

Freethinker

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SHOULD THE STATE SUPPORT CHURCH SCHOOLS?

ON FRIDAY, JUNE 19, the National Secular Society held a Forum at Conway Hall, the subject for discussion being "Should the State Support Church Schools?" The list of speakers was impressive and they were chaired by Max Wilkinson, the editor of *The Teacher*.

First to speak was Dr Ian Ramsey, the Lord Bishop of Durham, the chairman of the commission which has recently produced a weighty, well-researched Report on religious education, entitled *The Fourth R*. Dr Ramsey said that neither an unqualified 'yes', nor an unqualified 'no' was a satisfactory answer to the question posed. He then proceeded to outline the conditions under which "it might be thought reasonable for the State to support Church schools". These were, if the Church schools were providing the education which the state wishes to see given, and if Church schools represent, or could represent a reliable educational experiment. The Bishop also stressed the need for "exploration and openness" in education, and said that if these were encouraged there could be no question of indoctrination. He further suggested that there might not be any practical alternative to Church schools: "... we couldn't do without the schools. It's not at all clear that legally the pattern could be broken, without breaking trust deeds and the state supplying the extra money provided by the Church". He concluded by saying: "I answer with a conditional 'yes'. I have tried to show the conditions under which one answer might triumph over another. If the charges of indoctrination and divisiveness hold, then Church schools should not be supported by the state."

David Tribe, the President of the National Secular Society, said that the question of State finance for Church schools wasn't just a political or economic matter, but was of importance socially. "Even in these enlightened days of the twentieth century there are certain propositions that the church stands for." Listing some of these, Tribe then introduced a measure of realism into the debate: "I would say these statements are demonstrably untrue. . . . In this sense RE is indoctrination since these are propositions for which there is no evidence." Quite rightly emphasising the fundamental humanist objection to the present system Tribe made no bones about its unethical nature. "Many of us here have come to believe that Christianity has intellectual acceptability. But I would submit that it is as untrue as spiritualism, demonology and astrology." He pointed out that the Church pays 20 per cent of the cost of building a Church school and that all the maintenance costs are met by the state. "The grand total if one works it out from the statistics is £300,000,000 a year. A lot of money. Is it socially useful? Is it intellectually right? Is it divisive? You need look no further than Northern Ireland to see evidence of that."

Archbishop Roberts, SJ, began by giving another "qualified 'yes'" as his answer to the question. He then told us about his experiences in India teaching in a Jesuit school in Bombay, St Xavier's college. He said that the large

majority of the school's pupils were not Christians, rather Hindus, Parsees and Mohammedans. Going into the history of the college he told us that in its first hundred years the missionaries running it had made no converts at all. Rome threatened to close the college down, but the Jesuits resisted this, because they believed that "Christ was the



light that shined on every man that came into the world". His point was that despite the lack of converts the college was worthwhile because "Christian ideas have however, come into the constitution of India. The people who govern India are very largely Christian educated, and much of the

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public service in India was originated by Christians." Despite the Archbishop's plausible stance the implications of this were not appreciated by every member of the audience. The Archbishop, who we must remember is a Catholic, finished by quoting from the Social Morality Council's recent report on religious education. Whether this denoted an enlightened Catholic or an unenlightened report was a matter for the audience.

Brigid Brophy, the final speaker, began characteristically: "It seems that the name 'Church School' is part of the argument against them. School—where you go to find out, Church—where you go when you're convinced." She relieved the audience of their worry over the possible significance of the Archbishop's lecture on India: "Children in schools in England are more vulnerable than students in a Jesuit college in Bombay, who have already been indoctrinated as Moslems." Later on Miss Brophy said: "It is argued that you can't tell children about Christianity without letting them experience it. But we teach them a lot about Marxism, for instance, without giving them experience of it. . . . We expect our teachers to refrain from indoctrinating our children politically. We cope with the possibility of indoctrination by not segregating our schools politically. . . . The Church schools differ from other schools only in that they try to influence the children into one sect of one religion. The children have no choice if there is no other school in the area. . . . This is a tyranny, and like most tyrannies it is based on righteousness. . . . Christianity is not being attacked. We are just moving towards justice. Christianity holds privileges above the justice line and as long as this is so, it is not intolerant to press for a reduction of these privileges. Neither is it intolerant to ask Christians to be tolerant. . . . Perhaps the Christians would agree to keep us quiet by giving us a share of the money to indoctrinate our children. However, we can't accept because we're committed to tolerance." Miss Brophy concluded a memorably lucid speech by saying: "If we believe in tolerance let us build a state school system into which tolerance can be built. To do that would be the most effective means of ensuring moral education for our children."

Regrettably after these stimulating speeches the questions were not generally very relevant, and of those that were very few were actually answered by the speakers.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TEACHERS

ALTHOUGH he is no longer the Secretary of State for Education and Science, before leaving office Mr Edward Short made some interesting and indeed disturbing comments with regard to the law regarding Religious Education as it applies to teachers. These are revealed in the following press release, issued recently by Maurice Hill, the Secretary of the Humanist Teachers' Association:

"We complained to the Secretary of State for Education

and Science that forms issued by some Local Education Authorities ask applicants for non-religious posts in schools whether they are prepared to give Religious Instruction.

