

# FREE THINKER

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## LORDS DISCUSS PORN: LONGFORD MAKES THEIR FLESH CREEP

Now that public indignation concerning pornography, blue films and nude stage shows has been aroused to blood heat, Lord Longford has decided the time has come to declare war on obscenity. He fired the opening shots in the House of Lords last week by initiating a debate on pornography. This public-spirited Roman Catholic peer had not spared himself in preparing for the fray, and undertook a programme of research, the details of which we do not propose to sully the virginal pages of the *Freethinker*. In hushed and fearful silence they assembled at Westminster to hear his report on Britain's moral decadence, and a call to the Government for "a far-reaching inquiry". If the Government should be too preoccupied with other matters, Lord Longford and his friends will conduct an unofficial inquiry. Support for such a project was by no means unanimous. Lord Goodman, chairman of the Arts Council, said the London theatre was no more obscene than it ever was, and politely advised snoopers and self-appointed guardians of public morality to keep their distance. Lord Willis agreed there was a great deal of obscenity today: "I think it is obscene to have nearly a million unemployed. I think it is obscene for a great Church not to allow anyone to use birth control devices. I think poverty is obscene".

### Roman Catholic and MRA Campaign

*David Tribe writes:* As some of their Lordships observed, the Upper Chamber has held down the years many worthier debates which have received less coverage. But, insofar as the subject is of general interest, it was useful to have such a discussion and interesting, though not always sensible or well-balanced, points were raised.

Where there seemed general agreement was in the difficulty of definition and the impossibility of establishing conclusively that a particular publication or spectacle was able to corrupt. That being so, it was the more unfortunate that the Earl of Longford and some of his supporters should propose substituting for the "deprave and corrupt" test of obscenity the "causing offence" definition of "indecent", so that the arbitrary powers now wielded by customs officers could be extended into every field of artistic expression. As Lord Ferrier believes that pornography is "promoted by the powers of anti-Christ" and as any expression of honest opinion, regardless of any four-letter words in which it might be couched, is certain to give offence to someone, we should soon return to seventeenth century repression or the medieval Inquisition. It is well known that the cohorts of purity are led by Roman Catholics or MRA Anglicans—with one or two Baptists thrown in—and that they tend on the whole to extreme political conservatism. There is little doubt what sort of material they would find most offensive. They do not complain about the Old Testament, whose cruelty, bloodshed, violence and sexual perversions were cogently demonstrated by Lord Platt.

### Gunning for Sex Education

Lord Longford seems to believe that the country is in a tumult of anxiety over the spread of porn, which Lord Eccles, the Paymaster General and Minister responsible for the arts, described as "the ugly child of the permissive society"; and he cited some thousand letters of support

which he had recently received. There seems a lack of logic here. If porn is as ugly and unpopular as set out by Lord Longford and his friends, it is a little surprising that it should be spreading at the rate claimed. The truth would seem to be that the great bulk of the population takes it—if it takes it at all—in its stride. As for the letters, Lord Willis rightly observed that "there are entire brigades of maiden ladies, of both sexes, waiting with pen in hand to write in condemnation of any speaker who praises sex or in praise of any speaker who attacks it". And he mentioned "one organisation of sabbatarians" that he did not feel it necessary to name, "which even issued a draft letter of protest to its members so that they could react spontaneously on such occasions". For the attack in the Lords, and outside, is not directed solely against hardcore pornography. One of its many targets is sex education, and an incredible storm in a teacup is being whipped up over Martin Cole's sex education film *Growing Up* and the Birmingham teacher who took part in it. Here again Lord Willis rightly brought out that ignorance is more dangerous than knowledge, however indelicately presented. He referred to the underground of child prostitution and sadism, not to mention pornography, that flourished in Victorian England as a reaction to its extreme reticence and guilt feelings over sex. And as recently as 12 or 15 years ago a marriage counsellor told him of "one young couple who had finally come to him in desperation because their knowledge of sex was so small, and they had been taught so little, that for something like a year the young man had been trying to enter his wife through her navel". At the same time incredible euphemisms for leg and "arse" developed that made a mockery a language.

