Psychiatric Study Aids Religion, Says Pruysler

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There is danger in the easy comfort of finding relations between "two very different levels of abstraction," psychiatry and religion, according to Doctor Paul Pruysler.

In his lecture last Thursday, entitled "Religion and Psychiatry—a Polygon of Relationships," Dr. Pruysler traced the growing relations between religion and psychology. Dr. Pruysler, director of education at the Menninger Foundation, considers the two as different studies of the same subject, "the image of man."

While psychiatry and religion embrace the same subject, the practical and theoretical ends of the two are quite different.

The development of relations between psychiatry and religion is quite young, according to Dr. Pruysler.

In the 1940's pastoral theology had come to a new level of application. The examination of psychiatric practices in a religious perspective, and vice versa, put religion in a "peer level dialogue with psychiatry."

However, "it is all too easy" to find comfort in the increasingly numerous relationships between psychiatry and religion. This ends the dialogue." According to Dr. Pruysler it must always be remembered that each discipline has different, and often opposite, values.

Dr. Pruysler feels that there are three "new frontiers" in which relationships will develop in the years to come. The most apparent is that of the "deepening and broadening" of psychiatric and psychological training in seminaries.

The second area of interest is the study of the phenomenon of conversion. The close observation of new drugs such as LSD has demonstrated many similarities to acts of conversion.

Finally, Dr. Pruysler feels that the churches must look into the application of psychiatry to the mission field. Growing education has produced an identity problem within the native in developing nations. In order to help resolve this psychological problem, the church will have to increase its emphasis in this particular area.