

CHAPTER 3

INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING

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Imagine two sisters, standing together, gazing onto the Atlantic Ocean with the sun rising over the horizon. The moment is engulfed in warm red, orange, and yellow beams that illuminate the crashing waves. Both women are moved into deep contemplation and awe. Unconsciously, these refractions of light initiate chemical transformations in receptor cells on the two women's retinas. These "images" are then "translated" by their individual brains in profoundly different ways. To one of the sisters, the image confirms created beauty, splendor and a Creator's handiwork. She whispers a grateful praise to God. Hearing this, her sister, impacted by the same shimmering light dancing with the waves, utters back, "I will not sacrifice even one goose bump to religion."¹ Each woman views similar scenery, yet influenced by her own "faith" ends up perceiving the world differently. What people "see" is shaped by their belief system or, put another way, their a priori lens.

One way to "see" this world is from a Judaic-Christian perspective. Here, the God of creation speaks through Scripture saying, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over . . . all the earth."² According to this Old Testament text, humans were created in the image of God and sent forth to be stewards of this earth. This statement begs the questions, "What does it mean to be made in the image of God?" "How might Christians be good stewards?" and then, "How does this call to stewardship impact the way Christian educators lead and teach future generations?"

The foundational distinctive of a Christian college education is the integration of faith and learning. As we saw in the previous chapter, American Christian higher education is currently focusing on the recovery of integrating a Christian worldview with "secular" discovery. The chapter concluded with a suggestion that the prevailing distinction between "sacred" and "secular" truth is being diminished or replaced with a holistic and integrated epistemology. Arthur Holmes's classic statement, "All truth is God's truth,"³ provides a short

but succinct phrase that encapsulates this way of thinking. This intentional re-integration of all truth (“sacred” and “secular”) distinguishes the experiences of Christian college students. Ultimately, the process of integrating faith and learning must be done intentionally. To be intentional, one must understand it.

The formal training of most university educators, including Christian college educators, was completed at a secular university. At these institutions, a variety of world-views (i.e., naturalism, secular humanism, atheistic existentialism, etc.) have more often than not replaced Christian theism as the guiding philosophy underlying the

Most university educators’ formal training, even the Christian college educators’ training, was completed at a secular university where a variety of world-views (i.e., naturalism, secular humanism, pantheism, atheistic existentialism, etc.) have more often than not replaced Christian theism

study of a particular discipline. In addition, the increased specialization within the academy has “bred fragmentation, rather than integration, of knowledge.”⁴ As George Marsden described, during the twentieth century Christianity was pushed to the outer boundaries of the academy as the progressive movement shifted the academy in a more broadly moral and less distinctively Christian direction.⁵ Educational historian Douglas Sloan concluded that by the 1970s, the relationship between Christianity and higher education in America was sharply diminished and near collapse.⁶ With this diminishment came the obvious loss of a primary source for the articulation and modeling of faith and learning

integration. This chapter attempts to provide a simple starting point for both. Due to the book’s scope, this chapter should be regarded as a primer on integrating faith and learning and not a comprehensive treatment.

The primary component of a predominant methodology for integrating faith and learning is the development of a Christian worldview. A worldview provides a discrete picture of reality based upon reasonable faith and observation. Much as a picture on the top of a puzzle box provides a framework for constructing the puzzle, a worldview provides a framework for interconnecting the diverse components of reality. It also provides direction for inquiry. The person who assembles the puzzle must skillfully and patiently navigate each piece into its proper place, but the large scale image is provided beforehand. This “picture” assists us in constructing knowledge and interpreting experience, and without it a person easily reaches false conclusions. Specifically, a Christian worldview is developed by organizing knowledge gathered from the world around us (general revelation) and knowledge from beyond our natural boundaries,

such as the sacred Scriptures (special revelation). Ultimately, though, all philosophical presuppositions that construct any worldview are based upon faith.⁷

This chapter provides a basic description of faith and learning integration and defines commonly used terms. Additionally, we outline some of the various approaches to the faith-learning integration process, provide insight into integrating across the various disciplines, and highlight the importance of good interpretation of Scripture. We will then review several integrative strategies and conclude with suggestions for application, some of which may be more aptly utilized in the classroom and others in co-curricular settings. But first let's look at some common misconceptions about integration.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS OF FAITH-LEARNING INTEGRATION

Chapel, student ministries, discipleship groups, and missionary fellowships are duplicated in different formats and fashions on virtually all Christian college campuses. So, one may naively assume that these high profile spiritual formation programs provide the primary basis for the Christian college integration distinctive. Less than one hundred years ago, the Christian worldview formed the academic foundation for much of American higher education, and these Christian co-curricular programs served as an outgrowth of the college community member's faith. But, as the prevailing worldview influencing American academia shifted, many Christian college leaders wrongly assumed that retaining these programs sufficed for its distinctive.⁸ *Infusing spiritual formation programming within the curriculum and co-curriculum is not sufficient* as the Christian college distinctive. More than just programming, there must be a deeper integration at the core level of educating (both in and out of the classroom), specifically at the level of a discipline's subject matter.

