Giving Religion Away: What the Study of Religion Offers Psychology

Peter C. Hill

Part 1

William C. Bier Award Address, APA Division 36 (Psychology of Religion)

August 15, 1998

My wife and I own a modest cottage at a campground on the west branch of the Susquehanna River in central Pennsylvania. If you were to visit our cottage, two questions would probably come to mind: why this particular cottage (remember, I did say it was modest) and why this particular location? The fact that the cottage is part of a larger camp makes it valuable, especially to my wife, for sentimental reasons. She has fond childhood memories of her family vacationing there and many members of her immediate and extended family still own property at the camp, providing a convenient location for family gatherings. But why anyone would put a camp site on the west branch of the Susquehanna River still baffles me. You see, the west branch of the Susquehanna River is a far cry from the Susquehanna River. Virtually anyone from that part of the country is familiar with the Susquehanna River—a wide, somewhat majestic and picturesque river at spots, flowing southward through Williamsport down past Harrisburg, the state capital. It's obscure west branch, however, is narrow, shallow, rocky, poor for fishing, and during dry summers provides little more than a trickle as it flows into the Susquehanna. But the west branch does flow and does carry, at least when rainfall is plentiful, important supplies and accretions to the Susquehanna. In much the same way, the psychology of religion should provide an important contribution to the "mainstream" discipline of psychology.

An Exciting Time to be a Psychologist of Religion

Last year at the APA convention in Chicago, the outgoing president of Division 36, Ken Pargament (1997b), when rhetorically asking whether the name of the division should be changed to the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, correctly identified this as an exciting time in the psychology of religion, at a time when our work is no longer confined to relative obscurity. Pargament also suggested the possibility that a distinct discipline, the psychology of religion (and spirituality?) is emerging and that we may no longer have to see ourselves, as traditionally we have done, as clinical, social, developmental, or experimental psychologists with an interest in religion. It is within this optimistic context that I would like to share my views about the need to clarify the meanings of religion and spirituality and to believe that a distinct discipline is beginning to emerge (but, please, do not embarrass me by asking what criteria I am using).

I think Ken has Division 36's priorities straight. We seem to be living in a time of great interest in, but also much confusion about, religion and spirituality. Given our division's history, Ken is correct when he

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says that we uniquely have "a sense of the critical issues, problems, and pitfalls" (p. 14) in defining these central constructs. It is therefore our responsibility to take leadership in approaching our subject matter rather than simply reacting to larger and often misguided socio-cultural understandings. I also share the position of our current president, David Wulff (1996), that the psychology of religion's position in the field of psychology is best described as "precarious," especially given the relatively small numbers of contributors to the field. I think the psychology of religion does have a future provided that we can offer something constructive to the discipline as a whole. Even so, within at least the foreseeable part of that future, we will likely remain, at best, a tributary to psychology's "mainstream" much like the relationship between the west branch of the Susquehanna and the Susquehanna (keep in mind, however, that the Ohio river is also a tributary to the Mississippi).

Interaction Between Religion and the Science of Psychology

Jones (1994) postulated three forms of interaction between religion and psychology as science. I have found this tripartite division helpful in my own thinking about the psychology-religion interface and believe that Jones is correct when he implies that all three modes of interaction are necessary to the progress of human knowledge. I want to mention his last mode of interaction first, because it appropriately sets the stage for the other two. Jones argues that the relationship between the science of psychology and religion must be dialogical (Barbour, 1990; Browning, 1987). Neither religion nor psychology can dictate to the other how to define and interpret its task, thus avoiding either a religious or scientific "imperialism." The second form of interaction is the critical-evaluative mode of functioning, being appropriately self-critical about underlying assumptions. Jones' third form of interaction is the constructive mode that, for example, when relating religion to science, "... should occur when religious belief contributes positively to the progress of science by suggesting new modes of thought that transform an area of study by shaping new perceptions of the data and new theories. It is within the context of this constructive mode of interaction that I want to consider what distinguishes the study of religion and spirituality bring to psychology's table.

