, *Wesley and the Quadrilateral: Renewing the Conversation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).
14. Sandage and Brown, "Relational Integration, Part 1."
15. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
16. Alvin Dueck, "Babel, Esperanto, Shiboletths, and Pentecost: Can We Talk?" *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 21 (2002): 72–80.
17. See John D. Carter and S. Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979). See also Siang-Yang Tan, "Intrapersonal Integration: The Servant's Spirituality," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 6, no. 1 (1987): 34–39.





THE BRAIN, RELIGION, AND BASEBALL: REVISITED

Warren S. Brown

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He has served at Fuller since 1982. Currently, Brown is most actively involved in neuroscience research related to the cognitive and psychosocial disabilities in a congenital brain malformation called agenesis of the corpus callosum. He has also studied callosal function in dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, multiple sclerosis, and Alzheimer's disease; and he has done research on brain wave changes associated with aging and dementia, language comprehension, dialysis treatment for kidney disease, and attention deficits in schizophrenia.

I recently received a phone call from a producer of the TechKnow program on Al Jazeera. She was doing a story about research going on at the University of Utah involving studies of brain activity during religious experiences,¹ and she wanted me to comment on the research. She had read my article on the neuroscience of religiousness on the website of the International Society for Science and Religion² and wanted my perspective on the relationship between brain function and religiousness, and on what this sort of research can tell us about religion. What is the nature of religiousness and what does it have to do with the brain?

Being a neuropsychologist at a theological seminary, this is the sort of issue about which I am often asked to comment. We are in a scientific era in which functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) is making it possible to observe distributions of activity throughout the brain while people are mentally doing interesting cognitive, social, and emotional tasks—such as viewing pictures showing social interactions, solving moral dilemmas, or imagining an emotional experience. We are in a cultural phase in which *brain* and *neuroscience* are buzzwords invoked in many conversations with a certain degree of cachet. The answers I give to questions about the brain and religiousness constitute a part of my contribution to the larger work of the School of Psychology on the integration of theology and psychology.

As described on “The Religious Brain Project” website, this study at the University of Utah aims to find “answers to fundamental questions, like ‘What happens in the brain during religious or spiritual experiences?’ and ‘How is the brain changed by religious experience?’ We also want to understand which brain networks contribute to religious feeling.”³ This study is similar in design and experimental questions to a number of other studies of the neuroscience of religiousness. Typically, these

experiments involve having persons see, hear, and/or meditate on religious stimuli or themes, during which the patterns of activity in the brain are measured using fMRI or other measures of brain activity. For example, studies of brain activity have been done with respect to meditation (both Christian and Buddhist), prayer, listening to Scripture passages, and judging theological statements to be true or false.⁴ Since it is pretty clear that all of human life and experience is tied up in some way with the functioning of our brains, it is not surprising that something is seen in each of these brain imaging studies. However, each study finds a different pattern of brain activity associated with the religious condition, and thus different forms of religious activity or experience are related to different patterns of activity in the brain. There is not a particular area of the brain that is always active during mental processing that is experienced as religious.

There are two implicit assumptions of this sort of study that I find questionable. One is that brain activity associated with a religious experience will be functionally unique—that is, that the brain will function in a way that is unique to religious experiences and distinct from other forms of brain functioning. The other problematic assumption is that human religiousness can be adequately telescoped down to a form of subjective internal experience elicited by certain “religious” stimuli. The presence of these assumptions means that religious life gets reduced to nothing-but brain states associated with internal experiences elicited by a few decontextualized stimuli.

WHAT ABOUT BASEBALL?

I once wrote a book chapter that I entitled “The Brain, Religion, and Baseball.”⁵ It was the last chapter of an edited book involving chapters describing studies on the neurology of religious experience (not unlike the Religious Brain Project at the University of Utah). My

chapter was the conclusion, and my job was to review and discuss points made from the other chapters. In order to convey a perspective on the neuroscience of religiousness, I wondered what it might be like to substitute “baseball” for “religion” in these research projects—i.e., a neuroscience of baseball. Moving to a different domain of life helps us see more clearly the issues surrounding the neuroscience of religion.

The point of using baseball as a comparison was to signal the fact that the religious lives of people are incredibly complex and diverse, involving all sorts of situations, responses, engagements, and life perspectives. In this respect religiousness is much like baseball, which also encompasses a great many engagements, behaviors, and experiences. So, what form of engagement with baseball would one choose to study? Playing baseball? But what sort of playing: small-scale friendly games or professional baseball? And what aspect of playing: fielding, batting, pitching? Watching baseball? But what sort of watching: watching a group of friends playing, or attending a professional game, or watching on TV? Would one study being the umpire, talking about baseball with friends, betting on the outcome of games? All of these events and experiences will have different and diverse patterns of neural activity and bodily engagement. One cannot imagine that a particular neural system or neural pattern is involved with all of baseball, or even that the various patterns will always include a particular brain area—a “baseball module” somewhere in the brain. The point is that it would not make much sense to go looking for a unique and particular neuroscience of baseball. Human religiousness is at least as wide-ranging in its contexts, behaviors, and experiences—such that, though it is embodied (I believe), there is not a particular aspect of brain activity that is universally related to religious experience or behavior.

The problem with studies of the neuroscience

of religiousness or religious experience is that, when a particular pattern of brain activity is found to be relatively consistently present across individuals when they are processing a specific form of religious stimulus or task, it is concluded that this pattern of activity must be *the* neural basis of all religious thoughts and experiences. The complexities of religious life are thereby reduced to patterns of brain activity associated with a temporally and situationally limited event.

An important background presupposition driving this research is the assumption that there must be an evolutionarily endowed tendency for humans to be religious. The idea (sometimes only implicit) is that religiousness is uniquely human, and everything that is uniquely human must have come about through a history of natural selection of genetic mutations expressed in biological organization. Thus, there must be something we can find in brain activity and organization that is the expression of the genetics of this characteristically human behavior. Entangled in this assumption is also a commitment to “inside-out” with respect to human behavior—the idea that the causes of all behavior originate inside the individual.

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

Philosophical ideas about brain and mind (or brain and religiousness) have their root in one of two basic positions. One idea quite common in religious circles is that religiousness is not about the body or the brain at all. That is, our religious lives are the manifestation of a non-bodily, nonmaterial thing or property called a “soul” or “spirit.” This answer has a long history in philosophy and Christian thought, extending back from René Descartes to St. Augustine and eventually back to Plato, with lots of nuances and variations along the path. Since the soul/mind is understood as inner, this position also entails a view of religion as inside-out. Considered on its own, and outside of integra-

“My latest work is dealing with the growing pathologies related to digital overuse. . . . I’m working with universities with students who are potential digital addicts in the lives that they live. Our programs really need to pay attention to the digital pathologies that are emerging, because they are not going to go away, and we’re facing severe pathologies in the future.”

+ **ARCHIBALD HART** was the third dean of Fuller’s School of Psychology and is currently a senior professor of psychology. This quote is taken from a Fuller panel convened for the School of Psychology’s 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)





✦ “We are in a cultural phase in which brain and neuroscience are buzzwords invoked in many conversations with a certain degree of cachet. The answers I give to questions about the brain and religiousness constitute a part of my contribution to the larger work of the School of Psychology on the integration of theology and psychology.” —Warren S. Brown

tive considerations involving neurology and neuropsychology, this view is reasonable and certainly not incoherent.

However, for many (me included), this Cartesian framework is inadequate when faced with the impact of brain disorder on many forms of religiousness and religious-like life experiences. For example, temporal lobe seizures are, in some cases, accompanied by deeply religious subjective experiences. Hallucinogenic drugs that alter neurotransmitter systems can produce experiences that in some cases seem richly spiritual. Certain forms of frontal lobe brain damage can lose the moorings of a person’s moral compass. Dementia confuses not only everyday cognitions, but also one’s religious cognitions and experiences. The dulling of life in Parkinson’s disease also impacts religious experiences. Thus, the thesis of a dual nature, according to which religiousness is a matter of the spirit and not of the physical body or

brain, just does not resonate well with so much of what is known about the relationship of the body to spiritual life.

The other basic position provides an alternative answer—that religious mental processing (and religious experiences) are no more than the outcome of brain events. All of mental life is caused by the electrical activity of brain cells, and nothing more. Thus, for example, if the anterior temporal lobe gets abnormally active (due to epilepsy or electromagnetic stimulation), we have an experience that we interpret as religious although, in reality, it is just the electrical activity of the brain. Moral sensitivities are no more than the wiring of the frontal lobes. One’s beliefs are mostly the consequence of a pre-wired brain. This is a reductionist answer—that is, complex mental or religious experiences are reduced to nothing-but the activity of particular neural systems. It is also another version of inside-out—all behavior and experience is

caused exclusively by the inner brain.

As you might expect, there are some significant problems with this sort of answer as well, some of which are built into the premises driving the interpretation of the results of neuroscience research.

The first problem is that there is a lot of variability between people in what they experience during the experiment. Averaging patterns of brain activity across people easily draws us into over-simplification and assumptions about uniformity in brain processes. Second, it is never the case that these studies are able to test all of the events and experiences that are similar to the religious variable in the experiment but that persons would not consider religious—and being similar would likely elicit the same pattern of brain activity. Is what is being shown in the pattern of brain activity described in the results of these studies really unique to religiousness, or is it common to other domains of life? Finally, due to the necessities of research design, religiousness and religious life get concatenated to some predefined, contextually isolated, and very diminished event or stimulus, which, with respect to the research at hand, come to stand for the whole of religious life.

RELIGIOUS LIFE AS EMBODIED, EMERGENT, EMBEDDED, AND EXTENDED

So, my first response to the producer from Al Jazeera was to try to sort out for her the Cartesian and biological reductionism alternatives, and to suggest why I think that both hold some elements of truth, but are in the end inadequate. However, there are other positions than these alternatives that are both reasonable and more consistent with what is known about brain processes. The view that I (and others) believe provides the greatest resonance between a neuroscientific view of human nature and all that is experienced by religious persons can be represented by four descriptors: *embodied*, *emergent*, *embedded*, and *extended*. Each term embraces a large literature of theory and discussion that cannot be reviewed and discussed herein.⁶ However, I will try to sort out these ideas in a brief and comprehensible way.

To say we are *embodied* is to move away from the Cartesian idea of a disembodied soul as the source of our religiousness and spiritu-

ality, and toward the idea of humankind as nested in God's physical creation. We were created by God as beings inescapably implicated with the physical and biological world. What is more, a lot of recent research and theory suggests that we are truly embodied and not just em-brained. That is, our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, memories, etc. are grounded in our bodily existence. We think by remembering, rehearsing, and simulating sensations and actions from our history of bodily interactions with the world—including acts of speech. Thus, what we experience as inner thought (or religious experiences) is built upon, and continues to draw upon, our memories of ourselves as behaving and interacting bodies. While religiousness may be considered a particular subdomain of the operation of these embodied mental capacities, it is more true to say that all of our capacities participate in our religious selves, and which capacities participate depends on which of the great variety of religious contexts that engages us at the moment.

