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Editorial

Sustaining family and mental health in contemporary societies underscores the point that there is a troubling storm within families. To sustain a healthy family, there must be a healthy family. There is something to sustain. Studies have shown that unresolved challenges in families inevitably lead to stress and mental health issues. They analyse how unstable families lose their social and health balance, whose consequences snowball into individual, family, and societal life. Based on the challenges that confront the family, this volume devotes itself to exploring the causes, dimensions, challenges, effects, and potential panaceas to the increasing ill-health in families across different spaces.

Sajo opens this volume with a critical evaluation of how mental health could be sustained in families in contemporary times. He argues that family mental health is integral to societal well-being. Contemporary pressures demand that families actively cultivate resilience, supportive relationships, and adaptive coping mechanisms. Policymakers, religious organisations, and health institutions must partner with families to reduce stigma, provide resources, and foster environments where families thrive.

The second article by Harold examines the critical intersection between psychology and evangelicalism, drawing biblical normativity and theological resources to establish the place of Christ in the redemptive work. He avers that evangelicalism and psychology are becoming increasingly relevant and effective in helping counselees grow both spiritually and emotionally by acknowledging their Christian values and assisting them in understanding their emotional pain and social issues. The paper offers counsellors and psychologists a Christian worldview rooted in the Evangelical tradition, serving as a framework to support and guide counselees

when they bring religious experiences and concerns into therapy and counselling. Following this is Ayokunle's article, which argues that there is a connection between migration and mental health. For Ayokunle, as humans migrate from place to place, they either encounter health issues in their host communities or carry health challenges. Thus, migrants should have access to information about their health status and the places they migrate to.

On their own, Gire and Oladapo explore the complexities of family mental health and well-being in contemporary society. They argue that despite the scientific and technological advances the world has made, along with all its challenges, biblical principles remain relevant to addressing them. The vagaries of contemporary life are the subject of biblical contemplation. Audu and his colleagues conducted an empirical study to investigate the correlation between poverty and family mental health in Ayingba, central Nigeria. They argue that poverty results in social stigma, which in turn causes mental ill-health. They submit that addressing the viscerogenic needs of the family is a catalyst for sustaining family health. Irewole and Femi-Bamidele further develop this argument by asserting that the effects of poverty on a family cannot be overstated. They conclude that addressing poverty in families will lead to a healthy family life in all ramifications.

Onuchukwu argues that choosing the right marriage partner is fundamental to achieving and sustaining family mental health. A wrong spouse, he argues, would instigate stress and problems that would undermine a family's mental health. He therefore suggests that emotions and physical attractions are not the fundamental values for choosing a spouse; spiritual guidance would be needed to complement them. Bolaji and Balogun argue for the place of children in mainstreaming mental health in a family. They believe that godly children are critical assets to family mental health; thus, guiding them properly and biblically will help them to perform their designated roles in the family. Agboifo further explores the place of

children in the family and their correlation with mental health. Since dysfunctional families could produce unadjusted children, he recommends that the services of pastoral caregivers are crucial in turning the tide around. Closely knitted to Agboifo's view is Babalola's, who vigorously argued that pastoral care and counselling are all too important to maintain and sustain family mental health. Pastoral intervention in stressed families can help restore trust and love, and heal the entire family, he submitted. Ibrahim also follows this trajectory of pastoral care-giving as indispensable to addressing family challenges. He highlighted the causes of family mental health challenges and suggested that bible-based pastoral counselling can serve as a worthy intervention. Oyewole also argued along this line that family health challenges can be addressed through informed pastoral care-giving in addition to other socially approved measures. For Rhodolf, the nexus between family system theory and its implications for mental health and well-being within the Ghanaian socio-cultural context cannot be overemphasised. He advocated for a family-centred, contextually grounded approach, calling for integrated pastoral and psychosocial frameworks that reinforce family systems, mitigate stigma, and promote sustainable mental health interventions within Ghanaian society.

