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Man As He Is

A Review

By ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN and LEONHARD C. WUERFFEL

THE Lutheran pastor who uses a free Monday to hole up with a copy of Graduate Study Number III * of the School for Graduate Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is in for an exciting and exhilarating experience. Part of the reason for this lies in the very way the book has come into being. The title page lists no author, and no part of the book was written by one person alone. The subtitle describes it as a symposium—the common end-product of an interplay of minds, in this case the minds of five capable representatives of theology, psychology, and psychiatry, each an expert in at least one area of one of these fields, and each a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Symposium committee chairman is Paul E. Meehl, professor of clinical psychology at the University of Minnesota Medical School, clinical consultant of the Veterans Administration Hospital at Minneapolis, a practicing psychotherapist, past president of the Midwestern Psychological Association, and codirector of a quarter-of-a-million-dollar Ford Foundation diagnostic research project.

Rev. H. Richard Klann is Lutheran campus pastor in the Greater New York area, a former Army chaplain, with a Columbia University Ph. D. in systematic theology and Christian ethics.

Dr. Alfred F. Schmieding is professor of education and psychology at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill., consulting psychologist at Dyslexia Memorial Institute, Chicago, and a consultant in child guidance to various welfare agencies in that city.

Rev. Kenneth H. Breimeier is director of the field-work program of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, assistant professor of pastoral theology at the same school, and a Northwestern University Ph. D. in applied psychology.

* *What, Then, Is Man?: A Symposium of Theology, Psychology, and Psychiatry.* By Paul E. Meehl, H. Richard Klann, Alfred F. Schmieding, Kenneth H. Breimeier, and Sophie Schroeder Sloman. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958. ix and 356 pages. Cloth. \$3.50.

Dr. Sophie Schroeder Sloman, an M. D. whose specialty is child psychiatry, is clinical assistant professor in psychiatry at the College of Medicine of the University of Illinois, former superintendent of the Illinois Institute for Juvenile Research, and a fellow of both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Orthopsychiatric Association.

Meeting over a period of several years, the panel grappled with the problem of the insights and concepts of psychology and psychiatry as these confront theology. Retrospectively they say that they have endeavored "to achieve three aims: (1) to explain Christian doctrine to non-Christian psychotherapists; (2) to explain psychology and psychiatry to pastors; (3) to examine critically some of the relationships existing between these two systems of concepts" (p. 295). This agenda determines the content of the resultant volume, with chapters on the Christian view of man, an analysis of the philosophical presuppositions of psychologists, man's biological nature, the molding and activating of behavior, psychodynamics and psychopathology, tensions between psychology and theology, determinism and related problems, the nature of valid and displaced guilt and the relation of the two to psychological and spiritual health, faith and personality, pastoral counseling and the means of grace, and constructive interaction processes in the Christian parish. Appendices discuss faith healing, the problem of conscience in pastoral counseling and psychotherapy, the problem of "dualism," differential psychology, and indeterminacy and teleological constraints.

Weighty subject matter this is indeed, but the treatment is far from ponderous. Although authorship of any given chapter had become quite multiple by the time the final draft went to the printer, there are still enough traces of original formulation to preserve a feeling of individuality.

Just as the psychological and psychiatric discussions are directed primarily to the clergyman rather than to the psychologist/psychiatrist so the theological information is imparted primarily for the sake of the nontheologian. It is not impossible, however, that the pastors who read the theological discussions will derive almost as much benefit from them as the psychologists and psychiatrists will.