### Suffering Lord and Ladies

To prepare for the debate Lord Longford has apparently been on a guided tour of Soho's blue film basements and striptease, a subject on which I can say little because,

(Continued foot of next page)

## CHURCH IN VORSTER'S STATE

JOHN GILD

The Anglican Bishop of Zululand, the Right Reverend Alpheus Zulu, was recently arrested under South Africa's notorious pass laws. Bishop Zulu was visiting a suburb of Johannesburg when it was raided by municipal police in search of Africans whose papers were not in legal order. To white officials, one black man looks very much like another and they simply cannot distinguish a bishop from a bricklayer.

Gradually learning to make this sort of distinction, the higher authorities were embarrassed. The criminal charge against Bishop Zulu of not carrying his pass-book was withdrawn on condition that he produced his pass to the officials in his home area in Natal, where, incidentally, he has some white people in his diocese, much to the annoyance of the authorities.

The South African Government hopes to avoid the threatened conflict with Churches other than its own Dutch Reformed Church, which can of course be relied on to toe the National Party line. The conflict arises from the unrepentant tendency of some churchmen to believe that all men are equal in the sight of God, and occasionally to act on this belief.

### Compromise

It would, however, be an error to suppose that most

of the churches stand four-square against apartheid. Time and again they have been forced to compromise on matters of principle, mainly but not entirely because the laity (who, after all, pay the preachers) hold opinions about race relations that are normal in that crazy country. In 1967, for instance, when a motion called on the Cape Diocesan (Anglican) Synod to declare apartheid morally evil and to tell this to children, including candidates for confirmation, it was heavily defeated.

An article in the latest issue of *Anti-Apartheid News* (published in London but banned in South Africa) points to telling evidence of the failure of the Churches to transcend the dominant social ethic of white superiority. The black members of the Methodist and Anglican Churches, who are actually a majority, are steadily drifting away, to form their own separatist black Churches. The numbers in these dissenting Churches have increased markedly since the Afrikaner Nationalists first came to power in 1948, and are now over two million. They are working out their own theology relevant to the black community. They realise that the gallant efforts of a vaguely liberal body like the Christian Institute of South Africa may anger Mr Vorster's cabinet but otherwise produce no effect on the general situation. Of this it can truly be said that the more it is reported to be changing, the more it remains fundamentally the same as it has always been.

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like Lord Goodman, "in the immense preoccupations of my own life I have never had the fortunate opportunity of attending them". It is to the credit of Lord Longford, especially feeling as he does, that he should have devoted so much time, and is prepared to continue this work, researching the sleazier aspects of London's life. Similar honour should be paid to the Dowage Lady Birdwood. Recently she described in Bow Street Magistrates' Court, where she was prosecuting the "blasphemous" play *Council of Love*, how a friend warned her not to see it because it would destroy her. But such was her sense of public duty that she saw it not once but four times, and helped to record, transcribe and summarise it, so that today she must be the greatest authority on the piece outside those who actually took part in it. Mrs Mary Whitehouse must spend most of her life at her television controls anxiously going from channel to channel as programme timetables or the frenzied telephone calls of her friends suggest some new outrage that will shock her. If it has not already happened, a public subscription should be launched to equip Triangle Farm House with a special theatre for simultaneous transmission.

### Greater Dangers to Society

The most serious aspect of this debate is probably the way it is distracting people's minds from the really serious problems of this country and the world. While the war in Vietnam continues to kill and maim thousands every month, our public-spirited citizens are occupied in the basements of Soho. While Lord Ferrier calls upon "all Christians to stand up and be Christians" in their fight against porn, we face, in Lord Goodman's words, "greed, cruelty, avarice and many other things . . . greater dangers to our society than pornography". Rightly Baroness Gaitskell deplored "an avalanche of unctuous, self-

righteous preaching" and Baroness Lee was "much more shocked by an unwanted child being born into the world".

For a book on censorship that I am writing I have tried to interview advocates of "control"—they seem, for some reason, loath to use the word "censorship". When they do speak they will never give evidence for the corruption they are alleging. It all seems to be a matter of intuition that any right-thinking souls should share. And it is indeed, I believe, a matter of feeling, misdirected away from the real difficulties that face us.

## THE FREETHINKER

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# THOUGHTS ON PERFECTIONISM

PAUL ROM

In their striving for survival all higher organisms instinctively search for food and a sexual partner; they also defend their living space against hostile intruders. Thus they achieve a state which can be considered as their perfection.

Man, the highest organism, is the master of his instincts. Possessing a well developed intelligence he can compare different things and events. He also compares himself with others and forms an opinion about his own and his fellow men's value. As no human being enjoys a perfect body, a perfectly satisfactory social position, and exemption from illness and death, it follows that to be human means intelligent people will become aware of inadequacies and frustrations.