These articles explored critical areas of family mental health and proffer intellectual, spiritual, and practical solutions that can mitigate the challenges. While welcoming you to savour these interesting articulations of ideas, it is essential to acknowledge that the contributors are responsible for the accuracy of the ideas in their articles.

Benson O. Igboin
Editor-in-Chief

AN INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND EVANGELICALISM: THE BIBLE AS NORMATIVE: A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION

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Abstract

The ongoing dialogue between Evangelicals and the field of Counselling (Psychology) remains a key topic among Christian counsellors and psychologists, reflected in the diverse perspectives within this discipline (Armagam, 2024). This article seeks to deepen the theological understanding of practices rooted in a Christian psychological worldview. The Bible plays a vital role as a reference point for Evangelicals in anthropology, guiding both their intellectual and spiritual approaches to Christianity. Drawing on the EDNA approach of N. Woodbridge, the article advocates a comprehensive, intersectional reflection through literature, enabling counsellors who are evangelicals to incorporate biblical principles into their therapeutic work. It suggests that counsellors committed to Christ should see the Bible and the Christian tradition as foundational for their practice. The article aims to highlight the connection between Evangelicalism and psychology, reaffirming Scripture as the ultimate authority by recognising God's sovereignty and the doctrine of redemption through grace, faith in Jesus Christ.

Keywords: Evangelicalism, Psychology, Bible, Intersectionality, Counselling, Faith

Introduction

A normative framework for Christian counselling does not operate in isolation; instead, it interacts with a foundational theological interpretive structure. This framework equips Christian counsellors and psychologists with an Evangelical worldview rooted in biblical principles, offering essential support and guidance for counselees who share religious experiences and concerns during therapy. Christian psychology is grounded in a Christian worldview that upholds core Christian beliefs. It involves a biblically informed, Christ-centred, and Spirit-led professional who helps individuals understand their emotional struggles while fostering their spiritual growth through interaction with Scripture.

For many years, the interplay of psychology within Evangelicalism has been a topic of significant dialogue and a crucial factor in acknowledging and addressing the brokenness and emotional distress of those receiving counsel. Although Evangelicalism and psychology encompass a range of perspectives, they remain interconnected, highlighting the counsellors' obligation to honour the spiritual and religious views of their counselees.

Jones (1994, 197; 2007, 155) insightfully points out that in our pursuit of exceptional care, we must never forget that science and professional practice are intertwined with metaphysical, moral, and spiritual beliefs. Although Evangelicalism and psychology may hold differing perspectives, they also find common ground that opens the way for meaningful dialogue and cooperation on important issues related to human well-being. This article advocates a distinctly Evangelical view and urges a stronger connection between Evangelicalism and psychology. Central to Evangelicalism is the belief that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God (Harold, 2022). Armagum (2024) aims to increase awareness within the psychological community about the vital role of scripture in

achieving the scientific and professional goals of modern psychology. The article suggests an intersectional approach that enables Evangelical psychologists to participate in therapeutic settings through practices that are faithful, theologically grounded, and evidence-based, all rooted in scripture.

As Armagum (2024) showed, psychology can significantly benefit from a more in-depth examination of biblical texts. To realise this connection, we will utilise Woodbridge's (2013) hermeneutical framework, called EDNA, which encompasses Exploratory, Descriptive, Normative, and Action tasks. The EDNA methodology aligns well with the Evangelical tradition. Woodbridge (2013) states that this approach is deeply rooted in evangelical theology, where the Bible acts as the authoritative foundation and standard for all Christian behaviour and church practices. A key part of evangelical theological identity—centred on Christ—derives its strength from the confessional link that views Scripture as the written Word of God.

The EDNA Approach

By adopting Woodbridge's (2013) framework, this article will delve into the significant impact of Evangelical theology on Christian psychology, guided by the four essential tasks of practical theological interpretation.

