



William B.
Whitney
and
Carissa
Dwiwardani

The Integration Journey

A Student's Guide
to **Faith, Culture,**
and **Psychology**



InterVarsity Press
ivpress.com

Taken from *The Integration Journey* by William B. Whitney and Carissa Dwiwardani

Copyright © 2024 by William B. Whitney and Carissa Dwiwardani

Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.

www.ivpress.com.

Introduction to Integrative Reflection and Formation

I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.

C. S. LEWIS

About This Book

Imagine for a moment that you are going to visit New York City for the first time. Your trip is only a few days away, and with each day that passes, you can feel your excitement building. You download the New York subway app on your phone, read up on some good restaurants that you want to visit, pick out some shows that you want to see, and pack your coat because it's fall. Since your best friend from high school has moved to New York to attend university there, you've had a standing invitation to come visit. She has offered to show you New York. As your friend shows you around the city, she first of all directs you to places that are some of the must-see places to visit: the Statue of Liberty, Central Park, Times Square, and New York's Museum of Modern Art. The hope is that when you leave from your visit to New York, you will have visited some of the popular landmarks. Although your friend offers to give you a tour of New York, this doesn't mean that you will see

everything that the city has to offer (since New York simply has too much to do and see during a short trip). You can't see everything on a week trip to New York, but this trip will be an introduction to the city, from the perspective of someone who can guide you to some places of interest.

The book you hold in your hands is similar to this anecdote about a trip to New York. This book, for all practical purposes, is a brief tour through the subject of how one might integrate Christianity and psychology. It is just a guide. Just as there is too much to see in a brief tour of New York, the fields of psychology and Christian theology are too vast and wide within the field of integration to sum it all up in one book. However, we must begin somewhere. That being said, not all issues regarding integration are solved, but this book provides a basic framework for understanding how to begin to reflect and practice the integration of psychology and theology together, and to form your own views on the subject. Moreover, we believe this tour of integration will be helpful for empowering our next generation of integrative thinkers and practitioners. Integration, we argue, shouldn't just be an abstract subject either. Thinking and reflecting on psychology and our Christian faith as a community from our particular cultural context will lead us into a transformative process where, over time, we are able to work toward greater love and justice.

That being said, while there are some personal parts of this tour, there is no single tour that can be completely removed from the person giving it. That's where we, your authors (Carissa and William), come in. Throughout the book we'll share some of our own experiences of integration, as well as how we think integration can be understood. Some of these views of integration are

perspectives we bring to the table that you might have heard before, but others might be less familiar. However, if there's anything to learn about integration right from the beginning, it is that *you* are an integral part of the integrative process, and you have something important to bring to the integration conversation. Truth be told, we are all on a journey of becoming more integrated as people, that is, understanding how our emotions, thoughts, faith in Christ, studies in psychology, cultural identity, and actions relate to each other. Our illustration of the tour demonstrates that there's no single articulation of integration that can be separated from the person giving it, and a primary goal of this book is to help you learn more about how psychology and your Christian faith work and fit together from your particular cultural context.

Integration: The Basics

The term *integration* comes from the Latin root *integer*, which means whole or intact.¹ We use the term *integration* since we are studying both psychology and Christian theology, and we are working to reflect on them in a unified way. The question that many of our students have is: How do we think about these subjects in a unified way? And how do we move forward in thinking and reflecting about psychology and Christianity together?

We argue in this book that no real conflict exists between psychology and the Christian faith and that both can contribute to a more complete picture of the world and human person. This does not mean that there is always complete symmetry on all topics relating to our Christian faith and psychology, but it does mean

¹I (William) am indebted to one of my own integration professors, Dr. Cameron Lee, at Fuller Seminary, who begins the conversation about integration by reminding students of this point.

there are considerable areas of overlap, which we as Christians must consider.

