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## Weaving a Tapestry

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# WEAVING A TAPESTRY

BY HALEY R. FRENCH



To the title above, I consider this third issue of *Salubritas* to be a bit of a scholarly tapestry—the intricate combination of works that, together, creates something unique and appealing.

This issue, as with the preceding two, was not organized by a specific theme, making it open to diverse topics and contributions. The result is interesting, and through the publications herein, I propose that the journal continues to contribute in important and distinctive ways to at least two specific bodies of academic literature that I wish to highlight — 1) studies related to Christian integration in counseling, and 2) the broader field of research on Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, also referred to as Spirit-empowered Christianity. Some articles in this issue address one field of study more than the other, but taken together, the contents included here offer much to both fields named above, amongst others.

In the previous issue, I spoke about the ability of *Salubritas* to ‘expand horizons’ through its role as a journal that has a commitment to publishing counseling research from a Spirit-empowered perspective. There are many esteemed academic journals dedicated to integrative, Christian counseling scholarship, and likewise, there are many esteemed journals dedicated to Pentecostal and charismatic scholarship, predominantly featuring theological and biblical perspectives. But, to my knowledge, *Salubritas* is the only journal established in its aim and scope to offer a space for scholars and clinicians—both established and emerging—to contemplate the professional counseling profession and process as it relates to Spirit-empowered spirituality and praxis. Though

the journal welcomes and features scholarship that is not explicitly focused on the relationship between these two areas of study or may not overtly explore Spirit-empowered Christianity in the counseling space, it yet remains a unique academic vehicle in its commitment to prioritizing and welcoming the research of Spirit-empowered scholar-practitioners.

Through the scholarship of these individuals, we gain important insights into how they approach the study of counseling and related topics in distinctive ways. The expression of their worldviews and shared spirituality in their scholarship is illuminating, and this is needed, precisely because there is still relatively limited information on how Pentecostal and charismatic counselors (and those who reflect on related topics or other forms of care) are unique in how they think about, approach, and engage in those endeavors (e.g., see Decker et al., 2022).

In addition to these foundational commitments of the journal, I feel it is important to highlight another central value that guides this publication; one that relates to the preceding discussion. It is our commitment to not only showcase the works of established scholars, but to also create a space for emerging practitioner-scholars to publish. In each of the three issues of *Salubritas* thus far, this one included, there are articles co-authored between seasoned scholars and students or recent alumni of graduate level counseling or theology programs, as well as articles solo authored by students pursuing postgraduate degrees. In addition to this, there is a space reserved in each issue for the featured work of a current graduate counseling student, or students, that is overseen and guided by ORU counseling faculty. The exercise of mentoring a graduate level counseling student through the process of writing a student article—especially related to the area of Christian integration in counseling—is an intentional and hopefully formational act.

To this end, this current issue is a wonderful collection of articles that span a range of topics, all of which have been contributed by ORU faculty, students, and alumni. These essays are what I would consider to be the fruit of ongoing labors at ORU to innovate, research, and write in the conceptual and practical ‘space’ in which counseling and related topics

(i.e., counselor education, Christian integration in counseling, mental health issues, etc.) and Spirit-empowered Christianity meet.

The first article, authored by recent ORU professional counseling alumnus and LPC and LADC Candidate, Kyle Stueber, and ORU Senior Professor of Counseling and Assistant Dean of the School of Counseling, Andrea Walker, is an intriguing outgrowth of their three-year process of intentional dialogue on topics of spirituality and Whiteness, as well as others. Having discovered their differing views, values, and assumptions on these important topics, they committed to dialoguing regularly and over time, to demonstrate hospitality and a desire to better understand and learn from one another. Their article documents repeated efforts to resist assigning limiting, reductionistic, and harmful labels, and instead, to first seek to understand one another, ultimately experiencing transformation through meaningful conversation and relationship. In a day and age of many divisions, their article is a timely reminder of the power of caring presence, receptivity over reactivity, and a willingness to listen.

