



**COUNSELING CROSS-CULTURALLY**, by David J. Hesselgrave. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984. Pp. 436. \$14.95 (paper).

Reading David J. Hesselgrave's book, *Counseling Cross-Culturally*, reminded me of driving in city traffic. I found myself moving along in stops and starts. There are some ideas here that are extremely helpful, but there are also some assumptions that bring agreement to a sudden halt.

On the positive side, Hesselgrave argues persuasively that the whole field of counseling in a cross-cultural setting has been largely ignored in Western theological education. The results have been damaging to the life of the church because there are thousands of Christians who find themselves practicing counseling throughout the world with very little training or consistency. In fact, it is precisely this situation that prompts him to offer his work:

It would appear that, unless something is done soon, we will repeat the mistake that we have made over and over in Christian missions: namely, the unwarranted and wholesale exportation of counseling texts and theories, seminars on this and that personality or societal problem, and, organizations designed to perpetuate Western approaches to problem-solving. It is precisely this mistake that has given rise to charges of ecclesiastical imperialism and widespread criticism of “Western” evangelistic strategies, pedagogies, church structures, school curricula, and even theologies! (30)

Arising from this concern to counteract Western cultural egocentricity, Hesselgrave defines counseling as an interaction with either individuals or groups “in order to solve problems and effect positive change” (39). His analysis of counseling techniques is thorough; his methodology provides a credible blueprint for any cross-cultural minister to follow. Basically, he outlines both Western and non-Western models for problem solving with a strong appeal to the scriptural basis for bridging the two world views.

In essence, Hesselgrave organizes his book in three helpful steps: an introduction to theory and practices, a method for studying cross-cultural counseling, and a series of case studies to illustrate his conclusions. As a handbook for cross-cultural counseling, these three divisions are extremely useful. It would be especially beneficial for beginners in the field. As an aid to mission, Hesselgrave's work would be a valuable addition to any library.

However, there are some stopping places that should not go unnoticed. For example, it is doubtful that every Christian of color could embrace the implicit theology which serves as the foundation for his three-part practical approach. It is Hesselgrave's theology that signals most of the red lights. For example, his interpretation of the great commission as a mandate for a vertical relationship with God sounds good until it is superimposed over the decidedly horizontal social

structure of many tribal Christian communities. The creational theology of the vertical western church conflicts fundamentally with the tribal creational theology that sees relation with God in a much more egalitarian manner. His dismissal of this critical, theological point with the statement that a “vertical relationship with God through Christ... will inevitably bring some social dislocations” (37) is a step to the side of a main weakness in this theological outlook.

Hesselgrave’s attitude toward what he calls “tribal” peoples betrays a lack of appreciation for the Christian theology rapidly emerging from this community. Perhaps this is because that theology contradicts some of his primary assumptions. When Hesselgrave says that “guilt can be good” in the conversion process (356) he is speaking strictly from his own cultural heritage. His analysis of “guilt” cultures and “shame” cultures leaves much to be desired, especially when translated into a theological framework.

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The feeling one comes away with is that *Counseling Cross-Culturally* is a good work, but ironically, good for persons from one cultural area. As an introduction for graduate level persons of western or northern European background, it is acceptable. For many of the rest of us, it has a stop and go quality that limits its longterm value.

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**CREEDS, SOCIETY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A STUDY IN THREE CULTURES**, by Max L. Stackhouse. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. Pp. xii + 315. \$19.95 (hardbound).

Stackhouse’s book presents itself as an attempt to bridge the contemporary trenches dividing humanity culturally and politically as to the definition and practice of what constitutes the essentially human. To define the essentially human is, for the author, to define a belief which expresses an ultimate (and thus religious) commitment toward the fundamental and universal plight of humanity. To act upon such beliefs is to create a practice that shapes civilizations and engenders specific social structures that will mediate the actualization of the fundamental values of the human race.

The development of the argument is easy to recognize. By affirming the universality of the essentially human and the particularity of the ways in which it is culturally and politically expressed, Stackhouse suggests the basic building blocks of the book. The first part (chs. 1-2) presents the methodology and a brief sketch of the roots of human rights, traced back to the “biblical conception of life” where its “deepest roots...are found” (31).

For Stackhouse, “human rights represent a belief about what is sacred in human relations and the pattern of civilization” (2). Such a belief, by implying a universal moral order, gives rise to a “doctrine” which, then, becomes a creed whenever it is “held to be true, embraced with commitment, celebrated in concert with others, and used as a fundamental ground for action.” (2). Therefore, such creeds have pretensions of universality as to what is understood by “right” and by “human.” The right of the human is the essentially human. However, this pretension of universality—which the author attributes to the never defined communality of human needs

(131)—is always restrained by the particular ways in which concrete societies create space for membership. Membership defines inclusion and exclusion of the individual in the human community and thus connects social relations and individual dignity. With this the author specifies the poles that will frame the discussion of human rights: “Between creed and the structure of social membership, human rights as a living norm is hammered out” (6). And since these two extremes belong to the limit-fields of religion proper and ethics, “human rights is essentially a matter of religious ethics” (6). Thus he is concerned in showing the common root of the pursuit of human rights in the socio-religious tradition reaching back to “the hebraic notion of a universal moral law rooted in the righteousness of God” (35). This view was radicalized and universalized by Christianity becoming a “public theology” capable of giving shape to a complex civilization (the western world) and, finally, engendering the medieval conflict between *regnum* and *sacerdotum*. The turning point to modernity and the emergence of the *Kulturkampf* is, for Stackhouse, the Council of Constance (145), “the last great effort (until the twentieth century)...to establish a public theology for ‘all’ the ‘civilized world’” (46). The failure of the council in creating a social space between Pope and emperor is the cause of modern pluralism, because it was able to dissolve the medieval synthesis. The resulting cultural dismemberment allows for the emergence of the three great ethico-religious systems presently competing for cultural hegemony: the “public theology” of the Free-Church tradition of the U.S., the “civil religion” of “orthodox” Marxism-Leninism in East Germany, and the “social spirituality” of Hinduism in India.

