

Reviews.

Suffering, Human and Divine, by H. Wheeler Robinson, M.A., D.D. (Student Christian Movement Press, 6s.)

Dr. Robinson is widely known as an Old Testament scholar. In that respect he probably would be reckoned among the first two or three in this country. But he is also a distinguished theologian, and he has written with insight and helpfulness on many aspects of Christian thought.

In this particular book he takes up one of the hardest. "I knew," writes Dr. Rufus Jones, "when I asked Dr. H. Wheeler Robinson to write this volume on *Suffering* that I was giving him the most difficult task which this series on Great Issues of Life would impose on any writer in the list." The compliment implied in the task has been amply deserved, and the present book is worthy both of its author and its subject.

The book, as its title implies, deals with the problem of suffering in its widest aspects, but it has the great merit that it keeps close to human life. Sometimes in reading theological and philosophical books one has the impression that one is living in a vacuum away from living reality. The argument is wholly abstract, and one wonders how it would stand up to the awkward facts of our workaday world. But Dr. Robinson has spent as much time with poets as with theologians, and at no place in the book is the reader allowed to forget that suffering is a dreadful fact, whatever our theories of its origin and ultimate value may be. "I have not forgotten," says Dr. Robinson, "how limited is the value of mere argument on such a theme," and the book is suffused with a living sympathy which does much to assist the argument.

After a statement about the fact itself, and a discussion of some of the suggested explanations (including those in the Old Testament), the book comes to grips with the problem by showing suffering as a fact in human experience inevitably has a relation to God. There are three chapters on Providence in its various connections (Nature, History and the Individual), and then three more on the Suffering of God. These last are particularly illuminating, and they whet one's appetite for the book on *Redemption and Revelation* which, in a footnote, Dr. Robinson says he hopes to give us.

Everything in matters like this must turn on one's view of God. Given a Being who is so completely beyond all human

limitation as to be little more than the negation of all we know ourselves to be, one can easily argue that suffering is something He can neither experience nor rightly appreciate. But given, on the other hand, One who has identified Himself with His people in love and sympathy—because they are His children, and He cannot forget them—then suffering becomes His inevitable position. It is theirs, and so it is His, and when, to all this, we add His resolve to redeem them from sin whatever it costs, at once we get the Cross with all it signifies of vicarious suffering for the Redeemer. God, it is clear, suffers not only *with*, but *for* His people, and the fellowship He makes with us in the furnace can never be broken.

Naturally, at points the book is not easy reading, but it can be heartily recommended, and it will repay careful study. There is one mistake on p. 12 which should be corrected. The author of the Gifford Lectures on *The Human Situation* is W. Macneile Dixon, not W. Macneile Wilson.

HENRY COOK.

The Politics of the Kingdom, A study of the Lord's Prayer, by D. W. Langridge, M.A. (Independent Press, 3s. 6d.)

Mr. Langridge has written a stimulating and provocative book on the pattern prayer. He leaves the beaten path of those who have treated it as "an expression of personal piety." His object is to show that the man who takes this prayer on his lips is committed to far-reaching changes in the structure of human society and human relationships, and that he must direct his political wisdom and energy to bringing them about. "The Lord's Prayer has challenging economic implications." "The prayer is the aspiration of a perfect society." "We cannot honestly offer the Lord's Prayer, and excuse or exempt ourselves from political action." The book is an exposition of the prayer with these facts as its background. It is a startling reminder that the revolutionary principles of the kingdom have often been so toned down to fit our conventional standards that we are scarcely aware how greatly they are at variance with much of life. This is a book that raises many questions, and sets a ferment going in the mind. Probably the most persistent, for the ordinary Christian, will be: "What immediate practical steps can I take?"

W. TAYLOR BOWIE.