

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ANY general assertion that crime and juvenile delinquency is increasing at an alarming rate should be treated with some caution, especially when coupled—as it so often is—with a suggestion that the present indifference to religion is to blame. Are moral standards really declining? Is delinquency any worse or more widespread in this age than in preceding ones during which Christianity ruled men's lives from cradle to grave, and for most practical purposes was all-powerful? Looking into the past record of Christian Britain, I hardly think so. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries hooliganism frequently got out of hand, and farmers often complained of damage to their property, especially on Sundays, because of the lawless state of the people. In 1791 "Church and King" mobs wrecked the valuable laboratory of the scientist Dr. Priestley, set his house on fire, and ended up in a drunken orgy! A few years later during London riots, a recruiting office was destroyed, Pitt's windows in Downing Street were smashed, and crowds demonstrated by throwing stones at the royal carriage at the opening of Parliament. Incidents such as those could be multiplied many times, with a much smaller population and, of course, nothing like the publicity given by press and radio today. In fact, as Lord Chief Justice Parker told the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (*The Observer*, May 31st, 1964), "there is no evidence to suggest that the youth of today are better or worse than in the past".

In 1821 there was a population of 15,472,000 compared with 52,676,000 in 1961, and there was no nation-wide reportage of every incident acting as encouragement to youngsters looking for adventure and excitement. To quote a *Guardian* leader of last April 1st, "the trouble at Clacton has been a good deal blown up. To judge from some comments one would think such things had never happened before . . . they have happened through most of our history, and they happen now, often in an uglier way in other advanced countries. Living but aged authors like Mr. Maugham will recall descriptions of urban violence apt to horrify anyone who knows only the Britain of the last twenty or thirty years. The paper went on to note that the crust of civilisation, thicker in this country than in most, is still thin enough.

**Always with us**  
Causes of delinquent and anti-social behaviour have been listed as various, but here I am chiefly concerned with one — the accusation frequently made by clerics, MPs, and others, that the decrease in religious belief and practice is in part responsible for the decline in moral standards and outbreaks of hooliganism among young people today. There is no authority for this. Fear of gods, practice of religious ceremonies, and threats by powerful priesthoods of all the great religions, have never acted as a noticeable deterrent to crime. Throughout recorded history the criminal, young and old has been with us, from the expert tomb-robbers of ancient Egypt, the later bands of outlaws, highway robbers, smuggling gangs, to

the fighting Mods and Rockers of today. These latter can only be regarded as youngsters who, in the exuberance of youth, either from lack of proper guidance or with no sense of civic responsibility, commit these offences against the community.

## Shocked

Faced with crime and bad behaviour in the past, ecclesiastically-dominated governments were ruthless in punishing offenders, but their tortures, imprisonments and death penalties did not deter. They antagonised. Today the Churches are reaping the results of such antagonism. In the days of the early Georges and through Victoria's

reign, almost the heyday of Christian England, morality was very low and crime was rampant. Pauper children mill apprentices were lodged in unhealthy conditions in dirty houses, both sexes together without supervision, and these were often dens of vice. Sir Robert Peel was shocked when Robert Owen called his attention to the terrible situation of the hundreds of children employed by his (Peel's) mills. Sir Robert then brought in The Health and Morals of Apprentices Act 1802, limiting hours of work and segregating the sexes.

## Inquiries

Inquiries into the extent and causes of juvenile delinquency have been carried out either officially or privately since 1800. In 1816, after the Napoleonic wars, a committee was set up to investigate the alarming rise in juvenile crime, and in its report listed the principal cause of increase at that time. These were many, among them — improper conduct of parents and lack of parental control, illiteracy, dearth of suitable employment, and ineffective police. At the time that report was issued there were some thousands of boys under 17 who were daily engaged in criminal activities. Again in 1827-8 a Select Committee was set up to enquire into the increasing number of criminal convictions in England and Wales. Though not dealing solely with juvenile crime, the committee was obliged to devote most of its time to that section. It found the increase was largely due to the fact that offences previously passed over as trivial and treated summarily, were now being dealt with by commitment to prison and trial, hence more publicity. Causes listed still revealed a deplorable state of affairs — drunkenness, child neglect, no suitable treatment for young offenders, abandonment of young boys by parents and masters, and still lack of police. Trade apprentices who had formerly lived in employers' houses under supervision were now turned out when they finished work to roam the streets at night, often becoming thieves or worse. In 1847 a report on the working of the Parkhurst Act 1838 passed to deal with juvenile offenders, concluded that little had been achieved. From 1846 onwards during the railway constructions, conditions with regard to morals and vice were anything but happy. Some 200,000 navvies were employed up and down the country, who on paydays, indulged in wild drinking orgies in company with women

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## Delinquency and Perspective

By ELIZABETH COLLINS

living with them, many of whom they had picked up en route.