In the second part of the book (chs. 3-8) two chapters are dedicated to the analysis

of each of the three “cultures” chosen as paradigmatic cases of the contemporary “*Kulturkampf*... as to what principles and which groups will shape the future” (xi). The discourse in these chapters is largely picturesque, sometimes oversimplified, sometimes abundant in details well observed but not always clearly connected to the course of the argument.

In the case of the U.S., attention is given exclusively to the Free-Church Calvinism or puritanism which allied with utilitarian liberalism has prevented liberalism from falling into moral permissiveness and into the tendency of inflating the role of the government while it also restrains the puritan tendency toward either theocentrism (“imperialism”) or “revivalist fideism” (75-76). The result is the emergence of intermediary institutions in whose social space the Free-Churches, voluntary associations, and interest groups shape public life and articulate the “American creed.” The obvious problem in such optimistic and formalist overview of the role of the Free-Church tradition lies in the liberal confidence in a public discourse free from *material* determinations, economic and ideologico-political control. The contradictory character of this intermediary sector (e.g., the “peace churches” versus the Moral Majority) is obliterated and so is the role of the (“not-free”) Catholic tradition in matters of economics, peace, and human rights.

In the case of the G.D.R., the religious analysis of the situation provides a reading of the Marxist-Leninist system as a “civil religion,” a “substitute church,” a “new redemptive community” (188), which “mediates the means of salvation to the people, guiding and informing all areas of thought and action” (157). For Stackhouse, the result is the divinization of the human or the affirmation of “absolute human autonomy” (273). The character of the argument, however, is not clear. If it is made on the basis of the history of ideas culminating with Marx’s criticism of

religion, then it is false since he (along with Engels and Lenin) advocated the historical necessity of economic processes which ultimately sets constraints on human autonomy (pertinent here is Marx's criticism of Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer). If the argument is built on the basis of the prevailing ideology of a communist society, it is equally false since it is the author himself who recognizes the determining factors of economy and technology—and not of human free agency—in historical processes (e.g., 156) and even accuses Marxism-Leninism for not having “a fundamental place for the causative role of ideas or persons in human history” (273). Hence Stackhouse classifies the communist ideology as humanist in order to show that it is religious, but then he criticizes its “civil religion” for being marked by bureaucratic economicism and technocracism. The religious analysis is superfluous and inconsequential.

A systematic alignment of errors, mistakes and options is frequently of esthetic appeal for those who with naval sensibilities imagine truth as a ship eternally navigating between ubiquitous Scyllas and Charybdises. Thus opposing the one-sidedness of Marxist-Leninist materialism and collectivism we will inevitably find the “radical individualism,” “gnosticism,” or “social spirituality” of Hinduism (13, 255). With this arrangement of options the solution is already prescribed in the presuppositions since the question of human rights “is not one of individualism versus collectivism but one of *membership*” (5).

A brief review of the options is presented in the final evaluative chapter (ch. 9). The impossibility of making a choice outside of the creedal structures of the “three religions” is asserted and the only conclusion follows:

As a convert to the Liberal-Puritan synthesis...I have become convicted that the last of these three views (treated first in this book) is the truest description of the human condition. This view preserves freedom and is rational; it is potentially universal and practically creates in particular settings the social space whereby the concrete social structures are opened up so that most basic human needs are likely to be met over time with a minimum of destructive violence. (272)

Besides the fact that the problem of violence is never discussed and thus could hardly serve as a historical criterion, the definition of basic human

needs as a norm for defining the effectiveness of the model leads us to a further problem. In the words of the author, “the problem in this approach is the definition of what is...‘basic’” (269). The solution will “depend on the fundamental definition of what is holy” (269). Freedom, rationality, universality, and practicality are examined according to what is regarded to be “holy.” For a puritan heart, freedom is defined as a “fundamental sense of relationship to something beyond determinate human capacities and human construction” (273). Thus both Marxism-Leninism and Hinduism are dismissed as inadequate because in the first “absolute human autonomy does not free us from human limitation” (273) and in the latter the “final release...is but a final stage of a totally determined process” (273).

On the question of rationality the argument is the following: Christianity (Liberal-Puritanism) believes in the righteousness of God which “cannot be refuted rationally” (273). And this seems to follow since the basis of rationality is the transcendent holy. Marxism-Leninism

and Hinduism can be challenged because they deny reason by denying the (Liberal-Puritan) basis of reason (275). Yes, it follows. But the argument is circular in both the justification of freedom and of rationality.

And, finally, Stackhouse claims that the Liberal-Puritan position is potentially universal and highly practical “because it preserves the equality of every human person in regard to the most basic facts about humanity: all are children of God” (274). Hinduism “identifies” God with a particular “gene-pool,” and Marxism-Leninism with a “particular principality or civic power” (274). Given the presuppositions the result is hardly surprising.

*Creeds, Society, and Human Rights* is a polemical attempt to restore credibility to the Liberal-Puritan marriage as the normative paradigm to shape the future of civilizations. It adds to the recent titles proposing the rehabilitation of economic liberalism and political conservatism even if the author might not feel very comfortable in the company of the recent generation of neo-conservatives or neo-liberals as they have been labeled. The dream is the same: “the decisive class for the future of humanity is the middle class. All should join it” (277). With such a peremptory formulation for the solution of the human rights problem one wonders if Baudelaire should not have had his way when he suggested that to the inventory of human rights should belong the “right to go away...”—in this case, from this discussion.