As we have seen, it is possible that we are embodied in ways that support a reductionist view that all the properties of the human mind are nothing but the firing of neurons. However, this idea is becoming increasingly improbable in current research and theory where behavior, experiences, thoughts, ideas, motivations, and so on cannot be reduced to the firing of neurons or even activity in neural subsystems without the disappearance of the important properties of mind one wishes to explain. While neural activity is critical, the higher properties of the human mind *emerge* from broad patterns of interactions within the brain, and between the brain, the body, and the world. The interesting properties are not in the parts (neurons), but in their vastly complex and temporally extended interactions. The idea of emergence, therefore, means that out of the neural patterns of interaction emerge genuinely new complex, rational, intelligent, and interpersonal mental properties. While this idea of emergence seems mysterious, there are many demonstrations and theoretical arguments regarding how individual parts (like individual neurons) can interact together in ways that result in the emergence of new properties (like mind) that cannot be reduced to the functions of the parts. The causes of the properties of mind are *patterns* of interactions among neurons, not the neurons themselves. In this view, our mental and religious (soulish) lives are bodily processes that entail complex neural patterns

that embody nonreducible aspects of us as acting, thinking, and relational agents.

While human properties like mind and religiousness are (in this framework) embodied and emergent, it is also critical to recognize the social, cultural, and congregational *embeddedness* of an embodied and emergent person. Even when we are alone in our thoughts, we exist in the context of our extensive history of physical and social engagements, and we interact with these memories as the basis of our thoughts and meditations. We don't think, feel, believe, desire, hope, or emote entirely alone as isolated persons, but rather, our thinking, feeling, and believing is always embedded in life contexts.

The concept of embeddedness leads to a recent idea in the philosophy of mind—*extended cognition*. The idea is that we frequently become engaged with objects and persons in our environment such that they become an indistinguishable part of the processes of mind. In this view, once such engagement occurs, there is no clear functional boundary between the brain, the body, and the environment. While such engagements are temporary and transient, nevertheless the capacities of mind are for the moment enhanced by interactions with things or persons outside of the individual person. For example, a notebook or smart phone can expand our memory capacity in ways that are not functionally different from using the memory structures in our brains. Even more so, when we are extended into the ongoing processes of social interactions, a great deal of what constitutes our mind at the moment emerges from the nature and experience of ongoing interpersonal interactivity. My mind is supersized for the moment by my engagement with other persons in conversation and interaction. The recent work that Brad Strawn and I have been doing considers the embodied, embedded, and extended nature of our personhood with respect to the nature of Christian life. If these concepts are true, what are the implications for the church?⁷ What if human religiousness and spirituality (and baseball) do not exist inside individual persons, but exist within coupled systems—when we are engaged with other persons, or with God?

AN IMPORTANT THEOLOGICAL CAVEAT

My answers to the journalist from Al Jazeera, as well as the context and content of the discussion in this article, are admittedly naturalist. That is, the discussion has been about the

nature of persons (anthropology), concentrating our attention on the sort of persons God has created. What has not been included in this discussion is recognition of the presence and work of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit is not embodied in the manner of the religious and spiritual lives of his human creatures. Thus, this essay has left bracketed the nature and work of the Spirit of God for the sake of this discussion of the relationship between religiousness and brain function. However, if interactions with a physical or social world are so critical for the nature of the human mind and religious experiences, then it is coherent to consider our interactions with the Spirit of God as the critical context for the emergence of spirituality in embodied persons.

Through the neuroscience of religious experiences we can know a bit about ourselves as creatures, but due to the limits of scientific investigations, we can only know about a contributing part to a larger whole that is human religious life. What is more, this research will leave untapped (and un-researchable by neuroscience) the deeper theological questions about the nature and work of the Spirit of God within his creatures and created world.



ENDNOTES

1. See "New Religious Brain Project Seeks to Uncover Brain Activation during Religious and Spiritual Experiences," February 4, 2014, University of Utah Health Care webpage: http://healthcare.utah.edu/publicaffairs/news/current/02-04-2014_religious_brain_project.php.
2. Warren S. Brown, "Neuroscience of Religion," *The International Society for Science and Religion* (2010). Website <http://www.issr.org.uk/latest-news/neuroscience-and-religious-faith/>.
3. Quote from Jeff Anderson, MD, "New Religious Brain Project."
4. Some of this research is reviewed in P. McNamara, ed., *Where God and Science Meet: How Brain and Evolutionary Studies Alter Our Understanding of Religion*, vol. 2: *The Neurology of Religious Experience* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).
5. Warren S. Brown, "The Brain, Religion, and Baseball: Comments on the Potential for a Neurology of Religion," in McNamara, *Where God and Science Meet*.
6. This view of human nature is described in great detail in Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Malcolm A. Jeeves and Warren S. Brown, *Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities about Human Nature* (Radnor, PA: Templeton Press, 2009); Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
7. Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*.



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SELFIES, UPWARD MOBILITY, CONVERSION, AND THE GOSPEL OF WESTERN INDIVIDUALISM

Jenny H. Pak, Kenneth T. Wang, and Alvin Dueck

Our young Chinese guide was explaining various points of historical and cultural interest around China's scenic Huangshan Mountain—all the while taking “selfies.” She admired all things Western. She had taught herself English by watching American movies, and any new word I (AD) uttered, she asked for a definition and put it in her personal “dictionary.” Given her more collectivist society, her behavior seemed most incongruous. What appears to be happening is that, globally, interdependent cultures and selves are simultaneously becoming more independent.¹ How does the fact of shifting culture influence the dialogue between our faith and practice as psychologists?

Too often we assume that within the person there is a central core processor that is universal. Culture adds only a few local flourishes.² Over the past 40 years, psychological research that takes the social and cultural context more seriously has provided us with a treasure trove of findings that support the notion that differences in cultures and communities are reflected in the individual.³

But how do cultures and communities vary? Some communities/cultures are thick, saturated with a network of relationships that provide mutual support, while other communities are thin, providing few significant relationships with most of those relationships judged by their usefulness.⁴ However, it is possible for a given individual to have both a small social circle of family and trusted friends and at the same time have a broad range of acquaintances and social circles. They differ in the time spent together, emotional intensity, level of intimacy and transparency, and support and reciprocity.⁵ One's work group is different in relational quality from a circle of stamp collectors. Persons with thick relational communities may have different faith experiences, motivation,

identity, emotions, and relationships than a person in thin relational communities.

Societies also differ in the number of communities that prioritize the flourishing of the individual or valorize the common good. In the first, where the person is the center of attention, it is hoped that this individual will grow to be autonomous, authentic, respectful of others, and from this position of independence, to develop significant relationships with others. At best, this individual possesses self-confidence and is unique, assertive, expressive, and intentional.⁶

In other communities, and even within the same individual, there is an emphasis on the whole of which the individual is a part. Here social harmony is highly valued. The healthy individual is one who is aware of the needs of the other and willing to accommodate. The larger whole is acknowledged more often than the individual part. The model individual is one capable of controlling his or her own emotions, sacrificing on behalf of the other, belonging, fitting in, maintaining harmony, and promoting others' goals.⁷

So it appears that our thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships are constituted in a dynamic relationship with our cultural environment. Our meanings, attitudes, images, representations, and cultural products are shaped by interpersonal interaction, institutional practices, and systems. In the United States, Markus and Conner found more independent self-construal among males, the upper-class, non-religious individuals, and Caucasians, but greater interdependence among females, the lower-class, religious individuals, and ethnic minorities.⁸ People develop both styles of self-construal, but the societal triggers that evoke these syndromes vary such that one pattern is privileged over another in different communities, societies, and cultures.

If cultures and communities are powerful factors in shaping personal experience, one would expect that the psychological nature of religious experience would reflect the cultural context. So when it comes to the task of integrating psychology and theology, culture matters. We begin with how the experience of the Korean ethnic church with its cultural history of trauma has shaped the individual as he or she immigrated to the United States. It appears that capitalism and a particular style of being the church have engendered a corrosive individualism. We then reflect on spiritual conversion in more rich, relational communities using the example of Chinese churches. In each case more than the individual's motivation is needed to explain behavior. Thick integration calls for complex dialogue, while thin integration ignores culture as a partner in the conversation between theology and psychology.

INDIVIDUALISM IN THE ETHNIC KOREAN AMERICAN CHURCH

Korea as a nation has had to cope with chronic invasions by different foreign powers and multiple strains of oppression throughout history. For 4,000 years of existence Korea has not had a moment of peace, leaving marks on the Korean collective psyche and character.⁹ *Han* is a term that has been used in daily life among Korean people since ancient times to describe the depths of human suffering or "frustrated hope," and it is still commonly referred to by those who lived through the Korean War. The collective *han* stemming from patriarchy, hierarchy, and foreign intervention is indigenous to Korean people and deeply saturates every segment of the Korean culture and way of life.¹⁰ One cannot understand the individual Korean psyche apart from this historical context.

Most immigrant parents are reticent to share details of their losses and the dislocation they

experienced as children during the Korean War. Often only fragments of fleeing the war zone and battling extreme poverty and hunger are retold to the next generation. Though they may not have been directly exposed to the event, powerful collective experiences of trauma can be transmitted across generations, often in complex and implicit ways, and the urgency for family security may be internalized and identified by the children of survivors.¹¹ In addition, group trauma can be subsequently perpetuated through microaggressions, another form of abuse involving daily discrimination and racism for immigrants and ethnic minorities living in the United States.¹² Reflecting on the destruction, loss, and poverty that profoundly shaped a nation facilitates a deeper understanding of Korean immigrants' responses to the historical trauma. Linking the historical to the personal allows one to be compassionate and empathic through understanding.

The Korean immigration to the United States was prompted in large part by the 1965 reform of US immigration law and a desire to escape the political, economic, and social upheavals of war. As a result of the new wave of immigrants, Korean churches grew from only 30 in the late 1960s to 4,233 by 2013.¹³ Such explosive growth brought the unintended problem of increasing individualism in Korean ethnic churches. What is unique to Korean immigrants in recent times is that a history of trauma has fatally merged with the individualistic materialism that drives America. Not only did financial success satiate internal needs, but Korean immigrants also found that capital was equated with acceptance in a country that rejected them as aliens. Individually acquired wealth became a natural crutch to lean on, as it provided tangible means to measure immigrant success. This unhealthy

"Fuller has made this huge contribution as a school of psychology, yet our greatest contribution to the church . . . is to bring a healing presence to individuals, to children, and to couples in the name of our Lord in all the Christian communities that our graduates serve."

+ **WINSTON GOODEN** is dean emeritus of Fuller's School of Psychology and Evelyn and Frank Freed Professor Emeritus of Psychotherapy and Spirituality. This quote is taken from an Integration panel convened for the School of Psychology's 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)



focus on obtaining economic security has, unfortunately, reinstated the traditional Korean class structure that separated the haves and have-nots. This division within the church inevitably created a fragmented community, vulnerable to interpersonal conflict. While needing to reconcile structural isolation and social marginalization in this country as a minority, the congregation also needed to transform the class-based anxiety accentuated by a history of trauma and immigrant experience within the group.

In the 1970s when the Korean community was in early stages of development, Korean churches provided assistance to facilitate immigrant families' adaptation to America by offering information about housing and employment, language assistance, and enrolling children in school. By catering to these pressing needs, the church inadvertently nurtured a self-serving dependency. Many Korean immigrants came to the church with the misguided notion of one-sided receiving and only remained at a church if the individual needs were being fulfilled. If such members were not happy, they left for the next religious community promising immediate satisfaction. Failure to address "church hopping" was a lost opportunity for Korean congregations to work through differences and embody Christ relationally by developing mutual trust, commitment, and maturity.