#### Acts of Parliament

These events were taking place when Churches and Sunday schools were full, there was no shortage of clergy, in fact one usually sat on the Bench of Magistrates, and Christianity was ostensibly "a going concern". In 1895, 40,000 people were convicted of indictable offences in England and Wales compared with 153,000 in 1959. In the former year there were fewer bicycles and no cars standing about to be stolen, while in the latter there was a considerably increased population — and far more temptation. Records show that between 1857-66 murders averaged 114 each year, while in 1937, with a population more than doubled, more publicity, and emptying churches, the number was still 114. Acts of Parliament have continually been passed to deal with young offenders. There have been: The Probation of Offenders Act 1907, The Children Act 1908, Prevention of Crimes Act 1908, setting up of the Borstal system for boys between 16 and 21, Criminal Justice Administration Act 1914, The Children and Young Persons Act 1933, giving further scope to approved schools, and The First Offenders Act 1958.

#### Small Minority

Before the second world war, the authorities were disturbed by figures showing a rise in the number of school-leavers found guilty of offences between 1929-33. The

Home Office attributed it to the rise of numbers in that age group (the usual post-war bulge). The subsequent rise in 1934 was thought to be due to more children being charged under the 1933 Act. The rapid increase in juvenile crime during and after both wars was attributed to causes engendered by war conditions — the break-up of family life, evacuation, fathers away in the forces and mothers out working, homes bombed and consequent anxieties, and wartime shortages, among others. These things were bound to have an adverse effect upon the thousands of children who, during their most impressionable years were deprived of father's supervision, a mother's care, and the security of a home. Now grown up, and with more money to spend than their parents ever dreamed of, exposed to the sensationalism of cinema, radio, and press, it is small wonder that some fall by the way. But it is hardly the moment for the Churches to criticise a state of affairs which they were unable to deal with in the past, and which they now wish to try and turn to their own advantage. To censure all young people is quite unfair, only a small minority behave badly, and with them it may be only a passing phase. In *Roots of Evil* 1963, Christopher Hibbert says, "nor can it be doubted that if statistics had been prepared in the past on as an elaborate scale as they are today, any possible comparison between our world and that of our ancestors would be in favour of ours"

## Special Friendships

BY MARGARET McILROY

*Special Friendships* by Roger Peyrefitte (Panther Books, 3s. 6d.) is the story of an emotional friendship between boys at a fashionable French boarding-school, run by priests. It is a touching and absorbing story, and the author handles delicately the adolescent emotions involved. Of the story I will say no more, not wishing to join that detestable class of reviewers who outline the plot of a novel, and blurt out the ending. However, readers of THE FREETHINKER will be interested in education provided by the Roman Catholic Church for the sons of wealthy families, as well as in the fate of the hero, Georges.

"St. Claude's" is steeped in religion, and its pupils are exposed to a regime of intensive chapel attendances and religious instruction. At the end of the day: "All the boys knelt up on their eiderdowns while the dormitory master on duty said a prayer aloud: its first words were: 'Sleep is the image of death.'" In the morning: "Still dazed with sleep, Georges was on his knees, listening to morning prayers: 'O God, it is by virtue of Thy goodness that the light of day is restored to me.'"

The priests have very little understanding of the mentality of boys, and insincerity and hypocrisy flourish. Most boys take communion daily to keep in the masters' good books. The Superior delights in the large number of communicants at the beginning of term, remarking naively, "I see in that a gratifying proof that the majority of you spent your holidays well, that they were holy days indeed, in which you did not lose the habit of performing your religious duties." When Georges wishes to give his confessor a false impression of penitence, he confesses to a long string of sins he has never committed. In the refectory a boy reads aloud from the Martyrology, and "the horrifying details and exotic names which caused the reader to stumble provoked sly smiles on many faces."

The masters have a complicated dual relationship with

the boys, being at the same time their teachers and their religious advisers. Each function gets in the way of the other. Only one of the priests could be called a bad man, but the whole atmosphere of the place seems unhealthy, with its religious emotionalism and constant emphasis on purity. The priests' fear of sex makes sex omnipresent.

The supreme irony comes towards the end of the book. At a moment of tragic crisis, a priest visits Georges at his home during the holidays. The parents, totally ignorant of the reason for the visit, comment on the priest's kindness in calling. "This led to some reflexions on the good points of religious boarding schools, where the masters kept such a close watch on the boys' progress, endowing them with principles which would ensure their happiness in the life before them." The reader, who knows what is concealed from the parents, may reach a different judgment on religious boarding schools — which may be much less obnoxious than St. Claude's and still have little to recommend them.

However, *Special Friendships* is not merely an account of a deplorable educational system. It is more even than a reminder that young love is deathly serious to those who are experiencing it, however ridiculous it may seem to their elders. (Parents will see a dreadful warning in the complete unawareness of Georges' parents of all he is undergoing). This is a fine novel in its own right, which will enlarge the reader's sympathies besides giving him enjoyment.