Christian colleges are small in size when compared to most state institutions. This characteristic facilitates another misunderstanding of full integration. Integration is *not merely about encouraging personal relationships* between the educator and student. The smaller number of students in the classrooms and better faculty-student ratios, along with faculty and staff who are led by Christian principles of charity and kindness, may generate a university ethos that is pleasant and inviting. These factors have been suggested to provide a positive learning environment and may help with retention.⁹ However, these factors do not necessarily entail the integration of faith and learning. Such relational opportunities can be reproduced in many non-Christian private colleges and in special programs on state school campuses like honors and athletics. Integration is more than positive educator-student relationships.

Some Christian educators facilitate prayer or other spiritual disciplines in the classroom. In so doing they may intentionally or unintentionally equate integration with praying before class. Interspersing the spiritual disciplines within a chosen teaching method may assist the student in grasping the material, but it falls well short of the full meaning of integration. By contrast, integration reaches down into the specific material being studied; it is *not an auxiliary or preparatory activity* to assist the student in retaining the material.

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Christian colleges generally have a core curriculum that includes some biblical and theological coursework. In addition, most, if not all, have majors that prepare students for full-time Christian service. Integration of faith and learning is *not sufficiently satisfied at the curricular level*. It must go deeper than a set of additional courses on a graduate's transcript. These courses can serve to develop one's Christian worldview, but the real integrative distinctive is accomplished in how this worldview interfaces with each discipline.

Similar to this "insufficient curricular level integration" is the attempt to add biblical or Christian components to one's discipline. Full integration is not the addition of poetical sections of the Bible in a poetry class or utilizing Christian novels in a literature course. Though this may be helpful in understanding aspects of poetry or literature, it does not represent the full incorporation of the integration process on the body of knowledge within the discipline. Remember, *full integration is not an addition of biblical or Christian theological precepts as illustrative examples within any particular discipline*; rather, the discipline's integration must start at the epistemological level. It shapes how one sees all of the discipline at its core and should not be limited to an auxiliary role.

V. James Mannoia, in his book *Christian Liberal Arts: An Education that Goes Beyond*, outlines an alternative use of the term integration.¹⁰ He argues that the American academy has drifted away from integrating knowledge between the various disciplines. For example, he suggests that the Christian college should be about integrating (or reintegrating) sociology and history, where one understands historical transitions from a sociological perspective. Instead of a cross-disciplinary understanding of the world, he believes that today's students' educational experience has become too specialized or truncated. The culprit here is that faculty focus has moved from teaching to research. He argues that Christian colleges have a special niche to fill—one where reintegrating

the disciplines is the standard. He also challenges Christian college professors to conduct research that utilizes real world problems, thus putting their “faith into action.”¹¹ Mannoia’s challenge to reintegrate across the disciplines is an important discussion; however, it diverts us from our central theme: evaluating and shaping a discipline’s body of knowledge from a Christian worldview.

All of the previously mentioned curricular and co-curricular components of today’s Christian college are healthy outgrowths of the faculty and staff’s commitment to follow Christ and facilitate developmental opportunities. These programs and activities are important for equipping the saints and challenging the seeker. But in themselves they fall short of the basic task of integrating faith and learning, which is the acquisition, organization, and presentation of knowledge informed by a Christian worldview.

FOUNDATIONAL TERMS AND CONCEPTS OF INTEGRATION

The central purpose of this chapter is to provide a primer on a method of integration, not an overview of a Christian worldview’s salient themes. For a relevant description of a Christian worldview, we suggest reading Cornelius Plantinga’s *Engaging God’s World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*.¹² The book outlines the central tenants of a Christian worldview: Creation (God created the world and man was created in the image of God), the Fall (all of creation suffers from the corruption of sin), and Redemption (the whole world can be re-created through God’s grace).¹³

To help readers understand this process of integrating faith and learning, we provide definitions of some critical terms: faith, worldview, learning, and epistemology. *Faith*, in this context, is more than an emotional feeling or something “hoped for.” Instead, it is a set of rational assumptions about life and truth embraced by personal trust. It encompasses more than a commitment to religious teaching and does not negate the need for normal forms of learning. Arthur Holmes says that faith “does not preclude thinking either about what we believe or about what we are unsure of, nor does it make it unnecessary to search for truth or to examine evidence and arguments. Faith does not cancel out created human activities; rather it motivates, purges, and guides them.”¹⁴ Faith is a rational, yet assumed, way of organizing all of the available knowledge. As a person organizes her faith-based assumptions about the world, she views her world in a particular way—much like the two sisters at the beginning of this chapter. This theoretical construct is her worldview.

A *worldview* is a set of assumptions that frame a person’s understanding of reality. It provides one a discrete picture of reality and provides answers to the fundamental questions of life that form one’s perspectives. Ultimately, these perspectives direct

our behavior. The answers to the following questions expose one's worldview: "What is the nature of man?"; "Does God exist?"; "Can we know God personally?"; "What, if any, is the purpose of life?" These questions are usually answered prior to the academic inquiry, and the manner in which one answers them impacts what he studies, his methods of inquiry, and ultimately his interpretations. These assumptions bring clarity to his picture of the world, much like eyeglasses do. Nevertheless, any eyeglass prescription can be mildly or severely incorrect, which can impede the individual's ability to perceive, evaluate, and act correctly.

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Learning, in connection with the integration of faith and learning, generally refers to acquiring and understanding knowledge gathered from educational pursuits. This includes knowledge from all disciplines and from various types of inquiry. Theologically speaking, academic knowledge is referred to as general revelation. In addition to general revelation, Christians believe God has also provided knowledge via special revelation (i.e. Scripture). Learning for the Christian includes the acquisition of general and special revelation secured from multiple sources.

