

BIOLOGY AND PERSONALITY. Ed. I. Ramsey. *Blackwell*: 30s.

This book is the outcome of a few days' discussion among a very mixed group of people including biologists, psychologists and philosophers, both christian and agnostic. The papers are very diverse in content and quality, but a certain coherence is given to the book by the full discussions printed after each paper, in which the participants often refer to other papers as well as the one under discussion. Some of the comments appear as footnotes interrupting the text: this is very discourteous to the contributors and extremely irritating for the reader.

I fail to see the value, in this context, of papers on the most recent findings of molecular biology, or the precise effects of particular kinds of brain lesions on behaviour: such information does not throw any new light on the problems under discussion, which include familiar puzzles such as the origin of human characteristics, free will and biological determination, disease and moral responsibility, and the relation between social and moral behaviour: we have known for some time that there is no discontinuity between living and non living matter, and that bodily changes affect behaviour.

However, there is much of value in some of the papers, particularly the discussions on evolutionary ethics by David Lack, J. Maynard Smith and A. M. Quinton. Dr Lack gives a lucid exposition of the problem of human origin, suggesting that 'good' behaviour is not

necessarily co-extensive with social behaviour, and pointing out the difficulty of accounting for the origin of goodness by natural selection when there is evil to be accounted for as well. As a Scientist however he feels obliged to hold that human beings must be entirely explicable in evolutionary terms; and there the conflict remains for him, unresolved, as in his earlier book on evolution.

Maynard Smith sees no difficulty in accounting for the origin of ethical behaviour in evolutionary terms, but rejects the other part of the notion of 'evolutionary ethics', i.e. the view that right conduct is that which furthers evolutionary progress. A. M. Quinton subjects the whole idea to a thorough philosophical analysis at a high level.

Maynard Smith's paper seems to me very valuable also from another point of view: it is an excellent exposition of the standpoint of modern scientific humanism at its best, and sets out the reasons for its objection to what it deems to be the claims of christianity. The greatest weakness of the book is the lack of a contribution from a competent theologian who could have entered the discussion at Maynard Smith's level. Such a theologian might have objected to the concluding paragraph summing up the symposium, which states that religion is an affair of the inner life. Has the author never heard of the Chosen People?

E. WANGERMANN

THE SAMARITANS. Edited and introduced by Chad Varah; *Constable* 18s.;

About six thousand people kill themselves each year in Britain, and probably one in every hundred people has attempted to commit suicide at some time. Professor Erwin Stengel, a contributor to this book, believes that there is an important psychological difference between these two groups and that it is usually the second that will turn to the Samaritans. These figures, and the desperate loneliness they indicate, were the reasons why Chad Varah made his offer of personal help twelve years ago to those tempted to suicide or despair. At that time there were three suicides a day in Greater London, and these were not, as Varah says, just statistics, but desolate people dying miserably in lonely rooms.

There have been charges laid against the Samaritans, querying the usefulness of a non-

medical counselling service staffed by non-professionals; there is a feeling that this sort of work should be left to the psychiatrists and social workers. However, Chad Varah became convinced that there *was* a contribution for non-medical counselling to make. Psychiatric research into suicides had shown that thirty per cent of suicides have had psychiatric treatment, and it is estimated that half as many again ought to have had such treatment. Ignoring the fact that the thirty per cent have died in spite of their treatment, this leaves fifty-five per cent of whom it is true to say that they required some kind of attention other than psychiatric treatment; the forty-five per cent who were psychiatric cases also needed some other kind of ministrations in addition to medical help. Roughly one in eight of the serious

cases who look to the Samaritans for help are referred to psychiatric treatment, but obviously the majority of people needing psychiatry seek it without coming first to the Samaritans. The potential suicides they receive appear rather to require the 'befriending' service which they offer: the Samaritans emphasise that you don't have to be on the point of taking the tablets before getting in touch with them.

The idea of this kind of service grew in Chad Varah's mind, but as he was than caring for a large South London parish he was unable to devote sufficient time to it. What he needed was time, a centre from which to operate, and an income on which to live while carrying out this project. The ideal answer was a city church with a small resident population and thus fewer parochial ties, and Chad Varah was lucky enough to be offered the Lord Mayor's Parish of St Stephen Walbrook, the patrons of which agreed to allow a trial of the scheme. As soon as the experiment was publicised it began to be used, and it was only a few months before the original concept of a non-medical but profes-

sional counselling service was abandoned and its place taken by the concept of a *befriending* service run by lay volunteers, selected by and operating under the supervision of someone capable of supplementing their efforts by counselling the clients or referring them for treatment when necessary.

Chad Varah's long introduction to this book gives details of the early days of the Samaritans, and of the development of the present structure of Samaritan branches. The twelve essays in the book are by psychiatrists, psychiatric social workers and clergymen, and all of them were given as papers to various Samaritan conferences. They describe the problems which the volunteers frequently have to face, and the ways of solving them. In fact this is really a handbook for Samaritans rather than a book for the general reader, but it will be of value to social workers and clergymen. Included in the book is a list of all the Samaritan branches in Britain and the rest of the world.

ROSEMARY EAGLETON

RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. Selected Documents edited by A. O. J. Cockshut; *Methuen*; 35s.

A. O. J. Cockshut's interpretations of the sensibility and legal implications underlying nineteenth century literature and religious controversy are often stimulating, but can also be frustrating because of his failure to validate his suggestions by detailed reference (for example, in his reading of Clough and Mill in *The Unbelievers*). Even in this documentary volume, which sets out to refer us to the texts, five of his passages are undated. In his short General Introduction, he provides thumbnail sketches of some of the significant persons and movements (conceding to the Broad Church, however, only a moral and 'national' achievement, not a theological one). He writes that 'the purpose of this volume is to present texts which are comparatively inaccessible', and it is good to find Clough's little-known, but valuable, *Notes on the Religious Tradition*; the three extracts from the *Tracts for the Times* illustrate the quality of Newman's writing as well as some of the key issues in the Oxford catholic revival. Liberal scholarship and thought is represented by two of the *Essays and Reviews* (C. W. Goodwin and Rowland Williams), two passages each from Dean Stanley and Dr Arnold, Frederick Temple on 'The

Apparent Collision between Religion and the Doctrine of Evolution', and the Preface to Colenso's *Pentateuch*. It would have been useful to have included an example of the fundamentalist opposition; Mr Cockshut only shows us the liberal rebels, and leaves us to infer the original context of debate from internal references.

The selection of five letters and one brief extract from Christmas' *Concise History of the Hampden Controversy* shows something of the intensity of feeling that the Erastian establishment of the Church of England engendered, which is relevant to Keble's Assize Sermon as well as to what happened to Colenso and Rowland Williams. But despite the title of this volume, Mr Cockshut's intention seems to have been less precise than to provide a documentary history of the controversies of the period. The extracts from William Wilberforce, Coleridge, and Dean Mansel are not strictly controversial, though they did contribute to the development of theology and of religious sensibility. The Wilberforce extract exemplifies extremely well the vitality of his religion, and its relation to a firmly dogmatic belief. Coleridge's conception of the National Church, or 'Clerisy', is a