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Integration in a Christian University

Daniel J. Estes
Cedarville University, estesd@cedarville.edu

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Daniel J. Estes

It doesn't take long in Cedarville to realize that we speak a strange dialect around here. We eat lunch at Chuck's, we drink latte at Vecino's, we take courses in PACL and Spiffo, and we are careful never to scan and scram. It is almost as if we speak a version of English that is barely understandable to others outside the Cedarville bubble. Perhaps someone should write a book for new students on Speaking Cedarville English as a Second Language. When that book is written, it will have to include an entry on the word "integration." You can't be at Cedarville for long without hearing that term, but somehow it doesn't seem to fit with how we have heard the word used before.

In our culture, the word "integration" is typically used in one of three ways. In sociology, it refers to bringing together diverse social groups, such as using cross-city busing to achieve racial integration in the public schools. In psychology, it speaks of having emotional health as the total person is functioning smoothly as an integrated whole. In mathematics, integration describes the process of measuring the area under a curve. But at Cedarville, we seem to use "integration" in a somewhat different way. What do we mean when we title a course Christian Worldview Integration, or ask students to evaluate whether their teachers have demonstrated integration in the classroom? This morning I would like to raise and answer some basic questions about integration in a Christian university: What **[PPT 2]** is integration? How **[PPT 3]** does the process of integration work? What **[PPT 4]** role should integration play at a Christian university in the 21st century? In addressing these questions, I will review some key

factors that have brought us to where we are today, and then I will cast a vision for where

Cedarville could proceed in the years ahead.

1. Definition of Integration

What is integration?   Christian educators employ the term "integration" in a technical

sense.   They have taken the general notion of integration as an incorporation of two or more

elements into a larger unity, and used this term to speak of the linkage of pieces of knowledge

derived from various sources.

There are three predominant models for integrative thinking in Christian higher

education.   The **[PPT 5]** integration of Scripture and knowledge model explores the explicit

linkages between biblical data and knowledge from outside the Scriptures.   The emphasis in this

model is upon developing explicit connections between the biblical text and the various

academic disciplines.   Examples of this approach have been proposed in theoretical fields such

as psychology and education, but to my knowledge this model has not been employed much in

more technical disciplines such as engineering or accounting.

The **[PPT 6]** integration of faith and learning model is broader than the integration of

Scripture and knowledge model.   In this context, faith refers objectively to the whole system of

Christian theology, and learning speaks of the comprehensive corpus of thought found in the

academic disciplines.   In this model, it is granted that in some areas of thought, such as

mathematics, it is difficult to produce explicit linkages between biblical texts and significant

aspects of the discipline.   This model, however, maintains that all of knowledge is encompassed

within larger theological categories such as creation, general revelation, the image of God in

humans, and the unity of objective truth.   Among Christian undergraduate institutions, this is the

most prominent model for integration, and it has produced many excellent studies, including the

Through the Eyes of Faith textbook series sponsored by the Council for Christian Colleges and

Universities.

At Cedarville, the term integration is typically the shorthand form of a more complete

phrase, the **[PPT 7]** integration of faith, learning and life.   This model builds upon the

integration of faith and learning model, but then it adds particular emphasis to the necessary

life-changing applications of knowledge.   These changes affect every dimension of life, ranging

from our personal ethics to the largest public policy issues.   Thus, this model seeks to bridge the

gap between theory and practice, knowledge and action, learning and living.   It takes seriously

the memorable claim by Abraham Kuyper that there is not one inch in this universe where Jesus

Christ is not King, and it seeks to honor God by bringing the Christian faith to bear on every

aspect of life.   This view of integration, then, lies in stark contrast to the prevailing

misconception that separation of church and state means that faith must be privatized such that it

is allowed no place in the public square.   Rather, the integration of faith, learning and life is the

compelling rationale that obligates us to engage every area of our culture for Christ.