- a. The Explorative task represents a form of priestly listening, deeply rooted in a spirituality of presence, and aims to uncover the underlying factors that led to the current situation. What is happening?
- b. The Descriptive task demonstrates wise judgment rooted in spiritual wisdom and seeks to uncover the reasons behind unfolding events. Why is it actually happening?
- c. The Normative task involves prophetic discernment rooted in a spirituality of discernment, focusing on the essential question of what should be happening.
- d. The Action task highlights transformative action and examines how we can effectively address the challenges

ahead. What ought to be happening?

The EDNA model is firmly established in evangelical theology, which asserts that the Bible is the ultimate authority guiding all Christian behaviour and church practices. As noted by Morrison (1999,165), “much of evangelical theological identity and its Christocentric focus are anchored in the confessional link that recognises Scripture as the written Word of God.”

Explorative - What led to the present situation/ What is happening?

According to Woodbridge (2013), exploratory research plays a pivotal role in the social sciences by investigating a scenario and typically serves four distinct functions. First, it strives to deepen our understanding of a particular situation, phenomenon, community, or individual. Second, it assesses the extent or range of a specific phenomenon, issue, or behaviour. This evaluation clarifies the characteristics and scope of the problem, laying a solid foundation for further in-depth research. Third, it seeks to provide explanations for observed phenomena, issues, or behaviours by “connecting the dots” in research and identifying causal factors and outcomes linked to the phenomenon in question. Fourth, it aims to identify overarching patterns of events or activities within a specific context, rather than merely focusing on isolated issues.

While the dialogue between Evangelicalism and psychology is essential, many Christian counsellors and psychologists still promote a separation between faith and psychological practice. As Patterson et al. (2000:199) note, the dominant view in the Western world has emphasised rational and logical thinking, with science focusing on the biological aspects of humanity. At the same time, Evangelicals concentrate on the spiritual realm.

Nevertheless, more Christian counsellors and psychologists are recognising the importance of exploring the connection between religion and psychological well-being to help their clients better

(Vietan et al., 2023; cf. Tan, 2011, p. 11). Christian psychologists have made significant progress in combining Evangelical theology and psychology, aiming to understand how faith impacts overall well-being. This development in the relationship between Evangelical theology and psychology underscores a commitment to enhancing religious and spiritual awareness (Pargament, 2011, p. 8).

Research by Vietan and Lukoff (2022) confirms a strong link between religion and well-being, especially when counsellors incorporate faith into therapy. The blending of Christian beliefs with psychological practice is intentional; both aim to address the whole person—covering physical, spiritual, and mental aspects. As Vietan *et al* (2023) noted, religious beliefs that promote psychological integration are vital to this conversation. Recognising this intersection can significantly enhance the support offered to individuals in need. Embracing faith can illuminate the path through life's toughest challenges, infusing our experiences with profound meaning and purpose. It nurtures a positive perspective that fosters optimism and hope. Sacred texts present us with inspiring role models who guide us in embracing life's struggles. Faith also empowers individuals by instilling a sense of indirect control over their situations, alleviating the pressure to exert personal control. Furthermore, it connects us to a supportive community—both earthly and divine—that combats feelings of isolation and loneliness, making our journey more bearable.

Over time, evangelical approaches to psychology have increasingly merged in the fields of religion and psychology (Jones, 1994, 189). According to Narramore (2007, p. 21), a key shift occurred, making the line between religion and psychology less distinct. Many evangelicals still prefer pastoral counsellors when seeking help with emotional issues. This view arises from a complex mix of personal, psychological, spiritual, and environmental factors. However, more people are gradually turning to psychology for understanding core human issues and the complex questions about emotional pain and

suffering.

Blair (2015, 200) highlights a crucial overlap that has encouraged counselors and psychologists to find innovative ways to integrate religion into their therapeutic practices in a way that is both harmonious and enriching. Koenig (2009, 89) offers an important perspective on the interaction between Christian faith and psychology, emphasizing the need for counselors to recognize their clients' religious and spiritual dimensions. These aspects should be viewed as valuable assets for promoting mental and social well-being, while remaining vigilant to situations where such beliefs might become distorted or restrictive, potentially exacerbating rather than alleviating psychological issues.