We study, engage the world around us, and reflect on our experiences. What we eventually accept as knowledge and what we include as acceptable ways to obtain knowledge defines our *epistemology*. In his philosophy text, Donald Palmer defines epistemology as the "theory of the knowledge that answers questions such as: What is knowledge? What, if anything, can we know? What is the difference between opinion and knowledge?"¹⁵ Prevalent Western epistemologies like rationalism (the predominance of reason to gain knowledge), naturalism (exclusion of all knowledge apart from empirical observation), and relativism (knowledge is subjective and socially created), all emerge from assumptions prior to engaging in research and study. These basic epistemological assumptions are all assumptions that require faith. Therefore, we must acknowledge that any author or researcher's theoretical premise will influence the shape and findings of the study.¹⁶

CORE ISSUES RELATING TO FAITH AND LEARNING INTEGRATION

This section reviews a few core issues related to the integration process. Robert Harris, in his book *Integration of Faith and Learning: A Worldview Approach*, states, "The process of integration should not be seen, then, as a method of rejecting knowledge,

but as an activity for clarifying, filtering, and correcting misinterpretations. Or better, integration provides a touchstone for testing the claims about knowledge."¹⁷ While the integration of faith and learning is foundational to Christian higher education, there are a variety of approaches to integration. This section begins with a discussion of four prominent approaches. Second, the "visibility" or pervasiveness and the ease of the integrative process vary significantly between disciplines. Therefore, it will be helpful for the reader to understand where his discipline fits within this range. Last, because it is critical to understand how to interpret Scripture within the integrative processes, we will provide some direction to the reader for interpreting Scripture.

Four Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning

In his book *Foundations of Christian Thought: Faith, Learning, and the Christian Worldview*, Mark Cosgrove outlines four approaches to integration.¹⁸ We summarize his approaches below because we find them useful in describing a range of views in Christian higher education on how one undertakes the process of integrating faith and learning.

Sole Authority Model: Faith against Learning

This model's foundational proposition is that the Bible is always trustworthy, and yet, because of its fallen nature, the human mind is not. This leads to the interpretation of Scripture being placed in a position that is always above or against "secular" learning. The *sole authority* approach tends to elevate Scripture in a triumphal manner to the sole source of wisdom for life and to relegate human learning to non-essential and misguided interpretations. This approach to integration tends towards anti-intellectualism, a general hostility toward academic pursuits, and indoctrination.¹⁹

The *sole authority* model is constructive in its recognition that frequently there are hidden anti-Christian assumptions to be found within human knowledge claims, and anti-theistic worldviews often produce biased research and interpretations. However, the triumphal attitude of this approach can be destructive to the learning process by preferentially upholding interpretations of special revelation, i.e., "God's word," to the extent of preventing students from engaging with general revelation, i.e., "God's works" as revealed in the world around us. Although it places an emphasis on the infallible word of God, it tends to forget that people lack infallibility in the interpretation.²⁰

Separate Authorities Model: Faith and Learning

The *separate authority* or the *parallels* model views faith and learning as two separate entities existing side by side much like the parallel tracks of a train. Rather than

being antagonistic to each other as in the *against* model, this model considers faith and learning to be two sources of truth that are complimentary but do not intersect. Therefore, truth about the world can be determined from the academic disciplines and the truth about God can be determined from Scripture.²¹ A common academic arena for adherents of this model is the natural sciences. In addressing the question of whether there must necessarily be conflict between faith and science, Stephen Jay Gould, a preeminent Harvard scientist, stated that:

. . . science covers the empirical: the composition of the universe (“fact”) and the way it works (“theory”). Religion, on the other hand, examines questions of ultimate meaning and moral value. These two [realms] do not overlap, nor do they encompass all inquiry. Science gets the age of rocks, and religion the rock of ages; science studies how the heavens go, religion how we go to heaven.²²

Adherents of this model of faith-learning integration would state that both areas are needed to live a God-honoring life; however, the two areas do not overlap.

The *separate authorities* or *parallel* model has the positive benefit of a jolt-free ride along the road of learning by not dealing with any potential conflict between the knowledge claims of the discipline and the Christian worldview. This approach works best when there seems to be little overlap between the subject area and Scripture, such as in the study of mathematics or chemistry. The shortcoming of the approach is that it lacks an evaluation of the discipline’s baseline knowledge claims.²³ For example, the underlying worldview of many scholars in the natural sciences—scientific naturalism—has many tenets that oppose Christian theism.

