REVIEWS

CAUSES OF CRIME. By Lord Pakenham. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 21s.)

This book proves to be a review of current opinions on the causes of the increase in crime, rather than the broad constructive treatise which the title suggests and the author's many admirers had hoped for. This was in no way his fault, for he had to follow the terms of reference laid down by the Nuffield Trust in organizing the enquiry on which this report was based. With the able assistance of Mr Roger Opie and of Mr J. S. Lodge, the Home Office Statistical Adviser (who contributes an invaluable appendix), Lord Pakenham has shown what a muddle the whole problem had fallen into. An examination of the 'foundations of belief' was essential if any real progress is to be made in diminishing crime.

The authorities to which Lord Pakenham has turned to make his appraisal represent a solid body of the more balanced and best informed writers on criminology, such as Doctors Stafford Clark, Gibbens, David Henderson, Ferguson of Glasgow, Dr Lyndesay Neustatter, and Sir Cyril Burt. Even after avoiding the extremists and cliché-mongers ('Make the parents responsible'!), he finds wide differences of opinion on such commonly adduced causes as poverty, broken homes, hereditary influence, inborn defects of temperament, absence of religious teaching, mental and physical inferiority. Common experience suggests that all these factors (and some others he does not mention) affect the end result, but how much? Is the broken home, for example, likely to produce criminals more than the intact home where the father is a brute or a burglar, or the mother a loose-living slattern? Now that real destitution is almost unknown, how, precisely, does poverty act to produce law-breaking?

The truth about the relationship of the 'decline of religion' and crime is particularly puzzling. Greatly daring, Lord Pakenham questions the universal assumption that religion has in fact declined, basing his scepticism mainly on figures of attendance at communion. It is possible there has been a revival lately, but I would hazard the opinion that vast numbers of children, more than for centuries, are ignorant of Christian doctrine. Never in Protestant England can the Bible have meant so little to the young, and it would be strange indeed if this had no effect on their conduct. The important aspect of the matter for Catholics, which the author does not mention, however, is the tacit refusal to investigate our own record. Responsible statements of the high proportion of Catholic delinquents, adult, adolescent, and juvenile, come from many lands and no one attempts to explain why

the religious training on which we lay such stress is not more successful. One would like to see the position thoroughly investigated by trained sociologists and the issues courageously faced. Have we sufficiently studied methods of making religion understood and accepted by children as well as merely *taught*? Are Catholic homes and school encouraged to co-operate? Have we provided adequately for the education of dull and retarded children who have special temptations to drift into petty crime? Do we emphasize too exclusively the evils of divorce and birth-control and forget to mention that a Christian home should be full of love and happiness? Unless we can give satisfactory answers to these questions—and many others—we are hardly in a favourable position to pronounce on the relationship of religion and crime.

In his quest for hard facts, Lord Pakenham was brought up against the astonishing unreliability of official statistics. (This has been pointed out before but has failed to register in the mind of the public.) He found that the figures returned from local areas are subject to such variations in the classification of crimes, and the practice of magistrates and the police is so different, that the official tables do not make a sound basis for comparison between one part of England and another, or even between different years! The formation of a small Statistical and Research Department at the Home Office to supplement the efforts of the solitary Statistical Advisor now in charge has been one of the excellent if belated results of this enquiry. No one should wonder that all Lord Pakenham dare conclude about crime is that it is a mainly urban offence and the offenders are mainly male. The highest ratio of offenders to population occurs at the age of fourteen. The number of offences has certainly risen considerably since 1938 and the chief increase is in the 'nastier offences'.

On the highly important question of the criminal's responsibility, the Catholic outlook is opposed to much in current thought. As Lord Pakenham points out, many criminologists have not adequately explored the criminal's mind at the moment of the decision or the nature of the criminal decision. He gives full weight to cases where a delinquent act has been determined wholly or in part by a mental or physical handicap. This Doctor Stafford Clark calls a 'medical crime', 'a crime in which the individual capacity of the criminal to refrain from committing the act is effectively diminished by factors both recognizable and, at some stage, treatable by medical means'. But free will, as the normal condition of the normal individual, still remains. Good use is made of the Riddell Memorial Lecture on *Responsibility* (1951) by Sir Walter Moberley, which puts the position brilliantly. A belief in free will is not so much an abstract doctrine as a basic necessity for

the administration of the law. 'Unless the adult members of society possess enough self-control and intelligence to understand and obey the law if they wish, social life becomes impossible in any form but that of a slave society.' He further emphasizes that guilt is not an illusion. It is an awful reality, though not (for a Christian) the final reality. 'The grace of God dwarfs all calculations of merit or demerit.'

In the conclusion, this problem of the relative guilt of society and the offender tends to obscure Lord Pakenham's vision. The reason does him credit: he is so overflowing with passionate sympathy for the man in collision with the majesty of the Law that he seeks to shift the burden in every way possible. He certainly admits that 'Human law and human penalties in accordance with human justice are in principle at least . . . sanctioned by the best Christian thinking', but later on he writes (and this is his 'new approach' to crime and criminals), 'Once we see delinquents as people who may be receiving justice, but may equally be receiving gross injustice at our hands, we shall approach each individual prisoner on the assumption that it is at least possible that he ought not to be there at all . . .'.

Now nearly everyone who has had practical contact with criminals is agreed that the great stumbling block to reform is their inability to appreciate the fact that what they did was wrong and that they themselves were responsible. I cannot think Lord Pakenham's attitude could help them. It is Dr Moberley's view that if he is not definitely pathological 'it is disastrous to lead a man to believe that he is more sinned against than sinning and to imply that strenuous moral effort on his part is unnecessary'. We should without doubt bear one another's burdens, but we cannot lead one another's lives. It is the defect of a most stimulating and inspiring study that the author tends sometimes to forget—or seems to forget—this fact.

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ORIGEN, THE SONG OF SONGS: COMMENTARY AND HOMILIES. Translated and annotated by R. P. Lawson. (Ancient Christian Writers, No. 26. Longmans; 21s.)

'While Origen surpassed all other writers in his other books, in his *Song of Songs* he surpassed himself.' This is the judgment of St Jerome, writing to Pope Damasus in his dedicatory letter prefixed to his own translation of the two Homilies. Jerome does not give us his reasons for this judgment. We may conjecture, however, that for a man so deeply concerned with the text and the letter of the Scripture as St Jerome, Origen's method of interpretation would commend itself most when applied—as it is in these Homilies—to a dramatic poem rather than to an historical narrative. For a modern reader, too,