This kind of question is most frequently directed at students leaving Colleges of Education and applying for their first posts. The purpose can only be to give preference in appointment to those teachers who declare that they will not opt out of RI.

Yet the 1944 Act (Section 30) specifically states: 'No teacher shall be required to give RI, or be deprived of, or disqualified for, any promotion or other advantage by reason of the fact that he does or does not give Religious Instruction . . .'

Mr Short's reply to our complaint stated: 'If the requirements of the Law about the provision of religious instruction in county and voluntary schools are to be met effectively, local education authorities and others who have to appoint teachers must obviously know which applicants are prepared to give religious instruction before appointments are made'.

He thus accepts the fact that appointments for non-religious posts will sometimes be decided according to the religious views of the applicants. This is religious discrimination.

Mr Short claims that Section 30 of the Act was designed to safeguard teachers against total exclusion from the education service, but not against exclusion from appointment to any particular school. This is not what the Act says, and his interpretation is in our view illegal, and is certainly immoral.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Humanitas Stamps: Help 5 Humanist charities. Buy stamps from or send them to Mrs. A. C. Goodman, 51 Percy Road, Romford, RM7 8QX, Essex. British and African speciality. Send for list. Humanist Holidays. Youth Camp, the Wye Valley, late July and early August. Family Centre, Aberystwyth, Monday, August 17 until Tuesday, September 1. Full board just over £2 per day with reductions for children. Details from Mrs Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey. Telephone 01-642 8796.

COMING EVENTS

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. Cronan and McRae.
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.

INDOOR

Belfast Humanist Group: NI War Memorial Building, Waring Street, Belfast: Monday, July 6, 8 p.m.: Tape recording and discussion.
South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, July 5, 11 a.m.: "The Use and Abuse of Advertising", Lord Sorensen. Admission free. Sunday, July 12, 3 p.m.: Humanist Forum—"World Government—Formula or Fetish?" Tony Mills (of 'Q') Peter Cadogan, Peggy Crane (UNA), Bruce Ritchie (British Association for World Government). Admission free (Tea 2s).

EDUCATION TODAY

WILLIAM WELSH

PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS APART, only popular newspaper articles and some paperbacks inform the uninitiated about educational developments.

A new paperback, *Education Today*,¹ by Mr Michael Pollard, Deputy Editor of *Teachers' World*, is an A to Z guide to the whole spectrum of education in this country. Written in conjunction with a Yorkshire Television Series, the book is designed to present an easily intelligible series of explanations with commentary and is the more helpful on account of cross references within the various items which are arranged in alphabetical order.

A pleasing feature of the book is its balanced comment, its unbiased and often stimulating approach to questions of educational policy, state and private provision, and teaching methods, new and traditional. And it touches on issues that often give rise to heated but not always highly informed debate in the press.

Controversy is not hedged. Thus, on the direct grant schools, the author admits that their record is "good". And he concludes his chapter on these schools by saying, "It is hard to see how they can be integrated within the system without destroying their qualities entirely".

While the whole tenor of the book is towards an appreciation of the more recent experiments in the educational world—and Black Paper reactionaries will find little comfort—there are admissions, like that on the direct grant schools, which show that the author goes out of his way to give a broad, factual picture, instead of maintaining silence on disputed issues. Rather he balances one view against another, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. Social objections to direct grant schools, some valid and other less so, are balanced against the undoubted excellence of most of them—excellence in the academic field at any rate.

Likewise, though the merits of the comprehensive schools are underlined, particularly the concept of educational equality of opportunity, there's no ideological fanaticism about comprehensive education. And the handicap of great numbers, whether on the rolls of comprehensive schools, or in classes in all types of State schools, is rightly stressed.

The importance of smaller classes is pointed out as an advantage in the private sector, an advantage parents are willing to pay for. Even Mr A. S. Neill's Summerhill is mentioned, along with Dartington Hall.

Those freethinkers who regard the comprehensive school as a panacea for our social ills, would do well to reflect that but for the private, paying sector, we would never have had the idealism of Homer Lane's Little Commonwealth, of Bertrand and Dora Russell's school venture, or Summerhill.

But the writer makes the point that educational standards in the private sector vary considerably. Apart from the public schools and the training grounds for these, the preparatory schools, there are scores of independent establishments, mostly for day pupils, whose standards are not as good as they ought to be. Those who have read George Orwell's *A Clergyman's Daughter*, in which he scathingly indicts the third and fourth rate private schools of the thirties, will recollect his exposure of the sycophantic fee collectors, the parent placators, the humiliations suffered by poorly qualified and still more poorly paid staff.

Mr Pollard rightly underlines the distinction between the

merely "registered" school and that "recognised as efficient".

