

# **CHRISTIAN COUNSELING AND GENERAL REVELATION: THE MISUSE OF A BIBLICAL DOCTRINE**

**By Samuel Stephens**

A movement cannot be rightly understood unless it is placed in the context in which it began and how it progressed – what we call history. History allows us to trace threads of ideas and themes through time. Within the movement and practice of Christian Counseling, a line of division surfaces as we look at sources of authority upon which counselors have depended through the years. This division occurs between biblical conviction and counseling practice. In this essay, I suggest that the integrative model of counseling, namely Christian Counseling, misses the mark concerning the search and identification of truth by abusing the biblical doctrine of general revelation. The field of Christian Counseling has consistently demonstrated a historical misrepresentation and biblical misapplication of this doctrine in an effort to provide a justification for the utilization of secular psychology.

## **What is Christian Counseling?**

It is important to note that as a label Christian Counseling can refer to a wide spectrum of counseling approaches.<sup>1</sup> A unifying drive of this counseling approach, however, is the effort “to integrate psychology and Christian theology.”<sup>2</sup> Everett Worthington defined Christian Counseling as:

[An] explicit or implicit agreement between a counselor who is a Christian and a client for the provision of help for the client, in which the counselor not only has at heart the client’s psychological welfare but also the Christian spiritual welfare.<sup>3</sup>

As a formative influence in the Christian Counseling movement, Clyde Narramore noted that “wise counseling *requires* that evangelical faith be carefully integrated with the theories, therapeutic methods and professional roles of the modern psychologies [emphasis added].”<sup>4</sup> In his book *Psychology and Theology*, Gary Collins added, “The Christian who wants to understand and help change human behavior *must have* a good understanding of psychological techniques and knowledge in areas such as biological, cognitive, affective, social, and individual bases of behavior [emphasis added].”<sup>5</sup> A theme found throughout Christian Counseling literature is an emphasis on the importance of professional credentials, the reliance upon social science, and a focus on assisting clients in overcoming spiritual maladjustments on their own.<sup>6</sup>

#### Integration: An Idea and Process

Christian Counseling cannot be fully understood without highlighting the concept and method of integration. According to John Carter and Bruce Narramore, Christian social scientists who study human behavior through the scientific method use the term *integration* to show a correlation between professional and scientific fields with Christian theology. They stated, “Most of these efforts are based on *one essential philosophical underpinning*—the belief that all truth is God’s truth, wherever it is found. This proposition is frequently referred to as ‘the unity of truth.’”<sup>7</sup>

Collins defined truth as “an abstract idea, a universal reality that exists and can be grasped by analysis or experimentation.”<sup>8</sup> In the inaugural edition of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Bruce Narramore argued that “the minister and psychologist are not the only ones caught up in this conflict. The theologian, the physician and the student of psychology and scripture all share concerns for the whole man. They know they cannot minister effectively if

they neglect the contributions of related disciplines.”<sup>9</sup> Within Christian Counseling, integration provided a clear path to discovering truth in which psychological science, in conjunction with Scripture, could present a “cohesive approach to the problems that confront us.”<sup>10</sup>

### The Doctrine of General Revelation

Within the context of the broader Christian Counseling movement, general revelation has been used in such a way as to make available “pieces of truth that cannot be found in the Bible.”<sup>11</sup> According to Bruce Demarest, general revelation had traditionally been “mediated through nature, conscience, and the providential ordering of history” for the sole purpose of providing “a universal witness to God’s existence and character.”<sup>12</sup> In the first volume of his *Systematic Theology*, James Leo Garrett clarified, “‘General’ revelation is that disclosure of God that is available to all human beings through the created universe (nature) and in the inner nature of human beings (conscience).”<sup>13</sup>

Christianity has been recognized as a revelatory religion and some have gone as far as to say that Christian faith *necessitates* revelation. The doctrine of revelation distinguishes Christianity from pseudo-religions which have more in common with pagan philosophies.<sup>14</sup> The very concept of revelation also assumes the sinfulness of man and the fact that man is in spiritual bondage apart from God’s activity and self-disclosure. In *Revelation and Reason*, his landmark treatment on this subject, Emil Brunner noted that biblical revelation, both general and special, did not disclose “facts” or “something” but it unveiled and disclosed God himself.<sup>15</sup>

### A Brief Biblical Witness

Psalms 19 and Romans 1 demonstrate the doctrinal significance of general revelation.<sup>16</sup> In Psalm 19, King David exclaimed, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their

expanse is declaring the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1).<sup>17</sup> In his commentary on this psalm, John Calvin noted:

Scripture, indeed makes known to us the time and manner of the creation; but the heavens themselves, although God should say nothing on the subject, proclaim loudly and distinctly enough that they have been fashioned by his hands: and this of itself abundantly suffices to bear testimony to men of his glory.<sup>18</sup>