This is not to say that all will agree with every theological formulation. Many of them may probably want to point out to the psychologist or psychiatrist to whom they give or lend a copy of the book that theologians differentiate between the Biblical revelation to which they are absolutely committed, the symbolical formulations which paraphrase — accurately, we believe, of course, but paraphrase nonetheless — the Biblical material, and the theological formulations of our dogmatic tradition which systematize constructively (and sometimes speculatively) the Biblical and symbolical data. They may also want to reassure psychologist and psychiatrist readers that sometimes even theological professors have been known to go for as much as six months without even once using the terms *causa efficiens*, *ordo salutis*, and *fundamentum dividendi* and that our faith is not bound to an Aristotelian, Scholastic-Orthodox, or any other theological vocabulary. The symposium appreciates this too; it asserts that “the theologian will be dissatisfied by the condensed and partial exposition of Christian doctrine” (p. 4) and reminds the reader that, while all major disagreements were ultimately reconciled, “in many instances the final form of expression represented a compromise with which no one was entirely happy.” (P. 7)

A basic contention is that “there are no propositions *within the corpus of verified scientific knowledge* which contradict Christian doctrines. . . . The conflict [between science and Christian theology] is not a substantive one; it is methodological and philosophical” (p. 297). God is repeatedly described as “a God of order, not of confusion” (p. 11 and *passim*). For the Christian, the Word of God at its highest is “the Logos, the structure of intelligibility, that which is prior to all things, the creative and ultimate power” (p. 11), in a total identification of Logos, Word, Jesus Christ, and God. To avoid a “broken literalism,” the statements of the Bible, like all human speech, must be understood in the context of the entire discourse and of what is known of the history and character of the speaker. While Christian statements based on divine revelation appear to be “rootless refugees in our modern scientific world” (p. 14), with “at least a shadow of duplicity about them” (p. 15), since the Christian appeals to evidence when it suits him but rejects unfavorable

evidence by asserting that God is compatible with all possibilities, there is such a thing as an empirical knowledge of God, and religious statements are intended to be a record of such experience. Yet the assurance or trust of the Christian "is more than the product of evidence" (p. 18) and hence "not to be equated with ordinary objective knowledge" (p. 22) on the one hand or with "blind trust in an institution or a body of dogma" (p. 29) on the other; therefore, while his statements about God are not incorrigible logically, they are so as statements of his faith.

The Holy Spirit will not work directly, but only through the means of grace; yet the Word of God must come to man in its proper order—the sure and calm confidence in God's mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ follows the confrontation with one's condition of utter hopelessness. But "no one may judge the genuineness or validity of a person's conversion by the emotional temperature which accompanies it." (P. 31)

Faith is directed to the Triune God, who alone can elicit, sustain, and justify it. But it is an unrealistic accommodation of Christian faith to the scientific method to agree that "beyond the limits of science and philosophy we will grant the existence of the area of faith in which statements are incorrigible. However, they have no relevance to the empirical and corrigible statements which it is the function of philosophers and scientists to analyze and to confirm." (P. 34)

When we turn specifically to the doctrine of man in revelation and in science, divine creation and human existence are data respectively of divine revelation and human experience, reasonably inexplicable by any coherent system of concepts. Science deals with man as part of nature, but there is no scientific consensus about many issues. The thrust of modern science is deterministic, in the sense that the scientist proceeds from the assumption that all events have their causes. A Christian realizes that "to be in creation means to be limited by 'necessities'" (p. 44); this is true even of the incarnate Christ under the Law in both a normative and descriptive sense. A Christian therefore "unhesitatingly accepts determinism *in its function as a leading principle of inquiry into causes*" (p. 45), without accepting a universal determinism of

both physical and mental events that make responsibility, praise, and blame fictitious notions.

Both in revelation and in scientific opinion man is clearly different from the highest animals. This is true whether the point of comparison is the relative learning capacity of a normal human child and a chimpanzee or man's peculiar powers such as discursive reasoning, moral feeling, self-induced recollection, systematic forecasting, and causal analysis by reference to complex inferred events, or even such uniquely human phenomena as scrupulosity, unresolvable guilt feeling, or delusions of persecution.

Though totally dependent on God, man is not a puppet or mechanical toy. He has revolted against God, and he revolts against Him. Adam's story "is the story of all men of all ages" (p. 53). An indivisible unity that cannot be split into several parts (pp. 53, 56), man is in his totality under sin and in anxiety. For this reason he has no free will in spiritual matters.