#### ALTERATION TO DATE

READERS are asked to note that the public discussion for parents and teachers on "Religion in The School" will now take place on Sunday, July 5th, at 3 p.m. in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1. Further details may be obtained from the Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone HOP 2717.

# The Point of No Reward

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

To the recently published diary of the late Richard Rumbold (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 36s.), William Plomer, its most efficient editor, has given the title *A Message in Code*. This does not, as it might at first seem to suggest, refer to any explicit message which the book is supposed to convey. It is taken from a comment made by the author towards the end of his diary: "Life, I am almost inclined to think, has the fantastic quality of a message in code, to which we do not possess the key." There might be differing views on whether or not life is, or has, a message over and above its meaning as we understand it in the experience of daily living. But if there is any mysterious other-reality behind appearance, if there is any message in code that requires deciphering, it is pretty safe to say that nobody has as yet found the key to it. Nobody has ever got nearer than unproved assumption, not even the infallible Pope, as Richard was destined to discover.

It might be said that the diary itself has a message, or maybe several messages, none of which is so cryptic as to call for much skill in deciphering. To a Freethinker at any rate, it provides plain enough confirmation of the futility of religion in general and of the Christian religion in particular when dealing with the intractable problems which life imposes. Richard Rumbold was brought up in what, to a Freethinker, is the sinister light of the beliefs and dogmas of that unchristian brand of Christianity called Roman Catholicism. At a fairly early age he seems, both for temperamental and practical reasons, to have come to distrust and then to detest the Catholic Church. He eventually turned upon it and although in later years he seems under pressure to have resumed some sort of sketchy dalliance with it, he appears, rather like Talleyrand, to have nodded but not to have spoken. He never, either in practice or in spirit, actually returned to it. In later years he travelled far and wide, both physically and mentally. He sought the elusive key through Buddhism, both the Ceylonese and Japanese Zen varieties, but although he seems to have derived more satisfaction from them than from Christianity, they did not lead to any lasting success.

Richard's first real clash with the Roman Catholic Church apparently arose out of the publication of a first novel, suggestively called *Little Victims*. He wrote this at the time he was an Oxford undergraduate. From his later autobiography and still later diary, this novel can now be seen as a thinly fictionalised account of his own first twenty years. Written at so early an age the novel is not surprisingly, intellectually immature and somewhat amateurish in execution. But because of its subject matter and the offence it gave in certain influential quarters, it involved its author in a phase of the most unpleasant notoriety. It doesn't, or it didn't, take much to shock some people. It is now over thirty years since the novel appeared. Today, it would be difficult to imagine a reading public being scandalised at anything so comparatively innocuous. However, since on the one hand it exposed the loutish and disgraceful goings-on of jejune Oxford undergraduates and on the other the vicious atmosphere of a famous Catholic school, it made powerful enemies in two directions. Richard seems, so to speak, to have burnt the scandal at both ends. If it gave a light that was lurid its effect was also brief. Moreover, it was not the novel itself that caused the upstir so much as the publicised

reaction of a well-known Catholic priest.

Although the actual characters in the book were carefully labelled fictitious, Richard had been indiscreet enough to make an elderly and seamy-minded French tutor ask the leading character (obviously Richard in disguise), "So you're a Catholic, are you? Have you met Father Ronald Knox yet — such a nice man?" In such a context that could easily have been a double-edged remark and Father Knox with typical priestly forbearance at once took umbrage. He lost no time in finding an excuse for a humiliating revenge. He excluded Richard from Communion in the most inexcusably pointed way. "I knelt at the Holy Communion rail with the others," said Richard, "but when Father Knox reached me he took the silver plate from my hands and passed on to the next person," unmistakably implying that Richard was unfit to receive the consecrated wafer. News of this incident promptly got into the papers and there was a blaze of undesirable publicity, into which the Archbishop of Birmingham was also drawn. When Richard presently sought out Father Knox for an explanation, the priest told him, "I hear you have written a very filthy book," and so forth. The priest admitted that he had not read the book but had received information from another undergraduate. But Catholic restrictions, as Richard said at the time, are appalling. "I have written a very moral book," he protested, "but my Archbishop, like most of the Catholic hierarchy, has no discrimination. People seem to think that Catholic schools are immune from vice and different from Protestant schools. This is untrue. They are worse." Richard could speak from personal experience. But as usual the Catholic authorities resented the truth. Only a Catholic version of truth must ever be permitted.