Lack of respect

Psychologists of religion have long claimed to be the Rodney Dangerfields of their profession, bemoaning the fact that religion rarely receives the respect it deserves from mainstream psychology. Further, some psychologists outside the psychology of religion who recognize the rift between psychology and religion put much of the blame at the foot of psychologists. One noted example is Donald T. Campbell who opened his 1975 APA Presidential Address in the following way: "A major thesis of this address is that present-day psychology and psychiatry in all their major forms are more hostile to the inhibitory messages of traditional religious moralizing than is scientifically justified" (1975, p. 1109).

The claim itself takes numerous forms: religion as a research variable is underrepresented in mainstream psychological journals (Weaver, Klime, Samford, Lucas, Larson, & Gorsuch, 1998) and mainstream journals in related fields (Larson, Patterson, Blazer, Omran, & Kaplan, 1986; Craigie, Lin, Larson, & Lyons, 1998). There is an apparent and perhaps unexamined negative attitude toward religion among psychologists (Sarason, 1993), a bias against religion exists in moral development research (Richards & Davison, 1992), there is an antireligious prejudice in admissions to clinical psychology doctoral programs (Gartner, 1986), few professional training programs in psychology address religious issues (Bergin, 1983; Shafranske & Malony, 1990) and such neglect appears to be of little concern to those trained in such programs (Sheridan, Bullis, Adcock, Berlin, & Miller, 1992), religion (other than religious pathology) is not well-represented in psychology textbooks (Lehr & Spilka, 1989), and clinicians as well as other mental health specialists rarely make referrals to clergy (Koenig, Bearon, Hoyer, & Tr воз и когда религиозные...
ideation is involved (Kevin, 1976). This lack of respect is perhaps best underscored by the results of a sample of APA members in the mid-1980s who rated Division 36 (then known as Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues) last among the then existing 41 APA Divisions in terms of importance and interest to the field as a whole (Harari & Peters, 1987).

Such lack of respect may contribute to a "righteous indignation" among those in the field given the growing literature, likely "far more voluminous than many psychologists would suppose" (Wulff, 1986, p. 44), that religion and spirituality are importantly related to a number of domains of great interest to psychologists. For example, there is now a substantial body of literature investigating the relationship of religion and spirituality with mental (see Garner, 1996; also see Ventis, 1995) and physical (see Dull & Skoikan, 1995, also see Hill & Butter, 1995) health. The relationship is complex with religion and spirituality correlating both positively and negatively with mental and physical health, though on balance the benefits of religion and spirituality seem to outweigh the disadvantages (Bergin, 1983; Payne, Bergin, Bielen, & Jenkins, 1991). Similarly, religious commitment has a number of positive and negative derivative social functions (see Paloutzian & Kremen, 1995): it is a consistent negative predictor of drug abuse (Gosue, 1995) as well as premarital and extramarital sexuality (Cochran & Beeghley, 1991), and a consistent positive predictor of marital adjustment (Hansen, 1992) and family stability (Steinmetz, 1979); but also it may be a contributor to some forms of child abuse (Bottoms, Shaver, Goodman, & Qin, 1995) and certain types of religion appear related to prejudice and discrimination (Hunsberger, 1995). The research evidence supports what William James (1902) recognized nearly a century ago when he distinguished between sick-souled and healthy-minded religion, that is, religion cannot be simplistically labeled as wholly good or wholly bad (Zinnbauer, Par- gament, & Scott, in press).

Why the neglect?

