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Bland and Strawn's "Christianity and Psychoanalysis: A New Conversation" (Book Review)

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Christianity and Psychoanalysis: A New Conversation,

by Earl D. Bland and Brad D. Strawn, Christian Association of Psychological Studies Books. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. 304 pp. \$24.00.
ISBN 9780830828562

*Reviewed by John M. Hunter, Library Director, Seth Wilson Library,
Ozark Christian College, Joplin, MO*

Christianity versus psychoanalysis? Christians have nothing to fear from the proper application of science. God is the author of wisdom and truth, and there is no reason for perpetuating adversarial positions. Earl Bland (PsyD) of MidAmerican Nazarene University, Olathe, Kansas, and Brad Strawn (PhD) of Fuller Theological Seminary have compiled incisive discussions from Christian clinicians that make us better disciples of Jesus and more grounded counselors. Psychoanalysis can be a God-given method for redemption.

The atheist Freud is partially to blame for the historic tension between the two worlds (p. 15). A new conversation? Perhaps a new hermeneutic that relates cultural contexts holistically. We are seeing a recycling of the 1920s societal criticism of failed religion. Christianity's modern-day challenge is to respond by living relevant and relational lives. The editors propose two themes: God mediates through his creation, and "acknowledging our particularity and unity is the central task of this book" (p. 32). The contributors authenticate these through honest "confessions" of how their respective church traditions filter their understandings of psychoanalysis. Their periodic "Christian Critiques" help Christians put the discussions in perspective (pp. 71, 126, 149, 175, 197, 247).

God can be safely inserted into discussions about human complexity and "emergent" hypotheses. Theology and psychoanalysis both attempt to define our realities from different, yet similar perspectives. The two seemingly oppositional views are becoming more fashionably or respectfully integrated. Both seek to explain how and why we function as human beings. Both can respectfully coexist with the knowledge and acceptance of a living God and human purpose through glorifying Him. One of the most practical chapters addresses couples therapy. The final chapter not only offers closure for the project, but also the "healing and restoration" (p. 263) rationale for an integrated psychoanalysis.

Steven Sandage of Boston University summarizes the book's value on its back cover: "It is rare to find resources such as this, which are theoretically sophisticated, theologically nuanced and therapeutically relevant." This academic work serves well as a textbook for courses that compare the two dynamic paradigms. The case studies in most chapters brilliantly illustrate the book's premise. The bibliography comprises almost ten percent of the book and enhances the book's research value. The short

subject index adequately satisfies readers' needs. Theology and psychology students, faculty, pastors, and counselors will gain an historical perspective of psychoanalysis and a theologically balanced assessment of the topic. Academic and liberal arts libraries should add it to their collections.

**Christianity in Roman Africa:
The Development of its Practices and Beliefs,**

by J. Patout Burns Jr. and Robin M. Jensen. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.
723 pp. \$55.00. ISBN 9780802869319

*Reviewed by Sarah E. Keil, Instruction and Serials Librarian,
Trevecca Nazarene University, Nashville, TN*

J. Patout Burns Jr. and Robin M. Jensen have crafted an in-depth volume detailing the practice of faith by early Christians in North Africa during the second through fifth centuries, including the Vandal Era and the Byzantine Period. The authors begin with a foundational overview of Christianity in Roman Africa, allowing for the core of the text to delve into the theology and practices of these believers. Topics explored include: baptism, the Eucharist, penance, clergy and religious orders, marriage and family, death and burial customs, the cult of the martyrs, and piety of believers. Lastly, the influence of Roman Christianity on Latin Christianity's theological practices and positions are explored. African theologians Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine are profiled in depth through this volume.

Burns and Jensen shape their work through an archaeological and literary lens, accomplishing a dual focus of providing a broad overview of early Christian theology and practices in the North African region but also detailing specific archaeological evidence and histories. Consequently, *Christianity in Roman Africa* is recommended as a useful companion to track theological and faith expressions over time, especially from a non-Western perspective. Applicable socio-cultural applications and commentary lead to the richness of this text. A wonderful highlight of this volume is the numerous illustrations; many full color photographs, diagrams, and other illustrations make the text come alive. Because it is well written and presented, the volume is quite readable and accessible. The accompanying timeline and bibliography provide necessary background for understanding the social and cultural context. This work is especially recommended as a means to make apparent the impact of African theology on Christianity and would strengthen college, university, and seminary libraries.