Men's natural feelings of inferiority (Adler) become an inferiority complex for him who has formed too low an opinion of himself and has allowed dominating or pampering persons and painful events to discourage him. An inferiority complex prevents one being happy and perfect as a pleasant and helpful fellow man. This complex helps one to withdraw to a narrow circle of life. There, he believes, he can avoid failures. This complexity also allows him to leave in good conscience to others the burden of social tasks which frighten him. An inferiority complex may even serve to excuse—at least in one's own eyes— one's manifest failures. "If I had not an inferiority complex, I should, of course, have achieved much more!" But who creates this complex if not the person himself? We are not obliged to give up when difficulties of existence seem to be overwhelming. Difficulties are there to be overcome.

The reverse of the same coin is the superiority complex which also can disturb people's relationships and bring about bafflement, frustration, even misery. One can hold that perfectionism is a kind of superiority complex.

## Neurotic Striving

In his striving for what he considers his perfection man's normal feelings of inferiority can be compensated by a courageous and skilful activity. This allows him to become successful and to feel perfect. But a sound feeling of perfection will be mainly obtained by being a good friend, worker, and lover. The perfect criminal, the perfectly happy lazybone, the superman, are ideas of madmen. And if one has not also "the courage to be imperfect" (Sophie Lazarsfeld) one indulges in a neurotic striving for god-likeness. Normally one will strive to become every day a little less imperfect.

Perfectionism, into which the striving to become perfect can turn, is an error and often constitutes a compulsion neurosis. It has no cause; it is like an idol created by a person who then serves and worships it. Perfectionism isolates human beings who should co-operate.

A therapist had a patient whose "nervousness" was due to her ambition always to be perfect. He suggested that she write on a paper: "In order to be a perfect human being I must have the courage to be less than perfect!" This statement was always to be kept before her eyes. What happened? She wrote these words on a sheet of paper, but not finding the handwriting good enough she repeated it three times until she deemed her achievement perfect.

An artist complained about his difficulties of getting on socially. He always had to criticise the imperfections of colour or form which struck him when he visited people's houses. After we had had a few talks to interpret his style of life (Adler) he told me: "I found myself in the luxurious home of a new acquaintance and I was still fanatic enough to tell my host that in so elegant a dining room there should not hang reproductions of famous works, but modern original paintings. For the first time in my life I noticed that my words provoked a host's face to register a queer expression. Having learned already much about my complex I managed not to add that a little table lamp was also not in keeping with the rest of the room's furniture; nevertheless, on the point of leaving I could not refrain from remarking that the baroque lamp contrasted disagreeably with the modern style of the whole room". This patient, having begun to understand that impeccable beauty had become for him, an idol which other did not worship, still had to restrain himself to give up shocking others with his uniqueness and to become more sociable. One cannot get rid overnight of one's obsession to be perfect, even if one has recognised it as a mistake.

## Difficulty in Communicating

If someone is said to be perfect in a foreign language, nobody expects him never to make a mistake. Do we not sometimes commit errors in our mother tongue? We shall, of course, try to increase our vocabulary and to refine our expressions so as to make our communication easier perceivable; but the perfectionist, not able to allow himself any mistake, does not dare to open his mouth when abroad and loses the chance to be corrected by others and to advance by trial, error, and success, towards a greater perfection. Whilst always eager to criticise others, a perfectionist usually cannot himself stand any criticism.

A perfectionist often excludes from his life certain possible pursuits because, to be perfect in them, they need more time, patient study, and practice than he is ready to speaker, writer, singer, card player, dancer, etc., I shall not try at all", the perfectionist often misses much fun in life. give. By thinking: "If I cannot be a perfect sportsman,

Walking once with such a person in a main street, I had to listen to a stream of sneering remarks: how terrible that long-haired fellow! how short that mini-skirt! how ridiculous this African in his native dress! how old-fashioned that bearded Jew in his caftan! how funny that nun in her religious garb! how ugly this building which since long should have been replaced by a new one! how rude that driver who tried to get ahead of another car! —I was not less observant of these facts but I could just smile or find them stimulating thought and talk. But with a fault-finding perfectionist, no pleasant conversation can arise. Besides this pleasure, he misses many others and does not easily win friends.

A person's compulsion to be perfect in everything puts him under continuous stress. The perfectionist wastes much time and strength in trying to outshine all others. He is most often a nervous character.

