

FREETHINKER

Registered at the
G.P.O. as a Newspaper

FOUNDED 1881 by G. W. FOOTE

Friday,
August 25, 1967

THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS

I URGE everyone who has not yet done so to read the recently published annual report of the National Secular Society. Aptly titled *The Second Hundred Years* it reminds us of some of the solid work done by the Society since its inception in 1866 and briefly reviews twelve months' activities. It was no idle period for the Society. There were centenary lectures and a memorable rally at Northampton, as well as the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers. The Society continued the propagandist work for which it has been so noted for so long by publishing a number of leaflets and by organising one of the best attended and most widely reported meetings on Secular Education since the War. The Society's well-deserved reputation for its social events was maintained by the resounding success of its 61st annual dinner, at which the speakers were Margaret Knight, Miles Malleson, David Tribe, Lord Willis and Baroness Wootton.

The National Secular Society had an important role to play in 1867. 100 years later it still has a vital part to play in the affairs of the nation. We are still plagued with an Established Church supporting the status quo. Indeed we are now plagued with two Established Churches where 100 years ago there was but one. In 1867 the Church of England was the only Established Church. Now we have the Church of England by law established and the Church of Rome by politics established. Secular education is still an aim, not a reality; though thanks to the National Secular Society's campaigning over 100 years and its determination to succeed within the next few it may soon be a reality and no longer an aim. Religion still bedevils and hampers law reform and Church organisations still invoke God, the Charity laws and tax relief to hold on to their bastions of power. By now we should be living in a secular society. We are not. The work of the National Secular Society must therefore continue and it deserves the support of all who are Secularists at heart.

Although not a vogue word such as one mildly synonymous with it, Secularism has stood the test of 100 years and more. Its principles are clear cut. It does not brook the courting of quasi mystics, nor does it attend semi-official tea parties with Roman Catholic emissaries who have sped hot foot from a Vatican feast of wafer and wine.

Secularism aims for a society in which people may be free to be religious, not compelled to be so, in which people may be free to choose, not imprisoned unnecessarily for doing so, in which people may be free to develop an individualistic personality which is rich in diversity, not dictated, dominated and indoctrinated into a conformism which is neither individual nor personal, but simply automatic in a mechanically conditioned manner unworthy of the natural aspirations of the human species.

Secularism holds that this life is the only one of which we have certain knowledge and that all efforts should be directed towards improving it. The opponents of Secularism are those who maintain that this life is not the only one of which we have knowledge, that there is another and higher life which God has in store for us and that all our efforts should be directed towards preparing ourselves for that one.

God still stalks in the minds of millions. These millions blessed with the grace of God and the knowledge of his will oppose birth control, oppose abortion, oppose the reform of laws which still restrict, quite unnecessarily, the freedom of the individual. There are still millions of people who know God's will on this, that and the other, who know what the individual must do for his salvation, must do for his own good and for that of society, must not do because it is against God's will, against the will of the Pope who knows more than the rest of us put together, against the will of the Archbishop of Pie-in-the-Skyland who saw God revealed in a dream the night of the Mayball and who now has enough divine knowledge to muck us all up for the next year and more. These are the millions of interfering busybodies who want freedom for their religious twaddle and restrictions for whatever does not conform to it. These are the millions who oppose Secularism. They oppose Secularism because they know what Secularism is about. And Secularists oppose them because they know what the angels of divinity are about. The issues are clearly defined. No good can come from papering over the cracks and trying to conceal the fundamental differences. They are there and they are real. The National Secular Society has, without fear or favour, been recognising these differences for a hundred years and will doubtless continue to recognise them and work for the principles and objects of Secularism until a truly secular society has been created.

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Harry Lamont

Speaking Personally

I HAVE just read a remarkable book called *The Circle of Guilt* by Dr Fredric Wertham, MD, in which the author attempts to explain why Frank Santana, a Puerto Rican youth of 17, shot dead William Blakenship (15) in a New York street.

Puerto Rico (in the West Indies) is part of the United States, and the aborigines (mostly Spanish-speaking) flock to the mainland in large numbers. Nothing reprehensible in that. They have a normal and natural desire to improve their economic condition.

As they are nearly all very poor, Puerto Ricans tend to gravitate to the slums where they are forced to pay high rents for poor, squalid, poky accommodation. There is much prejudice against them. They are accused of tipping garbage out of windows and other even more disgusting habits.

According to Dr Wertham the Puerto Rican is not inherently inferior to the white, but has been made to appear so by having to work long hours for low wages and live in foul hovels, under appalling conditions.

Frank Santana was a quiet youth of high intelligence whose father died when the boy was 4 and Frank's mother, despite poor health, worked in a garment factory.

Frank wanted to be a television technician, but was fobbed off with another course, so became disgruntled and played truant.

Boys of the neighbourhood formed gangs, some of which existed for the sole purpose of beating up Puerto Ricans. One day Frank met William Blakenship and either through fear or bravado shot him dead.