Numerous reasons have been posited for the apparent snub of religion and spirituality in research and practice. Certainly a commonly cited reason is that psychologists as a group are significantly less religious/spiritual than the population as a whole (Shafranske, 1996; Sheridan et al., 1992), though the precise reason for this difference [which may not be as large as once believed (Shafranske, 1996)] is not fully understood. Additional insight can be gained from the historical and philosophical context where religion and spirituality were casualties of psychology's dogged determination to gain status in an age of science (Vande Kemp, 1996). Indeed, during psychology's crucial infancy at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries, modern science was displacing religious authority as a dominant source of truth (Barbour, 1990; Karier, 1986) and the corresponding metaphysical assumptions of naturalism, determinism, materialism, and reductionism, as well as the positivist epistemological assumption of empiricism were taking hold. Such assumptions conflict with many theistic religious traditions (see Richards & Bergin, 1997, pages 21-35, for an overview of these conflicting assumptions).

The new zeitgeist

However, in the words of the eminent psychologist Bob Dylan, "the times they are a-changin," resulting in a "new zeitgeist" in psychology (Richards & Bergin, 1997). The indicators and precipitators of such change are numerous. First, though the religious landscape is changing with a new breed of spirituality that is sometimes distinct from traditional conceptions of religion (Larsen, Swyers, & McCullough, 1998; Spilka, 1993; Turner, Lusoff, Barnhouse, & Lu, 1995; Zinnbauer et al., in press), there remains in the culture as a whole a persistent and possibly renewed commitment to religious and/or spiritual belief (Gallup, 1994; Gallup & Castelli, 1989; Shorto, 1997). Such commitment is increasingly acknowledged by psychologists and other social scientists and calls for a revision among social theorists of classic secularization theory (Hunter, 1983; Stark & Bainbridge, 1996). Second, the noticeable decline of a positivist philosophy undergirding psychology-as-science

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What has the Psychology of Religion to Offer?

In a number of applied ways I have already answered this question by reviewing the literature on the relationship between religion/spirituality and the applied topics of mental health, physical health, and behaviors with social implications. These findings offer much to the larger discipline (and to other disciplines as well) and should not be disregarded, especially in an age of social accountability for research funding.

But now I am thinking more in basic research terms; how can the study of religious experience (and perhaps religion itself) promote understanding of basic psychological and social processes? It seems to me that this question is fundamentally different than the question most of us psychologists of religion usually ask: how can the study of psychology promote understanding of religious experience? Both are legitimate questions — it's just that one is far more frequently employed as an underlying reason for doing research in the psychology of religion than the other. If we can empirically demonstrate how the study of religion/spirituality advances the field of psychology by contributing to our knowledge of basic cognitive and affective processes, by generating fresh insight into some limited and tired perspectives on personality functioning, and by providing a moral frame of reference as a situated context (as it often is) for investigating certain social-psychological dynamics, then the psychology of religion may indeed have something important to offer the broader discipline and thereby stand to gain a certain measure of respect. The argument has been made before (e.g., Gorsuch, 1988, Paloutzian, 1986), though perhaps in different language than used here, and is offered within the spirit of Jones' (1994) constructive mode of interaction.

I will devote the rest of this paper to two broad domains of research where I believe the psychology of religion and spirituality has much to offer. The position assumed here is that religion and spirituality are not totally unique variables for psychologists to study (see Dities, 1969 for a discussion of four possible positions on the uniqueness of the religion variable as a psychological construct). This may be an obvious assumption to those doing psychological research in this field, but it is rarely made explicit and, more importantly, may not be as widely shared as we think, especially among psychologists who choose not to study the religion variable.

Broad Domain #1: The Study of Affect

I mention this first because those who know me well know that this is where I believe the scientific study of religion has much to say to psychology. Much seminal work in modern theology stresses the centrality of feeling in religious experience: Schleiermacher's characterization of religion as that sense of absolute dependence when experiencing an existential relationship with God or One's two-fold
creaturily feeling of fear or repulsion (mysterium tremendum) and fascination or attraction (mysterium fascinans) in the presence of the numinous. Though religion is the source of such profound emotional experience and despite James' (1902) insistence "on rehabilitating the element of feeling in religion and subordinating its intellectual part" (p. 491), affect has been largely disregarded in the psychology of religion (Hill, 1995). This is understandable, in part, because the study of affect has been stigmatized by psychologists until the past two decades. There is, however, a renewed interest in affect and psychologists of religion may be in a unique position to contribute to our growing understanding of affective processes (see Hill & Hood, in press).