## Frustration

If one tried by harmless mockery to point out to someone the nonsense of perfectionist behaviour, he would

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## FREETHINKER

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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 St., 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 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

## EVENTS

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group, Salisbury Hotel, King's Road, Brighton, Sunday, 2 May, 5.30 p.m. Tea party followed by Annual General Meeting.

Humanist Holidays. Summer Centre in the Lake District is now full. Youth camp being planned for 24 July until 1 August in Salop. Details: Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone 642 8796).

London Young Humanists, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace, London, W8, Sunday, 2 May, 7.15 p.m. Peter Headicar: "Town Planning".

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1, Sunday, 2 May, 11 a.m. A. L. Morton: "English Utopias". Tuesday, 4 May, 7 p.m. Leslie Sklair: "Values and Norms of Science".

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# NEWS

## COMPLAINING PRIESTS

The *Statement on Moral Matters* which was issued by the Catholic hierarchy of England and Wales at the beginning of the year has given little help to "troubled and distressed" Catholics, says the Catholic Priests' Association. In a letter to Cardinal Heenan and the bishops, the Association (which claims to represent over 1,000 priests) calls for a more open defence of orthodoxy. They say that the number of Catholics who become despondent is increasing every week, and that many factors contribute to this deterioration: "They range from the open rejection of truths of Catholic Faith, to the creation of doubt and uncertainty in the minds of so many about basic principles of Catholic morals".

The CPA goes on to claim that hardly a single "truth of Faith" was immune from attack. And the attacks are coming from within the Church itself, in teachers' training colleges and establishments of education. Children were being indoctrinated with ideas not in accordance with Church teaching.

The priests are most upset by the fact that Mass and the Holy Eucharist were targets for vicious attacks. These range from "rejection of transubstantiation to the introduction of practices by some priests that send a shudder of horror through the human soul". They appeal for a halt to be called to unapproved practices being introduced into the liturgy.

The bishops also recently received a statement from the Pope commanding them to oppose the "tidal wave of false doctrine gushing through the Church". It was their duty, he declared, to call the faithful back to obedience. The bishops may call the faithful until they are blue in the face, but at the same time some of the more worldly wise will be recalling these lines from Shakespeare's *King Henry IV*:

*Glendower*: "I can call spirits from the vasty deep."

*Hotspur*: "Why, so can I, or so can any man;

But will they come when you do call?"

## MUSLIM SILENCE

"The events in Bangla Desh emphasise that traditional religion can only play an inhuman role in the modern world", said Professor A. B. Shah, president of the Indian Secular Society, in a recent statement.

"What is happening in Bangla Desh is a vindication of the secularist stand on the role of religion in the modern world. The war of independence that is being heroically waged by the people of Bangla Desh against the armed might of the military-bureaucratic establishment of West Pakistan shows that religion cannot be the basis of a nation state in the contemporary world. Language, culture, geographical contiguity, economic interests and social institutions provide a much stronger bond than traditional religion, however useful the latter may be for whipping up hatred against those of a different faith.

"Muslims of West Pakistan are carrying out a brutal massacre of unarmed people, including women and children, who only the other day were their fellow nationals. And yet no Muslim country in the world has condemned the Yahya Khan regime. Not only that, leaders of Muslim public opinion in India have observed a deafening silence

# AND NOTES

on the happenings in Bangla Desh. People who used to waste reams of paper and tons of ink to flood the correspondence columns of daily newspapers at the slightest real or alleged damage to Muslim interests thousands of miles away have not said a word in condemnation of the atrocities committed by West Pakistani troops in Bangla Desh. Instead, many of them question the reliability of the reports of the atrocities and characterise them as inspired by sources hostile to West Pakistan. The Muslim Press in India has reacted in the same way."

In London, a group known as Action Bangla Desh has been formed to co-ordinate action on the crisis. Sponsors include the Bangla Desh Students' Action Committee, the Peace Pledge Union, Friends Peace Committee, and the Young Liberals. Its aim is to secure the immediate withdrawal of all West Pakistan forces from East Bengal and to ensure that adequate relief and aid reaches the people. It will provide immediate information for members of the public, the Press and organisations.