Dr Wertham agreed to examine the accused, vilified by the Press in the most opprobrious terms. Apparently the prisoner read nothing but horror comics, and when playing truant spent hours at the movies every day to watch scenes of lust, crime and violence.

When Dr Wertham called at the killer's home to see the youth's mother, he met a man who testified that the prisoner was normally kind and helpful, most considerate, but the friend refused to testify in court, alleging that prejudice against Puerto Ricans was so intense that it would cost him his job.

Accused pleaded guilty to second degree murder and was sentenced to 25 years to life, which means a minimum of 25 years and a maximum of entire life.

Dr Wertham explains that Santana, by race and colour prejudice, had been made to feel inadequate and therefore fell an easy prey to delinquency. We see the effect of indoctrination with violence.

"Inversely this feeling against Puerto Ricans affected young Blankenship as well. Neither boy learned race prejudice in his home. It came from outside. Where there is so much hostility in the environment, it would mean looking through the wrong end of the telescope to stress the hostility of the individual child. It was on the altar of community prejudice and antagonism that Billy Blakenship was sacrificed."

I believe that all forms of racial and colour prejudice are damnable. In Oxford recently six leading citizens were prosecuted by the police for demonstrating outside a hair-

dresser's shop because coloured customers were refused service. Fortunately the case was dismissed. Several people wrote letters to newspapers urging that the hairdresser had a perfect right to select his clients, but such discrimination can easily lead to more serious victimisation.

It is a striking fact that children are born free from colour prejudice. White infants play quite happily with black until the whites are taught that blacks are inferior.

Since the blacks were captured in Africa and carried in irons to America and the West Indies, they have usually been exploited and regarded as sub-human, a state of affairs the whites want to perpetuate in various parts of the world. Colour prejudice is so bitter in some regions that it will not be easy to secure economic, political and social justice for blacks and other non-Europeans. South African *apartheid* (separate development) is a fraud and a sham, merely a pretext to ensure a permanent supply of cheap labour and safeguard white supremacy. Europeans have grabbed 87 per cent of the land and will not give up any appreciable amount.

South Africa has been described as a pigmentocracy, a heaven for the whites and a hell for all non-Europeans.

A stupid, ignorant European hoodlum will consider himself *ipso facto* infinitely superior to all dark skinned people, no matter how intelligent or highly educated.

On South African farms black labourers are frequently flogged to death and the brutes responsible escape with a derisory penalty.

Colour prejudice is often completely irrational and can afflict people otherwise highly intelligent, fair-minded and equitable. I have often tried to reason with victims of xenophobia, but usually have to give up in despair. I think schools could do more to inculcate the idea that colour prejudice is vile and contemptible.

Reverting to the Santana tragedy, when this youth started playing truant and running wild, an attendance officer should have called at the Santana home to investigate, but nobody did. The book is really an indictment of a social system that by ineptitude and neglect encourages crime, which is then punished with severity.

Dr Wertham complains that in many cases the social services describe an offender as unsuitable for treatment merely because treatment is difficult. So often officialdom chooses the line of least resistance.

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FORUM ON CENSORSHIP: III

Jean Straker

JOHN CALDER, himself in conflict with the censors, could not speak about *Last Exit to Brooklyn* because the matter was *sub judice*; but he did want to say that they did not have to go to the Old Bailey. They could have pleaded guilty, paid the fine, and the matter would have been forgotten. To a company publishing 70-80 books a year, one book less could be replaced by another. But doing this would give an open invitation to Sir Cyril Black and chief constables of limited views and to Mary Whitehouse to jump on every book they didn't like, not only for sexual but also for theological and political reasons. 'It would not be very long before we were back to seeing Darwin sold under the counter.'

We recognised two kinds of society, open and closed: the latter did not change, the former allowed progress and evolution and tolerated a great variety of different views and accepted changes in morality.

If Victorian England had needed restraints on individual freedom to bring about reforms, that was now passed; we were now in danger of becoming an extremely frivolous society. Kenneth Tynan could utter an impolite word on the radio and fill the newspapers with headlines while in that short space of time real obscenities were going on in parts of the world where thousands of people were being killed in the names of freedom and democracy. Did we want to be titillated by frivolities because we were afraid of realities?

"We live in an age when it is impossible for anybody to have absolutes, when we must realise that whatever we think and however sure we might be of our opinions at any one moment, we might quite likely be wrong, and we must constantly re-examine what we believe to see whether or not we are wrong. This is not an age of faith. It is an age of doubt. It is an age when doubt must be very close to the pinnacle of all the virtues."

We were all moralists, wanting a better world, wanting to discover truth, and putting doubt on that pinnacle was the only way for us to discover what the truth was. Lord Devlin had said that even if nobody believed in the Christian religion we must still have Christianity to underpin morality to avoid chaos. But surely if people were not going to believe in the religion behind the morality, they would abandon the morality as well.