In order to be straightforward with some of our assumptions about integration, here are some key components that will guide how we approach integration in this book: (1) Integrative reflection between psychology and the Christian faith is not simply an academic exercise, or something that can be reduced to the realm of thoughts or theories. It is *embodied, lived, relational, and practical*. (2) Embodied integrative reflection develops over time and is part of spiritual formation and transformation. (3) Integration is always influenced by the faith background, culture, studies in psychology, and life experiences we bring to the table. (4) Practicing integrative reflection between our culture, psychology, and the Christian faith cannot be divorced from the basic principles of loving God and others. (5) Embracing and understanding our cultural and ethnic background and the cultural/ethnic story of others is an essential element of interdisciplinary work between our Christian faith and psychology. (6) Practicing integration as Christians should lead us to expand our capacities to love God and others, and should enable us to work toward greater justice in our churches, communities, and wider society.

What is integration as we understand it? *Integration is an embodied, lifelong practice of reflection and meaning-making that incorporates our Christian faith, psychology, and culture which leads to personal transformation such that we have a greater capacity to love God and others, and work toward greater love and justice in our churches, communities, and society.*

One way we can approach this process is through intentional and thoughtful reflection as a community about our own Christian

faith, psychology, and particular cultural context. We believe that the first step in this transformational process is the simple recognition that *as Christians we already engage in reflecting on our faith*. Or, to roughly paraphrase the great twentieth-century theologian, Karl Barth: “You are already a theologian!” (Barth, 1981). Many times, students believe that they don’t have anything to offer to the task of integration. However, as a Christian you have a basic belief in Christ, and this means you are already engaging in aspects of reflecting about your faith. Reflecting or thinking about our faith and asking how it applies to a real-life situation is the practice of theological reflection, and what theology is about. Reflecting on our faith from the particular situated context that we are embedded in (i.e., as psychology students or psychologists from our specific cultural location) is the very beginning of practicing integration for yourself.

If you are studying or interested in psychology, most likely, integration of psychology, your faith, and your culture is already occurring in your life without you even recognizing it. At first this might surprise you, but chances are you already have some beliefs or ideas about how psychology and your faith work together. Moreover, we always do this kind of reflection about psychology and our faith from our own embedded cultural context. While these beliefs and thoughts about psychology and our Christian faith might not be fully formed or articulated, they still represent some sort of beginning point for how you have already thought about psychology and Christianity. For instance, these are some common thoughts and questions we hear from our own students that represent integrative reflection on psychology, Christianity, and culture:

- “I think that counseling is about being loving toward others in a way that Jesus would.”
- “I believe that God created humans, and psychology helps me understand humans better.”
- “How should I understand mental illness? Is it just a diagnosis, or is something spiritual going on?”
- “In my culture, the spiritual support that people get from our church community is an important way of how my church understands well-being and thriving.”

All of these statements or questions reveal some beginning thoughts or questions regarding the disciplines of psychology and Christian theology. For instance, the first statement about loving others in the way that Jesus would relates counseling and Jesus’ concern for humanity, and demonstrates how a student’s faith commitment helps them understand a certain aspect of psychology, such as counseling or psychotherapy.

The second statement acknowledges that psychology is studying human thought and behavior while acknowledging that humanity is God’s creation (a very important point). This second statement also reveals a preliminary perspective on how psychology and Christianity should be understood together (that psychology studies humans who are ultimately created by God).

The third question reveals a potential point of tension that students commonly have. That is, what is the connection between the spiritual realm that Christianity speaks of, and the discipline of psychology that primarily includes biological and environmental explanations to mental illness? In this book, we take an integrated approach and understand that insights from psychology can be a

way God helps us and provides restoration. We will unpack this more in later chapters, but foundational to the practice of integration is the belief that God works not only through a spiritual realm, such as prayers, but also through other ways, such as the help of a mental health professional.

The fourth statement recognizes the many ways that mental health, spirituality, and one's church are important from a cultural standpoint. It reveals that many different cultures understand their religious community to be an important part of psychological and spiritual well-being. We will address the importance of one's cultural identity at many different points throughout this book, but importantly from the outset, we want to stress that reflection on our Christian faith and psychology is always done from our particular cultural context.

We have heard each of these statements and questions at the beginning of the semester from students before we actually have talked about what integration is. Each of these statements reveals students have already made some connections between their own Christian faith, their studies in psychology, and their culture. But, even if you do not believe your faith has any impact on your psychology, that in itself is a theological belief or a faith statement. Some researchers within psychology believe faith does not and should not impact how we think and engage with psychology. The reality, however, is all of us have initial thoughts about our faith and psychology from our own cultural context. As mentioned above, our position assumes that (1) our faith already influences our work in psychology; (2) our work in psychology benefits from intentional theological reflection; and (3) all of this is done from the culture and context where we are embedded.