Rather than correcting the problem of self-interest, the sermons in Korean churches that focus exclusively on prosperity or how to receive God's blessing often feed into unhealthy individualism. By emphasizing what people can "get" from God or the church, the true message of the gospel—Jesus' sacrificial love—is downplayed or missed entirely. Prayers to God that focus exclusively on personal problems further contribute to individualistic pietism rather than strengthening

the faith community.¹⁴ Problems commonly observed in Korean ethnic churches today are not issues that sprang up overnight, but reflect a history of unresolved trauma, loss, and suffering. Generational trauma and victimization manifests itself not only at the individual level but also in the collective psyche with societal consequences.

CONVERSION IN MORE RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES/CULTURES

To understand the psychology and/or spirituality of an individual apart from his or her cultural context is like trying to understand the Apostle Paul as a generic human being rather than one deeply embedded in his Jewish culture. Krister Stendahl pointed out that Paul's conversion was less like Luther's and more like a vocation, a call to reconcile Jew and Gentile.¹⁵ Paul was an authentic and faithful Jew. He read the doctrine of justification by faith through the eyes of Habakkuk, not the failure of the Catholic Church. Like a good Jew, Paul believed we are saved by God's faithfulness. So again culture matters. To assume that Paul's ethos was the same as that of the Reformation or that people in different cultures are all the same tends to thin out the rich texture of human experience, whether Jew or Gentile.

In many Asian communities, coming to faith is not simply the individualistic decision so common in the Western world. In more collectivistic communities, we often see families converting to Christianity as a unit rather than simply as individuals. Chinese folk religions and Daoism incorporate ancestral worship and the concept of passing on the family torch. Thus, when a person converts to Christianity, they may be extinguishing this family torch. Hence, in deeply relational cultures one can be disowned for betraying the family by taking on new beliefs and practices as a Christian.

My (KW) wife was the first member of her family to become Christian after enduring a serious kidney disease. Initially, her conversion was not well accepted by her family. She was on a spiritual path different from her family members, and practically, she was no longer able to participate in traditional customs of ancestor worship. It was not until our wedding day that my wife's family came into contact with Christianity. Upon finding that the wedding would be held at our church, my parents-in-law felt the need to check out this group. Through their interactions with our church, they became more socially comfortable there, which gradually melted the initial reluctance toward Christianity. Despite leaving Taiwan after our wedding, my parents-in-law continued on their own to stay connected socially with our former church. A part of it was related to a form of social reciprocity (*renqing*, 人情) since our church community had hosted our wedding. Several years later, my wife's parents and her two sisters' families became Christians.

The example of my wife's family is in line with Katrin Fiedler's essay that examines the communal nature of Protestant Christianity in China.¹⁶ She does so from a variety of angles: accessibility, group dynamics and perceptions, Christian gatherings as a leisure option, and the role of the family. Unlike Buddhist and Daoist worship that are more serious and individualized, Fiedler points out that Christianity offered a more socially interactive and engaging communal life for the Chinese populace. Members of the Chinese Christian church community not only conceptualize themselves as being a family in Christ, but literally address each other as brothers and sisters. The church also acts as a surrogate family system fulfilling a communal need when family ties are not strong due to conflict or migration.¹⁷ Consequently, there is often strong peer pressure to adhere to group norms

and rules within the Chinese church community.¹⁸ The collectivistic Chinese values that emphasize relational favors and obligations play an important role in the church community as well. Individuals within the Chinese Christian community often view themselves with other Christian members as in-group and view non-Christians as out-group. And the implicit and explicit rules for members within the church community apply similarly to how rules and roles apply within a family. Therefore, there is often a more explicit and unified ethic and system of rules within many Chinese churches.

As mentioned earlier in this essay about the selfies taken by the tour guide, China is an evolving society strongly influenced by Western and individualistic values in secular and religious life. Not all Chinese are collectivists. Although China has a traditionally collectivistic culture, there are more individualistic influences in urban city settings. Many younger individuals in urban China explore Christianity because they view it as a trendy Western way of living. The urban churches may look a little bit more like those in Western settings compared to the ones in China's rural areas. In sum, although we provide examples to illustrate the communal nature of Chinese Christians, the diversity in Chinese society should not be overlooked. This makes the task of thick integration of culture, faith, and practice a complex endeavor. Overgeneralizations about culture can lead researchers, therapists, and ministers working cross-culturally to make errors.

THICK CULTURAL INTEGRATION

If cultures are all the same, we can then export our theology and psychology without qualification. The integration of the two is then the same in all cultures. While cultures differ on many dimensions, we have focused on societies with thick relational networks

versus thinner market-driven, individualistic communities. We have argued that these cultural and psychological differences impact the conversation between culture and faith differently for Korean Americans and for new Protestant Christians in China. While not all Korean churches are individualistic, cultural forces and church policy have colluded to increase individualism in many Korean immigrant churches. In China the embodied community of Christ is attractive precisely because it is more collective than individualistic.

Our hope is that the church would transcend the extremes of individualism and collectivism.¹⁹ Being the body of Christ requires emphasizing Jesus' teachings calling for humility and courage. Only when the message of the cross is fully embraced can strong individuals in the church point to the kingdom of God in a world seeking justice and peace. Just as Christ calls us to be in union with him, the church can only be built through unity. Our brokenness at the individual, family, and social levels can be healed and brought to wholeness if we prioritize community building and consciously resist divisiveness. Whether individualistic or collectivistic, unless self-serving human tendencies are regenerated in Christ, churches cannot function as the loving community of God that seeks to be salt and light in a broken world.



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THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN THERAPIST

A WRITTEN INTERVIEW WITH INTEGRATION PIONEER SIANG-YANG TAN BY BRAD STRAWN

Siang-Yang Tan is professor of psychology in the Department of Clinical Psychology at Fuller, and has been an active member of the seminary faculty since 1985. He also serves as senior pastor of First Evangelical Church in Glendale, California. A licensed psychologist and Fellow of the American Psychological Association, he has published numerous articles and books, including *Counseling and Psychotherapy: A Christian Perspective* (Baker Academic, 2011).

STRAWN: Dr. Tan, you have written widely on the integration of psychology and theology, helping integrators think about principled integration (which includes theoretical-conceptual and research), professional integration (clinical/practice), and personal integration (i.e., the spirituality of the integrator or Christian therapist). In addition, you have made important contributions to the field in areas such as lay counseling, clarifying the difference between implicit and explicit integration in clinical practice, and the importance of informed consent when practicing as a Christian therapist. But as you know, some critics have worried that psychotherapy or counseling, even practiced by Christians, is not really Christian. In other words, what differentiates a Christian therapist from a secular therapist? This is where I think your work on the Holy Spirit is so important. So I want to ask you about your understanding of the Holy Spirit in the realm of professional integration.

TAN: The Holy Spirit is essential when it comes to the work of the Christian therapist. The Holy Spirit is called the Counselor, Comforter, Helper, or Advocate in John 14:16–17. The work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit can be understood as taking place in three major ways: the Spirit's power, the Spirit's truth, and the Spirit's fruit.

STRAWN: Tell us about those three areas.

TAN: First of all is the Holy Spirit's power. As Christians we understand that the Spirit is essential to life and ministry and we are commanded to be continuously filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). To be filled with the Spirit is to yield to the Spirit, allowing the Spirit to take control and shape us to become more like Jesus and to empower us to do the works of Jesus—which can include counseling. As we are in tune with the Spirit, we are given spiritual gifts that enable us to be fruitful in

the area of counseling. The spiritual gifts that are most salient for counseling include exhortation or encouragement (Rom 12:8), healing (1 Cor 12:9, 28), wisdom (1 Cor 12:8), knowledge (1 Cor 12:8), discerning of spirits (1 Cor 12:10), and mercy (Rom 12:8).

STRAWN: So the source and power of our work as Christian counselors emanate from the Spirit. What about the Spirit's truth?

TAN: The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth teaches and guides us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13), which includes psychological truth. Because we know that the Holy Spirit inspired God's Word, we can be certain that the Spirit will never contradict the truth of Scripture when interpreted properly. This means, for Christian counselors who are abiding in the Spirit, that they can be certain that the Spirit will enable their work to be consistent with the moral and ethical aspects of biblical teaching.

STRAWN: So when the Christian therapist is in tune with the Spirit, that therapist can be certain that his or her practice is truly Christian, Christ centered, and biblically based. What about the Spirit's fruit?

TAN: Of course the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit, as we see in Galatians 5:22–23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. When the Spirit is involved in Christian counseling, we can expect that the therapist will evidence such fruit toward his or her clients and that the outcome of the therapy will be a person who is more and more exhibiting Christlike fruit. Shorthand for the Spirit's fruit is *agape*, or Christlike love. The Spirit's fruit of *agape* is powerful in Christian counseling!

STRAWN: You have also written about how these three aspects of the Spirit's work need to be in balance.

TAN: Yes, while these three aspects are crucial in both Christian life and Christian therapy, they need to be present in biblical balance. Power without love can result in abuse. Power without truth may lead to heresy. But power based in biblical truth and steeped in Christlike love can produce renewal, revival, and deep healing of broken lives.

STRAWN: Can you tell us a little bit more about how you see the Holy Spirit's activity in the actual clinical setting?

TAN: I talk about this and have written about this in five ways. First, the Spirit can empower the Christian therapist to discern the root of the client's problem through the gifts of knowledge and wisdom (1 Cor 12:8). Second, the Spirit can provide spiritual direction as a therapist and client participate in more explicit integration by using Christian practices such as prayer or engaging Scripture. Third, of course, the Spirit can touch a client and bring powerful experiences of grace and healing at any time during the counseling work. This may be gradual or occur during "quantum change" when epiphanies bring about sudden transformations. Sometimes this happens when the therapist makes use of inner healing prayer with those patients where it is appropriate and there has been informed consent. Fourth, the Spirit can assist the Christian therapist to discern the presence of the demonic. While this is a controversial topic in some areas of Christian integration, I have written that one of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit is discerning of spirits (1 Cor 12:10). The Spirit will not only enable the Christian therapist to discern these spirits and make differential diagnoses between demonization and mental illness, but will also help the therapist know when prayer for deliverance should be a part of the therapy or whether a referral to a pastor or prayer

ministry team is also called for. Finally, the Spirit is involved in deep spiritual transformation of both client and therapist into greater Christlikeness as they participate in the spiritual disciplines with the Spirit's help and enabling. Some of these disciplines may be practiced in the session and some may be given as homework assignments between sessions. But either way, these disciplines help us access the presence and power of the Spirit, leading to growth and healing.

STRAWN: If I am understanding you, then, the Christian therapist/counselor assures that what he or she is doing is Christ-centered and biblically based by staying steeped in the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is what brings about real change—which I think I also hear you saying is growth in Christlikeness for both client and therapist!

TAN: Yes, that is correct. The Holy Spirit is crucial for Christian therapy! Of course training and competence and professional ethics and all that are needed, but the Christian therapist will use these in dependence on God the Holy Spirit.

The content of this written "interview" is taken from Dr. Tan's writings and approved by him in this format.



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"We used to talk about the 50-minute hour, but what is the use of that 10 minutes? That 10 minutes before the Christian therapist might be thought of as a time you lift up to God this person you're going to be dealing with and that you also lift up yourself. . . . The issue is—and I've become consumed with this—is spirituality: every minute you have—whether it's at a stoplight or for 10 minutes before the next therapy session, [we must] not be so preoccupied with what's happening but be open to the Holy Spirit—that's what the Spirit is there for!"

