Recent Books of Interest


In this little book a Roman Catholic psychotherapist offers a simple, readable introduction to psychologically informed pastoral care, warmly blending psychological and theological insights and giving particular attention to maintaining the priest’s pastoral identity and integrity. The book does not contribute creatively to the pastoral field as such and seems primarily directed toward clergy who may be new to the offerings of contemporary psychology to pastoral work. Nevertheless, this book could no doubt be read with profit by persons of any denomination seeking a brief and humanly sensitive introduction to the cura animarum.


The author is the minister of a Baptist church in North Carolina whose wise and sensitive understanding of the needs of dying and bereaved persons is beautifully shared in this little volume. Though Bailey cites his own pastoral experiences freely and somewhat homiletically and offers a number of practical suggestions to parish ministers, his discussion is well grounded in psychological knowledge and literature. The book emphasizes the personal and existential qualities of the pastor’s relationship with persons in need and fidelity to basic convictions of faith. Funeral resources are included. Though not a substitute for more detailed discussions of grief or the pastoral counseling of grieving persons, The Minister and Grief is nevertheless an excellent general presentation for the parish pastor.

Est is one of the more controversial entries in the short-order therapy field, a movement sweeping the country (and the pocketbooks) of tens of thousands of Americans seeking more effective ways of living. If you want to learn all about it, here is a first-rate popular treatment by a Ph.D. psychologist who tried it for herself and found out. Written in an entertaining style, Getting It provides a spritely report of her own experience as an est trainee and a well informed critical discussion of the psychodynamics of the movement. Her critique is highly readable, unbiased, yet incisive—and finally devastating: est, she concludes, is “a surrender that buys us . . . the narcissistic omnipotence of infantile fantasies.” Psychological totalitarianism, anyone?


Names like Margaret Mead and Virginia Satir stand forth in the list of contributors to this volume, who represent a variety of professional disciplines—social work, psychiatry, psychology, family therapy, and the like (though not ministry). Their insights are many and occasionally illuminating, though books of this kind invariably lack coherence and consistency. A nice feature is the inclusion of multiple reactions to certain key articles and a panel discussion that includes college students as well as professional experts grappling with this fast-changing uncertain world of intimate relationships.


The “magic” alluded to in this title is the apparent magic that great psychotherapists and healers seems to have. Not so, says the authors. Success at healing, they contend, is related to an ability to grasp the client’s inner cognitive map of reality lying behind his outward linguistic expression, then to correct, expand, or complete the map. In this second volume (the first came out in 1975) the authors apply this thesis to nonverbal modes of perception and communication. As in the first, they offer a number of hermeneutical principles and rules for improving the effectiveness of therapy from any theoretical orientation, using their “metatheory.” While there is something disturbingly mechanical about these prescriptions, the book offers interesting insights if one can bear with the details of its application of “transformational grammar” to psychotherapy.