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Foundations,
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CHALLENGES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD AMONG TRADITIONAL
AGE COLLEGE STUDENTS OF MONOTHEISTIC FAITHS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY (215 pp.)

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This study contributes to the dialogue in the higher education literature on spirituality by describing how traditional-age college students of monotheistic faiths make meaning of a challenge to their conception of God. These students' experiences were examined in order to address two, identified deficiencies in the literature: a) the neglect of perspectives that assume a supernatural reality; and b) the unintentional suppression of perspectives that view spirituality and religion as being intertwined. Extensive, open-ended interviews were conducted to access the meaning-making processes of eight college students who attend a public university and identify strongly with one of the Abrahamic faiths: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. A phenomenological approach was employed to analyze the students' meaning-making processes and identify the common essence among their experiences free from assumptions about spirituality found in the literature or held by the investigator.

The phenomenological essence of the participants' experiences was discerned as a disruption to their relationship with God due to their expectations not being met in regards to how divine authority should be exercised. These disruptions precipitated challenges to relationships both inside and outside of their religious communities as

participants worked to re-conceptualize God and their relationship with Him. These findings demonstrate the centrality God played in the spiritual experiences and the interrelatedness of spirituality and religion for the participants; and thus, suggest the need for a broader, more inclusive definition of spirituality that accounts for the experiences of naturalists and supernaturalists, and for those who divide and those who join spirituality and religion.