To argue, as Schleiermacher and Otto have done, that religion is based on feeling, is to also suggest that religion is similar to emotional experience (Watts, 1996). Without reducing religion to emotion, both are human states that involve the whole person and both are integrative in that they include virtually all psychological phenomena (i.e., biological, social, cognitive, etc.). (Watts, 1996). Religious experience may become automatized and thereby occur without conscious reflection (Hill, 1994; Hill & Hood, in press), similar to much affective processing (Isen & Diamond, 1989), but also both may involve considerable reflection. Also, both religion (James, 1902) and affect (Finch, 1997; Ortony, Sommerson, & Clore, 1992) are not potentially authoritative, meaning that both have the intensity capacity to override other concerns or issues of the moment. Furthermore, both religion (Pargament, 1997a) and affect (Fischer & Tangney, 1995; Watts, 1992) can be both adaptive and maladaptive, possibly in similar ways (Watts, 1996).

Both religion and emotion are also socially constituted (Averill, 1996; Oatley, 1993). "Emotions are constructed according to blueprints (norms and rules) laid down by social institutions, of which religion is a prime example ... religious creeds are made plausible or implausible by the kinds of emotional experiences they engender. New creeds know they have 'arrived,' not when they accept intellectually the creed of their new religion, but when they experience the emotions considered appropriate to that religion" (Averill, 1996, p. 99). How religious organizations serve as social "enabling mechanisms" (Averill, 1992) that help determine appropriate and adaptive emotional experience and expression has yet to be explored.

**Specific emotional experiences.** Most religious systems have something substantial to say about emotional experiences and expression. Though it can be argued that virtually all emotions are fundamentally social, some emotions, particularly the "self-conscious emotions" of embarrassment (or social anxiety), pride, guilt, and shame (Tangney & Fischer, 1997) are especially social in that 1) their defining characteristics are socially constructed, 2) they are experienced in the context of a real or imagined social interaction, 3) they are endowed with significance by social communication (i.e., socialization), and 4) they are associated with particular appraisals of the self and others (Barrett, 1995). How various social constitutions of religion, including specific teachings, affect such self-conscious emotions is a fertile research domain of potentially great value not just to the psychology of religion, but the psychology of emotion as well.

Our understanding of affect may be best served by the psychological study of religion and spirituality through a prototypical approach (Russell, 1991) to the study of emotion (Hill, 1995). Members of an emotional category (e.g., anger) are determined not by consensual definition but by sufficient resemblance to prototypical exemplars, often in the form of scripts. For example, in the case of interpersonal anger, an actual event may be compared with the following prototypical components: harmful intention by offender, victim strikes at offender. Rod Bassett and I (Bassett, 1995; Bassett & Hill, in press) have suggested a religious prototypical model, possibly used for instance by those intrinsically-committed to religion, where the definition of an affective experience is defined by the content of religious beliefs. We have offered a modified version of Schachter and Singer's (1962) theory of emotion, suggesting that emotion is a function of physiological activity or

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arousal ("A"), cognitive interpretation ("C"), and expression ("E"). This "ACE" model proposes that what determines the moral direction of an emotion are the cognitive and expressive dimensions. For example, an earlier investigation (Basset et al., 1989) found that Christians utilize four criteria in discriminating positive ("righteous") from negative ("sinful") anger: 1) whether or not the person was following specific Godly principles; 2) whether or not the person experienced initial negative results from the anger; 3) whether or not another person was being mistreated; and 4) whether or not the person overreacted in anger. The first criterion involves cognitive interpretation while the last two criteria involve expression.