Not only did the heavens and sun address the glory of God, but each also revealed truth (Psalm 19:3). Peter Craigie noted that “as mankind reflects upon the vast expanse of heaven, with its light by day and its intimation of a greater universe by night, that reflection may open up an awareness and knowledge of God, the Creator, who by his hands created by glory beyond the comprehension of the human mind.”<sup>19</sup>

The New Testament contains a biblical witness to the doctrine of general revelation as well. Thomas Oden stated that a majority of theologians in the early years of Christianity agreed with the concept of general revelation as seen from the perspective of Paul in Romans 1–3 as the “universal revelation in the cosmos and human nature—along with a corresponding affirmation of human suppression of this revelation.”<sup>20</sup> Romans 1:20 states that God’s divine characteristics “have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made . . . .”<sup>21</sup> In his explanation of this verse, Dunn expounded upon the potential influences on Paul’s observations regarding revelation and truth:

[Paul] draws principally on influential Stoic ideas: that there is an innate rapport between the divine and the human because the divine logos immanent throughout the world is immanent also in man as the power of reason . . . however, it is Paul’s more Jewish perception of this divine relation which remains primary: what is known is an act of revelation personally willed by God (v.19b) in relation to a created order (v.20); and man is recognized as a responsible agent in face of this revelation . . . .<sup>22</sup>

Another New Testament scholar, Douglas Moo, generally agrees with Dunn’s assessment that general revelation was directed by God, revealed by God, and purposed to convey the glory and

power of God. However, he viewed Paul's presentation of truth in this passage, while derived from general revelation and accessible to both Jews and Gentiles alike, was still limited in scope. In itself, general revelation cannot provide salvation to sinners.<sup>23</sup>

### **Historical Perspective of General Revelation**

The doctrine of general revelation has undergone scrutiny, served as the topic of debate, and has been used as a foundation for other church teachings.<sup>24</sup> Originating with Thomas Aquinas, theology came to be known as the queen of the sciences. Millard Erickson noted, "Until the thirteenth century, the term science was not applied to theology. Augustine preferred the term *sapientia* (wisdom) to *scientia* (knowledge)."<sup>25</sup> As a scholastic theologian, Aquinas focused much of his philosophical musings on the idea of truth and knowledge, which included its definition, source, and purpose. He categorized truth in two realms one lower (nature) and one higher (grace). During the medieval period the church was in a unique dilemma where paganism and secularism, threatened the status of Christianity in the eyes of the common man. Instead of relying on Scripture as the authority of what is necessary for faith and practice, Aquinas chose instead to appeal to reason for an adequate defense of Christianity.<sup>26</sup>

From this effort, Aquinas formulated the concept of natural theology, which he later refined in his *Summa Theologica*. As defined, natural theology "is the attempt to attain an understanding of God and his relationship with the universe by *means of rational reflection*, without appealing to special revelation such as the self-revelation of God in Christ and in Scripture."<sup>27</sup> Aquinas' conclusion concerning natural theology was essentially a misguided attempt to create an apologetic from general revelation. This effect led the Catholic Church to place "Scripture and tradition next to each other" instead of recognizing the different natures, yet

identical purposes, of special and general revelation.<sup>28</sup> Aquinas' emphasis on the capability of man's reason led theologians to view revelation as only necessary to explain "what is above reason."<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Aquinas' re-tooling of general revelation rested on two assumptions: first, that nature was wholly intact and yet only partially marred by the Fall of man (Genesis 3), and secondly that people had retained an integrity of reason and perception untouched by sin.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century brought more developments to the doctrine of general revelation. However, instead of the parameters of this doctrine being expanded, it was narrowed. There was general consensus among Protestant theologians that man's reasoning abilities were tainted and skewed by sin and thus were susceptible to error.<sup>30</sup> As early as 1524 A.D., Balthasar Hubmaier, a German Anabaptist theologian, published *Eighteen Dissertations* in which he included a section refuting a widely accepted view of general revelation. He wrote, "All teachings that are not from God are in vain and shall be rooted up. Here perish the disciples of Aristotle, as well as the Thomists, the Scotists, Bonaventure, and Occam, and all teaching that does not proceed from God's word."<sup>31</sup> This bold representation of general revelation was echoed by another well-known reformer, John Calvin. Calvin's doctrine of sin, like that of Hubmaier, was sophisticated and took "into account that sinful men corrupt the gifts of understanding and scholarship God gives."<sup>32</sup> The rationalism of natural theology committed error in that it denied man's "dependence in our present state of sin upon God's past revelations of himself."<sup>33</sup>

While the Protestant Reformation brought about many positive changes, the adverse impact of natural theology continued on through the nineteenth century. In 1870 the Catholic Church "announced that God could be known with certainty from that which had been created *through the natural light of reason.*"<sup>34</sup> The modern era of theological deliberation, from the late

eighteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, was characterized as having combined the man-centered philosophies of the previous century with a broad interpretation of general revelation.