Figure 1.1 represents the three primary components of integration that we call the Integration Triad.

As you can see, the components of integration presented here are Christian theology, psychology, and culture. Integration occurs as we allow our Christian theology, our studies in psychology, and our culture to inform and transform our ideas, beliefs, and behaviors. This is represented by the overlapping circles. The place where integration occurs is actually at the overlap of all three circles. However, for ease of entering into the conversation, we can approach integration by starting at just one of the circles.

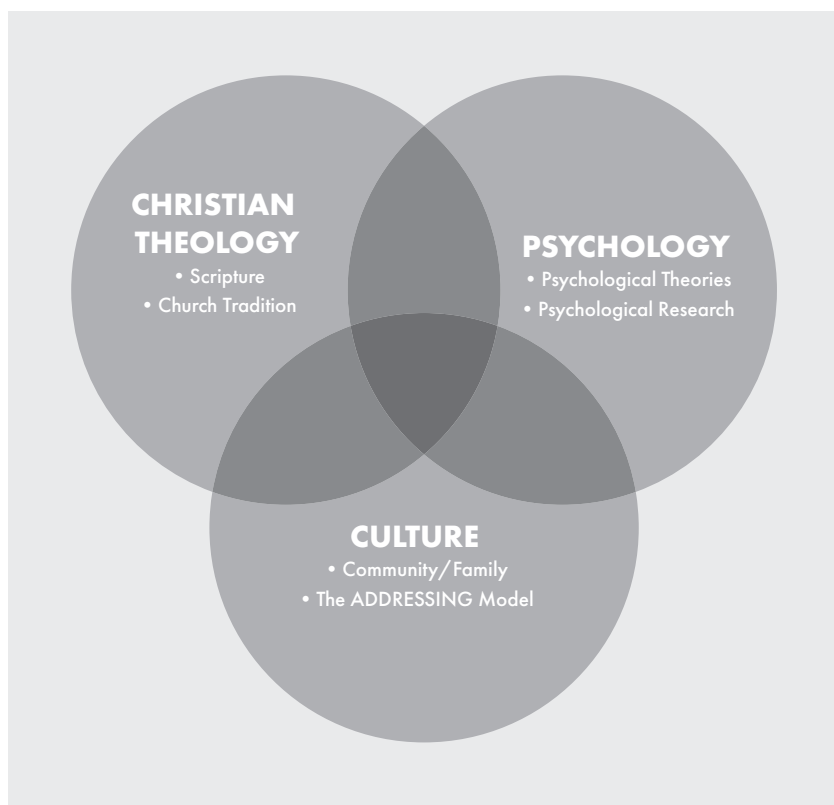


Figure 1.1. The Integration Triad

What Do We Mean When We Say “Christian Theology”?

While “Christian faith” and “psychology” and “culture” give some direction to how we understand integration, it is too broad to just speak of Christianity or psychology or culture in general. When we speak of Christian theology, we are talking about what Christians have agreed on to be the fundamentals of our faith as outlined in the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds. These creeds of Christianity uphold the importance of biblical truth provided in Scripture, and more specifically, they speak of God’s good news of redemption in Jesus Christ, the redemptive purposes of God advancing in the world, and the work of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to love God and love others.

Don’t let the words *Christian theology* scare you too much. One of the most famous definitions of what theology is comes from the twelfth-century theologian and Benedictine monk Anselm (d. 1109), who said that theology is *faith seeking understanding*. If we are to start from Anselm’s well-known description, practicing theology is simply starting with our belief and faith in Jesus Christ, and then seeking to understand the world around us from that standpoint. This component of faith is very important because it stresses the real-life application of theology. Christian theology is (or at least always should be) involved with the world we live in—first, because God is involved with the world we live in, and second, because Christian theology always involves reflection on how Jesus Christ makes a difference to the world we live in (in this case our studies in psychology). In this book we use the words “Christian theology” and “Christian faith” interchangeably because we believe that practicing theology should be and is always connected to our faith in Jesus Christ.