As soon as we speak of integration, we quickly move into some difficult, and at times

contentious, issues, because we cannot talk about integration without addressing the subject of

truth.   This requires that we enter into the philosophical domain of epistemology and the

theological subject of revelation.   In speaking of truth, we need to acknowledge at the outset that

the semantic range of this term includes several different and overlapping concepts.   In the realm

of science, truth **[PPT 8]** refers to what is held to be true by the consensus of the scientific

community at a point in time, but what may well be altered or overturned by additional empirical evidence.   In a dogmatic **[PPT 9]** sense, truth is what a particular ideology or system of thought regards as axiomatic.   This could be an economic system such as Marxism or free market capitalism, a form of government such as democracy or monarchy, or a theological system that has been accepted as the final and complete understanding of what actually is.   In this sense of truth, any divergence from the system by definition constitutes error, because the dogma is considered equivalent to what actually is the truth.   The relativistic **[PPT 10]** notion of truth is closely linked to individual perspective.   Thus, for the adherent of social constructivism there is no universal, absolute truth, but only various constructions of knowledge that are regarded as equally valid by different communities.

Truth is often used in a qualitative **[PPT 11]** sense for individual items that belong to the set of objective truth, that is, they possess truthfulness or veracity.   Thus, to say that $2 + 2 = 4$ is the truth is not to claim that it is a comprehensive statement of all that is true, but only that it is an example of a truthful proposition.   In its ultimate **[PPT 12]** sense, truth can be defined as the sum total of reality known to the all-knowing God, that is, truth equals the omniscience of God. It is this ultimate sense of truth that provides the necessary starting point for speaking of the integration of faith, learning and life.

Because the same term "truth" is commonly used in each of these five ways, and no doubt in other ways as well, it behooves us to be careful to speak precisely and to hear others accurately.   When someone claims, "I believe in truth," we need to discern exactly what she intends to communicate by those words, and before we call into question someone's commitment to truth we should comprehend clearly what she truly believes.   As Christians committed to

truth, we must be careful to speak truthfully about others.

The Bible has much to say about truth, and therefore about integration.   Psalm 119:160 states: "The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous ordinances is everlasting."   In Psalm 19:1-6, however, it is clear that the natural world pours forth divine revelation as well, and Rom 1:18-23 argues that humans are held accountable for responding to God's truth that they receive through nature.   The gospel of John records several sermons and signs of Jesus, for the purpose that the reader will believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.   But then John concludes his gospel with these words: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25).   The clear implication is that the words that Jesus spoke but which are not included in the text of Scripture are also true, even though they are not available to us today in the Bible.   In Deut 29:29, Moses distinguishes between the things that have been revealed by God and the secret things that belong to the Lord alone.   Job exclaims in Job 26:14 that he can see only the fringes of God's ways, and at the end of the book seventy unanswerable questions posed by the Lord cause Job to admit that what he knows at last is that he cannot know exhaustively the ways of Yahweh.

When all of the scriptural evidence is taken together, an epistemological model emerges that provides the basis for the integrative enterprise.   Viewing truth in the ultimate sense of God's omniscience, the Bible **[PPT 13]** is a subset totally within the truth set.   Partially overlapping with the Bible subset is another **[PPT 14]** subset representing the words and deeds of Jesus, only some of which are included in the biblical accounts.   Also within the truth set is the subset **[PPT 15]** of knowledge that has been derived from general revelation and accessed

through human discovery.   The boundary of this subset is expanding as scholars push back the

frontiers of knowledge in their laboratories and libraries.   The remaining portion **[PPT 16]** of the

truth set is labeled as mystery, because at the present time God has not chosen to make these

aspects of His omniscience knowable to humans.

2.   Process of Integration

How, then, does the process **[PPT 17]** of integration work?   As we proceed with the

integration of faith, learning and life, we need to acknowledge three limitations that constrain our

efforts.   Our first limitation **[PPT 18]** is finiteness, which manifests itself in two ways.   The

content of what we can know is finite, because God has not revealed everything that He knows

either in the Bible exclusively, or in the combination of the Bible and other modes of revelation.