Counsellors and psychologists need to understand the significant influence the counselee's religious and spiritual considerations have on developing effective treatment goals. Advances in Christian therapy techniques, along with the broader impact of faith on psychosocial health, have generated compelling research supporting the benefits of incorporating faith into mental health practices within Christian therapeutic settings (Tan, 2011, 11).

Furthermore, Lukoff, Lu, and Yang (2011, 189) found that prioritising faith in mental health services is linked to positive outcomes, like alleviating distress and improving management of serious conditions, including mental illnesses. Analysing the role of Scripture in counselling settings focused on growth and wellness provides valuable insights into how clients understand and navigate their relationships, psychological challenges, emotional issues, and overall quality of life.

The Descriptive Task: What is actually happening?

To truly understand the ongoing discussions surrounding the intersection of religion and psychology within the evangelical community, Eric Johnson's insightful 2010 work, *Psychology and Christianity*, serves as an invaluable resource. It outlines five pivotal

paradigms that shape how Christians engage with psychology. These frameworks—the levels-of-explanation approach, integration approach, Christian psychology, transformational psychology, and biblical counselling—each provide a foundational lens for interpreting, developing, and evaluating psychological models through a biblically informed perspective.

1. The levels-of-explanation model asserts that Christian faith and psychology are separate fields that offer complementary insights into human nature, all while maintaining their unique research methods and perspectives.
2. The integration model proposes that Christian psychologists should harmonise psychology and theology, ensuring that psychological research aligns with essential Christian beliefs. This approach encourages a productive interplay between a Christian worldview and psychological practice, while firmly rejecting any research or methodologies that contradict the Bible as incompatible with genuine integration.
3. The Christian psychology model advocates for a psychology deeply anchored in a Christian worldview. It seeks to define human nature through a historical and philosophical lens of Christianity and engages in empirical research that is firmly rooted in this faith perspective.
4. Transformational psychology focuses on the spiritual and emotional renewal of the counsellor or psychologist as the foundation for their practice, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This model prioritises real-world experiences—including those understood through faith, such as sin and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit—as essential for developing a

fresh perspective on the transformed individual. It is characterised by flexibility, drawing on Scripture, personal experiences, and reflective observation, rather than adhering strictly to a single psychological theory.

5. Finally, the biblical counselling model presents a unique methodology that centres on rigorous biblical analysis, asserting that Scripture is the ultimate and authoritative source of all pertinent insights in counselling. This approach applies biblical principles to navigate life's challenges. It views reliance on non-biblical resources as potentially distorting the mission of counselling, which aims to mend personal and relational struggles.

The five foundational paradigms play a vital role in deepening our understanding of psychology through the lens of a Christian worldview and its theological interpretation. As Johnson (2010,292) eloquently points out, it would be a grave error to assume there is only one correct perspective among these five, dismissing the others as entirely erroneous. These paradigms are designed to empower Christians to synthesise the most valuable insights from each viewpoint, paving the way for a more holistic approach to psychology that goes beyond mere linear reasoning.

In the realm of Evangelical theology, which is firmly anchored in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, we find a profound exploration of human nature. A significant hurdle in the dialogue between Christianity and psychology lies in the necessity to establish a robust theological framework that weaves biblical principles into therapy and counselling practices (Pargament, 2011,12). A normative stance for Christian psychology advocates for an evolution beyond mere integration, seeking to develop a distinctively Christian psychology deeply rooted in Scripture.

Jones (1994, 188; 2007, 142) asserts that religion does more than

illuminate aspects of God; it shapes our understanding of existence and defines many truths about human nature. Moreover, psychology informed by an Evangelical Christian perspective is not merely an isolated therapeutic endeavour detached from God. As Johnson (2007b, 45) emphasises, this psychology relies on God's mercy to shed light on human understanding and to uncover insights about human nature through reflection, research, and creative thinking.

Normative: What should be happening?