### **Theological Implications of General Revelation**

The first theological implication regarding general revelation is in the categorization of theology as a “spiritual science” as opposed to a man-centered social science. By the late nineteenth century, the definition of *science* began to shift from an orderly, systematic study of a particular topic to becoming almost synonymous with the discovery of truth. Writing prolifically on the topic of science and spirituality, Abraham Kuyper noted that due to man’s sinful nature, the scientific method imposed upon the study of theology would invariably lead to error. In his *Principles of Sacred Theology*, he wrote:

Science is entirely different from truth. If you imagine our human development without sin, the impulse to know and understand the cosmos, and by knowledge to govern it, would have been the same; but there would have been no search after truth, simply because there could have been no danger of relaying upon falsehood as a result of investigation.<sup>35</sup>

Kuyper defended an idea of truth that inherently pointed to non-truth, while modern science depicted a “thirst after knowledge” which attempted to know everything that existed.<sup>36</sup>

Commenting nearly a century later on this topic, Carl F.H. Henry noted that it is hypocritical for modern science to demand that religion fall in line when the hard and social sciences constantly re-evaluate and re-assess the veracity of previous conclusions. A consistent characteristic of modern science is that it was always “subject to ongoing revision of its judgments.”<sup>37</sup> Erickson agreed with Henry that sciences not based on biblical revelation could indeed err. As such, general revelation can only be accurately understood when held in distinction from man-centered

disciplines. Millard Erickson stated, “In an attempt to be regarded as scientific, disciplines dealing with humanity [e.g. psychology] have tended to become behavioristic, basing their method, objects, and conclusions upon what is observable, measurable, and testable, rather than on what can be known introspectively.”<sup>38</sup>

A second theological implication behind general revelation is that it is distinct from the process and idea of scientific discovery. The Greek word ἀποκάλυψις (*apokalypsis*) is used throughout Scripture and is most often translated as *revelation*, which denotes “an ‘unveiling’ and hence a disclosure.”<sup>39</sup> Despite this connection, general revelation has been consistently subsumed under the pursuits of modern scientific exploration. Regarding the use of general revelation by the Christian counselor and psychologist, Gary Collins stated, “He [God] has revealed this truth through the Bible, God’s written Word to human beings, but he also has permitted us to *discover truth* [emphasis added] through experience, through research investigation, and through the insights that come through reflection, observation, and the words of books and sermons.”<sup>40</sup> David Penley disagrees with Collins’ conclusions citing that this is an inaccurate view of general revelation. Christians cannot justify utilizing the social sciences by claiming they fall under the category of general revelation. He noted, “General revelation is not God revealing new things to us. He is revealing things about Himself that He also has revealed through special revelation in the Scriptures.”<sup>41</sup> A correct understanding of general revelation precludes that God is infinite and man is not. To know God, He must make himself known.<sup>42</sup>

### Christian Counseling: Context and Ideology

In one of the most comprehensive texts in the field of Christian Counseling, Gary Collins mentioned that man’s discoveries of “truth” in general revelation must be consistent with the

Bible as revealed truth; however, he did not concede that psychological theory and methodology were based on anti-biblical presuppositions. He further concluded that counseling becomes ineffective and limited when counselors “pretend that the discoveries of psychology, neuropsychology, psychobiology, human genetics, and related fields have nothing to contribute to the understanding and solutions of problems.”<sup>43</sup> In this final section of the essay, it will demonstrated that Christian Counseling has adopted an unbiblical concept of general revelation in order to justify attempts at integrating secular psychological models with Christian theological approaches to soul care.

### **A Modern Approach to Soul Care**

The endeavors of philosophy and psychology have, in many ways, intersected with theology and the Christian church regarding the dealings, purposes, nature, and solution to the “basic problems of human nature.”<sup>44</sup> The early integration of philosophy with theology culminated in pastoral counseling becoming dominated by a scientific and psychological model. Modern trends in pastoral counseling have set it apart from its foundation as the biblical care of souls. In 1956, William Hulme stated, “In former days, the pastor’s counseling was oriented in pastoral theology [anchored in Scripture]; today it centers on pastoral psychology. The impetus for this new movement has come more from the laboratories of the psychological sciences than from the scholarship of theologians.”<sup>45</sup>

Among Protestants, practical theology no longer covered matters related to soul care and counseling but focused only on topics including preaching, missions, evangelism, and church government. When faced with issues that practical theology did not answer, pastors referred their congregants to the “secular experts” for help and counsel.<sup>46</sup> Carter and Narramore noted that

while liberal pastors functionally abandoned theology for psychology in this area of ministry, conservative pastoral counselors, who were in the minority, were unaware of “the contributions of psychology to the understanding of personality” and therefore lagged behind their counterparts.<sup>47</sup> Soon a small number of Christian psychologists began calling all evangelical pastors and counselors to embrace one another’s methods, both biblical and psychological, in an effort to construct a holistic integrative approach to soul care that would be acceptable to clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, efficacious to patients who were emotionally, mentally, and spiritually ill, while still remaining unapologetically Christian.<sup>48</sup>

