

Explorations
in
Human Nature

An
Opportunity
In
Theological Education



THE CHICAGO COMMITTEE
OF
THE COUNCIL FOR CLINICAL TRAINING
of Theological Students
in the United States and Canada
1944

Development and Accomplishments

This undertaking was begun in 1925 in the Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts, when the Chaplain, A. T. Boisen, with the consent of the Superintendent, Dr. William A. Bryan, and the encouragement of Dr. Richard C. Cabot, brought four theological students to that hospital. Since that time the plan has been extended not only to other mental hospitals, but also to general hospitals, prisons and reformatories, and child-guidance clinics. In 1930 formal incorporation took place under the name of the "Council for the Clinical Training of Theological Students." The Council now has its headquarters in New York City, with regional organizations in Philadelphia, Michigan and Chicago.

Since the inauguration of this plan some *seven hundred students* have received training under the auspices of the Council. These students have been drawn from more than seventy theological schools and from more than twenty-two church bodies. More than eighty per cent of them have gone into the pastorate.

From the beginning the Council has based its program of instruction upon a program of research. Except as an emergency measure it has recognized no training center which does not have a full-time supervisor. The task of such a supervisor is not merely to guide the student in his practical activities and in his relations with other professional workers, but also to seek the answer to questions of significance to the student of religion which the doctor and the social worker and the penologist are not likely to ask.

This program of inquiry has born fruit in an increasing number of publications by persons who got their start with the Council. In addition to a considerable number of articles in scientific journals, some of them of real importance, there have been a number

wreckage which war leaves in its wake.

Mental Illness

The problem of mental illness is one of peculiar interest to the student of religion. In any mental hospital there are three types of patients: (1) those whose difficulties are rooted in organic disease; (2) those whose illness represents the end result of malignant character tendencies such as day-dreaming, dwelling on one's grievances, seeking alibis and the like; and (3) those who are aware of their danger and are striving desperately for the reorganization of their personalities. It is with the third group that the student of religion is particularly concerned. Studies of the second group are instructive, but such patients are not often interested in religion and their chances of recovery are poor. They represent the dark background against which the third group should be viewed. When we see the marked religious concern which characterizes this third group and the relatively high recovery rate, we may be ready to recognize the kinship of such disturbances to the religious conversion experience which has been so prominent in the history of the Christian Church ever since the days of Saul of Tarsus. The one as well as the other is an attempt at reorganization. The difference lies in the values attained. And even in religious experience of recognized validity we are likely to find psychopathic manifestations when the difficulties to be overcome are deeply rooted and the struggle severe.

In the second place the mental hospital offers an opportunity to bring help to a group of sufferers whom the church has thus far strangely neglected. It is a large group. Mental and nervous patients today occupy more than half of the hospital beds in this country. And yet the church is doing almost nothing for them. Out of some four hundred hospitals maintained by the Protestant churches of America only three are mental hospitals. And in the state institutions,

tudes. For this reason the study of delinquents offers rewarding leads in the matter of family relationships and throws much light upon the task of moral and religious education. It throws much light also upon the cultural factors in the development of the personality. From wayward young people one can learn much regarding the significance of conflicting cultures, of groups within groups, of social pressure upon the individual, and regarding the fundamental motivations and problems of the individual in his community relationships.

The correctional institution also offers to the future minister an unrivalled opportunity to find his actual role and function in relation to other professional workers. Nowhere else are the respective functions of professional workers more sharply defined or better correlated. The student who has received training in such an institution should be able thus to recognize the roots of crime and other social problems in family and community conditions and to co-operate effectively with the community agencies for their eradication or amelioration.

The United States Bureau of Prisons has recently become interested in the possibilities of the religious approach to the problem of crime. It has provided for chaplains in its correctional institutions and has made it a requirement that no man should be appointed to a Protestant chaplaincy who has not had training with the Council.

The Physically Sick

The conditions in a general hospital offer striking contrasts to those in a mental hospital. In the first place, the general hospital is much smaller. Where mental hospitals like Elgin with its five thousand patients are by no means unusual, a general hospital with five hundred patients is considered large. Its patients, moreover, stay but a short time and, while there, they are for the most part confined to bed, under the strict care of doc-

well no matter what happens make it possible for the healing forces to operate more effectively. A wise and understanding minister of religion who has knowledge of the emotional attitudes of the sick may therefore be of real assistance in relieving the fears and anxieties which block recovery.

Other Fields of Human Distress

In addition to these three fields of human need we have also the experiences of the aged and the infirm, the tubercular, the blind, the deaf and dumb, and the feeble-minded, which always present opportunities for understanding and service.

Program of Instruction

Instruction is based upon the case method. In sharp distinction from the usual classroom procedure, the students in clinical training see actual human problems approached at the same time from different specialized viewpoints. The unit of study is thus not a particular specialty, such as psychology or sociology, but the total personality in its social setting. *Throughout we are concerned with the task of explaining the experiences in question in terms of normal motivations and reaction patterns, all in the endeavor to discover the laws of the spiritual life which apply to all of us.*

In each training center the resources of the institution are placed freely at the disposal of the student. He is allowed to attend staff-meetings. He has access to the case records. He has the use of the library and he has abundant opportunity for personal contact with the inmates. On the basis of these opportunities the student is required to turn in written observations on assigned cases, some of which are selected for intensive study.

Group conferences, usually eight to twelve hours a week, are devoted to the consideration of cases studied and reported by members of the group and of the broader principles involved in the problems and experi-

cal schools, of influential physicians and clergymen and laymen. This Committee holds meetings three times a year and at other times as occasion may require. Matters of business are handled by an executive committee.

Conditions of Admission

The opportunity to study at one of the Middle Western training centers is opened to a limited number of qualified students of theology. Candidates for the summer period should be able to stay thruout the training period which begins about the middle of June and extends until Labor Day. There are also openings for those who wish to remain for a full year. A personal interview is required. There is a registration fee of five dollars. At most of the training centers maintenance is provided.

Application should be made to the Committee's secretary, Rev. Frederick Kuether, Jr., Box No. 122, St. Charles, Illinois, or to the supervisor of the training center to which the applicant wishes to be assigned.