In their helpful book *How to Think Theologically*, Howard Stone and James Duke (2013) alert us to the fact that first and foremost being a Christian means we are already practicing theology and have a theology. That is, we are already some degree of a theologian since theology is simply reflecting on our faith in light of the world around us. When we say that as Christians we already have a theology, we are simply noting that any statement we make about our faith or what we believe about Jesus is inevitably a theological statement. That is, it is a summary or reflection of our faith with the words we can find to describe it, as best as we can understand it at that point in time, and applied to a particular context. If we are Christian, then we inevitably already have a theology (however simple or complex it might be) and a community and culture that helped us form our faith. Consequently, whenever we think about a topic (such as psychology) from the standpoint of faith, we are engaging in theological reflection. For simplicity's sake here, we focus on the fact that theological reflection on the research and practice of psychology is, in its most basic form, what integration actually is: interdisciplinary thinking and reflection about psychology from the standpoint of our Christian faith. As we move forward, we will note that integration also involves our cultural identity, meaning-making, and transformation of who we are so that we can extend love and work toward justice.

As Christians we naturally practice theology. Any time you reflect about your faith in light of the world around you, you are engaging in some form of theological reflection from a particular context. What often begins as an everyday or working theological view of the world is developed and shaped over our lives to be more practical and applied. As we move through our lives, our

theological reflection could possibly include more intentional theological training, whether that is through a local church, a community group, or a university or seminary. Our ability to think about things in a theological way and live out our faith is also enhanced and nourished by our families, churches, and communities. You probably already *do* have some thoughts about psychological topics in light of your Christian faith—you just might not recognize that you do. Chances are, as a psychology student or professional, you already engage in some aspects of thinking about how your psychology and your faith connect and relate, whether or not you are completely aware of this.

In addition, our own Christian faith is specific and contextual, in that it is informed by Scripture, particular church doctrines, and communities of interpretation (i.e., theological influences that different church denominations represent). Moreover, our Christian faith is also informed by our own cultural background and personal experiences (a very central part of our view of integration). And yours is too. For example, the way a particular church denomination practices their faith in the United States often has some differences from the way this very same denomination practices their faith in South Korea. Church traditions have rituals, rites, and values. Cultures are influenced by the community's conceptualization of God and how the divine relates to humanity. In actively conceptualizing integration as involving both theological influences and culture, the practice of integration becomes more reflective of the body of Christ in its cultural and denominational diversity. Consequently, when each of us practices integration, we are drawing on these experiences and Christian communities of interpretation that are embedded within our culture. As Brad Strawn, Ron White,

and Paul Jones aptly note, the “Christian theology” part of integration is always very tradition- and experience-specific to the particular person practicing integration (Strawn et al., 2014).

What Do We Mean When We Say “Psychology”?

Psychology is the study of the human mind and behavior. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), psychology incorporates all aspects of the human experience. Psychology studies very specific things from the functions of the brain (and how this impacts our emotions and mental states), to the actions and behaviors of groups of people. Psychology also studies how people grow and change over time, examining child development or how best to care for older adults. Whether it is in scientific research centers or mental healthcare settings, understanding the mind and human behavior is what psychology is about.

Psychology also has many subdisciplines. Some of the major divisions include social psychology, cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, developmental psychology, psychology of religion, cultural psychology, and clinical/counseling psychology. In fact, the APA currently has fifty-four divisions within its organization, and each of these divisions reflects the wide variety of subdisciplines within psychology. This has caused some scholars, such as Rand Evans (1999), to refer to the current state of psychology as a “loose confederation of subdisciplines” (p. 15) under the same umbrella, since many of the subdisciplines remain so different from each other. For example, praxis-oriented psychoanalysis is quite different from the lab experimentation done with Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in neuropsychology (Evans, 1999). Although psychology is a vast discipline with many different

subdisciplines, when we practice Christian faith integration with psychology, we generally practice integration by beginning from one (or several) of these psychological subdisciplines influenced by prominent researchers. Just as there are many different denominations and cultural expressions of Christianity, there are also many subdisciplines of psychology that have been influenced by key thinkers in psychology.