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**FOOD FOR TOMORROW?** by C. Dean Freudenberger, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. Pp. 173. \$8.95 (paper).

Freudenberger does an admirable job of addressing and answering the complex question of whether there will be enough food in the future. That is a hard assignment in only 141 pages of text. I differ with him on a few points and approaches, but generally, the main points concerning problems, solutions, and implementations are sound. The survival of agriculture is basic to the survival of society. We have the ability to solve many problems. We need the will to change the current direction of resource use.

The book is divided into three main parts. First, Freudenberger discusses the world food crisis as a crisis of resource use or misuse; that takes about one-half of the book and is its weakest part. In the second part, he uses biblical sources, ancient lifestyles, and current knowledge to develop a new ethic for agriculture. In the final chapters, he discusses potential solutions and outlines some tasks for churches to meet the challenges of the future.

The first few chapters are rather hard to read. The writing is choppy and the footnotes excessive. At times, Freudenberger is careless with his numbers. For example, he seems to say that between 150,000 and 200,000 acres is more than 20% of 58 million acres (39). Another concern is a writing style which may lead a reader to think that worldwide catastrophe starts next month and we can't do much about it!

“Ancient Wisdom for New Problems” is an interesting chapter which discusses

various points from ancient life, biblical observations, and current knowledge. While I have questions about some of his comments, I cannot argue with his basic thesis that Old and New Testament themes support the idea of interconnections and interdependencies of all parts of creation. This conclusion is the basis for his new ethic for agriculture.

Freudenberger discusses three ethical guidelines which he uses to develop a new definition and vision for agriculture: justice, participation, and sustainability. He defines a just agriculture as one that “provides the means by which people can share the inheritance of the earth so that all can fully be maintained in freedom and community” (99). Participation in decision making by everyone is needed to allow agriculture to be just and sustainable. A sustainable agriculture is one based on permanent carrying capacity of the land, not on maximum short-term yields. Freudenberger makes this new definition sound like an unreachable utopia when compared to the reality of today’s world. But these goals are worth striving for.

In the section on solutions, Freudenberger writes about three resources or methods which can help agriculture world wide: forest farming, perennial grasses and shrubs, and indigenous livestock. After discussing needed technological and policy developments, he points out several components for a solution in the U.S.: an educational effort to create awareness of agriculture’s problem; responsible land ownership; small-scale family farm operations; regional marketing; biological-intensive versus chemical-intensive agriculture; greater education in values, ethics, purposes, and goals; more research for sustainable agriculture technology; a new understanding of food security; redevelopment of rural America; protection of environmental and national resources; and a need for people to live today so that generations will be able to live in the future.

In his final chapter, Freudenberger identifies four major tasks for churches. First, our Christian faith can liberate us from traditions and conventional morality and give us the freedom we need to change our ways. Second, we need to tell others of the agricultural problem. Third, we need to envision a new and preferable form of agriculture. Fourth, we need to take the leadership in seeing that this vision is known, discussed, and enacted. As a final point Freudenberger argues that the church needs to accept these tasks as a “wise person” who advises and questions those who have power and authority.

From my perspective in the academic community in agriculture—specifically economics—I find points of agreement and disagreement with Freudenberger. Overdrafting of water resources, chemical use, big farms, and economics are not always evil. Small farms are as likely to misuse resources as big farms. The definition of “misuse” has many gray areas. The economic marketplace may force some changes, but, as Freudenberger says, we also need changes in technology and policy. Perhaps most important is that we all need to change the ways we live and work—even the midwestern family farmer!

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**READING THE OLD TESTAMENT: METHOD IN BIBLICAL STUDY**, by John Barton.  
Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. Pp. 272. \$12.95 (paper).

John Barton, lecturer in Old Testament at Oxford University, England, herewith offers up a very readable and engaging discussion of Old Testament hermeneutics. Initial chapters on literary, form and redaction criticism serve as refresher courses on three of the staple methodologies employed by those who read their Bibles historically. In fact these sections are so clearly written and so well illustrated that they could be used in an introductory course on Bible study method. Barton then applies all three methods to Ecclesiastes in a sample study. Again, the material would be very helpful to the neophyte.

But then the plot thickens. The opening chapters are a sort of foil in order to

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discuss a method that both intrigues and mystifies Barton, namely, the canonical approach of B. S. Childs. While allowing that the method of Childs is indeed new (no one heretofore has ever put that kind of emphasis on the canon) Barton points out several inconsistencies in the method.

Which canon does Childs have in mind for the Old Testament? Why the masoretic Hebrew text, of course. Problem: The church's Old Testament canon for 1,400 years was the longer Septuagint.

Childs likes to quote Augustine and Chrysostom and a few other church fathers because they interpreted Scripture wholistically, canonically, and with a precritical wholesomeness. Moreover, it is these interpreters who have shaped the canon. Problem: these interpreters also allegorized, and Childs rejects allegory as a legitimate methodology.

Childs affirms *sola scriptura* in a way which attracts many a Bible devotee. Problem: this hook-line-and-sinker approach to the canon does not sit well with those who are positively impressed with Luther's Old Testament measuring rod, "Whatever bears witness to Christ."

In a word, Barton allows the canonical method to be brand new but finds it theologically unsatisfying.

Barton then goes on to an enlightening (and to me convincing) presentation of the why's and wherefore's of structuralism—that attempt at reconstructing not what the author meant but what the author wrote. The author goes in this direction because he believes that canonical criticism ought to be seen as a form of structuralism. Of course Childs denies that his method has either father or mother, but Barton makes a good cause for seeing significant connections between Childs and the structuralists.

