4-1-2006

Considering the Relationship Between Religion and Psychology

Robert L. Gleave
Dallas R. Jensen
Roger Belisle
Philip L. Nelson

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp/vol30/iss1/9

This Article or Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Considering the Relationship Between Religion and Psychology

Robert L. Gleave, PhD, ABPP, CGP, Dallas R. Jensen, PhD, Roger Belisle, PhD, and Philip L. Nelson, BM

Brigham Young University

The interaction between Religion and Psychology, one of the founding principles of AMCAP, has been addressed several times in AMCAP forums (De Hoyos, 1982) and elsewhere (Richards & Bergin, 2005; Sorensen, 1981; Sperry & Shefranske, 2005). Many may have entered the helping professions to fulfill personal religious needs as well as service goals. The long-standing dialogue on the topic of Religion in the helping professions will not end with this article, nor should it ever end in this life. We believe that examining the ways in which Religion and Psychology interface deserves the attention and effort of many minds, that this endeavor is too important to approach lightly, and we will argue that premature conclusions could prove harmful (Bergin & Payne, 1992). It is critical that those debating these important issues avoid making claims beyond their effort or asserting greater success than will hold up under close examination. Many therapists who embrace the relevance of spirituality and religion in the lives of those receiving psychotherapy (e.g., Richards & Bergin, 2005) have proposed strategies for the inclusion of spirituality in psychotherapy. We argue that development of such strategies must be preceded and guided by careful consideration of the relationship between Religion and Psychology. Our purpose is not to provide a definitive treatise on the subject, but to identify some relevant questions, problems, and dilemmas.

We will discuss four broad topics. First, we will present a framework for the complex interaction between Religion and Psychology—one that embraces ambiguity and uncertainty in order to prevent premature closure. Second, we will present five questions we think are important to ask when considering the compatibility of Religion and Psychology. Third, we will present three facets of Religion and Psychology that we believe are mutually exclusive. Finally, we will offer an approach to the integration of Religion and Psychology that encourages a continuing dialogue of how and whether it can be done.

Opportunities in Unknowability

We believe the mortal world will not see a resolution of the questions and dilemmas we will present, which non-resolution may be of value, as we will assert. It seems to be part of the mortal condition that humans will not arrive at a “theory of everything” in which all truth is captured. The gospel itself is not “whole” or complete in its current state. Though the gospel is sufficient for humanity’s current struggles and though there has been a “restoration of all things” such that more is available than in any previous dispensation, complete certainty will not be achieved in mortality.

The following is an illustrative passage from a discourse of Joseph E. Taylor (1894), referring to a statement the Prophet Joseph Smith had given to Elder John Taylor, at the time a member of the quorum of the twelve. Joseph Smith had asked Elder Taylor, Orson Hyde, and some
others to write a constitution for the church. As they applied themselves there was always something that could not be accepted, that could not be passed upon. When Brother Joseph asked Brother Taylor if he had finished the constitution, the latter replied that he had not because the parties involved could not agree upon the constitution.

“Well,” said Joseph, “I knew you could not; ye are my constitution—as Twelve Apostles—ye are living oracles.” That is what he meant. “The word of the Lord shall proceed from you, and that, too, in keeping with the circumstances and conditions of the people, and you shall have the inspiration of Almighty God given to you to give counsel suited to them.” Now, what about the written word? Shall we ignore it? Shall we pass it by as a thing of no value to us whatever? Or shall we retain it, read it, and commit it to memory, and above all things become possessed of the spirit underlying the written word. . . . You take this revelation, for instance, pertaining to the glories of the celestial, terrestrial and telestial worlds, and let many individuals read it carefully and seek to mature ideas that come to their mind in connection with this revelation. You ask these individuals their opinion upon this, that, and the other passage, and I guarantee to tell you that there will be a vast variety of ideas upon that written word, a vast difference in conception. And now, mind you, while these individuals may be more or less possessed of the spirit of the Almighty, yet . . . is it not possible that you and I may place a wrong construction upon the revelations of Almighty God? Do brethren vary in opinion belonging to the same quorum, to the same organization, vary in their opinion upon points of doctrine? Why, yes; and they vary very largely and very widely, and in some instances I have found that one individual is the very antipodes of another, so far apart are they in their ideas. Does that change the spirit of the revelation? Not by any means. What is the reason of this diversity of thought and opinion and construction? Simply the fact that we have not grasped the real truth underlying the revelation. And yet these men are good men, useful men, men full of zeal and intelligence, and full of faith in God. The sick may be healed under their hands, the power of God may be manifested in them, and yet they may err in judgment in trying to conceive the proper and correct idea upon points of doctrine which God himself has revealed. You come to the principle of baptism, however, and there is no question about that. And why? . . . Simply because we all partake of it, we all experience it, we all pass through it. When you come to grasp the eternal things that God, to a certain extent, has revealed in order to give us some light upon things pertaining to eternity, that is another thing. You and I have not passed through it, and consequently we must reach out to gain a conception, and according to our capacity to conceive, so are we satisfied in our mind. We talk upon this subject, on that subject, and we shall find our brother varying from us in ideas, and yet he is a good brother. When you and I have passed through death . . . when you and I shall be celestialized we will know something about celestial glory; it will not be merely conjecture. We will understand by actual experience, and there will be no difference of opinion whatever. (para. 27)