It goes without saying that the discipline of psychology has a tremendous amount to say about human thought, development, and behavior. Psychological research is a vital part of integration since it provides important data and research observations about the world of the human mind and behavior. Psychology is at its best when it clearly articulates these observations as measured, focused, tested, and repeatable through the use of experiments. Through the scientific method, psychology has been able to provide a great amount of empirical, factual knowledge about the world and human behavior (Bowker, 1998). The solution to any perceived tension between psychology and Christianity is to understand what science or psychology can reasonably describe and articulate. If psychologists stay within the bounds of what science can or cannot reasonably say about human behavior, then there exists no real conflict between the fields of psychology and Christianity (Plantinga, 2002). Speaking to the limits of the discipline, no one expects psychology to instruct us on matters of faith or spirituality. For instance, psychology can give us insight about religious practices of people from a social scientific perspective, discuss forms of spiritual coping, and even provide information on what forms of religious coping might be better than others, but the broad aim of psychological research is not

primarily to nourish one's spiritual life. In the same way, one's faith, and in our case Christianity, doesn't provide empirical research on human behavior. When Scripture discusses human behavior, it is done from a particular perspective. There's a lot about human behavior in Scripture, but actual discussion of behavior in Scripture has more to do with how we conduct ourselves in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ (i.e., loving God and loving others).

This just simply means that psychology provides a particular type of knowledge about human thought and behavior. More specifically for our topic here, psychology can *teach or inform us about* why humans think and act the way that they do. From an integrative perspective we have the opportunity to ask how this information from psychology helps inform or broaden our understanding of aspects of Christian theology or church practice.

What Do We Mean When We Say “Culture” and “Culturally Embedded”?

We are culturally embedded creatures, which simply means that culture always informs how we make meaning of our world. From the moment you begin to explore the world as a newborn, you do so within the context of a particular culture and context. For instance, no matter which language was spoken to you as a baby, this language was culturally embedded and carries deep cultural significance. Rites of passage in life—from birth and child rearing, to friendship, dating, and marriage, and even to grieving deaths—are all informed by cultural practices and contexts. As such, we would be remiss to write about the integration of psychology and theology without acknowledging how culture informs meaning-making (see

Bookman-Zandler & Smith, 2023; Dwiwardani & Whitney, 2022; Hoard & Hoard, 2023).

By stating that integration is culturally embedded, we also mean that the practice of integration is shaped by our cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While multicultural psychology has become a vital area of focus within the discipline of psychology since the mid-1980s (Ecklund, 2016; Pederson, 1990), discussions regarding culture and Christian theology are sometimes underrepresented within the integration dialogue (Shelton & Dwiwardani, 2022). However, more recent efforts have been made among scholars to acknowledge the centrality of culture within interdisciplinary work between psychology and Christianity.² In light of these developments, recognize that your cultural background is a vital part of how you practice integration. This book will help you identify different ways that you can understand both your theological tradition and cultural background as influencing how you think about your own Christian faith, and help you recognize how they all interact with the discipline of psychology.

Within integration circles, researchers have emphasized the importance of identifying one's theological location for developing integrative thinking between psychology and Christian theology (Strawn et al., 2014). At the same time, the importance of identifying our own cultural identity remains central to the enterprise of integration, since all integrative reflection between the Christian faith and psychology is done within a particular context and is influenced by our culture. For example, as

²See further Abernethy, 2012; Eriksson & Abernethy, 2014; Hook & Davis, 2012; Hook et al., 2023; Houston-Armstrong & Callaway, 2023; Jones et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Pak et al., 2023; Sandage & Brown, 2018; Shelton & Dwiwardani, 2022; Whitney et al., 2023; Yangarber-Hicks et al., 2006. We'd also like to direct you to a special issue dedicated to this topic: Houston-Armstrong, T., & Callaway, K. (2023), *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 42 (1).

attendance in mainline Christian churches has declined over the past decades within North America and Europe (and continues to decline), Christianity has grown in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Jenkins, 2011). This dramatic shift in the growth of Christianity means the face of Christianity in the next twenty-five years will be more diverse (less White and Eurocentric). This only adds to the relevance of culture as an essential element of integration (Kärkkäinen, 2018).