From structuralism Barton moves on into the new criticism, which in its own way insists that a text is a text and that it carries its own meaning. New Critic T. S. Eliot responded to an undergraduate who asked, "Please, sir, what do you mean by the line, *Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree?*" by saying, "I mean, *Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper tree!*" In Biblical terms this says that the meaning of "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" is "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*"

If that sounds a little silly, it merely points to Barton's third aim in the book: to argue a case against the pursuit of 'correct' methods. But his is not a mere eclecticism.

Instead of asking which method is 'right,' we might ask what is really going on in the reader when he is using each of them, what kind of reading they belong to. That inquiry seems hardly to have begun yet in the biblical world, though it is already well advanced in secular criticism. I hope that this book has at least shown

that there is a place for it and provided occasional, provisional suggestions of the sorts of results it might achieve. (207)

I learned a lot reading this book. It got me to thinking about hermeneutics in a fresh way. I recommend it as a post-M.Div. refresher in the disciplines and as a profound and appreciative critique of the canonical approach.

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**SLAVERY, SABBATH, WAR, AND WOMEN: CASE ISSUES IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**, by Willard M. Swartley. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1983. Pp. 368. \$9.95 (paper).

For most folks, the question of how one is to interpret Scripture rarely comes up in the abstract. The issue usually only arises when something concrete is at stake—when there is some “hot” subject, often connected to sexuality, family, or to the use of force which is threatening to tear apart individuals or societies. It is at this tense juncture that people frequently appeal to Scripture as the final authority and arbiter of ethical and social issues. They ask, “What does the Bible say about premarital sex, divorce, homosexuality, the place of women, the use of nuclear weapons?” Then, when such an appeal is made, there is great dismay when proponents of conflicting views are able to preface their opinions by the dramatic line “As the Bible says....” In the end, the discussion is not helped, and, moreover, the Scriptures appear to be of little use. The Bible appears to be the primary loser. It is this troubling state of affairs

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which Willard Swartley addresses in his book, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, and he brings to the discussion a clear view of the issues and problems, a balanced perspective, an even-handedness in presenting opposing views, and, most helpfully, a public discussion of what is at stake.

Swartley’s main objective is to demonstrate how Scripture has been used and misused when dealing with matters of social ethics and then to develop a hermeneutical model appropriate for such circumstances. He feels that it is not only appropriate but also necessary for Christians to use Scripture when dealing with such matters. This, however, should only be done if one develops a sound method of interpretation. Towards that end, Swartley takes up each of the issues mentioned in his title in successive chapters. Each chapter clearly presents two or more conflicting sides of each issue, and then provides a hermeneutical commentary which makes its own contribution to the overall discussion. Swartley is very clear about the purpose of these chapters; they are not meant to be exhaustive presentations of each issue. Rather slavery, Sabbath, war, and women are discussed with an eye toward illuminating the central topic of biblical interpretation. This Swartley does with tremendous skill. He is quite adept at presenting opposing views in a manner which is thorough, informative, and eminently readable. One does, in fact, learn a good deal about the various topics, and Swartley’s secondary goal of illuminating

the contemporary biblical debate about the role of women in society is deftly handled.

In the process of drawing out the relevant points, Swartley mentions an impressive number of items which have hermeneutical implications. A simple list of the issues which Swartley raises gives a sense of the depth of his discussion. He sees the following as significant: the meaning of "literal" interpretation of Scripture, the relationship of individual passages to the whole, the unity and diversity of Scripture, the relationship of the two Testaments, the nature of "kingdom" ethics, the human and divine dimensions of Scripture, the voices of the community of faith (including those from ethnically and economically diverse perspectives), the place of tradition and later church practices, the relationship of doctrinal positions to Scripture, the analysis of societal structures both past and present, a proper perspective for the historical-critical methodology, the role of ideology, and the overall intent of Scripture.

Swartley eventually offers his own positions on each of these topics, positions which arise quite consciously from a Mennonite perspective. There is a heavy emphasis on the teaching of Jesus, the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old, and "kingdom" ethics which center on the values of love, peace, and justice, as well as on the importance of sound scholarship, the believing community, and the dynamic nature of divine revelation. Swartley's own views are balanced, often helpful, and worthy of serious consideration. The one trap he falls into is the tendency to apply the term "rabbinic" only to those passages in Paul which are distasteful, thereby neglecting to observe that much of what is good in Paul also has rabbinic roots. However, this one failing pales beside Swartley's impressive ability to show why a clear position on each of the above-mentioned points is important. He, in a sense, invites each reader to take a conscious stand on these underlying issues so that the public discussion of the role of the Bible in the larger societal issues might be more cogent.

There are many strengths to this book, not the least of which is its clear presentation and useful organization. Most helpful are the final two chapters which offer a proposed method for Bible study and a summary of learnings which contain cross-references to discussions in the preceding chapters. The book is highly recommended and well suited for both congregational and classroom use. Moreover, I suspect that this book would not simply sit on the pastor's shelf but would be used often as a reference when handling thorny issues.

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**THE SUFFERING OF GOD, AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE**, by Terence Fretheim. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. Pp. 223. \$10.95 (paper).

Picking up a book with a bright red cover and a title like this, one is prepared to plunge into the infinite depths of divine pathos. But no, we have to read over a hundred pages before we find more than a hint of God's pain and anguish. It finally dawns that there is an older definition of suffering, to wit, to be acted upon, to undergo experiences not of one's own choosing, and also, to allow or permit oneself to be acted upon. With such a definition in mind, we can understand why we are being conducted through a metaphysical description of the biblical God. We need to recognize that this God is capable of experiencing pain and anguish before we can

talk of God's actual experience.

