

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Midrash on Psalms Translated from the Hebrew and Aramic by WM. G. BRAUDE (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 2 vols.

The thirteenth member of the Yale Judaica Series is an impressive and valuable contribution to modern English translations of classical Judaica. Rabbi Braude's translations are both readable and true to the original text—no mean accomplishment. In addition to an introduction, which summarizes the theories of Buber, Zunz, Mann, *et al* on *Midrash Tehillim*, the author presents copious notes and, happily, comprehensive indices.

Religion in America: Original Essays on Religion in a Free Society edited by JOHN COGLEY. (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958)

A series of thoughtful essays by such outstanding thinkers as Niebuhr, Tillich, Heschel, and Herberg

on religion and freedom in America. Religious pluralism, church and state, secularism, and religion as such in a free society are discussed from different points of view, enough to make this an excellent primer for understanding present tensions in these fields today.

The Comparative Study of Religions by JOACHIM WACH (Columbia University Press, 1958)

The religious experience common to all faiths is analyzed and classified as expression through thought (doctrine), through practice (devotion), and through fellowship (the religious community).

Dr. Wach portrays the third and latest stage in this field of study as superseding the early endeavors of historians looking for parallels (and thereby undoing the uniqueness of distinctive religions) and also the second stage, when positivistic scholars tried to explain religious norms

Briefly Noted

and values historically, psychologically, and sociologically.

This excellent volume concerns itself with the non-rational, as well as the rational, elements in religion and records analytically the dissimilarities between the specific elements of the different faiths.

The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion by JOHN HERMAN RANDALL, Jr. (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958)

A valuable summary of how Western philosophers dealt with the "conflicts" of science vs. religion, or reason vs. faith. Prof. Randall assumes that Judaism has little to do with knowledge in the first place (and mentions Maimonides as an example!), hence deals primarily with the Christian thinkers. The author's own solution (seriously modified in the Epilogue) is to deprive religion of any cognitive truth, thus leaving it no opportunity for "conflict" with science or philosophy. The result is a shadow-world of religiosity where mythology is substituted for theology, poetry for reason, and symbols for truth.

The Importance of Being Human by E.L. Mascall (Columbia University Press, 1958)

This volume attempts to reconcile the findings of science, especially

evolutionary biology, with the basic religious concepts of man. The author contends that the unrest of our age is occasioned by man's difficulty in believing that he has a definite and unique place in nature, and that he is fulfilling a God-ordained purpose in life. Mr. Mascall seeks, therefore, to establish the uniqueness and centrality of man in a world characterized by the depersonalizing tendencies of science. While the problems that face religion become crystallized under the sharp quill of the author, the solutions still remain amorphous.

Chance and Providence by WILLIAM G. POLLARD (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958)

An important atomic scientist who has become an Episcopal priest, Dr. Pollard deals authoritatively with the apparent incongruity of the biblical idea of providence in a scientific world of strict causality. This book is a convincing and well-written argument that the concepts of chance and accident, indeterminacy, and complementarity are inherent in all world phenomena (without the usual assertion that freedom is directly derived from the Heisenberg principle) and that Divine providence is thus operative within the natural order.