

EXCERPT



The Integrative Mindset *Pathways to Practicing as a Christian Clinician*

August 5, 2025 | \$28.99, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0220-9

Discover the profound impact of integrating faith and psychology with *The Integrative Mindset*. Guided by the wisdom of veteran integrative clinicians Brad Strawn and Earl Bland, readers will learn how to cultivate an integrative mindset that harmonizes personal experiences and innate talents with therapeutic practice. Using their 60+ years of combined experience, Strawn, and Bland, present a compelling emergent model that celebrates the unique and dynamic complexity of each therapist-client relationship.

illuminating the Integrative Moment

It's the first session with a brand-new client. Paperwork has been filled out, introductions have been made, you and the client have both sat down on comfortable furniture, and now you've invited the client to explain what has brought them to see you today. But instead of answering your question, they turn and ask, "You're religious, right?"

What do you say? Why is the client asking this? What *exactly* are they asking? Is this a trap, a defense, an attack, a plea for attachment and solidarity, or something else entirely? How do you incorporate this into therapeutic work? Is talking about religion even okay in therapy? What if the client wants to say more about their faith or is interested in yours? What if they want to talk about what their faith has to do with their psychological issues? Is this a moment of integration of psychology and theology, and if so, what do you do?

Over the years we have had the privilege of conducting and supervising therapy with countless clients who professed religious faith. So, over the years we have heard lots of stories. We have worked with deeply religious clients who said they were afraid to come to therapy because they were told by their Christian friends and pastors that psychology was dangerous and should be avoided. We've heard these same believers say that instead of coming to counseling they were told that they should have more faith and pray harder. Yet somehow, when all their religious resources disappointed them, they found their way to our offices. On the other end of the spectrum, we have had religious clients come to us saying that if we even mentioned God or the Bible, they would find another therapist. We've even had nonreligious clients say that they had come to see us because even though they were not religious, they thought that maybe there was something spiritual in the world that they might benefit from thinking more about.

We have also had the honor of training students of faith to become psychologists or counselors who were authentically intent in their desire to bring together religion/spirituality with their psychological knowledge. From these students we have also heard stories. Students have told us that they love psychology and love their faith, but they just can't get their mind around how to put these two into meaningful conversation, especially in practical ways they can apply in their clinical work. We have had students wonder whether they are truly integrating their faith into their practice if they are not talking about God or Scripture or engaging in some practice of faith. We have had students (and peers) who were so afraid of integrating faith poorly that they consciously (and unconsciously) avoided the subject altogether, even when the client practically brought it up. We've had students who prayed with a client as soon as the client asked for it and others who adamantly refused, saying, "I'm a psychologist, not a pastor." We've even had students who, while not afraid to ask clients about their personal sex life, finances, or their culture, were terrified to bring up the issue of religion or spirituality, saying, "It's just so personal."

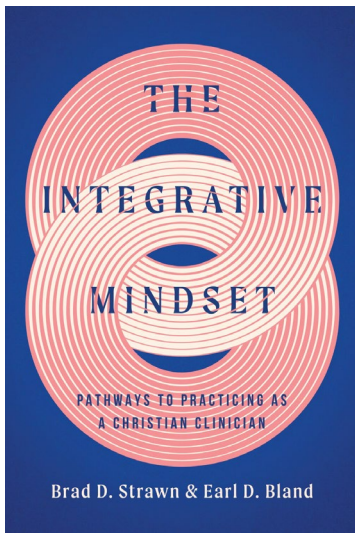
In general, we find that the idea of integration is attractive and desired by our students and colleagues, but the actual embodiment of an integrative clinical posture has been somewhat illusive. We especially find this with our students from various non-White cultures, who often remark that the writing, research, and theorizing around the integration of psychology and theology is primarily White, patriarchal, and of a Reformed theological persuasion.



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So, while *integration*, a term we will define below, has been around for at least fifty years, there is still much confusion about what it is, how to define it, and, for the focus of this book, how to engage it in clinical practice. Our desire is to make the clinical experience of integration more accessible and applicable to everyday work with clients. We specifically want to address the gap so many Christian therapists and counselors encounter when they attempt to bridge the theory or idea of integration and real-world clinical relationships.

