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Review

Daniel Kearney, *Adult Bullying, Caring for Yourself and Others.* Chawton, Hampshire: Redemptorist Publications, 2017, 53 pp. (pbk). ISBN: 978-0-85231-507-1

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Daniel Kearney is a former independent school headteacher and pastoral leader with over 20 years teaching experience which he brings to bear in this thoughtful and suggestive work, part of Redemptorist's new Pastoral Outreach Series.

With an epigraph from David Cameron, a former Prime Minister of the UK, stating that stamping out bullying in the workplace is a vital objective because it makes "peoples' lives a misery, and harms business and society too", Kearney sets out his stall in eight brief chapters. The chapters discuss: (1) How it feels to be bullied; (2) Workplace bullying, pp. 6–15; (3) For those who suffer (the victim); (4) Adult bullying in the family; (5) Others can help (tips on combatting bullying); (6) For victims and those who care (the benefits of the virtues), pp. 32–45; (7) Summary; and finally (8) Prayers and meditations.

Aimed at business owners, managers and workers, Kearney also wishes to help clergy to support "parishioners" who may become victims. For this journal's spiritual care purposes, the author refers to a headline in *The Times* newspaper, "A Quarter of Minority Staff in the NHS are Bullied". He places this in the familiar UK healthcare context of the listed protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, without over-reference to these legalities or the Public Sector Equality Duty. However, in Chapter 2 he gives a personal example of a pathological "serial bully" in a school "spreading lies", even to pupils and parents, and attributes the phrase's origins to Tim Field, former UK National Workplace Bullying Adviser. Kearney's

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interactive approach with multiple choice textboxes, e.g. *A Bullying Teacher*, what would you do: placate, resign or resolve? is to his credit, as are some of the descriptions he coins: "feigned victimhood", the "narcissistic bully", or the "impulsive bully" who grows angry but is not able to manage it because s/he feels no empathy.

In Chapter 3, the author notes that bullying and harassment can result in near suicide. This was illustrated recently and controversially among young workers in the UK Labour party confronting anti-semitism allegations (BBC *Panorama* TV programme, 15 July 2019), but Kearney mostly limits himself to low level bullying (he suggests using humour to offset it), which, if not effective, we may surmise, is often the root for the more serious form and effect of bullying. UK telephone numbers for the industrial Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the National Bullying Helpline are offered. There is no reference to the #MeToo movement and its huge impact. However, but for those who deliver spiritual care, is it possible that the network of bullying and harassment advisers (or those subtly renamed as "mediators" to be more accessible) which NHS Trusts often direct traffic to, represent, with some notable exceptions (https://www.verita.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Imperial-Final-report-9-August-18.pdf), a more adequate disciplinary redress than in the private or government sectors? With the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian scheme, a UK whistleblowing network initiated following the 2013 Francis Report which found systematic abuses in health and social care, it is interesting to note that a few "chaplains" are also now named Guardians with Trusts.

In Chapter 4, Kearney tackles abuse of, and by elders, and his valid angle is familial rather than institutional; hence he highlights perhaps the rare insight that elderly parents could be bullies themselves. However, elder abuse is a serious problem, which non-clinical workers such as chaplains encounter, and health and social care systems must deal with regularly. He does not mention advocacy groups, such as Action on Elder Abuse, or the Mental Capacity Act 2005. This is probably because of how bullying can cross the line into crimes of neglect and ill-treatment which is outside the remit and capacity of this book and the series. Chapter 5 speaks of not "videoing the bully" when recent lapses in care have depended on undercover journalists doing exactly that. Kearney is perceptive in outlining the bully's projected self-dislike, insecurity and inadequacies on to the target, whom they may actually envy.

The excellent Chapter 7 topped and tailed by quotes from Barack and Michelle Obama ("Our motto is when they go low, you go high") explains a virtuous quadrant with Prudence, Courage Temperance and Justice

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going around the clock. The word "cardinal" derives from the Latin word for "hinge", thus all the other virtues pivot around the famous classical four. Kearney is particularly good at drawing in examples as he circles the compass: temperance is a younger colleague keeping a cool head amongst dinosaur behaviours and seeing them off with confident positivity. Justice requires managers to deal with bullying workplace cultures, but who will deal with top-down or bottom-up toxicity in workers and managers themselves?

I admire the way Kearney gently and reflectively introduces and weaves the ethical and transcendental elements into the book and completes it with ten (mainly Christian) prayers and meditations. Note that three of these are from non-religious sources. I recommend this book as a thought-provoking and practical starter, albeit conservative, but filled nonetheless with much clear good sense in a few pages.

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