Using personal life experiences and conceptual abilities to comprehend the things of God, people reach into the vastness of knowledge from different points and at different paces. They do grasp hold of important pieces of the truth and are encouraged by the confirming voice of the Spirit. What they “know” they may truly “know,” and yet they still do not know it all. It may be a human trait to try to apply a known truth more broadly than it can stretch (2 Nephi 9:28). In the quest for certainty, people may want to discount that their knowledge is gained in a context and from a certain point of view. Perhaps the journey of acquiring knowledge is as important as arriving at the destination.

We suggest that there is something in the exercise of growing, speaking with each other, and learning from each other, that holds value in and of itself. A similar idea that further illustrates the value of the inability to arrive at certainty in this life is expressed by John Durham Peters (1999):
Embodiment holds all kinds of secrets unknowable to the spectator. A spirit that has never lived in embodied mortality may know all things except what it is like not to know all things. In mortality, a spirit can become acquainted with the night, privation, and ignorance. It can encounter lack, absence, desire, and negativity in their fullness (or rather, their partiality). It can learn about waiting, surprise, the uncertainty of all action—everything, in short, that derives from living in time. (p. 35)

We suggest that learning line upon line is an inescapable principle for professions as well as for individuals. Given that all are subject to everything “that derives from living in time,” humility seems the wise course. As many add their voices to this endeavor to find a way for Religion and Psychology to relate, there will be many opportunities for ideas to clash. One may feel under attack when another good sister or brother asserts a conflicting opinion. Some may feel a need to contend in the arena of ideas to defend what they “know” to be “true.” It can at times be as though they are defending the very integrity of their “knowing.”

We encourage more humility along with attempts to cooperatively arrive at an understanding. We assert that the tolerance for ambiguity for which we have called is important, not only to make room for resolving differences cooperatively and to avoid prematurely closing dialogue, but to also create a rich seedbed for creativity. There is much joy to be found in the discovery of new insights and truths. We believe that many ideas held suspended in ambiguity offer a greater opportunity to advance knowledge than does the search for certainty. “If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties” (Bacon, 1952, p. 16).

**Potential Incompatibilities**

We now turn our attention to five questions regarding the compatibility of Religion and Psychology: (a) What motivations prompt attempts to bring these two together? (b) Can they mix? (c) Where is each placed historically and culturally? (d) What is the strength of the grounding on which each stands? (e) Do they share purposes and goals?

**What are the Motivations that Prompt Attempts to Bring Religion and Psychology Together?**

Motivations for joining Religion and Psychology may be examined from either direction. What might Psychology gain by including Religion? What might Religion gain by including Psychology? Are there some who attempt to make one more acceptable by adding the other? Do some want the advantages of integration without concern for the resulting effects on the cohesion of either?

First, what advantage would fall to Psychology in the relationship? Would an infusion of Religion somehow exalt the psychotherapy process or elevate it to a status of having more to offer? Some may be uncomfortable or frustrated with the ambiguity we referenced earlier, believing that Religion holds the promise of “Truth” with a capital T. The temptation might be to attempt to bring the “Truth” of Religion into Psychology in order to claim the creation of a “true” psychotherapy that is then complete and no longer subject to ambiguity. One might wish to call upon the truths of Religion to shore up a shaky foundation, so to speak. In so doing, can one then claim to have created a “true” Psychology or system of psychotherapy? To what degree does adding a few pieces of “foreign” foundation really constitute “building upon a rock” (Helaman, 5:12)? Can one really add enough pieces to create a “true” Psychology? The responses to such questions may reveal that attempts to create a “true” Psychology belie an arrogance that is inappropriate regardless of one’s intentions. Such attempts may often be fueled by a desire to be “right,” but that these efforts lack depth, rigor, and clarity of thought has been argued before (Sorensen, 1981).

