

Burkle, Howard R. *God, Suffering, and Belief*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977. 128 pp. \$5.95.

The author's purpose is to meet the charge that it is no longer possible to believe in God because of the absurdity seen in the human situation. "Absurdity" he defines as "any aspect of human experience which seems clearly inappropriate and incongruous in a world governed by the just and loving God of the Bible" (p. 11). Many factors make belief in God difficult in our day, but human suffering is the most important. The book deals with four aspects of human suffering which cause the most difficulty in believing in God. These are abandonment, genocide, racism, and sexism.

He sets the stage for the first of these by recounting Camus's novel, *The Plague*. By describing the deaths of three people in an epidemic, Camus points up the "irrational destructiveness of the world," the irrationality and submissive fatalism of Christianity, and the heroism of the human spirit which recognizes the absurdity of the human situation while yet refusing to give up to death passively or with bitterness.

The second aspect of human suffering reaches its depth in the death of six million Jews under Hitler, symbolized by what went on at Auschwitz. This experience led some Jews to abandon belief in God, but it led others to a stubborn belief, though not comprehending the reason for the tragedy.

The third aspect deals with the oppression of the black minority in the United States. Burkle deals especially with William R. Jones's criticism of black theology with its theocentric theism. He favors instead a humanocentric theism or a secular humanism, in both of which God's existence really does not matter; everything depends on what men do.

The fourth aspect is the oppression of women, though here the author curiously selects as a representative of the oppressed, Mary Daly, who does not deny belief in God but only in a Father God which leads to a dominance of the male over the female.

The last chapter deals with the charges that belief in God is an act of cowardice and that a powerless God is inadequate to the world's needs. Burkle's answer is that belief is a "venture into the unknown," without any guarantee or security. Believers have to believe against the very obstacles—the suffering in the world—that unbelievers use to affirm their atheism. They realize, too, that it is easy to deceive oneself by believing what one wants to believe. Belief also is a constant affirmation. In regard to the second charge, Burkle says that God's persuasion is an active participation in the world, and this is all the assurance of potency that we need. The question, then, is whether we will join God in the struggle.

Burkle's fourth aspect does not suit his discussion, since the spokesperson for oppressed women is not rejecting God but only a wrongly conceived God. This type of corrective is always necessary. Burkle could have chosen examples of women who have in fact rejected God, and he could also have included the third aspect in this discussion.

The answer to the various aspects of suffering that Burkle gives is virtually the same—that is, God is a God who allows man to exercise his freedom and who uses persuasion rather than coercion; and thus, if man uses his freedom to oppress or cause suffering to his fellow human beings, God can-

not intervene without destroying freedom. Since this is the case, the author could have treated the various objections to believing in God in one chapter instead of in each of the four chapters and also as part of a fifth. Otherwise, Burkle has organized his material well and treated the subject in a clear-cut manner. Whether his discussion will convince unbelievers remains to be seen.

It seems to me unfortunate that the author has chosen to use the pronoun "it" for God. While his motive is laudable, I believe that he has gone to another unacceptable extreme by desexing and depersonalizing God. Perhaps "God" should be used throughout, without any pronoun.

Andrews University

SAKAE KUBO

Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976. 424 pp. \$9.95.

This is a significant commentary by a University of Calgary professor on one of the most debated books in the OT. Craigie states at the outset that Deuteronomy "is a part of the Word of God and not simply the product of human imagination" (p. 8). Affirming the unity of the book and Moses as its author, he stands opposed to the view that it must be dated between 700-622/1 B.C.

Craigie follows a recent trend in OT scholarship which has recognized the treaty-covenant structure of Deuteronomy (M. Kline, K. A. Kitchen, et al.). He rejects the views of some who use arguments based on the same structure for a 7th-century date, and places Deuteronomy in the early period. This means that Deuteronomy is from Moses in its substance. "At some point following the death of Moses (34:1-12), the whole work was written down, perhaps on stone or tablets, but more likely on a leather scroll" (p. 29). The book in its final form may be related to the renewal of the covenant by Joshua (Josh 8:30-35) (p. 32) "at the end of the Mosaic age" (p. 66).

The treaty (covenant) form of the book consists of a preamble (1:1-5), historical prologue (1:6-4:49), general stipulations (chaps. 5-11), specific stipulations (chaps. 12-26), blessings and curses (chaps. 27-28), and witnesses (30:19; 31:19; 32:1-43). Craigie concludes, "This overall structure of the book of Deuteronomy suggests that it can be regarded essentially as a unity" (p. 24). Minor additions of a later period are found only in Deut 2:10-12, 20-23; 3:9-11, 13b-17.

Among some of the interesting features of this commentary are three appendixes. The first one deals with the problem of the scientific study of the OT and faith. The conclusion is reached that an adequate approach to the study of the OT is the theological-historical one with a concept of history that makes allowance for the intervention of a transcendent God (pp. 73-78), a position for which this reviewer has himself argued (*Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975], pp. 107-115). The second appendix (pp. 79-83) proposes an Egyptian background for the Hebrew term *bryt*, "covenant," the Egyptian cognate of which is *brt*. I find problems in this proposal, based on the facts that (1) *brt* is a