A Note from the New Editor-in-Chief

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I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself and offer a few ideas regarding the next phase in the venerable history of the *Journal of Religion and Health*. First, I am honored at the prospect of continuing the *Journal's* leadership in publishing articles of the highest quality in the area of psychodynamic theory and practice in dialogue with religion, psychology, psychiatry, mental and physical health, and the humanities. Second, we will continue to focus on the publication of research studies in the expanding field of spirituality in health. We have at the *Journal* a well-deserved reputation for providing articles of international background and multicultural character. All these traditions will be maintained and enhanced. I hope to continue our practice of encouraging new authors with ideas involving explorations of an interdisciplinary character to submit their work to us.

I bring to this office 31 years of experience as a pastoral care department head in both a psychiatric hospital and a major academic medical center. In both these settings, care of the critically ill and supervision of students were major parts of my role. I have been involved in medical education, particularly in the area of bioethics, and continue as a member of an Institutional Review Board, Committee on Human Rights in Research, where I was for a time Vice Chair. My writing interests lie in the historical essay and critical studies regarding the relationship among literature, religion, and psychoanalysis.

My history with the *Journal* extends back to the early 1990s when I became a regular reader, contributor, and later member of the Editorial Board. The last 3 years have been marked by extraordinary growth due in no small part to the efforts of Donald Ferrell. He and I have carried on a dialogue during this period that has only added to my understanding of the joys and challenges of editorship. This largely e-mail conversation has made me feel that at points we have occupied adjoining cubicles in cyberspace, an experience that I never could have otherwise imagined. I am pleased that Don will continue on as part of the Editorial Board, thus lending to the *Journal* his wisdom and expertise.

I would like to share a few thoughts about my understanding about what an editor *does* and *is*. As I considered the meaning of my entry into this new role, I found myself returning to things I had read and thought about years ago. I explored once more remarks made by

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Maxwell Perkins who was the legendary editor at Charles Scribner's & Sons publishing house in New York. At Scribner's, Perkins was instrumental in discovering and then advancing the careers of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and others. These writers occupy an acknowledged prominent place in the canon of American arts and letters. Perkins once remarked to a group of aspiring editors in his characteristically understated way:

“An editor does not add to a book. At best he serves as a handmaiden to the author. Don't ever get to feeling important about yourself, because an editor at most releases energy... The process is so simple ... Because in the end an editor can only get as much out of an author as the author has in him.” (“The Real Thing” in *Maxwell Perkins: Editor of Genius*, A. Scott Berg, 1978)

I intend to keep Perkins' words and example in mind, particularly that of being a “handmaiden.” I am not sure this process is quite as “simple” as he suggests. But the humility, forbearance, and determination Perkins showed as an editor is a symbol, a beacon of excellence and integrity to which I aspire.

I am fortunate in having this opportunity at the *Journal of Religion and Health*. I embrace its challenge and the chance to make a contribution to its enduring tradition.