Like Peter Watkins, he was disturbed that the ordinary man was unable to put his survival above the price of beer. It seemed that our democracy was a kitchen garden which produced so many vegetables to be plumbers, so many to be bank clerks, so many to be dock workers, so many to be intellectuals. Many of those in authority believed that it was better for people to be unaware, ignorant, and outside the knowledge of the dangers that surround them. He did not believe that such a mandarin attitude was possible today; people who had been denied educational opportunities should not be condemned to remain ignorant; it was not enough to feed them bingo. The education of the great majority who leave school at 15 had produced a disturbing generation of young people who wanted to opt out of the adult world and had never been equipped to put anything in its place. If they were not to become vegetables but intelligent human beings able to think for themselves, he would give them, in place of the Billy Graham message, the message of the high arts, the intelligent arts, the creative arts.

Avril Fox had found that at the committee meetings of the Cosmo Group there were many different views of the

meaning of the word 'censorship'. She had defined it as the overall imposition of one point of view and the discouragement of independent thinking. She called the act of censorship 'paternalism'; there was no country in the world free from it; in many the Catholic Church did not encourage individual thinking; both in the United States and the Communist countries there were restrictions on thought; in the African nationalist countries independent points of view were discouraged. We were not to run away with the idea that we were as backward as could be here; it was bad enough, but the freedom that we did have was the envy of people all over the world; we were free also to struggle for more freedom. Our responsibility was not only to ourselves but also to pioneer on behalf of the whole world. Any step forward here would make it possible for others to follow.

David Collis wanted to consider the question of censorship from the standpoint of consistency. The existence and the nature of God was a matter of considerable importance, of such importance that many national leaders all over the world invoked the aid of God. Of the four laws that apply censorship—sedition, obscenity, libel and blasphemy—reasonable arguments could be advanced for the first three. He did not wish to maintain that the fourth was a live issue today; it was extremely unlikely that it would ever be enforced again—although it was still on the Statute Book—but it did illustrate the point that authority could impose penalties on anyone who questions the existence of God in spite of the fact that God never came forward in self-defence. A libel on a real person could be disproved by evidence; the sophistry was that the blasphemous libel—like the obscene libel, now called 'obscenity'—could succeed. It did not matter whether it was a question of God, *The War Game*, or *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, because people like Sir Cyril Black and Mrs Mary Whitehouse relied on laws which were based on assumptions that could not be challenged by evidence. If the only protection against such sophistry was to show where the catch was, what we asked for was the freedom to show where the catch was. It was a total inconsistency that the Criminal Law should give no right of defence to a person who was accused of committing an alleged crime for which no victim could be shown to exist.

David Tribe, speaking for himself—there could be no 'party line' for the National Secular Society—wanted to make two qualifications before he summed up: (a) that Britain was relatively free, and (b) that many censors really believe that they are performing a public service. He said that there was no absolute right for free expression: the European Convention on Human Rights imposed prescribed restrictions which were necessary in a democratic society—and he felt that the NSS also would accept these restrictions. But we would have to ensure that these restrictions were not abused for bureaucratic convenience; there were many restrictive acts which gave bureaucratic control over means of publication and distribution which afforded the victim no right of redress; it was impossible, however much money we had, to broadcast freethought news to the nation.

"The channels have been allotted to specific people: and when they exercise censorship, as blatantly as they do on questions of freethought and secular humanism, it is one of the most mischievous forms of censorship; it is a complete monopoly censorship."

(Continued on page 271)

NEWS AND NOTES

A CONSIDERABLE sum of money is spent every year to attract visitors to Britain, and while there is much to offer—particularly to those addicted to music and drama—it is evident that drinking and catering facilities are far from satisfactory. In a large number of restaurants it is impossible to get a drink with a meal, and although there has been a marked improvement in pub catering, one is still often faced with the choice between a meat pie of doubtful origin or the ham sandwich which has seen better days. It is to be hoped therefore, that the recommendations by the Consumers Council to the Monopolies Commission will be accepted, and be the first step towards sweeping away many of the petty restrictions which are now an irritation to the public and a refuge for the unenterprising.

A radical reform of Britain's licensing laws is long overdue. The Consumer Council suggestion that Sunday drinking hours should conform with the rest of the week is particularly welcome. Many people feel that public houses should remain open until midnight, and there is a good case for extending drinking hours at the weekend. Many of the restrictions on dancing and entertainment should also go. The atmosphere in the majority of central London pubs is as conducive to enjoyment as that in a nineteenth century cemetery chapel. This is certainly not the case in northern clubs where there is plenty of music and entertainment.

It is high time the Government and other bodies realised that most people do not regard pleasure as something wicked and must be accompanied by restrictions and discomfort. The visitor from overseas may be delighted by our theatres, festivals, scenery and stately homes, but is not encouraged to pay a return visit by inadequate and unsatisfactory facilities he will encounter time and again.