Eric Johnson considered the 1960s and 1970s the “golden age of integration” where many Christian psychologists, mental health workers, and counselors largely favored the integration of faith and psychology. The key figures at the forefront of the Christian counseling movement held to a strong conceptual view of integration. Johnson noted that the task of what he labeled as interdisciplinary integration “ostensibly involves reflection of the propositions of modern psychology and the propositions of theology (and the Bible) in order for Christians to end up with discourse that includes both theological and psychological propositions and that is logically consistent with Christian faith.”<sup>49</sup> In an attempt to integrate, those who held to this approach divided the “revelations” of the Christian faith into two distinct categories. Special revelation involved theology as disclosed in Scripture while general revelation allowed for the study of sociology and psychology by humans in order to “discover” truth.<sup>50</sup> Others affirmed that psychology, as a “scientific discipline,” not only had more impact on the church than any other theory, except perhaps Darwinian evolution, but that as a human-centered field of study similar to theology, psychology could “offer a great deal toward an understanding of the human race.”<sup>51</sup> In identifying the objective of Christian counseling, Collins stated, “As a counselor, you are a

change specialist. Your job is to help people deal with the changes that come into their lives and make changes that will improve their lives.”<sup>52</sup> However, this change is inconsistent to the concept of “change” as presented within the Bible.

### **The Search for Truth**

The question of the nature of truth serves as the impetus behind the psychologically-informed Christian Counseling movement. The goals and methods of Christian Counseling are concerned with both psychological and spiritual matters. Christian counselors and psychologists hold that the Bible, however useful for spiritual matters, never claims “to be a textbook on counseling” and “never was meant to be God’s sole revelation about people-healing.”<sup>53</sup> The logical conclusion of this claim on the nature and source of truth was expressed by Stanton Jones when he suggested that Christian counselors had a duty to their clients to share *any* knowledge of psychological theory they had in their possession. He also seemed to suggest that to withhold such knowledge would make the counselor not only irresponsible, but even negligent.<sup>54</sup>

Two related assumptions are shared by those who engage the integrationist approach to Christian Counseling. The first assumption is that God is the source of all truth. Carter and Narramore defend this assertion by stating that all disciplines share a basic *unity of truth* and this unity serves as the legitimate basis for all attempts at integrating the Christian faith with professional, clinical, and theoretical psychology. The view that Christian theology shares subject matter and philosophic jurisdiction with secular psychology leads them to conclude that God is the source of the truth found in these two often opposing sources. They claimed, “If we believe that God is the source of all truth, we assume that there is *no inherent conflict* between the facts of psychology and the data of Scripture [emphasis mine].”<sup>55</sup>

The second assumption generally held within Christian Counseling is that man is able to know/discover all truth. According to Collins, science serves as the vehicle for studying and making sense of the natural world (via general revelation). In essence scientific methodology provides an illumination into the teachings and truths of Scripture in a way that man can grasp. A Christian psychologist must be a solid student of both general and special revelation and “continually test his scientifically derived facts against the revealed truth of the Bible.”<sup>56</sup> Larry Crabb conceded this point by stating, “The Two-Book View (which is the implicit view behind much current thinking on integration) elevates the conclusions of empirical research to the same level of decisiveness as the conclusions of biblical study.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Historical Misrepresentation**

Christian Counseling perpetuates the historical misrepresentation of general revelation by equating scientific studies and empirical data with God-given revelation. Concerning the use of general revelation in related literature, Deinhardt noted:

The importance and theological soundness of the stance taken on it is virtually ignored in the Christian counselling [sic] literature, in spite of the fact that it has a key role in determining what materials are to be included in theories of counselling [sic] and what methodologies will be employed in counselling [sic]. Moreover, to the extent it is mentioned, it is typically done so in a manner not representative of traditional evangelical theology. Instead, “all truth is God’s truth” is often used as a theological catch clause so-to-speak whereby one can uphold biblical authority, while in good conscience adding in whatever other “truths” one might deem worthy from other sources.<sup>58</sup>

In agreement with this assessment, Jim Owen stated, “Although ‘Christian’ psychology claims to integrate Scriptural truth with ‘discovered’ (i.e., scientific) truth, integration is not occurring; Integration is virtually impossible. ‘Christian’ psychology sets aside the historical-grammatical method of interpreting Scripture and replaces it with a hermeneutic centered on pathology.”<sup>59</sup> Jones views special revelation as an exalted gift; however, it is insufficient in providing what

counselors need to fully understand human beings. Modern psychology, provided to man through general revelation, offers “legitimate and strategic” aid in helping the Christian therapist better understand human nature.<sup>60</sup>

