

Having been in print since 1947 *Faith and Freedom* has now reached issue 201.

Sidney Spencer is a much neglected figure in twentieth-century Unitarian history and Jo James gives a comprehensive examination of his theological ideas. A Unitarian minister noted for his strongly pacifist witness both before and during the Second World War, with only limited formal academic credentials to his name he nevertheless became Principal of Manchester College, Oxford as well as one of the acknowledged world experts on mysticism. His interest in this subject resulted in a number of publications culminating in the Pelican *Mysticism in World Religion* in 1963, an influential work and something of a best seller in its day. Jo illuminates Spencer's theology, sets it in its context and seeks out its relevance to the present day.

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 'Scopes Monkey Trial', the famous trial which took place in Dayton, Tennessee when local teacher John Scopes was taken to court for teaching Darwin's theories in his classes, contrary to the law of the state of Tennessee. John Midgley gives a timely account of this key event, forever made famous by the movie *Inherit the Wind*, starring Spencer Tracey.

One hundred years is a long time yet the whole case has many uncomfortable resonances in the present age and these perhaps feed into the current situation in the United States. Dan C. West, who has 'lived through 15 presidents since the beginning of the Second World War', gives a very insightful analysis of the current political, theological and cultural trends which mark America today.

How do we understand our place in the universe, how do we understand the universe itself in theological terms? Feargus O'Connor provides an excellent examination of *Our Mysterious Universe: Accident or Design?* looking at the philosophical notions that underpin the argument from design.

Following on from Barrie Needham's article considering the Koran/Quran from Western, liberal Christian eyes in our last issue, we are pleased to include a response from Imran Usmani who brings considerable insight to the topic through his extensive researches on Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

We are delighted to once again include a number of reviews, including Peter B. Godfrey's review of Diarmaid MacCulloch's *Lower than the Angels: A History of Sex and Christianity*; Peter's review of the late Rev Art Lester's *Thank God I'm an Agnostic: Trusting your Hunch about God, the Universe and All That* and the editor's review article on *A Short History of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Including Sketches of Individual Congregations and a Fasti of Ministers who served in them* by John Nelson.