Excessive noise

ALTHOUGH the recent sonic boom tests caused a considerable amount of distress and apprehension this was to some extent offset by the apathetic acceptance of these bangs as just another addition to the already considerable amount of noise to which we are already subjected. There might have been a greater outcry had the public been aware of the fact that these booms were of 1 lb. per square foot pressure, whereas heavy aircraft such as the Concord produce up to 20 times this pressure with proportionately increased noise. Moreover, booms from international supersonic flights will be continuous by day and night.

These claims are made by the Noise Abatement Society, a non-political voluntary organisation which was founded in 1959 and is dedicated to the task of reducing noise from all sources. Members include over 400 organisations and a large number of individuals. As a member of the International Association Against Noise it works in close cooperation with similar bodies abroad. The NAS has campaigned against apathy on the question of excessive noise, and as this seems to be one of the most unpleasant features of modern life, there is an evident need for such organisations.

At the moment the NAS is collecting signatures to a petition calling on the Government to end boom tests and

to ensure that no supersonic flights over Britain will be permitted. Petition forms and details of the Noise Abatement Society may be obtained from 6-8 Old Bond Street, London, W1.

The winner

THERE were 29 contenders for the Bard's crown at the National Eisteddfod and for only the second time this century it was placed on a woman's head. The new Bard, Miss Eluned Phillips, submitted a poem on the three great religions—Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. She concludes that they are all in the same state of decay.

E.A.

BILLY GRAHAM'S IMPRESSION

MANAGEMENT

Robert W. McCoy*

HUMANISTS came under scathing attack from Rev. Billy Graham at his recent crusade in Winnipeg, Canada, when he charged that Humanism is one of the Gods of our age along with science. "America, Canada and Britain are becoming more humanistic, while Russia is calling for more belief in God." Within a week of Graham's crusade, American television carried his programme for an hour during prime evening time.

While those who attended one of his crusades in person may get a glimpse of Graham as a speaker at the end of a hall, those who watch his 'performance' closely on their TV screens can see him demonstrate his fluent skill in delivery. A viewer can also notice the staging of his performance which assists him in his effectiveness. No one questions that Graham is an intense speaker who has mastered the use of gestures very effectively. To the person in the hall he appears to be an orator referring to the Bible for inspiration since he holds it open in his hands most of the time while speaking. A TV viewer who watches closely, however, can observe that Graham is looking past his Bible at a manuscript and fully two-thirds of his presentation is read from a prepared text.

On June 19, after Graham's Winnipeg Crusade was concluded, Pat Patterson reported on her programme *Matinee*, heard over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation station CKW in Winnipeg, the results of a study done by the network during the crusade.

She reported that most of those who attended were in their 40's and of the large number interviewed, every one of them said that they went to hear the man and not the message. When pressed, few could recall what Graham actually said. In a recorded on-the-scene survey, a reporter asked many of those who were still in the hall what Graham had said. No one could remember anything specific; only one woman could remember something of an analogy about the 'woman at the well' but she couldn't remember the point of it. Another said that 'he talked about religion' but many were embarrassed to admit that right after hearing Graham they could not remember what he said. In view of this it would appear that the lasting impact of Graham's message is nil.

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HUMAN SACRIFICE

A. C. Thompson

THE BASIC IDEA of sacrifice is that of paying a god for favours—of giving him an ox or a bull or a lamb, the best of the flock, and in order to deliver it to his doorstep, of burning the dead carcass on a stone altar so that the smoke ascends heavenward. The more ravenously one desires, the more earnestly he must entreat his god, and the more valuable must be the object sacrificed. The most valuable thing that one can sacrifice is his own child, usually his first-born. He who wants best fortune from his god kills his child and burns the body, or it may be, simply leaves it to rot, or buries it. The motive of sacrifice is egoistic: one desires all the best for himself and is willing to pay the price for it.

Human sacrifice has been practised by people over a large part of the world. The Mayas of Yucatan sacrificed their prettiest girls by drowning them in a deep lake. The people of India practised human sacrifice; a widow, for example, must follow her husband in death. Here, the Bible can serve as a written witness of this barbaric belief, to illuminate the origins and motives of this practice. The Hebrew god, Yhwh, specifically demanded human sacrifices, not only that by Abraham of his son, Isaac, but as a general law, part of the laws which he allegedly gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, along with the Ten Commandments (Ex. xx—xxxiii): "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors; the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me" (Ex. xxii, 29, 30).

The story of Abraham and Isaac displays, as well as human sacrifice, a contrast between supernaturalism and other ethical theories. Yhwh, according to the story (Gen. xxii), commanded Abraham to kill his son Isaac and to burn the dead body as an offering or sacrifice. Abraham set about to obey, but just as he was about to stab Isaac with a knife, an angel stopped him, and he killed and burned a ram instead. Abraham is commonly upheld as a righteous man. Other ethical theories would declare it wrong for a parent to kill and burn his own child; that what Yhwh commanded was evil; that when one is commanded to do wrong, he has no other course but to refuse; and that Abraham should have told God that he would not obey, whatever horrible vengeance God, in his wrath, might inflict upon him. The story clearly displays the supernaturalist's doctrine: an act depends for rightness only on commands from God; the vilest crime is right if God commands it; God can rightly command a marauding people to commit wholesale murder, rapine and rape, as he commanded the Israelites to war against Midian (Num. xxxi). No act is right or wrong apart from the will of God. Of course, the angel stopped Abraham in time, but this is not the point. Abraham did wrong in being willing to obey. He should instead have been willing to suffer anything rather than murder his son.