Woodbridge's (2013) normative task can be seen as an essential practice of prophetic discernment, deeply rooted in a spirituality of discernment. This approach enables individuals to recognise and respond to God's Word in the unique contexts of their lives and the world around them. Prophetic discernment involves earnestly seeking God's guidance amid life's complexities, circumstances, and decisions, while carefully examining and evaluating the evidence to reach a well-informed conclusion.

Theological interpretation uses theological concepts to analyse specific events, situations, and contexts, drawing on scripture and human actions. These concepts are closely connected to the doctrine of God and divine truths as revealed in the Bible (Clinton, Hart & Ohlschlager 2005,31). A strong framework for Christian psychology—both in theory and practice—should include theological principles related to humanity's creation in God's image, the example set by Jesus Christ, and the power given by the Holy Spirit (Jones, Clinton & Ohlschlager 2005,54). This approach aligns with Evangelical counselling views that highlight the relationship between psychology and Scripture. Tan (2011,363) describes Christian counselling as psychotherapy or counselling offered by a Christian who is centred on Christ, grounded in biblical teachings, and led by the Spirit.

a. Scripturally Based

A central principle in Evangelicalism is the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, which stresses the authority of Scripture. This belief is based on the idea that the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word. As a key guide, it reveals spiritual truths, nurtures relationships, and supports personal transformation (Collins 2007,43; Roberts & Watson 2010,166). Its complete inspiration and authority mean it should be interpreted broadly and objectively, recognising it as God's revelation to humanity (Narramore 2007,31). Johnson (1992,348) highlights that the Bible's role as divine revelation, written in the context of everyday life, ensures its ongoing relevance for all generations. Therefore, psychology must connect with Scripture to explore human values, health, and emotional well-being within the framework of faith and spirituality. This link emphasises the vital importance of Evangelical theology, which is firmly rooted in biblical teachings and philosophical reflections on human nature (Johnson 2011,24). Consequently, Christian psychology critically assesses the Bible as a standard (Roberts & Watson, 2010,155) against which psychological principles are measured (Collins, 2007,43).

In this context, Scripture serves as the guiding principle (Johnson 2007a, 188–190) for research focused on a Christian and theocentric view of human nature. In the Evangelical tradition, the Bible holds the highest importance. Vanhoozer (2005,234) explains that practising *sola Scriptura* means considering Scripture as the “norming norm,” while tradition is seen as the “normed norm.” Therefore, Christian psychologists have a responsibility to engage with the profound insights found in Scripture and apply them within the reflective framework of empirical research, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of human nature. Johnson (1992, 349) argues that Scripture carries functional priority and offers significant authority for a Christian worldview, where psychological research remains mainly based on empirical evidence but is complemented by a biblically informed perspective on humanity.

Johnson (1992,350-353) presents eight roles that the Bible might serve within Christian psychology: experiential, foundational, contextual, axiological, anthropological, canonical, dialogical, and creative:

1. The Bible functions as an experiential guide and a key source of wisdom for those seeking to encounter God and deepen their understanding of Him through the transformative power of His Word.
2. Its foundational significance creates a solid framework for anchoring human understanding, core beliefs, and basic assumptions.
3. The contextual aspect recognises the innate meanings, purposes, and assumptions of creation and human nature, all rooted in God's creative power and wisdom as described in Scripture. This Christian perspective aims to interpret all psychological truths through the lens of God's reality.
4. The axiological dimension reveals the values, principles, and imperatives for humanity that come from the Bible, emphasising their incorporation into research, theory, and practice.
5. The anthropological aspect of the Bible deepens our understanding of its redemptive-historical story regarding human sin and divine redemption.
6. The canonical significance of the Bible is essential to Christian psychology because it serves as the Christian canon, providing guidelines, standards, and a measure of lasting truth.
7. The dialogical function of the Bible encourages a more profound understanding through the exchange of values,

principles, and viewpoints during discussions. This process facilitates comparing psychological insights with biblical revelations. The interaction between psychological discourse and biblical teachings allows Scripture to serve a normative and transformative role, engaging with psychological findings and theories without merely evaluating the discipline or undermining the Bible's unique authority.