On RI and daily worship, Mr Pollard has nothing to say that freethinkers don't already know. But he advocates senior pupils being allowed to "opt out" of their own volition. He also points out what many people will find surprising: that in Scotland, a country with stern Calvinistic traditions, the daily act of worship, statutory in England since 1944, is not compulsory.

Mr Pollard makes a few other observations about Scottish education. He explodes the popular myth that it's somehow superior. Having extensive teaching experience in Scotland as well as in England, I go along with him here. He does admit, however, that in Scottish primary schools, reading standards are generally higher and that children also start to read at an earlier age.

This is reassuring for Scotland. Can it be that traditional teaching methods make for literacy at a quicker rate? Certainly, there's some misgiving about reading standards in today's London. A recent survey by Sir Cyril Burt which appeared earlier this year in the *Times Educational Supplement* shows that in London, reading standards have fallen rather badly; that in 1914, when primary classes could reach 80, reading skills were better than they are today. A positive decline in reading standards is not great advertisement for the newer teaching methods. As for the teaching of English generally, Mr Pollard points out that 'creative' writing is the order of the day. With scant attention to the mechanics of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

I have never for the life of me been able to see that accuracy in writing is incompatible with 'creative' writing. Were the great masters of English Literature 'inhibited' through having paid some attention to the formalities of writing? 'Advanced' teachers of English are scared lest a little discipline in writing may stifle the imagination. Significant that in preparatory schools, the more formal approaches are not despised, and take their place alongside the teaching aids.

Criticism of training departments is no novelty. And they are given their share of criticism here. The ivory tower of the training department, aloof from the grim reality of slum schools, is now unassailable. But the gap remains. Not enough teaching practice. Too much theorising. A peculiar distaste for the discussion of that heartburning issue: class discipline.

This at a time when teachers, particularly secondary school teachers, are reasonably enough concerned about protection from assault by pupils. Pupils who will soon be compelled, willy-nilly, to stay in school until sixteen.

Assaults on teachers are alarmingly frequent. Schoolgirl pregnancies make the headlines. Progressive and apparently enlightened approaches to learning methods, the increasing opportunities provided by an expanding education service: these have not eliminated schoolroom hooliganism.

Mr Pollard cites "low intelligence" as one of many causes of backwardness in pupils. Recent contributions to the educational press by Professor Eysenck and by Sir Cyril Burt have pinpointed genetic endowment or the lack of it as a determining factor in intelligence potential.

These findings are not calculated to appease the anxious

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BUDDHISM

JOHN L. BROOM

THE GREAT RELIGION of Buddhism had its origin in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the eldest son of a Hindu nobleman, who lived in the sixth century BC in the town of Kapilarastu in northern India.

As with all religious leaders, the life of the Buddha has become surrounded throughout the centuries with all manner of alleged miracles and wonders, so that it is difficult to disentangle historical fact from pious legend. A few researches, indeed, have even mentioned that the Buddha never existed, except in the fertile imaginations of his followers. This idea however, like the myth theory of the origins of Christianity, has now been abandoned by all serious scholars, and it is generally agreed that a reasonably accurate picture of the life of the founder of Buddhism can be built up from the various sources available to us.

By the middle of the sixth century BC, Hinduism in India had become a corrupt and superstitious faith. The noblemen and priests wielded unlimited power, and the whole country was bound in an iron system of caste. The ordinary people were ruled, or rather oppressed, by hundreds of petty chiefs and their attendant sycophants throughout the length and breadth of the land. One of these, Siddhodana by name, lorded it over the tribe of the Sakyas, an Aryan clan situated in and around Kapilarastu, a town approximately 100 miles north of the city of Benares. To him, about 560 BC, there was born a son Siddhartha Gautama, the future Buddha. Many wonders, of course, are supposed to have occurred at the birth of the young prince, some of them remarkably similar to those alleged to have taken place when Jesus of Nazareth first saw the light of day. At 19, Gautama was married to his cousin Yasodhara, and thereafter, like St Augustine, he gave himself up to a life of unbridled pleasure and luxury. When he was about 29, however, he had some kind of spiritual experience which transformed his whole existence. According to the traditional accounts, while out riding in his chariot one day, he had a vision in turn of an aged man, a man suffering from a loathsome disease and a putrefying corpse. Those sights filled Gautama with the realisation that all wealth, worldly possessions and pleasures are vanity since every human being must grow old, suffer and eventually die. That very day, so the legendary account runs, a son and heir was born to him, but after a last look at his sleeping wife and baby, he left the great palace, his riches and his power, and rode off into the wilderness. For the next six years, he wandered around the country a penniless mendicant, seeking the path which would lead to deliverance from sorrow and the attainment of salvation.

