



2013

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Recommended Citation

Richardson, Michael J. (2013) "Baptized in Acid or Breathed with Life? An Exploration of Psychology's Bridging Capacity," *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*: Vol. 35 : No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp/vol35/iss1/6>

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Baptized in Acid or Breathed with Life? An Exploration of Psychology's Bridging Capacity

MICHAEL J. RICHARDSON

Three influences are described as contributing to a changing understanding of “secular” that ultimately excluded a consideration of theistic considerations: First, the separation of religious and scientific domains following Cartesian dualism opened the door for the popularization of a naturalistic science with a central characteristic of being independent of theistic considerations. Dualism eventually emphasized a distinction between subjective and objective experiences, rather than a distinction between spiritual and material realities—allowing the possibility of a purely naturalistic dualism. Second, naturalistic science made inroads back into traditionally religious questions involving the “objective” realm, particularly through the work of Charles Darwin. Third, drawing on assumptions from naturalistic science, psychology made inroads into the “subjective” realm, which helped popularize naturalistic science and marginalize theistic religion by substituting naturalistic explanations for religious explanations of mental, spiritual, and physical experiences. Implications regarding potential opportunities and obligations for responding to this trend are explored for religious psychologists.

Applied social and behavioral sciences, such as psychology and education, of necessity reach beyond descriptions of what is and aspire to facilitate healthy change. Practitioners of the social and behavioral sciences who believe in an active and involved God, without whom we cannot work as effectively as we might wish, are often frustrated by the “God-free” assumptions that underlie their respective disciplines. Many are committed to bridging the chasm between the assumptions and practices that seem inherent in their profession and their personal religious and spiritual beliefs and practices. Indeed this chasm exists, and to the extent that the assumptions underlying our disciplines and those underlying our religious and spiritual practices are incompatible, the chasm may be impossible to bridge (Richardson & Slife, 2013; Slife, Stevenson, & Wendt, 2010). However, to the extent that believing practitioners continue to be both believers and practitioners, we seem to hold out hope that things might be otherwise. After all, as agents

of change, shouldn't we be as interested in what might be as in what has been?

In order to understand the possibilities of the future, we would do well to take a deeper look at the past. In the present paper, I explore the influence of psychology on the secularization of society—its influence on removing consideration of God from our professional change processes (such as psychotherapy and education)—thereby creating a chasm between religious and professional practices involving change. I also argue, however, that this secularizing influence of psychology and other social sciences reveals a bridging capacity and that by under-

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standing that bridging capacity we might make better use of it in the future.

REFORMATION, PLURALISM, AND ORIGINAL SECULARISM

Several authors trace the roots of secular society to the Reformation and the resulting religious plurality and conflict (Nord, 1995; Pannenberg, 1996; Taylor, 2007). Religious differences eventually undermined the establishment of a particular religion as a foundation for society in general (Pannenberg, 1996). Charles Taylor (2007) has argued that part of the effect of the Reformation was that a broad middle ground ultimately opened up between theistic and nontheistic worldviews, allowing people to explore a wider range and variety of belief or disbelief. Freed from a particular dogma, the individual, as well as broader society, was then able to explore both religious and nonreligious points of view in a pluralistic setting. In addition to reforming religion and society, this pluralistic setting also opened the possibility for the restoration of older beliefs and practices that had been suppressed during a time of monolithic religious dominance.

However, it was in this context of religious plurality and dissent that the possibility of a secular society based on the value of free thought also arose (Jacoby, 2004). If a shared belief in religious faith could not unify society, then perhaps a shared belief in reason and critical thinking could. This sort of "original secularism" (Reber, 2006, p. 194) was not intended to exclude religious influence but rather to avoid unexamined constraints against free thought. Still, it replaced the unifying value of seeking to understand God's will with the unifying value of reason—or of experience, or both—and the unfettered exploration of ideas.

Many early free thinkers were devout religious believers who were united not by opposition to religion but by opposition to any sort of oppression or uncritical acceptance of dogmatic assumptions (Pannenberg, 1996; Reber, 2006). Wolfhart Pannenberg argues that most of these early free thinkers "would have been scandalized by the thought that they were depriving Christian truth claims and morality of public influence" (sec. III, para. 5) and calls this early approach to free thought a "classical alliance" (sec. VI, para. 4) between faith and reason. Similarly, Huston Smith (2001) argues that science and religion were "allies" at this time in history (p. 80).