8. Furthermore, the Bible's creative role offers a framework for exploring innovative concepts, findings, and theories based on the biblical perspective of the Christian psychological community, rather than being limited to a purely psychological viewpoint.

As the divinely inspired Word of God, the Bible, along with Christian creeds and confessions, provides a theological framework and foundational basis for research, theory, and practice within Christian psychology. Christian psychology must prioritise biblical teachings as central to its understanding rather than viewing them as secondary. In a worldview informed by the Bible, anthropology addresses humanity's origins, nature, and relational responsibilities toward God, others, and oneself. The Bible depicts human beings as a unified being of body, soul, and mind, covering both physical and emotional needs (Dt 6:5; Lk 10:27). The main goal of biblical anthropology is not to develop a specific biblical psychology or physiology but to represent humans as created in God's image while recognizing their fallen state in a broken world (Gn 1:26–28). This divine image invites them to reflect on God's reign, revealing aspects of His character and ways (Clinton, Ohlschlager, & Centore 2005, 32).

In light of this divine act, humans focus on God and rely on their Creator. Although God made humans in Genesis 1:26–28 to reflect His image and likeness, their relationship with God has been broken because of sin. Their fallen, sinful nature has tarnished the image of

God (Gl 5:16–17; Col 2:13–14) and has led to disobedience, the destruction of their relationship with God, and conflicts with other humans, themselves, and the environment (Rm 8:7; Eph 2:3–8).

Despite the sinful aspect of human existence and their broken relationship, God established a special relationship with His covenant people (Gn 15–17). God's response to humanity's fallen and sinful nature is revealed through reconciliation and salvation through Jesus Christ as a gift from God to demonstrate His grace and faithfulness to His covenant (Jn 3:16; Eph 2:14–19). This restored image of God in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, calls upon the redeemed covenant people of God—who have been created in God's likeness—to live a responsible and restorative life (cf. Eph 4:17–5:20). Therefore, as moral human beings, people live a life centered on God, guided by the work of the Holy Spirit.

b. Christo-Iconic - Embracing Christlikeness

Living a life focused on Christ, reflecting His image, is deeply rooted in the hope and trust that come from Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. This divine act reconciles believers and grants them forgiveness before God (Eph 2:4–5). Johnson (2007b:42) emphasizes the need for Christian counsellors to recognize Christ as the sovereign Lord over every aspect of both professional and academic fields.

The foundation of evangelical theology is firmly based on the person of Jesus Christ, as revealed in Scripture (Col 1:26–27; Phil 2:5–8). Christology explores the miraculous aspects of Jesus Christ's life—His extraordinary birth, His nature, His teachings and deeds, His sacrificial death and atonement, His resurrection, ascension, high priestly intercession, and His expected second coming (Johnson 2007a, 33). As the Son of God (Heb 1:2), Jesus exists forever with God (Jn 8:58), reflecting the Father's nature (Heb 1:3), and He

declared that seeing Him is like seeing the Father (Jn 4:9). In His incarnation, He took on human flesh and was born as a man without giving up His divine nature. From His conception and birth through His death and resurrection, Jesus was fully God and fully human. His mission of substitutionary atonement and redemption for humanity's sins was accomplished through His death and resurrection (cf. 1 Pt 2:21–24). Two essential truths (cf. 2 Cor 5:18–19) required this atonement (Clinton & Hawkins 2011,31). First, humanity was trapped in sin and corruption, unable to save itself. Second, God's perfect holiness demanded a just solution for sin, which Christ provided by taking on the role of a servant and bearing the serious penalty for all human transgressions (cf. Phil 2:5–11).