My own acquaintance with Richard Rumbold began shortly after the publication of *Little Victims*. A novel of mine had just come out and I had dedicated it to Edward Carpenter, whom in my young days I used to visit. Richard, much younger than I, had a warm admiration for Carpenter's ideas and on this account wrote to me through the publishers. Shortly after we met and forthwith became firm if not close friends. Our further meetings and correspondence were always spasmodic as he was continually changing his address. He had what is so curiously called an independent income — nothing could be more dependent — and was able to spend and roam in a way I could not. It was not until the early part of 1949 that I received through the post the copy of a book entitled *My Father's Son*, obviously an autobiography. It was by Richard Lumford, a name unknown to me. However, an accompanying letter soon explained. Here, of all things, was Richard Rumbold's autobiography under a protective pseudonym. The first part of this very welcome gift turned out to be a more or less factual account of what had been told as fiction in the novel. It carried on the life story much further. Some of it I already knew at first hand. This book proved to be a great advance on the novel, far more mature and this time extremely well written.

The rumpus with the domineering Catholics is described in this autobiography and retold in the diary, which in the earlier parts inevitably overlaps the autobiography. In fact all three books, novel, autobiography and diary are to a considerable extent varying versions of the same life

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## This Believing World

It is most intriguing to note that the Church of Scotland has ordered a "guide on morals" to be drawn up. Why is it intriguing? Because, for some nineteen centuries, a code of morals inspired by Almighty God himself was drawn up once for all, and known everywhere as the Bible. So perfect was it, that all disbelievers in it as God's Holy and Precious Word were forced under the direst penalties — which included imprisonment, torture, and burning alive — to accept it without question. And now it looks as if the Church, or at least some Churches, are dissatisfied with God and his Word and are even ready to tell him so.

★  
An ex-moderator, the Very Rev. Neville Davidson, utterly disregarding the Bible, wants "ethical signposts" to be set up as "the younger generation was as deeply bewildered and puzzled as ours is". Good heavens, are we to understand that the Precious Word, the source of England's greatness, as dear Queen Victoria used to say, the Great Book which has withstood the onslaughts of blatant infidels for centuries, emerging always completely unscathed, now "bewilders" both the old and the young generations? Mr. Davidson is lucky he is not living in the ages of Faith!

★  
Charles Dickens' famous "infant phenomenon" in (*Nicholas Nickleby*) has been completely routed by a little Russian girl, Vera, whose exploits in seeing through walls, reading a book by merely touching it, identifying people in a photograph by standing on it, and so on, are absolutely guaranteed by the Moscow magazine *Agricultural Life*. She sees with her skin, says a psychiatrist, and he assures us that "Science has so far been unable to explain the phenomenon of skin sight". Perhaps science has never come across — at least outside Russia — a single case of anybody at all seeing with his skin. But ours is truly a wonderful world!

★  
We are told by the "Daily Express" (May 4th) that "Bishops will speak on birth control", meaning of course Roman Catholic Bishops, who have in the past, like Archbishop Heenan, rigorously condemned it. They never produced any evidence that artificial contraception was condemned either by God or by the Bible, but were content angrily to say that the Church denounced it. Alas, even fervent believers in the Church like all Roman Catholic mothers are no longer deterred by pontifical rage, and want to limit their families like other women, and the bishops shrewdly recognise this.

★  
How can they reply to Auberan Waugh, a staunch Roman Catholic like his father, (Evelyn Waugh) who roundly declared in the *Catholic Herald*, "Insistence on tradition is simply not good enough unless it can be shown what started the tradition . . . Perhaps it stems from conditions which no longer apply". Perhaps it stems from ignorance and bluster. The Roman Church is not and never will be again the power that it once was.

★  
The devastating exposure by "The People" about a ghost called George, that he was no other than the son of the house, David, is contemptuously dismissed by *Psychic News* with the "proof" that David is "inhabited" by the spirit. We all know that pigs can be inhabited by devils — that is "proved" by Holy Scripture — but it's a new one on us that a spook can inhabit a boy. Still, no doubt they sometimes have to find somewhere or someone to live in when they come up (or down) from Summerland. People who believe in "eternal life" will have no difficulty in swallowing any "proof" so long as spirits form part of it.

## THE POINT OF NO REWARD

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story and the different modes of telling provide a remarkable illustration of how a mind can develop. From first to last that story evinces a strong, natural and intelligent antipathy towards organised religion, especially Romanism with its dogmatic teaching based on an authority that is entirely self-constituted. "Even before I was excommunicated," Richard remarks in the autobiography, "I was not a convinced Catholic." And the same candour threads all through the diary, which has become more intimately revealing, more deeply reflective. But apart from this all-pervasive hostility to western religious pretensions, this diary gives an absorbing insight into the workings of a strange and remarkable mind, irremediably warped by a bad heredity and darkly overshadowed by the ravages of tuberculosis. The tragic circumstances of his family life are graphically portrayed. His mother, dominated and goaded by an atrocious husband she was unable to divorce because of Catholic forbiddance, eventually went out of her mind and committed suicide. Richard's only sister, also a Catholic, committed suicide for reasons which seem never to have been cleared up.

