

# philippine studies

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## **Religious Psychology: Fundamental Pastoral Counseling and Mental Illness and the Religious Life**

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pretentiously wise. Here is a sample—picked definitely not at random:

In prayer we must not think too much. After all, even in this world, we only entertain thoughts about a friend when he is absent; we would scarcely want thoughts if he were sitting in the room. I am talking to you, not having thoughts about you now. When the pagan poet wrote to his girl "I would not have my thoughts of thee instead of thee", he was proposing a very useful line for us. (pp. 119-120)

Two kinds of snobs will find this book useless: the snob who is convinced he is not half mad and the snob whose madness is so esoteric that he will eschew all non-professional help. But even these snobs might be amused by the book's menagerie of eccentrics.

ROQUE FERRIOLS

## RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY

FUNDAMENTAL PASTORAL COUNSELING. By John R. Cavanagh, M.D. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1962.

MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. By Richard P. Vaughan, S.J. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1962.

In the old days a disturbance in one's interpersonal relations would have been presented for solution to a spiritual father, who was expected to give advice from the wisdom of his own experience and his knowledge of theological principles. Today a large part of that territory, once belonging to the spiritual adviser, has been subtracted from his dominion and placed instead under the care of the psychiatrist, the clinical psychologist, and the psychiatric social worker. However, since man as a whole being cannot be easily split into his metaphysical parts, priest and doctor have responsibility over the same man. And yet if they are to respect one another each must be clear on his own functions and on those of the other. The two books under review both seek to communicate to the priest or religious some knowledge of the doctor's functions, which he may then borrow for use in religious counseling and in preserving his own mental health.

The first book, *Fundamental Pastoral Counseling*, is by Dr. John Cavanagh, a physician and psychiatrist, lecturer at Catholic University in Washington D.C., and himself a Catholic layman. He can joke about his own profession ("Psychiatry is the observation of the Id by the Odd."), but for the most part he takes a serious and at times a rather dogmatic stand on the problems of mental health and disturbances. He is at his weakest whenever he tries to justify his philosophical stand with quotations from philosophical authorities or when

he appeals to Shakespeare and Kipling, rather than to scientific data, to back up such broad statements as, "Women are less reasonable than men. Being intuitive woman has little use for logic." He concedes too much to the views of the man in the street and not enough to actual findings of psychological research.

The greatest weakness of the book is the closed moral stand the author takes on client-centered therapy, which he lumps together with "situational ethics" which was condemned by Piux XII. Suffice it in this review to refer the reader to the surveys of current moral theology in *Theological Studies* from 1956 on for the considered views of professional moral theologians, who accept this form of therapy as legitimate and acceptable.

The author is at his best when he stops playing the moral theologian and speaks from his own experience as a psychiatrist. He is an exponent of the art of listening:

As counselors, clergymen tend to talk too much. Being in the habit of preaching and teaching, they tend to preach and teach all the time... Too frequently the conscientious clergyman feels that he can by direction solve all his client's troubles. Such talking by the counselor is seldom of real value.

He gives useful hints on how to handle silences, how to dissolve resistance, what to do with clients who fall in love with their counselors. His chapter on teen-agers shows real understanding. "Adolescence is not impressed with authority. It reveres only that authority which it sees vested with actual worth." "Rebellion is a normal characteristic of adolescence.. Avoid making issues except over major matters." The book will appeal to the parish priest, engaged in numerous activities, who is looking for rules-of-thumb in the handling of abnormal cases.

The second book, *Mental Illness and the Religious Life*, will appeal more to the religious who seeks understanding of himself and others like himself, and especially to religious superiors who must occasionally deal with subjects who do not fit common ascetical categories. It is a very sympathetically written book, by one who is himself a religious, a priest, and at the same time a practicing clinical psychologist. The entire book is a fine blend of theory, well grasped, and of extensive experience with mentally ill religious.

Fr. Vaughan feels that up to very recent times religious as a group have been rather hostile toward modern psychological theories and instead have tended to think of neurotic, and even psychotic, behavior as irreligious or even immoral. The first step is thus to show how one's behavior even within the cloister cannot be entirely free of one's "living past", and that the way the child was brought up has a definite effect upon his adult behavior. A person is thus not necessarily to blame for everything that happens to him, nor are moral disturbances necessarily the results of one's personal sins.