For some time, he studied Hindu philosophy under a learned sophist, but found his teaching unsatisfactory. Then, with five other hermit monks, he tried the life of an ascetic, subjecting himself to such extremes of self-torture and fasting that he nearly died. Eventually, however, he decided that such excessive self-abnegation was as much a form of egotism as excessive self-indulgence, so he abandoned his severe penances, and began to take regular food again. Thereupon, his disciples, disgusted at what they considered his apostasy deserted him, and proceeded to the Deer Park in Benares. Wandering on alone once more, Gautama came to the banks of the Nawangara river and sat down to eat his breakfast under the shade of a fig tree. There he remained all day, trying to decide what his next move should be. He was sorely tempted to return to his father's palace and resume the powerful and wealthy life

of a prince, but towards evening, so we are told, he had an overwhelming mystical experience, and entered the indefinable state known as Nirvana. Thereafter, he was called the Buddha or the Enlightened One, and the fig tree under which he had achieved liberation, the Bo Tree or Tree of Knowledge.

When at last he emerged from his trance, the Buddha determined to communicate the truth he had apprehended to his fellow-men. He sought out first his former five disciples in the Deer Park in Benares. On his way there, he met an acquaintance who asked him where he was going. "I am going," replied Gautama, "to the city of Benares to establish the kingdom of righteousness, to give light to those enshrouded in darkness, and to open the gate of immortality to men." On arrival at the Deer Park, he preached a series of sermons expounding his new-found faith. Soon, he had converted not only his five original disciples, but many other people who came to hear him. For 45 years, he wandered around the valley of the Ganges, never going farther than about 150 miles from Benares, but attracting more and more followers wherever he preached. Of these, his cousin Ananda became the chief and beloved disciple. The Buddha died in about 480 BC at the age of 80, and to Ananda he gave instructions concerning the future of the great religion he had founded.

Like, Jesus, he left nothing in writing, and soon his followers (again like the early Christians!) were quarrelling about the content of the authentic primitive Gospel. When, or by whom, the teachings were written down we know not, but a canon was eventually fixed at a great Council held in Patna under the famous Emperor Asoka around 250 BC. Since this did not take place until more than 200 years after the Buddha's death, it is impossible to determine how much of the doctrine was promulgated by the Buddha himself, and how much was added by his disciples.

The language used in the Scriptures is Pali, which stands roughly in the same relation to ancient Sanskrit as modern Italian does to Latin. As a whole, the Scriptures are known as the *Tripitaka* or "Three-fold Basket". The three parts of the "Basket" are the *Vinaya Pitaka*, the body of rules for monastic life, the *Sutta Pitaka*, a huge collection consisting mainly of the Buddha's sermons, and the *Abhidamma Pitaka* the metaphysical commentaries on, and exposition of, the doctrines. The *Sutta Pitaka* (which is itself divided into various *Nikayas* or groups) is by far the most important and interesting of the three "Baskets", including as it does the famous *Dhammapada* (which anticipated the Christian ethic of returning good for evil) and the *Jataka*, or birth stories. It is doubtful, however, if the latter formed part of the original Pali canon, since, though charming, they abound in the kind of miracles alleged to have occurred at the birth of every Divine Saviour.

The kernel of the Pali teachings are the "Four Noble Truths" which the Buddha is said to have enunciated in his very first sermon in Benares following his enlightenment under the Bo Tree. These are: 1. That suffering is an integral part of existence. 2. That all modes of existence are caused by desire. 3. That the cessation of desire leads to the cessation of suffering, and 4. That this may be accomplished by following the "Noble Eight-fold Path", viz. right view, right thoughts, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right recollection and right meditation. The ultimate end of mankind is the attainment

of *Nirvana* or deliverance from the wheel of continuous rebirths known as *Samsara*. *Nirvana* can only be defined in negatives, non-consciousness, non-life but also non-death. It is important to note that the Buddha did not advocate the renunciation of the world, since this would be to go to the extreme of asceticism, and hence to deny the Fourth Noble Truth, the practice of the Middle Way. Buddhism adopted the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*, but since the Buddha did not believe in the existence of the soul, the sum of merit and demerit which each man inherits at birth is not, as in Hinduism, that which he himself has accumulated in previous existences, but is the totality of good and evil achieved by all preceding generations. All things are in a state of continual flux, and will eventually pass away. But while the cosmos remains, it is governed by the rigid law of cause and effect, or karma. In original Buddhism, there is no conception of a personal God or of individual salvation. To the true Buddhist saint, the Christian's aim of securing eternal happiness for himself in paradise, seems incredibly selfish and unworthy. The Buddhist believes that at death he himself will cease to exist but that his virtuous actions will be passed on to another individual, and contribute to the ultimate release from life (and hence from suffering) of all sentient beings.

