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Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues

Peter L. VanKatwyk

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a process of theological reflection. It is impossible to read this fine text without engaging one's own faith and life journey.

Ironically, the word "loneliness" appears infrequently. I recall only three places where the word is used. And yet most of the entries are earnest searchings for meaning amidst despairing loneliness—both existential loneliness and loneliness anxiety. The pains of loneliness are penetratingly there. The possibilities for loneliness are constantly elevated amidst the author's "gospel musings".

This is definitely a book worth reading as engagement in personal reflection and as devotional literature. Beyond that, or perhaps as part of that, I can also see this text being used in courses in theology or as a resource material in adult education, most notably in clergy-laity study groups. The text is written by someone struggling with faith and life issues, with living in a trying and puzzling world, including in the institutional church. And in the midst of all this, she is raising the deep questions: What does it mean to believe in God's grace? Are we capable of truly caring for other people?

Arnold D. Weigel
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Deadly Sins and Saving Virtues

Donald Capps
Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987

In his latest book Capps resurrects the traditional canon of "deadly sins" which appeared long dead, at least as a significant focus area in the practice of pastoral care and counselling. This resurrection, however, does not constitute a return to moralism. On account of psychoanalytic theory and even more so the impact of Carl Rogers' non-directive therapy, the pastoral care and counselling movement has adopted an attitude of "positive regard" and "unconditional acceptance" to counteract the moralism held responsible for what were considered the real "deadly sins": neurotic repression, a punitive conscience, and low self-esteem.

Capps maintains this non-moralistic perspective by utilizing Erik Erikson's developmental theory as a dynamic context in which the "deadly sins" are counteracted by the "saving virtues", which Erikson defines as human strengths which emerge in the healthy personality throughout the life cycle. Theologically this means that "original sin" is placed in tension with "original goodness" as both good and evil are inherent in the human condition. While the "saving virtues" dispose the person to the growth experience of a fulfilling orientation to an ever-expanding world, the "deadly sins" arrest the person at critical points in the life cycle, thus condemning the

person to a restrictive lifestyle which is destructive of self and others. Thus the various stages in the life cycle become *kairos* moments of critical life orientations: one direction offered by a "deadly sin", another by a "saving virtue". The point of the book is that specific sins are contrasted by specific virtues and that the alluring disposition toward a specific sin/virtue occurs at a specific stage in the life cycle.

While in a previous age of pastoral care and counselling the image of "the shepherd" appeared at centre stage, Capps represents a new generation of pastoral care givers who see their primary role as a "travel guide" or "coach" in helping persons become better oriented in their world. This new pastoral identity was first and most provocatively expressed in Don Browning's *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* in 1976. In 1983 Capps placed this moral enterprise in life orientation in the context of developmental life tasks in his *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care*, a book which serves as perhaps the best introduction to Erikson's theory and the present book under review.

On account of this emergence of the orienting function of pastoral care, the Bible gains a new prominence as guide and map, not so much in reference to the life here after, but for the here and now as it relates to an "active faith". Capps incorporates Bible studies in his books, presenting the Bible not so much as a "moral book", a book that teaches and advocates morality, but as "a major resource for assisting individuals and groups in the nurturing of a virtuous orientation to life and more specifically, of a life reflecting the saving virtues" (p. 5).

Some of the Bible stories are used to illustrate the moral dilemma of being pulled in opposing directions between the deadly sins and the saving virtues. Such morality vignettes can easily degenerate into an exercise in biblical moralizing. A larger "metastory" approach is present in showing the "pilgrim motif" in the first eight books of the Bible which are ingeniously linked in parallel process with Erikson's eight developmental stages. A faith development approach is illustrated by relating the eight Beatitudes to the eight life cycle stages. While some readers will object that all of this amounts to psychological reductionism of scriptural exegesis, others will discover a fresh biblical approach in moral education and pastoral counselling.

Capps is a systematician with a rare gift of synthesizing a variety of sources and theories. There are times when his tables and diagrams appear a bit too neat; listing and expositing eight "deadly sins" is a bit of a deadly, if not boring, exercise. The horror of the deadly sins, surely, is that they cannot be tamed, not even in brilliant cognitive frameworks. By theological definition sin remains disorderly and unexplainable. Yet Capps' developmental and dialectical process approach to the doctrine of good and evil does inspire the pastoral task of contrasting the life-denying function

of "deadly sins" with the good news of the "saving virtues" as the pathways of life.

Peter L. VanKatwyk
Interfaith Pastoral Counselling Centre
Kitchener, Ontario

Guided Grief Imagery: A Resource For Grief Ministry and Death Education

Thomas A. Droëge
Mahwah, New York: Paulist Press, 1987
178 pp.

Carl Jung, when he was asked by the British TV host whether he believed in the existence of God, replied "No, Mr. Freeman, I *know*". Jung's famous rejoinder speaks to our modern western preoccupation—both religious and secular—with propositions and an overly intellectual approach to truth. Thomas Droëge's excellent book on using imagery to help us face death serves to rectify our imaginative impoverishment while yet affirming the core of the Christian tradition. The author rehabilitates our capacity to image the real in the domain of death and grief, that is neglected in our technologized churches and society.

This is a book for pastors, counselors and educators and any committed journeyer who thinks death, grief and loss are too important an ingredient of life's journey to be left to reason and doctrine alone. Guided imagery and the experiential journaling approach of Ira Progoff are integrated with a variety of death-related material drawn from Christian liturgies and biblical material including narratives from the Pentateuch and the Gospels, the pastoral issues of the Pauline Epistles, as well as the existential exclamations that constitute the Psalms.

This book is both comprehensive in scope and rich in detail. Chapter one and five ground the use of imagery in a coherent psychological and theological framework. In the third chapter Droëge refocuses us from our cultural thanatological myopia as he outlines historical shifts in the popular images used for facing death over two millennia. This is the best summary I know of Philip Aries' *The Hour of Our Death*. Four main historical phases are described. Evidently until the seventh century the early Christians for the most part seemed comfortable with "nearness to death" sustained by the alarming warmth of the Paschal Mystery and affection for the early martyrs and their burial sites. Greater awareness of the individual self in medieval times was accompanied by a preoccupation with the fate of the soul at death together with a fear of a legalistic judgement. The horror