THE CHANGING MEANING OF "SECULAR"

Modern definitions of secularism are quite different from this original secularism in that they emphasize an independence from or even opposition to religious perspectives while often maintaining that secularism is neutral toward religion (Slife & Reber, 2009). For example, Dictionary.com defines secularism as "1. secular spirit or tendency, esp. a system of political or social philosophy that rejects all forms of religious faith and worship" and "2. the view that public education and other matters of civil policy should be conducted without the introduction of a religious element" (Secularism, n.d.-a). Merriam-Webster Online similarly defines secularism as "indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations" (Secularism, n.d.-b). According to these definitions, modern secularism no longer implies a freedom of dialogue between different points of view, whether religious or not. Rather, modern secularism by such definitions implies the exclusion of religious thought and the favoritism of nonreligious thought.

Several historical developments were involved in reshaping our modern understanding of secularism and the movement toward exclusion of religious ideas from the public sphere. For the purposes of examining the role psychology played in this process, I will describe three of these historical developments: (a) the separation of religion and natural science, reflected in a mind-body dualism; (b) natural science inroads into traditionally religious questions about the "objective" world, including the question of our physical nature; and (c) inroads from the social sciences, driven in important ways by the influence of psychology, into the "subjective" world, including the nature of consciousness or mind.

SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND NATURAL SCIENCE

As noted, original secularism or free thought included a dialogue between religious and nonreligious points of view, and the exclusion of religious perspectives in particular would have been unthinkable (Pannenberg, 1996). In order for secularism to take on the connotations of rejection and exclusion of—or even simply independence from—religion suggested by the modern definitions, an initial separation between the "religious" and "nonreligious" would have to occur. This distinction arose from the separation of religion from natural science and has been traced to an ontological separation of mind

(or spirit) from body (or the physical world) associated with Cartesian dualism (Griffin, 2000).

David Ray Griffin (2000) argues that Cartesian dualism initially allowed for an assumption that theistic considerations were independent from inquiry into the natural or material world. In one sense, this dualism was thought to protect a belief in God from scientific challenges to belief—which was perhaps Descartes' intent—but this hope was ultimately not realized. Another result of dualism was the converse assumption that the natural world could be studied without reference to divine influences.

This assumption became foundational for a mechanistic, materialistic, or “naturalistic” worldview that came to dominate scientific inquiry (Griffin, 2000). Whereas early dualists subordinated mechanistic nature to spiritual and divine forces, later dualists ultimately eliminated reference to these “supernatural” forces and focused exclusively on a “natural” world (Griffin, 2000, p. 28), which was assumed to be composed solely of “disenchanted” (Taylor, 2007, p. 773) matter and mechanistic processes devoid of spiritual or divine influence.

Furthermore, what had been associated with divine or spiritual influence by early dualists was later ascribed solely to mental, or subjective, experience—as simply “epiphenomena” of objective material realities (Griffin, 2000). This latter sort of dualism entailed both a subject-object split (Bishop, 2007)—rather than a spirit-matter split—and a reversal of the relationship between mind and body. Rather than subjecting matter to the influence of spirit/mind, an epiphenomenal mind was now subjected to the mechanistic processes of the material world. This version of dualism was described by Taylor (2007) as a “modern ontic dualism: Mind over against a mechanistic, meaning-shorn universe, without internal purposes such as the older universe had” (p. 773).

This new vision of science, described as “scientific naturalism” (Griffin, 2000, p. 11), can be distinguished from the earlier view of science in which religion and science were seen as allies (Smith, 2001). As scientific naturalism became a dominant force in society, some held out hope that naturalistic science might provide a “common faith” in an increasingly relativistic milieu of moralities—or instead of oppressive religious dogmas of the past. One notable thinker who explicitly argued this point, John Dewey (1934), has had a particularly important influence in both psychology and education. In this sense, the

absence of universal religious grounding allowed for the laws described by natural science as universal—including naturalistic theories regarding human nature and development—to become a possible foundation for a “secular” social order (Johnson, 1995; Nord, 1995; Panzenberg, 1996).