In short, culture influences our understanding of integration. The culturally embedded component of our Integration Triad reminds us that one's own theology exists only within one's own identification with gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality (and other aspects of our identity). When we practice integration, we bring all our summative life experiences about our own culture, church background, family, understanding of God, and knowledge of psychology to the table. This is what makes the task of integration an enriching experience—as well as a unique one. Your own family norms and systems, your cultural and denominational traditions, your life experiences, and your own interpretations of key aspects of Scripture will all inform your study of the discipline. In other words, we bring our own unique, embedded theological and cultural beliefs to the table when we exercise our faith and when we study psychology. The practice of integration will, therefore, be a diverse enterprise, as different aspects of culture and church tradition come to bear on how one engages the task of integration. Although there is diversity within the field of integration, Scripture provides the baseline and guide for how we understand our own experiences and how we know God through Jesus Christ.

When we speak of the culture component of the Triad, we also acknowledge that the interpretation of both Scripture and our interests in psychology are influenced by our culture, gender, family norms, faith traditions, and life experiences. Moreover, an awareness of our own cultural expressions and how these aspects of culture shape our experiences in the world is a vital aspect of spiritual development, transformation, and formation (discussed more in chapter five). Cultural and intellectual humility are also part of this transformation, since humility involves not simply tolerating the differences of others but also offering attentiveness and empathy for both oneself and others (Eriksson & Abernethy, 2014; Hook et al., 2023).

Christian Theology, Psychology, and Culture in Dialogue

Now that we have given some clarification to the terms “Christian faith” and “psychology” and “culture,” we want to make it clear that we are not arguing for one specific *type* of integration. Rather, we are providing a general outline and roadmap to help you think and practice integration for yourself. Our Christian faith, our studies in psychology, and our culture inform how we practice integration. Everyone’s integration journey will be unique because of the theological traditions, cultural background, and subdiscipline(s) of psychology you are familiar with.

As authors, we also cannot separate ourselves from our theological, psychological, and cultural influences as we go about interdisciplinary work between psychology and Christianity. Aspects of our cultural, theological, and family traditions always shape the way we practice integration, whether we are aware of this or not. For a brief moment, we as authors think it would be

valuable to acknowledge how our theological backgrounds and culture have influenced our own integration journeys. Ultimately, our faith traditions and cultural identities matter for how we make sense of our Christian faith and what we are drawn to in the field of psychology.

I (Carissa) was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, as a third-generation Christian in my family. My grandmother, who practiced animism, converted to Christianity as an adult through friendships with women in the Dutch Reformed/Presbyterian church. Growing up, she told me stories of how she used to present offerings to the spirits outside of her bedroom door before bed, so that she would be protected from evil spirits. However, when she became friends with the Christian women, she found that their kindness and friendship were so authentic and deep that she decided to become a Christian. She was baptized along with all of her children. I continued to grow up in primarily Reformed/Presbyterian churches, until I came to the United States for college. While I have attended mostly nondenominational churches in the United States, they have primarily been churches that are highly influenced by Presbyterian and neo-Calvinist thoughts, and have been the predominant influences in my interactions with integration. I also completed my undergraduate, graduate studies, and now teach at Biola University, which shape much of my thinking on integration. Ethnically and culturally, my family identifies as Chinese-Indonesian. In the United States, I am primarily identified as Asian though I never thought of myself as “Asian” growing up (since just about everyone around me was also Asian). Now having lived in two different countries, in both the West and East Coasts of the United States, and three different cities (Los Angeles

area, San Francisco, and Norfolk/Virginia Beach) as a Chinese-Indonesian/Asian cisgender female, all the people I have met along the way and the meaningful conversations I had with them influence my thoughts and process in integrating Christianity and psychology.

I (William) identify as a White, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied male. While we'll be writing much more about ethnic and racial identity, culture, and privilege as we move through the book, for now it's important to note that these identities impact how I practice and understand integration between my faith and psychology. I'm continuing to learn ways that my White identity, privilege, and church tradition impact my views of psychology and theology. This is partly because the privileges associated with being White has the tendency to obscure the experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). As we will see in future chapters, our own racial identity and privilege are never side-stepped when we practice integration, but are, in fact, brought with us as we come to the integration table.