Second, what advantage falls to Religion in the relationship? Could Psychology make Religion more palatable, perhaps by removing some of the traditional obstacles to religious adherence? Could Psychology remove sin as a topic of conversation or provide flexibility in what is perceived as rigid dogma? Could Psychology provide an answer for declining church attendance? Maybe some psychological principles would enliven a sermon and lead to increased donations. Psychology might offer training to clergy to increase the effectiveness of giving religious counsel to adherents.
Is this like adding “window dressing” to an existing structure? Integration efforts that fail to consider such questions seem to be sloppy at best—and irresponsible and dishonest at worst.

Such motivations for integrating Religion and Psychology seem to make a fundamental error. The quest to have the advantages of one by seeking to directly add it to the other ignores principles of paradox and byproducts, which are that many of the best benefits of this life are not obtainable by direct attempts to make them happen. At times the commands are to “cast thy bread upon the waters” (Ecclesiastes 11:1) or position oneself “last” in order to be “first” (1 Nephi 13:42). Losing one’s life in service is the only way to truly find it (Matthew 16:25). Attempts at integration that fail to consider the potential application of these principles may be untenable.

**Can Religion and Psychology Mix?**

Many have suggested ways in which Religion and Psychology might be integrated, or in our words, mixed together (Sperry & Shafranske, 2005). Genevieve De Hoyos (1986) summarized previous iterations of the dialogue, identifying four types of integration. The first she called “using secular therapies to achieve church-approved goals” (p.118). By this she referred to a fairly routine and basically secular application of psychological principles with the inclusion of gospel goals as the motivation for the therapies. Second, De Hoyos identified what she called “Mormonizing” secular models: a basic adherence to secular psychotherapy theories and practices with the addition of some specific aspects of the gospel, such as occasionally referring to scripture or occasionally referring to gospel principles as a support for the secular therapy. Third, De Hoyos identified what she called “blending secular therapies with the gospel,” appearing to assume that the primary adherence is to the gospel, but with a significant reliance upon secular theories and techniques. De Hoyos identified a fourth type which places the gospel at the “hub of the wheel”: with the gospel as the foundation of the work, but including minor attempts to blend in secular theories and techniques. These four types of integration seem useful for summarizing many of the approaches examined over the years in AMCAP.

However, this way of construing integration seems to assume that the two are compatible in a way that allows such mixing.

If a mixing of the two is possible, what is the nature of the mixing? Is it a mixing similar to cooking, whereby one takes separate ingredients, mixes them together, and creates something altogether different? One view of this kind of mixing is that the whole is somehow greater than the sum of its parts. Does adding Religion to Psychology make it something beyond itself? Does adding Psychology to Religion make it something beyond itself? This type of mixing seems to imply that individual ingredients were somehow not sufficient in and of themselves or at least that there exists a potential that is beyond the reach of the original ingredient. Perhaps varying the amounts of individual ingredients results in a different whole. Does more Religion or more Religion in the balance yield a better product? One of the problems with this approach is that the final product has nothing foundational. None of the original ingredients have any over-arching primacy. We think most in AMCAP would have difficulty removing the primacy of Religion.

Perhaps Religion and Psychology may mix like apples and oranges, where there is an intermingling of principles and goals and behaviors, but each separate element maintains its own distinct original properties. With this view, is the whole greater than the sum of the parts, creating the problems mentioned previously? Does each enhance the other in the mix, or is there an element of pollution present? Does the addition of one significantly enhance the performance of the other? Does the presence of Religion significantly enhance Psychology? Does the presence of Psychology significantly enhance Religion? Does one water down the other?