Equal Authorities Model: Faith Plus Learning

The *equal authorities* or *integrate* model acknowledges the overlap between the subject matter of the Bible and that of the academic subject areas which leads to an interplay between faith and learning. In this model, Scripture and academic inquiry are equivalent sources of truth and when combined are more productive. Each source of truth, God’s word (special revelation) and God’s works (general revelation), contributes to our understanding of any particular topic, as in the study of human nature or ethics.²⁴

The acceptance of both Scripture and human learning as equally valid sources of knowledge is a favorable aspect of this model. However, the quantity of information gathered among the vast array of academic writings tends to tilt the scales toward secular research. This unintentional secularization of a discipline’s subject matter is of concern because the undisciplined student looks to the Bible only for details in certain subject

areas. In areas that are not specifically addressed by Scripture, which is often the case with many academic subjects, non-integrated subject matter dominates the field. To address this concern, Cosgrove suggests that the student should consider that “the Bible contributes a different form of truth . . . a form excellent for building the Christian philosophical worldview from which the academic subject areas can be evaluated.”²⁵

Foundational Authority Model: Faith Supports Learning

“The *foundational authority*, or the *worldview*, model states that the major contribution of the Bible to our academic pursuits is that it gives us a worldview foundation from which to do our studies in science, social science, and the arts. This *worldview* approach acknowledges that beliefs do make a difference in academic pursuits. One’s faith or worldview does matter when one engages in the learning process.”²⁶ One’s worldview affects the choice of subject areas to study, the methods of inquiry, and most importantly, the interpretation of the information discovered. “In other words, the learning process in school is never an academically unbiased process since one’s learning is always affected by one’s worldview beliefs.”²⁷

The *worldview* model recognizes that everyone has a worldview and that it has a profound impact on how one sees the particular tenants of an academic discipline. It is essential for students to be taught how to critically examine the worldviews underlying the various knowledge claims and to gain a thorough understanding of the rational basis of the Christian worldview. The worldview model is intellectually honest because it acknowledges and openly examines all worldviews including one’s own and thus defuses anti-intellectualism. In this model, the Christian worldview becomes the cornerstone for integrating faith and learning.²⁸

One negative aspect of this model is that by utilizing a Christian worldview as the starting point of our academic pursuits, the researcher, scholar, or student may confuse the *worldview* model with the *sole authority* model and not allow general revelation to influence their interpretation of the biblical text. Our search for truth should be tempered with a heavy dose of humility and a strong understanding of our limitations.

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Although this worldview integration model is currently the most prominent among evangelically oriented colleges, it is not without its critics. Jacobsen and Jacobsen state in their book, *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*:

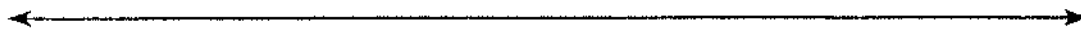
First, this [worldview] model contains the implicit claim that it is the only valid way to bring faith and learning together: it defines the singular path that all Christian scholars must follow regardless of their own particular understandings of faith or their specific fields of disciplinary expertise. The second limitation is its hyper-philosophical approach to Christian scholarship. In essence, the integration model requires that Christian scholars temporarily become philosophers (instead of being biologists, psychologists, engineers, artists, or whatever else they are), whenever they want to engage in the specific activity of doing Christian scholarship.²⁹

They go on to state that, “Christian scholars will probably need to develop a range of new, less grandiose ways of relating faith and learning that are more attuned to contemporary scholarly practices.”³⁰ Their text provides some new direction for integration that may be helpful for the Christian educator.

THE “VISIBILITY” OF INTEGRATION

Integration influences all disciplines because, as we have previously stated, our worldview establishes the framework for inquiry and interpretation. However, the ability to perceive this Christian worldview is more prevalent when the central topic of study is more closely associated with the nature, purpose, and daily living of human beings. Further examination exposes a continuum of how visible integration is among the academic disciplines. We will call this continuum the *Visibility Continuum*. This visibility continuum assists us in understanding why course materials of similar classes of Christian and secular schools look surprisingly similar or oddly diverse. At one end of the spectrum lie the hard sciences of math and natural science; on the opposite end are literature, philosophy, and theology.³¹

THE VISIBILITY CONTINUUM OF INTEGRATION



Less Visible/Pervasive

More Visible/Pervasive

Mathematics, Natural Science, Social Science, History, Art, Literature, Philosophy, Theology

The level to which the subject matter of any discipline’s body of knowledge differs, when seen through different worldviews, is a matter of degree. Therefore, the disciplines that focus more on the physical matter, such as mathematics, chemistry, and

physics, tend to have a similar worldview perspective on the essence and nature of matter (less pervasive). So, even though the underlying assumptions about the purpose and genesis of life may differ, or the acceptability of certain research methods may differ, there are shared premises of the discipline's inner workings. Therefore, we might have a difficult time distinguishing between a day in an algebra course taught at a state university and a similar one taught at a Christian college. To be sure, there would be some introductory comments that reframe the subject in a Christian or naturalistic worldview, but the general class material will look surprisingly similar.

However, visiting the same two institution's courses in psychology or theology may have noticeable even striking differences. In this scenario, the general academic body of knowledge may be similar (i.e. how the synapses in the brain work), but the interpretation and explanation of the particular activity may differ greatly (i.e. If man has a soul, how does it interact with the brain? or, How does one define deviant behavior?). Here in the social sciences the conflict of worldviews permeates and differentiates even more of the discipline's subject matter. Due to the nature of the academic discipline's knowledge, the pervasiveness of a Christian worldview or the integration of faith and learning is more observable. Questions concerning the presence of a person's soul and the underlying assumptions about the goodness of human beings saturate the more pervasive discipline and the assumed answers to these questions alter the discipline's accepted forms of inquiry and knowledge.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERPRETATION: HERMENEUTICS