The burden of the book, as I understand it, is to test the interpretive capacity of process theology to highlight aspects of the Old Testament depiction of God which have been denied or obscured by the various traditions of classical theism. By process theology is meant a conception of God involving limits upon God's power and knowledge and real interaction between God and creatures. Fretheim argues that the biblical God is immersed in the world God created and that this God is limited (or self-limited) by creation. As a result, the course of natural and human events is not solely determined by God, but by a give-and-take between the Creator and creatures.

Fretheim is also engaged in a contemporary kind of typological reading of the Old Testament. He regularly draws attention to the links between the Old Testament and Christ. God takes on human form in theophanies and in the prophets, foreshadowing the complete incarnation in Jesus. God is changed by the events of time, and experiences disappointment and sorrow because of Israel's sin and judgment, prefiguring the *via dolorosa* of the Messiah.

The author believes that one can detect a metaphoric shift in contemporary Godlanguage and that it is the Old Testament theologian's task to recover those neglected Old Testament metaphors that would fit the emerging image of God. His own hermeneutical schemata highlight feminine characteristics of God. They are also supportive of liberation theology, for a limited God would not be identified with the unjust power structures of any given moment in history and would be free to participate in struggles for liberation and justice. A limited God could not be blamed for the terrible evil and suffering of the Holocaust and other agonies of our century and could be seen as suffering along with the victims. In these respects, the work has an apologetic purpose.

Let me sketch the argument of the work. Fretheim's metaphysical thesis is set forth in chapters three through five. He begins by arguing that the dominant "image" of God in the Old Testament is not that of a transcendent monarch, but of a being who stands beside creatures and interacts with them. Various types of interaction portrayed in the text indicate that the future is open to various possibilities, limiting God's foreknowledge to probabilities and a certain knowledge as to what God will do. God's presence and action are a constituent of every event in creation, and what is often called "intervention" is really only an intensification of the universal presence, facilitated by the possibilities of a given situation. God's absence or hiding are never intentional, but the result of sinful resistance to God's presence.

God's most "intensive" presence, treated separately in the sixth chapter, is in theophany, when God incarnates in a human form. The accounts of theophanies in the Old Testament make a specific point of highlighting the visual, "empirical" manifestation of God as enhancing the audition. This visual experience is always of deity in human form. Whatever form God possesses apart from theophany, "the human form of the divine appearance constituted an enfleshment which bore essential continuities with the form God was believed to have" (105).

Chapters seven through nine finally arrive at the subject of God's suffering. The prophetic word constitutes the primary textual basis for the discussion. The texts

ascribe lamentation to God, who suffers *because* of human sin, particularly the sin of God's people Israel, and who suffers *with* humanity, particularly Israel, when it experiences suffering

(either due to its own or others' sin). God also suffers *for* humans, particularly for Israel, bearing the burden for their sin so that they can live and in order that they might be redeemed.

The book concludes with a chapter synthesizing theophany and suffering. God is incarnate in the prophets, and the prophets' experience of rejection is God's experience. The prophets suffer in God's behalf because of, with and for Israel and the rest of the human race.

The argument of this monograph is quite convincing as an exposition of a number of neglected metaphors and depictions of YHWH. Passages which were an embarrassment to classical theists here take on a positive significance. I am sure that the reader will recognize that his or her unexamined metaphysical assumptions have obscured important aspects of God's interaction with the world. This book will cause a lot of us to revise our doctrine of God.

There is some question, however, as to how "hard" Fretheim's claims are to be construed. He acknowledges that a good deal of biblical God-language fits the more common understanding of divine transcendence, sovereignty and rule of destiny; at most he avers that his process model is "predominant" (35). The task of biblical theology is not, however, to articulate a predominant scheme (if that could actually be assessed), but a comprehensive one. We are not allowed to pick and choose our way through the Old Testament; all of it has an equal claim to our attention.

If Fretheim were to extend his claim, proposing it as a comprehensive model of biblical God-language, he would experience some difficulties. The dramatic coherence of the biblical rendering of God is more subtle and dialectical than rational coherence. The classical models of an absolute being or will made it impossible for God to be the character God is depicted as being. The capacity of God to interact with God's creatures was sacrificed to the divine incomparability. Process theology, however, stumbles over precisely those aspects of the biblical depiction that classical theism handled well.

One principle of the biblical depiction of YHWH is sufficient to point up the problems that process theism faces. There is an elliptical quality of divine transcendence which makes an experience God undergoes an action of God. To cite an example quoted by Fretheim himself (145), "(YHWH) delivered his power to captivity//his glory to the hand of the foe" (Ps 78:61). One might say that God both suffers and does not suffer, for God can be said to initiate whatever God undergoes.

One solution is to abandon the search for metaphysical coherence in favor of the more subtle and elusive logic of dramatic consistency. Characters can possess paradoxical features in their identity. The biblical God certainly is depicted as an incomparable being, beyond any conceivable limit in power and knowledge; indeed, it seems parsimonious to deny any capacity to such a grand and glorious God. Yet this same God is quite capable of interacting with humans in a dramatic give-and-take.

*The Suffering of God* is certainly a valuable contribution to Old Testament theology and should find its way into the library of students of Scripture and ministers of the Gospel. It is a potent corrective to the distortions in our reading of Scripture introduced by classical theism.

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**PEOPLE OF THE LIE**, by M. Scott Peck. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. Pp. 269, \$15.95.

M. Scott Peck has written a troubling book. *People of the Lie* was meant to trouble complacent moderns, we who assume that if there are no heroes, there aren't any real villains either. So-called villains are really just people suffering from psychosis or character disorder. They're not evil.

Peck aims his slings and arrows at the heart of this modern assumption. He has

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treated the character-disordered and the psychotic, and evil, he says, is an entirely different disease. Evil, maintains Dr. Peck, is "a specific form of mental illness." Evil people, despite the revulsion we might feel toward them, are not to be scorned but to be seen as "ill and pitiable" and, if one has sufficient skill, as curable.