NATURAL-SCIENCE INROADS INTO THE “OBJECTIVE”

Taylor (2007) describes the way we collectively view ourselves as a society as the “social imaginary.” According to Taylor, in order for an idea to be translated into common practice it must “infiltrate the social imaginary” (p. 172) or become part of a common understanding in society. Thus, in order for naturalistic science to become the common ground for a secular social order (and thus alter the meaning of “secular”), the ideas and assumptions of natural science would need to spread to the social imaginary.

Natural science—which following dualism had been considered independent of, or even neutral toward, religion—initially confined itself to inquiries about what was considered the material or “objective” world (e.g., physics, chemistry, and astronomy), leaving the spiritual or “subjective” world to religion. Although conflict had once erupted over descriptions of a material world and universe that differed from religious authority, religious pluralism along with Cartesian dualism may have allowed for such inquiry to be less threatening to believers. However, a notable exception occurred when natural science tackled the question of biological development. The advent of Darwinian evolution, in the minds of some, provided a naturalistic alternative explanation for such “objective” phenomena as the diversity of species and the origins of humankind (Brickhouse & Letts, 1998; Griffin, 2000; Johnson, 1998). However, separating God from *this* aspect of the material world seemed particularly offensive to believers, perhaps because Darwinian evolution appeared to contradict scriptural accounts of the creation of man and animals, which were widely shared by religious adherents in spite of religious pluralism.

Accordingly, Griffin (2000) calls Darwinian naturalism “the very heart of the conflict between science and theistic religious belief since the time of Charles Darwin” (p. 20). In addition to seeming to contradict scripture, Darwinian naturalism potentially altered the traditionally accepted relationship between mind and body as well

as between God and the material world. That is, whereas the material world (including the body) had once been thought of as subject to influence from the mind (or spirit) and God, Darwinian evolution seemed to reject this possibility in favor of naturalistic explanations for physiological processes. According to Griffin,

the idea that all the behavior of matter is governed by laws of nature, combined with the recognition that the human body is comprised of the same material elements as everything else, led to the conclusion that all bodily activities must be as law-governed as the events in the laboratory or the interactions of billiard balls. (p. 29)

That is, laws of nature, rather than spiritual or divine influences, were now thought to be the source of physiological activity. Griffin cites Darwin as arguing that “allowing mind to introduce ‘caprice’ into the world . . . would make science impossible” (p. 29). According to Griffin, Darwin also “rejected the idea of any divine intervention to explain the origin of the human mind” (p. 34). Thus, under Darwinian naturalism, mind, spirit, or even God could no longer be thought of as having supremacy over biological activity.

NATURAL-SCIENCE INROADS INTO THE “SUBJECTIVE”

In spite of the central role Darwinian naturalism played in the conflict between science and religion (Griffin, 2000), Darwinian thought was initially insufficient to displace religious perspectives in the social imaginary. In spite of Darwin’s apparent hopes that his theory would not require appeals to divine activity (Griffin), evolutionary theory itself was frequently altered or subsumed by religious thinkers as simply God’s method of creation (Eyring, 1983; Johnson, 1998). Thus, a second type of movement of natural science into traditionally religious questions must be considered in order to account for a popularization of naturalism sufficient to displace the dominant role religion continued to play in society.

This second movement involved social science inquiry into “subjective” experiences. Psychology in particular played an important role in further popularizing naturalistic science through inquiry into such experiences, including many considered central to religious thought (Meador, 2003). What Darwin’s theory lacked, psychology and the social sciences began to increasingly offer. If important matters of the mind, heart, and spirit could be explained naturalistically, the final stronghold of theistic

religion would be invaded and perhaps the primary reason for its existence undermined.

Psychology, in this sense, frequently addresses phenomena traditionally left to religionists (Williams, 2001), such as mental, spiritual, and moral experience, but largely confines itself to strictly naturalistic assumptions and explanations regarding these phenomena (Slife & Whoolery, 2006). For example, in research about how people think about God, references to divine influence as a possible *cause* for such thoughts are avoided, whereas the idea that beliefs about God are simply effects of naturalistic processes dominates the field (Slife & Reber, 2009).