The words of the creator God found in special revelation (Scripture) should influence all disciplines of study. But clearly, Scripture is not a comprehensive text for any academic disciplines (i.e. earth science, psychology, kinesiology, philosophy, astrophysics, etc.), thus the methodology of interpreting Scripture, also known by the term *hermeneutics*, becomes critical. The scope of this chapter does not lead to a full discussion of hermeneutics, but every Christian should use caution and wisdom when interpreting Scripture as it applies to an academic discipline, especially when the text was not intended to provide definitive knowledge on issues peripheral to the objective of the text. In *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, Richard Hughes states, "... if I confess the sovereignty of God and the finitude of humankind, I confess as well that my reason is inevitably impaired and that my knowledge is always incomplete."³²

The Christian educator engages both general and special revelation. She observes and interacts with nature and reason (general revelation), and she reads and studies the sacred texts (special revelation). She reads with a finite perspective and this

incomplete, finite perspective limits her judgment of events and even the texts being studied. Hermeneutics attempts to answer the question, "What is the text really saying?" or, "What does God have to say about this?" So, as a Christian interprets special revelation in relation to her discipline, the wise and prudential use of appropriate hermeneutical skill is critical. Some passages may be appropriate to interpret at face value, and others will need intensive study and wisdom. It is also prudent to remember that the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek over two thousand years ago within a particular culture and time, though the words are relevant for every generation.³³

A two-way street illustrates the interaction between general revelation and special revelation in the worldview model. Here the information gained from inquiry and reason informs, clarifies, and directs one's understanding and interpretation of special revelation. The same is true going the other direction: an interpretation of special revelation informs, clarifies, and directs how one works with and utilizes general revelation. When one limits Scripture's impact on a particular discipline or allows Scripture to "trump" a particular set of observations without carefully applying appropriate study of the biblical text, she has failed to utilize appropriate hermeneutical methodology. Like a two-way street, information from general and specific revelation travels both directions.

The problem with a two-way street, though, is that it creates opportunity for conflict. When such conflicts arise we have four response options: side with special revelation, side with general revelation, suspend judgment until further review, or "live in the midst of paradox." The first two responses we will call the "revelation coup." In the first situation, the person attempting to integrate her faith and learning devalues general revelation and trumps any "conflict" with her interpretation of Scripture. The second situation is similar in that when reviewing the conflicting data, she lays aside her understanding of the text and allows general revelation to trump Scripture. The third option may at times be most prudent. When perceived conflict arises, the need to pass final judgment may be suspended until further study. Remember, although Scripture is the final authority for Christians, interpretation of specific Scripture passages may be erroneous and, therefore, the "revelation coup" should be avoided when possible. The fourth option calls us to invite diversity, embrace ambiguity, and welcome creative conflict.³⁴

In an article on the difficulties surrounding integration Roger Ebertz concludes with a call for Christians to approach scholarship with an attitude of humility.

Genuine understanding begins with intellectual humility and openness. As finite, historical beings, we must be aware that we are not God. We rejoice

that God has chosen to reveal himself to us through prophets and apostles, in the person of Jesus Christ and in the Scriptures, but we should be careful not to identify our finite understanding with the Truth that surpasses understanding. We must stand before the world and before God with the recognition that our perspectives are by necessity incomplete and limited. This humility, in turn, should lead us to be genuinely open to others. In the case of the Christian scholar I believe this openness faces several directions. The Christian scholar is open to Scripture. She is open towards the subject matter of her field. And she is open to applying concepts like “love” and “compassion” to the intellectual activity of scholarship. I am inclined to think they apply. Genuine openness to another is only possible when we care about what the other has to say.³⁵

APPLICATION

This section presents three strategies for integration, as well as some practical integrative tools for use in and out of the classroom.

Three Integrative Strategies

Cosgrove’s four models presented in the earlier section (Sole Authority, Separate Authorities, Equal Authorities, and Foundational Authority) provided a general framework for understanding a range of approaches to faith-learning integration. This section draws upon the work of William Hasker who proposed three integrative strategies that present a framework for faith-learning integration with a specific discipline. These three strategies “ . . . differ in their assessment of the existing relationships between the disciplines and the Christian faith, and therefore also in their understanding of what must be done in order for a Christian scholar to pursue the discipline with integrity.”³⁶ These strategies were first proposed by David L. Wolfe³⁷ and Ronald R. Nelson³⁸ and then further expounded upon by Robert Harris.³⁹

The Compatibilist Strategy

As implied by its name, the *compatibilist* strategy for integration seeks to emphasize areas of harmony or compatibility between knowledge from special revelation and academic inquiry. This strategy seeks to highlight areas of common ground in basic assumptions, methods of inquiry, knowledge claims, and interpretations. A compatibilist may also utilize a Christian worldview as a supplement to fill in the perceived “truth voids” in the academic discipline, but he focuses on the unity between the

discipline and Christian faith and does not see the need to challenge the underlying assumptions of his discipline. Integration strategies involve the identification, connection, and elaboration of any points of compatibility that are discovered.⁴⁰ For example, a biologist using the compatibilist strategy to teach about DNA would relate its structure to its function as an information molecule but would avoid discussing the origins of the DNA molecule itself.

A positive aspect of compatibilism is that by focusing on the compatible aspects, it has a tendency to defuse anti-intellectualism in students who may fear academic engagement because of perceived inherent conflicts.⁴¹ The drawback to this approach is that by failing to address real points of epistemological and ontological conflict between the academic discipline and a Christian worldview, students may fail to grasp that conflicts even exist. Another potentially negative aspect of the compatibilist strategy is that there is often no systematic approach to the areas of harmony. Compatible pieces from both the discipline and the Christian faith are picked up and pieced together with the resulting integration often resembling a patchwork quilt.

