

attempt, and the only way that we can extend our morals to the comprehension of all men.

F.K.

MORAL PROBLEMS NOW. By George Hagmaier, C.S.P. and Robert W. Gleason, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 21s.)

Most priests now realize that even the most normal people are conditioned physically and emotionally in their free choice; even without a knowledge of psychiatry, they must be aware of a distinction between man and angel which makes the absolute decision for good or evil of the latter impossible for the former. The fulness of responsibility sufficient for mortal sin does not need to carry with it that utterly exclusive adherence of the mind wholly intent upon an object coolly chosen as desirable which is characteristic of the pure spirit. On the other hand, psychiatrists—many of them Catholics—are not at all so ready as they once seemed to be to exclude all free will and regard man as wholly a being of instincts and urges. But priests are not always as willing as they ought to be to make use of these new insights. At best, many of them are considerate and kind to the sinner—from the highest motives—because they must be other Christs, ready to forgive as soon as there are signs of repentance. But after that, one penitent is much like another and more attention is paid to the objective character of the sin than to its subjective conditions.

Frankly, it is often difficult to do more. Even acting as a regular confessor in the same parish for years at a time, it is far from easy to discover the circumstances which would make it easier to advise about some particular weakness: a voice often gives little indication of the difference of age between seventeen and seventy, sometimes it is even difficult to know the sex. And even the regular, recognizable voices produce little evidence of the different ways of life which go a long way to explain why their owners admit more often than others a lack of charity. But if a little more is revealed in confession, or if a person summons up the courage to consult a priest outside confession, what is the priest to do? This book will help him.

He will learn above all to be patient, not to rush in with advice but to listen. And that is a great deal. But he will also learn to recognize the signs of strains and stresses that are really quite common even though to most of us they suggest extreme abnormality if not downright sin: sexual problems and alcoholism are the most obvious. Here, too, he can help greatly by merely listening; but he should be equipped to deal with the common problems, say, of masturbation in adolescence. He should be able to recognize when the problem is more acute, when he must pass on the penitent as a patient; but even then hopefully and with encouragement.

There is more to the book than guidance for the priest in dealing with emotional conflicts behind the bare statement of sin. It describes the mental illnesses, provides a brief but illuminating study of personality and has some healthy suggestions about explaining sex in the proper terms even to the young. The authors call attention to some of the forms of 'unconscious guilt': for example, 'certain individuals feel compelled to confess that they have missed mass even though they were sick or snowed in'. I wonder if they are aware that ninety per cent of the good Catholics in this country suffer from the same compulsion.

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NOTICES

The PAMPHLET BIBLE which the Paulist Press (New York) is publishing in monthly parts (each 96 pages, 75 cents) has now reached the book of Numbers. The text is that of the Confraternity translation, well printed, and each part has a clear and useful commentary. *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Numbers* are each in two parts, and there is also a general introduction to the Pentateuch called *The Law given through Moses*.

Dom Augustine Guillerand (died 1945) was a French Carthusian who held a number of important offices in the Order. *WHERE SILENCE IS PRAISE* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 138 pages, 9s. 6d.) consists, like its predecessor *They Speak by Silences*, of short extracts from his letters and counsels. They treat of a wide range of topics, but all are characterized by the deep reflection of a man whose life was centred in God.

Browne and Nolan have published two paper-backs about love of one's neighbour. *SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL* (136 pages, 6s.) is an excellent popular biography by M. V. Woodgate, which first appeared as a hard-backed book two years ago. *GOD IS OUR BANKER*, by Robert Nash, S.J. (88 pages, 3s. 6d.), describes the 'Little House of Divine Providence' in Turin, founded in 1828 by St Joseph Cottolengo. It now covers an area of five square miles and has some ten thousand inmates, entirely dependent on alms—but the spirit of charity within is said to be even more impressive.

Burns Oates have recently re-issued some traditional books of devotion: *EUCCHARISTIC MEDITATIONS* of St John Vianney, *VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT* by St Alphonsus Liguori, and the *SPIRITUAL COMBAT* of Lorenzo Scupoli. These are handy pocket-sized volumes, costing six shillings each. They are beautifully printed, and bound in the sort of limp plastic which gives a good imitation of leather.