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Mark R. McMinn

George Fox University, mmcminn@georgefox.edu

Todd W. Hall

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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE—PART 2

MARK R. MCMINN
TODD W. HALL

The swirling winds of postmodernism have created the possibility of using spirituality and psychology in the same sentence. Suddenly psychologists are interested in spirituality. The number of articles indexed in PsycINFO with the word “spiritual” or “spirituality” in the title has mushroomed from 7 in 1979 to 28 in 1989, to 84 in 1999. In some ways this seems like the best of times for psychologists working to integrate psychology and Christian spirituality. Or is it?

The contemporary postmodern views of spirituality that surround us are often based on amorphous notions of self-discovery, actualization, and moral relativism. Christian spirituality, in contrast, is deeply rooted in a particular historical tradition and set of epistemological assumptions that defy moral relativism. Christian spirituality, as revealed in scripture and affirmed throughout history, is about knowing God and knowing ourselves. As John Calvin affirmed in the first pages of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Calvin, 1559/1989), one cannot occur without the other. A relativistic postmodern spirituality of self-discovery may distract, or even cause harm, if it does not affirm a need to know God. This is a critical time for Christians to affirm a spirituality that is built upon a solid foundation of historical, biblical, and systematic theology—one that offers hope through truth-claims that have been forged through centuries of scholarship, devotion, and divine leading, and yet one that is informed of and open to the contributions of modern psychological methods.

This is the second of two special issues devoted to Christian spirituality and psychology. The first part of the special issue, published in the winter of 2000 (28:4), concentrated on the themes of spiritual

formation and spiritual direction. This second special issue illustrates a diversity of approaches to integrating psychology and Christian spirituality, including topics such as spiritual interventions, gender, measurement, spiritual coping resources for psychologists, and theological traditions.

The task of integrating psychology and Christian spirituality is complex and multifaceted, as illustrated by the various approaches and topics included in these two special issues. It is helpful to see scholars attempting to break the task into smaller, more manageable endeavors. How can we measure spirituality? How can we train doctoral students to use spiritual disciplines to prepare themselves for the profession of psychology? What spiritual coping resources do psychologists use to cope with the daily stresses of their work and personal lives? What benefits can be observed in explicitly training graduate students to understand spiritual warfare? What gender differences may be contributing to the underrepresentation of females in the integration literature? If we are to integrate psychology with Christian spirituality, which Christian spirituality shall we choose? (This issue includes two articles that start from disparate theological assumptions—Reformed theology and Wesleyan theology—and yet it is fascinating to observe the common conclusions regarding clinical implications). These are the sorts of questions addressed in the pages that follow.

Ours is a time when spirituality has become a legitimate topic for discussion within the field of psychology. The opportunities, like the complexities, are great, and it will be prudent for Christian scholars and practitioners to actively join the conversation.

REFERENCES

Requests for reprints may be sent to Mark R. McMinn, PhD, Wheaton College, Department of Psychology, Wheaton, IL 60187.

Calvin, J. (1559/1989). In H. Beveridge (Trans.), *Institutes of the Christian religion*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.