

Rolf R. Nolasco, Jr., *The Contemplative Counselor: A Way of Being* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 136 pp.

A commitment to contemplative formation offers a particular approach to a life of faith that both evangelical and mainline Protestants have been increasingly integrating into their spiritual lives. While this formation has deepened Protestants' encounter with the sacred and enriched their personal and communal worship experiences, the author of *The Contemplative Counselor* explores the implications of a contemplative way of life for counselors and their clients. With a Doctor of Theology degree from Boston University in religion and psychology, a wealth of personal experiences from travel to and time spent with monastic communities in the US and Europe, and an active counseling practice, Nolasco brings the necessary skill set and experiences to more than fulfill his task.

The central concern of the book focuses on understanding ways in which Christian contemplation and mindfulness can inform the personal life of the counselor, the practice of therapy, and the counselor's commitment to social justice. Contemplation is understood not as a counseling technique but as "a life in communion with God, an experienced union with the divine that yields the fruit of a transformed life that is fully awake and fully alive" (p. 35). Mindfulness requires being awake in order that we may see beyond external appearances to the sacredness of each moment. Counselors who nurture a contemplative path in the midst of their own busy lives develop a personal centeredness free from the need to rush toward the quick introduction of therapeutic techniques. Nolasco draws on case material from his own counseling practice, as well as his personal experiences, to paint a textured picture of the contribution a contemplative religious counselor provides in a therapeutic culture that has become focused on the "quick fix" of psychological techniques and pharmaceutical interventions.

This book will be of interest to those in helping professions, especially those who are committed to, or interested in, developing a contemplative approach to life. Clergy, who do only very brief or short term pastoral counseling, will find here an affirmation of the vocational implications of their personal spiritual practices. Also, the book is an excellent resource for seminary students interested in spiritually informed pastoral care. Although Nolasco assumes the reader will have some knowledge of basic counseling tools, the writer's style is accessible and engaging.

Joseph D. Driskill
Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, CA