Nevertheless, although an aura of tragedy permeates the book, it has its lighter aspects. There are extremely interesting accounts of Richard's associations with the great and famous and of their religious and literary opinions. Then, the latter part of the diary can be read as a fascinating travel book with vivid descriptions of life in Ceylon, India and Japan, effectively contrasted with what he justly calls the empty glitter of western civilisation. We are given an unusual insight into the main kinds of Buddhism, which the western world knows so little about. In due course circumstances, as circumstances will, brought him back to Europe and soon to a resumption of the earlier difficulties. He once went with me to a Quaker meeting, an hour's silence broken only by a few quietly-spoken sentences. This, he thought as we walked away, seemed to come nearer to the real thing than any previous experience. He refers to Humanism in his diary as inadequate because "When a man is ill or dying in terror of the unknown, no humanism will avail him." One could only point out that for the convinced Humanist, such terror was the outcome of false beliefs and disappears as the falsity becomes exposed.

Richard Rumbold's untimely end at the age of forty-seven would no doubt in the view of a commonplace Christian, be looked upon as a tragedy to deplore. Yet it was manifestly the end of a life perpetually and inescapably tormented by periods of intense and undeserved unhappiness. Whether he died by accident or whether he followed the examples of mother and sister remains uncertain. But either way a saner and more humanistic opinion could regard his death as being in that homeliest of phrases, a happy release. Indeed, if it were actually premeditated, it could be seen as a bravely wise decision. Death is preferable to a living existence beyond our human apprehension, then we might imagine that Richard has at last found the key and decoded the message. But no convincing reason has ever been shown to suppose anything of the sort.

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street,) Sunday Evenings

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Community Centre, Green Road, Richmond), Friday, June 19th, 7.30 p.m.: CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL, "Thomas Paine — Mr. Common Sense".

South Place Ethical Society, (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 21st, 11 a.m.: REGINALD SORENSEN, M.P., "Personality in an Impersonal World".

## Notes and News

AS INTIMATED last week we are printing in this issue an article by two students of the Birmingham College of Advanced Technology, M. J. K. Stanworth and B. J. Yapp. "In the Beginning" first appeared in the students' newspaper, *The Sun*, on April 29th.

★  
In a letter printed this week, a Christian reader asks us to substantiate our description of Pandit Nehru as a Freethinker. Mr. Nehru's will and testament, dated June 21st, 1954, and read over the Indian radio by his sister, Mrs. Pandit, on June 3rd, 1964, affords perhaps the best evidence. In it, reported *The Times* (4/6/64), he rejected sternly "the shackles" of religion and tradition that "bind and constrain" India and "divide her people and suppress vast numbers of them". There were, *The Times* said, "sad and ironic implications too in his adamant instructions that no religious ceremonies should be associated with his funeral", because those explicit instructions were ignored.

★  
"I WISH to declare with all earnestness", Mr. Nehru said, "that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies, and to submit to them even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others". He requested cremation and that a handful of his ashes should be thrown into the Ganges. There was no religious significance in that, he added; he had known

and loved the Ganges and Jumna rivers at Allahabad ever since his boyhood. "The Ganges especially is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been the symbol of India's age-long culture and civilisation, ever changing, ever flowing and yet ever the same. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas which I have loved so much and of the vast plains below where my life and work have been cast". The remainder of his ashes. Mr Nehru said, should be carried high in an aircraft and scattered over the fields "so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of her".

★

PART of the special feature entitled "Books that Started Something" at the World Book Fair at Earls Court, London, is devoted to Thomas Paine. It includes his works *The Case for the Officers of Excise*, *Common Sense*, *Crisis Papers*, *Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, as well as cartoons, engravings and coins. The Fair, which began on June 10th, will be open until this Saturday, June 20th. Coming so soon after the unveiling of the Thomas Paine statue at Thetford on Sunday, June 7th, the exhibit will do something to publicise one of England's greatest men and writers.

★

WE HAVE a great deal of respect for the Family Planning Association. That respect would be increased if the Association weren't so concerned about its respectability. When Mrs Leah Manning proposed at the FPA conference that birth-control advice should be made available to the unmarried, some delegates "were anxious about the good name" of the Association and "foretold" that if the resolution were approved, some of the older members would feel obliged to resign. "Others feared that the society would lose the support of the Church, and the only two parsons who spoke, both declared themselves against the proposal" (*The Guardian* 5/6/64). The conference therefore voted in favour of making the advice available through the youth advisory centres, of which there is only one in operation.

★

DR. FAITH SPICER, the supervisor, told the conference that when the youth advisory centre was opened, the intention was to hold sessions once a fortnight. This was quickly amended to once a week, and had now been increased to three times a week. Moreover, sessions were booked up for a month in advance. Those who came were mostly responsible people ("I only wish more of the irresponsible would come", Dr. Spicer said) and many of them were engaged but couldn't yet get married. In this situation, they had decided "carefully and responsibly" to sleep with their future husbands. Many people would say they were wrong, Dr. Spicer added, "but I believe we should help them with the advice they need".