The primary goal of a Christian psychologist, then, must be to follow the example set by Christ. Tan (2011, 371) and Johnson (2004, 98) emphasise that Christian spirituality focuses on the spiritual growth (Rom. 8:29) of the counselee toward greater Christlikeness. Achieving this transformation requires ongoing spiritual development and a daily commitment to understanding and practising biblical virtues and truths (cf. Clinton, Hindson, & Ohlschlager, 2001). According to Johnson (2004,107), a key sign of spiritual maturity is 'conformity to Christ,' which allows Him to reveal our true selves through the free and spontaneous work of the Holy Spirit.

c. The Significance of the Holy Spirit

Engaging in spiritual disciplines that are firmly rooted in biblical and theological foundations is essential for fostering meaningful dialogue between the Christian faith and psychology. From an Evangelical perspective, true transformation—becoming more like Christ—originates from God (Rm 12:1-2) and unfolds through the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Harold & Nel 2022). God's self-disclosure in Scripture emphasises that growth and transformation stem from His sovereignty. Throughout our relationship with humanity, God continually conveys His promises of love and care

through the empowering influence of the Holy Spirit (Kakwata, 2018).

The central role of the Holy Spirit in Christian therapy is strongly supported by Scripture (Jn 14:16–17; 16:8, 13; Ac 9:31; Rm 8:26–27; 1 Cor 2:10; Tt 3:5), which describes the Holy Spirit as our Counsellor, Comforter, Helper, and Advocate. We can only attain true spiritual growth through the Word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Harold and Nel, 2024). While skills, methods, strategies, and psychological tools can support the process, they are secondary to the Holy Spirit's primary work. Narramore (2007, 31) points out that psychology professionals are uniquely positioned to lead others toward a deeper spiritual understanding. However, neglecting God's plan for salvation risks reducing our efforts to mere intellectual exercises—focused more on protecting our own spiritual and emotional needs than on advancing God's redemptive mission. The Holy Spirit's guidance forms the foundation of spiritual growth.

The transformative work of the *parakletos* (παράκλητος), or Christ's representative (Jn 15:26), empowers healthcare professionals through spiritual formation, ultimately bringing comfort and upliftment to those they counsel (Harold and Nel 2022). Adams (1973,7) notes that every counselling situation involves at least three participants: the counsellor, the counselee, and the Holy Spirit, who acts as the ultimate Counsellor. Clinton and Ohlschlager (2005,15) describe this counselling relationship from a distinctly Christian perspective, emphasising both vertical and horizontal aspects. Although it has a dyadic nature involving at least two people, it becomes uniquely triadic with the inclusion of God's presence (the Holy Spirit) in the vertical, spiritual, transcendent dimension.

Christian counsellors must possess competence and training in counselling techniques, but their primary reliance should be on the Holy Spirit as their Counsellor, Advocate, and Helper (Tan 2011, 35). Johnson (2004,97) defines spiritual formation as “the human capacity for a relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ through the Spirit,” emphasising our faithful response to divine providence. In describing this innate religious inclination within humans, Johnson (2007a,349) refers to the 'sensusdivinitatis' or 'semen religionis,' capturing our experience of God's presence.

The Action Task: Transforming the Landscape – What ought to happen?

Engaging in ethical reflection empowers Christian counsellors and psychologists to critically assess their practices and standards against universal ethical principles (Osmer, 2008,161). Historically, a divide has existed between Christian counsellors and psychologists, stemming from concerns that intertwining religion and spirituality with professional practice might overstep their boundaries. The prevailing view suggests that “matters of God belong to the domain of religion, while issues of faith should be left to clergy and theologians” (Morrison *et al.* 2009,184).

On the one hand, clergy and theologians may compromise their integrity by openly dismissing psychology, only to subtly integrate its concepts into their counselling practices (Nganyu 2025).

Collins 2007:43). Conversely, Lee and Newberg (2005,445) raise valid concerns regarding the appropriateness of discussing religion and spirituality within healthcare settings, cautioning that it could lead to healthcare providers imposing their personal beliefs on patients, potentially overshadowing critical medical interventions. This concern is particularly relevant given the risks associated with misinterpreting the Bible and misusing counselling and therapy (Morrison, *et al.* 2009,184; Tan, 2003,17).

