Introduction to the Special Edition on Psychology of Religion at Rice University

Nathan Carlin

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Abstract This brief paper introduces the special edition of *Pastoral Psychology* on the psychology of religion at Rice University.

Keywords Psychology of religion · Pastoral theology · Rice University · Graduate programs

Introduction

I am pleased to be introducing this special edition of *Pastoral Psychology*. Lewis Rambo, Editor of the journal, and I, Book Review Editor, came up with the idea of doing this issue while talking on the phone one evening. We were trying to think of creative projects for the journal. He suggested that we could do issues or parts of issues dedicated to graduate programs in psychology of religion and pastoral theology. I liked the idea, and I suggested that we begin with Rice University, since I am a doctoral student in the Department of Religious Studies at Rice specializing in psychology of religion. Rambo liked this idea, and so, after some recruiting on my end, we have this issue. We hope to focus on other programs in the future.

These essays are representative of the kind of research in psychology of religion that currently goes on in our department: work that historicizes and theorizes the field of psychology of religion (William Parsons's essay); work that applies psychoanalysis, such as Kohut's self psychology, to contemporary Christianity, such as the recent success of Joel Osteen (Christine Miller and Nathan Carlin's essay); work that explains and engages eastern religious traditions—in this case, the Krishna-Bhakti tradition—by utilizing object relations theory (Andrea Jain's essay); work that uses psychological thinkers such as C. G. Jung to understand African-American religious traditions, such as Spiritualist churches (Margarita Guillory's essay); work that makes a case for new religious movements, such as the Diamond Approach, on the grounds that such movements can facilitate a mature

N. Carlin (✉)
Department of Religious Studies - MS 15, Rice University,
P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-1892, USA
e-mail: nathan_carlin@yahoo.com

transformation of narcissism (Ann Gleig's essay); work that deals with religion, science, and addiction (Nicholas Boeving's essay); and work in psychology and gender studies that is pastoral theological in nature (Nathan Carlin's essay). One other essay in the volume, co-authored by William Parsons and Jeffrey Kripal, provides a brief history of the study and the teaching of psychology of religion at Rice University.

The diversity of the topics covered in this issue is a testimony to the intellectual freedom and creativity that is cultivated and encouraged in our department. Who knew that, in the same department, one could engage, psychologically, new religious movements and eastern religious traditions, as well as African-American Spiritualist churches and Joel Osteen's church, or even shamanism and addiction? Who knew that one could go to graduate school to diagnose God with gender confusion? It is my hope that this special issue will stimulate more conversation and energy in the fields of psychology of religion and pastoral theology so that colleges, universities, and seminaries might dedicate more resources (e.g., faculty lines, funding for graduate students, courses, seminars, and public lectures) to psychology of religion and pastoral theology. This is why Lewis Rambo and I have dedicated some of the journal's resources—i.e., space—to this topic.