★

SO CREMATION is no longer a sin! Pope Paul — it was announced on June 5th — had approved a document stating that people choosing cremation instead of burial should "no longer be considered sinners and refused the sacraments" (*The Guardian*, 6/6/64). Thus the changeless Church has reversed a decree of 1886 condemning cremation. The anti-religious aspects of cremation have become less violent, the Pope said, and the Church had taken into account economic and hygienic motives. Soon then, no doubt, we can expect to see images of "Our Lady" alongside the crosses that Christians have impertinently erected in crematoria, which owe their very existence to Freethinkers.

# In the Beginning . . .

By M. J. K. STANWORTH and B. J. YAPP

EVER since the dawn of recorded history men have speculated as to the origin of life, the nature of the universe, and man's place in an apparently hostile environment.

Amongst the ancient writings that have been preserved are the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Vedas* of the Hindus, the *Theogony* of Hesoid, the Mohammedan *Koran*, and the clay tablets found in the library of King Assirbanipal. All these purport to give an account of the origin of the world, and to have been divinely inspired, therefore their veracity should be unquestioned. Modern man does question their veracity, however, for a number of reasons. Firstly, they conflict with the findings of modern science; secondly, they contradict one another; thirdly, when they were written men were ignorant about facts which are now elementary knowledge.

Today we may enjoy these mythological accounts as poetry, but should not respect them as scientifically accurate, nor allow the free rational temper of mind to be retarded by superstition. Ancient man did not think of them as myths, but then ancient man was ignorant, and that is no excuse for believing them today. It is to be regretted that many millions in supposedly civilised nations should still cling or half-cling to this nonsense.

The ancient Germans believed that the world was made from a body of a dead giant, who had been slain. The sea being his blood, the earth his flesh, the mountains and rocks his teeth, and the sky his skull.

The Babylonians also thought that the world was made from a slain monster, but that it was a female, Tiamat. They thought that there had once been an age of paradisaical innocence, when mankind lived on the east of the Persian Gulf, ruled over by the earth god, Enki. Man transgressed God's laws, however, and in a rage of anger, He drowned the whole mankind except Tatug.

There is a striking resemblance between this and the Hebrew account given in the Old Testament. It is not coincidental. In 586 BC, Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and the Jews were enslaved in Babylon, for a period of traditionally 70 years. (It was in fact 58 years; for the Jews were released when Babylon was captured by Cyrus in 528 BC.) Immediately after their return to Jerusalem, Genesis, the first book of the Pentateuch, was compiled.

The Old Testament stories of the Garden of Eden, the Fall, and the Flood, are clearly derived from Babylon. The Babylonian word Tiamat, gave rise to the Hebrew word Tehom — "the deep" — the dark watery chaos that existed before creation. The world, according to the Babylonians, started after a fight between Marduk (the sun or spring god) and Tiamat (sea god). During the long winter the Babylonian plain looks like the sea (Tiamat) owing to heavy rains. When spring arrives the god of the vernal sun (Marduk) divides the waters, sending them partly upwards as clouds, and partly downwards as rivers. This myth requires as its background alluvial land, which Babylon is and Palestine or the Syro-Arabian desert is not, and also a sun god which Marduk is and Yahweh is not.

It is significant that for nearly nineteen centuries Christendom regarded the Biblical account of the beginning as scientific fact, and many still do today. It has been pronounced many times that the Bible is the word of God, and God does not tell lies, therefore damn science and

take your learning from the "Word of God." Luther said: "Moses is reporting things that actually happened," and when Copernicus contradicted the Bible, he declared: "Copernicus is an upstart astrologer who dared to set his own authority above that of Holy Scripture." Dr. F. Sherwood Taylor, a modern Catholic writer, has written: "The scriptural writers intended to give an historical account of events that actually happened." The Westminster Confession asserts: "It pleased God in the beginning to make or create out of nothing the world and all things therein in the space of six days."

C. Edward in his book, *The Old Testament*, wrote: "The ingenious gentlemen who desire to harmonise Genesis with the facts of science would be much better advised to take the further step of harmonising geology with the details of Babylonian Mythology."

From the Hebrew scriptures it is possible to compile an accurate picture of the universe as it appeared to the Jews, and which was later incorporated in Christianity. The earth was flat and circular. There were subterranean waters which gave rise to the sea and were also divided into rivers. As Genesis put it: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered into one place and let dry land appear." There were also waters above the firmament which were the source of rain. The firmament itself was supported by pillars on its outer sides.

After death the souls of the blessed went to a place below the ground called Sheol (Abraham's Bosom). The souls of the cursed went to a place below the ground also, but it was called Gehenna. One supposes that the entertainments provided in each of these establishments differed somewhat.

After the earth and stars, man was made, in God's image, created out of dust, and God's breath gave him life. Second Genesis gives a somewhat different version. In this man is made before the firmament and this version is consistent with a Summerian myth.

