

dene endokrine Störungen, welche nach unserer Ansicht die Suizidgedanken beeinflussen.

Interessant ist, daß nach einer kurzen multifaktoriellen Therapie in den meisten Fällen diese Krankheitsbilder verschwanden. Als Prophylaxe der Suizidversuche bei Jugendlichen glauben wir vor allem, daß: 1. die sozialen Verhältnisse (einschließlich Familienverhältnisse) der Jugendlichen untersucht und geregelt werden müssen; daß 2. die Jugendlichen im Arbeitsprogramm nicht überlastet werden dürfen; daß 3. das kollektive Leben mithilft, die psychischen Traumata leichter zu überwinden; und daß es 4. gilt, eine reale medizinische Fürsorge zu sichern.

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### **Sexual and religious conflicts in suicidal young people**

*Ch. Varah*

Many suicidal young people come to "The Samaritans - to help those tempted to suicide or despair". This is an organisation which I founded in 1953 and which now has 67 Branches in the United Kingdom and 10 overseas.

It is the experience of the London Branch, which receives up to 100 new "clients" each week, that suicidal young people are almost always troubled about problems arising from their sexual and emotional needs, and the inner conflicts which these create because of their religious or conscientious ideals. This is surprisingly true even of those whose upbringing has not been explicitly religious. Recent surveys in Great Britain have shown (a) that "teenagers" enjoy much less sexual gratification than had been supposed, and (b) that of the whole population, only 2 per cent do not believe in God, and 14 per cent are undecided; that 43 per cent pray regularly and 64 per cent believe in the divinity of Christ. Two out of every three people disapprove of pre-marital, and four out of five of extra-marital, sexual relationships.

So young people experience powerful natural urges and needs in a society whose religious and moral pressures are contrary to most of what is suggested to them by the mass media of entertainment and advertising. They are crushed between the upper millstone of mores which are basically puritanical, Manicheistic and life-denying, and the nether millstone of a worldly philosophy which is materialistic, sensual and soul-destroying. Small wonder that so many are confused and agitated.

In this situation, they need to be assured by someone they trust that both influences are false: that a religion which labels the physical and emotional longings which God has given them "evil" is a horrible distortion of Christianity, and that commercial and other interests which try to persuade them that they are simply animals with a special aptitude for living for sensual thrills are erring in the opposite direction. Man is neither angel nor animal, but a sacramental union of soul and body whose whole need and purpose are to be satisfied. The lay volunteers by their friendship, and the professional members by their counselling, are usually able to reduce or remove this kind of conflict in young people who come to The Samaritans with their problems. Not all guilt is pathological; and where it is rational but misconceived, therapeutic relationships with accepting and well adjusted people seem to be the most effective way of preventing suicide.

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