To compound the problem, as created beings we are finite in our ability to comprehend the truth

that God has revealed.   Even given the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, our human

minds are not wired for omniscience.   This is part of the reason why good and godly people,

equally intelligent, equally pious, and equally surrendered to the teaching ministry of the Spirit of

God, may still disagree in their understandings or emphases.

Our second **[PPT 19]** limitation is fragmentation.   Like separate pieces of a jigsaw

puzzle, truth as it is presented both in the Bible and outside the Bible typically comes as

fragments that must be linked together into meaningful combinations.   For example, theologians

cannot go to a single biblical book to study the doctrine of salvation in its entirety, but they must

synthesize data found throughout the entire biblical corpus.   When a foundational question, such

as "What does it mean to be human?" is posed, fragments of truth from nearly every book of the

Bible as well as from virtually every academic discipline must be identified, analyzed, and then synthesized, but even then the picture that is reconstructed falls far short of a complete portrait.

A third **[PPT 20]** complication is due to our fallenness. When our human parents disobeyed the command of God, numerous consequences followed. Along with spiritual estrangement from God and physical sickness and death, the human mind is now corrupted so that it cannot perceive precisely even what is knowable. From the time of the fall to the present day, the human propensity is to distort and misconstrue what has been revealed. And because regenerated Christians still retain their original sin nature together with its noetic effects, they need to acknowledge that they may not understand all that they think they understand, that their reach toward knowledge may exceed their grasp of it, and that others who differ from them may not necessarily be wrong.

Even though a biblically-informed approach to integration realizes the inherent limits to human knowledge, this should not be confused with full-blown skepticism. Skepticism questions all assumptions until they can be confirmed, usually by empirical means, and in its extreme form it asserts reductionistically that knowledge is impossible, so the search for truth is pointless. By contrast, the Christian faith teaches that we can know, but we know in part; we can see, but we see through a glass darkly. This is a far cry from skepticism that maintains that we cannot know and we do not see.

Working within the parameters of these limitations of finiteness, fragmentation and fallenness, the task of the Christian scholar is to seek God's truth wherever He has revealed it. Integration endeavors to link together the various data of God's truth in a coherent whole to the extent that it is humanly possible at this point in time. In a partial way, integration works toward

reconstructing the picture of the whole as only the omniscient God sees it perfectly.   Several

principles guide this task of integration.   First, **[PPT 21]** integration seriously considers both

special revelation and general revelation.   Both secularism, with its rejection of the Bible as a

source of knowledge, and biblicism, with its exclusion of knowledge from outside of the Bible,

rule out by definition a source of divinely-revealed truth, but integration looks for God's truth

both within the Bible and outside the Bible.

Second, **[PPT 22]** integration uses critical thinking to scrutinize all truth claims to discern

if they can be demonstrated to belong to the truth set.   Because the Bible as the Word of God

resides totally within the truth set, it can serve as a measure for evaluating some truth claims, but

first the Bible itself must be understood accurately.   It is not sufficient to use a cursory level of

biblical understanding as a surrogate for precise analysis of the biblical text.   To complicate

matters, there are many truth claims that cannot be measured directly against a biblical text,

because the Bible does not speak specifically to them, and in these cases a more indirect standard

of coherence with the biblical data is warranted.

Third, **[PPT 23]** integration endeavors to articulate how the pieces of truth link together.

For example, Psalms 32 and 51 speak about how sin produces both objective and subjective

guilt, but in <u>Macbeth</u> Shakespeare elaborates on the devastating consequences of guilt as he

traces the profound psychological ruin that came to Macbeth and his wife as a consequence of

their murder of Duncan.   Reading these texts together leads to a level of understanding of sin

and guilt that goes beyond what either text individually communicates.   Because this kind of

integrative thinking requires expertise in multiple fields, it   emerges best from scholarship in

community, and only rarely by scholarship in isolation.