There was a famine in the days of David three years, and David inquired of Yhwh, who replied, it is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites (2 Samuel xxi, 1-14). Then David besought the Gibeonites and delivered to them for human sacrifice to Yhwh the two sons which Saul's concubine Rizpah had borne him, and five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul. These seven were then hanged in the hill before Yhwh "and they fell all seven together and were put to death" in the beginning

of the barley harvest. The heartbroken mother, Rizpah, then took sackcloth and spread it over the bodies on the rocks; and she kept watch over these rotting carcasses "from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night" (xxi, 10). David later ordered the bones of the seven to be collected and to be buried along with the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan. "And after that Yhwh was intreated for the land" (14).

Yhwh sent an angel to stop Abraham from killing Isaac. But he did nothing to stop Jephthah from sacrificing his daughter (Judges xi). Jephthah vowed that if Yhwh without fail deliver the children of Ammon into his hands, then whatever comes forth of the doors of his house to meet him when he returns in peace shall surely be Yhwh's, and he will offer it up for a burnt offering (xi, 30-31). Jephthah was victorious, and on his return home, his daughter, his only child, came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances. When he told her of his vow, saying, "I have opened my mouth unto Yhwh and cannot go back", she begged him to allow her two months in which to "bemoan her virginity" and at the end of two months she returned to her father who did with her according to his vow. That Jephthah could not "go back" on his vow was enacted by the command of Yhwh to Moses in the Book of Leviticus, which deals with all sorts of sacrifices, and which, in its chapter xxvii deals with persons and their redemption value in shekels of silver, as well as with the values of beasts, structures, grains and lands. Here is decreed specifically that (Lev. xxvii, 28-29) "Notwithstanding no devoted thing that a man shall devote unto Yhwh of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto Yhwh. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death". If you once pledge a human being's life, you are obliged to go through with the killing.

The motive of human sacrifice is either self-survival or social-survival. When Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac, it was with expectation of personal, selfish gain, as was that of all persons who sacrificed their own children to their gods; the motive was to give the tribal god a most precious thing to induce him to grant favours in return. In most religions, this is the motive for worship, for prayer and for faith: it is for egoistic advantage, here or here-after. It may be argued that the motive of Jephthah was neither selfish nor social, but purely religious, purely obedience to Divine law; this view seems to be strengthened by Jephthah's apparent regret (Judges xi, 35), at having uttered his vow. But it is clear that at the time he made the vow, he did it to promise his god a payment for a favour—to pledge a most precious gift, one of his own family, in return for a desired victory which would both preserve his society and retain himself as head over it (Judges xi, 9-10). David's motive was the survival of society—to end a famine.

Christianity, which developed from Judaism, is based wholly upon the cult of human sacrifice. The execution of Jesus Christ, who was accused by Hebrew priests of sedition, was given the religious interpretation by his followers that his death was in reality a human sacrifice of the veritable son of God to propitiate the father's infinite dignity

which was offended by man's sin. This doctrine, which was proclaimed especially by Paul and is still held by Christians, is that Jesus Christ was actually the son of the Hebrew god Yhwh, and himself God, and that he came down to earth from Heaven to be put to death, to "die for us", to "redeem us with his blood", to appease his father for the sin of Adam and Eve of eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, so that the father would be induced to relent and to admit believers into Heaven after their deaths (Romans v, 6-21; 1 Cor. xv, 22; 1 Cor. xv, 45; Gal. iii, 13; 1 John ii, 2; John i, 29). This is the central doctrine of Christianity.

Judaea, in the time of Christ, was occupied by the Romans, who apparently did not permit human sacrifice or any other form of murder or execution without their consent; witness that the Jewish authorities could not execute Jesus without first obtaining the permission of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Thus the cult of human sacrifice could not be made a generally advocated and practised rite of the new religion. The death of Jesus on the cross was hence proclaimed the most precious sacrifice of all, more effective in assuaging the father's offended pride than other sacrifices. Indeed, theologians assert that the infinite majesty of the Hebrew god Yhwh was so august that nothing which man can do could possibly expiate the offence of his first sin, and that hence the sacrifice of a divine being was necessary. If this is true, one may well wonder at all the useless and unnecessary sacrifices of the millions of cattle, sheep, turtledoves and other animals supposedly commanded by Yhwh in his Book of Leviticus. A cross, with the figure of the dead Jesus affixed, has ever been the symbol of the Christian church and religion.