I (William) was born and grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, and my father was also born in Fort Worth, Texas, but then moved to Bartlesville, Oklahoma, when he was very young. My mother was born in Jelgava, Latvia, and then immigrated to the United States when she was about eight years old because of World War II. While Christianity has been an important part of our family for generations, it was the generosity and kindness of a Presbyterian church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, who raised enough money to sponsor two Latvian refugees (my grandmother and mother) and provided housing and a job once they arrived in the United States. As a result of this church's kindness, both my grandmother and

mother immigrated from West Germany, where they were living as refugees after their home had been destroyed by Russian forces invading Latvia. After moving to the United States, they settled in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and attended that same Presbyterian church that had sponsored them.

The church that I grew up in Fort Worth was a Baptist church where my grandfather (on my father's side) had served as the pastor for over thirty years. I attended a Baptist university and seminary before deciding that I wanted to pursue more advanced studies in theology. Studying theology at Oxford and Fuller Seminary influenced my views of integration as I met students from all over the world from a variety of theological and cultural backgrounds. When I was in Los Angeles attending Fuller Seminary, I also worked at a Korean Presbyterian church where I served as the pastor of English ministries. Engaging in pastoral work led me to pursue a psychology degree in marriage and family therapy (also from Fuller), and I began working with clients from a variety of backgrounds at a nonprofit counseling center. Currently, I'm doing more graduate work in positive developmental psychology from Claremont Graduate University while I'm teaching psychology at Azusa Pacific University. My views of integration are still growing and expanding as I'm continually learning more in both theology and psychology through my research and teaching.

Overall though, these experiences early in my study of theology and psychology shaped some of the values I have toward culture, privilege and theological tradition, and they have helped me explore further how this impacts our understanding of integration. Consequently, my Baptist upbringing in Texas, certain interpretations of key aspects of Scripture, my theological research within

the Reformed theological tradition (specifically neo-Calvinism) during my doctoral work, my experience serving in a Korean Presbyterian church as a pastor, my clinical work at the nonprofit counseling center, my time serving as a faculty member at a university with a Wesleyan heritage (Azusa Pacific University) have all informed my Christian faith, theology, and the way I think about and live out integration in my life. When I practice integration and speak about my faith, I bring all these summative experiences of spiritual formation to the table (my history, church tradition, life experiences, and White identity).

These are just a snapshot of our stories. You have one too. When we speak of Christianity, each one of us has an experience of how we came to know God and also how we became interested in psychology. Your own integration story is important to understand and reflect on since it is the intersection of God's story (Christianity) with your story. This is important not only because this makes you who you are, but because your own Christian faith is tradition-specific and is informed by particular church denominational doctrines, communities of interpretation, cultural background, and experiences.

As you can see from our own stories, Christianity has been an important part of our families' lives and our lives, and yet, we have been shaped by different cultural and theological influences. While most Christians hold to a set of fundamental beliefs consistent with the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, Christianity is denominationally and culturally diverse. When we move toward integration with Christianity and psychology, it is necessary to reflect on what traditions, denominations, and cultures shape our understanding of our faith.

For Christians who study psychology, there are some basics such as the interpretation of Scripture that are foundational for any integrative task. For instance, each of us understands God and values science, and we make meaning of both our faith and science through different cultural communities that aid us in interpretation. Our own cultural communities help us read, understand, and interpret Scripture, in that we are always situated within a specific context. We also have communities that help us learn about and make sense of psychology (this mainly happens through our classes and coursework). Consequently, this book is not just about you learning all of the information here, but also about you coming into contact with parts of your own faith and culture and inquiring how these impact the specific aspects of psychology you are already studying.

Given that, the overarching goal of this book is to provide you with an integration roadmap that helps you understand the basic landscape of integration. This will be done by helping you think about psychology, your faith, and culture all together, and helping you practice integration from your particular faith and cultural tradition. It's okay if you are not familiar with all of the traditions of your faith. Through Scripture we have witnessed God's gracious interaction with humanity and the world through Jesus. Each of the major Christian traditions will attest to this fact, and while there are theological disagreements to how some aspects of Scripture are interpreted, we believe that theological diversity adds to the richness of the integration dialogue, rather than taking away from it. Moreover, we also argue that cultural diversity adds to the richness of the integration dialogue and is an essential part of it.