Self-Evaluation: It is maintained that self-evaluation is guided by four primary motives: self-assessment, self-enhancement, self-verification, and self-improvement (Taylor, Neter, & Waymont, 1995). It could easily be argued that each of these four underlying motives of the self may include religious and spiritual dimensions for the sizable portion of the American population that claims religion and/or spirituality are important in their lives. At the very least, the extent to which these underlying motives are influenced by one's religiosity and spirituality deserves empirical attention. Yet the self-evaluation literature is largely self-contained and rarely involves other literatures, either inside or outside of the field of psychology. I will briefly consider one theory of self-evaluation with an eye not only toward the potential application of the theory to religion, but also toward how an understanding of religious and spiritual processes may enrich the theory. Much of the discussion here lies in with my later discussion on humility.

Higgins (1987) proposed a theory of self-discrepancy as a way of relating self-evaluation with affect. Arguing that among theories concerned with self-evaluation (e.g., achievement motivation theories) several stress vulnerability to general positive or negative states but fail to emphasize different kinds of positive and negative emotional experiences, Higgins proposes that one must consider three basic domains of the self: the actual self (your representation of the attributes that someone, yourself or another, believes you actually possess), the ideal self (your representation of the attributes that someone, yourself or another, would like you ideally to possess — someone's hopes or aspirations for you), and the ought self (your representation of the attributes that someone, yourself or another, believes you should or ought to possess — someone's sense of your responsibilities, duties, or obligations). Higgins points to an extensive literature that the ideal and ought selves should be distinguished from each other and that discrepancies between the actual self and each of these other two selves lead to different negative emotional experiences: 1) deflection-related emotions (e.g., disappointment, dissatisfaction, sadness, etc.) associated with absence of positive outcomes as a result of discrepancies between the actual and ideal self, and 2) agitation-related emotions (e.g., fear, threat, restlessness, etc.) associated with presence of negative outcomes resulting from discrepancies between the actual and ought self. Several important empirical questions for the psychologist of religion come to mind: To what extent is either type of self-discrepancy associated with religious experience (teachings, parenting styles, etc.)? Does religious experience emphasize one type of self-discrepancy more than the other? Does religious experience provide mechanisms (e.g., teachings about God's acceptance and grace) that minimize either type of self-discrepancy?

Higgins (1987) also recognizes that emotions associated with self-discrepancies will differ depending upon who defines the ideal and ought selves (others or self). For example, deflection-related emotions due to a discrepancy between actual and ideal/own self may include disappointment or dissatisfaction whereas if the ideal self is heavily influenced or determined by someone else (ideal/other), the person may be vulnerable to some of the "self-conscious" deflection-related emotions discussed earlier such as embarrassment or shame. Parallel agitation-related emotions may include fear or feeling threatened (actual vs. ought/own) and guilt or intenseness (actual vs. ought/other). Again, the psychologist of religion may see numerous questions for research. Are some negative emotions, if tied to self-discrepancy, more acceptable or justified within a religious system than others? Are some,
because of the religious system, more difficult to cope with? Are some negative emotions preventable? Are some healthy?

Again, however, the research possibilities for psychologists of religion are, in and of themselves, maybe less important than what the psychology of religion offers to self-discrepancy theory. For instance, to the extent that the ideal and ought selves are religiously or spiritually based, the distinction between the two selves is muddied. Many religions teach that the ideal self is the ought self. In Christianity, for example, servanthood as exemplified in the teachings and life of Christ ("WWJD"—"what would Jesus do") is considered both an obligation and aspiration. Similarly, the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-23) is conceptualized in Christian thought as both an ideal state of existence modeled after the character of God as well as a command of scripture (Briscoe, 1993).