Perhaps the way they mix is like oil and water: The mix is a tentative one, forced at best, with a constant tension, each with the inclination to separate from the other, held together only by intense efforts. In this view, the differences surface frequently and in striking ways. Any attempt to further the position of one threatens the other. One might begin to question whether the effort is worthwhile. Thus it is apparent that there are many possible approaches to mixing, each carrying a set of questions for requisite consideration. Other writers may identify additional types of mixing that would shed more light on the dialogue.
WHERE ARE RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY PLACED
HISTORICALLY AND CULTURALLY?

Next we turn attention to temporal positioning, to historical and cultural context. Consideration of the historical relationship between Religion and Psychology quickly reveals Religion's primacy—that it has been part of this earth's existence since the beginning. Psychology as a “science” has arrived on the scene only recently, having been here just the last few decades (Robinson, 1995).

Dr. Edwin Gantt (2005) makes a similar observation and offers some insight on the matter:

Despite a lengthy, rich and sometimes contentious history of literary, philosophical, and theological inquiry into the problem of human suffering, our modern world has increasingly come to rely on psychological and psychotherapeutic explanations of suffering's origins and meaning. Indeed, many scholars have argued that psychology has come to compete for and in large measure usurp the cultural and intellectual space once occupied by religion, literature, and moral philosophy… It has become commonplace in our society to believe that psychologists not only hold the keys that will unlock the mystery of suffering but also possess the techniques necessary for eliminating it. Because of this assumption, psychologists are often afforded the sort of status and respect that was in earlier times reserved for priests and prophets, sages and shamans. (p. 53)

What has happened to cause this shift away from Religion and toward the enthroning of Psychology? What is different about current times when compared to previous eras in history? Such questions seem relevant when considering the place, function, and role of both Religion and Psychology, as well as whether or not the two can be integrated or even co-exist.

Another important observation is that the predominance of psychotherapy services is found in Western cultures. Psychology could even be accurately described as being a product of Western thought and civilization (Robinson, 1995). What would Psychology be like if it were to have emerged from a different culture or mindset? Why do the same questions not come to mind regarding Religion? As with all of the questions we will raise, we can not explore all of the implications that follow from this observation, but there seem to be important constraints imposed upon Psychology by these limitations of cultural context. Members of AMCAP are likely to be deeply entrenched in Western culture and its product: psychotherapy. The roles of religious adherent and psychotherapy practitioner likely constrain one's worldview, resulting in biases that skew one's beliefs about the importance of Psychology relative to that of Religion. Acknowledging that none can achieve immunity, we recognize that even the ideas in this article are subject to such cultural constraint.

WHAT IS THE STRENGTH OF THE GROUNDING ON WHICH RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY STAND?

Do Religion and Psychology stand on equal footing? The few arguments presented thus far suggest that they do not. What credibility, then, should be assigned to each? More to the point, how much credibility can Religion surrender to Psychology? To what degree will one allow Religion to be bent by the assertions of Psychology? Should Religion be encouraged to “make more room” for Psychological theories and practice? If much of an intrusion into Religion is made, its integrity as a self-sufficient entity falls into question. For example, Religion would be obligated, at least in some way, to accommodate the demands of the minority voice, as is done in Psychology. On the other hand, if Religion made no concessions with Psychology, would the result be a hostile takeover of Psychology by Religion? Even with abandonment of competitive language in favor of cooperative tones, the question remains of how much one will be allowed to influence the other. Yet another option remains: to abandon attempts at a relationship altogether. Until the questions in this debate have been more thoroughly examined, choosing this option seems premature.

DO RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY SHARE PURPOSES AND GOALS?

Our fifth question for consideration is whether the purposes of Religion and Psychology are the same. A related question might be whether the purposes of one are a subset of the other. For those who believe the purposes of Religion and Psychology to be the same or consider one a subset of the other, an integrated relationship easily presents itself. At this point, the
question arises of whether Psychology is needed at all, considering that God has already established a perfect system. However, the relationship is more difficult for those who believe that the purposes are dissimilar or perhaps even mutually exclusive. If the purposes are not the same, one might question the effort to establish a relationship at all. Additionally, a hasty approach, unconcerned with completeness or accuracy, might simply throw out the mutually exclusive goals or areas from each side, preferring to focus only on parts that combine easily. We argue that it would be wise to carefully consider the more troublesome questions early in the project. Others have also examined the challenges associated with using psychotherapy as a means to gospel ends (Sorensen, 1981).