Today, there are two main forms of Buddhism, Hinayana Buddhism, found chiefly in Southern India, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet-Nam, and Mahayana Buddhism located in Northern India, Korea, Tibet and Japan. Hinayana Buddhism claims to have preserved the original teachings of the Buddha and lays great stress on the following of the Noble Eight-fold Path whereby the individual progresses by his own virtuous actions towards enlightenment without the aid of supernatural agencies of any description. Mahayana Buddhism, on the other hand, developed into a cult religion with an elaborate ritual, a priesthood and magnificent temples in which images of the Buddha are worshipped in an almost idolatrous fashion. Moreover, in the Mahayana there arose the concept of the *Bodhisattvas*, superhuman beings of infinite wisdom and confession, who have voluntarily renounced their own hope of immediate enlightenment in order to help others to attain *Nirvana*. Thus, in the Mahayana we find the emergence of the idea of a semi-divine Saviour who will guide fallen creatures to deliverance from the wheel of existence. This is, of course, analogous to the Christian doctrine of the Atonement, and a direct contradiction to the Hinayana belief that mankind's deliverance is attainable only by each individual's own efforts.

One of the most fascinating offshoots of Mahayana Buddhism is Zen, which, although it originated in India and was brought to China in the fifth century AD by the sage Bodhidharma, is now practised chiefly in Japan. In the west, it has become widely known only within the last forty years, chiefly through the writings of Dr D. T. Suzuki (who died in 1966 aged 97) and his chief American and British disciples Alan Watts and Christmas Humphreys. But it has had a profound influence on the work of such thinkers, novelists and poets as C. G. Jung, Erich Fromm, Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsburg.

The main feature of Zen is its extreme anti-intellectualism, and its stress on the instantaneous character of the moment of enlightenment called by the Zen masters, *Satori*. In order to help the disciple achieve *Satori*, Zen makes use of two main techniques, the *Mondo* a form of rapid question and answer between master and pupil, and the *Koan*, a word or phrase insoluble by the intellect. Examples

are: "Q: What is the Buddha? A: Three pounds of flax, or, The cat is climbing up the post. Q: What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming to the west? A: The cypress tree in the courtyard. Q: What is the sound of one hand clapping? (There is no recorded answer to that one.) A man is hanging over an abyss by his teeth. A friend asks him, What is Zen? If he doesn't answer, he fails. If he does answer, he falls. What should he do?" All these conundrums are literally "non-sensual", and the idea is, that by meditating on them continuously, the mind is driven to its limits, and the indescribable truth is suddenly apprehended. Another favourite Zen device, frequently employed in their monasteries, is the use of shock therapy which extends to slaps, blows and beatings with sticks, all designed to promote the break through to spontaneous "awakening". In some ways, although Zen is a branch of the Mahayana, it marks a return to original Buddhism, since it is atheistic, mistrusts sacred books and images, and derisively rejects any conception of an atoning Saviour. On the other hand, unlike the Hinayana, it teaches that *Nirvana* can be attained *here and now* in this world. There is no wheel of continuous rebirths from which man needs to be delivered; or to express the matter in Zen terminology, *Samsara* is *Nirvana*. All you need to achieve freedom is to realise that you are free, otherwise you are like the man in the Chinese proverb who was searching for the ox while riding on its back.

It is not possible to criticise Buddhism as a whole, since the two main forms of it are so different from, and often contradictory to, each other. The chief objection which may be directed against Hinayana Buddhism is that it is, as Albert Schweitzer put it, essentially "life-denying". To say that suffering is an integral part of existence is to state what should be obvious to any thinking man. Yet it is only half of the truth. Happiness is also an integral part of existence, provided we know how to attain it. It follows that to end existence by quenching desire would be to extinguish happiness along with suffering. To maintain that desire as such, is evil is absurd; it may be good or evil according to the objects upon which it is directed. Even the most extreme Hinayanists would not contend that desire for *Nirvana* is evil. But the whole basis of Hinayana Buddhism, that it should be the aim of every human being to strive to escape from the wheel of existence, leads inevitably to an apathetic, negative attitude towards social problems. It is clearly illogical to try to better the lot of one's fellow men, if the whole purpose of existence is to escape from this world. Indeed, one would be doing them a disservice, since to increase their happiness on this earth would be to bind them ever more tightly to the wheel of endless cause and effect, and hence to impede their deliverance into *Nirvana*.

Mahayana Buddhism is exposed to the objections which may be levelled against all forms of "salvationist" cults. There is no evidence whatever for the existence of the *Bodhisattvas*, and to worship the Buddha as a semi-divine Being is to do what he himself explicitly denounced. Moreover, reliance on a Saviour to deliver one from one's sins, besides being completely contrary to the Buddha's last words, tends to encourage sloth and superstition which indeed exist widely among the northern Buddhists, especially in Korea and Japan.

There is no doubt that Zen Buddhism has had a beneficial and liberating effect on Oriental poetry and painting.

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The delicate lyrics of the eighteenth century master *Hakuin* are justly famous for their artless simplicity and perfection of form, e.g.:

*With the evening breeze
The water laps against
The heron's legs.*

Unfortunately, these *Haiku* poems, as they came to be called, are fatally easy to learn, and there have been countless imitators especially in the present century. As Arthur Koestler puts it in his stimulating book *The Lotus and the Robot*, "... we have endless permutations of crows perching on a branch, frogs leaping into a pond, drops sliding off bamboo leaves and autumn leaves rustling in the ditch". Inevitably a deterioration in both the poetry and the painting set in, until today all inspiration has been lost and the products have become imitative and stereotyped. To quote Koestler again, "The autumn leaves still rustle in the ditch, but originality has gone down the drain. The water still laps against the heron's legs, but the muse lies drowned at the bottom of the ancient pond."