**Experiential Knowing.** Epstein’s (1993, 1994) Cognitive-Experiential Self Theory (CEST) proposes a model on how human beings function as knowing persons. CEST describes two parallel but interacting modes of information processing, both of which are adaptive: 1) a rational system that is largely conscious and free from affect and 2) an unconscious experiential system that is tied to affect. Everyone utilizes both information processing modes, though people may differ in terms of their relative utilization and the effectiveness of the two modes (Epstein, Pacini, Dener-Raj, and Heier, 1996). Distinctive characteristics of the two modes are listed in Table 1.

It seems to me that religion and spirituality is based largely in the experiential mode, though they certainly contain rational mode components as well (see Edwards, 1997). In fact, there has been a direct call from Epstein for psychologists of religion to test CEST’s distinction between the two processing modes. He contends that “Religion provides perhaps the most impressive evidence of all that there are two fundamentally different modes of processing information. For many individuals, rational, analytical thinking fails to provide as satisfactory a way of understanding the world and of directing their behavior in it as does religious teaching... religion is better suited than analytical thinking for communicating within the experiential system” (1994, p. 712). Research on strongly held beliefs (see Abelson, 1988) suggests that such beliefs are based on an affective foundation so that perhaps a committed religious faith should be foremost conceptualized as “an emotional landscape of primal maternal strength and simplicity upon which we erect structures of reasoned belief” (Gzorak, 1997, p. 194).

How might psychologists of religion study the experiential system? After all, the psychology of religion literature is replete with research on the rational system as defined by CEST: self-report measures on religious beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors; reasoned-action models, moral and faith development (with a heavy cognitive emphasis); an I-E paradigm virtually entirely reliant on analytical self-report measures for its empirical base; a "questing" critique of intrinsic vs. extrinsic faith as a mature religion on the basis of an alleged social desirability bias; cognitive complexity, open vs. closed-mindedness, models of cognitive integration of psychology with specific religious and spiritual traditions, coping strategies, religious attributions, and so forth. All of these are extremely valuable research domains that have propelled the field forward and deserve further consideration. However, as long as we employ a model that studies primarily the analytical, relies on conscious appraisal of events, stresses cognitive differentiation and integration, and relies heavily on self-report measures (an analytical tool that is much more conducive to measurement of the rational system), then we are likely simplifying the complexity of a rich experiential religion and spirituality. Obviously, to better tap the experiential system, alternative methodologies will have to be utilized including, but not limited to, qualitative research, linguistic analysis, and the use of narratives. However, not all methodologies designed to study the experiential system need be foreign to what we are accustomed in empirical research. I (Hill, 1994, Hill & Basset, 1992) have proposed elsewhere that we consider the distinction of automatic (nonreflective, effortless

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not requiring cognitive capacity, inescapable) versus controlled (reflective, effortful, requiring cognitive capacity, escapable) processing of attitudes as a way of getting at the experiential nature of religious faith. Creative quantitative methodologies (though somewhat elaborate and possibly expensive) have been developed (e.g., response time) necessary to identify attitude valence such as "good" or "bad" to, in this case religious objects as a measure of attitude automaticity.

A provocative aspect of CEST for the psychology of religion and where the psychology of religion may contribute much to further develop the theory are four postulated implicit belief systems, each associated with a basic need. Each need requires satisfaction, which is assessed primarily in an intuitive fashion on the experiential level (hence, these are identified as implicit belief systems). The four implicit belief systems with the related four basic needs include: 1) the degree to which the world is perceived as benevolent or malevolent (associated with the basic need to manage pleasure and pain); 2) the degree to which the world is perceived as meaningful or meaningless (associated with the need to develop a coherent conceptual system); 3) the extent to which people are comforting, trustworthy, and dependable versus dangerous and untrustworthy (tied in with the need for relatedness); and 4) the degree to which the self is worthy or unworthy (related to the need for self-esteem). Each of these four implicit belief systems are inextricably intertwined with religious and spiritual concerns for a great many people (see Hill & Hood, in press, for a more detailed analysis). In other words, religion and spirituality are major players, players primarily on the experiential field, that help provide answers within the implicit belief systems and thereby provide direction in meeting the associated basic needs. I will briefly discuss one of these needs, the need for relatedness, within the context of religious experience represented by the Christian faith. Other religious faiths as well as many contemporary forms of spirituality can provide alternative contextualized understandings of this fundamental need.