From one perspective, such movements into the “subjective” might be seen as a natural result of the failure of dualism to resolve the philosophical problem of how two separate realities (i.e., “subjective” and “objective” realities) could interact (Griffin, 2000). Thus, inquiry about the physical body would naturally lead to inquiry about the mind. However, others suggest that these social science renderings of experience may have been more purposive as attempts to displace religion as a basis for social order, at least in some cases. According to Warren Nord (1995),

the great scientists of nature were not, for the most part, avowed opponents of religion, but many of the great social scientists were. One important reason is that the social sciences were, in the beginning, morally and politically motivated: early social scientists were social critics who saw organized religion propping up reactionary regimes, inhibiting free inquiry and social progress. Of course, social science also inherited the tension all scientific method had with religion. As a result, many of the great social scientists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took it as a special responsibility to discredit religion by arguing . . . that it had naturalistic causes. (p. 28)

Nord suggests here that inroads of the social sciences into religious questions may have been a deliberate attempt to “discredit religion” in order to undermine and perhaps replace the dominance of religion in society—a dominance that was considered by some to be oppressive. Thus, although inroads into the “objective” may have simply been a result of the failures of dualism, inroads into the “subjective” realm may have been more deliberate.

Psychology, for example, with the apparent weight of empirical authority and therapeutic practices that promised to alleviate such (formerly spiritual) ills as sadness and guilt, seemed to represent an improvement over

strictly religious approaches (Meador, 2003). With this hope, psychological explanation and therapeutic practice rapidly proliferated throughout the twentieth century, even being welcomed and promoted by influential religious leaders as offering solutions they no longer found in their theology (Kugelmann, 2005; Meador, 2003). Whereas Darwin opened the door for theorizing about the naturalistic evolution of religious and moral thought, Freud (1930/1961) did some of the initial work of explaining how such thought might emerge from inborn naturalistic tendencies, such as unconscious drives and pressures from the natural world.

Theistic religion might have resisted such thinkers as Freud and Darwin, but the rapid proliferation of alternative psychological theories may have overcome many objections. For those who questioned the scientific grounding of Freud's theory, behaviorism emerged with its empirical demonstrations. For those who disliked the arguably dim view of humanity posed by both psychodynamic and behavioral thought, humanistic psychology emerged with its focus on a naturalistic human tendency toward self-actualization—giving practitioners and consumers of psychology many choices of theoretical approaches but none that took God's influence seriously.

B. F. Skinner (1953) advocated the view that all experience, including religious experience, could be explained naturalistically and without a consideration of the possible action of God. For Skinner, "traditional descriptions of Heaven and Hell epitomize positive and negative reinforcement" (pp. 352–353). In *Walden Two*, Skinner pressed further into religious terrain when his protagonist identified with Jesus, not as a God but as a great psychologist and honored colleague (Woefel, 1977). Jesus's love was recast as positive reinforcement and Jesus was praised for favoring this behavioristic principle over less effective punishment. The protagonist is described as god-like in acting as both creator and redeemer of a better society and also as one who had come further even than Jesus in his understanding of reinforcement principles and their applications (Woefel, 1977).

Humanistic psychology might have played a particularly influential role in making inroads from psychology to religion. Mike Arons (1976) argues that humanistic psychology was well situated to transform both psychological science and religion. Humanistic psychology was seen as restoring such considerations as value, meaning, consciousness, and subjectivity to a psychological science

that had become primarily concerned with the objective and empirical. Conversely, humanistic psychology was seen as potentially broadening Western religious views of salvation, in part through the influence of Eastern philosophies on humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology supposedly offered Western religion a freedom from its former "irrationality," "blind faith," "servility," and "acquiescence to authority" (Arons, para. 4).

In addition to these reformulations of mental experience offered through psychological inquiry, psychotherapeutic practice soon offered religionists a new sort of ministry, promising empirically tested relief from psychological, emotional, and perhaps even spiritual suffering. Lifelong human struggles formerly associated with such theistic themes as pride and humility, sin and self-sacrifice, repentance and redemption were now able to be relieved in perhaps a few short sessions with a psychotherapist, and at a quantifiable cost. The rapid adoption of psychological solutions to ministerial concerns in both Protestant (Meador, 2003) and Catholic (Kugelmann, 2005) circles has been documented.