How are we to recognize evil? By its deception. Throughout Peck's book he builds upon the theme hit early: evil cannot tolerate truth.

Describing an encounter with an evil person, one woman wrote, "it was as if I'd suddenly lost my ability to think..." This reaction is quite appropriate. The evil are "the people of the lie," deceiving others as they also build layer upon layer of self-deception.

Peck builds his case by describing his various encounters with evil. He shares his own case material, much as he did in *The Road Less Traveled*, and adds case material from one other psychotherapist. He also describes what he learned attending exorcisms. He tells, in greater detail than he did in *The Road Less Traveled*, the story of his investigations into the psychology of My-Lai, and how he was thwarted by Army brass.

Peck does an excellent job opening our minds to the possibility that there are evil people. He is convincing, because he is convinced, on the existence of demons and demonic possession. He will change minds with his presentations.

But will he change the minds he claims he most wants to change—those of the psychiatric professionals? Peck claims that he wants to alter diagnostic categories to include "evil" among mental illnesses. Only by its inclusion among diseases, and the scientific study of evil, can help be had for these helplessly trapped evil people.

It's not a bad aim, though the debate about the difference between sin and disease needs to be joined by theologians before the psychiatrists take evil over as their province. The problem with Peck's approach, however, is that this book is pop psychology. It isn't the kind of book which would convince the sceptics that evil is disease which deserves study and treatment.

The ill-defined sense of audience is a major flaw in this work. It isn't written for mental health professionals. Nor is it a self-help manual like *The Road Less Traveled*. It isn't a "psychiatrist's view of the ball clergy fumbled," like Menninger's *Whatever Became of Sin?*

Despite that flaw, this book deserves reading by modern clergy. We do tend to take the existence of evil pretty lightly, especially in the liberal wing of the church. "Possibility thinking" threatens to catapult much of conservatism out of Christendom and into culture religion. We all need to remember that those people whom we are to love as Christ's flock are not all just beaten down by negativity. Some of them are—in all likelihood—evil.

There is the danger that we'll use that insight as a club on our enemies. Peck is blessedly

aware of that danger and devotes both introduction and concluding chapter to making his readers aware of the issue. Perhaps Peck's greatest contribution through this book will be in his delineation of the faces of evil. Unless we find destruction and deceit at the deepest level, we had best not use the label evil. And if we do, we must face that evil, as Peck rightly insists, with sacrificial love.

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**HERALDS OF A NEW REFORMATION. THE POOR OF SOUTH AND NORTH AMERICA**, by Richard Shaull. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1984. Pp. 160. \$8.95.

From his earliest book, *Encounter with Revolution* (1955), to his latest, *Heralds of a New Reformation*, as well as through countless other articles and publications, Richard Shaull has attempted to convey to his readers the urgent challenge which the Latin American context places before North American church and society. In this latest volume Shaull presents this challenge once again, combining over four decades of experience dealing with Latin American issues with a solid knowledge of Latin American liberation

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theology which calls us to re-examine our theologies, our politics, and our lifestyles.

Who are the "heralds of a new reformation"? Shaull perceives that among the poor, especially among those of Latin America, a transformation is currently underway of such dimensions that it prompts analogies to the transformation which took place within Christianity at the time of the Protestant reformation. Shaull sees among the Latin American poor an awakening of consciousness and new commitment to community, organizing, and action. This points beyond the individualistic and fatalistic attitude which has often come to characterize the poor over centuries of colonialism and ecclesial paternalism. Moreover, he believes that as we take seriously an encounter with the poor in the process of their transformation and begin to "look at the world from below," we too are challenged to "change values" and even "change sides." Thus the poor become for us "heralds of a new reformation." It is they who prompt us to repentance and conversion as we face the radical disparity between those who are more than well-off and those who are poor.

The characteristics of this new reformation are many. One of the greatest strengths of this book is the case that is made to show that the theology of liberation is, like the protestant reformation, grounded first of all on a rereading of the Bible. The first three chapters are devoted to an elaboration of the biblical material which undergirds this theology. The exodus of Israel and its unique egalitarian social vision; the witness of the prophets to God's demand for justice; and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah of the poor are the basic themes from this new rereading of the Bible. Both the biblical texts themselves and the supporting literature cited by Shaull (e.g., Norman Gottwald's *The Tribes of Yahweh*) make an impressive case for the vitality of this interpretation. In examining these chapters it becomes clear that Latin American liberation theology seeks to ground itself solidly upon the biblical tradition and cannot be

summarily dismissed (as Marxist, for example) without squarely facing the biblical texts which speak of God's demand for justice and concern for the poor.

Another characteristic of this new reformation which Shaull uses to draw parallels with the Protestant reformation is the renewal of the church. The priesthood of all believers finds a contemporary form in Latin America in the basic Christian communities. Bringing examples from personal experience, Shaull assists readers to envision the experience of church taking place in these communities which number in the tens of thousands throughout Latin America. Once again the study of the Bible is integral to the basic Christian communities. But the study of the Bible is one that often leads to involvement in attempting to change conditions of injustice and oppression. Such activity for political change beginning on the local level is often perceived as a threat by those seeking to preserve their advantages under the present structural arrangement. From this confrontation arise a host of accusations which misrepresent the communities' goal of Christian discipleship in their own place and time.