Harris suggests the following as examples of this strategy⁴²:

- Seeking common ground between faith and scholarly discipline (basic assumptions about reason, truth, evidence)
- Using Christian and biblical examples to show the application of disciplinary concepts
- Showing that Christianity is relevant to learning in that the Bible has much to say about knowledge (human nature, beauty, history, etc)

The Transformationist Strategy

A scholar who pursues the transformationist strategy assumes that there are areas of commonality between the discipline and a Christian worldview, but recognizes areas in which the discipline is seriously lacking in the validity of knowledge claims and worldview assumptions and interpretations.⁴³ A transformationist critically examines the discipline by testing its claims against a Christian worldview and desires to “remake or transform the discipline into one with a Christian orientation.”⁴⁴ The transformationist does not deny the commonality between the discipline and the Christian faith but sees the need for a transformation of the discipline to correct what he perceives as serious defects in its assumptions and knowledge claims.

The benefit of this strategy is that it recognizes that most academic disciplines develop their knowledge claims from non-theistic worldviews, which leads to skewed disciplinary interpretations and theories. It also recognizes that ideologies often play a

powerful but hidden role in many disciplines, and it seeks to address them.⁴⁵ The transformationist strategy can be challenging in that the scholar must venture below the surface to expose the assumptions and ideologies of the discipline, develop the modes of transformation, and then implement them. For example, students in a science course could be challenged to keep the following questions in mind as they come across some of the theories presented in their textbook: Can this data be backed up by repeated experimentation? Are there any alternative interpretations to the same piece of data? What is the researcher's presuppositional framework and could this have affected his/her interpretation of the data? Utilizing these types of questions can help prevent students from simply swallowing information presented in textbooks as facts and teaches them to be on the lookout for underlying assumptions that may significantly affect the interpretation of data.

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The development and implementation of critical thinking skills are essential to the transformationist strategy of integration. Harris again provides some examples of the utilization of this strategy of integration⁴⁶:

- Asking integrative questions that require a connection between biblical knowledge and disciplinary knowledge
- Advocating the existence of truth, reason, meaning, and interpretative standards against postmodern rejection
- Upholding biblical authority in the world of knowledge
- Using Christian knowledge to test and correct claims made by the discipline

The Reconstructionist Strategy

Scholars who pursue this strategy have found that the tension between the fundamental assumptions of the discipline and a Christian worldview are severe enough to warrant a rejection of the foundation of the discipline, which means that the scholar must then engage in a "radical *reconstruction* of the discipline on . . . fully biblical foundations."⁴⁷ This is often due to a deep permeation of the discipline by anti-theistic assumptions, such as relativism. For example, philosophical naturalism, a pervading worldview in the natural sciences, which by definition excludes anything but natural causes for all that exists, must be exposed and challenged by those who believe in a

supernatural agency whose presence is a far superior explanation for the natural cause and effect processes that we regularly observe in the universe.

Examples of this strategy from Harris include⁴⁸:

- Employing the Christian worldview as the organizing principle that informs and interprets the subject area and all knowledge
- Replacing assumptions underlying the discipline (e.g. replacing philosophical materialism with theistic assumptions)
- Identifying alternative interpretive schema for the analysis of data and evidence

Which Strategy to Utilize?

Although these strategies differ in their assumptions, it is not necessary for a Christian scholar to compartmentalize them in their practical applications as though they are exclusive from one another. Hasker encouraged scholars to utilize the three strategies as an integrative framework and suggested that the strategies “. . . may better be viewed as three points on a continuum, than as three mutually exclusive alternatives.”⁴⁹ Harris explains:

At this point it is crucial to remember that the goal is not simply to connect faith and learning or to overlay learning with a “faith perspective.” The concept of integration refers to a process that will produce a unified, coherent system, an interrelationship, a holistic understanding, a seamless landscape of truth where the physical realm, spiritual, and rational all combine into one realm. . . . The answer to “which approach?” will become clear if you think for a minute that (1) disciplines vary widely in their content, philosophy, and methods, (2) most disciplines have more than one school of thought, and (3) even within schools of thought controversy, change, adaptation, and development are common. For these reasons, a combination of the [three approaches] will likely be the most useful depending on the circumstances. The goal is to integrate faith and learning, to develop and apply the Christian worldview, to welcome worthy knowledge, to avoid being taken in by false knowledge—not to apply mechanically some mental formula. Integration is a complex and lifelong practice and will require a number of methods and approaches.⁵⁰

One of the biggest challenges for Christian scholars in the process of faith-learning integration is in the determination of how to integrate biblical truth into our disciplines. The following list of questions may provide a starting point in analyzing the intersections between the content of our faith and our disciplines⁵¹:

- a. *What does my field say about what is and is not real, about what is true and what is false, and how do I understand that as a Christian?*
- b. *What does my field say about the nature and limits of knowledge?*
- c. *What methodology for gathering data does my field require before someone is able to assert their view about something?*
- d. *How can what I know and teach in my field point to God's existence and presence in everyday life and nurture a hunger to understand and know him?*
- e. *What are the ethical issues involved in my field of learning, and how do they relate to my ethical beliefs as a Christian? How does my faith promote principles of justice, charity, and concern for others within my field?*
- f. *Is Christian scholarship in my particular field vocational, implicit, explicit, or a combination of the three? Vocational means the scholarship may not appear uniquely Christian, but it is done with excellence and contributes to the development of new knowledge. Implicit means your work touches on concerns common both to Christians and everyone else. Explicit means your work is directly and obviously Christian and has value for apologetics as well as daily living.*