Fourth, **[PPT 24]** integration in looking for promising linkages must resist the temptation to tamper with the pieces.   Too often, a popular theory in an academic discipline is attached to a biblical text that it does not truly fit.   This kind of purported integration is inauthentic, and though it may impress from a distance, closer examination of it leads to disappointment.

Fifth, **[PPT 25]** integration treats received truth claims from the past with respect, but as the Bereans who evaluated the teachings of Paul by the standard of the Scriptures, it examines all things and only then believes and conserves that which is demonstrably true.   At the same time, integration exercises intellectual daring that prompts it to keep probing the mysteries of God's truth.

Sixth, **[PPT 26]** integration manifests a spirit of humility in refusing to make assertions or to form judgments that go beyond the evidence that God has now made available.   With a resolute commitment to integrity, the Christian scholar should be courageous enough to stand for what she does know,   humble enough to admit when she does not know, and wise enough to know the difference.

Seventh, **[PPT 27]** integration values the whole above the parts.   At the present time, specialization dominates higher education.   In fact, it is not too far off the mark to say that the further we go in education, we learn more and more about less and less, until we know everything about nothing, and we can speak to no one.   By contrast, when we integrate faith, learning and life, we are seeking to see the whole, unified picture of knowledge rather than focusing on the separate, discrete details.   This attention to the whole presents a powerful impetus for scholarship, and at the same time it compels us to view life from God's perspective rather than according to the limited agendas of our personal preferences or of the current

disciplinary hot issues.

3.   A Vision for Integration

We have defined integration, and we have considered how integration should proceed. That brings me to a third and final question **[PPT 28]**.   What role should integration play at a Christian university, and specifically at Cedarville, in the 21st century?   Over the past thirty-five years since I first came to Cedarville as a freshman, I have witnessed two waves of integration at our university.   From 1970 to 1985, initial advances in integration were led most notably by Allen Monroe in Social Science, James Grier in Philosophy, and James Biddle in Education. These scholars provided an initial articulation of integrative theory, working from the integration of Scripture and knowledge model.   Several of the general education courses were developed within an integrative framework, and a requirement for a brief integration statement for faculty tenure was introduced.

After 1985, the first wave of integration calmed to a ripple for nearly a decade.   The second wave of integration arose in 1993 with the writing of a formal position paper from the integration of faith, learning and life model.   This was followed over the next eleven years   by increased faculty expectations and development in integrative scholarship and pedagogy.   An annual integration workshop for faculty was instituted to increase faculty understanding and competence in this area, and all faculty were required to write papers explaining their views of integration and how they implement integration in their teaching.   In addition, several curricular programs featuring integrative thinking were designed and implemented.

Once again Cedarville stands poised at a critical juncture.   In the decade ahead, will we

allow our historic emphasis on integration to float aimlessly, or will we ride a new wave to excellence in this area?   And to what destination could the next wave of integration bear us?

The past focus on integration at Cedarville has produced sufficient infrastructure to enable our university over the next ten years to assume a position of national leadership in the integration of faith, learning and life.   We have an unusually rich general education program that includes several courses, such as Introduction to Humanities, and Politics and American Culture, that are decidedly integrative in their design, and the Bible minor has been constructed from a worldview model that culminates in integrative thinking about contemporary issues.   In addition, curricular programs such as the International Studies major and the Honors minor have produced valuable experience in the design and development of effective integrative learning opportunities.

In the next decade, I would like to see our general education program become more intentional and explicit in integrating the Bible minor with the other required components.   This increased curricular linkage would generate crucial and stimulating discussions throughout the university on subjects such as Christian stewardship of the environment, a Christian approach to the ethical issues raised by technology, a Christian view of creativity, a Christian philosophy of work and leisure, a Christian response to the problem of poverty and hunger, and a Christian commitment to social and economic justice, to name only a few.   I would also welcome the development of additional interdisciplinary majors in which faculty and students can explore connections that too often fall between the disciplinary cracks.   In addition, each academic major should formulate a specific plan by which students achieve mastery in integrating the Christian faith, the discipline, and life.