The office of ABC (34 Stratford Villas, Camden Town, London, NW1, telephone 485 2889) is open daily (except Sunday) from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

## BAPTISTS AND QUAKERS

Glad tidings were thin on the ground at the annual assembly of the Baptist Union which opened in London on Monday. It was announced that a 5,806 fall in membership had taken place during 1970, there were eight fewer churches and the number of baptisms were down nearly 1,500 on 1969. The only signs of advance came from Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic where there had been a slight increase in membership. There has been a loss of 70,000 in the last 20 years.

The Society of Friends (Quakers) also reports that, although it is regularly gaining new members, there has been a nett loss during the last year.

## LACK OF SOCIO-LEGAL RESEARCH

The lack of research being done in the socio-legal field is criticised in the Annual Report of the Cobden Trust, which was published last week. Christine Jackson, the Trust's Research Officer, writes in the Report that "because of the segregation of disciplines in British universities and the structure of central government, neither the institutions nor the personnel are readily available to undertake the necessary research into the social effects of the legal system and its by-products".

The Cobden Trust, the research and educational arm of the National Council for Civil Liberties, is helping to fill the gap. Its current research programme covers the working of Tribunals, the bail system and the use of police powers. "Each of these subjects represents a serious problem for society in general and the administration of justice in particular; yet none of them has been subjected to the detailed study or the informed public debate they deserve".

The Report also reviews the response to the Trust's research into Legal Aid, the findings of which were published in 1970. "Generally welcomed and widely reported", the "only discordant note was a two-page denunciation in the Law Society's Gazette". The Trust comments: "It is

unfortunate that the Law Society seems incapable of accepting criticism or seriously campaigning for even the most obvious reforms. Even so, it compares favourably with the Bar Council which has nothing to say on the subject at all".

Alan Paterson, secretary of the Cobden Trust, says that the expansion of the Trust "has continued its course in a most encouraging way. Whereas even a year ago we were able to undertake no more than one major research project at a time, we are now in a position to frame a more ambitious programme".

## NO SALE

During the last six months the committee of Leicester Secular Society has been considering an offer from a firm of estate agents who wanted to purchase the Secular Hall building on behalf of a well-known insurance company who plan to build new premises in Leicester. They were offered a new hall within the development area or a warehouse in Yeoman Street, near the present building, which would have been adapted to suit their needs.

These proposals were put to the members at a general meeting and, by an overwhelming majority, they carried a motion to advise the Trustees to retain the present building. They also affirmed their determination to use the hall for the advancement of secularist principles. It is highly unlikely that the Trustees will act against the wishes of the membership on this important question.

## THOUGHTS ON PERFECTIONISM

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most likely react by proving how correct he is to act like that. One cannot change him with humorous remarks and must tolerate him as a neighbour (whom a believer in the Old or the New Testament should even love), or avoid him. Behind the façade of his superiority the perfectionist must feel frustrated for he has no sense of humour.

"The perfectionist" is, of course, an abstraction, a general type. In reality, each individual is unique. The perfectionist's striving for personal superiority over others can have many different meanings; his hidden purpose may be to waste time, to keep others waiting, to depreciate another person by making him appear, in contrast, so much inferior, to have an excuse for failures in particular spheres of life (would a super-perfect businessman not expect to be admired, even if failing as a husband and father?), etc.

In the case of expert treatment of a suffering perfectionist, the patient must learn to understand the origin and development of his complex, which is of his own error and making. At the beginning his wish to be perfect may have been useful. With a deepened personal and widened social insight, encouragement to give up the false ideal, and training of a more flexible behaviour, the perfectionist may slowly become a "new man" as an autonomous person, sensitive, spontaneous, co-operative, and full of humour. The new goal of just being a useful fellow man and contribute to the common good will allow him to live more happily, even though being less perfect than "God". It would, however, not give a life without inter-human conflicts. With his changed life-style, he would, however, be able to solve them in a more fruitful manner.

## BOOKS

### FREEDOM OF CHOICE AFFIRMED

by Corliss Lamont. Pemberton Books, £1.25.

This is a book of unusual clarity and interest, one that I found difficult to put down once I had started to read it. It is scholarly, well-written and jargon-free. All the terms used in it are clearly defined and, indeed, to ensure that the reader understands these terms, there is a Guide to Meanings at the end of the book.

The main theme is the "labyrinthine dispute" over freedom of choice and determinism and, while finding myself very much in sympathy with the author's intentions to defend the concept of freedom of choice, there are some points with which many humanists might find themselves in disagreement which I wish to bring out.