For example, Keith Meador (2003) argues, "It is no longer uncommon to interpret Christianity as a vague set of therapeutic practices dedicated to personal health and well being" (p. 269). Meador goes on to describe his analysis of what he calls the "most influential American Protestant journal" of the early twentieth century, the *Christian Century*. Meador argues that during the time Charles Clayton Morrison was editor and writer for the magazine, articles referring to psychology and the use of psychological language increased. Meador supplies several telling quotes from Morrison, supporting the idea that the influence of psychology on Protestant thinking was increasing during this time—at least as represented by the *Christian Century*. In a 1910 editorial, called "From Laboratory to Pulpit," the *Christian Century* editors wrote:

It has long been our conviction that the most important testimony to the truth of religion and the reality of a spiritual world is yet to come, not from theologians, but from psychologists. The day of dogma is past. The scientific method of study and proof sweeps the field. . . . A new type of proof is forthcoming—the professors call it a new apologetic—which grounds itself in the bed-rock of experience and follows the most rigid method known to any science and comes out, fairly and without stumbling, on the side of faith. The psychologists are the apostles of this new gospel. (as cited in Meador, p. 281)

Morrison thus appears to argue that psychology could make up for some of the failings of theologians and that dogma could be replaced by psychological empiricism—even as “a new apologetic” for faith.

A few decades later, however, Morrison had apparently had second thoughts about borrowing a methodology grounded in naturalism. Nevertheless, Morrison’s later lament also represents a sort of testimonial to the extent of psychology’s influence on Christianity (Meador, 2003):

I had baptized the whole Christian tradition in the waters of psychological empiricism, and was vaguely awakening to the fact that, after this procedure, what I had left was hardly more than a moralistic ghost of the distinctive Christian reality. It was as if the baptismal waters of the empirical stream had been mixed with some acid which ate away the historical significance, the objectivity and the particularity of the Christian revelation, and left me in complete subjectivity to work out my own salvation in terms of social service and an “integrated personality.” (as cited in Meador, p. 269)

Thus, contrary to his earlier hope that psychology would be a “new apologetic” for faith, Morrison now seemed to think that his faith had not been supported by psychology but rather replaced. In this sense, his earlier reference to a “new” gospel might have been more prescient than he supposed.

Robert Kugelmann (2005) argues that the older conflict between Catholics and Protestants gave way (beginning in the 1960s) to a conflict between liberal and conservative Christians, defined in part by a liberal adoption of psychological theory and practice and a conservative adherence to traditional approaches. He argues that this shift was taking place as much within churches as between them. Although Meador’s (2003) analysis suggests that this shift came somewhat earlier within Protestantism, Kugelmann claims that the boundaries between psychology and religion began to weaken in Catholicism primarily after 1960. Prior to that time, although psychology was granted autonomy within the church in matters of “fact” and “treatment” as long as it didn’t contradict doctrine, Kugelmann cites Pope Pius XII as limiting psychology’s role in what were considered more foundational matters. The church maintained the final word on “spiritual and moral issues” (p. 348) and on such important doctrines as the nature of the soul. This seems not unlike the current balance often hoped for, if

not always achieved, in LDS counseling contexts, and apparently this is a boundary the LDS church intends to maintain (Gleave, 2012).

However, reminiscent of Arons’s (1976) hopes, Kugelmann (2005) suggests that humanistic psychology played an important role in weakening the boundaries between church and psychology for Catholics and that these changes came from both directions. Humanistic psychologists opened the door by considering the “higher reaches of human nature” (p. 349) and broadening their view of legitimate psychological science. Catholic theologians and philosophers largely “welcomed” this new psychology as they began to question their own views of both themselves and of the sciences (Kugelmann).

In spite of humanism’s softening of psychology’s hard empiricist edge, it appears that, contrary to Arons’s (1976) vision, psychology has largely represented a one-way bridge between naturalism and theism. Several religious researchers and practitioners of psychology, including LDS psychologists, have convincingly argued that psychology remains firmly rooted in naturalistic assumptions that are in many ways incompatible with theism (e.g., Gantt & Williams, 2008; Slife & Whoolery, 2006). According to Kugelmann (2005) and Meador (2003), however, the effect of psychology on some aspects of theistic religion has been profound. If the historical relationship between psychology and religion has indeed been so imbalanced—with psychology having profound influences on religion, while religion has had only superficial influences on psychology—then the firm boundaries that the LDS church seems intent to maintain (Gleave, 2012) are certainly understandable, and organizations such as AMCAP, along with individual religious psychologists and educators, face a serious professional if not spiritual challenge.