As we have seen, Zen teaches that the use of the discursive intellect can never lead to enlightenment. Yet Dr Suzuki and his disciples must have written well over a million words rationally expounding the Zen philosophy which activity according to Zen itself, must be a complete waste of time and effort! A more fundamental criticism of Zen is its extreme anti-nomianism. As Alan Watts expresses it: "In its essence, the Zen experience is a liberation from conventions of every kind including the

moral conventions (*The Way of Zen*, p. 107, italics mine). As a direct result of this attitude of moral indifferentism, Zen can be, and has been, exploited by supporters of every political creed, including Japanese fascism and militarism. Koestler records a conversation he had on this subject with the learned Abbot of a Zen monastery in Kyoto:

"Koestler: You favour tolerance towards all religions and all political systems. What about Hitler's gas chambers?"

The Abbott: That was very silly of him.

Koestler: Just silly, not evil?

The Abbott: Evil is a Christian concept. Good and evil exist only on a relative scale.

Koestler: Should not, then, tolerance be applied on a relative scale?

The Abbott: That is thinking in opposite categories which is alien to our thought."

Clearly, this kind of ethical nihilism, which regards the perpetrators and the victims of atrocities with equal detachment, can be very dangerous.

Buddhism, as we have seen, has its defects, some of them serious. Nevertheless, it surely cannot be denied that without it, humanity would have been deprived of a philosophical system of great wisdom and insight. Unlike Christianity, Buddhism has never been a persecuting religion, and knows nothing of the revolting doctrine of eternal torment. On the positive side, its atheistic metaphysics should commend it to free thinkers, and its ethic as expressed in the Noble Eight-fold Path sums up the essentials of the good life with admirable clarity and economy.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ELECTION

DAVID TRIBE

SOME OBSERVATIONS on the general election can now be made from a humanist standpoint.

As the Chairman of the Community Relations Commission has just observed, inflammatory speeches by Enoch Powell and his supporters always have a disturbing but have not hitherto had a lasting effect on public opinion. Though it is clear that certain areas displayed a strong Powellite vote on June 18, causing valuable MPs to lose their seats in unnaturally strong swings, throughout the country his impact was far less than had been feared. Of the newly elected MPs more seem to oppose than to support him.

Right up to the week before the election most religious journals, with the support of at least one Anglican bishop, conducted an all-out campaign against candidates who backed humanist or generally liberal legislation, past or future, which they denounced as immoral and anti-Christian. Luridly worded and inaccurate tracts warned the faithful that 'unless some action is taken now the day is not far distant when this country will be a pagan nation, acknowledging no law that is not man-made, and those laws will include compulsory euthanasia for the incurable and the aged sick, the retarded and social misfits, sterilisation of the unfit; removal of all censorship over books and plays, so that the young, brought up in Godless schools, will have no protection against obscene and pornographic literature, and in which there will be no law preventing the

sale of mind-destroying drugs—and all in the name of freedom!' (Lamp Society, leaflet HUM14 *Cum permissu Superiorum*). Christian men and women were urged to rise in a body and throw these humanist monsters out of parliament. And what was the result?

While some members of the Humanist Parliamentary Group lost their seats in an average swing of 4.2 against them, this was less than the swing against their parties of 4.5 in the country at large. Compared with that in neighbouring seats, their performance is seen to be considerably more successful than these figures would suggest. Four other MPs outside the HPG in the last parliament were associated in the public mind with controversial 'permissive' and reforming legislation even more than most members of the Group. The swing against them was a remarkably low 2.5. The average swing towards the arch-reactionaries in this field was 5.2, higher than the national average but in no case corresponding to the success of Right-wing candidates in other fields.

It might be too much to assert that a wave of support for permissiveness is sweeping the nation. But this much at least is clear. Modern elections are won on national issues like economics, modified by concern over practical local issues and appreciation of good constituency work. Declining numbers and a greater feeling of independence in the pews have altogether made attempted Christian blackmail a threat that reforming MPs need not take into account.

Review

TONY MILLS

Emergency World Government by Prof. J. H. C. Creyghton.

THIS PAMPHLET deserves serious consideration. As the title indicates, it discusses the emergency in which the world finds itself today and puts forward a remarkably simple formula for terminating that emergency by the establishment of a world government. It contains some brilliant insights into the true nature of the present crisis.