The second article, authored by Greg Meyer, Associate Professor of Professional Counseling and Director of the Professional Counseling program at ORU, is an exploration of the concept of 'spirituality' in relation to counselor education. In review of relevant literature, Meyer discusses the historically ambiguous use of the term 'spirituality' and the way this has impacted the training of counselors. Often the term is approached with personal bias and through the influence of one's culture, with a tendency to conflate the meaning of spirituality with religion, or to overidentify spirituality with a particular faith or theological tradition. Meyer seeks to propose the use of an explanatory definition of spirituality that is multicultural in focus, and refers to the innate capacity and tendency of humans to make meaning and construct their realities; a self-reflective skill that allows them to consider their values, beliefs, biases, etc. Meyer distinguishes this approach to the idea of spirituality from those that are religiously, theologically, or inspirationally motivated or associated. Meyer suggests that by utilizing an explanatory understanding of spirituality in this way, counselor educators can assist

counseling students to better integrate their identities with and by their spirituality. Therefore, instead of feeling compelled to pit religious beliefs against one's spirituality, for example, the focus is purposefully shifted to the innate spiritual and existential values of helping others, making meaning, and finding purpose.

The third article, authored by Robert McBain, a current ORU Ph.D. student and Research Coordinator for ORU's Holy Spirit Resource Center, is the result of qualitative analysis of sermons preached on the topic of depression by Assembly of God (AG) pastors in Oklahoma. Through his qualitative analysis of 12 sermons, McBain demonstrates how these pastors frequently correlated depression with congregants' faulty thinking. As a result of this faulty thinking, preachers described depressed individuals as progressively moving into 'the cave' of depression (pulling upon the Elijah story in 1 Kings 19), where there was hopelessness, isolation, and warped thinking, but also the sustaining ministry of God. Through a transformative encounter with God in 'the cave', congregants were described as moving out of depression, ultimately because of fixing their faulty thinking. Though not without his critiques, McBain highlights the important role of framing depression as a journey or process, and the way this aids congregants in their meaning-making efforts.

The fourth article was co-authored by Peter Althouse, ORU Professor of Theology and Director of the ORU Ph.D. program in Contextual Theology, and Audrey McCormick, a current ORU Ph.D. theology student and Co-Lead Senior Pastor at Sanctuary Ministries in Concord, CA. Graciously, both authors agreed to allowing *Salubritas* to reprint this article after its initial publication in Ma, Onyinah, and Bled (Eds.), *The Pandemic & the Holy Spirit: From Lament to Hope and Healing*, published by ORU Press (2024). Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, Althouse and McCormick conducted a document analysis of Pentecostal-charismatic websites, online content related to the pandemic, along with official P/c denominational statements, documents, and publications (both online and print form). Surprisingly, they discovered that P/c Christians were not engaging in eschatological, triumphalist claims of healing and a 'better future', in a naïve denial of the present suffering

of the pandemic. Rather, the data revealed that P/c Christians were acknowledging the grief and suffering of the moment, while actively seeking to evoke hope in the midst of suffering. In this way, Althouse and McCormick conceptualize the acts of grief and mourning as eschatological responses to the suffering of the pandemic.

The fifth article was authored by a current, second year ORU graduate counseling student, Nicole Biller, under the guidance of myself and fellow colleague, Kelly Dunbar Davison, Professor of Professional Counseling at ORU. In her article, Biller reflects on the importance and quality of training in Christian integration in counseling, within graduate level, integrative counseling programs. In her review of pertinent literature, she highlights students' desire for faculty to increasingly and effectively model integration to their students in practical ways. And while integration is frequently posed as being of great importance for Christian graduate counseling programs and to the training they provide, Biller suggests that the quality of such training needs to be thoughtfully evaluated. In an effort to contribute to available scholarship and information on how to provide quality integration training, Biller identifies related areas of concern that she suggests shape integrative training and education in a well-rounded way. These include: a biblically informed worldview, intentionally crafted hermeneutics, and a well-developed theology that, in turn, produces faith-informed practices.

Circling back to what was noted at the beginning, I wish to reiterate the way this issue meaningfully gathers certain topics together—counseling, counselor education, the spirituality of the counselor, Christian integration in counseling, mental health in the church, and theological and practical elements of Spirit-empowered Christianity related to mental illness, suffering, and hope. The diversity of these topics is evident, but so is the strength of joining these interdisciplinary perspectives and fields of expertise together in one issue.

Since its inception only a few years ago, *Salubritas* now celebrates over 7,900 downloads of parts or whole issues of the journal, and readership in 96 countries. We are immensely thankful for the reach and impact of this publication. Our hope is that the research shared here will continue

to inspire others to bridge gaps, discover the value of interdisciplinary dialogue, and the importance of doing scholarship from a distinctively Spirit-empowered perspective, whether implicitly or explicitly.

## References

Decker, E. E., French, H. R., & Parker, S. (2022). Pentecostal spirituality and counseling. *Salubritas*, 2, 7-21.