Irreconcilable Differences

We will next examine what we consider to be three mutually exclusive elements of Religion and Psychology. We will refer to these elements as irreconcilable differences. The first of these deals with purpose and method. It seems that Religion approaches its purposes by providing a “way of living” that offers meaning in the face of difficulty, hardship, and suffering (2 Nephi 31:20). Religion offers very little direct assistance in specific ways to manage day-to-day difficulties. Psychology, on the other hand, seems to occupy itself with the specifics and mechanisms of day-to-day living, with a focus on relieving the sorrow, suffering, and hardship. It is as though Religion says, “Trials will happen in your life for many reasons—here are some ways to find meaning and peace anyway.” Psychology seems to say, “If bad things happen to you, we will discover how you could or should respond to mitigate the effects.” Religion seems to provide overall, general types of support, whereas Psychology has a list of disorders with specific strategies to address each. This difference has some important implications. Two such implications are closely related and we highlight them here.

As a first difference in purpose and method, a press for specifics seems to leave room for—if not actively encourage—the development of strategies that are bigger, faster, higher, stronger, and better, as defined by the developer. This competition is easily found in Psychology. An easy next step is to assert that the resulting procedures are inherently superior and deserving of accolades, prestige, and money. The familiar patterns of pride are a very short step away. An assertion that one has “found a better way” when connected to specifics puts one in a position of arrogance that closes off exploration of other options. On the other hand, when an assertion of “finding a better way” is framed in more global and flexible terms, specific applications are left to context and judgment. Precisely because the specifics are avoided, there is nothing on which to lay a copyrightable claim. Therefore, the press for premature closure on the matter is reduced, and claims of a “superior” specific treatment are unlikely. Cooperation and similarities are emphasized, and competition and differences are minimized.

As a second difference in purpose and method, specific treatments the literature attempts to define are almost always held out as having general applicability. The “research” is full of language that is clearly intended to position the findings as representative of people “in general.” Terms such as statistical significance and randomized sample are but two examples. The assertion is then made that since it is “best” it should be applied to all. Again the tone takes on a flavor of arrogance.

When assertions concerning purpose and method are left at the level of a principle, with expectations that context and judgment can and will offer flexibility in the specific application, the primary focus can be on an individual’s uniqueness and personal experiences. The individual is the primary concern—the one struggling with important issues and wrestling with the meanings and trials which life presents.

Marleen Williams (2004) illustrated the importance of considering individual uniqueness by proposing a metaphor of prescription lenses, which are appropriately adjusted for each individual in need of a vision aid.

The optometrist did a careful examination of my eyes and discovered that I must meet some specific needs to see correctly . . . I suspect there are few individuals in the audience that would see well out of these glasses. Think what your experience would be like if I insisted that you wear my glasses every day to do your work. They work great for me, but what if I assumed that they would also be perfect for you and imposed that solution on you? You would be miserable, and you would probably resent me for imposing the wrong prescription on you. Even more important, with my prescription you could not do the work that is yours alone to do. (pp. 3-4)
Even though many endorse Psychology’s goal of finding universal answers with broad applicability, the individual with personal uniqueness continues to call for exceptions to every rule.

Our second irreconcilable difference concerns the assumptions Religion and Psychology make about truth. Religion makes a firm claim on having truth and feels no need to question basic assumptions. Psychology, on the other hand, operates on the assumption that everything is couched in some degree of error, subject to refinement, as the scientific machine marches forward. In moments of uncertainty, Religion calls for people to act with faith and to bend their lives toward the truth. The truth is the foundation, and people fit themselves to it. Psychology calls for the truth to be established upon the test of how it is judged by people. People are the foundation, and truth is made to fit the majority.

A third apparently mutually exclusive position is the issue of payment for services. Very different assumptions underlie lay service and paid service. Paid service seems to imply a turning over, to some degree, of personal responsibility to the one who is paid. There is an expectation of one-up, one-down, teacher-learner, professional-client that is inherent in the payment process. The concept of taking turns in a leadership role, without payment involved, has a different set of assumptions. One can envision relationships of co-traveler, mutual support, and horizontal rather than vertical style of relating. Offering religious services in order to get personal gain carries a pejorative title of priestcraft (2 Nephi 26:29). One who pays for religious services may well expect to be saved to some degree as part of the bargain. Attention and effort are thus diverted away from the true giver of salvation as part of the deception. Psychology, which makes no attempt to claim it can offer salvation, has established itself firmly as a paid service, and one can scarcely imagine its survival without payment.