Can the death of Jesus on the cross be construed as really a human sacrifice? The essential idea of a sacrifice is that of killing or destroying something of value with the intention of giving it to one's god to cajole him into granting a wish. But neither the Jews nor the Roman soldiers nor anyone else intended the death of Jesus to be this. Hence this sacrifice, if it was a sacrifice, could only be one by the god Yhwh, of his own son, to himself, to atone to himself or to punish himself, for man's sin, without man's intention, just as if one could collect money owed to him by taking the sum out of one of his own pockets and putting it into another, without the knowledge or intention of his debtors. That one should die to atone for another's sin does not appear just. If a god has given man the ability to sin by his own effort, it must seem that he should let him also atone by his own effort, instead of facing a necessity of atoning on man's behalf by means of sacrifice of his own son to himself. It may seem further that redemption should be on the same terms as the fall: by Adam's sin, every human being is damned, but by the redemption, only baptised believers are saved. That this sacrifice failed to erase the curse which Yhwh laid in Eden on his just-finished creation (Genesis iii, 14-19) is obvious from the facts that the serpent still goes on his belly, people still try to crush serpent's heads with their heels, women still have pain in childbirth, the earth still bears thorns and thistles, and in the sweat of their faces men still eat bread. Hence it is evident that Christians have twisted the death of Christ from what it actually was into something it was not—from an execution into a human sacrifice. Christianity has thus based itself upon a principle which is morally evil—that of killing someone to obtain advantage, in this case blissful residence in an eternal Heaven.

If Jesus came as a god to earth with a recognised intention of being sacrifice, he thereby bound, as accessories to an evil act, his Jewish accusers, his traitor Judas, Pontius Pilate and his Roman executioners, and caused condemnation and persecution of the Jewish people for nearly twenty centuries until only recently the Roman Church has considered "forgiving" them. Of course, the persecution of Jews by Christians through the centuries, including their persecution by the Nazis under Hitler, may not be due entirely to revenge for the crucifixion of Jesus; part may be due to the fact that, rejecting the Christian religion, the Jews form a separate society, or a discrete element in society, thought to have interests at variance with those of society as a whole.

No natural ethical principle which has ever been proposed can approve human sacrifice. Intuitively, if we know anything at all, we know that it is wrong for a parent to murder his own child and to burn the child's body. Egoistic Hedonism could find no pleasure in infanticide without the supernaturalist's promise that God will reward it. No conceivable natural law requires parents to murder their children, nor unbelievers their god. Ritualistic murder does not produce the universal happiness which is the goal of the Utilitarians, nor is it a practice Kant would wish to universalise. Except for the religious motive, it is without pragmatic value. Of all moral philosophies, Supernaturalism alone endorses it.

Two alternatives are possible: either (a) the presumed Cause of the universe does want and commands human sacrifice; or (b) people have been mistaken in believing that he does. One is able to prove from revelation that he does require this worship by pointing to passages in the Bible such as those cited above. The Mosaic law concerning human sacrifice has never been repealed, for it is nowhere recorded in Holy Scripture that Yhwh ever changed his mind and revoked the law. When King Josiah instituted his reform of the law to abolish the worship of other gods and to cause the people to worship Yhwh only, he ordained that "no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Moloch" (2 Kings xxiii, 10), but he is not recorded as having prohibited further human sacrifice to Yhwh. Hence this law was never repealed and is still in effect, and it is true that God does still require human sacrifice. Then either (1) in obedience to the will of God, we should kill and burn our children, or (2) God has commanded something which is intrinsically evil and we are not obliged to obey him.

If the second alternative above, (b), is true, that people, and the Bible, have been mistaken in holding that God requires to be appeased by human sacrifice, then it is necessary to inquire, why people have so deluded themselves. Why have primitive peoples made this practice so universally a moral precept? It may be that the psychologist can offer enlightenment on this point. But the moralist can also provide a logical, ethical explanation. Expectation of perpetual bliss in a future life is of course the chief motive, but it is not the sole motive. Christians today, for example, venerate the human sacrifice of Jesus Christ; but in addition they also endeavour to convert others to this cult. It is therefore evident that the motive is not alone one of individual personal salvation; it is obvious that, in addition, they are employing a doctrine in an endeavour to form a society of persons with a common set of beliefs, with uniform doctrines and moral practices. Those within this religious society fortify one another's beliefs with unquestioning acceptance of traditional teachings, whether these teachings are valid or invalid, essentially good or essentially evil. Those outside

this religious society are held to be still unredeemed by the sacrifice, or if redeemed at least not saved, that is, not entitled to the favour of Yhwh which he has bestowed since his appeasement by the sacrifice only upon those who, by accepting the doctrine, unite themselves with the religious society. Thus, although the motives of human sacrifice have been those of personal and social survival, there should also be recognised the motive of using this practice as a tribalism which binds a people together in blood, in the blood of their children or of their god.

THEATRE

David Tribe

The Fight for Barbara (D. H. Lawrence), Mermaid.
A Day in the Death of Joe Egg (Peter Nichols), Comedy.
Annie (Alan Thornhill and William L. Reed), Westminster.
School for Wives (Molière and Miles Malleson), Hampstead Theatre Club.