+ H. NEWTON MALONY is professor emeritus of psychology in Fuller's School of Psychology. This quote is taken from an Integration panel convened for the School of Psychology's 50th anniversary. More online.





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CARING FOR PRACTITIONERS: RELATIONSHIPS, BURNOUT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Cynthia Eriksson, Ashley Wilkins, and Jude Tiersma Watson

Let's start with a question. Before you begin reading this article, take a minute to stop and reflect. In your work and ministry, what is it that you seek for those you are serving? What is the healing or wholeness that you desire for the people to whom you minister? Write those thoughts down.

Now, consider that list for yourself. How does your life reflect that place of wholeness or healing? God desires that you also live in a way that is connected intimately with the knowledge of who you were created to be, that you know how much God loves you, and that you are transformed and healed: God wants you to have a ministry plan that can sustain you. Is that the plan you follow?

WHOLENESS AND BROKENNESS

Ministry with shalom at its center is a *mutually transforming ministry*. As we pursue a life of service that seeks to live out shalom for others, God seeks to transform us so that we live in dynamic relationship with our self, God, our loved ones, and our community. Our participation in ministry is then a reciprocal involvement in redemption and restoration; *we are restored as we participate in the restoration of others*.

Yet how often does the work of ministry, health care, or psychotherapy lead to the experience of exhaustion, disillusionment, or despair? It is not uncommon to hear colleagues say that they are “burned out.” Is this what you desire for the people you are serving? Is your goal for them to be so invested in their work and ministry that they do not have time to pause and rest? How can this be what God desires for you?

In this article we will explore the association between burnout and shalom, and the ways that human relationship to God, self, others, and community are interwoven in these ex-

periences of wholeness and brokenness. We assert that it is within the transformative power of relationship that we move toward shalom, and when we break down in our authentic connection to God, self, and others we are prone to burnout. In fact, we do violence to others and ourselves, and we violate God's plan for shalom when we do not value the authentic needs of self and of others.¹

WHAT DOES PSYCHOLOGY SAY ABOUT BURNOUT?

There are many reasons to embark on thoughtful, quality integration of psychological science and intercultural and theological reflection. However, one pressing reason may be that the use of psychological research on burnout in conversation with ministry settings may help us protect a whole generation of ministry leaders from an orientation that violates shalom. Social psychologist Christina Maslach, in her early research and writing on burnout, emphasized that “what is unique about burnout is that the stress arises from the *social* interaction between helper and recipient.”² Burnout is relational; it is in the context of relationships that the stress develops. By connecting with others in need and experiencing the emotional burden of another's pain and suffering, the caregiver is required to give of herself emotionally to create an opportunity for healing—for shalom. The experience of burnout is also relational as it is connected to one's sense of relationship to self, which is influenced by one's relationships with colleagues and leaders within the ministry or care setting. This primary relational context joins our understanding of ministry burnout to the concept of shalom.

Maslach's theory includes three components of burnout: “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.”³ The theory suggests an interactive relationship between these three compo-

nents. The emotional demands of serving people in healing or helping roles can cause workers to extend themselves beyond their capacities. Needs may feel urgent and ever-present, and the worker can begin to feel “used up,” that there is “nothing left” and no source for gaining energy for the work. When *emotional exhaustion* sets in, one possible way to try to conserve energy is to not extend oneself as much to the relationships. This can move the worker to a place of distancing from or *depersonalizing* those whom he/she is caring for. While a certain balanced amount of detachment may be a necessary boundary in emotionally charged work, a worker who is burning out becomes emotionally cold and unfeeling or cynical about the needs of the client. Finally, these experiences of distance and exhaustion can be exacerbated by a sense of *limited personal accomplishment*, and perhaps even self-recrimination that one has “failed” or “become like the other burned out workers.”⁴

The impact of burnout moves beyond these internal experiences of exhaustion and lack of accomplishment. Research suggests that burnout is associated with lower work productivity, lessened commitment or loyalty to an organization, more sick days, more stress-related illness, and finally, attrition.⁵ There is more than simply risk of personal misery when a health professional experiences burnout; it ripples outward and affects ministry, relationships, organizational culture, and morale.

Maslach and her colleagues have identified six specific areas within the work setting that contribute to the risk of developing burnout: “workload, community, values, personal control, reward, and fairness.”⁶ We will briefly describe these constructs and connect them with the overall framework of relationship. As might be expected, *workload*

is a critical factor in burnout, particularly with respect to emotional exhaustion. When the work demand is beyond one’s capacity, and when there are not seasons of lessened work to allow for recovery, exhaustion can develop.⁷ *Community* is the general quality of relationships within the workplace or organization. Support from peers can increase one’s sense of accomplishment and effectiveness in work, while support from supervisors can buffer against exhaustion.

Personal control in work is exemplified in the ability to contribute to organizational decisions and having clarity and limited conflict in job roles; more control is associated with less burnout. While there may be limits to the ability to control outside circumstances or resources, the ability to participate in decisions and problem solving may help to buffer the impact of these limitations. The importance of *reward* is also associated with burnout—not only financial compensation, but also recognition for work accomplished. *Fairness* in the job setting is the perception that decisions are equitable, processes of decision-making are unbiased, and one’s efforts, time investment, and skills are justly acknowledged and compensated. In a longitudinal study, Maslach and Leiter found that for those already at risk of burnout, unfairness was a key predictor for them actually experiencing burnout a year later.⁸ Finally, we consider worker *values*. These ideals and principles bring people to a particular job, motivate them for their work, and set expectations for what they want to accomplish. When these personal values align with organizational values, burnout is less likely.⁹ This requires us to be able to reflect and identify what our personal values and motivations for ministry truly are.

RELATIONSHIPS AND BURNOUT

Because relational stress in work correlates

“If we were to take Jesus more seriously, we would take the body of Christ more seriously. We need to learn it is in the body of Christ that we are formed, and that character formation shapes the way in which we are therapists, researchers, and educators. . . . It is such a temptation professionally to move beyond the provincial church into the rarified air of our own professionalism. While I believe strongly in our responsibility to society and immersing ourselves in its brokenness, I think we have a profound responsibility as followers of Christ to take care of the body of Christ.”

+ ALVIN DUECK is the Distinguished Professor of Cultural Psychologies in the School of Psychology. This quote is taken from a Fuller panel convened for the School of Psychology’s 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)



to burnout, an important antidote against it is supportive work relationships. Humans turn to relationships when stressed, and social support as a psychological construct represents both the experience of being emotionally and practically supported ourselves and doing this for others.¹⁰

Psychological literature identifies four main sources of social support that mitigate burnout: *professional*, *personal*, *organizational*, and *church-based*. *Professional* support comes from supervisors, colleagues, and patients.¹¹ Family and friends provide *personal* life social support.¹² *Organizations*, through policy and other structures, institute supportive environments. Two examples of organizational support include predictable workloads and employee input in policy.¹³ *Churches* not only offer emotional support through clergy and members but also provide avenues of encouragement to maintain, deepen, and integrate faith with daily life.¹⁴

The presence of social support can both prevent and buffer against the effects of burnout, as “social support not only reduces the likelihood of strain, but social support is mobilized as a coping mechanism when strain does occur.”¹⁵ Research with samples of healthcare workers, first responders, psychologists, caregivers of patients with advanced cancer, and counseling center staff supports the conclusion that higher levels of burnout occur when there are low, insufficient, or dissatisfying levels of social support.¹⁶ In humanitarian aid workers, social support was significantly related to less emotional exhaustion and more personal accomplishment, and organizational support (indicated by a feeling of being supported by the agency, as well as the perception of supportive policies) correlated to

lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.¹⁷

SHALOM AND BURNOUT

How can whole, shalom-oriented relationships contribute to a work or ministry model that can move past burnout into a sustainable ministry? Clearly shalom cannot be attained by addressing only one aspect of our lives or work but rather requires a dynamic understanding of our relationships. Realistically, even when we desire to embody a reciprocal transformative model of ministry, there may be seasons in which we are overextended. However, attending to the warning signs of these seasons of stress allows ministry workers to create time for continued refinement and transformation. Facing burnout remains an opportunity to grow in understanding more about ourselves as well as others. In order to more deeply explore this interaction, we begin with a model of human relationship.

Martin Buber offers a theological framework for humanness that reflects the relational image of God and the value of persons. In a simple way, his “I-Thou” understanding of personhood reflects the fact that we are a true self only within relationship; the self is known only in relation to another. The relationship with another—“I-Thou”—reflects the sacred space that is formed when we are in authentic relationship; Buber contrasted this with having an “experience” of a person, rather than authentic connection, represented as “I-It.”¹⁸ Balswick, King, and Reimer expound on Buber’s theological anthropology to present a model of relatedness with four quadrants, based on the framework of an x-axis that represents value of self (from low, insecure sense of self, “It,” to a high, secure sense of self, “I”) and a y-axis to identify the value of the other (from low recognition of

the unique humanness of the other, “It,” to a high regard for the other, “Thou”).¹⁹ This model then identifies four quadrants or types of relations depending upon the location on the axes: I-Thou (upper right quadrant), I-It (lower right), It-Thou (upper left), and It-It (lower left). The I-Thou relationship is then the best description of a whole and healthy relationship with self and with other. God’s intention is that we be fully ourselves and fully acknowledge the uniqueness of another in relationship. Shalom is based on an I-Thou model, a developing self that is secure in an understanding of her/his particular identity and value, in relation with Thou (an “other” with unique being and identity). Burnout as just described is represented in the quadrants where either the “I” or the “Thou” has become an “It.” When we live out of a place of limited self-awareness and self-identity, our own needs and values can become subsumed in the caring relationship, demonstrated, for example, when it feels impossible to say “no.” When we thus become exhausted by the emotional demands of those in need, the other may become an “It” in an effort for the “I” to survive. We may feel it is too much to relate to the unique value of each person in need and may disconnect from our ministry relationships.

We enact I-Thou or I-It relationships within our ministry cultures, so we must seek to reinforce the value of self and value of other within them. An organization that esteems its own workers (or its ministry identity) over recipients often lacks sensitivity to the unique needs of the community and cultural context; it also fails to embody mutuality and the reciprocal nature of all ministry. Organizational cultures that value the recipient over the worker oppress their own workers and impede their health and transformation.

This is clearly not participation in God's shalom.

IMPLEMENTING PRACTICES FOR SHALOM

How might Buber's I-Thou model enrich our understanding of shalom? We consider the personal, social, and organizational impacts of this model. First, within the mutual transformation model of ministry, each self is of value; we must commit to the challenging work of authentically regarding both self (I) and other (Thou). Transformational ministry also recognizes the ongoing mutual healing of both the caregiver and the care-receiver. Finally, institutions bear responsibility for creating an organizational culture of shalom, places that encourage and reward relationships of mutual enrichment rather than burnout and oppression.

Personal Impact of the Absence of Shalom

A dynamic model of shalom reminds us that we are in the midst of transformation, and we each bear a personal responsibility to pursue well-being and spiritual maturity. We have already argued against the idea that burnout is merely a matter of personal weakness. Nonetheless, we do participate in our transformation. In this regard, Miner and colleagues have identified an "internalized orientation to ministry" that serves as a buffer to burnout in clergy.²⁰ This emphasis on an internal sense of identity, role, and competence highlights the importance of a secure sense of ministry self—an "I" as ministry worker, not an "It."