Admitting that not all Christian Counselors and integrationists have adequately represented general revelation, Mark McMinn and Clark Campbell stated that this doctrine was “more authoritative on issues left unaddressed in the Bible” including examples given such as “constructing microprocessors or treating bacterial pneumonia.”<sup>61</sup> However, general revelation, as previously mentioned, is never referred to as an ambiguous truth that was to be discovered by “reasonable” men.<sup>62</sup> General revelation was provided to man by God for the purpose of *revealing* man’s inherent sin, guilt, and need for reconciliation to His Creator. Scripture, as special revelation, brings explicit clarity to this relationship.<sup>63</sup>

### **Theological Misapplication**

Collins reimagines not only the historical but the biblical definition of revelation. His model “begins with the assumption that God exists and is the source of all truth. This truth is revealed through the Bible (disclosed truth) and nature (discovered truth).”<sup>64</sup> The biblical definition of truth is re-framed by Collins and Crabb in the form of expanded empiricism. Collins noted, “I would agree with Crabb that the Bible is our primary source . . . But the Bible does not claim to be a textbook on psychology. We can and must draw from nonbiblical sources if we want to intervene to bring about maximum change through counseling.”<sup>65</sup>

In his book, *Psychological Seduction*, sociologist William Kirk Kilpatrick argues that the good intentions of Christian integrationists often leads to the secular overtaking the sacred. He stated, “True Christianity does not mix well with psychology. When you try to mix them, you

often end up with a watered-down Christianity instead of a Christianized psychology.”<sup>66</sup> In differentiating Christian counseling from biblical counselors, Ed Bulkley noted that the “controversy centers on the issues of authority and the source of truth.”<sup>67</sup> As has been shown, the misapplication of general revelation in order to affirm extra-biblical sources of truth is not a new concept when the Christian counseling movement was first conceived; regardless, as a movement, this approach was widely applied.<sup>68</sup> Years earlier, Abraham Kuyper noted that truth that is scientifically established has come to be known as *universally valid*. However, Scripture never presents truth as a force that depends upon corporate agreement in order to retain its validity.<sup>69</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While it is a vitally important biblical doctrine, general revelation has been at the center of theological debate throughout church history. Unfortunately, this doctrine has been often misrepresented leading to error regarding the nature, source, and application of truth itself. Through this essay, I have argued that those adhering to an integrationist approach to Christian Counseling have perpetuated an incorrect understanding of general revelation in an effort to utilize both secular psychology and Christian Scripture. Ultimately, integrative counseling functionally identifies and utilizes two different types of wisdom: one found in the Bible and one found in secular psychology.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, modern soul care practices pay lip-service to the sufficiency of Scripture while simultaneously denigrating the inherent authority of the Word of God. A proper historical and theological understanding of general revelation recognizes not only its place as subservient to special revelation, but also that revelation is not synonymous with empirical inquiry, incidental discovery, or truth-making but instead demonstrates an active and

purposeful unveiling of God's nature and plan to those who are made in His image.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the term Christian Counseling will be applied to those who advocate and seek to integrate secular psychology with Christian theology in their theory and practice of counseling. For the purposes of this paper, Christian counseling is treated in relation to its underlying principles and practices. For a clear example of the extensive field that is Christian counseling see David G. Benner, *Christian Counseling and Psychotherapy Psychology and Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987a), 266.

<sup>2</sup> David G. Benner, *Psychotherapy in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987b), 13. Many who were critical of the Christian counseling movement saw the fields of theology and psychology as "fundamentally incompatible" (13). Among the wide spectrum of critics, the following were prominent in the early stages of the movement. See, Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity* (Santa Barbara, CA: EastGate Publishers, 1987); Gary Almy, *How Christian is Christian Counseling?: The Dangerous Secular Influences that Keep Us from Caring for Souls* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000); and Ed Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999), 189.

<sup>4</sup> Mark R. McMinn and Timothy R. Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>5</sup> Gary R. Collins and H. N. Malony, *Psychology & Theology: Prospects for Integration* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 41.

<sup>6</sup> The forbearers of the Christian Counseling movement held to self-help psychological principles which tended to de-emphasize the authority of the pastoral counselor in terms of teaching, correcting, and training, in favor of placing the counselee in the center of the counseling process in an effort to further empower them to seek their own good. See, Seward Hiltner, *The Christian Shepherd: Some Aspects of Pastoral Care* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959); Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958).

<sup>7</sup> John D. Carter and Bruce Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 13. The concept of the *unity of all truth* was expressed by the early 1950s within the related field of Christian Education. See, Frank Ely Gaebelein, *The Pattern of God's Truth: Problems of Integration in Christian Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 118.