D. H. LAWRENCE is the most autobiographical of major British writers. Young authors are always advised to write about what they know, but **The Fight for Barbara** demonstrates that they should write about it in some sort of perspective. In 1912 Lawrence met Frieda Weekley, née von Richthofen, and within six weeks swept her away from an affluent home and a considerate but apparently unbedworthy and dull husband to penury in Europe. In a villa on Lake Garda he revised *Sons and Lovers* and inevitably quarrelled with Frieda. After one such episode he wrote this play, where she appears as a bitch, he a bore, and her parents and husband figures of Victorian melodrama. Two Italian peasants are thrown in for background colour. Though it means removing whatever element of suspense there may otherwise have been in the play, director Robin Midgley has made the only possible decision by eking the programme out with an introductory anthology of background letters by the real-life protagonists and a very mixed bag of Lawrence's satirical squibs. Thus the audience can pleasurably speculate how far the action is fiction, fact or Lawrentian subconscious. Sylvia Coleridge, Geoffrey Lumsden and Robert Cartland are amusing in their burlesque parts: Stephen Moore as "Lawrence" suggests the miner's son rather than the sensitive writer; Adrienne Corri as "Frieda" passes improbably from one big theatrical moment to the next. Adrian Vaux's set is unpretentiously effective.

Peter Nichols has a six-year-old spastic daughter Abigail, whom he describes as a "vegetable". Advanced five years, she has become the "heroine" of **A Day in the Death of Joe Egg**. In the play an unsuccessful teacher and his formerly promiscuous wife are tormented with guilt over whether they are responsible for the spasticity of their daughter, whose nickname comes from her grand-mother's petulant "I'm left all alone like Joe Egg". When not dreaming of putting her in a home or smothering her, he rails against God as a "manic depressive football player" and regularly plays charades, based on her birth and early life, an incredible eleven years later. Punctuated by asides and snatches from a band in the manner of Osborne's **Entertainer**, these occupy most of the first half, which I found—at the risk of sounding an old fuddy-duddy—more embarrassing than amusing or pathetic. But amusement and pathos tumble into a remarkable second half, when grandmother and a patronising old schoolmate and his wife turn up and, while dad is trying to murder the girl, everyone plays out a polite actuality charade that this is really a normal household. Zena Walker, Phyllida Law, John Carson and Joan Hickson are convincing in well-written supporting rôles. To the lead, Joe Melia brings an amiable **Beyond the Fringe** dottiness, close below whose surface lurks tragedy; but only a Peter Sellars could have brought off the charades in the first half. Michael Blakemore directs courageously with a real child on the stage.

A lavish new Westminster Theatre was completed two years ago. Like the writing at Belshazzar's feast, apocalyptic words from Dr Frank Buchman grow out of the walls of its foyer, and a plaque dedicates it to his successor Peter Howard. A well-tailored cosmopolitan gathering glides over the thick carpets to the coffee-bar or elegant restaurant (there is no bar). People smile at you and seem to mean it. In the auditorium, a musical tells the story of the Stockport widow Annie Jaeger who struggled through the early Depression to educate her son Bill. He went to a London theological college and discovered MRA (then Buchmanism) and the distress of the East End. At the age of 58 she joined him in a campaign to take the hate out of the class struggle. **Annie** goes

from the straight-from-the-shoulder Northern to the rhyming-slang Cockney stereotype, contains songs like "Our Town", "Good morning" and "Open your heart", and is thoroughly delightful. With great skill librettist Alan Thornhill, composer William L. Reed and director Henry Cass feed elements of Osborne, Geršwin, Bernstein and Littlewood into the conventional heart-warmer and produce a result that is tender and sharp, tuneful and lively, painlessly propagandist. The largish caste and orchestra have no weak links—a rare feat—and in Margaret Burton a really starry star.

Miles Malleson's adaptations extract the maximum of wit and spontaneity from the incomparable Molière. **School for Wives** is really a school for husbands; or a school for anyone likely to forget that love cannot be imposed but must be won. The sensible husband keeps quiet under provocation, and he who has a morbid terror of being cuckolded had best not marry. Even compared with the dramatist's other satires the plot is pretty implausible and some of the dialogue corny, and Powell Jones rightly directs certain sections at high speed and in high camp, though he rather overdoes it with the stage business and facial contortions of the two servants. But underneath the farce there is one of Molière's most universal messages, and the principal character Arnolphe is as tragic if not as doomed as Othello. Dressed and painted as *pierrot*, basic and timeless, with a marvellous sense of inflection and feel for comic pedantry, Jack Tweddle delicately links pathos with period burlesque. Penny Jones is the charming *ingénue* he tries to mould.

FORUM ON CENSORSHIP: III

(Continued from page 267)

There was censorship too of the other methods of the dissemination of ideas: few speakers' sites have been developed, and there was always obstruction to people speaking in public places; internal pressures existed everywhere, in broadcasting, in films, and in the theatre.

