

Book Review

1. 'Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment: Bridging Faith and Person-centred Therapy'

Author: Brian Thorne

Paperback: 366 pages

Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell (21 Sep 2012)

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It was a great joy once again to make the acquaintance of the wise and eminently readable Professor Brian Thorne in this generous compendium of his 'greatest hits' from the past few decades. Prof. Thorne, until recently Professor of Counselling at the University of East Anglia, has made it his lifelong task to integrate Person-Centred (Rogerian or Humanistic) Counselling with his own humane corner of Christianity. Carl Rogers, the founder of the school and a person whom Thorne met on several occasions, is a key motivating figure behind the thoughts and attitudes of Thorne and it is no surprise to learn that Rogers himself had originally wanted to train as a minister before 'defecting' to psychology. Thorne, from his High Church Anglicanism, is able to recover the lost soul of Rogers and present work that is highly integrative and instructive to the Christian pastor. Having used his work for several years with my students I have noticed how he always elicits surprise, joy and familiarity (not bred with contempt) when students encounter his writings. This collected volume will do nothing to lessen that effect. You will find all the 'essential Thorne' in this volume as well as a few recent essays and sermons never published before... perhaps most provocatively the recent 'Collision of Worlds' which argues against professionalization and state-regulation of therapy in the UK. A somewhat surprising position that is so well argued one finds it hard to resist Thorne's conclusions. His earlier classic, 'Person-Centred Counselling and Christian Spirituality' (1998) is well represented as are his other classic texts on this intersection of two worlds, too often, sadly, estranged from each other. Thorne's is not just an optimistic thesis about psychology and its necessary relationship to religious practice, but an optimistic view of human nature. Lovers of the doctrine of Original Sin will find little to amuse themselves here as Thorne's bright

Anglicanism extols the beauty of the human form in relationships, sexuality, love, charity and faith. In a dark world his writing has always been a tonic and this volume does not in this respect disappoint. In his long career he has tackled numerous areas on the interface between psychology and religion: professional ethics, the interaction of faith and personality type, personality disorder and clinical intervention. In doing so he has, in his own words, often been seen as a 'maverick heretic who threatened the model of the Christian family and the fabric of Christian morality'. Yet despite 'throwing caution to the winds' on several occasions Thorne has, I believe, managed to reconcile much that is seemingly irreconcilable and has formulated a world-view that integrates contemporary psychology and traditional Christian doctrine and spirituality in an attractive and important fashion. 'Humanistic' he may be by label, but 'humane' is the word that occurred to me time and again as I read these enlightened scripts. Not only Christians but psychologists will be challenged anew by these writings. As mentioned, the 2009 essay 'A Collision of Worlds' presents a forensic analysis of the 'medical paradigm' that many psychologists today fetishize as the only available model for psychological intervention. Thorne may be a heretic but the profession desperately needs such heretics today if it is avoid making desperate mistakes in the future. So then, this is a collection of essays to savour and enjoy – the clear fruits of a life spent in the service of the Holy Spirit, the alleviation of suffering and first and foremost, the Truth.

Dr Peter Tyler, St Mary's University

2. Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction

Author: Philip Sheldrake

Paperback: 133 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press (2012)

ISBN: 978-0-19-958875-6

Price: £7.99

Anyone who has ever puzzled over the myriad contemporary uses of that oddly weasel word 'spirituality' will find much to enjoy in this latest addition to the excellent OUP 'very short introduction' series. Its author, Professor Philip Sheldrake, will be already known to many readers for his lifetime contributions to the development of Christian spirituality as a subject of critically detailed academic study. He does