Professor Creyghton starts from the fact that there is no political relationship between individuals and the United Nations Organisation and that, even between the UN and its member states, the relationship is purely voluntary. The only authority an individual recognises is that of his national government. Any state can attack any other state and so they are all bound to prepare *against* attack. Hence:

the existing world political structure accounts for all the international tensions in the world. For instance, if all countries called themselves communist—or anti-communist—these tensions would prevail the same as they do now. . . . It makes no sense to reproach our governments for putting their own national interests above the common world interest. . . . Not having anybody to help them, they must help themselves. . . . The present international strife may be seen as a manifestation of human virtues rather than of human vices.

This last statement is perhaps straining the argument rather far.

The solution which is proposed is astonishingly simple. The fact that it appears to require an act of faith is no defect. Any conceivable solution to our present catastrophic problems is going to require a very considerable act of faith. Professor Creyghton tells us that

On September 12, 1968, at Wolfach in West Germany, 14 people from various parts of the world joined together to set up an Emergency Committee for World Government. The Emergency Committee . . . has drawn up a programme whose description may begin by saying that there has to be set up an Emergency World Council. The Council should consist of, let us say, some 100 members (who should be) individuals who command the confidence of a great many people (and who), when acting together, would enjoy the political confidence of, at least, humanity's majority.

The Professor suggests that these persons should number perhaps 5, 7 or 9, and thereafter he refers to them as 'the Five'.

Either at once or when the time is 'ripe' the Emergency World Government would be established by the Five simply announcing that on a certain day they would assume political authority. From that date:

every directive they issue would apply to every inhabitant of the world, personally and individually.

But:
Everyone's allegiance to his national government would remain untouched, except when contradicted by the five.

To the usually-to-be-expected objection that the Emergency World Government might degenerate into a world dictatorship, Professor Creyghton replies—in my opinion rightly—that:

the present world political structure, if allowed to persist, is almost certain to lead, if not to extermination, then to a world dictatorship.

He adds that a dictatorship depends on armed forces and that the World Government wouldn't have any.

Professor Creyghton believes that the mere proclamation that there is a world government would immediately attract the allegiance of enough individuals—even in autocratic states and even among policemen and servicemen—to prevent war.

If no more than 10 or 15 per cent of a state's forces joined the open or silent following of the world government, that state would be militarily incapacitated, because it would be uncertain of the loyalty of its forces.

It may very well be true that a number of citizens in any country would be ready to transfer their loyalty to the new world authority. After all, other non-national institutions in the past have gained the allegiance of people against their own

governments. The papacy and the comintern are two obvious examples. Another is the Assembly of revolutionary France, whose programme was summed up in November 1791, by Isnard of the Var, as 'a war of peoples against kings'.

In the end, however, the French revolutionaries, like the comintern and the papacy, failed to win 'the confidence of humanity's majority'. One is also reminded of the abject collapse in 1914 of the Socialist International, which was supposed to be going to bring out the workers of Europe against the military designs of their rulers. But all this doesn't mean that the task is impossible; it simply means that the technique has not yet been perfected—rather like heart transplant surgery. Today success is a good deal more crucial than it was on any previous occasion, because now the very survival of *homo sapiens*—and probably of all life on our planet—appears to depend on our ability to switch our allegiance from national governments to an international one. Most people realise this. The problem is not to convince people that it's necessary, but to convince them that *it can be done*. As far as I can see, the only way to convince people that it can be done is to start *doing* it. Here we come to the weakest point in the pamphlet—the statement that 'the Council, together with the Five, would have to decide whether the time was ripe to establish at once the Emergency World Government'. This matches ill with the earlier remark that 'we are living on a ticking time-bomb . . . and we have not an hour to spare'.

It may sound odd to say so—and some may even find it shocking—but the survival of the human race is basically a problem of public relations. We can't expect to survive much longer under the present dispensation. But any new 'world political structure' will have to be *sold* to 'humanity's majority'. There can be very few people in the world who are wholly satisfied with their existing—national—government. It ought not therefore to be very difficult to win them over to a supra-national one. All that is needed, quite possibly, is an actual supra-national government to win them over *to*. Professor Creyghton has a formula for creating one. So—go right ahead, Professor! We're all with you.

Emergency World Government is published by the Emergency Committee for World Government, Frederick Hendriklaan 26, The Hague, The Netherlands. It is supplied free to subscribers to *World Union*, a monthly on *World Order* (subscription—US \$2.50 in Europe and US \$4 elsewhere) from the same publishers.

EDUCATION TODAY

(Continued from page 211)

fears of parents concerned at their children's lack of progress. Nor do they in any way support the Utopian dream of those who are convinced that a "good home" or a good school or the latest methods in teaching or the provision of the latest and most sophisticated equipment can do the trick.

But freethinkers can face the fact. That all are not born equal. That academic excellence is not by any means the inevitable result of favourable environmental influences. That determinist factors must be acknowledged, no matter how painful that acknowledgment may be.

In any case, is academic education for as many as possible the ultimate ideal? Is it desirable that all should have an education in the grammar school tradition? One would conclude from the outcry over the last decade about the iniquities of the eleven-plus, that academic education is necessarily superior. And that being superior, it should be enjoyed by all.