Having a secure ministry identity challenges the temptation to a messiah complex. A messiah complex springs from an overactive sense of agency in which we consider our role to be greater than it actually is. We are not truly connected to our own unique

gifts and needs; in surprising ways we may be treating ourselves as an "It." Of course, caregivers do not wake up in the morning and decide that today they will become the messiah to those for whom they care. Rather, this savior complex subtly (or not so subtly) enters in when caregivers find it difficult to let God be God and thus take on more than they intend. At this point we are not participating with God but rather have taken on God's role as well as our own.²¹ When we are *unable* to stop or say no to the requests of others, we may be acting as rescuers rather than as coworkers with the one true Savior who redeems us for shalom. The messiah complex prevents us from realizing our own need for transformation, instead seeing transformation as something that needs to be accomplished "out there" and not "in here."

The principle of Sabbath is one way to regain perspective on our identity and role in our work. Sabbath means not only resting but ceasing, including ceasing to try to be God. On the Sabbath, "we do nothing to create our own way. We abstain from work, from our incessant need to produce and accomplish. . . . The result is that we can let God be God in our lives."²² When we remember who God is in our lives, we are reminded of our role and God's role; we can refrain from the temptation to be God in the lives of those for whom we feel responsible.

Sabbath creates a time and space in which shalom relationships are lived out and marred relationships are made whole. The accurate "I" view of the self is deepened as we experience God in the keeping of the Sabbath and Sabbath rest. Exhaustion is not the mark of spirituality. Sabbath is not only about personal time with God, or a personal time of rest, but also the place in which

social support can be encouraged. Sabbath is a communal event that is best and most fully shared with others. Once Sabbath thus alters our orientation, it is not so much an isolated day as an atmosphere, a climate in which we live all our days.²³ Importantly, Sabbath offers a foretaste of what is to come, when all will live in shalom. Messianic Rabbi Stuart Dauermann writes, "In fact, the standard Jewish salutation at the end of conversations or letters during the week as the Sabbath approaches is 'Shabbat shalom,' wishing someone 'Sabbath wellness/wholeness/restoration as an anticipation of that Day when all is altogether shalom.'"²⁴

Caring for ourselves and living out Sabbath rest in community impacts how able we are to truly care for our team, our family, and those we seek to serve. Through the ongoing transformation of a commitment to pursue shalom, we maintain an accurate sense of self.

Shalom in Organizations

The call to shalom and healthy community relationships requires a countercultural perspective. Cultural values of progress and productivity directly threaten healthy relationships; Sabbath counteracts this. Health care or any ministry that rigidly follows managerial culture by primarily valuing numerical growth or monetary cost runs the risk of treating others as "It"—one more cancer patient, one more family in economic need. What happens when the cancer patient does not get better? What is felt when the economic needs become more complex? We are not advocating an unreal or idealistic perspective on the vast needs of ministry and healthcare settings, but we are asking for an organizational commitment to eschewing an orientation that considers progress or productivity the ultimate goal of service.

“When we fail to acknowledge our interdependence . . . we fail to serve the purposes of God optimally. We may do so out of pride, believing our own efforts to be sufficient, or out of self-reliance, believing our own efforts should be sufficient, or out of shame, believing ourselves undeserving of assistance. But when we insist on acting independently, we can thwart the opportunities of others to contribute as God made them to contribute. These contributions from others can be complicated, frustrating, and wonderful, but even when more the former than the latter, interdependence enriches both the self and the other. God made us for relationship and community.”

+ **MARI CLEMENTS**, dean of the School of Psychology, in her 2014 Baccalaureate address



Organizational leaders seeking shalom recognize that viewing progress and productivity as their highest values *will not* create an organizational culture that supports workers’ choices for margin, rest, and restoration.²⁵ In a shalom-oriented organization, leaders model keeping the Sabbath; they encourage staff to take their vacation time. Leaders need to uphold a high view of the value of each worker as well as each person they serve while themselves exemplifying healthy “I-Thou” relationships. Mutual transformation can then occur at all levels of the agency.

CONCLUSION

We violate God’s plan for shalom when we do violence to ourselves and others through burnout. While this statement may seem extreme, we contend that the experience of burnout represents a violence of self-deception and expectations of others that extend beyond capacity for health. Let us commit to enacting a ministry culture that lives in shalom and creates mutual transformation in ministry.

+ Originally published in a slightly different form in *Health, Healing, and Shalom: Frontiers and Challenges for Christian Health Missions*, ed. Bryant L. Myers, Erin Dufault-Hunter, and Isaac B. Voss (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015).



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+ "In an academic institution like Fuller, I believe that my work as a faculty member in the School of Psychology will help me integrate mind and heart in the work of spiritual formation as I continue my own study and teach courses that will explore this topic from many perspectives." —Laura Robinson Harbert, dean of chapel and spiritual formation and assistant professor of clinical psychology





DO YOU NEED JESUS TO BE A GOOD THERAPIST?

Cameron Lee

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Lee has been a member of the Marriage and Family program faculty since 1986. While teaching marriage and family studies courses on the Fuller campus, he also speaks off-campus as a Certified Family Life Educator. He is a licensed Family Wellness Trainer and a member of the National Council on Family Relations. Lee's current project is the development of the Fuller Institute for Relationship Education (FIRE), which seeks to help congregations create sustainable marriage and relationship education ministries through the low-cost training of volunteer leaders. Lee maintains a personal blog entitled *Squinting Through Fog*, a series of reflections on the Christian life (available online).

It was nearing the end of the academic year, and one of our graduating family therapy students came to my office for a chat. She sat across from me, beaming, full of enthusiasm for her newfound clinical skills. To be frank, I don't remember much of the conversation. But one sentence lodged forever in my mind. With a glow of delight on her face, she reported what for her was a new and exciting insight: "I don't need Jesus to be a good therapist!"

Something in me cringed as she said this.

I didn't take her to mean "I don't need Jesus, period," and to some extent, I could agree with what she said. Many excellent therapists aren't Christians, and Christians have much to learn from them; conversely, being a follower of Christ is no guarantee of clinical wisdom or competence. Nor would I want to endorse the kind of instrumental thinking in which a relationship with Jesus becomes a mere means to some other end, even as worthy an end as becoming a skilled clinician.

Still, I couldn't suppress the feeling that I had failed somehow in my own vocation as a teacher. I had taken too much of our students' personal and spiritual formation for granted.

We talked for a while, but I doubt that I had much of anything constructive to say. Eventually we said farewell at my office door, and I never saw her again. But her words haunted me. Something was missing. I wasn't sure what. But I knew that in some way it had to do with this thing we call "integration."

But what *is* integration? And why does it matter?

INTEGRATION AS INTEGRITY

I have often asked our students, "How many of you came to Fuller because of our emphasis on integration?" Invariably, nearly every hand goes up.

The problem, of course, is that the word *integration* can connote quite different things to different people. Moreover, it's easy to forget that the terms *psychology* and *theology* each represent a wide range of personal and professional meanings. Part of the difficulty is that, by its very nature, the academy encourages specialization and subspecialization. Expertise, as they say, consists in knowing more and more about less and less. This sets a practical limit on the extent of integration that can occur *within* each discipline, let alone across them.

That's not a counsel of despair. Psychology, for example, encompasses a vast domain of empirical research, a complex array of theories of personality and behavior, and an eclectic mix of clinical practices. But no one would seriously suggest that the whole enterprise be abandoned simply because researchers, theorists, and practitioners can't always agree. Productive and insightful work continues to be done, and many hold out the hope of greater synergy. In recent decades, for example, neuroscience has begun to serve as a common platform for discussion between professionals of quite different stripes, a trend that seems likely to continue.

But there's an alternative to thinking of integration primarily in cross-disciplinary terms. What, we might ask ourselves, is the perceived problem to which integration is the proposed solution?

To begin with, there is the practical problem suggested above. The state of knowledge in

well-established disciplines such as the social and behavioral sciences and biblical studies and theology continues to grow apace. It's difficult enough for scholars and practitioners to keep abreast of developments in their own fields; it's more difficult still to develop anything approaching expertise in other domains. The problem is felt keenly by dissertation students. Even if their curiosity extends across disciplines, the pragmatic reality is that they are rewarded more for specialization than cross-bench thinking.

Much of what drives the interest in integration, however, is personal and in some sense political. The relationship between the church and the profession of psychology has often been fraught with mutual suspicion. Many early writings in integration had an apologetic tone, as if a certain level of justification was needed for dabbling in such dark arts as psychology and psychotherapy. The need for such defensiveness seems to have lessened over the decades. But many of our students still come to Fuller over someone's objections: *By all means, study to be a pastor or missionary*—is the message they receive, directly or indirectly, *but why be a therapist?*

The matter can be put in more personal terms. First, students arrive at Fuller with a set of preunderstandings shaped by their families, churches, and other social contexts. For many students, seminary is a profoundly enriching experience. But even enrichment can come at the price of deconstruction, as students have their habits of thinking about God, the Bible, and even themselves challenged in destabilizing ways.

Second, psychotherapeutic practice is neither uniformly nor unilaterally determined by empirical research (nor can we be sure that most therapists are dedicated to keeping

up with their academic journals!). Theories of psychotherapy, therefore, with their assumptions about human nature and the well-lived life, often function as worldviews, or “cultures of healing.”¹ To some extent, therapy consists of socializing clients into new ways of thinking and being that hopefully lead to greater satisfaction and fewer problems.

This assumes that therapists themselves have been thus socialized, quite possibly into multiple cultures of healing, and in ways that may clash with their pre-understandings. This can lead to a fragmented imagination and a compartmentalization of experience in which a person thinks one way in one context (e.g., church) and another way in the next (e.g., the clinic). The problem is thus one of “coherent construal,” to use Walter Brueggemann's term: of being able to interpret and experience reality whole, to tell a coherent story about what is happening, how one should respond, and why.²

