

Editorial

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The issue of *the Journal of Religion and Health* now before you is the last in our 49th year of existence as a continuous interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary forum for the communication of scientific and humanistic thought on the relationship of spirituality/religion and health. It is more ample in the number of articles it contains than is usually the case. Perhaps this is a way of saying that we have been especially blessed during the past few months with a continuous stream of worthy contributions to the *Journal* and we offer this expanded issue in celebration of this happy state of affairs. Long may it continue!

We open this issue of the *Journal* with a significant example of cutting edge thinking and research that can often be seen in its pages. Sian Cotton and colleagues argue that spirituality/religion (S/R) research with adolescents requires the reworking of the fundamental measures used in S/R research to be relevant to adolescent populations. Indeed, new measures need to be developed that are formed in relationship to the developmental, psychosocial, psychocultural and psychospiritual realities of adolescent life. The case they are making for moving S/R research into the domain of adolescent life by developing more relevant research tools is also being made by other colleagues who are urging the opening of the field not only to adolescent research but to diverse racial-ethnic as well as diverse religious and cultural groups. Subsequent research to be published in the *Journal* will make these assertions. This work points to the creative ferment within the field of S/R and Health research today.

The next two articles also focus on recent research on adolescence. Barbara Carlozzi and colleagues focus on spirituality, anger and stress in adolescence. Kristin Haglund and Richare J. Fehring explore the issues in religiosity, sexual education and parental factors with adolescents and young adults whose sexual behavior may constitute significant health risks.

Laura M. Gaydos and colleagues make the case, comparable to that made by Sian Cotton and colleagues regarding adolescence, that a new research domain can also be seen in the emerging field of religion and reproductive health. An example of such emergent research can be seen in the study by F. S. Cowchock and colleagues, *Religious Beliefs*

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Affect Grieving After Pregnancy Loss. Any of us who has lost a child due to a premature termination of pregnancy should find this research especially interesting and helpful. Just as positive religious coping empowered women in dealing with the profound loss of a pregnancy, so Yaron G. Rabinowitz and colleagues discovered the same to be true in their research on the cumulative health risks to which the caregivers of those suffering from the ravages of Alzheimer's Dementia are subject. Their research shows that positive religious coping mitigated the potentially negative health effects of sustained care giving.

We move from quantitative research to the qualitative domains of the *Journal's* focus by exploring, first, the teaching of the great religious traditions on that most personal and, often, most problematic form of pregnancy cessation, namely, voluntary termination by the pregnant woman. In the article: *Religious Perspectives on Abortion and a Secular Response*, Moira Stephens and colleagues offer a contribution that truly reflects the kind of forum the *Journal* was created to provide. Here, representatives of several major religious traditions are each invited to address a case around the question of voluntary termination of pregnancy from within each of their traditions. Drawing upon the resources of contemporary philosophy, the authors deconstruct each religious commentary in light of larger philosophical questions. They pay special attention to the secular social context in which religious persons living in secular societies must approach the question of voluntarily terminating a pregnancy. This is an exemplary model of philosophical dialogue with the great religious traditions.

Another qualitative domain the *Journal* serves is known in the Christian tradition, as *pastoral care*. The domain of pastoral care includes formerly constituted versions of pastoral ministry that can be found in the ordained ministries, priesthood and teaching/healing offices of the great religious traditions; pastoral theologians and teachers of pastoral care; institutional chaplaincies; and those specialized ministries that include pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy, to name a few of the disciplines and practices of this domain.

Editorial Board member Curtis W. Hart provides historical perspective on one form the movement of pastoral care took in American, largely Protestant, culture in his: *Present at the Creation: The Clinical Pastoral Movement and the Origins of the Dialogue Between Religion and Psychiatry*. In his narrative, Hart shows how clinical pastoral education became a constitutive aspect of the curricula of theological seminaries in America. As we approach the 50th anniversary of the *Journal of Religion and Health*, this article helps to remind us that the *Journal* was founded out of a creative dialogue between religion and psychiatry. This dialogue was embodied in the persons of a pastor, Norman Vincent Peale and a psychiatrist, Smiley Blanton (see Donald Capps' important article on their relationship in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 48, No 4, pp. 507ff). Hart's essay is a welcome preparation for acknowledging and honoring the 50th anniversary of the *Journal*.