Many who have escaped it through "failure" have reason to be thankful. Arduous scholarship doesn't suit everybody.

¹ New English Library, 5s.

Art

MARGARET PEARCE

Royal College of Art Degree Exhibition 1970.

THIS ANNUAL EVENT, in the second week in June, is one of the most professional exhibitions I have yet been to. RCA—the pinnacle of specialised training in the field of industrial design is renowned throughout the world for designs produced by its staff, students and graduates.

Looking back at this exhibition, everything kaleidoscopes into a glorious array of colours, textures, and designs, especially in textiles, ceramics, glass and graphic design.

A few exciting examples were: Roddy Friend's "mush-room" of glass fibres with light transmitted through to form a delicate shimmering fountain of colours, reflected on to a mirror. Julia Crallan's new technique of chromatography in silk screen printing. This is a simultaneous application by hand of a mixture of several different dyestuffs having different migration properties which produces rainbow designs on pure silk. Ken Hugh's witty poster for the film 'Hitler's Children' showing a picture of a swastika'd sheep and two lambs.

The most outstanding section was that of silversmithing and jewellery. The craftsmanship and finish on various personal and household items was superb. A silver choker with lapis inlay comes to mind.

Less interesting, but more important were the new ideas in the engineering field—the bathroom for the disabled, automatic checkout for supermarkets, car designs, and a fish gutting machine to name but a few.

One of the main disappointments of these young graduates is that so few future employees come to see their work (which is one of the purposes of the exhibition) and so many find it difficult to find employment. If it was not for the exciting new ideas of such people as these art students, this world would be considerably more dull.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TEACHERS

(Continued from page 210)

We have asked him to confirm that a teacher of a non-religious subject may not be accepted for a post in a maintained school because of his unwillingness to teach RE. If this is not so, then the questions on the application forms become pointless, and we have asked him to take action to prevent LEAs from asking these questions, whether they be pointless or discriminatory."

Mr Hill goes on to draw attention to the anomaly whereby, although the safeguards provided for by Section 30 of the 1944 Act are being sacrificed because, according to Mr Short, of Section 25 of the Act which makes religion compulsory for the schools, Section 25 is "broken with impunity by hundreds of schools"

It is to be hoped that the Humanist Teachers' Association will draw the attention of the new Minister for Education to this unethical mishandling of the law, even though their chances of prompting her into action are, one cannot but admit, considerably lessened.

LETTERS

Catastrophe approaching?

MAY I TEAR just one more little piece off Claud Watson?

He's doing it again! As a good solid gentle English gradualist he looks with horror on the wicked French and Russians who used "terror and murder as a political weapon". We, of course, never did—except at Wexford, Drogheda, the

Boyne, Dunbar, Culloden. And likewise, I suppose, the native peoples of the West Indies and Tasmania all volunteered to die! Two million Biafrans have just followed them. Unpersons all . . .

The other day Michael Scott drew my attention to the close parallel between the Roman pre-occupation with their gladiatorial games just before the final collapse and the present sick pre-occupation of this country with the game of football. It bears thinking about.

Spiritually (I don't know a better word for what I mean) the decadence of this country is quite incredible. Social values have retreated to the personal and parochial levels. The General Election was a pageant of the macabre.

It seems that nothing less than a traumatic experience will avail us now. The rest of Europe had that experience years ago in the form of the Nazi occupation. We did not. The result is that we need the continent more than the continent needs us. Our sickness is such, of course, that we cannot see it.

I foresee some quite appalling crisis of a military-financial order involving the simultaneous collapse of both the pound and civil government. Since 1961 we have bought time with foreign loans. But today the dollar itself is in trouble. What happens if, next time we are in difficulty no one comes when we call?

There are no signs of recovery within the present system. Its very recovery-mechanisms have ceased to function—the final failure was the demise of attempts to create new select committees in the House of Commons a couple of years ago. Sovereignty has passed from Westminster to Whitehall. We are ruled by those who, by definition, are not accountable to us.

Political parties, today, are about as relevant to reality as the churches.

We have been reduced, as John Lilburne would put it, to "a state of nature". The only way out that I can see is for us to start to rethink just about everything from first principles and prepare to meet catastrophe with imagination. Blake's Albion still sleeps—awaiting the apocalypse.

PETER CADOGAN.

The RSPCA

I FEEL that if only the Council of the RSPCA would sound the opinions of *all* its branches, which do excellent work as units, they would discover how deeply most members dislike, indeed abhor hunting, whether for sport, or the spurious reason that it is the "most humane" method of killing. The majority of members can afford neither time nor money to attend the Annual General Meeting to make their wishes felt—as British Field Sports members can, and do.

D. B. HANCOCK.

Commune

OUR luxury commune requires two more people with capital (£6,000), any age, sex, status, wanting company, love, comfort, free-living, a purpose.

MAURICE HILL,
57 Otterburn Gardens, Isleworth, Middx.

MEMORIAL EDITION

WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Preface DAVID TRIBE

Introduction Professor ANTONY FLEW

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