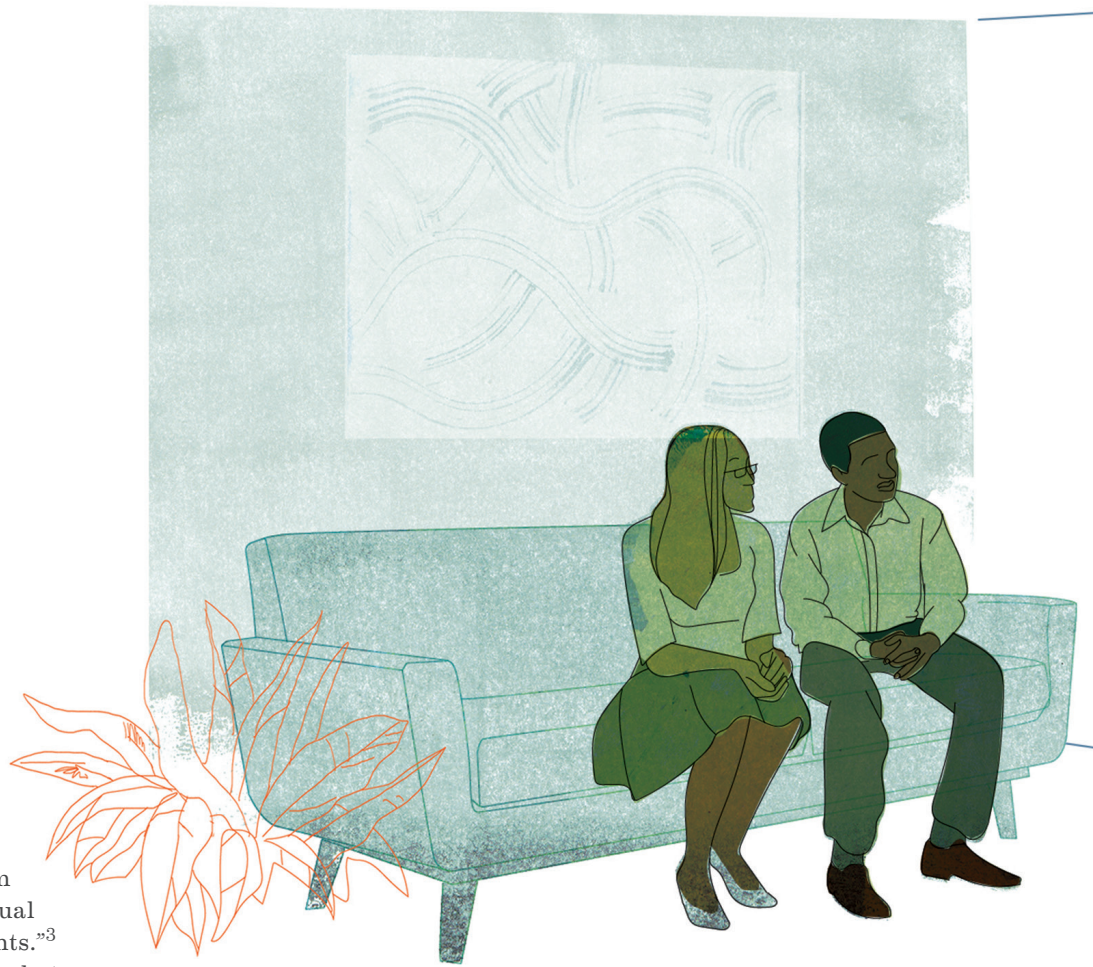
Beyond mere intellectual interest, therefore, one of the motivations for integration is the sense that one's personal integrity is at stake: *Is there any conflict between being a Christian and being a psychotherapist?* The question isn't unique to the practice of therapy; many Christians experience some degree of compartmentalization of faith and work, confession and profession. But therapists, who are intimately involved in helping people correct the course of their lives, may feel the question more keenly.

Thus, there is an important sense in which “the integration of psychology and theology” can be understood in academic and interdisciplinary terms, and much fruitful work has been done on that basis. To think of integration as a matter of integrity, however, emphasizes a more personal dimension.

“A part of our role is how does God use us in that transformation process [of therapy] to challenge, to question, and to help people see the consequences of [their choices]. Another part is this beautiful intimacy when people share their lives with you in that very sacred place where, because you've given them that faithful, unconditional love and empowerment, now they can share their hearts and their secrets at a level of knowing and being known at the very core of their being. That is a sacred privilege for therapists. . . . We're on our knees before God here.”

+ **JUDY BALSWICK** is a senior professor of marital and family therapy. This quote is taken from an *Integration* panel convened for the School of Psychology's 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)





Social psychologist Ken Gergen has called it “multiphrenia”: a problem of identity, a “splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments.”³ It’s a good description, I believe, of what happens to students during their formative but frequently confusing years of graduate training.

What’s needed is a coherent narrative framework capable of holding together a developing sense of vocation as Christians and as therapists. In Fuller’s Marriage and Family program, that framework is provided by the biblical motif of *peacemaking*. Other models, of course, are possible. But formation requires *some* coherent framework, and we believe that peacemaking, along with what we call the attendant “clinical virtues”—humility, compassion, hope, and Sabbath rest—provides one that is true to the narrative of Scripture. I sketch that framework briefly below.

PEACEMAKING AND THE CLINICAL VIRTUES

The early chapters of Genesis provide a leitmotif that runs through the biblical narrative. What God creates is good, even very good—but sin spoils and defaces that good creation, and humanity bears the consequences. A doctrine of sin should encompass more than just the conscious and individual violation of moral norms.

We are not only disobedient, but also broken and bent; we not only create and perpetuate suffering, but through our relationships we also suffer what stems from the brokenness of others.

A peacemaking perspective assumes that creation was originally suffused by *shalom*, a rich biblical term for peace that conveys much more than the mere absence of conflict. *Shalom* is the presence of contentment, wholeness, and justice. Sin sunders *shalom*; in Cornelius Plantinga’s memorable phrase, a world broken by sin is “not the way it’s supposed to be,” not the way God intended.⁴

Psychotherapists must deal with brokenness of every kind: physical, emotional, spiritual, relational. The work can be difficult and draining. Under professional strictures of confidentiality, therapists find themselves carrying burdensome stories of suffering that they cannot tell to others. Many Christian therapists, moreover, work in contexts in which explicitly sharing the gospel with clients would violate ethical norms. What vision, then, will sustain them in their work?

The high-water mark of the Beatitudes is the call to be peacemakers (Matt 5:9), nestled in the context of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3, 10). All of his disciples must understand themselves as citizens of that kingdom, making peace by participating in the ongoing work by which God is restoring *shalom* to creation. Disciples who would also be psychotherapists must bring that kingdom orientation to their work. What we thus call the clinical virtues are not ad hoc character qualities that simply make one a better therapist; they draw their unity from the internal logic of the Beatitudes.

Jesus holds up a surprising list of people as exemplifying God’s kingdom—at least surprising to those whose imaginations have not been shaped by a right understanding of prophecy (see, e.g., Luke 4:14–30; Isa 61:1–2). In Matthew 5:3–6, Jesus calls the poor in spirit and the meek blessed, together with those who mourn and hunger for justice. In Luke 6:20–22, it’s the poor and the hungry, the distraught and disenfranchised. God’s kingdom, in other words, comes by grace rather than merit and must be received as a gift. It does not belong to those whom we



As my life continues to unfold, God seems to be combining my passion for mentoring graduate students with his vision to reach hurting people. I've long been in solidarity with Hispanic people, and I have been uniquely placed to provide clinical supervision as Fuller Psychological and Family Services (FPFS) has begun over the past year to provide therapy services in Spanish.—Anne Turk Nolty, assistant professor of psychology

The clinical virtue appropriate to such a state of affairs is *humility*. It is not necessarily those who come from privileged backgrounds and model families, for example, who make the best therapists. People who aspire to assist others in navigating their brokenness must know their own with clear-sighted honesty. Against the modern, almost gnostic worship of technical know-how, the humble Christian therapist stands amazed—*Who, me?*—at the privilege of helping others find and nurture moments of wholeness and peace.

This is active work: peacemakers are not peace-wishers. People who humbly grieve brokenness—both their own and that of others—hunger to see God make things right. And they are not content to sit idly by. Blessed through the knowledge and experience of God's mercy, they in turn embody that mercy for others (Matt 5:7).

This is expressed through the clinical virtue of *compassion*, a word whose root means "to suffer with." A therapist's compassion, motivated by the desire to

see one's client move toward wholeness, is the foundation of the healing relationship. Many who seek healing will say that their therapist is a person who truly listened to them, who truly understood. No longer invisible, no longer isolated in their suffering, troubled clients begin to perceive glimmers of hope.

Therapists face hopelessness on a daily basis, and therefore need the virtuous disposition of *hope* themselves. Compassion, after all, is difficult to sustain. In addition to the emotional demands of what happens inside the therapy room, therapists have their own personal concerns with which to contend (and for which they need *self-compassion*!). Burnout and emotional exhaustion, feelings of futility and meaninglessness are ever-present possibilities, and the therapist's own hope-full or hope-less attitude will be communicated to clients through the therapeutic relationship.

For Christians, hope entails cultivating the enduring ability to imagine present challenges in terms of the future promised by God. Even small steps toward peace can be celebrated for their participation in the divine work of restoring wholeness to creation. Every therapist faces days or weeks in which clients seem stuck with no progress in sight, tempting therapists to blame their

"We can't just think of spirituality as an experience of transcendence. It's something that radically changes lives, that changes the way we understand ourselves and the way we are in this world. Here in the School of Psychology that's something that the faculty are very committed to doing: enabling our students to have an educational experience that is transformative to who they are as people, that shapes them and forms them, and that convicts and propels them to go out and serve in this world."

+ **PAMELA EBSTYNE KING** is the Peter L. Benson Associate Professor of Applied Developmental Science. This quote is taken from an Integration panel convened for the School of Psychology's 50th anniversary. [More online.](#)



clients' "resistance" or to give up altogether. But as N. T. Wright reminds us:

*You are not oiling the wheels of a machine that's about to roll over a cliff. You are not restoring a great painting that's shortly going to be thrown on the fire. . . . You are . . . accomplishing something that will become in due course part of God's new world. . . . [W]hat we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted.*⁵

Wright admits that we cannot know exactly how such things will come to pass. But we shouldn't underestimate the value of knowing that our work is not wasted. At times, therapy can be an agonizingly slow process of growth. Against the background of a results-oriented, quick-fix culture, this can be discouraging to therapists and clients alike, and a temptation to despair. A robust eschatological vision—the vision of a hopeful future under the sovereign promise of God—may be just what a Christian therapist needs to be sustained in the virtues of humility and compassion.

Finally, therapists have long been taught the need for self-care. Some have gone as far as to propose it as an ethical imperative, since therapists who neglect their own needs risk endangering their clinical competence.⁶

From a peacemaking perspective, however, the language of "self-care" is too narrow; *Sabbath rest*, rightly understood, provides the more appropriate image. We may think of Sabbath as a break from work, and busy therapists may indeed need the enforced rest. But rest is neither an end in itself nor a means to "enhancing the efficiency of [our] work."⁷

Rather, through Sabbath rest, we cultivate a right relationship to work itself. Even God rested (Exod 20:8–11)—and we are not God. Moreover, we rest, and grant rest to others, as a sign of remembrance that we have been rescued from slavery by God's mercy and might (Deut 5:15). In these ways, Sabbath brings us back full circle to humility, for in our rest, we remember that God's work

precedes and gives meaning to our own.

The clinical virtues of humility, compassion, hope, and Sabbath rest are narrative-dependent. In other words, their meaning and unity derive from their place in a shared story. We can consider them as character qualities, but only in the sense that they are appropriate to being a character in a particular story: the story of God's ongoing restoration of shalom.

WHY INTEGRATION MATTERS

The model of integration as integrity, within the vocational narrative of peacemaking, is the product of a departmental history that is too long and complicated to tell here. Suffice it to say that Marriage and Family was once a ministry program within the School of Theology; changes to state licensing laws prompted us to relocate to the School of Psychology in 1987. The troubling conversation mentioned above happened during the early years of that transition, when we were still adjusting to our new institutional home and trying to identify our distinctives.

Today, marriage and family students are introduced to the peacemaking framework in their first quarter. Simultaneously, in their first and second quarters, they participate in small groups, led by faculty, to explore their own personal narratives in connection with peacemaking and the virtues. Then, in the spring quarter of both their first and second years, the students, staff, and faculty of the program gather off-campus for a day of worship, meditation, and conversation. It's indicative of the graduate school subculture that many of us enter the day feeling too busy to take that time away from our work. But it's a testimony to the wisdom of Sabbath that by the end of the day, we wonder why we waited so long.

Integration as integrity is necessarily about formation. Whether we intentionally engage in formational practices or not, the fact remains that students will be formed

by their seminary experience, sometimes in ways that pose unintentional challenges to a coherent sense of identity and vocation.

