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Spiritual care and therapy: integrative perspectives

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Hughes are to be commended for helping us all be means by which God's grace – better, God's compassion – becomes real at any time.

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Spiritual Care and Therapy: Integrative Perspectives

Peter VanKatwyk

Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2003

224 pages, \$32.95 Softcover

In *Spiritual Care and Therapy: Integrative Perspectives*, Peter VanKatwyk brings together, in a very personal way, 25 years of experience in teaching, supervising and research in the field of pastoral care and counselling. However, much more than just a summary of his life work and insight, this volume invites the reader to explore the relationships between “care”, “spirituality” and “therapy.”

In the introduction, VanKatwyk suggests that there are two good reasons to move beyond the term “pastoral care.” First, we live in an increasingly pluralistic world where the Judeo-Christian image of shepherding is less meaningful. Second, the concepts of “soul” or “spirit” are being used more and more in the field of counseling and psychotherapy. With this as a starting point, the first section of the book looks at spirituality and care from a variety of perspectives. In the first chapter, VanKatwyk points out that the concept of connectedness is the key link between spirituality and caring. How we care reflects how we feel connected to one another, and spirituality is often defined as our sense of being connected to all life. Thus spiritual care is broader in scope than pastoral care. “Spiritual care embraces multiple spiritualities and bridges diverse theological worlds.” (18)

The second section of the book invites the reader to consider “the essentials of caring” as being clustered around the themes, “what to know,” “what to say,” and “what to be.” Here we are taken on a creative tour of therapeutic models, communication models and the use-of-self in the therapeutic relationship. Like a play with three storylines coming together at the end, VanKatwyk brings these three

perspectives together and places them in relationship to one another in what he calls “The Helping Styles Inventory.” Well known to many supervisors in pastoral care and counseling, the HSI is an excellent tool for identifying and stretching the kind of helping responses of those in clinical training.

In part three, a combination of theory and case studies are brought together to give the reader an opportunity to reflect on caring in a number of different family contexts. The circumplex model of the family, life cycle theory, grief theory and spirituality are observed and explored in a number of vignettes including a catastrophic loss in the author’s own family.

The work of Peter VanKatwyk has much in common with other pastoral theologians of our day, such as a great desire to hold theory and practice in close proximity to one another. This ensures that they may continuously inform one another. However, there are some important differences which set his approach to spiritual care and counseling apart from others. For VanKatwyk, there is always a strong desire to cherish diversity and not be afraid of ambiguity. His work is infused with the belief that diversity has a paradoxical truth behind it: only by embracing diversity and not being afraid of it will we see the full magnitude of how incredibly connected we all are. For this reason, his approach to understanding spiritual care and therapy is not systematic nor does it try to create firm structures of understanding and practice. He prefers to create maps of the territory. VanKatwyk’s approach is much more dynamic and circular in nature. This always allows for the possibility that two very different parts of the picture might actually be closely connected if we look at a different map. If a given moment of need is viewed as a sculpture, VanKatwyk’s approach to spiritual care and therapy is the act of intentionally moving into the space of that sculpture and interacting with it from a variety of creative and mutually life giving perspectives.

Following in the footsteps of his teacher, Howard Clinebell, Peter VanKatwyk is one of the great teachers of pastoral care and counselling in our time, and *Spiritual Care and Therapy* is essential reading for all those practicing and/or training in the helping professions today.

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