It seems to me that the continuing argument depends very much on the meanings given to the terms freedom and determinism. Dr Lamont brings them into sharp opposition by giving determinism a much wider scope than many determinists intend. He states that the determinist position implies that "every decision and action of a man today was predestined in detail not just five months ago or five years ago, but before the human race had even come into existence . . . determinism implies that everything that is going to happen in the future of the cosmos . . . is already shaped and necessitated in and by the present".

This kind of picture of the universe is surely more consistent with a theology that sees every detail of the universe as planned in advance by an omnipotent deity than with the determinism assumed in scientific enquiry. This latter determinism is reflected in the refusal of the scientist to regard any event as causeless, as outside the scope of scientific investigation. This is a long way from the notion of predeterminism or predestination with which Dr Lamont seeks to saddle determinism.

A more subtle and interesting argument used by the author seeks to show that determinism is self-defeating. This consists in stating that, by declaring that all ideas are determined either by the particular psychologies of their propounders or specific historical conditions, or an amalgam of both, it ceases to make sense to distinguish some as true and some as false. They are all on the same level, expressions of personal and historical conditions, neither true nor false. This argument, I think, would be more persuasive if determinism was affirmed simply as an article of faith without any reference to criteria for discriminating true ideas from false ones. For both kinds may be historically and psychologically determined. In any case, all categories which are treated as ultimates or absolutes—as Dr Lamont insists on treated determinism—lead to paradox if pushed hard enough. This applies to freedom, causality, space, time and matter. On the other hand, if they are treated as explanatory principles of relative application, they serve to organise, to make sense of, human experience.

Dr Lamont defends his idea of free choice by appealing to the "unmistakable intuition" that people have that they are free in making their choices. This inner feeling of freedom, he argues, is as strong as the conviction we have that there is an external world independent of our consciousness of it.

# FREETHINKER

This is an important point. Nevertheless, the strength of a conviction is no guarantee of its truth. Dr Lamont is fully aware of this but he argues that this consciousness of freedom is so powerful as to create an initial presumption in its favour. It should, however, he says, be judged finally "in the light of reason and of the available evidence". This, it seems to me, he does not do. He quotes, but does not answer, Spinoza's point anticipatory of Freud, that people's conviction that they have freedom of will, results from the fact that "they are aware of their own desires and ignorant of the causes by which these desires are determined . . ." He also quotes the evidence from hypnotism that a person may think he has made a free choice when, in fact, he is responding to someone else's choice, and dismisses this with the dictum that it is the exception that proves the rule. Exceptions do not prove rules except in the sense of testing them. In showing that a rule lacks the generality claimed for it, an exception disproves the rule.

It is true that there are many actions that we can look back on and reflect that we could have chosen differently. The man who, faced with the choice of two roads takes one that leads to disaster may wish on reflection that he had taken the other. But this is only to say that his present knowledge—absent at the time he made his choice—now enters as a factor. Dr Lamont is right to insist that freedom is a genuine experience but it is freedom within a context, a comparative and relative freedom. Thus a released prisoner feels free because certain limitations on his movements have been removed. Freedom of choice, of course, means more than just the removal of restrictions. Henry Ford is said to have remarked that people buying his cars, in the early days of Ford cars, had the choice of any colour provided that it was black. In other words, they had no real choice and therefore no freedom to choose. But consider the case of a man who knows nothing about cars and is offered the choice of several cars. He appears to have more choice but, compared with a man who has knowledge of cars, his freedom to choose is nominal. Freedom of choice is not an abstract quality depending on nothing but the fact of its existence. It depends on knowledge; it is freedom from the limitations of ignorance. Like Dr Lamont I too affirm the importance of freedom of choice. But it seems to me to be much more bound up with the knowledge that science and general experience bring than Corliss Lamont seems willing to concede. His book, however, provides a lively, well-informed contribution to the perennial problem of freedom of choice and I hope it will be widely read.

REUBEN OSBORN

## THE FREETHINKER 1970 BOUND VOLUME

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# REVIEWS

**IRELAND HER OWN** by T. A. Jackson.

Edited and with an epilogue by C. Desmond Greaves. Lawrence and Wishart, £1.

*Ireland her own, and all therein from the sod to the sky.*  
James Fintan Lalor.

When first published, in 1947, this history covered the period up to about 1930. The present edition contains T. A. Jackson's original text, together with an "epilogue" by Desmond Greaves which takes us up to the end of 1969.

