

5-1-1990

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

Christopher F.J. Ross

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Ross, Christopher F.J. (1990) "Guided Grief Imagery: A Resource for Grief Ministry and Death Education," *Consensus*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 1 , Article 20.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol16/iss1/20>

This Book Reviews is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

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

contained in many medieval images may help explain the modern world's desire to deny death by flexing its technological muscles and largely eschewing the topic. The intervening Enlightenment phase is presented as sentimentalizing death with its focus on the death of "the other" and with heaven depicted as the place for a happy reunion with the loved one. This third chapter may help the pastor and educator deal with the variety of attitudinal strains which influence individuals' approach to death.

While challenging in the impact of its enthusiastically advocated experiential methods, this book is not the work of a self-conscious iconoclast. Rather the writer allows us to rediscover the richness of resources within the Christian tradition for dealing with death authentically. Chapter four mines the liturgies of the church, not only the funeral liturgy but also baptism, the Easter Vigil, and Lutheran hymnody. The abundant quotations and commentary effortlessly demonstrate that the power of imagery lies in its ambiguity. For example water can both drown us and cleanse us; the mountain can be both wilderness and the place where we are nearer the light of the Divine.

Whereas part one is for those who desire a firm foundation for any innovative practice, part two provides detailed guidelines for those timid about using guided imagery to deal with death directly for themselves and those they serve. (Of course good preachers incorporate imagery routinely!) The book contains a total of thirty-three full-text image-journeys that may be used for worship services, Bible study, retreats or for work with special groups. A number of grief-related topics are covered using different biblical and non-biblical images. Separate chapters are devoted to material from the Psalms and New Testament. The last chapters provide descriptions that allow the leader to choose a death-related issue that is appropriate to the needs of the class, congregation, family, or individual. There are image-journeys for the anticipation of one's own death, the past or anticipated death of loved ones, or the experience of traumatic loss or threat that may constitute, according to Droege, a "mini death".

While this is definitely not just a cook book, its value as reference and resource would be enhanced by a subject index. Moreover, some discussion of the death education movement within and without the church would be welcome. It might address the reservations of some people that the death education movement is an attempt by modern science and religion to technologize the transcendence of death and to create yet another task that modern humans have to do well. As one person put it, "Now I even have to die well". R.C. Johnston's *Confronting Death: Psycho-religious Responses* will provide balance, however, for the neophyte.

By the end of the book it is clear that Droege's enthusiasm for the imaginal approach to death is no vain effort at control, but a means of accessing the profound opportunity of human life through the multiplex images of the Paschal Mystery that lies at the heart of the Christian tradition.

Christopher F.J. Ross
Wilfrid Laurier University

The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature

Sidney Greidanus

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1988

xvi + 374 pp.

This book is an excellent presentation of a conservative Evangelical understanding of biblical preaching. Greidanus is Professor of Theology at The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta, and his concern is to further sound and authoritative preaching of the Bible. Well and widely read in both disciplines (23 pages of "Select Bibliography") he seeks here "to bridge the gap between the department of biblical studies and that of homiletics" (xi).

In a time of strident—and sometimes vicious—argumentation in favor of biblical inerrancy and against any historical-critical methods, it is refreshing to observe a conservative scholar carefully evaluating source, form, redaction, rhetorical, and canonical criticisms, noting strengths as well as weaknesses, and appropriating their respective usefulnesses for expository preaching. And it is salutary to experience Greidanus' steadfast emphases on the integrity of the text, the overarching theocentricity of the Bible, the need for a holistic approach to interpretation, and respect for the importance of preaching as derived from the kerygmatic nature of Scripture itself.

The initial chapter presents the familiar Evangelical emphasis on preaching the Scriptures (*vis-à-vis* the Lutheran emphasis on using the Scriptures to preach the Gospel): "If preachers wish to preach with divine authority, they must proclaim the message of the inspired Scriptures, for the Scriptures alone are the word of God written; the Scriptures alone have divine authority" (12). Preaching, therefore—by definition—is expository preaching, the "plain meaning" of which is "to exposit the Word of God" (10).

Three categories or dimensions of interpretation guide and control exposition and preaching. (1) Literary Interpretation (ch. 3), in which "one seeks to ascertain the meaning of the passage by focussing on the words" (297), includes not only such methods as source, form, redaction, rhetorical,