

8-1-1960

Book Review of *Counselling the Catholic*, by George Hagmaier and Robert Gleason

J. Joseph Hofmann

Follow this and additional works at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq>



Part of the [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hofmann, J. Joseph (1960) "Book Review of *Counselling the Catholic*, by George Hagmaier and Robert Gleason," *The Linacre Quarterly*: Vol. 27 : No. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/lnq/vol27/iss3/6>

Book Review

Counselling the Catholic

George Hagmaier, C.S.B. and Robert Gleason, S.J.

Review by

J. Joseph Hofmann, S.J.
Chaplain, Kings County Hospital
Brooklyn, New York

"Grace builds upon nature" is a commonplace presumption in dogmatic theology. It is for the professional theologian to describe the nature and operations of grace, and it is for the psychologist and psychiatrist to shed light on the intricate and interacting workings of human nature as we live it. The priest in his role of confessor and pastoral guide should be familiar with both of these fields. The area of grace is covered thoroughly in his training in the theological seminary, and, in more recent years, courses in pastoral psychology are also being presented to the seminarians.

This excellent book is for those who were never privileged to have had such a psychology course; or, if they had one, this book is an outstanding one to have on the bookshelf for review and for renewing the proper attitudes about the problem-solving process.

Does the reading and study of this book turn out amateur priest-psychologists? No! It is definitely not intended as such (and for this reason and to avoid casual "spot" references, the authors have chosen to omit an index). The authors aim to present a compendium of practical psychology, a simple outline of fundamental counselling concepts and techniques. It is a certain minimum of information which every priest should have.

Although primarily intended for Catholic priests and seminarians, still parents, teachers, doctors, guidance counsellors, youth workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists may find considerable portions of this material useful.

In addition to excellent chapters on the psychological and moral perspectives of masturbation, homosexuality, and alcoholism, there are three chapters that stand out in the estimation of this reviewer.

The first of these is the chapter that stresses the fundamental principle of all counselling and has an importance that cannot be overstressed: be a listener and show a wholehearted acceptance of the client. Silent listening precludes inadequate or even wrong advice. It allows the client to talk out the problem, which, in some cases, is sufficient to solve the problem because, being crystalized in words, the problem is seen more objectively. This might be a difficult technique for a counsellor to adopt, but it is essential.

The chapter on the "psychology of human weakness" highlights another principle: that in complex human emotional conduct, there are very few "blacks" and "whites" but much "gray." Man's personal problems are not always open to easy and quick solutions. The Ten Commandments are reviewed to show some possible underlying elements that can color the treatment to be given in the confessional or in the parlor. For example: the problem of negligence in religious duties may have its foundation in a disregard for all authority stemming from poor parent-child relationships during youth. The strength of the sex drive, the difficult distinction between "wanting" with the senses and "choosing" with the will, and positive sex education are excellently and constructively presented showing factors and insights frequently overlooked in traditional counselling approaches.

Finally, the treatment of scrupulosity does credit to the authors as they disarmingly show how the traditional approach to this problem is inadequate in the light of present psychological findings. After sympathetically considering the approach of the great counsellors of the past, they gently show a better way to handle the scrupulous person.

Besides a complete and modern bibliography that rates a special word of praise, there is also included a list of referral agencies and facilities to be found in most cities that are available to give professional help to such cases as indicate the need. The list itemizes such groups as those concerned with the aged, the alcoholic, labor, legal aid, the Negro, veterans, welfare, young adults, and many others.

The authors modestly contend that their book is only a beginning in clarifying and refining the science and art of pastoral counselling. This volume sets a standard of excellence which may profitably be emulated by subsequent writers in this field.

Counselling the Catholic

Published by
Sheed and Ward
64 University Place
New York, N.Y.
1959 — \$4.50