

BOOK REVIEWS

Psychotherapy and spirituality: integrating the spiritual dimension into therapeutic practice

Schreurs A.

ISBN

Jessica Kingsley Publications, 2002.

‘As the spiritual relationship is in fact a relationship with life itself, it has an enormous, though often unobserved, impact on how people relate not just to the Divine but also on how they relate to each other.’ (p196) Agneta Schreurs, a Dutch group analyst, currently working on a research project on spirituality at the Free University of Amsterdam, uses this argument to stress the significance of the spiritual in the lives of the clients – both religious and non-religious – of her fellow therapists, for whom this book is primarily written,

She argues convincingly that, since both our inner world and our relationships with others are influenced by the cultural tradition we inherit, it is necessary in therapeutic relationships to acknowledge, and to work with, this past history, including the spiritual dimension of our heritage.

The author is clearly committed to her subject, but leaves the impression that she is a therapist who has studied spirituality, rather than a therapist who experiences a spiritual dimension to life. Sometimes this is an advantage, keeping the author objective, while considering a subject which for many is intensely personal. The disadvantage, however, is that her writing comes across as somewhat idealistic, and remote from the real world of her clients and their problems. She makes a distinction between people on a spiritual journey, who ‘would be unlikely to have needed the help of a psychotherapist [and] their less talented, less perceptive and less confident brothers and sisters’ (p222) implying that the ability to experience the spiritual, and intellect, are closely related. Her academic approach fails to bring alive the spiritual dynamic that she argues is present in the lives of her clients.

That said, the section headed ‘relational aspects of spirituality’ raises some interesting questions, and challenges to preachers, about how our understanding of a relationship with God influences our inter-

personal relationships, both from the perspective of the therapist, and of the client.

The introduction to the book is an excellent outline of the aims of her research, and helpful to chaplains and pastoral carers, both as an insight into the world of the therapist, and as a reassurance that, within that profession, there is concern about the spiritual dimension to life.

Lorna Murray, Chaplain, Royal Edinburgh.

Rehabilitation Counselling in Physical and Mental Health

Etherington K.

ISBN 1-85302-968-8

Jessica Kingsley

Counselling in the field of rehabilitation, or more broadly secondary in tertiary health care settings, in the UK is a relatively recent development in contrast to its expansion in primary care. This book is aimed at filling a gap in the literature for and about counsellors working in these areas. For the uninformed health professional in rehabilitation like myself with a superficial knowledge and limited exposure to professional counselling it provides a useful introduction to the subject. How informative it would be to those who already regard counselling as the principal component of their present work is impossible for me to gauge but one suspects they will find it a good read. The editor’s expressed concern is to provide a series of good stories to illustrate the discipline rather than produce a particularly academic text and storytelling is certainly the style adopted.

The introductory and first chapters provide a potted history of the developments of both rehabilitation medicine and the counselling profession in Britain, particularly the course at the University of Bristol. The reference list to these chapters give a helpful guide to the relevant literature. The final chapter follows the story format and invites the reader to correspond with the editor by e-mail with comments. The remaining ten chapters include six dealing with the *physical* disorders of multiple sclerosis, head injury, stroke, hearing loss, and ulcerative colitis and four concerned with mental health issues

mainly alcohol and drug addiction. One of the central messages of the text, and of counselling, is that the ills that befall people are never exclusively physical or psychological but a complex combination of both, a complexity compounded by environmental factors. Thus there are frequent references to the need to address the specific issues peculiar to the individual client in that person's own unique situation. Inevitable there is a degree of repetition across the chapters as the authors outline their roles and experience of counselling but this does not detract from the educational value of the book. As is often the case, the inclusion of the personal experience of disabling conditions by those affected is especially welcome and edifying. The lessons relating to the specific diagnosis covered are likely to be readily transferable to counsellors working with disorders of other symptoms such as cardiac, respiratory or renal diseases of indeed the field of palliative care.

One would encourage medical students and undergraduates in other health professions to read this book to gain insight into the wider effects of illness and disablement and how they should be managed. Many postgraduates would benefit in a similar way. Thus the editor would achieve her aim of informing people about counsellors. It is also likely to prove popular with counsellors themselves.

