ures which exploit people and waste resources, to structures that provide self-actualization for individuals and social, economic, and political accomplishments for society.

* * * *

Continuing education must, therefore, learn to use the insights and skills of such new disciplines as systems analysis, organizational development, and others as they become available. Indeed, continuing theological education must assume an inclusive attitude toward resources from all fields of human study, thus setting an example of dialogue that will inspire and instruct the future leaders of the church whose task is to encourage, inform, and direct the dialogue between God and man.

... In Relation to Mental Health

HERACLITUS, the Greek philosopher, is reputed to have said, “There is nothing more constant than change.” This word of wisdom is an apt description of our times and is particularly pertinent for those engaged in religion and mental health. Mental health concepts have radically altered in the past ten years. What kind of concepts we shall have about mental health twenty years from now is anybody’s guess.

When cartographers first drew their maps of the New World, they had little knowledge and unlimited impressions; but after many Europeans had visited the two continents and the number of colonies had expanded, the maps began to reflect more accurate information. So it is with mental health. Our whole concepts are being revised.

This is equally true of religion. There is no need here to spell out the explosions taking place in many religious denominations. They are so dramatic that one does not have to be a prophet to forecast that organized religion is being completely reshuffled.

Foremost in the thinking of psychiatrists and other behavioral scientists concerning mental health are fresh attitudes toward health and illness. For example, Karl Menninger in his book The Vital Balance, reflected some of the thinking of other psychiatrists who today are unwilling to make certain types of emotional and mental ills conform to rigid traditional labels. According to Dr. Menninger, even the term “mental illness” is not “a thing” but “an aspect or quality of life at a particular time under particular circumstances.”

He goes on to say that in his view mental illness is a personality dysfunction and a living impairment which sees all patients “not as individuals afflicted with certain diseases but as human beings obliged to make awkward and expensive maneuvers to maintain themselves, individuals who have become somewhat isolated from their fellows, harassed by faulty techniques of living,
uncomfortable themselves, and often to others. Their reactions are intended to make the best of a bad situation and, at the same time, forestall a worse one—in other words, to insure survival even at the cost of suffering and social disaster.

Today, there is a unitary concept of mental illness which is following contemporary trends in other branches of science. However, many pastoral counselors have not caught up with current, widening concepts concerning mental health and illness. Too many pastoral psychologists are reading from the old books. Many of their shelves are laden with the writings of Freud. There is a generation gap in psychiatry; some are just beginning to spell the old words and practice the old techniques while others have already thrown both out the window. There is a serious danger that over the next twenty years clergy men who are attracted to pastoral psychology will continue to buy the same old vegetables at the same old store, quite unaware that the new psychiatry has far outdistanced them.

For example, there are still some seminaries in the country which give no courses in pastoral counseling or mental health concepts. I have noticed that in some of the seminaries (both Protestant and Roman Catholic) which are beginning to present pastoral counseling and mental health courses, the courses are heavily based on older classical, traditional concepts. There is a heavy reliance on the teachings of Freud. Freud’s contribution to our understanding of mental health and illness is inestimable, but some of his assumptions no longer have any validity.

Some pastoral counselors still think of mental illness in terms of a definite form of pathology—such as a sick liver, heart, or kidney. They attempt to diagnose the client’s ills with a traditional yardstick and, having found what they consider to be the illness, begin to set up “standardized” methods for cure. But if there is one thing that we are learning today it is that there is neither common agreement on the diagnosis of many ills nor a standardized method in the treatment of illness which can guarantee a cure.

I once defined education as “a growing awareness of one’s ignorance.” This is equally true of our study of human behavior. The more we delve into the subject, the more complex the problem becomes. Many of the so-called truths about human behavior of yesterday are the falsehoods of today. Pastoral counselors who hold to old concepts concerning human behavior may find themselves rejected as members of the healing team by the psychiatrists of the future in the same way that psychiatrists rejected clergymen who had false notions of psychiatry at the beginning of our century.

Take, for instance, some of the new thinking about psychoanalysis. According to the old theories, it was a system or a method during which the neurotic or psychotic nature of the emotional disturbance was revealed. Psychoanalysis was considered a diagnostic tool to be used in the same way that a physician uses a microscope to discover infection. Once the illness was uncovered, it was neatly labeled—like bacteria on a slide—and the appropriate method of cure then applied. It was assumed that there was a specific method of cure for each specific mental disease. But this concept of psychoanalysis, which, I must admit, was not always held by all psychoanalysts, is no longer accepted by wiser psychiatrists; one can certainly predict that this notion will not have much respectability twenty years from now.

Mental illness cannot be cured in the