It is with the political thrust of liberation theology that the parallels with the Protestant reformation become most difficult to maintain. In their commitment to a new economic order in the poor nations, liberation theologians have drawn upon Marxist categories in order to interpret their context and are advocating the option of socialism as a model for the future of Latin America. The socialism which is envisioned is not to be equated with totalitarianism such as that of Soviet Communism. Rather it is the socialism of Nicaragua to which Shaull makes numerous references as a model for the Latin American context. It is in these political and economic proposals for the future of Latin America that Shaull's book, like liberation theology itself, becomes most controversial. It is also here where this new reformation goes well beyond the Protestant reformation, at least as it finds a basis in the theology of Martin Luther, and challenges us to examine two kingdoms doctrine in light of contemporary reality.

It is finally as a call and a challenge to re-examine our theologies, politics, and lifestyles that *Heralds of a New Reformation* can be most profitably read. Theologically the "canon within the canon" of libera-

tion theology, God's good news for the poor, is different from the Protestant reformation's rediscovery of justification by grace through faith. Likewise the political commitments of liberation theology and many basic Christian communities contrast dramatically with Luther's insistence upon a distinction between two kingdoms and the consequent political conservatism which Lutheranism has demonstrated over the centuries. Nevertheless, differences need not be understood as absolute contradictions and Shaull would challenge us to take seriously the possibility that God may be working a new thing in our time. While it may be a risky historical judgment to already claim for liberation theology the status of a new reformation, Shaull has written a book which clearly articulates the challenge of Latin America and the theology of liberation for North American Christians. Finally this challenge is one directed at our most cherished values and our lifestyles as we live in a world where the poor are very much with us.

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**LIBERATING FAITH: BONHOEFFER'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY**, by Geoffrey B. Kelly. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. Pp. 206. \$10.95 (paper).

The Bonhoeffer conversation continues, and it continues on many levels. There are people reading *Life Together* in a purely devotional way, gleaning insight and strength for daily Christian living from that deceptively simple little volume, and there are scholars doing meticulous work on technical textual problems for a new critical edition of his collected works. His life, as well as his writings, continues to inspire and to energize Christians living in contexts indifferent or hostile to the faith. This new contribution by Geoffrey Kelly does what few books on Bonhoeffer can claim to do. It offers a presentation which attends to both the life and the writings, and can be read with profit by one unfamiliar with the Bonhoeffer materials, and with interest and appreciation by those who know them well. As a Catholic theologian trained in the disciplines of spirituality, he brings to his interpretation questions not always considered by those from other traditions. The book moves steadily toward concluding statements on "Rhythms of a Christocentric Spirituality" and the implications of that for the "Liberation of Peoples." The title is thus not casually chosen. It is carefully designed to encapsulate the content of the book. Each chapter is a skillful weaving together of theological-ethical issues and historical-biographical events. The shape of the argument is spiral.

Each chapter takes up a theme to which the last chapter has led, traces that theme through the stages of Bonhoeffer's life and work, and thus leads the reader into ever deeper levels of understanding. The first four chapter titles demonstrate the structure clearly: (1) Bonhoeffer: A Witness to Christ; (2) Christ, the Center of Liberated Life; (3) The Liberation of Faith; (4) Faith, the Liberation of the Church. The final two chapters are summary pieces. Chapter Five concentrates on "Rhythms of a Christocentric Spirituality," and is a study of the dialectic of freedom and discipline in Bonhoeffer. The final chapter deals with "Bonhoeffer, Church and the Liberation of Peoples."

The author concentrates on the biography and on the primary literature so that readers of this book will experience the pleasure of being led through the story by an able guide and will finish it with the confidence that they have the materials well in hand. It is a straightforward presentation of the Bonhoeffer legacy without continual interruption for debate either with Bonhoeffer or with his interpreters. Yet attention is paid to those by whom Bonhoeffer himself was influenced and with whom he entered into critical debate. Kelly handles with deftness, for example, Bonhoeffer's use of the thought of Nietzsche and of Feuerbach.

The impact of Kelly's statement is overwhelmingly positive. Yet those who pause along the way will probably find some places for question marks in the margins. Lutheran readers who know both Bonhoeffer and Luther's doctrine of the two realms may conclude that Kelly's

handling of Bonhoeffer's qualified rejection of the doctrine is not sufficiently nuanced. And those who have drunk deeply at the wells of Bonhoeffer's "nonreligious interpretation" may not be satisfied by Kelly's attempt to handle this radical notion in an unradical way by stating that what Bonhoeffer was really for was genuine religion rather than false religion. But it is precisely these invitations to reflection and conversation which make this book so worthwhile to read.

There is a set of discussion questions in the back of the book, making it directly useful for

group study. Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's close friend and biographer and the editor of most of the primary materials, writes an appreciative introduction. Geoffrey Kelly is professor of theology at LaSalle College in Philadelphia, and is secretary of the English Language Section of the International Bonhoeffer Society.

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**THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY**, by W. H. C. Frend. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984. Pp. 1022. \$49.95.

Frend, a professor of ecclesiastical history at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, is a distinguished member of a long line of British scholars of early Christianity. Before offering this magisterial work in over 1,000 pages, he already was known for his *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, *The Donatist Church*, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, *The Early Church*, plus numerous articles in scholarly journals. The present work draws from his earlier material and brings together a lifetime of research and reflection on Christian origins.

He tells us the reason for writing this book is that so much of early Christianity is being neglected in the schools, including seminaries. Frend thought it important to preserve as much research as possible within one volume. His work is comprehensive in scope and exhaustive in detail, proceeding chronologically with topical arrangement, beginning with the Jewish background, Jesus, Paul, the Jewish-Christian tensions and continuing with the spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean and into Europe and Asia. The book concludes with the death of Gregory the Great in 604. Although some readers of *Word & World* may be reluctant to work through a volume of this size, Frend reads very easily and writes with a vivid style which makes the book entertaining as well as informative. He treats in detail every facet of early Christian faith and life, giving attention both to the development of dogma as well as to church-state relations and the interaction of Christianity with Graeco-Roman culture.