While Christ is a mystery even for the Christian, the church makes certain assertions about Him and His work: He is truly God; He is truly man; these two "natures" are uniquely united in His one "person"; His voluntary death on the cross was the price which He paid for the life of all mankind; while He rose again in the same body in which He died, in His unwitnessed resurrection His body assumed a different relation to the space-time continuum in which we exist; by their faith in the risen Son of God all men receive forgiveness, divine acceptance, and eternal life with God.

The dimensions of existence for the Christian as "a new creation" are radically different from his former state. Although unremittingly engaged in a monumental struggle, he no longer is compelled to prove his worth to himself, to others, and to God and has access to inward serenity born of his conviction regarding his true worth in God's estimate through Christ. At this point, the opinion is expressed: "many of the Lutheran clergy do not minister to the needs of their parishioners adequately because they are content when their people participate in general confessions instead of insisting upon the health-giving function of specific confessions." (P. 68)

The new being is nurtured in the Christian community — not

in isolation — (1) by the Word of God, that is, the “good news” of God’s grace in Christ; (2) by Holy Baptism, which is able therapeutically “to confer upon the believing Christian an unshakable sense of integration, of belonging, of ultimate security” (p.72); (3) by Christ’s body and blood in the Holy Eucharist, which in the ancient Christian community was celebrated “whenever the congregation met for worship” and the benefits of which “many Lutheran congregations now offer the Christian an opportunity to receive . . . at least once each week” (p.72); and (4) by prayer, which “enables God to give [the Christian] all good things without destroying the status which belongs to man.” (P.74)

In the study of the behavior of man a concept of learning theory is advanced which embraces the following terms in describing what is acquired: habit, expectancies, cathexes, and perceptions. After carefully defining how psychologists use these terms the suggestion is made “that the compatibility of learning theory and theological formulations of the same behavioral event could be properly investigated only by means of detailed and rigorous logical analysis.” (P.130)

The reader is warned “there is grave danger in dealing with people’s mental and emotional problems when one is not equipped with accurate knowledge of the subject and the factors involved. The solution is not a simple matter of advice and admonition” (p.132). A careful evaluation is made of types of mental illness, classified under “mental deficiency, psychoses, psychoneuroses, and sociopathic personality (formerly called psychopathic personality)” (p.132), all of which receives excellent treatment by way of definition and meaning to the pastor or psychologist who must seek to aid the afflicted. The reader is introduced to the ramifications of mental illness and led to appreciate anew the need for diligent consideration of a whole array of symptoms which are significant to proper understanding and diagnosis of human problems. Throughout this portion of the presentation an appeal is sounded for more understanding and sympathy for human frailty and limitations. Mental mechanisms receive careful consideration and are summarized under the captions: repression, sublimation, rationalization, compensation, symbolization, displacement, projection, identification, escape, reaction formation, and conversion, each

of which plays an important role in the development of personality and must be understood correctly if therapy is to be successful. The methodology of therapy by the psychologist is briefly discussed and goals of psychotherapy defined.

In considering the tensions existing between psychology and theology a noteworthy observation is made in these words: "When the aims and tactics of pastor and psychotherapist seem to be getting in each other's way, it is sometimes difficult to tease out the precise locus of a cognitive disagreement, because they use largely nonoverlapping terminologies" (p. 150). Examples of problem areas in terminology are then described and helpful definitions given. At the same time it is frankly admitted that there are genuine disagreements "between the substantive views of psychologists and theologians" (p. 158). Again examples of disagreement are presented with elucidating remarks.