Janelle Stanley reminds us that the tradition of pastoral care toward the mentally ill precedes the clinical pastoral movement. In her *Inner Night and Inner Light: A Quaker Model of Pastoral Care for the Mentally Ill*, Stanley traces the profound impact George Fox and the early Quaker movement had upon the drive to reform the asylums in which the mentally ill were housed in the early history of America. Stanley documents as well the influence of C. G. upon the formation of the later pastoral care tradition within the Quaker community.

Editorial Board member Donald Capps in *Identity with Jesus Christ: The Case of Leon Gabor* offers a deeply insightful study of how contemporary clinical pastoral thought approaches the complex question of the role of religion in certain forms of mental illness. Capps shows how Gabor, one of the "Three Christs of Ypsilanti" not only suffered a

delusional identification with Jesus Christ, but became remarkably creative in sustaining that identification when confronted with psychiatrist Milton Rokeach's attempt to help him disidentify with Christ. Capps' article offers penetrating analytical insights and a profound grasp of the creative self, even when that self is impaired by delusion.

Titus George gives us a compelling picture of how pastoral or spiritual care provided within an institutional setting can make a valuable contribution to the healing of patients and/or their families under hospital care. In *My Ishvara is Dead: Spiritual Care on the Fringes*, George tells the story of how he was able to help a Hindu widow find new meaning in the face of the destruction of her world of meaning bound up with her role as her husband's devoted servant in life. This story honors the mystery of human mourning and the extraordinary capacity of symbolic, metaphorical images and narrative to address us in the midst of our suffering with healing power and new possibilities of life. It is sobering to imagine the number of people suffering illness and death in hospitals who do not experience such healing in the presence of a spiritual caregiver, who is adequately trained to mediate such healing. It is not an exaggeration to say that to address this issue of holistic care at the boundaries of illness and death is one of the reasons the *Journal of Religion and Health* exists.

Karmen Sterk offers a significant companion piece to George's article in *You Can Only Die Thrice: Death and Dying of a Human Body in Psychoanalytic Perspective*. Interestingly, Sterk's contribution also makes a plea for broadening religion-health research beyond the quantitative and the boundaries of Judaic and Christian culture. Drawing upon the work of Van Gennep, Lacan and Zizek and "epistemologies borrowed from medical anthropology", Sterk makes a persuasive philosophical argument that our western bio-medical hermeneutic that confines the meaning of death to the demise of the human body is vastly unequipped to grasp a more complex and layered understanding of death. In Sterk's words: "there is more for humans to lose than biological (Real) life; a far greater loss is to exist without (Symbolic) reason to live." It was this predicament of the Hindu woman whose *Ishvara*'s death brought her symbolic world to an end and thus the end of her reason for a "a life worth living" that Chaplain George grasped and to which he ministered.

David Bittner, after a trip to Hawaii in 2009, reveals to us how, in the face of the loss of much of its original culture, hidden meanings are to be found. With a journalist's eye and a soulful imperative to search beneath the surface of things, Bittner weaves a fascinating story of how original and colonialist peoples interacted to create the contemporary paradise of Hawaii with all its beauty and ambiguity. With some surprising turns along the way, Bittner derives both personal and transpersonal meanings from his journey and illustrates why C. G. Jung believed that the archetype of "the Hero's Journey" is one of the significant models of ego development and individuation.

Donald Capps appears a second time in this issue with a slightly tongue-in-cheek effort to explore *The Psychological Benefits of Bad Poetry*. Following Freud's lead, Capps argues that bad poetry is a form of humor that exemplifies what Freud claimed humor provides us: in the face of the often persecutory nature of reality, humor spares us "the expenditure of painful emotions, costly inhibitions, and difficult thinking." Capps, who founded the Bad Poets Society at Princeton Theological Seminary, provides us with some hilarious examples of his own bad poetry composed as he sat through interminable committee meetings, world transforming curriculum revisions and the comings and goings of Presidents and Deans. Capps demonstrates meaning in humor, liminality in laughter and the calling of the muse in good and bad poetry. What better resources have we for creating meaning, resisting the power of the quotidian to reduce our lives to stereotypes and even

caricatures while saying “yes” to it all without living beyond our psychological (and spiritual?) resources?