It is almost impossible to write an "objective" history of Ireland, and Jackson bares his literary chest from the outset: "I write frankly as a partisan . . ."; "As an Englishman, primarily for Englishmen . . .". He wrote as a Marxist, and it is necessary to remember that when Jackson set pen to paper Stalin was at the height of his powers.

Two obvious criticisms of this book are its price, which is high for a paperback; and the incidence of typographical errors which one might think could have been minimised in a new edition. To its credit, however, the book has a serviceable index and a sketch map of Ireland. The editor, I think rightly, has not removed passages from the original text which, in this post-Stalinist age might make even a good Marxist wince; for instance ". . . the Irish 'kulak' class—the gombeen-men . . ."; or: "It (the idea that nationalism and socialism were not opposites) . . . was finally vindicated by the teaching of Lenin and Stalin".

On occasion the book contains errors of fact which the present editor has not commented upon, for instance, the central flag flown over the General Post Office during the 1916 Dublin Rising is described as "a large green banner inscribed in golden letters *Poblacht na hEireann*". In fact, this flag was returned to Ireland by the British Government in 1966, and may be seen in the National Museum, Dublin. It is green, and bears the inscription "Irish Republic" in orange-and-white Gaelic-style characters.

Apart from the foregoing criticisms I found this book lively, and a pleasure to read. Its slant is a welcome change from traditional Irish histories, coloured as they were by British imperialism or Catholic pietism. I was particularly pleased to see Jackson bringing out the relevance of the English Levellers in Irish affairs around 1649. The events in Ireland from 1641 to 1650 are exceedingly involved, and even confused Irishmen at the time; this author's account is by far the clearest I have yet read of this period.

Jackson deals very well also with development of Ireland in the eighteenth century and the rise in 1792 of the United Irishmen whose objects were, in the words of Wolfe Tone, "the establishment of the Rights of Man in Ireland". Needless to say, Tone knew Thomas Paine! Jackson's comments on the rise of the Orange Order will certainly set on edge the teeth of "Protestant atheists": "They (the Orange Order) constituted the first Fascist body known in history". Elsewhere he says: "Belfast is often

enjoined to 'Remember 1690'. When it again recovers a pride in remembering 1792, Ireland's day of final deliverance will be at hand". As for Daniel O'Connell ("The Liberator"), now an unfashionable person in modern Irish history, Jackson foreshadows the current attitude: "His inept, ill-natured, and dishonest son John promulgated the lie that the Young Irelanders had 'broken the Liberator's heart'. The truth was that the O'Connells, between them, had broken the hopes of Ireland".

To write an "epilogue" to a work of this type is no easy task, especially if it is to "marry" with the style of the main author, and at the same time be the epilogue writer's own original idea, clearly expressed. In this task C. Desmond Greaves has succeeded fairly well, though I wonder if Jackson shared Greaves' opinions on the origins of the second world war.

Written though most of its was more than 20 years ago, this book has some interesting points to make on the allocation of responsibility in healing that perennial running sore, the "Ulster problem". In the foreword, Jackson writes: "The reason for telling this story is that, contrary to common belief, the process is not yet complete. I have thought it necessary to show the causes of the Anglo-Irish conflict, since only when these are known will the common people of England, the final arbiters, be able to tackle this long-outstanding Irish Question with a comprehension of the real issues involved". Speaking of Partition he says: "Partition—a crime and an insult in one—was imposed from England. In England the work of undoing Partition must be, and will be, begun".

If you ever read, and enjoyed, the Left Book Club edition of A. L. Morton's *A People's History of England*, then I can heartily recommend this biased, opinionated, but eminently readable work to you.

NIGEL SINNOTT

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## THE THREAT TO CIVIL LIBERTIES

"It is impossible to discuss the development and structure of the National Council for Civil Liberties without considering its purpose in our present society", said Malcolm Hurwitt, who presided at the annual general meeting of the Council in London last weekend. Mr Hurwitt said the present task facing the NCCL is three-sided: to help those who are the victims of justice or oppression; to preserve a climate of tolerance; to extend the boundaries of civil liberties. "I am talking only of the current political situation. There would be no role for the NCCL in a heavily repressive system. But even in this system we must not be afraid to criticise the Establishment, institutions and methods, if simply to preserve our own access to them."