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

With some models and strategies outlined, one may now be asking the question, "What are some practical tools that can be utilized to accomplish the integration of faith and learning in the classroom?" Due to the space limitations of this chapter, we do not have the liberty to discuss the myriad of discipline-specific particulars of faith-learning integration. In his text, *Faith and Learning on the Edge: A Bold New Look at Religion in Higher Education*, David Claerbaut addresses specific faith and learning issues across a broad spectrum of disciplines.⁵² A cumulative bibliography for faculty on the topic of designing integrative assignments for academic courses is available on the CCCU Resource Center's Web site.⁵³ This section overviews two broad examples of putting integration into practice in the classroom: reflective action and the integrative question.

Reflective Action

One can engage students in the process of integration through a three-level hierarchy of reflective actions throughout their course of studies. This hierarchy can be applied to a single issue, an entire course, or even to an academic discipline. It is important for Christian educators to recognize that students enter the classroom with presuppositions of their own, and the process of encouraging students to identify, acknowledge, and discuss them can be challenging. The goal in these types of reflective classroom activities is not to provide students with all the answers, but to help them ask the right questions. As students are taught to progress through these three levels, their reflections guide them through an effective process of integration.⁵⁴

First level: THE WHAT—the investigation

Hermeneutic reflection— understanding and investigation into what is going on

On this first level, one should reflect on knowledge claims within a particular issue, course, or academic discipline. At this level students are taught how to 1) distinguish verifiable facts from value claims and also relevant from irrelevant information, claims or reasons, 2) determine the factual accuracy of a statement, including the credibility of a source, and 3) identify unstated assumptions, logical fallacies, etc. The key on this level is using critical thinking skills to investigate the information presented.

The following types of questions are appropriate at this level:

- What are the foundational assumptions that are stated or presupposed as the basis of this issue, course, or discipline?
- How do I know that this knowledge claim is true?
- What alternative ideas oppose that idea? What has been omitted or ignored?
- Is there an agenda or ideology behind this conclusion?
- What is the worldview behind or implied by the claim?

Second level: SO WHAT?—the interpretation

Normative Reflection—defined as when to say “yes” and when to say “no”

On this level, students deal with the interpretation of the facts. Students should struggle with whether they should reject or affirm different approaches, theories, or concepts as Christians.

The following types of questions are appropriate at this level:

- How does the claim or conclusion fit in with the Christian faith?
- How does my Christian faith/worldview affect my learning in this subject? How could my worldview act as a filter to evaluate this subject?
- What created goodness is present? What fallen aspects are here?
- What ethical questions does the knowledge/expertise in this subject raise?
- What does this subject tell us about God's creation? About God?
- Does this subject look different to a Christian than to an atheist? A Muslim? Why?

Third Level: NOW WHAT?—the application

Strategic reflection—what can be done with the “yes” and the “no”

On this level, students should reflect on the role of the redemptive process on this issue, course, or discipline. Application is the key on this level.

The following types of questions are appropriate at this level:

- Where is the hope here?
- How might we reclaim this area for the glory of God?
- How could the restoration of this issue be a signpost for the kingdom of God?
- How could learning in this subject affect my faith development?

The Integrative Question

Harold Heie has developed an integration application strategy that he calls the integrative question, which he defines as “a question that cannot be addressed adequately without drawing from both biblical and theological understanding and knowledge in the academic disciplines.”⁵⁵ He has found that the pedagogical strategy of posing integrative questions to students and helping them address such question has been an effective way to initiate students into their own quest for the integration of knowledge. This is a sample listing of Heie’s integrative questions⁵⁶:

English: *What are the similarities and differences in interpreting the biblical text and interpreting other literature texts?*

Political Science: *What is the role of forgiveness in international relations?*

Fine Arts: *What are the limits, if any, on the freedom for human creative expression?*

History: *How do alternative views on the “direction of history” (e.g., linear, cyclical, teleological) fit or not fit with the Christian narrative?*

Economics: *What is the relationship between the quest for profitability and the Christian call for compassion and justice?*

Education: *What is the relationship between subject-centered and student-centered teaching pedagogies in light of a Christian perspective on personhood?*

Physics: *What are the similarities and differences between the use of models in scientific inquiry and the use of models in theological inquiry?*

In general, asking students to process disciplinary, ethical questions can be a powerful integrative tool for use in a wide variety of classroom setting.

ENGAGEMENT IN THE INTEGRATION OF FAITH AND LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

As stated earlier in the chapter, integrating faith and learning in the classroom is the distinctive of a Christian college. When we take seriously the holistic nature of our institutions' educational missions, the student development staff and their programs become a unique and primary educational tool for integration. *The critical ingredient is staff members who are intentional about the integration process.* The integration process for the student development staff member builds upon the process outlined above. The reflective hierarchy questions, "What? So What? and Now What?" form a powerful formula for the integration process that can be utilized in all aspects of educational programming. This application section will address the integration issues related to the different role the student development staff member plays within the college experience.