One reason for this one-sided influence might be that, according to Slife and Whoolery (2006), the often-unexamined assumptions of psychological science include such ideals as objectivism and materialism. Objectivism assumes a subject-object split (Bishop, 2007), placing the object of psychological inquiry external to, and fundamentally separate from, the observer. This “objectivity” supposedly allows for observations to be free of “opinions, biases, values and feelings” (Slife & Whoolery, 2006, p. 222). This assumption may be problematic for religious psychologists primarily because of the “value-freeness” dimension. Whether doing research or therapy,

a psychologist is expected to remain “objective,” “value-free,” or “value-neutral.” Thus psychologists, no matter how religious, are expected to eliminate or “control for” a valuing of God’s influence in their research and practice (Slife & Whoolery). It has been argued that the valuing of value-freeness or value-neutrality pervades modern secular education as well (Johnson, 1995). This may be due in part to the pervasive influence on public education of such notable psychologists as John Dewey and Edward Thorndike, who both grounded their otherwise contrasting theories in naturalistic assumptions that ignored the possibility of divine influence (Richardson & Slife, 2013).

Similar to objectivism, the related notion of materialism assumes that what matters in psychological research and therapy is the tangible, material, measurable, and observable (Slife & Whoolery, 2006). An example of this view might be found in an assumption that mental experience, including religious experience, can be fully explained by efficient causal chemical activity in the brain (Slife & Williams, 1995). Outside of neuroscience, even the humanistic aspirations of describing and promoting “higher” human experience often rely on material, observable operationalizations. These operationalizations give constructs such as love, hope, faith, and divine inspiration a sense of empirical weight as encapsulated descriptions of behavior and emotion.

Furthermore, although humanism may soften the deterministic assumptions of earlier schools of psychological thought, it may fail to fully extract itself from determinism, thus denying the value of human agency so central to many religious people and to LDS doctrine in particular. Humanistic determinism is notably manifest in the assumption that an inborn actualizing tendency drives much of human behavior, needs, and even desires (Slife & Williams, 1995). Humanistic psychology also typically retains assumptions of individualism and instrumentalism (Bishop, 2007), which may conflict with such religious values as self-sacrifice and altruism.

Thus the meaning of spiritual and religious experience, as understood by many theists, may be distorted by psychology to the extent that psychology retains these naturalistic assumptions. What psychology typically gives us, then, may be at best an impoverished view of religious and spiritual experience and at worst a view that is completely disconnected from or even hostile to that experience. Religious experiences of the divine are

then transformed such that they become described in fully humanistic and materialistic terms, while psychology remains firmly grounded in naturalistic assumptions (Reber, 2006; Slife & Whoolery, 2006). Psychology may then leave theistic religion with what Morrison calls “hardly more than a moralistic ghost” (Meador, 2003, p. 269) while itself remaining relatively unaltered by the encounter. This lopsided encounter may be largely due to a widespread embracing of psychology by religion and a highly limited embracing of religion by psychology.

So although this psychological bridge between secular and religious questions, between the subjective and objective, between mind and body, between spirit and matter, might have provided an opportunity for mutual influence and dialogue, according to some theorists, religious ideas have tended to be distorted, subsumed, replaced, or ignored in favor of naturalistic ideas when it comes to the relationship between psychology and religion (Bishop, 2007; Reber, 2006; Slife & Whoolery, 2006). The chasm between natural science and religion has widened, with psychology making incursions into religious territory while staying grounded in the assumptions of the new secularism, represented by naturalistic (God-free) science.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGIST

The word “psyche” refers to the soul or spirit. As a study of the spirit, then, psychology *should* ideally be situated at the confluence of mind, spirit and body. It makes sense that historically psychology was a center point for materialistic inroads into matters of mind and spirit. Unfortunately, with the adoption of strictly materialistic assumptions associated with the natural sciences, psychologists created inroads with no outlets and thus a stagnating science of the mind.

However, the history of psychology’s largely one-sided influence on religion might provide clues for how religion might inform psychology and, through psychology, perhaps other sciences. By taking the spirit or soul that should be the center of our discipline seriously, religious psychologists might breathe some life (Gen. 2:7) into psychology and other sciences, which have otherwise tended to focus primarily on the temporal and material elements of experience—instead of allowing their understanding of truth to being baptized in the acid (Meador, 2003) of

a “one-sided [materialistic] dualism” (Bartlett, 2003; Slife & Whoolery, 2006).

