

*The Covenant Quarterly (Feb May 2013), pages 91-93*

**Robert H. Albers, William H. Meller, and Steven D Thurber, editors, *Ministry with Persons with Mental Illness and Their Families* (Fortress Press, 2012), 239 pages, \$29.**

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This book contains chapters dealing with nine mental health issues: Depression, Anxiety Disorders, Psychotic Disorders, Personality Disorders, Substance-Use Disorders, Eating Disorders, Autism, Acquired Brain Injury, and Dementia. Each chapter begins with a brief and believable scene from a pastor's office. A parishioner comes to talk about a family member with one of these problems, then the issue is described by an authority in the mental health field. These sections are well written and concise, and not overly given to technical or clinical language. The next section is written by a pastor or professor in the field of congregational care, giving some directions on how a church might be involved helping a family facing one of the issues. A brief bibliography is included at the end of each chapter.

The editors state: "The purpose of this book is to develop an integrated and interrelated approach that honors the work of the specialist in psychiatry, psychology and theology. It presents this approach as a dialogue between the disciplines so that each in her or his own specialty might work in partnership and not at cross purposes, as often has been the case in dealing with mentally ill people." (5)

The book does not intend to teach one how to counsel. It gives a helpful summary of current thinking in the mental health world on a variety of issues one may well face over the years of a pastoral vocation, and then gives guidance on how to think about the place of the pastor and the congregation in the life of these families. It is very much about dialogue and partnership. The underlying concern is that families with members who suffer from mental illnesses should not be isolated from involvement in the congregation, and neither should the pastor of the church try to do the work of the mental health specialist.

Every pastor has experiences in which mental health procedures and the faith claims of the church or family come into tension with each other. Sometimes pastors try to be doctors. Sometimes pastors or families in the church believe that mental health professionals have nothing to offer and the only valuable help comes from God. Sometimes mental health professionals look at you suspiciously when they find out you are a pastor. This book effectively addresses some of these tensions, removes unhelpful stereotypes, and shows how both pastor and doctor can have a role in the healing process.

One statement in the section on brain injury struck me as particularly insightful. "In our comprehensive literature search, no articles were found specific to pastoral response to individuals who evince emotional and behavioral symptoms related to brain insults. What we did find is that persons who deliver pastoral care tend to perceive themselves to be competent in dealing with grief, death and dying issues, anxiety and marital difficulties but tend to be challenged in relation to effective interventions for persons with depression, alcohol or drug problems, domestic violence and severe mental health difficulties." This is a good book for pastors because it broadens our sense of how to be helpful in situations where we feel less competent.

This would have been a significant book for me to have read at the very beginning of my pastoral years, and I imagine if that were the case, I would have referred to it often over time. I hope it will make its way onto many a pastor's bookshelf.

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