Brian Pentland, head of unit for the rehabilitation studies unit, University of Edinburgh.

Supportive and Palliative Care in Cancer: an introduction

Regnard C. & Kindlen M.

ISBN 1-85775-937-1

Radcliffe Medical Press

Following the implementation of Calman-Hine and NHS Cancer Plan recommendations comes this easy top read book suitable for Healthcare Professionals with little or no knowledge of Palliative Care, undergraduates and the lay person.

It is clearly laid out being divided into 8 chapters encompassing: Cancer, Cancer Treatments, Supportive and Palliative Care, Cancer Pain, Symptoms Communication, Dying and Bereavement, and Spirituality & Equality.

The much welcomed glossary at the back of the book explains those terms with a more medical, ana-

tomical of physiological nature, and again is set in simple text.

Each chapter is split into sections under the headings *What should I Know?* and *How can I use this information?* to enable application of the basic principles. There is also a *Key Points* summary box at the end of each chapter.

This simplistic text is in black and white with some basic diagrams/pictures to facilitate understanding. It can sometimes be slightly repetitive and is often vague, but does not baffle you with medical jargon as an advantage!

The book explores the journey of a cancer patient, from diagnosis to death, and provides a clear explanation of each step. I would recommend this book to anyone with an interest, but little experience in Palliative Care as well as those finding it difficult to explain to their patients certain aspects of the disease.

Victoria Nesbitt, senior medical student, University of Glasgow.

Ethics, Management and Mythology: Rational Decision making for Health Service

Professionals.

Michael Loughlin

ISBN 1 85775 754 X

Radcliffe Medical Press

This splendid swashbuckling critique of ethics in healthcare targets particularly the rhetoric of 'total quality management' in healthcare, and what Loughlin describes as the business of bioethics. The concept of total quality is certainly vague and confusing, and Loughlin is surely right in suggesting that it is dangerous to have a theory of quality in management which is often rather remote from clinical realities, and treats the hospital as a business rather than a caring and healing community. Some of Loughlin's criticisms of bioethics have some validity, and at times he sounds rather like Stanley Hauerwas in his scathing denunciations of the growing cadres of 'ethicists' whose opinion is sometimes treated as authoritative. But it is really too much to say that 'The academic agenda of bioethics is determined by the powers that be'! Loughlin should be fair and admit that much, or most, of the business of bioethics is in fact very serious interdisciplinary

wrestling with awkward issues of medical practice in which medical people who will be directly responsible for implementing decisions grapple with the issues in collaboration with others from various disciplines, many of whom are effectively patients' representatives. Elsewhere Loughlin argues that prudent and good decisions cannot be delivered from on high by those who are not deeply involved in practice. He is, of course, right in this, and in as far as he indicates his affinities they are with Aristotle and his concept of practical wisdom.

Some of Loughlin's sharpest barbs are directed at modern philosophers who have nothing to say about the 'real world'. His own position is a kind of moral realism which believes in the reality of goodness, is suspicious of codes, principles and rules, and emphasises compassion and solidarity, but sees no need to ground ethical positions in the soil of religious belief, or fundamental options. Rather they are grounded in our 'common humanity' - a pretty vague concept as far as I can see.

Some of Loughlin's critiques are devastating, particularly of the new managerialism which treats patients as customers and health as a commodity. There is a huge amount of sound sense in this book, and I think it should be set reading for health care managers and other professionals.. But Loughlin is stronger in criticism than in pointing towards solutions. And his assumption of a realist godless morality seems to make him avoid fundamental issues like sin, and guilt and forgiveness, which are in fact really important when people have to take and implement decisions which they sometimes know inevitably fall far short of being 'good'.

Duncan B. Forrester, New College, University of Edinburgh.

Dying and Grieving: A Guide to Pastoral Ministry

Alan Billings

SPCK

ISBN 0-281-05526-2

Not only does this book ask questions, it also provides answers. This book examines how pastoral practice, in the sphere of dying, death and bereavement, should change to meet our changing needs as a society. With helpful hints for reflection, autobiographical stories and useful suggestions for those engaged in pastoral ministry I would humbly suggest this book is a must for those who seek to bal-

ance the distinctly Christian theology of death with a distinctly Christian pastoral response.

