

Suffering and The Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain, by Richard Rice. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 166 pp. ISBN 978-0-8308-4037-3. US\$ 9.90.

In *Suffering and the Search for Meaning*, Richard Rice tries to respond to the question that never goes away: Why the suffering? This question has been responded to by many authors. Rice promises to “bring these various concerns together” (p. 15) after presenting the facts that there have been so many books on suffering tackling the issue from different angles and perspectives: description about people who have gone through suffering, tips on how to cope with suffering, and explanations about the reason for suffering. Apparently, Rice is not the first one to connect theory and practice on suffering. He uses Harold Kushner’s question “Why do bad things happen to good people?” (p. 16) to introduce his approach.

The book consists of nine chapters, with the first chapter being the question, the next seven chapters providing some reflections, and the last chapter calling for application. Before going further to the explanation and reflection about suffering, right from the beginning Rice makes a conclusion: “It would be more accurate for us to identify suffering as a mystery rather than a problem” (p. 24). What follows is centered on the discussion on God and responses to various views of theodicy: perfect plan theodicy (chapter 2), soul-making theodicy (chapter 4), cosmic conflict theodicy (chapter 5), openness of God theodicy (chapter 6), finite God theodicy (chapter 7), and protest theodicies (chapter 8).

Rice evaluates each theodicy by raising questions and arguing that every person may be in favor of looking at suffering with a certain theodicy, depending on what kind of suffering he or she may experience. Therefore, for Rice, theodicy is not only an intellectual exercise but also a practical one, because “the quest of theodicy is not an academic diversion; it is driven by an urgent personal need” (p. 39). Rice’s approach of presenting different kinds of theodicies is like prescribing different medicines or treatments for certain kinds of suffering. He includes different practical examples of suffering in life in each chapter that the readers may relate to their present suffering and be able to choose which theodicy they will hold.

How about for Rice himself? What theodicy does he hold? He answers: “An approach to suffering that is both intellectually attractive and personally encouraging, a theodicy that not only helps us wrap our minds around it ... but also provides us with comfort and hope. What we need, in a word, is a ‘practical theodicy’” (pp. 139, 140). There are three components of theodicy that will form one’s personal practical theodicy: religious beliefs, theological insights, and conclusion from life experiences. Based on this formula, Rice comes up with his own practical theodicy that reflects the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of salvation. He introduces it in four

points: (1) God is Lord and God is love, (2) suffering is real and suffering is wrong, (3) God is with us when we suffer, and (4) suffering never has the last word (pp. 150–152).

Rice's approach is not disassociated from the fact that he studied theology for ten years, raised up in a faithful conservative Christian family, a life-long church member, and has taught religion for forty years. Therefore, for others to be able to synthesize a personal practical theodicy, they must have a strong foundation in the biblical doctrines of creation and salvation, and a close relationship with God.

In his *Suffering and the Search for Meaning*, Rice is able to provide comprehensive knowledge about different responses to the presence of evil. This enables a person who has never read any book on the theme of suffering have a one-stop reading to be informed about one of the most asked questions in the world. The book also introduces prominent philosophers and scholars who share the same interest in the theme of suffering. This book is highly recommended for chaplains, counselors, and pastors that they may have a balanced approach to different cases of suffering.

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Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches, by Mary M. Veeneman. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 2017. vi + 190 pp + 1 p suggested reading list + 6 pp bibliography + 5 pp index. Paperback. US\$24.99.

Mary M. Veeneman, associate professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park University (Chicago, IL) wrote this book as an introduction to various recent methodological approaches in theology. The purpose of the book is to help readers become good theologians by understanding the sources, the starting points, the orienting questions, and the theological assumptions of contemporary theologies. The author does not intend to enter into a dialogue with each method but rather have the methods talk among themselves. *Introducing Theological Method* can be seen as a panel discussion about method moderated by the author.

The major categories of contemporary theology are divided into seven groups, each described in a chapter (chapters 2–8). These seven chapters are preceded by a short methodological introduction in the first chapter. Veeneman states that “theology must be done with consideration to such