

**LIBERATING GOD—PRIVATE CARE AND PUBLIC STRUGGLE** by Peter Selby  
(New Library of Pastoral Care). *SPCK*. 1983. pp. xii + 111 £3.96

The New Library of Pastoral Care reflects the growing influence of secular disciplines on the work of the Christian minister or 'pastor'—a term that is chosen precisely to embrace clergy and laity alike. The aim of the series is to maintain the distinctiveness of the Christian message while paying full attention to recent developments in the fields of social work, community care, psychotherapy and, especially, counselling. Most of the titles so far have been practically orientated towards one or other group of particular need—the dying, the bereaved, the lonely the physically handicapped, the married... Peter Selby's book, however, takes a more theoretical look at the assumptions of pastoral care, and he is critical of much that he sees.

We are all familiar with the accusation that Christianity neglects urgent social and political reform while urging its followers to content themselves with the way things are and place their hope in heaven alone. Now Peter Selby sees a similar tendency in the implicit aims of much counselling: 'They transmit the assumption that the best a distressed person can hope for is to acquire the ability to adapt with less distress to circumstances that cannot be changed.' (p.35) In either case we make an idol of individual peace and personal harmony, and ignore the gospel's call to action.

It is not the first time that the politically dismissive temptations of counselling have been pointed out (cf. *The Faith of Counsellors*, Paul Halmos, Constable, 1965). But what is valuable from Peter Selby's work is that he speaks from the inside. His training has been largely through counselling in the Carl Rogers school. His commitment as a Christian priest is basic to all he says. It would be absurd to represent him as either anti-counselling or anti-Christianity.

Rather, from the very heart of this work in 'pastoring' (a term that sounds at first like a cross between 'plastering' and 'pasteurising', but perhaps is not a bad one for the work of Christian caring) he can see dangers and false tracks. In pointing out that 'salvation' and 'psychological health' are not synonymous he is not attacking the importance of psychological care, but helping it find its right place in Christian ministry.

To get stuck on the internal landscape, whether through spiritual self-examination or psychological analysis, results in a 'sense of scratching where it does not really itch, but where ... perhaps it ought to and where, if we scratch hard enough, perhaps it will' (p 47). Pastoral care should lead naturally onwards, from the individual to the world and from prayer to action. As true pastors 'we are not to listen less or attend less, but to listen and attend to the cry of the world as those whom we care for pastorally express it' (p 98).

MARGARET HEBBLETHWAITE

**TIME, CREATION AND THE CONTINUUM**, by Richard Sorabji. *Duckworth*, London, 1983. Pp. xviii + 2 473. £29.50.

Professor Sorabji, already well known for his work on ancient philosophy, has here taken on the enormous task of tracing and commenting on views about the topics in his title from the earliest period of Greek thinking right through to the Middle Ages and beyond. He even manages to say a lot about Patristic and Islamic writers, whose work will be largely unfamiliar even to those readers who have already worked through classical texts on Sorabji's area of inquiry. Questions considered in the book include the reality of time, the nature of time, the relation between time and change, the relation of time to eternity, the beginning of the universe, creation and causation, the reality of atomic magnitudes, motion, and mysticism. There are expositions and discussions of authors such as Proclus, Parmenides, Plato, Augustine, Iamblicus, Gregory of Nyssa, Plotinus, Boethius, Philoponus, Ghāzālī, McTaggart, and many others. A particular

295