As suggested earlier, this kind of challenge is not unique to the study of psychology or even to seminary. Nor is peacemaking only relevant to Christians training as therapists. If Gergen is right, then multiphrenia and a piecemeal sense of identity is more and more becoming the norm in highly technology-dependent societies. Graduate school may exacerbate the condition, and training to be one who is paid to guide people through the ups and downs of their lives raises the stakes.

Integration matters because integrity and a coherent sense of identity as one whom Jesus has called to be a peacemaker matter. Do you need a relationship with Jesus in order to be a good therapist? Well, in some sense, no. But that's asking the question the wrong way around. Can the rigors and challenges of learning to be a good therapist become the testing ground for a coherent identity as a peacemaker? Yes. And if I had a chance to do that fateful conversation over again—who knows—this time I might have something more constructive to say.



Author's note: Deep thanks to my colleague Terry Hargrave for his excellent feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

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THE LOCAL CHURCH: A WORK IN PROCESS

Before joining the faculty at Fuller, I was, for 24 years, a pastor. The congregation I served, and all congregations, are messy: jumbled expectations, people experiencing times of great joy and of deep sorrow, heated discussions at board meetings, casseroles, preaching, and weekly critiques on just about anything. Congregations are messy places for one simple reason—they are an assembly of people. Being a pastor is tough, but most of the time, it is the best life.¹

The work of a pastor is to help people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ: leading people from sickness to healing, from immaturity to maturity, and from being settled to being sent. The Apostle Paul described his work with the churches in Galatia this way: “My little children, I’m going through labor pains again until Christ is formed in you” (Gal 4:19). This labor towards discipleship happens as pastors go about their routines of ministry. This work happens when the church gathers, but most often it happens in the midst of ordinary life, in relationships, as pastors intentionally pay attention to what God is doing, or seeks to do, in the life of a person whom they shepherd.²

In the church I served, we would often say: “All of us are broken people; some of us have better masks.” With “battles on the outside, fears in the inside” (2 Cor 7:5), we gather as church. We are defined not by problems, but defined as those loved by God in the process of being formed into the image of Christ.³

To do this work well, theology is not enough. Certainly, pastors need to study the Bible, church history, and doctrine, but the workplace of a pastor is the lives of people. The Word becomes real in the lives of people, not in isolation, but in the ordinary twists and turns of life. Pastors attend to theology, but they must also pay attention to what is happening with people. Eugene Peterson confesses:

I realized that I knew a lot more about scripture and truth than I did about souls and prayer. I also realized that for me as pastor, souls and prayer required an equivalent demand on my attention as scripture and truth. This is what pastors are for—to keep these things alive and yoked in everyday life.⁴

Pastors are not therapists. We are not trained to deal with complex psychological issues. But pastors, in order to serve their people in process, must develop an understanding of issues related to mental health, suicide, grieving and loss, eating disorders, relationship troubles, addictions, trauma, family systems, and just plain listening. This allows pastors to do a better job of detecting concerns, referring people to professionals, and simply being able to care in a more informed way.

Students who study at Fuller benefit from faculty who teach in the areas of theology, intercultural studies, and psychology. This allows us to better equip those who serve the church. In my master’s-level class, Pastoral Ministry, I bring in the best voices from our Schools of Psychology and Theology to give students new lenses to attend to issues that arise in the life of a congregation. Fuller’s Doctor of Ministry program offers courses taught by leading psychologists and theologians in order to enhance the skills of ministry leaders as they focus on people in their care.

Being a pastor is a hard and demanding job. Our Doctor of Ministry program, and other departments at Fuller, are working to help pastors and other ministry leaders attend to their own spiritual and psychological well-being so that they might serve well, and finish well.⁵

Every local congregation is a work in process. It’s a holy assembly of people growing into the image of Christ. Pastors are faithful guides and mentors ministering the Word to people in the ordinary realities of life. They do this best as they attend to the Word *and* attend to souls. I am grateful for the integration of theology and psychology that happens at Fuller Seminary.

ENDNOTES

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BUILDING VIRTUES IN YOUTH: A DEVELOPMENTAL TAKE ON SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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Teenagers have tremendous capacity for spiritual growth and thriving when they are embedded in a context telling them they have a purpose in life and that they are valuable and capable members of society. Many minority youth growing up in socioeconomic disadvantage, however, are at much higher risk for outcomes such as incarceration and emotional disruption. Consider for a moment the hypothetical lives of two teenagers: Trevor and Evan.¹ Both young men attend a high school on the south side of Chicago and live in a neighborhood replete with challenges that can hinder positive development. Many people would consider their odds of becoming flourishing adults quite low; however, their experiences as adolescents have the power to shape and even transform their life paths.

About a year ago, the trajectories of these fictitious boys' lives began to diverge. Trevor heard about a group called Team World Vision (TWV) from one of his friends. He went to a TWV meeting and found out that 30–40 teens from his school would be running 26.2 miles in the Chicago Marathon to raise money for clean water in Africa. Although Trevor had never really thought about raising money for kids halfway around the world (his family had barely enough money to get by), he was really inspired by the passion of the group leaders and decided to sign up for the marathon. Over the next few months as Trevor began to train with his team, others began to observe changes in Trevor. His teachers began to notice that he was spending more time on his homework and was more patient with annoying kids in class. Trevor also seemed better able to manage his anger and began to care about others. He started developing virtues like patience, self-control, and generosity.

Evan began participating in athletics, but he

had a different type of experience. He joined the basketball team at his school. His coach emphasized winning at all costs and would tell Evan he was only as good as his last game. Evan was the top player on the team and began to dream of a professional basketball career and making money. Evan began to really enjoy his newfound social status at school and attending parties where drugs and alcohol were abundant. He felt like he deserved a break after working so hard in practice, so he didn't feel bad drinking a lot. Evan did increase in self-control during basketball season, but he was pretty focused on himself and what served him.

Both of these young men began to engage in athletics, but the effect of their sport participation differed significantly. Trevor began to derive worth from his relationships with others and God as well as the contribution he could make to the world. Evan began to derive worth from his personal status as an athlete and future success. Although both boys demonstrated short-term benefits from their athletic involvement, only Trevor seems to be developing character strengths and virtues that will enable him to make a contribution to his community as he gets older.

As researchers who study thriving and character development, we wonder what it is about the experiences of these two boys that are most predictive of their divergent pathways. We surmise that it is the transcendent purpose and spirituality embedded in Trevor's athletic involvement that enables him to develop virtues in the TWV context, whereas the focus on the self and personal performance on Evan's team stunts character development.

As much as these are compelling anecdotes of the way spirituality can influence the trajectory of an adolescent's development, it is difficult

to know if Trevor is just an exceptional human being, or if the ability of spirituality to build character in the lives of youth is replicable across individuals and contexts. To answer this question, researchers in the School of Psychology's Thrive Center have been engaging in scientific inquiry to understand the nature of thriving and how religion and spirituality might affect thriving in adolescents.

THEOLOGY OF HUMAN THRIVING

What does it mean for a person or community to thrive? In many ways the idea of thriving has become a buzzword in popular culture, but very few people (psychologists included) can clearly define it. As the science of human

thriving has expanded over the past 15 years, it has become apparent that it is impossible to create a value-neutral definition of thriving. Instead, philosophy, ethics, and theology are highly relevant to understanding the good life in a meaningful way.

Given the vast theological resources available to us at Fuller, a team of faculty from the Thrive Center (Drs. Pam King, Justin Barrett, Jim Furrow, and Sarah Schnitker) along with some theology colleagues (Drs. Oliver Crisp, William Whitney, Bill Dyrness, Joel Green, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Jason McMartin, and Matt Jenson) began constructing a new definition of thriving based on Christian theolo-

gy and various psychological theories. After examining various psychological perspectives in connection with Christian doctrines, including creation, Christology, theological anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology, among others, the group concluded that thriving is "a state of growing toward that which something is supposed to be . . . [and] given this definition, thriving can only be evaluated in relationship to some purpose or telos."² But what is our God-endowed telos—both corporate and individual?

Personality psychologists hold the truism that "every [person] is in certain respects: (a) like all other [persons], (b) like some other

A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

If you ever participated in a sport, who would you say played a significant role in the development and enhancement of that experience? Most people think of a coach. As a track and field coach of 12 years, I have sought to provide formative experiences for my athletes. As a student researcher at the Thrive Center, I want to know how to make sports a positive formative experience for all athletes.

Competition can often evoke the worst in people, so how might a coach use competition to build virtue? A coach can provide a narrative to an athlete's experience, especially a young athlete experiencing a difficult loss or making a tough decision on the field. This narrative involves framing the competition as a test of one's character and a learning opportunity, and at the same time avoiding narratives that frame the competition as a test of one's worth. I teach my athletes that we can test what we have learned in practice, and we can learn from the experience.

However, it is important to note that devel-

oping virtue and character in the midst of wins and losses begins before competition. This narrative must be told from the beginning of the season and reinforced across time. For example, the disappointment of a loss is a prime opportunity to work on the virtue of patience coupled with the character strength of perseverance. I share with my athletes that hard work does not end and begin with each challenge; it is an ongoing process. The ways in which a coach discusses disappointment can impact how athletes process their emotions. I've heard coaches say, "Remember the disappointment and pain you feel now and work hard to never feel it again." I avoid this kind of negative motivation at all costs. It may motivate some kids, but not in a healthy, sustainable way. Instead, I tell my athletes, "If you tried your best, that is all anyone can ask of you. If you think you could do something different, let's try it out in practice and get ready for next time." It takes courage to compete in sports. I affirm the courage I see in my athletes after competition.

Young athletes have high hopes and expectations, yet have little control over many of the outcomes of a competition. I had an athlete who worked incredibly hard in and out of season to achieve his goals. He went into section finals as the top runner. In the middle of his race, he tore a tendon in his foot and he finished in the middle of the pack. We talked a lot about his disappointment. I helped provide a positive narrative for his experience. I shared with him the meaning of patience and perseverance and how I saw those character traits in him. He was able to be patient, continued training after such a devastating loss, and had great success as a collegiate athlete. This young man showed great poise and control in difficult situations. He did not develop great character alone. He had years of caring coaches who shaped a value for character beyond success, and he was able to shine.

Wins and losses, trials and triumphs, all have their place in our formation. Coaches, much like teachers and parents, can be God's hand

and feet in the world, drawing athletes to learn and experience the goodness of God in all aspects of life. Coaches who understand this reality and use all aspects of the sport to provide meaning and purpose to athletes are doing a noble work in the kingdom of God.

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+ “The Holy Spirit is essential when it comes to the work of the Christian therapist. The Holy Spirit is called the Counselor, Comforter, Helper, or Advocate in John 14:16–17. The work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit can be understood as taking place in three major ways: the Spirit’s power, the Spirit’s truth, and the Spirit’s fruit.” —Siang-Yang Tan

[persons], and (c) like no other [person].”³ The same may be true for God’s purpose in our lives. There are ways that all men and women are intended to reflect the image of God and glorify him; there are ways he has given specific gifts and callings to groups of people; and there are ways he has made each of us to uniquely reflect his image and serve his kingdom.

Although scholars should examine all of these levels of human purpose, our research team has chosen to focus on the telos of thriving that all people share. We ask, who does God intend to develop and thrive? Although theology points to multiple answers to this question, a strong case can be made that God desires all of us to become virtuous people, demonstrating God’s loving work in our lives through the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22–23. Virtues are the habits that people develop through intentional practices and meaningful relationships that build up the moral community for a higher purpose. N. T. Wright describes the centrality of virtue formation in Christian ethics based on New Testament teachings in *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. He states, “What Paul understands by holiness or sanctification [is] the learning in the present of the habits which anticipate the ultimate future.”⁴ Virtues become the means by which people are able to experience communion with God and with each other.

