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Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Reflections on Theory, Theology, and Practice

Barbara J. McClure

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Description: Despite astute critiques and available resources for alternative modes of thinking and practicing, individualism continues to be a dominating and constraining ideology in the field of pastoral psychotherapy and counseling. Philip Rieff was one of the first to highlight the negative implications of individualism in psychotherapeutic theories and practices. As heirs and often enthusiasts of the Freudian tradition of which Rieff and others are critical, pastoral theologians have felt the sting of his charge, and yet the empirical research that McClure presents shows that pastoral-counseling practitioners resist change. Their attempts to overcome an individualistic perspective have been limited and ineffective because individualism is embedded in the field's dominant theological and theoretical resources, practices, and organizational arrangements. Only a radical reappraisal of these will make possible pastoral counseling practices in a post-individualistic mode. McClure proposes several critical transformations: broadening and deepening the operative theologies used to guide the healing practice, expanding the role of the pastoral counselor, reimagining the operative anthropology, reclaiming sin and judgment, nuancing the particular against the individual, rethinking the ideal outcome of the practices, and reimagining the organizational structures that support the practices. Only this level of revisioning will enable this ministry of the church to move beyond its individualistic limitations and offer healing in more complex, effective, and socially adequate ways. Endorsements: ""There is simply no finer new scholar working in this field today. All readers will profit substantially from this work, since McClure's vision of an ecclesial mission committed to social transformation far exceeds the particular issues of pastoral counseling."" --Rodney J. Hunter Emory University ""Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling is truly groundbreaking in its theological envisioning and analysis of the implications of social location for the structuring of pastoral care. Rarely is serious attention paid to the class implications of our ministries. On that issue Barbara McClure has set a very high standard for us all."" --Mary McClintock-Fulkerson Duke University ""In this lucid, critical, and constructive book Barbara McClure moves the whole debate about the nature and locus of appropriate pastoral care and counseling on to a new level of analysis and sophistication. The implications of her careful arguments and studies are nothing short of revolutionary. This is a book that should be read and acted upon by anyone who really wants to see pastoral work make a difference in the contemporary world."" --Stephen Pattison University of Birmingham, UK ""In Moving Beyond Individualism Barbara McClure offers a brilliantly constructed new synergistic model for pastoral theology and the practices of care that recognizes the more profoundly socio-cultural and relational complexity of human beings and suffering. Her model helps us transcend the theological and social limitations of individualism and provides new resources for engaging in effective care with persons and systems whose distress is shaped by larger social forces."" --Nancy J. Ramsay Brite Divinity School ""Dr. McClure serves as a helpful conversation partner for pastors serving congregations. By challenging the individualistic models that most of us learned in seminary, she helps us to imagine a more synergistic and prophetic vision for pastoral care that encourages pastors to facilitate healing by drawing connections between the personal and the socio-political, leading us from the safety of our book-lined offices into the risky, vulnerable, and ultimately healing work of changing the world."" --Bradley E. Schmeling St. John's Lutheran Church, Atlanta, Georgia. About the Contributor(s): Barbara J. McClure is Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology at the

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