

it is perhaps the most clear, definitive and illuminating treatment of the subject that has yet appeared.

The book is well illustrated and copiously indexed.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

PROVIDENCE AND SUFFERING IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. By E. F. Sutcliffe, S.J. (Nelson; 15s.)

The problem of suffering requires explanation in every system of religious thought. Fr Sutcliffe has tried to present the solution offered in the revealed Word of God. He has prefaced it, for the sake of perspective, with a summary of the views of other great religious systems in the Ancient East—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jewish Kabbalism, Zoroastrianism, and the religions of Egypt, Greece, Rome and Babylon. The latter receives a chapter to itself for the close affinity its thought bears to that of the Hebrews.

The biblical solution to the problem was not offered ready made from heaven. It had to be worked out in the blood, sweat and tears of the people through whom God revealed himself and his ways to the world. It is lack of realization of this that has stultified so much of our past exegesis, which has treated different parts of the Bible as equivalents and has made no allowance for the progressive nature of revelation. Fr Sutcliffe does well therefore to insist on presenting the solution in its historical unfolding, careful not to read our own ideas into the Old Testament. He begins with the Genesis account of the creation, which shows that suffering played no part in man's life as God designed it, and only came into the world through the disharmony produced by sin. In the following chapter the idea of corporate responsibility is discussed. It was a commonplace in the Ancient East that no man is an island, and the Israelite was at first content to see his own suffering as the consequence of his solidarity with Adam, and national calamities as the punishment of the national infidelity of his forbears. But such an explanation merely touched the surface of the problem, and still left the anguished searchings of those who saw that the wicked continued to prosper and that suffering bore no less heavily on the innocent. The fifth chapter describes the bewilderment of these as expressed in the Psalms, where ignorance of a future life could only offer blind trust in a just God as an answer to the problem. Chapter six discusses the idea of individual responsibility, especially as developed by Jeremias and Ezechiel. This counterbalanced to a degree the false emphasis given by too exclusive a concentration on corporate solidarity, but it only made the problem of innocent suffering the more acute. The exile period provided a deeper penetration of suffering, in Jeremias who saw that it was a necessary part of his very faithfulness to God, in the Deutero-Isaias who showed its vicarious value in his picture of the Servant of

Yahweh, and in Job who was taught to see it as a test of virtue. These partial solutions occupy chapters seven and eight, and a further chapter is reserved for the revelation of life after death, which was given only in the last few centuries before Christ, and which provided the culmination of Old Testament thought on the problem of suffering: it would be compensated in another life. Chapter ten shows, rather sketchily, how the New Testament gives the final answer to the problem in Christ's own vicarious suffering, shared by the members of his Mystical Body, who are taught further to embrace suffering willingly as a means of detachment and self-denial. A final chapter gives a useful recapitulation of the book.

Among the better effects of the scriptural study of the last hundred years is the awakening of the Christian conscience to the need of something more nourishing than the critical analysis and apologetic defence which has been its biblical fare for so long. The demand has been well answered in the biblical theology which is being produced in France and Germany, but little has yet been done in English, at least by Catholic authors. For this reason alone Fr Sutcliffe's work is valuable. One could have wished for a little less of the atmosphere of the Schools in the treatment of the first chapters of Genesis, where the nakedness of Adam is presented in all solemnity as a proof of his impassibility, and his naming of the animals as a further apologetic point, proving his use of reason, great pains being taken to explain that the words 'God brought them to Adam' are to be understood according to the 'Hebrew mentality of attributing everything directly to God, the prime cause, without mention of the action of creatures, the secondary causes. . . . Hence the words do not say more than that in the ordinary course of things Adam came to see the various species of animals that lived in the Garden, for it is not said or implied that all the animals came into his presence at one and the same time.' (p. 41.) The author of Genesis might well have been horrified to find his picturesque simplicity being analysed in this heavy-handed manner. Similarly one could have wished for a little more flexibility of approach to some of the other problems this book has to face. Is it sufficient to dismiss the very fine ethical teaching of some Babylonian texts, reminiscent of the Gospel teaching itself, with a curt reference to the universal 'discrepancy between theory and practice'? (p. 21.) Is any purpose served in going to all lengths to deny any dependence of Bible on Babel (p. 51), when an honest admission of the obvious relationship between them will throw more light on what is truly proper to the Bible? Is the doctrine of an after-life to be written off simply as a 'new belief' which altered entirely men's attitude to suffering (p. 120ff.), and no inkling of this 'revelation' seen in the intimacy with God experienced by Jeremias and the Psalmists, an

intimacy in the light of which this present life paled into insignificance? For all the promise of a living and progressive theology, Fr Sutcliffe has given us little more than a series of unrelated and rather mechanical analyses of some aspects of suffering in the Old Testament. Not that this is unwelcome. The science of biblical theology is still in its infancy, and we can only be grateful for any addition to its small bibliography.

The publishers are to be congratulated on the elegance of their production of this book. It is marred only by two misprints in the footnotes on page 30 and page 125, and by the lack of a number for the footnote on page 151.

H. J. RICHARDS

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS. *Studies in Biblical Theology*  
No. 14. By Norman K. Gottwald. (S.C.M. Press; 8s.)

In a notable book the late Charles Williams once put forward the notion that the greatness of Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth was due in each case to a crisis in their lives when they saw what could not happen come to be. 'This is, and is not, Cressid.' The prophet poet of the Lamentations held together in his soul the knowledge of loving kindness, the 'covenant mercies', of Yahweh and the experience of the Fall of Jerusalem—and only just.

It is much to the credit of Professor Gottwald that he treats the Lamentations as the great poetry they are. The alphabetic acrostic form is used not as a mere exercise, not primarily as an aid to memorizing, but as an expression of the totality of Israel's sin, suffering and grief. Strictness of form and intensity of emotion are almost perfectly fused. The current types of lament, of an individual or a community over a disaster, the lament over the dead, are too partial to express this intensity, but their forms have contributed to the structure of the Lamentations. This is particularly the case with the theme of 'tragic reversal', the contrast of former splendour with present misery, exemplified so movingly in David's lament over Saul and Jonathan; Professor Gottwald goes on to show how this gives rise in the Lamentations to two variations, of which the most significant is the further (triumphant) reversal, when 'they shall be as I' (Lam. 1, 21). It is an interesting example of the way a literary form may express a theological concept. Israel has been judged and punished, has undergone a 'Day of Yahweh', but a 'Day of Yahweh' still awaits the nations her oppressors; this recognition of it as something which can be realized and yet not exhausted is an important stage in a current of symbolism finally expressed in the Christian conception of the Last Judgment. This, and other ideas of interest to the biblical theologian, are to be found in the two chapters which are the core of the present book, 'The Theology of Doom' and 'The Theology of Hope'.