For psychologists who do integrative research, this then poses an interesting question: how do we help adolescents to develop virtues, and how can spiritual development facilitate (or hinder) this process? Christian Scripture and theology suggest that virtues develop by allowing the Spirit to work in our lives (Matt 7:15–27; Gal 5:22–24), enduring suffering (Rom 5:3–4), and engaging in spiritual practices with a religious community.⁵ Psychology provides tools by which we can test when these three actually produce virtues and test the psychological mechanisms by which they bring about change.

HOW DO VIRTUES DEVELOP? CONSIDERING THE IMPORTANCE OF A SPIRITUAL PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

Since the late 1990s, the field of positive psychology has been investigating how character strengths and virtues are developed, and numerous positive psychological interventions that foster character strengths such as gratitude, forgiveness, self-control, and compassion have been empirically validated. However, these interventions are often presented in the popular press as a means to attain personal happiness in a context devoid of moral meaning. Researchers warn against the dangers of pursuing happiness for its own sake because pursuing virtues for hedonic purposes can actually undermine both virtue development and well-being. It is important to avoid seeing virtues as a means to an end (happiness), but instead to view them as important outcomes in their own right.

But who assigns significance and worth to virtue development? Historically, the development of virtues has been located in religious contexts for the purpose of honoring deities or the community.⁶ In modern times, virtue development has shifted to secular or therapeutic contexts for the purpose of individual well-being. Our research team asks, do virtue-building activities differ when practiced in a secular context rather than a religious context? Has this modern shift undermined virtue formation in our society—especially for adolescents and emerging adults—and can we facilitate the formation of virtues by imbuing interventions with spiritual purpose and meaning?





USING EXPERIMENTAL METHODS TO TEST SPIRITUAL FRAMING EFFECTS

One approach our research group has adopted to answering such questions is using experimental research designs to directly test if framing an intervention activity with a spiritual versus instrumental purpose will affect the efficacy of the activity to build virtues. For example, Dr. Schnitker's doctoral student Kelsy Richardson conducted a study in which emerging adult participants engaged in a gratitude journaling exercise for five weeks. The participants were randomly assigned to either pray thanks to God (imbuing the activity with spiritual meaning), read

thanks to another person, or to read thanks to himself or herself.

Findings showed that those in the prayer condition experienced greater gains in virtues and well-being than those in the other conditions, suggesting that gratitude might be more effective when practiced as a spiritual versus psychological exercise.

At present, our team is engaged in a large-scale experimental study to examine the effects of framing an intervention that builds self-control and patience in adolescents as spiritual, moral, or instrumental in its purpose. A plethora of research studies have shown that the ability to regulate one's behaviors and emotions has a major positive impact

on nearly all life domains, and a variety of interventions have been empirically validated to build patience and self-control. In many ways, self-control is like a muscle; it is a domain-general resource that is depleted after use but can become stronger with regular exercise. Many of the interventions that build self-control and patience seem to have corresponding spiritual disciplines that engage the same type of activity. For instance, regulating one's diet or spending are empirically validated self-control interventions; the spiritual disciplines of fasting and tithing draw on these same basic actions but also include a higher purpose.

In our study, we are recruiting 480 adolescents to engage in a two-week self-control and patience intervention. The intervention is delivered in a game-like and interactive way through the CharacterMe smartphone app we've developed with Matt Lumpkin and Matthew Geddert (see p. 86 for more). The app includes challenges meant to build basic regulatory resources (e.g., the "hand swap" challenge builds self-control by having participants use their nondominant hand to use their phones) as well as activities that build emotional fluency and help people solve interpersonal conflicts (e.g., the "selfie" challenge helps participants recognize their own emotions, and the "taking perspective" challenge helps participants reappraise negative interactions). Participants are randomly assigned to different versions of the app in which the language and framing of the activities emphasize how building strengths (or fixing weaknesses) will help them connect with something bigger than themselves (e.g., God; spiritual condition), will help them become a better person (moral condition), or will help them do better in school and athletics (instrumental condition). We are tracking the adolescents' self-reported character from before they begin the intervention through six months after they complete it. We are also collecting ratings of the adolescents' virtues from parents, friends, coaches, and teachers because those individuals may be better able to report true change. Our hypothesis is that



“One of the joys of working at Fuller Theological Seminary is working in a Christian academic community that consciously works at the integration of various disciplines. The School of World Mission (now School of Intercultural Studies) has always been dominated by the use of social sciences in service of God’s mission. Interacting with the School of Psychology has been one of the great joys and surprises for me, a historian and mis-
siologist. I have met a number of psychology professors, as well as students, who entered counseling because of their experience as missionaries or working on short-term mis-
sions. Committed to mission, they saw the importance of psychology in the service of God’s mission. In the middle of my first year at Fuller I encountered my first integration seminar where I was asked to give a response to a fascinating paper dealing with ‘Clinical Work with Evangelicals in Transition,’ by Marie T. Hoffman. I have been hooked ever since, seeing the value of the School of Psychology faculty and students working closely together in developing healthy habits, wholesome responses, and careful analyses. Positive psychology, core virtues, and the concern for human thriving tie our schools and scholarship closely together.”

+ SCOTT SUNQUIST *is the dean of the School of Intercultural Studies and professor of world Christianity at Fuller.*



the spiritual framing will lead to greater and longer-lasting development of patience and self-control.

VIRTUES IN SPORT: EMPHASIZING SPIRITUALITY, IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY

Although experimental studies provide a rigorous means to examine the effects of spirituality on virtue development, it is just as important to examine how spirituality and religion affect character development across time in real-world contexts to increase generalizability and applicability of findings. A specific context of virtue and spiritual formation that our team examines is that of sport. Athletics are often presented as a crucible of character formation, but empirical studies (as well as glaring moral failures of celebrity athletes) suggest that sports do not always promote virtues. Similarly, athletes often integrate religious or spiritual practices into their athletics, but the ways this is done may actually cause psychological harm or be theologically flawed. Thus, we are engaged in several studies to specifically examine virtue and spiritual formation in the context of sport.

As described in the story of Trevor and Evan at the beginning of the article, we are studying adolescents running half and full marathons with Team World Vision. By tracking adolescents from the time they sign up to train for the marathon through three months after they finish the race, we are able to examine the effects of rigorous training on virtues like self-control, patience, and generosity. In addition, we are examining how motivations for training (e.g., honoring God, raising money for clean water, or getting physically fit) and social relationships with other runners and leaders affect virtue development as well as athletic and fundraising outcomes.

In addition to examining virtue and spiritual development in amateur sport, we are especially interested in examining responses to our research questions among elite athletes. The high-pressured environment of elite athletics provides unique challenges to spiritual and virtue development. Competition plays an important role in our society. It can help individuals maximize their potential by cultivating positive character virtues as well as creating mental and spiritual frameworks of resilience, purpose, and joy. However, humans do not always flourish in highly competitive

environments, particularly when performance outcomes become the determiner of human worth. High-achieving individuals may impose unrealistic expectations for performance, which results in becoming overly critical when these expectations are not met.⁷ A sense of worth contingent on outcomes and expectation of perfection can create a performance-based identity that can have detrimental effects on emotional health.⁸

It doesn’t take long for children to discover their giftedness in sport and take notice of the affirmation that accompanies outstanding athletic performance. The natural trajectory of a talented young person is to begin to derive a sense of meaning and worth solely from athletic performance. This is especially true in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood, a time of active identity development and of tendencies toward social comparisons with heightened sensitivity to social rejection. The challenge of self-worth being based in performance is that the stakes get higher as you perform better. Winning only means that the young person will have to keep winning in order protect his or her self-worth. Thus competition can be perceived as a threat that carries the same physiological and emotional processes that occur with a threat to one’s physical safety. This performance-based identity is not sustainable over time and often leads to emotional difficulties and challenges.

It might be assumed that Christian athletes would not struggle as much with basing their worth in sporting performance. After all, the heart of the Christian gospel is the unconditional love of God demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus that is clearly not based on human performance. However, in collaboration with Dr. Kenneth Wang, our preliminary research findings are linking perfectionistic views of God to performance-based identity and negative emotional outcomes (e.g., shame, depression, anxiety) among a sample of Olympic and collegiate athletes. These findings introduce several questions about the impact of elite competition on the emotional and spiritual health of young athletes and why performance-based identity is also prevalent in Christian athletes.

One explanation of this might be an application of “muscular” Christianity to sporting performance. In other words, for some Christian ath-

letes, winning is not just a matter of proving their own worth and value in sport but also appeasing a God who expects perfection in order for them to be deemed worthy. Therefore, God's love is not only earned through performance but also requires domination as a way to bring glory to God's name. This can also have evangelistic appeal, as some Christian organizations may focus on recruiting successful Christian athletes as spokespersons because of their athletic success. Although winning can create a pedestal to preach the gospel, it can also leave Christian athletes feeling that they must attain athletic success to be useful to God's kingdom. This would be an example of ministering "through" athletes rather than ministering "to" athletes. In contrast, the latter focuses on sport as a context for spiritual transformation as a part of one's vocation, which includes giftings that (a) remind one of God's unchanging love, (b) provide a source of joy, and (c) create opportunities to connect and serve others.⁹

This spiritual framework holds potential for promoting character virtues and emotional health even in stressful environments such as elite competition. Identity that is rooted and established in God's unconditional love and connection to something greater than self creates a freedom to perform at one's best without the fear of not measuring up, and maximizes the potential for thriving. This has been seen in preliminary findings from our work with elite athletes. Purpose and meaning in life beyond sport was related to better emotional outcomes and feelings of comfort from God when experiencing a disappointing performance. This research has important implications for parents, coaches, and youth organizations that desire to see sports be used as a mechanism for character development. Perhaps Christian schools and organizations would benefit from a more intentional approach that promotes connection to God, others, and purpose in sports and counters the natural tendency toward performance-based identity. Further, in our estimation, findings derived from our research apply beyond the sporting context and are relevant across a variety of performance domains. We plan to continue to further explore and develop research-informed resources in this area.

Overall, we believe that our research will continue to identify key ways to promote thriving among youth and highlight the central role of spirituality and religion in virtue formation

and emotional health. We also plan to produce research-informed insights and resources to equip caring adults (e.g., parents, youth pastors, coaches) who play a critical role in shaping the lives of young people. Perhaps the late Peter Benson's quote best captures the essence of the communities that we want to create: "Thriving is about communities where people feel and know that they are persons of value and worth; that they have something unique to offer the world; and that they have the courage to act on their gifts."¹⁰

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ENDNOTES

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"This is the loneliest time in the history of America for people. . . . The issue of friendship, relationships, and relationship process is key for psychology. . . . Most of us don't have much conscious knowledge of what's going on in our brain. . . . The only way to get that knowledge is through a phenomenological approach where we go in and ask the individual—the individual's the only person that can tell you what they're thinking and feeling at any given moment. They may not have that in their consciousness, but once you ask them the question, very often they'll be able to [tell what they're thinking or feeling]."

+ NEIL CLARK WARREN, the second dean of Fuller's School of Psychology, is also the founder of eHarmony, an online relationship service. His company hopes to use phenomenological research to address loneliness in contemporary American culture. This quote is taken from a Fuller panel convened for the School of Psychology's 50th anniversary. More online.