In Part One the scene is set by attempting to place dying and grieving in context. Two crucial questions are asked: *What is the place of religion in contemporary society*; and *what can Christianity say about death that might carry conviction in an increasingly secularised world?* Changing social attitudes, structures and demographics are acknowledged as having contributed to our British transition from a 'traditional community to post-traditional society'. This has been accompanied by a waning of interest in religion and a shift in attitudes towards death. However, it would seem that most people still turn to the Church when they arrange a funeral. The challenge therefore to pastoral ministry, for both ordained and laity alike, is to develop a pastoral practice that can articulate for those who still turn to the Church in the face of dying and grieving an authentic, relevant and nourishing pastoral and liturgical experience.

Part Two examines the 'changing landscape of dying, death and bereavement', using the insights of psychology, sociology and autobiographical stories. The author manages to maintain the balance between theory and practice by grounding his examination of the subject matter in the real stuff of human lives and experience - at once both traumatic and inspirational. The author paints for his readers an illuminating and insightful picture of the changing way we have come to die; the way we understand death and conduct funerals; and the way we mourn and grieve. This picture is enhanced by the invitation of the author to his readers to reflect on how they might respond to difficult and contemporary issues likely to arise in their own ministry.

In Part Three, in the light of all that the book has explored the reader is given a clear guide to improving pastoral ministry today. Dying well; handling emotions and setting in perspective; and good grief; are the three elements of the nature of the pastoral care Christians can offer the dying and their families both in terms of our funeral liturgies and pastoral care of the bereaved.

The final word I believe should go to Billings. *'At one time the Christian understanding of death would have been widely understood and accepted. This is no longer the case and if Christian pastors, lay or*

ordained, are to minister to the dying and the bereaved in future they will need to recognize the points at which Christian assumptions and those of the wider culture are likely to diverge. This book is a valuable reference point in that task.

Frank Hannigan, 5th year student, Scotus College, Bearsden.

Reclaiming the Sealskin – Meditations in the Celtic Spirit

Heppenstall-West A.

ISBN 1 901557 66-9

Wild Goose Publications

In an age when worship in the healthcare setting is shaped by words like *inclusive* and where standard Church services seem less and less appropriate this book is a rare gift for the chaplain or worship leader looking to explore the sense of meaning, and the longing or journey towards that ‘something other’, often described as spirituality.

It’s set in the context of the *Celtic Legend of the Selkie*, the mythical seal creature that could also live on land in human form. Sometimes the Selkie would get trapped on land because a human would steal its sealskin, and it became a creature longing for the ocean much as the human soul longs for God. It encourages the reader to explore the longing and search for meaning that is so much a part of the modern sense of spirituality, a spirituality open to the wonders of the world and nature. This is not some loosely pagan exploration though, it is rooted firmly in the Christian faith. For me this book reflects the journey of the human soul, seeking for that *something other*, that sense of presence I know and believe to be God.

The main section of the book encompasses 70 contemplations reflecting on elements of nature and the world. Each contemplation follows the same format of mind, body, and spiritual insight. The *mind* includes knowledge, intellect, rationality and reason. The *body* includes instinct, movement, gut-reaction, feelings and emotions. *Spiritual instinct* is about that sense of something other, of meaning, intuition and prayer. Each reflection opens with a verse of scripture and ends with a prayer firmly rooting the contemplation in our relationship with God while at the same time encouraging us to step out of the box

and explore *our mind* (food for thought), *our body* (what do you do?), and *our spirit* (meanings).

As a hospice chaplain who struggles to find short meaningful reflections for staff Quiet Time, who works in a setting where many staff, by the nature of their work, have that sense of the longing of the human soul in themselves and see it in their patients and their families/carers, this book is a rare inspirational and practical resource.

David Mitchell, chaplain, Marie Curie Centre, Hunters Hill, Glasgow.

Dann B.