As might be expected from one who already has done extensive work in early "heresies," the author treats these movements with sympathy and understanding. He points to the sociological dimensions of schism and heresy, e.g., the Donatists in North Africa resented the domination of the ruling Roman class, thus injecting the element of social struggle in a doctrinal issue. Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism and most other heresies also reflected personality conflicts, struggle for power among the leading cities, or the clash of underlying philosophical presuppositions, as between Alexandria and Antioch. Throughout his work, Frend shows the wide variety of beliefs held by early Christians, sometimes in direct contradiction to one another.

Frend occasionally reaches conclusions at variance with the conventional wisdom of past histories. By 200 A.D. the church had already extended throughout the empire, and by 300 A.D. the church had become "the most important single religious force...challenging the supremacy of the immortal gods." He suggests that with or without Constantine's conversion, the church would have triumphed. When it comes to the influence of the mystery religions on Christian doctrine, Frend believes there was no influence whatever, and that the church drew instead from Hellenistic Judaism for many of its thought patterns. He clearly shows that theological reflection never did proceed in a philosophical vacuum, but that in every age theology is influenced by the

or value-systems of the culture. Frend also has his favorites and non-favorites. Justin Martyr, for instance, he calls “verbose, inconsistent, and not convincing” and sees no evidence he was influenced by any book in the New Testament.

Each of his twenty-four chapters is followed by an excellent bibliography of works pertaining to the chapter. Indeed, the bibliographies themselves are reason enough to own the book. Frend includes a seventy-five page synopsis of events to help place the triumph of Christianity into chronological and geographical perspective. Seven maps, together with photographs of key historic sites taken by the author further enhance the book.

This is not designed as a textbook of church history. Frend seeks to answer several principal questions: How did Christianity triumph? Why did provincials accept the faith so quickly? How did rural Christianity differ from the faith of persons in urban areas? How did asceticism indelibly shape the church’s identity? How did institutions of authority emerge? Why did East and West develop so differently that by 450 A.D. they were each going their separate ways? To each of these questions the author gives a convincing and informed answer. The “lesson” for the modern reader may be an awareness of the so-called non-theological factors which continue to shape the contemporary church, including its theology.

Fortress Press is to be commended for offering us this masterful survey of the rise of Christianity by one of the most distinguished scholars of this period. It is the fullest account available to us of the institutional life and doctrinal history of the early church.

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**HUNGER, TECHNOLOGY AND LIMITS TO GROWTH**, by Robert L. Stivers.  
Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. Pp. 176. \$8.95 (paper).

Stivers, in a confessional tone, acknowledges his relative affluence and the difficulties this affluence creates for anyone attempting to comment on hunger, technology and limits to growth. He has accurately perceived the difficulty North American Christians have in listening openly to the advocates for the hungry in the world. His initial candor breaks down our resistance to the changes which are necessary to establish a more equitable world. Merely to write about the great ethical issues of hunger, technology and limits to growth in such a way that those who are not favorably disposed to change the status quo might still continue reading is one of Stivers’ significant accomplishments.

As the title suggests, this volume presents a Christian discussion of the three ethical issues of hunger, technology and limits to growth with the stated objective of “describing and making a case for [a] new world view” (19). The problem of justice or “more specifically the problem of injustice in the form of poverty and malnutrition” (30) is well documented and well known. Stivers’ succinct recounting of the poverty and malnutrition problem and the avenues

available for change is an excellent summary which will serve well as a quick and clear reference for readers.

The fact that there are physical limits to our world's capacity to produce food and energy and absorb pollution is another of the great issues facing our world. Stivers perceptively notes, however, that "concentration on the [factual question of limits] misses the equally important second question of desirability....In the debate over growth, values and interests play a critical role in the assessment of the facts" (86). The author does not conclude that growth and technology are wrong but rather that they must be subordinated to the greater Christian values (89).

Stivers' discussion of the ethical questions surrounding justice and limits to growth is clear and quickly comprehensible. His discussion of the ethical problems surrounding technology and

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decreased participation is, in contrast, more obtuse. The ambiguity in the extent to which society regards technology as a problem together with the difficulty observers encounter extricating themselves sufficiently from it in order to establish perspectives creates a haze which may defy clarity of expression. Describing decreased participation as an undesirable side effect of technology is one thought-provoking insight to be gleaned from this otherwise rather abstract chapter.

In response to these three problems, Stivers derives three biblically based values which constitute the strength of his book. In response to hunger and poverty Stivers argues for the biblical concept of justice; in response to technology he argues biblically for a concept called participation; in response to the limits to growth he argues, again with biblical support, for sustainable sufficiency.

Once Stivers establishes these primary values, he is then ready to take the reader down a road which has three forks. This helpful analogy of a road with three forks lowers the level of abstraction and lays before Christians the choices they necessarily make.

Stivers' presentation would be even stronger if he had addressed more fully a question he identified in his preface: "The question then becomes how best to bring about laws and social actions that will deal with the communal nature of the problems" (8). Addressing this question would require tackling the arms race, the East-West struggle, the ponderous slowness of a representative government, and American hypocrisy and apathy. Although Stivers refers to governmental policy and advocacy in his concluding recommendations (153-154), a more thorough treatment of the role governments play would have been helpful.

Stivers' analysis of the problem, the Christian values germane to the problem, and the possible courses of action Christians might take in response reveal a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter. The author's presentation includes cogent arguments for change while at the same time avoiding rhetoric which tends to inflame passions and heighten resistance. Furthermore, he addresses difficult ethical and social issues without resorting to technical jargon. *Hunger, Technology and Limits to Growth* serves as a helpful and readable introduction to these great ethical issues.

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