<sup>8</sup> Gary R. Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1977), 120. A brief review of literature demonstrated that Christian counselors and psychologists could not come to a consensus regarding the source and definition of truth. See, Mark R. McMinn and Clark D. Campbell, *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 15; Stanton L. Jones, Richard E. Butman, and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 19-20; and Eric L. Johnson and David G. Myers, *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2010), 135.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Narramore, "Perspectives on the Integration of Psychology and Theology," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 1, no. 1 (1973), 3, 4.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Deinhardt and Rochon, *Is our Truth God's Truth?*, 6. The discussion regarding this use of general revelation could clearly be seen in two volumes written in defense and in critique of this issue. See Gary R. Collins, *Can You Trust Psychology? : Exposing the Facts & the Fictions* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988) for the pro-integrationist perspective and Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology* for the dissenting perspective. Also, Deinhardt has attempted an objective presentation of the importance of general revelation to Christian counseling. See, C. L. Deinhardt, "General Revelation as an Important Theological Consideration for Christian Counselling and Therapy," *Didaskalia* 7, no. 1 (September, 1995), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 14. Demarest continued, "Through the modalities of general revelation, man at large knows both that there is a God and in broad outline what He is like" (14).

<sup>13</sup> James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 2nd ed. , Vol. 1 (North Richland Hills, Tex.: Bibal Press, 2000), 51. Not all Baptists have been in complete agreement with Garrett. Stevens argued that general revelation was essentially equal to the acquisition of knowledge through a study of Nature, see William Wilson Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 15. Erickson included history as part of general revelation. However, Garrett disagreed because Erickson did not explain how various cultures and histories were in fact "revelatory," see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), 1:154-155.

<sup>14</sup> Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 15. While he placed a larger role of man's reason in discerning general revelation, Stevens did confess that special revelation was superior in its authority and completeness for matters of salvation, obedience and faith. (15-17).

<sup>15</sup> Emil Brunner and Olive Wyon, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), 25. By the 1940s, Brunner's contribution to the doctrine of general revelation could be detailed in his ongoing discussion and debate with friend and fellow neo-orthodox theologian, Karl Barth. For a treatment of this theologically significant dialogue in historical context see, G. C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955). For a contemporary perspective see, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "no!" by Dr. Karl Barth* (London: G. Bles, Centenary Press, 1987). This interaction will be expounded upon in a later section of this paper.

<sup>16</sup> The purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive list or an exegesis of these passages, but to provide a brief sample of general revelation as seen from a scriptural witness. Throughout church history, theologians have referenced the following verses to support the doctrine of general revelation including: John 1:4-9; Acts 14:17; 17: 26, 27; and Ephesians 3:9. For more on these verses see, Brunner and Wyon, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge*, 61.; Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace Book Designed for the use of Theological Students*, Vol. 2 (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1907a), 27.; Robert L. Thomas, "General Revelation and Biblical Hermeneutics," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9, no. 1 (1998), 5, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Version.

<sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson Rev.of Edinburgh (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 309. In verse 1, the Hebrew verbs *telling* (כָּפַר *caphar*) and *declaring* (נָגַד *nagad*) are related semantically in that direct, purposeful communication is inferred within their meaning. "H5608 - caphar - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (NASB)." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 7 Apr, 2016. <sup>16</sup>

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<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H5608&t=NASB>; and "H5046 - nagad - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (NASB)." Blue Letter Bible. Accessed 7 Apr, 2016.  
<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H5046&t=NASB>.

<sup>19</sup> Peter C. Craigie and Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 1-50* (Waco: Word Publishers, 1983), 180. While general revelation, according to Craigie, was adequate to speak of the character and glory of God, he noted that the "climax" of Psalm 19 lies not in the greatness of creation, but in the truth that is revealed by the Torah (183).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church*. Daniel L. Akin, (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 88. See also, Thomas C. Oden, "Without Excuse: Classic Christian Exegesis of General Revelation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 1 (March, 1998), 55-68.

<sup>21</sup> See W. E. Vine and F. F. Bruce, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1971), 168. According to Vine, the Greek word translated *understood* (voέω noeō) meant "to perceive with the mind, as distinct from perception by feeling." The emphasis on understanding with the mind seems to demonstrate the clarity and purposefulness of God within the revelation of himself vis-à-vis creation.

<sup>22</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 71.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *Encountering the Book of Romans: A Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 57. Psalm 19:7-14; Romans 10:14; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrew 4:12-13. The way of salvation is only provided for within the special revelation of Scripture.

<sup>24</sup> Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 57. Garrett mentioned that many theologians, from antiquity to modern history, have proposed divergent opinions on this topic. For example, he noted that the second century church father Justin Martyr and sixteenth century theologian Ulrich Zwingli held that general revelation could indeed be salvific or redemptive apart from special revelation. Some thinkers have even extended this include the teachings of non-Christians as well (e.g. Plato, Gandhi, etc.).

<sup>25</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 33-34. See also, McMinn and Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 157. See also, Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, 329.

<sup>27</sup> J. I. Packer, Sinclair B. Ferguson, and David F. Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 452. Natural theology has been more prominent in Roman Catholic theology than in Protestantism (453).