Do these differences constitute sufficient distance between Religion and Psychology that integration is impossible? At the very least, these mutually exclusive positions seem to cause all types of complications and make an alliance feel tentative.

Our Ideas

We have raised many questions about how or even whether or not Religion and Psychology can relate. The task of adequately addressing all of these questions, plus the many others that have and will be posed by other writers, is clearly well beyond us. Thus it feels somewhat foolhardy to attempt to offer an opinion of our own. Of course, it is not our intent to end all attempts at finding a relationship between Religion and Psychology until the definitive solution is finally offered. We are certain that each failed attempt has value and will be built upon by others. So as we offer our failed attempt at articulating a way for Religion and Psychology to relate, we ask only to fail alongside our good colleagues who have gone before us and alongside those who will follow.

We will begin with an idea that was presented by Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1976) when he spoke to the College of Social Sciences at Brigham Young University. He suggested that people maintain their “citizenship” in the gospel and hold a well used “passport” into their individual disciplines. This imagery can be very helpful over a career as conflicts and differences surface. It is comforting to know where one's citizenship lies. Though this citizenship will likely be in Religion for most members of AMCAP, at the same time one can feel free to fully investigate and try to understand the world of Psychology. Such imagery allows for firm boundaries between the two worlds. Though Religion and Psychology share some geographical features, being part of the same planet, so to speak, their specific geographies are at times considerably different. There is a difference in available natural resources. Cultural differences are prevalent, and at times languages make expressions of even similar ideas sound somewhat foreign to each other. Still, trade agreements and other forms of cooperation can occur between the two entities, and frequent trips by Religion's citizens into Psychology can be fruitful and enlightening. Nevertheless, it is always comforting to return home.

Continuing the metaphor of gospel citizenship and professional passports, it is a single person who travels back and forth. This person retains a home country or gospel culture when venturing into Psychology and returns to the homeland with newly acquired information, perspectives, and influences. With the ability to speak both languages, this person is not strictly bound by borders but can interact in significant ways in both territories, facilitating important processes in both, and possibly even negotiating some cultural exchanges. Yet it is clear that these efforts will not, and should not, remove the boundaries between the two entities. Though both Religion and Psychology are very important entities in this mortal existence, they have significant differences such that one cannot be subsumed
into the other without significant losses.

Elder Maxwell (1976) also spoke of “building bridges” using “timbers of truth.” The timbers of truth are waiting to be used. You have the professional and spiritual tools as has no preceding generation of LDS scholars. Go to and build! Be about your Father's business!” (p. 75). Elder Maxwell offers some wise counsel to guide such efforts:
1. Some such bridges can be built, but not easily.
2. Some such bridges cannot be built for a while.
3. Some foot bridges have already been built which can be widened into thoroughfares.
4. Some bridges simply cannot be built.

Elder Maxwell’s invitation, in our opinion, does not advocate creating new destinations for those bridges. Use of a “passport” implies a traveling back and forth from two established locations. One need not be about the business of creating an island, a place with some of both the gospel and psychology, fundamentally separate and distinct from both. Doing so loses something important and fails to acknowledge the differences between Psychology and Religion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to again emphasize that we see this dialogue as being a very important one—a conversation that is worth significant effort and calls for well-considered examination of the complex issues. We challenge readers not to be seduced by what seem to be easy or simple answers or to be content with efforts that have only face validity. It is important to avoid being swept along by the tides and currents of public opinion or transient cultures. It is essential that one not try to exalt Psychology beyond its limitations, nor attempt to usurp the role of ecclesiastical leaders in the name of Psychology.

We believe efforts to find interfaces and places for influence between Psychology and Religion are potentially very fruitful. However, such efforts need to be rigorous and thoughtful. It is important to be willing to hold opposing views in the same space, to wrestle with them, and to invite such a struggle, rather than flee from it. We invite future writers to consider the complexity of the connections between these two domains. We will have met our purposes if future efforts are enriched and if more important questions are raised.

References


Footnotes

1 Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2004) articulated a similar relationship between church government and the family. He spoke of a relationship between the two entities that has clear and distinct boundaries. “Each is independent in its own sphere…” With the church and the family, one is again tempted to compromise boundaries as attempts are made to move quickly and easily between the two organizations. (See the full text for additional clarification.)