Addiction: Pastoral Responses

Abingdon Press, Nashville

ISBN 0-687-04504-5

‘Addiction’ takes the reader on a journey that invites us to open our hearts to people who are Addicts. The Author asks us first to reflect on our own knowledge, thoughts, known truths, pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes - in short to challenge both our objective and subjective views and conclusions about people with alcohol and drug addictions. He then offers us a wider, a less value-laden picture of what may constitute the Addict and their world(s) in the hope that we can find new and meaningful ways in which to both consider and engage with them. Thirdly he offers us his way of working with and for Addicts, a way that for Bucky Dann and for many that he has worked with, offers hope and a way of living with addiction. Finally he takes a critical eye over the technological and biomedical ideologies which govern our world and our abilities or volition to engage with it, with ourselves and with each other. He ends with a message to all of us, a request, a plea to each of us to pay attention to the connections we all have and make and to look for a spiritual path in trying to exorcise our real and metaphorical demons.

What starts as a look into the worlds of the addict ends with recognition that they like us share a common humanity. As you read you are gradually led to consider it not a matter of them and us but instead simply “us”. He links the individual with the whole and argues that the way to happiness, reconciliation, healing, wholeness is by taking account of the connections between all the disparate parts – the unfolding of the individual into the whole and the

enfolded of the whole into the individual. Bucky Dann takes this a further step and suggested that paying this kind of attention is a moral imperative and one that we, if we are to remain spiritually healthy must practice with rigour in our current technological and materialistic world.

As a book it offers a good introduction to the 12 Step Method approach to treating addiction. But while the author does try to qualify the notion of God as it relates to the twelve step method, this book offers a predominantly Christian perspective on this. It would have benefited from a more thorough review of alternative treatment modalities or simply directing the reader in the direction of the appropriate literature. That it does not is a significant weakness in the text and format.

In conclusion this is a useful text for chaplains who come into contact with this particular client group and/or who have a desire to develop a knowledge base of the twelve step method and the wider issues surrounding addiction.

Jim Neville, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Osprey House, Invenress.

This is the Day: Readings and meditations from the Iona Community
Paynter N. (Ed)
ISBN 1 901557 66 9
Wild Goose Publications

I have to admit that until recently my knowledge of the Iona Community was limited to

- Knowing they lived on Iona!
- Wild Goose Publications was somehow linked to the community and I liked some of their publications/music.

However, it is said and I believe it, that nothing happens by chance. David Mitchell, the joint editor, was looking for a short review of this collection of readings and meditations from the Iona Community and so it found its way on to my desk! Then just a few weeks ago I was part of a group giving input to a Justice and Peace Conference from two Glasgow secondary schools. Part of the team that day were members of the Iona Community and I remember how impressed I was by their commitment to a better world for all people and how they challenged

many young people that day to *make a difference*. Yes, nothing happens by chance.

Beware the Ides of March took on a new meaning this year. Between advertisements for the documentary "Who killed Julius Caesar?" we are assailed by the immediacy of war. Its in our living rooms. We are there. We see the carnage first-hand. We hear the sirens and hear the cries of the wounded and dying.

Do you feel like me? Is it hard to clear your head when we are assailed on all sides by news reports, work, meetings, community, commitments? Can you find a few moments to recreate?

Then you might want to pick up this publication.

It is a compilation of readings and meditations collected by Neil Paynter during his four years as a resident member of the community. The Iona Community believe *'that social and political action leading to justice for all people, and encouraged by prayer and discussion, is a vital work of the church at all levels (from the rule of the Iona Community)*. If ever a statement was pertinent for this time, then this is it.

It is a wonderful hotchpotch of readings, personal reflections, scripture, poetry, reminiscences, testimonies. For example, Ian Fraser's *Basic Christian Communities (by spontaneous combustion of the spirit)* – as Ian points out, small Christian communities have been with us a long time - certainly the Iona Family have been praying together since the 1930's – long before we heard of the Latin American Communities.

If you would like to sing along there is John Bell band Graeme Maule's *Will you come and follow me?* To the wonderful Kelvingrove Air. Or take a good long look at Ruth Harvey's *Vision of Church* – over simplistic? I don't think so! We should try it and see!

I will end with a particular favourite of mine *Month 4 Day 20* where you find Lynda Wright's short piece *What gives me hope?* It is stark in its honesty, and it's food for thought.

Veronica McGrath, secretary to the Archbishop of Glasgow.