<sup>28</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 18-19. See also, Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, 64.

<sup>29</sup> Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Vol. 1 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1976), 87. Henry noted, "Many philosophers next insist that the legitimacy of metaphysics depends upon the exclusion of divine revelation as a source of truth and reliance only upon reasons uninformed by revelation."

<sup>30</sup> Brunner and Wyon, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge*, 65. See also, Berkouwer, *General Revelation*, 40. The reformers understood the tie between man's sin, darkened heart and mind, and the revelation of God in creation. Therefore, man is without excuse. This conception affirmed general revelation, but rejected the formalized natural theology of Rome. Moroney noted that the concept of 17 the noetic effects of sin was a common theme among reformed theologians throughout history including

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Calvin, Brunner, and Kuyper. For a more in depth study, see Stephen K. Moroney, *The Noetic Effects of Sin: A Historical and Contemporary Exploration of how Sin Affects our Thinking* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 124.

<sup>31</sup> William Latane Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1969), 21.

<sup>32</sup> Nicolaas H. Gootjes, "General Revelation and Science: Reflections on a Remark in Report 28," *Calvin Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (April, 1995), 98. It was important to note that Calvin did not disregard general revelation. In fact, in the Geneva Catechism of 1545, he affirmed general revelation as a biblical doctrine. See, Brunner and Wyon, *Revelation and Reason: The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge*, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace Book Designed for the use of Theological Students*, Vol. 1 (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1907b), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Henry, *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* [Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles], trans. J. Hendrik De Vries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 116. This work was originally published in 1898. For another work published only a few years before and dealing with the same subject, see James Petigru Boyce, *Abstract of Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887). Although Boyce identified theology as a science, he made clear distinctions between man's reason and God's revelation (3-4).

<sup>36</sup> Kuyper. *Principles of Sacred Theology*, 62. See also, Abraham Kuyper, *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art*, English Edition ed. (Grand Rapids: Christian Library Press, 2011). In this work, Kuyper relied on common grace for the preservation of science. He attested to the influence of Greek philosophers (e.g. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) on the thinking of Christians as inherently positive (52-53).

<sup>37</sup> Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, 250.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical*, 49. The theological concept of revelation usually involves two parties, the revealer and "the recipients of the revelation" (50).

<sup>40</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, Third ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 43.

<sup>41</sup> John Babler and Nicolas Ellen, *Counseling by the Book: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Charleston, S.C.: Self-Published. Printed by CreateSpace, 2014), 34. Penley went on to state that truth revealed in general revelation were essential spiritual truths related to God's identity. Other knowledge and discoveries can be made; however, these things do not have "eternal significance" (35). See Ephesians 5:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Colossians 2:8.

<sup>42</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 153.

<sup>43</sup> Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 43.

<sup>44</sup> William Edward Hulme, *Counseling and Theology* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), 3. Here, the author has made it clear that psychology and Christian theology have the same goals and objectives in view; however, many Christian counselors and psychologists would disagree. Stanton Jones's limited view of

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Scripture did not make it possible for Scripture to be concerned with these matters. See, McMinn and Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology*, 65.; Jones, Butman, and Yarhouse, *Modern Psychotherapies: A Comprehensive Christian Appraisal*, 17.; Benner, *Psychotherapy in Christian Perspective*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Hulme, *Counseling and Theology*, 2. The work of Anton T. Boisen and Clinical Pastoral Training as a sub-genre of psychotherapies is an example of this change. See also, McMinn and Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology*. Powlison noted, “According to the Bible, caring for souls—sustaining sufferers and transforming sinners—is a component of the total ministry of the church . . . There is no legitimate place for a semi-Christian counseling profession to operate autonomously from ecclesiastical jurisdiction and in subordination to state jurisdiction” (54–55).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24. Powlison did not argue that because there was no systematized theology of biblical counseling and soul care at that time that God did not use his people to do the work, “but where our articulated understanding of truth is defective we become vulnerable to deviant and distracting theories for which we pay a price in confusion and harm” (24, footnote 1). See also, David Powlison, *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 331; and Clyde M. Narramore, *The Psychology of Counseling: Professional Techniques for Pastors, Teachers, Youth Leaders, and all Who are Engaged in the Incomparable Art of Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 100.

<sup>47</sup> Carter and Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, 37-38. The reason for this was a rejection of Naturalism, rejection of non-Christian anthropology, and rejection of determinism, among others. The authors were treading the conservative pastors’ lack of psychological knowledge in a critical manner.

<sup>48</sup> Eric L. Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 9. See also, Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson, *Foundations for Soul Care: A Christian Psychology Proposal*, 90. Included in this camp, according to Johnson, were Gary Collins, John D. Carter, Bruce and Clyde Narramore, Larry Crabb, and James Dobson, to name a few. Other characteristics of those who held to an interdisciplinary view of integration included the attempt to “unite or combine aspects of two different disciplines” (92). In other words, these Christian counselors saw no fundamental difference between the Christian theology and modern psychology as fields of study.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. Interestingly, Johnson noted that he agreed with the critics of integration regarding the misuse and misapplication of general revelation. A strong conceptual integrationist himself, Johnson preferred the concept of *common grace* over general revelation to “refer to God’s active goodness manifested in good human activity and its products without implying that they flowed directly and infallibly from his mind” (100).