This book makes a significant contribution in demonstrating some of the interrelations between psychological and theological observations of man and shows how these observations are mutually reinforcing, how the concepts of one field enlighten those of the other, and how the significance of the observations differ radically. Each of these presents a challenging study and is only briefly described in the text. An additional question is raised in this connection as to the accountability of man in mental illness, and a helpful development of a parallel between treatment of physically ill people and mentally ill people is made. The theological implications of mental illness are thoroughly explored, and a plea is made that the pastor bear in mind that "understanding, reasoning, and retention enter into the problem of accountability" (p. 264). Worth noting and significant: "The sin must be understood in the light of the sickness, and the sickness in the light of God's purposes for His creatures." (P. 267)

In the treatment of the place of the means of grace in pastoral counseling this summarization of the problem is made: "There is no question in the mind of the theologian about the necessity or desirability of bringing God's Law to bear on the problem raised during the counseling. How to do this most effectively is an open question. The theories of secular counseling, supported in part by empirical confirmation, suggest that often the Law can be effectively

applied within the framework of permissive counseling. Here the counselee in effect preaches the Law to himself—finding in the warmth and strength of the counseling relationship that he can look at his problem—at himself—more objectively and more helpfully” (p. 276). “The practical result of this differing point of view concerning man’s capabilities is that the means of grace must become a part of the counseling. . . . Whatever solutions are arrived at must be drawn in one way or another from the Word.” (Pp. 277, 278)

The symposium should obviate a great deal of talking past one another by clarifying the varieties of determinism—as a methodological “working orientation” that is almost universal among psychologists; as “empirical determinism,” a tenet of which the extent that it is held among psychologists cannot be determined; and as “metaphysical determinism,” which takes as an absolute ontological presupposition the thesis that “all human psychological events instantiate universal laws,” an attitude which, in view of the dominance among them of antimetaphysical logical positivism, the majority of psychologists do not hold.

By showing that the “apparent incompatibilities preponderate over the real” (p. 165) and by identifying the three ideas of substantive determinism, materialist monism, and intersubjective confirmability as the notion which are well-nigh universal among scientific psychologists, the symposium focuses the discussion on the really relevant issues.

It makes abundantly clear that the concepts of theology—even to the degree that they relate to human actions and dispositions—cannot be expressed within the vocabulary of learning theory and psychoanalysis.

The discussion of the different meanings that “guilt” has in psychotherapy (“guilt feeling”) and in pastoral theology (“objective guilt”) should make it easier for psychotherapists and pastors to communicate their concerns about, and to report their professional handling of, the same person to one another.

By stressing the inadequacy of materialistic monism and the consequent necessity of some form of “dualism”—although not every theologian will concur in the solution that the symposium members offer on pages 158—159 and Appendix C—they

identify and isolate an area where the disagreement at the present time is probably irreconcilable and where each party must resign itself to seeing the other interpret commonly observed and agreed-upon data in a different way.

By making clear that "the psychological sciences do actually occupy a unique position with regard to the Christian claims" (p. 163), they help the pastor to understand the particular problem that confronts the Christian (and to some extent the non-Christian) psychologist in contrast to practitioners of other scientific disciplines.

By pointing out the differences that arise from interdisciplinary equivocation ("guilt" and "conversion," for instance) and by warning against the too easy identification of categories (such as the psychotherapist's "id" and the theologian's "original sin") they have illuminated for each discipline the nomenclature of the other.

By emphasizing that "there is no logical necessity linking determinism with materialism" (p. 188) the symposium obviates one widespread confusion.

By indicating that, in certain circumstances at least, conversion to the Christian faith may actually aggravate a person's neuroses (pp. 234—237), the symposium may keep converts from feeling disillusioned with Christianity when they discover that Christ is *not* the answer in the sense in which they had been led to believe.

By differentiating sharply between the theoretical scientific humanism of psychologists and psychotherapists and the technical know-how that they possess, the symposium opens the way to fruitful co-operation between pastor and psychotherapist even in those cases where the psychotherapist is frankly not a Christian, by making it clear that the Christian faith is cognitively an *over-belief*, a going beyond the corpus of scientific statements, rather than a contradiction of any scientific certainty.

One final tip: Even at the risk of giving the impression that he is "in some sense, at some level, 'really' motivated by hunger and by the approval motive (or the unworded expectation that these drives might otherwise be thwarted)" (p. 95), the reader will find it desirable to use a dictionary liberally.

St. Louis, Mo.