When Jesus instructs his disciples in Matthew 5:48 to strive for perfection (teleios—τέλειος) like their heavenly Father, he establishes a benchmark of maturity and ideal behaviour for Christians to measure against (Johnson 2007a,319). Calvin (1960, 35–37) posits that genuine wisdom consists of two dimensions: understanding God and comprehending oneself. This spiritual development unfolds through a dynamic relationship with both God and oneself. Roberts and Watson (2010,164) articulate a practical Christian psychology that is inherently 'teleological,' where 'telos' embodies the vision of human flourishing central to the Christian psychological framework. Clinton, Ohlschlager, and Centore (2005,31) argue that Christian psychology's ethical reflection can be viewed from two main perspectives: first, the Bible acts as the foundation of truth and the standard by which everything is measured (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:3); second, maintaining an eternal outlook and hope in Christ is essential for effective mental health practices.

Christian psychologists aim to empirically study human beings, paralleling psychology while aligning their research with broader commitments (Pargament 2011,19). McMinn (2011a,270) highlights the importance of historical and systematic theology, biblical understanding, and Christian tradition as essential elements of counselling. A holistic biblical worldview, rooted in theological principles and spiritual practices, provides a robust Christian framework for understanding human emotions, thoughts, and relationships (Clinton, Ohlschlager, & Centore, 2005, 36). Therefore, effective practice involves drawing from historical or contemporary models and reflexively adapting current methods.

Christian psychology, deeply anchored in Scripture, advocates for a richer integration of Christianity and psychology. While upholding scientific rigour and scholarly inquiry, Christian counsellors and psychologists must transcend cultural dogmatism and refrain from distorting Scripture's unambiguous teachings to justify personal

theories and biases (Narramore 2007, 31). For Christian psychology to be truly effective, it necessitates an objective reinterpretation of Scripture by individuals well-versed in contemporary psychology, who can articulate a biblical psychology that meaningfully addresses current challenges. However, to connect Evangelicalism with psychology, it is crucial for counsellors and psychologists who hold a Christian worldview to recognise faith as an essential part of human life that requires attention, empathy, and proper training (Bauke&Seifert, 2022).

The relationship between Evangelicalism and psychology is not simply about merging the two disciplines into one system, whether scientifically or intuitively; instead, it's about building a relationship of mutual understanding (Ellens 1997:193). Christian psychologists have the opportunity to employ a transversal model of interdisciplinary dialogue, enabling them to reimagine psychology and comprehend the intricate nature of humanity within the broader narrative of human sin and divine redemption, as revealed through God's creative power, wisdom, and grace in Scripture. This approach involves engaging clients at the centre of their experiences and helping them achieve wholeness, both spiritually and psychologically.

Conclusion

Evangelicalism and psychology are becoming increasingly relevant and effective in helping counselees grow both spiritually and emotionally by acknowledging their Christian values and assisting them in understanding their emotional pain and social issues. The paper offers counsellors and psychologists a Christian worldview rooted in the Evangelical tradition, serving as a framework to support and guide counselees when they bring religious experiences and concerns into therapy and counselling.

The division between faith and psychology can be replaced by a model based on a comprehensive understanding of effective intersectionality that moves beyond isolated thinking and promotes

collaboration through a cross-disciplinary approach, integrating biblical theology—which emphasises a high view of scripture—into therapy and counselling.

The development of the intersectionality approach between Evangelicalism and psychology explores important Evangelical principles that are key attributes of the normative perspective for Christian psychology.

This article espouses that within Evangelical Christian Psychology, the Bible should serve as the guiding normative principle to strengthen the link between faith and psychology. Christian Evangelical counsellors and psychologists should engage with the Bible and Christian intellectual and religious traditions as foundational frameworks for their practice-based research in Christian psychology. This intersectional approach, built on mutuality and respect, can enhance psychology by incorporating a normative perspective that highlights Evangelicalism—especially the authority of Scripture, God's sovereignty, and redemption through faith in Jesus Christ.

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