Robert L. Randall turns to Breughel’s famous painting of the fall of Icarus to meditate upon the meaning of tragedy and the human quest for self-actualization. Randall departs from the interpretation of Icarus as the mythic image of the self inflated by *hubris* showing us the catastrophic consequences of such overreaching of limits. Instead, Randall suggests that Breughel may be teaching us that the real tragedy of Icarus is that his rise and destructive fall is hardly noticed by those around him in the painting. The others are so enclosed in their own worlds, they do not notice the suffering of the young Icarus, who, after a moment of exaltation, falls dangerously and ignominiously into the sea. Breughel, Randall argues, drawing upon the work of Heinz Kohut, is teaching us not about tragedy as *hubris* but rather tragedy as *empathic failure*, i.e., our being so absorbed in our needs and life projects that we neither truly see nor are we deeply moved by the suffering of others around us. It is human indifference to our suffering that makes it tragic is what Randall would have us see in Breughel’s painting.

But Randall would also have us see that Icarus’s tragedy is not just the indifference of others to his plight. It is also that in his seeking the human good of self-transcendence, an authentic and positive value in human living, Icarus experiences failure, collapse and his own undoing. This sense of our vulnerability as human beings, even when reaching for what may be the best that is within us, gives rise to the “wisdom” of everyday life: don’t risk, live cautiously, don’t allow a grand passion to sweep you off your feet. Or else you may end up like Icarus in the drink. Against that “wisdom”, Randall offers something more profound. He writes: “We cannot thrive by naively thinking that we will never be hurt. But we can feel sustained through life by the thought that there are others who pay attention to us, who care enough to try to catch us when we fall, and who, while scolding us for our errors, still affirm the goodness of our efforts to enhance our self.” “Blessed are those who care”, to paraphrase Jesus, “for they carry within them the gift of our becoming”.

Finally, Carroll Arkema finds the sacred in an encounter he had with the 12-year-old daughter of a woman he knew, meeting her daughter for the first time. His poem, that seeks to capture something of the depth and mystery of human self-disclosure as he experienced it in a privileged moment of openness between him and this young woman who had entered his world, reminds us that, wherever else it may be found, the sacred lives within us. It seeks to manifest in and through us if our hearts are open, if we have ears to hear it speak or eyes to see it in another’s face.

Before concluding this *Editorial*, I am pleased to welcome Dr. Ralph W. Hood to our Editorial Board. Internationally known for his work in the Psychology of Religion, Ralph has made a substantial contribution to the whole field of the scientific study of religion. His work is widely cited in the literature on the religion-health nexus and it is our good fortune to include him as a remarkably creative member of the *Journal of Religion and Health* community.

I write this *Editorial* sitting in one of the places where I have often done *Journal* work as Editor-in-Chief, my “home away from home”, the Spiral Press Café at the Northshire Bookstore (www.northshire.com) in Manchester, VT, where I am able to benefit from high speed internet service, which I am denied in Dorset Hollow. The Northshire is one of the last independently owned bookstores, I dare say, in the United States and an absolute treasure in the Manchester community. As I remember the Friday afternoons over the past 3 years I have sat here doing the work of Editor-in-Chief, it is impressive to consider all who have preceded me and have attended faithfully and meticulously to nurture and sustain

this little gem of a *Journal* over the past 49 years. I conclude this *Editorial* with a sense of gratitude for work well done over all these years and a confidence in the future of the *Journal* that is robust and exciting.

Though this *Editorial* is being written in the autumn, the print issue will be in your hands in December, the season, for Christians at least, of that definitive moment when the Eternal entered time. May I conclude by offering this benediction in the spirit of Dickens' Tiny Tim for all of us, both within and outside the Christian myth: "God bless us everyone!"