There was a strong feeling amongst the members and delegates that the atmosphere in Britain at the present time was not conducive to civil liberties. There had been an alarming increase in the activities of the Special Branch which were clearly aimed at putting unpopular journals out of business, and frightening publishers and booksellers. There was a great deal of maladministration of justice, and clearly the police had abused their powers on many occasions. People had been detained for long periods at police stations and denied access to their lawyer or even a friend.

It was a matter of great concern that many Courts rejected a large number of requests for legal aid. This applied particularly at Great Marlborough Street Court in London, and it is strongly suspected that the reason for this is that many of the applicants are facing charges relating to drugs or political demonstrations.

### NSS and BHA Represented

The meeting passed two motions submitted by the British Humanist Association. The first of these deplored the report of the Chadwick Commission on Church and State "as perpetuating the special privileges enjoyed by a minority group holding a particular religious belief and regards the special representation allowed to the Church of England in the House of Lords and the denial of the right of Church of England clergy to sit in the House of Commons as a threat to wider civil liberties". The second BHA motion "recognising that civil liberties depends to a large extent on the free exchange of information via the mass media, calls on the broadcasting authorities to ensure adequate air-time for the presentation of the views of minority groups".

An emergency motion was proposed by Grace Berger, chairman of the NCCL Children's Committee, and seconded by David Tribe, president of the National Secular Society, and passed by the meeting. It called attention "to the disquieting action by the Birmingham Education Committee with regard to the teacher who took part in the film *Growing Up* before she became a teacher. Taken together with the fear shown by teachers who helped prepare *The Little Red Schoolbook*, the civil liberties of the teaching profession would appear to be in particular jeopardy". The meeting urged the NCCL Executive Committee to consult with teachers' organisations and indivi-

dual teachers to see what positive steps can be taken to guarantee the civil liberties of teachers.

David Tribe and the editor of the *Freethinker* were the National Secular Society delegates.

## LETTERS

### Incomes Policy

If you don't like your opponent's views, call them "fascist". Don't bother with detailed rebuttal of his arguments; just parade all the hoary myths that save thinking and let you go in for name-calling. This is the method of Pat Sloan who can seriously argue (*Freethinker*, 10 April) that a statutory incomes policy is "fascist", when he knows perfectly well that "marxist" Russia forbids all trade union activity altogether.

In my review of Lord Balogh's pamphlet, I pointed out that working people do not, in general, compare their incomes with those accruing to top executives and find the discrepancy "unfair". That being so, Mr Sloan's hypothetical working man fighting for an extra few bob whilst his millionaire capitalist boss holidays in Bermuda on the proceeds of the famous "sixpence off" remains—hypothetical. Just look at the car industry—hasn't Mr Sloan even heard of "parity with the Midlands", and does he not know that Ford, Vauxhall, Chrysler and British Leyland car workers are all vainly chasing each others' tails with wage demands of up to 30 per cent? Doesn't Mr Sloan even begin to appreciate that wage inflation on this scale will inevitably set the pace for a ruinously inflationary wage increase for two million engineering workers when their agreement expires this year? And doesn't Mr Sloan even care that this madness will further fuel the flames for 10-15 per cent price inflation that directly hits at those who cannot organise, the pensioners and the poor? Since when has the determination of wages and prices by the ruthless exercise of market power been compatible with socialist planning and social justice—let alone a rational economic policy for this country?

Space forbids me from setting out in detail the incomes policy that I would like a Labour Government to pursue. But that there is an overwhelming case for a statutory policy is surely evident to all who wish to take the jungle out of the pattern of wages and income distribution in Britain. Far from this being impossible until we have a "socialist planned economy", it is indeed an essential precondition of such an economy. As the trade union leaders show absolutely no interest in social justice or in improving the lot of the poorly-paid workers, it is up to the government. Certainly let the unions be consulted about the distribution of the national cake—but let us abandon the farce of pretending that one day the unions will suddenly see sense, and co-operate. They won't. I dislike the idea of statutory control of the unions as much as Mr Sloan, but if such control is eventually imposed the unions have only themselves to blame.

PHILIP HINCHLIFF.

### The Doubters

I note in the *Freethinker* (24 April) that 58 per cent of Church members in Dawley, Shropshire, accepted the miracles as related in the Bible. It appears, however, that only "45 per cent of Church members unreservedly believe" in "life after death". If this suggests a certain inconsistency amongst Church members, what about the three per cent of churchgoers who doubted the existence of Jesus Christ completely!

CHARLES BYASS.

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