Fr. Vaughan then describes the various forms of mental disease to which religious are prone; anxiety, obsessive thoughts, compulsive actions, scrupulosity, depression, schizophrenia, psychosomatic disorder, etc. The descriptions are vivid, concrete, and clinically accurate. An afflicted religious reading such descriptions finds relief in the fact that he is not alone nor the first to suffer such symptoms. Furthermore the superior of such a religious can, because of deeper understanding, take effective means to guide him. Thus:

Exhortations to fidelity to prayer on the part of superiors or fellow religious have little meaning for the neurotic priest or sister... If such exhortations were directed toward encouraging the neurotic priest or teacher to undergo the trying and humiliating experience of psychotherapy... these exhortations would be much more beneficial.

This statement and similar statements may sound strange to superiors whose experience lies mostly if not totally with normal subjects. Fr. Vaughan makes it clear that he speaks of the exceptional case, the abnormal. But where the abnormal used to be jammed into the same mold as the normal and treated as he "should" be and not as he was, the present book pleads the abnormal's case, asking that he be taken as he is and helped to become normal even though certain normal demands of the Rule have to be temporarily relaxed, in the name of Charity.

The book distinguishes clearly between supernatural helps, such as the sacraments, and natural instruments of cure such as psychotherapy. He points out the false notions of those religious who "because of the seemingly close connection between religion, morality, and psychiatry... see in psychotherapy a potential danger to the faith and religious vocation of the subject." Rather they should realize that "the religious who is psychotic or neurotic is just as sick as the religious with a heart or a stomach disorder. He is just as much in need of treatment. He, therefore, has an equal right to the specialized services of those who have been trained to treat this particular disorder. In all probability, unless he does obtain this specialized care his condition will grow progressively worse."

While thus strongly urging the use of natural means to cure mental disease, the author does not lose sight of his primary value, the spiritual life. He attributes to prayer and the sacraments their irreplaceable part in the life of the complete man. Psychotherapy is not a substitute for the sacraments, nor is mental health as great a value as the supernatural life. Nevertheless mental disease is a drag on the spiritual life, because it tends to distort the objective view of God and the sacraments. "Whereas other religious can concentrate their efforts upon corresponding with divine graces, the mentally ill religious is often so absorbed in his own inner struggle that he has little time or energy left for the pursuit of perfection." Mental health makes for spiritual health, and spiritual health is a great thing, and in fact is the aim of religious life.

The book is "must" reading for all those who have charge of the spiritual life: confessors, masters and mistresses of novices, counselors, and for anyone interested in how the Church takes the discoveries of the modern world and makes them her own.

JAIME C. BULATAO

## NEW RELIGIOUS DIRECTORY

1962-1963 PHILIPPINES CHRISTIAN YEAR BOOK. Benjamin J. Guansing, ed. Manila: Union Theological Seminary, 1962. xvi, 161 p.

For information on the personnel, organizations, institutions, and activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines, the *Catholic Directory of the Philippines* has long been a standard reference tool. The need for a source providing comparable data for other churches has been felt for many years, and the *Philippines Christian Year Book* is a praiseworthy if tentative gesture of response.

The title of the book poses a problem. I would suppose that Roman Catholics, who are not found here except in passing charitable reference, are entitled to be called Christians. On the other hand, the Jewish Community of the Philippines, which would hardly claim to be Christian, is listed along with the Protestant Churches. Although it is unappealingly negative, the phrase on the back of the book jacket most aptly expresses the volume's scope: "non-Roman Catholic religious organizations and denominations in the Philippines."

The contents of the volume are revealed by the chapter headings: Religious Organizations and Denominations; Philippine Federation of Christian Churches; Directory of Local Churches; Directory of Church Workers; Urban Churches; Philippine Bible House; Philippine Association of Theological Schools; Association of Christian Schools and Colleges; Hospitals and Clinics; Directory of Foreign Missionaries; Who's Who Among Filipino Pastors; Articles; Church Statistics. Chapter XII, "Articles," contains four distinct and brief statements summarizing the history and present status of the Methodist Church, the Philippine Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and Christian schools and Evangelical Christianity.

Within the covers of this slim volume—*somewhere*—there is a great amount of information. The problem is in finding quickly what you want to know. Aside from typographical errors (which abound), and the arrangement of information (which is needlessly repetitious), the greatest single defect is the absence of a master alphabetical list of persons mentioned in the volume. If all you know about a person