The reconciliation of Jewish and Greek cosmogony caused great heart searching in the early Church. For the influence of Aristotle was almost as great as that of the Bible. Where the accounts diverged a compromise was usually attempted, and where this was not possible the Hebrew version was given the benefit. One could hardly call this a scientific method, but when truth is not the objective any method is permissible. The "new compromise version" consisted of a new, larger universe, in which the pillars had disappeared, but which was still anthropomorphic.

It was believed right until the sixteenth century that the earth was the centre of the universe and that it was at rest. Aristotle had taught that the heaven was a sphere which rotated in a circle, the circle being the most perfect figure. The centre of a rotating body must be at rest. Therefore the earth is both at the centre and at rest. The combined authority of the Bible and Aristotle gave this belief a terrible potency.

Though these conjectures were regarded as wicked innovations by the Church, in fact the Greeks had postulated similar hypotheses 2,000 years before, and also a theory of evolution and atomic determinism. When the individual Greeks forwarded these ideas they were not persecuted, however, as were Galileo, Darwin and the others. This proves what progress the human race made

after 2,000 years of Christianity.

It was not until 1827 that the works of Copernicus were withdrawn from the Index, and his theories generally accepted. A similar storm issued over Darwin, and Darwin won hands down, but it was not until many years later that his theories came to be gradually accepted. In our own day Freudian Psychology is likewise handicapped.

The "Gloomy Dean" — Dean Inge — wrote: "Those Churchmen who airily declare that there is no longer any conflict between Christianity and Science are either thoughtless or are wilfully shutting their eyes. There is

a very serious conflict, the challenge was presented not in the age of Darwin, but in the age of Copernicus."

Screaming American Evangelists arrive by the plane and boatful, usually preaching Fundamentalism and the infallible authority of the Bible. Otherwise intelligent people have been known to arrive at their meeting with tears streaming down their faces to be "saved," beating their heads and yelling that they are wicked sinners to deny the divine authorship of the Scriptures. By state law the preaching of evolution is forbidden in schools in Tennessee. The new world, it would seem, is very old in some respects.

## The Value of the Religious Experience in Pentecostalism

By DEREK STUBBS

PENTECOSTALISM is an Armenian-type Protestant denomination, typified by its ecstasy ceremonies, where phenomena such as glossolalia (speaking in "tongues"), involuntary shaking, laughing, crying, sweating and healings occur. It is estimated that there are 40,000 to 60,000 believers in the UK, and 10 million in the world, and it must be realised that these are all "true believers" — no Church of England luke-warmth here!

The denomination as such is split into friendly sects, with superficial doctrinal differences, e.g., in the UK: The Assemblies of God, The Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance, The Catholic Apostolic Church, and many other much smaller sects. The movement is very strong in the USA, South America, and Sweden; and it is true to say that most of the "prepare-to-meet-thy-doom" public speakers are associated with Pentecostalism. I intend to review the ecstatic phenomena peculiar to Pentecostalism and put forward a theory as to their psychosomatic function.

It is not relevant to account for the extreme Jesucentricism of the movement, other than to say that the character-structure which requires a Jesus-syndrome tends to be more neurotic than normal, and a stressing of this tender hinge of their psyche, at ceremonies, tends to precipitate the ecstasy state. Likewise their eschatologism and necrophilia. However, these are also common characteristics of most non-Pentecostal fundamentalist sects.

I will not deal with their healing claims, as I have never been satisfied that any permanent, inexplicable, healing has occurred and has been checked before and after by qualified persons. Another reviewer, Bryan R. Wilson (in *Sects and Society*, Heinemann, 1961), notes the same.

Miracles, answers to prayers, prophecies come true, etc., are claimed, but the logical framework to which they are attached allows no opportunity for scientific examination. I shall not examine them either, other than to say that their "occurrence" is of intense mental reinforcement value, a mystical value necessary to all religions (for the believer), and of advertising capital for the non-believer. I make no apology for not examining other religious ecstasy phenomena, they have been well documented and the conclusion I draw may be equally as relevant.

It is first necessary to account a short synopsis of the (a) socio-economic and sexual composition of the movement, and (b) typical characterological attitudes, before I recount their ceremonies, and then put forward some explanation of their psycho-dynamics.

Pentecostalism offers an intense religious experience, an

extremely sociable church life, and a fundamentalist approach (with its associated prejudice outlets). The faith is more acceptable in periods of social change and disruption (e.g. World War II, the Irish troubles of the '20s, the poverty of the 1900s in Wales, etc.), and to people with emotionally disturbed backgrounds, shallow, insecure, or purposeless lives, and the socially-disenfranchised of "this world."