Longstanding professional development programs have resulted in a faculty who comprehend what integration is and how it works in their disciplines.   Cedarville faculty as a whole value integration, and they are supportive of institutional initiatives in this area.   More specifically, Cedarville has two faculty resources for integration found rarely in other academic institutions.   In most Christian universities, the Bible and theology faculty are only marginally included in integration, but here Bible faculty have been at the forefront of this endeavor for many years.   Also, many of the faculty in our first-rate professional programs have been pioneers in thinking and writing in fields where virtually no published scholarship has addressed integrative issues.

To build upon these strengths, I can envision the four schools of the academic division initiating biweekly seminar programs, in which faculty scholars and advanced students can present and discuss papers on integrative topics.   The process of presenting work in progress and interacting with one another would have a powerful and far-reaching effect on our university.   It would likely result in increased publications by faculty, as well as the enrichment of classroom teaching across campus.   Specifically, I would like to see Cedarville faculty fill two large gaps in the current literature by writing texts on integration in technical fields, such as computer science, athletics, theatre, and finance, as well as by producing a groundbreaking study on how to teach integrative thinking across the curriculum.   Works like these would make a profound contribution to all of Christian higher education.

Cedarville has also been blessed with state-of-the-art classroom technology, and the recent initiation of centers of excellence as well as the anticipated construction of a new academic facility in the next few years will provide our university with unsurpassed physical

resources for hosting a full range of seminars, workshops and colloquia.   There is no reason, then, why Cedarville cannot become the premier site for major academic conferences on integration.

At the present time, the three leading centers for integration include Wheaton, Calvin, and Gordon.   What would be needed for Cedarville to join and to advance to the front of this esteemed group?   The prominence of integration at these three colleges has not come suddenly or without intention.   Each of these institutions has benefitted from dynamic pioneers who have clearly articulated a vision for integration, led its initial development, and then mentored successors who have built upon their trailblazing efforts.   Equally important, integration at each school has received enthusiastic and sustained administrative support that has affirmed, rewarded, and funded its advances. By this means, a critical mass of institutional commitment was achieved, which then was translated into curricular innovation, financial allocation, and visible priority.   In other words, integration was elevated from an appreciated but marginal activity to a defining hallmark of the college.

In the next ten years, Cedarville can take the same path to excellence in integration that Wheaton, Calvin and Gordon have traversed before us, and there are many benefits that would accrue from this endeavor.   No doubt, a redoubled focus on the integration of faith, learning and life would also increase the quality of our disciplinary academic programs, as it enhances student learning.   No doubt, it would make our students even more highly valued by employers beyond their professional expertise.   No doubt, it would equip our graduates to function as responsible Christian citizens as they stand for God and for good in our society.   No doubt, it would open up strategic opportunities for our university to exert influence among the leaders of higher education

and within our larger culture.   But transcending all of these laudable achievements, there is a more compelling reason that should animate our focus on integration in the decade ahead.   By committing itself afresh to the integration of faith, learning and life, Cedarville University can live up to its calling to glorify the all-knowing God by investigating His truth wherever He has revealed it, by critiquing all truth claims to assess their validity, by synthesizing aspects of God's revelation into a coherent whole, by applying His truth to become agents of change in all arenas of life, and by communicating God's truth to the academy, the church, and the world in terms that engage contemporary culture.

This, then, is a vision of integration for Cedarville - will we see it clearly?   This is the mission of a truly Christian university - will we accept it confidently?   This is the calling for those who would love God with all their minds - will we follow it courageously?   May God grant us grace, wisdom and perseverance to rise to this challenge before us.

Daniel J. Estes
Cedarville University Chapel Address
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