

"The History and Adventure of Life", weaving it into the conditions of each geological stratum, naturally appeals, but a map showing the proportional length of time of each period is not accessible where we want it, the table given devoting two-thirds of its length to man, its post-War column especially in our opinion being out of place; this we disliked, but we found the rest of the volume corrective and admirable. The "Drama of Life" is scarcely a self-explanatory title for life in the sea and on land and in its waters, and the swaying balance between the animals and plants in communities (ecology). To us this quite learned volume shows a curious lack of those personal and humorous touches which we had become accustomed to expect, and which recur in full measure in the consideration of 'behaviour'—a separate volume is devoted to man—and of the "Biology of the Human Race".

Our suggestion to parents who have children going to a university for any science course, and to teachers, is to use these volumes so that their children or pupils may be educated, not merely crammed. There are nine of them, one for the summer vacation before the first term, and then one in each vacation until the student sits for final honours. The examinational result—whether the student is biologist, physicist or chemist—a certain understanding, will be great, and the candidate will have something which will add permanently to his interest in life, and will help him in his relationship with his fellows and his community.

The series is a reproduction in convenient form of the volume entitled "Science of Life", originally published in 1929 and reviewed in NATURE of March 28, 1931; the separate and handy little volumes now before us have been appearing at intervals since 1934.

Theism Restated

The Philosophical Bases of Theism

By Dr. G. Dawes Hicks. (Hibbert Lectures.) Pp. 272. (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1937.) 8s. 6d. net.

THE substance of Prof. Dawes Hicks' book was delivered as the Hibbert Lectures in 1931. The volume is designed primarily for the general reader, especially for those "who have abandoned the resort of basing their religious trust on a miraculously attested revelation", and for whom, therefore, the philosophic approach to religion is indispensable. The author admits that "philosophy can as little provide us with a new religion as the science of ethics can provide us with a new morality"; yet "a religious mind which has reflected upon the principles upon which its religion rests, is clearly an advance upon the religious mind which has not so reflected".

Dealing with what is known as the cosmological argument for the existence of God, we may note that Prof. Dawes Hicks rejects the idea of a creation out of nothing. "This idea of Nothing, in the sense in which we take it when we oppose it to that of existence, is a pseudo-idea, and the problems which are raised round it are pseudo-problems." Furthermore, "the idea of creation as an event which occurred at a definite date in the past calls to be unhesitatingly rejected. . . . If the notion of 'creation' is to be sustained at all it can only be in the sense of continuous creation—of a constant dependance of the world on the supreme Being". The gist of the argument for the existence of God from the existence of Nature,

is that "we are logically driven to acknowledge that there is a real existence beyond nature, unless we are prepared to rest in ultimate inexplicability, and to relinquish the attempt to frame any intelligible conception of nature at all".

In framing the teleological argument, Prof. Dawes Hicks stresses the point that Nature is strikingly adapted to human thought and reason, and in its very essence would seem to be intimately related to mind or intelligence. He alludes also to the work of the American biologist, Prof. L. J. Henderson, on the fitness of our material environment to support life. Countless other distributions of those three indispensable elements, carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, would have been no less antecedently possible, and yet we find "just *that* distribution, just *that* conjunction of properties, which is *fittest* for the maintenance of life".

Nor is the ontological argument overlooked by Prof. Dawes Hicks, and he does not admit that it was disposed of by Kant when he stressed the difference between 300 thalers in his mind and 300 thalers in his purse. For, after all, God is something very different from thalers, and as Anslem (who invented the argument) expressly affirmed, it was *only* in reference to the idea of the infinite that his argument had any significance. "This is an idea the content of which is wholly inexplicable by reference to finite, and therefore limited facts; and, accordingly, its mere presence in our consciousness is sufficient to establish the existence of a reality corresponding to it."

J. C. H.