We begin by drawing a parallel with a phrase that our good friend and early integrator John Carter was fond of saying. John would often say that Christians were interested in “thinking Christian thoughts,” but they should be more concerned with “thinking Christianly.” We believe, too, that many Christian therapists are interested in “integrative thoughts” (e.g., models, formulas, manuals), but we want to challenge integrators to “think integratively.” Semantically, an adverb always modifies another word and usually answers a question such as “How?” If one is thinking Christianly, *Christianly* is modifying the verb *thinking*, and therefore we can expect that there is some *process* to how one is thinking. In *thinking integratively*, *integratively* modifies *thinking* and also suggests a process or a how. Importantly, when we say *thinking* in this context, we are not referring to an abstract intellectual process, although clearly that is an element of what we are considering. Rather, because all thinking is embodied, we recognize that thinking is a deeply affective experience.

Consequently, integrative practice involves the total you—thoughts, feelings, emotional states, and bodily sensations. This book is our attempt to offer a process of how to think integratively, or perhaps how to *be* integrative, and why it matters. This process will include five domains (the *matters* that make integration matter): hermeneutics, tradition, ethics, self-development, and resilience.

—Taken from chapter one, “Emergence Matters: Illuminating the Integrative Mindset”



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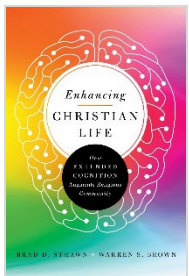
“Even our best ideas can, over time, become ruts that stifle creativity. In The Integrative Mindset, two outstanding clinicians, supervisors, and theoreticians jump out of the integration rut and give us much to ponder. Their notion of ‘integrative moments’ bends our current paradigms, offers fresh perspectives, and calls us to stand in wonder at what often happens in the clinical office.”

—Mark R. McMinn, professor emeritus at George Fox University, and coauthor with Megan Anna Neff, of *Embodying Integration*

A Guide for Integrating Faith and Psychology

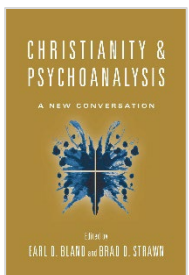
Brad D. Strawn (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is the Evelyn and Frank Freed Professor of the Integration of Psychology and Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He has postdoctoral training in psychoanalysis and is a licensed psychologist. He is coeditor with Steve Sandage of *Spiritual Diversity in Psychotherapy: Engaging the Sacred in Clinical Practice* and coeditor of *Christianity and Psychoanalysis: A New Conversation*.

Also by Brad D. Strawn:



Enhancing Christian Life: How Extended Cognition Augments Religious Community
by Brad D. Strawn and Warren S. Brown | August 25, 2020 | \$24.99, 176 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5281-9

It’s time to rethink the Christian life in light of current research on the human mind, particularly with a deeper understanding of “extended cognition.” Using insights from neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, Brad Strawn and Warren Brown argue for a vision of the Christian life as extended into interactions with a local network of believers.



Christianity & Psychoanalysis: A New Conversation (Christian Association for Psychological Studies Books)
Edited by Earl D. Bland and Brad D. Strawn | March 11, 2014 | \$41.99, 304 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-2856-2

The past thirty years has seen a theoretical and clinical renaissance in psychoanalysis, as well as a flourishing of Christian engagement in the fields of psychology and anthropology. This volume of essays stages a new conversation between Christianity and psychoanalysis that opens up new ways of thinking about the rich mosaic of human experience.



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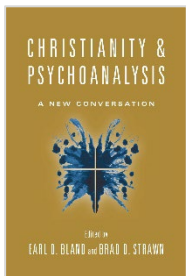
"If you want to enrich your clinical integration capacities, then read this book! Strawn and Bland guide you through ways to embody a 'thick' integrative presence with your clients that will rekindle the wonder of joining God in God's work in your clients' lives."

—Virginia T. Holeman, emeritus professor of counseling at Asbury Theological Seminary and author of *Theology for Better Counseling*

A Guide for Integrating Faith and Psychology

Earl D. Bland (PsyD, Illinois School of Professional Psychology; PsyD, Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles) is a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst, professor of psychology at Biola University's Rosemead School of Psychology, and faculty member at the Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles. He has authored numerous articles and is coeditor of *Christianity and Psychoanalysis*.

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