A recent review of the literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) found support for the notion that within human nature there exists a strong need to form and maintain lasting social relationships with others. The need to belong uncovered by Baumeister and Leary stands in contrast to the view of psychological maturity common to what was once referred to as psychology's "third force." That earlier generation of humanistic psychology centered around a few major concepts: self-actualization, individuation, authenticity, etc. These concepts describe a process of maturing that is primarily going on inside a singularly isolated individual where others play only a facilitating or, perhaps more frequently, a hindering role. The need to belong, other than identified as a third-level need in Maslow's hierarchical system, was rarely discussed and even then it was only to pave the way to experience and have met the higher-order needs of self-esteeem and self-actualization.

In contrast, Christianity portrays a social and communal definition of the person similar to that described by Baumeister and Leary (1995): "Life is relationship. Death is separation: not cessation. Separation from God or other is the product of sin and is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in Adam and Eve's separation from God's presence in the Garden with the resulting mutual alienation" (Carter & Barnhurst, 1986, p. 4). Thus, to be in sin from a Christian perspective is "not merely, or even most fundamentally, to be in state of mira-psychic collapse, it is to be found in relationship to personal beings external to oneself, and most fundamentally in relationship to God" (Roberts, 1997a, p. 15). So, for Christians, to be mature and complete as an individual is to be in a proper relationship with God.

Though theologians tend to describe this relationship in contractual or legal terms (CEST's rational mode of knowing), there is a personal and experiential aspect to this relationship as well, characterized by certain "fruits of the spirit" (Gal 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. What results, ideally, is a spiritual mode of being that flows out of an I-Thou relationship (Buber, 1970) characterized by mutual giving and openness, intimacy, sense of vulnerability, desire to spend time together, and expression.
of affection. Trust and faith grows through this relationship, ever producing greater stability in the relationship itself (Carter & Barnhurst, 1986) and thereby helping meet the need for relatedness.

What I have attempted to describe is what appears to me to be an important component of the experiential essence of Christian being. This is not meant to be apologetic for Christian theology. To the extent, however, that the experiential mode of knowing is central to our psychological makeup and to the extent that "religion is better suited than analytical thinking for communicating with the experiential system" (Epstein, 1994, p. 712), perhaps we should seriously consider experiential claims within specific religious traditions.

I have tried to provide a jump-start suggestion on how this can be done within the tradition with which I am most familiar.

(Editor's Note: The final part of Hills' address can be found in the Psychology of Religion Spring, 1999 Newsletter)

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**TABLE 1**

### Comparison of the Experiential and Rational Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential System</th>
<th>Rational System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Holistic</td>
<td>1. Analytic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Associationistic connections</td>
<td>3. Logical connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Behavior mediated by &quot;vibes&quot; from past experiences</td>
<td>4. Behavior mediated by conscious appraisal of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Encodes reality in concrete images, metaphors, and narratives</td>
<td>5. Encodes reality in abstract symbols, words, and numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. More rapid processing: Oriented toward immediate action</td>
<td>6. Slower processing: Oriented toward delayed action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Slower to change: Changes with repetitive or intense experience</td>
<td>7. Changes more rapidly: Changes with speed of thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Experiences passively and preconsciously</td>
<td>10. Experienced actively and consciously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Self-evidently valid: &quot;Experiencing is believing&quot;</td>
<td>11. Requires justification via logic and evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: From Epstein (1994).*

In her thin volume, Myers urges adults to create a "spirituality of caring." Indeed, her very first sentence is, "I have written this book for those in the secular world who are concerned about the ability of young children to thrive." Myers then tells us that her book is "for anyone who seeks a theoretical and practical language to talk about spiritual development in the early years."

