Editorial

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This issue of the *Journal of Religion and Health* marks the start of our fifty-first year of publication. In that time period, there has been no lack in its bringing to public attention a dynamic and timely dialogue among religion, spirituality, mental health, medicine, and public health in both narrative and research formats. These disciplines have thus become far better informed regarding areas of overlap, contention, and conversation in matters related to the social dimensions of religious practice and experience and their impact on the inner or spiritual life. This dialogue would never have been conceived possible in the *Journal's* first decade of publication (1961–1971). And the number of submissions for publication requiring sophisticated and informed review rises year by year.

This issue of the *Journal* reflects this broad spectrum of interest. It contains articles having to do with “Spirituality in Medical Education,” “Psychological Distress Among Religious Nonbelievers,” “The Image of God in Pastoral Counseling,” and “Religious Coping and Psychological Distress in Military Veteran Cancer Survivors.” These topics illustrate the diversity regularly represented in the *Journal*. Unfortunately, “diversity,” like “holism” and “holistic medicine,” has become over time a term that is harder and harder to define in clear and consistent ways. It is used to convey a wide variety of meanings in both cultural and academic contexts. Still, diversity remains crucial for informed debate. Scholars, researchers, clinicians, and students need the resources the *Journal* provides. Our review process seeks to insure its quality in both content and expression.

Diversity discussions can become places for wasteful ideological confrontation. Those of us of a certain age can recall the lack of dialogue in the era of the Cold War due to entrenched self-interest, pervasive anxiety, and ideological posturing. None of us want to see any part of that toxic era return to the public square. Part of the *Journal's* mission, then as now, is to remain in a place where there can be mutual respect and a potential for understanding among groups and individuals who need to understand one another better. It is heartening to me as the Editor of the *Journal* to have so many submissions of articles for review from all over the world and from the Islamic world in particular. These contributions serve a role in what Reinhold Niebuhr identified in a past generation as the ongoing

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dialectic between “the self and the dramas of history.” Those who originated the *Journal* and those who have been its staunch supporters over the years should take satisfaction from all that has happened.

And then, there is the maturity within the disciplines represented among our constituency. In 2011, two books were published that illustrate an evolution toward maturity in professional life. First, there is our Editorial Board member and contributor Harold Koenig, MD whose book “Spirituality & Health Research: Methods Measurement Statistics and Resources” (Templeton Press) should become a standard for those engaged in doing research in this field. And Rabbi Stephen Roberts has edited a volume entitled “Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain’s Handbook” (Sky-lights Press). This book is a long-awaited compendium on the place and role of institutional ministry in particular and of pastoral care in general. Both Dr. Koenig’s and Rabbi Roberts’ books will receive reviews in future issues of the *Journal*. A brief perusal of the table of contents and indexes of these volumes reveal a breadth and depth of mastery that are signs of maturity for these diverse but ultimately related disciplines. Both books, of course, will at some point be succeeded by future efforts in their respective fields. These achievements indicate where we have been and where all of us seek to go. The *Journal of Religion and Health* plans to be a part of this continuing journey. We are in it for the long haul.