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## [Book Review of] *Teaching Bioethics: Strategies, Problems and Resources* by K. Danner Clouser

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jected to an autonomous constitution of meaning and value from free choice. The Church has taught that the normative meaning of human sexuality is rooted in the very being of human persons and does not await the value calculus of individuals to be established. The ultimate issue is whether incarnate human persons can stand outside their own sexual constitution and change its inherent meaning by willing it so.

Hence the rejection of physicalism and the acceptance of ethical proportion- alism in matters of human sexuality seem to imply a theology of the person and human sexuality at variance with doctrinal teaching as well as moral teaching. These are profound theological concerns which lie beneath the surface of Father Curran's dissent from magisterial teaching.

Until these concerns are resolved, this reviewer can understand why the dissent- ing theologians must expect continued resistance to their opinions from magisterial teachers, even when the opinions are presented as persuasively and confidently as Father Curran presents his.

— Rev. Donald G. McCarthy

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## ***Teaching Bioethics: Strategies, Problems and Resources***

K. Danner Clouser

*The Hastings Center, Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., 1980. xi + 77 pp., \$4.00 (soft cover).*

This book is the fourth of a series of nine monographs on the teaching of ethics from the Hastings Center Project on the Teaching of Ethics in Higher Education, a two-year project supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and co-directed by Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok.

K. Danner Clouser's contribution deals with the teaching of bioethics. Other monographs in the series deal with the teaching of ethics in graduate schools of law, journalism, business, engineering, and social studies, as well as in the under- graduate curriculum.

Clouser is well known in the field of bioethics and writes from a background of Lutheran theology, Ivy League studies and teaching, and a dozen years of teaching medical ethics at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine at Hershey.

Only someone with Clouser's skills and qualifications could sensibly approach the well-nigh impossible task of writing a book on how to teach medical ethics in our contemporary pluralistic and largely materialistic society. He does it with a foot-work and a finesse that seldom seem to skip even a step. Clouser himself recognizes the problems involved in such a task.

By way of a method to approach the problems, he sketches a paradigm of teaching bioethics to medical students and using this as a baseline, rings in the "mutatis mutandis" for other biomedical settings and in this way, he says, he

hopes to keep the "Pandora's box contained and orderly" (p. 19) and does it in a very intelligible way and to a remarkable degree.

He would bring students to a point of questioning and pursuing moral issues "with as much rigor as the field admits" in an effort to be able to test, with them, the strengths and weaknesses of their moral reasoning. He would resist "indoctrination" but by indoctrination he seems to mean standards imposed without the benefit of examining the reasoning processes behind them. Thus religious faith, examined and supported by reason, is not to be excluded. Indeed, Clouser points out that "many students (and patients) already have religious beliefs and are anxious to see what their faith has to say about particular moral problems" (p. 62).

There is a great wisdom in his observation that "the most important additional requirement of one already trained in ethics is great familiarity with the medical and medical educational world. This cannot be stressed enough. It goes without saying that it is essential to have detailed factual knowledge of those medical areas concerning which one is raising moral questions" (p. 35).

This book is at least an antidote against what seems to be an all too prevalent error among many in the medical field: that physicians can fly through ethical questions by the seat of their pants and write articles on medical ethics with the sole guidance of their gut feelings.

In short, if a teacher first knows where he stands on moral questions, and where he is coming from, and if his own premises are tested and reasonable, Clouser's book will deliver what its title promises: strategies, problems, and resources, and will do it in a very intelligible way.

A valuable six and one-half pages of appendix, which Clouser refers to as "a starter kit" lists and briefly describes a selected bibliography, relevant professional journals and helpful resource organizations, for teaching bioethics.

— Thomas J. O'Donnell, S.J.

## *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Ethics*

Bernard Stoeckle, Editor

*The Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. 1977, x + 285 pp., \$19.50.*

In 1967, John Macquarrie edited a volume entitled *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. The work was clear, comprehensive, coherent and, in a word, competent. Even if it sold today at three times the original price of \$7.50, it would be a bargain.

No bargain at any price is *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Ethics* which is poorly conceived, badly edited, hastily published and unethically overpriced. Since a dictionary — especially one which is the work of many authors — is a different genre of scholarship, it can be reviewed only in a general way with illustrations used to highlight its overall orientation. A dictionary, after all, is meant to be consulted, not read.

The contributors hope that this work, "while it shuns the dictatorship of any party-line," will offer "basic guidelines for all interested Christians who wish to consider or reconsider the fundamentals of ethics at the present time (p. x).