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# Through the Loneliness: A Woman's Spiritual Journal

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to the translation of the fifth volume of the series, *The Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*.

Until then, this book will give you plenty to chew on!

Paul F. Bosch  
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

## **Through The Loneliness: A Woman's Spiritual Journal**

Antonia J. van den Beld  
New York: Paulist Press, 1987  
140 pp.

This is a captivating and challenging journal which records the human and spiritual dynamics and dimensions of a "second" journey thrust upon a woman in her middle years. The diary, covering a span of time from 1980 through into 1983, is deeply experiential and profoundly reflective in substance and in style. The author raises searching questions like: "Why, for heaven's sake, did God complicate people's life the way it seems to have done?... the reality that we can be 'touched', that we can 'respond', and that, when we do, we live a life which is not our own... What does it mean to believe in God's grace?... How can it be that I experience myself as a religious person and at the same time have such little faith?... Are we capable of truly caring for other people?"

God, God's grace, the tension between God's unconditional love and the drama of our human possibilities for love form the centrepiece of this story. The author is constantly wrestling with a myriad of emotions and feelings stirred up by many relationships. There's wonderment, guilt, anger, fear, frustration—and above all a deep feeling of loneliness as she feels her life taken in new directions. As these new directions unfold, she wants very much to believe that God's love is unconditional and yet she is in a deep inner battle with all that. She is really wondering whether it is possible to experience God's unconditional love within the human condition and within human relationships. Her experience seems to suggest to her the very opposite. Hence, deep-seated feelings of loneliness. She is repeatedly questioning herself about sin, personal responsibility and the values which might guide her on life's journey.

This is a profoundly personal testimony and a deeply spiritual witness. In reading the entries, I was vividly reminded of some of the struggles which Martin Luther went through in searching for a gracious God. It is a provocatively devotional piece of literature. Being written both in a narrative style and in a reflective mode, the material draws the reader into

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