"When we asked students to think of a specific, critical incident or moment that had changed them profoundly, four-fifths of them chose a situation or event outside of the classroom."

Christian college student development programs have a critical role in integrating faith and learning. The student development staff utilizes formal (e.g. presentation), non-formal (e.g. interactive programs), informal (e.g. athletics), and serendipitous (e.g. day-to-day life experiences in the residence hall) learning experiences. As an educator, imagine teaching on social justice or racial reconciliation with opportunities for lecture and reflection on real life experiences being played out in the residence hall living environment.

The student development programs have the ability to capture real life—real time—situations and use them in the learning process. The power of the "outside the classroom learning experience" is chronicled in Richard Light's book *Making the Most of College*. He states, "Learning outside of classes, especially in residential settings and

extracurricular activities such as the arts, is vital. When we asked students to think of a specific, critical incident or moment that had changed them profoundly, four-fifths of them chose a situation or event outside of the classroom.”⁵⁷

Integrating faith and learning in student development programs means organizing programs in ways that highlight a Christian worldview. The best programs are organized in ways that take advantage of the student’s experience or that can be facilitated by students (i.e. what does Scripture say about conflict resolution, racial reconciliation, stewardship, and leadership). The list of organized learning opportunities facilitated by student development staff include residential hall programming, spiritual disciplines training, club involvement, mission trips, chapel services, service learning, leadership training, vocational calling development, mentoring, small group involvement, sports and wellness activities. Although many of these activities are duplicated on other college campuses, the integrative faith and learning distinctive is facilitated by embedding a Christian worldview within the program’s specific purpose. Integrating faith and learning at the foundational level in student development programs is similar to the way professors integrate in the classroom.

Arthur Chickering’s developmental theory outlined in his original 1969 text, *Education and Identity* and then revised in his second edition, provides an initial framework for many student developmental programs. He suggests that college students develop in seven vectors: Developing Competence, Managing Emotions, Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence, Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, Establishing Identity, Developing Purpose, and Developing Integrity.⁵⁸ However, Chickering neglects a basic construct of a Christian worldview; namely, that our identity is ultimately found in Christ. Chickering’s work is seminal for understanding the college student’s journey through normal developmental stages, but without integrating a Christian worldview, any program based solely upon his theory is insufficient to provide an opportunity for the student to mature fully into a disciple of Christ. *The Christian student development staff member must have a baseline understanding of how to live out biblical truth in real life situations.* She must be a disciple of Christ and a conduit for speaking truth into unique and diverse experiences.

Beyond the unique educational methodologies, the student development staff member has another and possibly more powerful opportunity for communicating an integrative message—an authentic relationship within the context of real life situations. These educational modalities are enriched with a relationship between the student and staff member. The hall director living among the residence hall students or the activities director partnering with the student activity council member to facilitate campus activities provides rich opportunities to meet students where

they are. It also provides opportunities for staff members to be available at the teachable moments. This means that the student development staff must be ready to provide wise Christian counsel when helping students work through roommate conflicts, leadership challenges, and other developmental issues. *Within these “discipleship” relationships, staff members may find their most significant and challenging opportunity for integration.*

CONCLUSION

As Christians we are called by God to be stewards of the earth. As Christian scholars and educators, teaching our students how to think Christianly about all of life is a primary means of responding to this call. Arthur Holmes states, “The challenge of worldview thinking now is to reintegrate biblically based theology and values with the humanities and sciences and apply them to contemporary society and culture. This involves both critical and creative thinking: critical of non-theistic assumptions and their influence, but creative in exploring more consistent alternatives.”⁵⁹ Faith-learning integration is indeed a central challenge before us.

Mark Noll, in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, reminds us that for far too long Christians have abdicated their responsibility to pursue truth and knowledge in all areas of life. He believes we have accepted the fallacy that anti-intellectualism is more spiritual.⁶⁰ General revelation and special revelation are partners, both with significant roles, in helping us understand who we are as created beings and how we are to interact with this world. The integration of faith and learning in the academy is the foundational step towards assisting all learners in obtaining a fuller understanding of the Creator and his creation. These Christian truths not only shape our knowledge, but they also give direction for the pursuit of further knowledge.

The Apostle Paul states, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2a). As both followers of Christ and educational scholars, faith-learning integration is a task to which we are called. This integration must sink into the foundational assumptions and epistemology of our academic pursuits. We must avoid simply tacking on a spiritual discipline to our classrooms or our campus programs, thinking this constitutes integration. All we have accomplished is to produce more or less an integrative veneer that strengthens the misperception that our faith and learning do not mix. Let us take seriously the real work of integration.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss any surprises you had when reading the list of common misconceptions of the meaning of faith-learning integration. How might you continue to use your current methods of sharing your faith experience with students in combination with a deeper understanding of faith-learning integration?
2. Discuss which of the four integration models from Cosgrove best describes your current approach to integration. Is there one that you believe should predominate in Christian higher education?
3. Do you agree or not agree with the authors' premise that integration is more easily observed in some disciplines than in others? Describe your discipline in the context of the visibility continuum.
4. Discuss how the interpretation of Scripture affects faith-learning integration (revelation coup).
5. Discuss an integrative strategy or practical tool that you could use in your educational setting (classroom, residence hall, etc.).
6. Practice writing an integrative question for your own discipline.

For Further Reading

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