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EDITORIAL: FIVE-YEAR ASSESSMENT

JEFFREY S. LAMP, EDITOR

It seems as if in the academic world, at least in the United States, though I assume it holds in some way elsewhere, there are buzzwords that arise to label the current emphasis in the field of education. I have my own suspicions as to why and from whom these buzzwords arise, but I resist the temptation to engage in conspiracy theories at this point. It seems to me, as a lowly faculty member in an American private Spirit-empowered Christian university, the buzzword of the day is “assessment.” Everyone seems intent on assessing things that, apparently, were not previously assessed, or at least were assessed inadequately. What I find amusing about this state of affairs is that those now determining that assessment has been inadequate and offering solutions were educated when we were blissfully unaware of the inadequacies of our own educations.

Nevertheless, with the publication of last fall’s issue of *Spiritus*, we drew to a close the fifth year of publication since we rebooted the journal in 2017. And we drew that period to a close with a themed issue on Spirit-empowered counseling that in turn became the first issue of a new journal venture, *Salubritas: International Journal of Spirit-empowered Counseling*. It seems an appropriate time to assess the progress and impact of the journal as we enter our sixth year of the reboot with the present issue.

One way to measure impact is through numerical assessment. As 2021 drew to a close, editorial staff examined some of the statistical data regarding the download activity of the journal. This search revealed that over 50,000 downloads had occurred in the period 2017–2021, reaching 180 countries and approximately 450 educational institutions around the world. All continents—including Antarctica!—downloaded articles from *Spiritus*. In keeping with our vision, we wanted to include authors both from within and outside of Oral Roberts University, and our search showed that approximately 58% of our contributors were connected with ORU at the time of publication, including both faculty and students. These data suggest that *Spiritus* is, at this stage, achieving several of the objectives framed for it.

One specific objective we established was to publish at least one piece per issue that dealt in a scholarly way with the life and work of Oral Roberts. This focus turned out to be a fortuitous decision. In the first five

years of this reboot, four of the top five downloaded articles were pieces that examined this influential figure in the Spirit-empowered world. One special themed issue, published in the fall of 2018 (vol. 3, no. 2), was dedicated to studies on Roberts in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Oral Roberts University. However, our two most recent themed issues, covering Spirit-empowered leadership (fall 2020, vol. 5, no. 2) and Spirit-empowered counseling (fall 2021, vol. 6, no. 2), did not have a study specifically addressing Roberts. While this may be understandable with the counseling issue, given that this was not a particularly significant emphasis in Roberts's ministry, it was surprising that no study emerged to provide a substantial analysis of his leadership style. Moreover, as a perusal of the table of contents of this issue reveals, no article addressing Roberts appears. Surely this cannot mean that we have said all there needs to be said about this man. There is clearly interest in Oral Roberts, as our download history reveals. So consider this an invitation for authors to perform substantial research and critical analysis on Oral Roberts for publication in *Spiritus*. We can all but guarantee that such an article will garner significant interest.

The offerings in this issue cover a broad range of topics. New Testament scholar Edward Watson provides a study of John's Gospel that examines the faith responses of two characters in the Gospel: the royal official who approaches Jesus to heal his son (4:46–54) and the disciple Thomas. Watson contrasts the response of the royal official, who exhibits faith based solely on Jesus' word that his son would be healed, with Thomas, who is frequently portrayed as demanding physical proof in order to believe. Watson contends that John, in his character portrayals throughout the Gospel, is providing various models of faith responses for future readers who will be faced with responding to Jesus in their own walks of discipleship.

Following this biblical study, three articles address connections between Spirit-empowered movements and the historic Christian churches. Chris Green, in a creative approach to the problem of evil, critiques the position of many in Spirit-empowered churches, inherited from Augustine via John Welsey, in which God allowed the free choice of human beings to resist God in order to bring about good via suffering and evil that would otherwise not be realized. Noting that this view often brings about disastrous consequences, Green offers an alternative understanding, "one that holds that evil is truly nonsensical and so inexplicable; that no one is to blame for its advent, although all are responsible to resist it; that God had no purpose in allowing evil or the

suffering it unleashes, but always only works to undo it and to heal those who have been broken by it; and that we are welcomed by our share in the Spirit into Christ's long resistance to evil and the Father's final victory over it." Following this piece, Ryan Lytton examines the Pentecostal practice of glossolalia in light of the apophatic theology of (Pseudo-) Dionysius and Gregory of Nazianzus to demonstrate that glossolalia, in its uttering of mysteries to God, is an expression of spirituality that is consonant with apophatic theology that differs from the emphasis on silence in classical expressions of apophatic spirituality. Seth Whitaker addresses the common critique in Spirit-empowered churches that liturgical forms of worship are "dead" by looking at examples of prayer and liturgy from Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican sources to demonstrate the central role of the Holy Spirit in those expressions of worship. He argues that the purpose of Spirit-empowerment in worship is to facilitate unity and mission, two emphases held in common with Pentecostal traditions.

The issue closes with two studies that examine more pastoral concerns in Spirit-empowered communities. Volker Krüger looks at the leadership structure of the New Apostolic Renewal (NAR) movement, with its focus on the re-establishment of the office of the apostle and its employment of the five-fold ministry model, by examining it in light of organizational theory as understood in the business world. Krüger utilizes this interdisciplinary approach to assess the application of the NAR's polity in actual practice. Finally, Michael Blythe provides a historical analysis of the emphasis on humility in the Azusa Street Revival, arguing that humility was a crucial aspect in the experience of the power of the Spirit in this critical juncture in Pentecostal history. He argues that a re-emphasis on humility and self-surrender is necessary to combat the disillusionment felt by many over triumphalist tendencies of Spirit-empowered movements in the twenty-first century.

The studies presented here represent the breadth of interests we envisioned exploring as we relaunched *Spiritus* five years ago. As we look to the future, we are confident that heretofore unexplored aspects of the Spirit-empowered life will receive examination from a broad spectrum of authors and perspectives from around the world. We have already identified the special themes for our fall issues for the next three years, beginning with the theme of Spirit-empowered missions this fall. It has been a fruitful first five years; here's to the next five!

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