While Christianity and psychology are not always in agreement, they are not always in conflict either. At many points psychology and Christianity can work quite well together and even clarify the other to give us a broader and richer picture of reality. It is that picture of reality, informed by Christian faith and psychology, that we invite you into as we move forward.

Our students commonly ask: How do I actually practice integration for myself, and what exactly are we doing? These are excellent questions that will be answered over the course of the book, but we will begin addressing this question in this chapter. Perhaps you have had similar types of questions as you have thought about the subjects together. While we do want students to be able to think about how psychology and Christianity work together, the integration of the disciplines is a much more dynamic process that goes beyond just thinking about the concepts of psychology and Christianity. We also believe that integrative thinking further includes being shaped and transformed by the integrative process itself. Or, as Steven Sandage and Jeanine Brown (2018) have aptly stated, integration has a vital interpersonal and relational component to it, since it is people who are practicing integration. We support their relational approach.³ Consequently, we are not approaching integration as the interplay of abstract ideas that are separate from our own embodied lives and stories—for example, our Christian tradition, cultural, and racial identity (Sandage & Brown, 2018). As you will see, integration requires

³You will find that aspects of this book align with some of the major themes in Sandage and Brown's (2018) book, *Relational integration of psychology and Christian theology: Theory, research, practice*. As authors, we are indebted to Drs. Steven Sandage and Jeannine Brown for their research, and agree with their approach, as well as agreeing with other approaches to integration that are embodied, practical, relational, and lead to deeper reflections on cultural identity, love, and justice.

thoughtfully reflecting on your experiences within psychology, your culture, and your faith, in addition to consciously committing to practice and live out your life in an integrated way.

The argument of this book is that integration primarily occurs as we begin to make meaning of our faith, psychology, and culture. Our views on integration develop and are shaped as we live our life and encounter new situations that cause us to reflect on our Christian faith, psychology, and culture in new ways (described further in chapters five and six). Thinking about or reflecting on your faith, psychology, and culture is a practice that can be taught—but it is also a practice formed within us through conversation, sharing of stories, and hopefully some fun along the way too. (Okay—not Disneyland kind of fun, but the kind of fun that comes with knowing, growing, and becoming more self-aware.) Humans are fascinating creatures, and God made us both curious and complex. While this book is not the final word on the process of integration, we outline here the important and foundational guidelines regarding how one should approach particular aspects of psychology (e.g., neuroscience, social psychology, research methods) in a way that is theologically informed. Moreover, in this book we advocate for owning our own stories within Christianity, psychology, and culture.

Sometimes in our classes there are some students who think there is no relationship between the subjects at all, and sometimes we find a number of students who think there is no conflict between psychology and the Christian faith but aren't sure how they fit together. These viewpoints are valuable since they still represent starting points for how you understand the relationship between your Christian faith, psychology, and culture. Integration

is a process, and we each exist at different places when we begin the process. In many ways, the process of reflecting on theology, psychology and culture is about employing the different resources that are part of our cultural background, faith traditions, and experiences. Or said another way, practicing integration for ourselves begins when we use those resources we embody and the resources we are embedded in to reflect on how those very resources might come to bear on our research and practice within the discipline of psychology.

Wrapping Things Up

This book is to help you think about and practice integration in a way that is theologically, psychologically, and culturally informed. Integration continually changes as we grow and develop—as we learn more about the world around us, deepen our own spiritual and faith commitments, and further our studies in psychology. As folks who do research and clinical practice in the field of integration, our goal is to help you develop and grow in your faith as you understand more deeply the relationship between your faith, cultural background, and studies in psychology. For the Christian, the integration of psychology and theology is being able to give an answer for how our faith relates to psychology in addition to living out both love and justice in the particular context where we are placed.

Reflection Questions

As we begin this journey, we have some brief reflection questions for you that will help you think along the three major components of the Integration Triad.

1. As best as you can at this time, how do you understand the relationship between your Christian faith and psychology? Make a list of four to five ways you see that they relate.
2. In the first question above you listed ways the Christian faith and psychology might be related. Are there any ways that you might perceive them to be in conflict? Write down two to three ways that come to mind.
3. Think now about your own cultural background (for now just think about your own racial and ethnic identity). How does your cultural background influence your faith? How might it influence your studies in psychology?

BUY THE BOOK!

ivpress.com/the-integration-journey