<sup>51</sup> Carter and Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, 12. Collins, an influential voice in the Christian counseling movement, seems to contradict the stance of Carter and Narramore. He pointed out that many fathers of modern, or scientific, psychology were in fact atheistic and critical of religion, especially in clinical settings. Freud, for example, “did not believe in the existence of any supernatural being . . . He believed that religious people were both immature and neurotic” (98). See also, Mark R. McMinn and Gary R. Collins, *Cognitive Therapy Techniques in Christian Counseling* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991).

<sup>52</sup> Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*, 4.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 42. For an apologetic centering on the valid use of psychology for uniquely Christian counseling see, Collins, *Can You Trust Psychology? : Exposing the Facts & the Fictions*. For a critique of the epistemological error of integration, see Douglas Bookman, "The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling," in *Introduction to Biblical Counseling: A Basic Guide to the Principles and Practice of Counseling*, ed. John MacArthur and Wayne A. Mack (Dallas: Word, 1994), 63-97; Noel Weeks, *The Sufficiency of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988). Bookman identified epistemology as an essential philosophic cornerstone of counseling. Within its broader definition and application to counseling, epistemology begged the question, "How do we know that what we think we know is in fact true?" (63).

<sup>54</sup> McMinn and Phillips, *Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology & Theology*, 63. The question that Jones never answered is, "Who determines if the "utilization of secular psychology" is right?"

<sup>55</sup> Carter and Narramore, *The Integration of Psychology and Theology: An Introduction*, 22. According to the authors, Christians who hold to a "limited epistemology," or in other words who hold to only "one reliable means of finding truth (revelation)" cited irreconcilable differences between theology and psychology (79). See, Jim Owen, *Christian Psychology's War on God's Word: The Victimization of the Believer* (Santa Barbara: EastGate Publishers, 1993).

<sup>56</sup> Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 131. He went on to state, "Sometimes, of course, this [the study of Scripture] will not be a very important part of his work. The researcher who studies the synapses in the brain or the condition behavior of pigeons is working in an area that the Bible never discusses" (131).

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence J. Crabb, "Biblical Authority and Christian Psychology," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 9, no. 4 (1981, 1981), 308.

<sup>58</sup> Deinhardt, *General Revelation as an Important Theological Consideration for Christian Counselling and Therapy*, 43. See also, Babler and Ellen, *Counseling by the Book: Revised and Expanded Edition*, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Owen, *Christian Psychology's War on God's Word: The Victimization of the Believer*, 18.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson and Myers, *Psychology & Christianity: Five Views*, 116-117.

<sup>61</sup> McMinn and Campbell, *Integrative Psychotherapy: Toward a Comprehensive Christian Approach*, 24-25.

<sup>62</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 170.

<sup>63</sup> Henry, *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, 19. See also, Packer, Ferguson, and Wright, *New Dictionary of Theology*. Pinnock stated, "The two species of revelation stand together in a complementary relationship. We should not forget that God is the source of revelation in both cases, and that two types of revelation work together to the same goal" (585).

<sup>64</sup> Collins and Malony, *Psychology & Theology: Prospects for Integration*, 35. See also, Collins, *The Rebuilding of Psychology: An Integration of Psychology and Christianity*, 125.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 35. See also, Crabb, *Biblical Authority and Christian Psychology*; John MacArthur, Wayne A. Mack, and Master's College., *Counseling: How to Counsel Biblically* The John MacArthur pastor's library (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005); and J.R. McQuilikin, "The Behavioral Sciences Under the Authority of Scripture." paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Jackson, MS, December 30, 1975. Henry noted Aquinas' contribution to the development of empirical epistemology. Thomas Aquinas carried this onward in his emphasis on "sense observation of objects and events disclosed in common experience,"

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preliminary to rational demonstration of metaphysical realities” (78). See, Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*. While Crabb seemed to maintain a more cautious approach to integration, he still relied heavily on general revelation to open the door for secular psychological research to impress upon Christian theology.

<sup>66</sup> William Kilpatrick, *Psychological Seduction* (Nashville: Nelson Publishers, 1983), 23.

<sup>67</sup> Bulkley, *Why Christians Can't Trust Psychology*, 185. In the appendix of this book, Bulkley provides a succinct outline of biblical psychology which redefined many familiar terms in a scriptural light. See pages 335-350.

<sup>68</sup> Bookman, *The Scriptures and Biblical Counseling*, 70.

<sup>69</sup> Kuyper, *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art*, 78.

<sup>70</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:20-24; 3:19-20