The influences of science on religion through the medium of psychology, as described here, involved first a conceptual separation of the spiritual and material (described elsewhere as death) and then the purposive application of materialistic assumptions to the spiritual. The reverse path might then involve a conceptual reunification of the spiritual and material (a type of at-one-ment, or rebirth of the discipline) and a purposive consideration of spiritual assumptions when considering material realities—which should now be seen as inseparable from the spiritual. Religious psychologists, particularly LDS psychologists, should take seriously the belief that “all things...are spiritual” (D&C 29:34).

Historically, rationalism, with its emphasis on logical truths, has both competed and cooperated with empiricism’s emphasis on learning through the physical senses. The tenuous marriage between rationalism and empiricism in modern science has neglected a third element: “heart,” or spirit. This third element (variously described as intuition, insight, inspiration, and an innate moral sense—and in LDS circles as the light of Christ) can serve as a bridge between logic and the physical senses. It is this element that often anchors truth when our minds seem to tell us one thing and our physical senses seem to tell us another. With spirit, our mind (intelligence) and our bodies are united, our thoughts and physical senses can be aligned, our outward behavior can be made consistent with our inward beliefs, and whole or complete truth can be made manifest. Reliance on only one, or even two, of these three gates to truth can lead to various forms of error.

Whereas true religion should encompass all three elements, following the popularization of dualism and an acidic baptism in psychology and other social sciences (e.g., education), religion has to a certain extent relinquished its interest in temporal or material things (such as a study of the body or brain and its senses and a study of social processes), considering them primarily “secular” concerns. However, this ignores that secularism is no longer understood inclusively, and taking this exclusivity (separation) seriously inevitably tends toward a dangerous redefinition of spiritual as things not relevant to temporal life. Separated from spiritual understanding, the spiritual element found in temporal or physical experiences is inevitably redefined in materialistic terms

(e.g., as purely biological, chemical processes originating in the brain, or as a social dynamic or construction). This separation keeps the bridge functioning only in one direction, if it functions at all. Eventually even belief in God is redefined, for example, as simply a manifestation of primal fear in the personal or collective imagination (Dewey, 1934).

In spite of this weakening and constraining of the role of religion, facilitating communion between mind and heart (D&C 8:2), or reason and faith, continues to be largely the domain of religion. It is in understanding and facilitating communion between these elements and the physical world—including physical senses and overt behavior—that psychology might be of particular use. With the separation of science and religion, psychology attempted to keep a foot in both camps. Thus situated, psychology could have been an ambassador for reunion, or at least communion. Instead it became a “crypto-missionary” (Slife, Smith, & Burchfield, 2003) for naturalistic (God-free) science. Thus, it may be the responsibility of religious psychologists to re-establish this communion by being active ambassadors of mind and spirit to believers in a solely materialistic science—including clients and students with such a one-sided orientation. Believing psychologists often have unique inroads into the scientific community, even in comparison to other believing scientists, because we have a particular interest in matters of the mind and spirit as well as the body and behavior. It may be time for us to make better use of these opportunities.

However, this work of serving as ambassadors to the scientific community might not alone be sufficient. We might also be responsible for helping to repair some of the damage to religious belief done historically by our discipline. In this regard we might help religious people, including many of our clients and students, remember that material things, such as the brain and body, are also spiritual things—and the truths that govern spiritual things also apply to these material elements. In the modern sense of God-free secularism, there are no secular topics or issues with which religious people need not concern themselves. All things are spiritual. In our theology, separation is often equated with death: the separation of the body from the spirit and the spirit from God. In some ways, this bridging of elements that were formerly seen as separate and the seeking of unified truth—taking into consideration the relationships

between mental, spiritual, and physical realities—might itself be an important form of therapy as well as education. Our unique situation at the confluence of science and religion, as well as our professional interest in mind, spirit, and body, might allow the believing psychologist, while certainly not supplanting the role of an ecclesiastical leader, to provide unique insights into these bridging pathways. Such pathways need not be presented covertly, as psychological “crypto-missionaries” (Slife, Smith, & Burchfield, 2003) might at times have presented secular values. They also need not be pushed on clients or students with evangelical zeal. Rather, they can be considered in open dialogue as alternatives to what has in many ways become a lopsided influence: science on religion, or body on mind. Psychology, in cooperation with spirit, may help to balance the influence between these realities.

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