Spirituality is defined in different and vague ways throughout the book, a semantic fuzziness endemic to this topic. But the definition most germane to her thesis—that humans develop within interpersonal and communal contexts—is that spirituality is a "web of meaning interrelatedly connecting self, other, world, and cosmos."

She focuses on what adults can do to help children build such webs of meaning. A spirituality of caring requires that adults create for children hospitable space, focus on the centrality of children's own experience, have a sincere presence, and cultivate a hopeful transcendence. Theoretically, Myers draws from constructivists, phenomenologists, and developmentalists. From the last group, she particularly uses Erikson's framework and Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" concept. To help us understand a spirituality of caring, Myers employs early childhood anecdotes and excerpts from children's literature. Some of the anecdotes and narrative excerpts are effective in conveying her ideas. In my college seminar on children's religious and spiritual development, there was mixed opinion on her approach. Some students agreed with me that many

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anecdotes were tite and did not induce important lessons about spirituality; others greatly valued her anecdotes.

The book has assets. Its intent is praiseworthy, and Myers rightly aligns herself with the claim that "it takes a whole village to raise a whole child." Further, stressing the incompleteness of extant theories of development, Myers wants the developmental psychology canon to include an image of children as "spiritual pilgrims," in Robert Coles' lovely phrase. I especially enjoyed her section on ritual in children's lives, and my students particularly liked the different models of spirituality in the chapter "On Spiritualities." Most students enjoyed the relaxed writing style, though some felt the book's flow was sacrificed by overuse of subheadings within chapters.

Despite the book's assets, I was generally disappointed. I did not develop an improved "theoretical and practical language" or refined notion of a spirituality of caring. Though a separate chapter was devoted to her model and its core conditions, these concepts must be more clearly articulated. For example, on pages 61-62: "Spirituality is a construction of meaning meant to inform the human way we engage in that process of transcendence... A spirituality of caring is a way of naming what it is we do as a community to nurture and educate spirited young children for the invitations to transcendence presented by life." I find too much imprecision in the language. As Parmenides and his colleagues might say, Myers needs to unfuzz the fuzzy. Consequently, I failed to see a strong link between children's spirituality and thriving. I found the book emphasizing too much adults' actions rather than children's spirituality; perhaps a more specific title would have helped. The author needed to reconcile better her claim that spirituality is a "biological condition of being human" with her reliance on constructivist models of development that emphasize adult-mediated mechanisms.

I commend Myers for contributing to the small literature on children's spirituality and for her plea for a more child-sensitive world. Many readers, such as early childhood educators, will benefit from this book. My hope, though, is that her model will be refined in the future.

APPLICATION FOR DIVISION 36: Psychology of Religion American Psychological Association

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I hope you noticed the Division 36 Membership Application form in this edition of the Newsletter. In his incoming presidential remarks found in the Fall 1998 Newsletter, Division 36 President Dr. Siang-Yang Tan, Ph.D., wrote that one of his goals during his presidency is to increase Division 36 membership. We can all do our part in encouraging membership by distributing a copy of the Membership Application to our colleagues who may be interested in the Psychology of Religion.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank two people. John R. Tisdale, Ph.D., continues his service as Book Review Editor for the Psychology of Religion Newsletter. His work in identifying reviewers and providing me with timely completed book reviews is greatly appreciated. Also, Paul Williamson, a graduate student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, is coordinating the mailing list for student affiliates and associates of Division 36. The Newsletter is mailed to all APA members from APA's national offices in Washington D.C. Because APA does not handle mailings to division associates without great cost to the Division, Paul maintains the list and supplies the Newsletter editor with corrections and additions. If you are a student affiliate or division associate and have questions about your newsletter, please contact Paul at 423-330-1500 or at wpx103@aol.com.