

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.

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## 2. Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction

Author: Philip Sheldrake

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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

not leave these credentials behind in writing this book, however this is clearly a book also aimed (as the rest of the series) to the general reader so much technical discussion is jettisoned – which is probably just as well. The other development of Sheldrake’s style from his earlier works is the focus in this volume on ‘spirituality’ tout court rather than simply Christian spirituality. The explosion of interest in the field over the past couple of decades makes a comprehensive and coherent survey of the whole field well-nigh impossible at the current time. It is to Sheldrake’s credit that he neither trivialises or excessively dilutes the meaning and reference of the term as he gives a magisterial overview of its manifestations in world culture: past, present and future. To have achieved this in just over a hundred (small) pages is no mean feat.

The first section looking at ‘What is spirituality?’, addresses all the usual misgivings that arise when this term is employed in everyday discourse. Sheldrake, perhaps wisely, decides to concentrate on the manifestations of spirituality within specific world religions (‘Hindu spirituality’, ‘Islamic spirituality’ etc.) before turning to wider deployments of the term such as in ‘secular spiritualities’, the relationship of spirituality to philosophy, psychology, the arts and so on. This will form the template of the rest of the book as he addresses questions such as the relationship of spirituality to experience, way of life, society and religion. Each chapter contains a neat summary of differing faith and non-faith views to these questions and will be a welcome asset to my students who will no doubt find it a very useful introduction to the field before embarking upon deeper study. To aid this Sheldrake provides a helpful bibliography which will help the reader to pursue their own researches into the areas he indicates. It is a pleasant surprise to find a good index in a book this size, and having reviewed several more substantial books recently without an index this little volume puts many larger contemporaries to shame in its comprehensive and elegant critical apparatus.

I hope that this book will help to de-mystify some of the clutter attached to the word ‘spirituality’ and advance further its critical acceptance as a legitimate field of discourse. By concentrating on the practical as well as the theoretical aspects of the term Sheldrake is to be congratulated in producing an eminently readable but critically thorough guide to an often perplexing field.

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