Approximately 70 per cent of believers are women. Women in our society are more repressed, and therefore become more inhibited and neurotic. Pentecostalism has a valuable function for the neurotic. A larger than normal proportion of young people is noticeable. Considering the miseries that the adolescent suffers in our society, it is little wonder that he should often turn to the powerful emotional crutch of Pentecostalism. The Pentecostalist, almost without exception, is in semi-skilled or unskilled employment, definitely non-professional; and with an elementary education only, and therefore of the lower working class.

To say that the typical personality is of the authoritarian mentality would not be wrong. Most believers are very neurotic, some however are of the dynamic-neurotic character-structure, as found in right-wing political fanatics and the priesthood of the middle ages. Each church will have one member (usually male) who borders on dementia praecox.

"Anything enjoyable is sinful" is the Pentecostalist's golden rule. He is anti-drinking, -smoking, -cinema, -theatre, -dancing, -"pornographic" literature, and -sexual "immorality" (which means sexuality in general). He will not allow his children to taste these "worldly pleasures," and he will strongly discourage new converts from doing so. He may deny himself a car, television, radio, newspapers, etc. Noticeably, it is only the poor man who deprecates wealth, but secretly he admires the values "of the world," and when he can afford it a car, etc., will appear.

The Pentecostalist gives strong ideological support to The Lord's Day Observance Society and The Anti-Evolution Society. He will not usually attempt any social progress (as, say, penal reform); he is anti-science and anti-knowledge. This is biblically deduced, but it is a necessary symptom of his general psychological syndrome, as well as being a sour-grapes attitude to compensate for his own unfortunate ignorance and confusion.

(To be Continued)

## CORRESPONDENCE

## NEHRU

Although I am a Christian, I am a regular reader and admirer of your paper. I do wish, however, that you would curb your perhaps understandable desire to bring outstanding figures under the freethought flag at any cost. A week or two ago it was Shakespeare, now (5/6/64) it is Nehru, whom you describe as a freethinker. Is there any evidence for this? If so, I have not seen it.

HENRY K. WILLIAMS.

[This letter is referred to Notes and News—ED.]

## RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

There have been recently various articles and letters regarding religion in schools. I must say I do not agree with Margaret McIlroy in her article of the first of May. It would be better to put all our efforts for the time being in trying to stop religion in undenominational schools which are open to all whatever their beliefs. The first step is no doubt for all of us freethinking parents to protect our children from what we believe to be wrong and to stop being hypocrites (excuse the strong word) who decry religion at home and yet do nothing to stop the religious brain washing of their children at school. If we all asked that our children be excused from attending religious worship or instruction at school, then the authorities would have to take more notice and we would have two or more parents in each school asking for what is their right instead of one only or not at all.

I have done this for my three children at the primary school, without any fuss being made over it by the head or teachers — perhaps some surprise as it is such an unusual request. The children have not suffered in any way and they may even have gained as they have had more time for reading.

I have now asked for the same right for my eldest daughter who will be entering a direct grant Grammar School in September. The Headmistress has accepted my request without questioning it, although she added in her reply: "though I must say that the kind of practical (and quite undenominational) Christianity to which we aspire permeates every activity in this school and your daughter may not be able to escape the infection!"

However, in a later personal interview, she stated she was pleased to have a parent who stood for what he believed and that she hoped my daughter's presence at her school would eventually lead to lively discussions on religious subjects or others. As it is,

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my daughter will not be the only one exempted as there are already at the school several Jewish and Roman Catholic pupils who have their own religious training outside.

It may be that being French helps in this matter, but I cannot help feeling that this course should be followed by everyone who pretends to be a freethinker or an atheist. It would make it easier for all concerned in view of the greater number of requests made and it might encourage other parents who are as yet only indifferent to religion to do the same. We want to see "freethinking" in action not only in words or on paper.

L. TOUDIC

## BELIEF AND DISBELIEF

Sir Julian Huxley calls Humanism the coming religion of all mankind. Humanism is my religion in this empirical world. My conscience, secular morals and the law guide and control my dealings with my fellow men.

Traditional religion started from the ignorance of primitive men of nature, diseases, and calamities. Today it is a well-entrenched organisation whose assets count in billions. God-believers are being exploited by the sanctimonious cunning of religious leaders who have succeeded in making many people feel that religion is doing them a lot of good; that there is a personal and supernatural God; that there is heaven in outer space, and hell and purgatory elsewhere in the universe; that a human being has a so-called "soul".

Nothing shows that there is a personal and supernatural God. The universe has always been here in continuous flux, in an ever-evolving pattern. It is as eternal as time and space. Nature produced life; living matter emerged and evolved from non-living elements through ages of time!

The only beneficent religion of modern times is Humanism, the honest and courageous rejection of a personal, supernatural and imaginary God of tradition and the unceasing devotion to human welfare! Only fellow humans can help us. No prayer has ever been answered. God-believers know these things and yet they go on praying to feel good; they go on praying to find comfort in their belief and faith. Such is the strength of their primitive desire and the unreason of their religion ingrained into them for centuries by so-called "holy" men!

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