Then there was self-censorship by the artist, because he had to eat. But we should not believe that it was only sex that was being censored, because when we looked deeply we found that it was much more a matter of right-wing politics and religion. In commenting on the play *Us*, Lord Cobbold said: "It was beastly, anti-American and left-wing". Against that there was a play, *Shadow of Heroes*, anti-Russian and anti-Hungarian, which was all right.

Throughout history, from Plato to the present day, the state, allied to the church, had used three four-letter words to maintain its authority. We find the four-letter word first of all CANT: the cant of Barbara Cartland who has published such books as *Passionate Attainment*, *A Virgin in Mayfair*, *the Desire of the Heart*, *a Virgin in Paris* and is horrified at people whom she says are commercialising sex. The second four-letter word was FEAR—people who were afraid of their own emotions, people who are afraid of the ideas of others, people who are afraid to lose their privileges if others think for themselves.

"And then we have HATE: the people who hate the reformers, they hate those who want to advance society, they hate those who are trying to do good, if doing good disturbs people—and it does disturb people, for as Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes says, 'ideas are incitement'. And the National Secular Society believes that people should be incited by ideas, and that is why we oppose censorship."

Flashback

The Edinburgh Reformer recently contained a letter from W. H. Siddell advocating the idea of making Saturday a general holiday. We believe that Mr G. J. Holyoake should receive the credit of having first published that scheme. It would certainly prove a more economical arrangement than the slicing away of more half hours from each working day, and a full day's holiday each week would be a great step in the right direction. Let us aim at eight hours a day and five days a week. We need a "secular" weekly holiday.

(May 11th, 1872—*The International Herald*, official organ of the British Section of the International Working Men's Association.)
 EDITOR'S NOTE.—G. J. Holyoake, who coined the word 'secularism', was a Vice-President of the National Secular Society and first Chairman of the Rationalist Press Association.

FREETHINKERPublished by G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.
(Pioneer Press)103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1
Telephone: HOP 0029

Editor: DAVID COLLIS

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National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone HOP 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

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

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.; Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

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

INDOOR

West Ham Branch NSS (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead, London, E11). Meetings at 8 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of every month.

LETTERS**Freethought and the FREETHINKER**

IN your editorial of August 4, you said that the FREETHINKER is being outdone in free thinking by such papers as the *Guardian* and the *Playboy*. Quite naturally, those papers mainly express views which are not the rightfully principle concern of our journal, though it has always been, and should be, associated with them. But our journal has a mission—to advertise the sceptical viewpoint, which is rarely publicised otherwise, and for which it came into being, and if the *Guardian* and *Playboy*, with their far greater circulations, are doing so much better a job, in their particular sense of freethinking, than our journal, why not leave them to get on with that admirable job, and let the FREETHINKER mainly express its specific aspect of freethought, in this world of still rampant religious fundamentalism?

The flood of letters that poured into the *Sun* newspaper, in regard to the televised debate on the motion "That God does not exist", showed that this issue is still of great public interest. If the FREETHINKER is to chiefly express a free thought irrelevant to that issue, the sceptical viewpoint will become virtually inarticulate, as far as it is concerned, and it will cease to justify its *raison d'etre*. Those who express their dissatisfaction at this prospect, surely do not deserve to be termed Moaning Minnies.

F. H. SNOW.

- (1) *On a point of fact—I wrote that the FREETHINKER is, perhaps, being beaten at freethought by other far more influential journals.*
- (2) *On the last sentence of your letter—I agree with you that such people do not deserve to be termed Moaning Minnies on those grounds and nowhere have I said they should be.—Ed.*

Confused teenagers

SO Paul McCartney said "God is everything". I have heard of others who under the influence of drugs turn to God and all kinds of imaginations. This brings me to the argument one often hears about the way people turn to God even on their death-bed, and some have been atheists before. Surely their minds are weak at this stage, just as the people taking drugs. Does not this prove the importance of bringing up children to think clearly. At such weak moments people's minds go back to fears and beliefs they had when children.

I think my generation is to blame for the teenagers being so confused that they need escapes from reality. Who are we to blame them when still we are using cruelties of every kind and violence? We have made this world like a lunatic asylum. We have brought up youth to believe that there is a Prince of Peace. In fact there are wars of the most devastating kind raging today. We tell them there is an all-powerful God who has given us free will. All right, they have used their free will, they have marched, they have demonstrated, they have done the most degrading things, so their elders tell us, but they used their free will, to try to stop my generation from destroying the world. They really have tried. What is the result. The military machine is so powerful they have not the will to peace. peace is not their job. Their kind of peace means that if someone does not agree with them, or there is a country which has something they can take by force, they go ahead, and when they have obtained what they want then they will call that peace. So much for God's free will. As children at school, they are taught evolution by one teacher and by another teacher they are taught religion. Can you wonder they grow up confused?

KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS

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