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## Book Reviews

### *Counseling the Homosexual*

John R. Cavanagh, M.D.

*Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Ind., 46750. 352 pp., \$14.95.*

It has been said that we are in the midst of or alternatively have already gone through a "sexual revolution." At the very least, one could say that there is certainly more openness about sexuality. Concurrent with this greater openness about sex and sexual behavior has come greater openness regarding problems of sexual behavior. Problems in sexual behavior may be problems for those engaged in it or problems for those people who become aware of that sexual behavior if it does not conform to what they believe to be "normal sexual behavior." The most common variant of human sexual behavior that comes to mind, the "major minor" so to speak, is homosexual behavior. Biblical injunctions against homosexual behavior are well enough known so as not to need repetition in this review.

Before the 20th Century, medicine and psychiatry tended to accept Western civilization's stance or at least be influenced by it. Society's "crime" or "criminal" became psychiatry's "abnormal act or person." Homosexuality *per se* was considered abnormal and people engaging in homosexual acts perverted. Medicine and psychiatry as social institutions have no prerogative to state what is wrong. These decisions reside within the greater society as a whole and in religion and moral theology. Therein lies the precise flaw of this book. Dr. Cavanagh writes essentially from a theological point of view. If he were not identified as a psychiatrist, perhaps this could be permitted. The book might be described as a book written by a Catholic who just happens to be a psychiatrist. He seems to have a great deal of difficulty in distinguishing when he is speaking as a medical scientist and when he is speaking from an intensely felt personal point of view. In all fairness to Dr. Cavanagh, it should be said that many psychiatrists in the United States have this difficulty. This book is directed toward pastoral counselors. I am concerned lest these people regard Dr. Cavanagh's position as a majority viewpoint within American psychiatry, which it is not.

Two chapters of the book were written in collaboration with Father John Harvey. These are chapter 3, titled "Changes in Nomenclature and their Probable Effect" and chapter 16, "Contemporary Theological Views." These chapters are clear and concise. The Church has a prerogative to state — indeed, ought to state — what it considers right or wrong in all areas of human behavior, including the sexual. The traditional Catholic position, that only sexual behavior within a marriage wherein nothing is done to frustrate procreation, is in the opinion of the authors no way altered by contemporary views as to whether homosexuality is "normal or abnormal." Modern attempts to alter that traditional morality are presented and found less than impelling. The rest of the book gave me problems. I could hardly get through a page without questioning some comment. A medical scientist ought to be able to separate when he is stating his own opinion that is substantiated by data and when there is little substantiation for that feeling.

In chapter 1, the author states, "The relationship of love to sex is one of ultimate goal. 'Since God is love and thinks of man only to love him, man in his entirety including sex, is the object of divine love. As seen in this light, sex has no other end, no other meaning than love.' There is a profound link between love and procreation. God's love is the creative principal in the Universe, so it can be seen that love is creative. The creativity of human sexual love is seen in procreation. In

heterosexual union, a new human being proceeds from the act of love of a man and a woman. All possibility of this is absent from the homosexual's love relationship." Psychiatry ought not to state cosmological meanings. Again and again, Dr. Cavanagh quotes a Pope, a moral theologian or gives his own opinion and does not seem to realize that is not the same as scientific psychiatric thinking.

It is easy to find much of value in this book. chapter 2, "The Incidence of Homosexuality"; chapter 14, "Homosexuality in Governmental Agencies"; and chapter 15, "Homosexual Organizations" are fairly useful and accurate chapters. They reveal Dr. Cavanagh's scholarship and humanity and show him to be sympathetic and concerned for people. The remaining chapters are perhaps best described as uneven. Much of what Dr. Cavanagh says is accurate. The sad fact is, of course, all too little is known about sexuality and sexual behavior.

There are, unfortunately, also some blatant errors. On page 160, he states "Masturbation aside from its other aspects is evidence of sexual and emotional immaturity." Psychiatry may have had this view in the 19th Century, but that certainly does not represent the majority view in psychiatry of 1978.

In chapter 5, the author cites the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* (DSM-I) for "historical interest." In that particular diagnostic manual (supplanted in 1968 by DSM-II with DSM-III due out in 1979), homosexuality was classed with the sociopathic personality disorders. It is apparent that the author was in complete sympathy with that particular diagnostic grouping. Presently in American psychiatry, there are those who are convinced that homosexuality is abnormal; there is another group which is convinced that homosexuality is normal. Perhaps, however, the largest group of American psychiatrists believes that we simply do not yet know enough to make a definite statement. It is a fact that the majority of American males at some time in their lives participate in homosexual behavior. It is therefore, difficult to label homosexuality *ipso facto* abnormal. It is a fact that a certain percentage of men and women profess lifelong homoerotic feelings. It is a fact that in this latter group there is a high incidence of emotional illness. However, it also seems a fact that this percentage, although higher than the general population, is only a small fraction of the whole. That is to say it seems factual by most standards of mental health that most people who are exclusively homosexual in feelings and behavior throughout their lifetime could not be regarded abnormal except for those homosexual feelings and for whatever homosexual behavior in which they may engage.

Clinical experience warrants the statement that relatively few of those people who have exclusive homosexual feelings and engage exclusively in homosexual behavior are interested in changing their orientation. Definitive statements that homosexuality *per se* was abnormal were seriously compromising certain individuals in terms of getting jobs, serving in the military, etc. Unfortunately, psychiatry altering its view by changing its diagnostic nomenclature probably had less impact than American psychiatrists would have liked to believe. At least, however, psychiatry was no longer suborned. I have found it useful to think of behavior, not people, as homosexual.

In summary, this is a book on an important topic. It is apparently a remake of an earlier book which I have not seen. The earlier book published in 1966 may well have been more in tune with its time. The present book perhaps was not sufficiently edited from the original work to make it acceptable in today's situation. The book gives a clear, concise summary of the Church's current morality. There are some excellent chapters on homosexuality and the law and the homosexual in governmental service. The chapters on definition and causes of homosexuality are fairly useful, although one would wish that more current data had been reviewed by the authors regarding the current research on homosexual behavior. Unfortunately, as I have repeatedly stated throughout this review, the book is flawed. It is directed toward pastoral counselors and if these people believe that

the book represents modern psychiatric thinking, their work will be seriously compromised.

Toward the end of the book, the author quotes Father Leo Trese: "Indeed it is quite considerable that one might be a homosexual and become a saint, since it is by the conquest of temptation, that sanctity is developed, under God's grace. Since 'the greater the temptation the greater the merit,' the homosexual who achieves self discipline is doubly admirable, since he must do so despite the lack of safeguards which shelter the person with normal impulses." To that I might add that unfortunately such an individual would have to also overcome the testimony of some psychiatrists that he suffered from mental illness or, in the words of the author, "arrested personality development."

I am curious about this situation. In the 2,000 years of history of the Church, it seems statistically likely to me that some of the saints might have been homosexual. Catholic attitude throughout the centuries has seemed to glorify sexual abstinence over sexual participation. Numerous tales abound of saints who died to protect their virginity. Still often saints are glorified for their struggle against sexual temptation. Was any of the temptation homosexual, I wonder?

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## *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective*

Philip S. Keane, S.S.

*Paulist Press, 1865 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023, 1977. x + 236 pp., \$5.95 (paper).*

Philip S. Keane, a Sulpician professor of moral theology at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, offers in this work a "new" Catholic perspective on sexual morality. It is a "new" perspective insofar as it differs significantly, as the author himself acknowledges, from the "old" perspective that is reflected in the documents of the ecclesial magisterium, most recently in the *Vatican Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*. It is a "Catholic" perspective, the author urges, insofar as it is rooted in the teachings of contemporary Catholic moral theologians who are seeking to be faithful to the substance of the Catholic tradition. This, in essence, is the basic thrust of the book's argument.

Specifically the "new" Catholic perspective differs from the "old" both in its fundamental presuppositions about the meaning of moral good and evil, the way to determine whether human acts are morally good or evil, and in its specific conclusions about the significance of certain types of sexual behavior. The "old" perspective distinguished between the objective deed or act and the agent's or subject's personal responsibility or culpability for the deed and held that certain kinds of human acts, specified by their moral objects, were intrinsically or by their very nature evil deeds, the kinds of deeds that a human person, in particular a person who had become one with Christ in baptism, simply ought not to do under any circumstances or for any end, however good it might be. As applied to