

radical redistribution and revolutionary egalitarianism. In each case, he was operating from radically different premises and concerns. Circumstances lead me to suspect that the closing, if not the opening, phase of Jouvenel's political life may have been driven by a search to get out of harm's way.

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Britain's Liberal Legacy

by Derek Turner

In Defence of the Realm

by David Conway
Ashgate: Aldershot; 218 pp., £45



One can easily imagine meeting David Conway in the company of Adam Smith or David Hume—an historical conceit that would please him. A quietly spoken, formidably intelligent philosophy professor, he is a senior research fellow at Civitas, the think tank that grew out of the Institute for Economic Affairs—and a very agreeable lunch companion, as I discovered when I interviewed him for *Right Now!* late last year.

Conway's previous books include *A Farewell to Marx: An Outline and Appraisal of His Theories* (1987), *Classical Liberalism: The Unvanquished Ideal* (1995), and *The Rediscovery of Wisdom: From Here to Antiquity in Search of Sophia* (2000). His latest book is a closely argued, carefully expressed defense not just of the Anglo-Saxon-derived nation-state but of classical liberalism, for him the acme of possible politico-economic organization and the indispensable prerequisite for national cohesion and international harmony.

Conway is alive to the complexities of the word *liberal*. Although it has become almost a term of abuse in the United States, in the United Kingdom, it retains some of its traditional meaning of generosity and tolerance and is accordingly laid claim to by most politicians and opinion-formers (many of whom would seem to be in receipt of stolen goods).

Accordingly, Chapter 1 ("Towards the recovery of liberal vision") is a painstaking definition of various kinds of liberalism. Conway distinguishes between "political liberalism" (e.g., Rawls), "cosmopolitan liberalism" (e.g., Dummett), two kinds of "liberal culturalism" (by which he means multiculturalism), "*modus vivendi*" liberalism (e.g., John Gray), and different types of libertarianism. These variants, Conway believes, are fatally flawed by the lack of accommodation they offer to any concept of the divine.

Conway's earlier attempt to appropriate the tatterdemalion mantle of "equality" appears to demonstrate a lack of understanding that equality is incompatible with true liberty. Actually, all Conway means by equality in this context is that "every human being enjoys an equal moral standing—that is, all possess an identical set of basic moral rights." Yet this term has so many other less pleasing connotations that it might have been better had he avoided its use altogether or simply stated that he believes in equality before the law.

Conway is inherently suspicious of all forms of corporatism, including Catholicism, and sees (quite correctly) in the European Union a communitarian integralism inimical to both individualism and national identities. He has little time for those who are opposed to globalization or who distrust big business:

Such Americanization as globalisation is likely to bring in its wake is unlikely to be anything other than benign, provided America remains true to the biblical ideals and values on which it was originally founded.

His subordinate clause neatly differentiates his views from those of many American neoconservatives, for whom conservatism consists of "consumer choice." Nor does Conway believe in bombing those who do not want to follow the Anglo-American model. On the contrary, he closes his book with the famous quotation from Micah 4: "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." Naturally, he strongly opposes the overblown, politically correct, permanent bureaucracies beloved of so many American neoconservatives.

Conway feels that classical liberalism is essentially divinely inspired. Although *In Defence of the Realm* is academic in

its style (albeit lucidly written and cogently argued), it is inspired by a passionate conviction that the best hope for the world is the widest possible expansion of classical liberalism, underpinned by his own (Jewish) religious sensibility. For him, the origins of classical liberalism lie mostly in Judaism. To support this idea, he cites Cecil Roth, author of a book called *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization* (1938):

The Hebrew Monarchy came into existence under the influence of a conception, to be found nowhere else in antiquity, which regarded the constitution as the result of a tripartite agreement, or covenant, between the People, the ruler, and the Deity . . . [Because] the Deity is the embodiment of justice and righteousness it follows that the monarchy is dependent on the maintenance, not only of certain religious, but also of human values.

Roth believed, as does Conway, that this idealism was transferred to Britain by rulers and visionaries who read the Old Testament assiduously and sought to refashion Britain in emulation of the ancient Israelites. English visionaries imbued with Old Testament ambience learned to see England as similar to ancient Israel, "a divinely elect nation surrounded by idolatrous pagans"—a self-image aided by geography and history. These post-Reformation ideals were reinforced by Britain's subsequent commercial development as a globally trading empire, whose swash-buckling merchant-adventurers gradually metamorphosed into the "nation of shopkeepers" underestimated so disastrously by Napoleon (and Hitler). Other European Protestant nations, such as Sweden, were not affected by classical liberalism to the same degree, largely because of their different trading histories, which inclined them to look more toward Europe than to the open seas and new frontiers. The British qualities Conway so admires were eventually exported with the Anglo-Saxon diaspora to the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere; and so his patriotic solicitude accordingly extends around the globe.

Today, Britain is the classical-liberal state *par excellence* so far as Conway is concerned, a kind of quiet Utopia where

pragmatism and idealism are coregents. His vision of Britain is, at times, almost Miltonian; *In Defence of the Realm* includes long excerpts from such Protestant thinkers as the 18th-century Unitarian minister Richard Price and a final chapter eye-catchingly entitled “Thinking of England, New England and other holy places.” Yet the classical-liberal legacy is increasingly under threat in Britain, through multiculturalism, European integration, and the Blairite program of “modernization,” which has seen Britain’s institutions further undermined. Disintegrative, centrifugal pressures are at work, Conway knows, within all Anglophone countries, and within Israel.

Mass immigration and radical Islam pose potential challenges to classical-liberal values, urges Conway, yet he hopes these can be overcome by appropriate promotion of national public cultures, to which all immigrants would be expected to adhere (whatever their private cultures may be). Yet because of the scale of recent demographic changes, he seems to feel a little unsure on this score; as he said to me, “We must hope that the Anglo-Saxon cultural imprint can be transmitted onwards to non-Anglo-Saxons. In some respects, if that’s not the case, we’re doomed.”

Traditional conservatives will find much to agree with in this book, especially in Chapter 2, in which Conway discusses the threats faced by both classical liberalism and the Anglo-Saxon nation-state. They will admire his intrepid, if carefully phrased, criticism of mass immigration:

Given the current scale in which immigrants have entered Western liberal democracies from countries with radically different cultures, it may be doubted whether current opposition to such immigration is motivated more by racism and xenophobia than by legitimate concerns for social cohesion and for the survival of the national culture of the host society.

They will share his detestation of “anti-national cosmopolitanism,” which Conway describes aptly as “a mindset primarily found among educated Westerners who purport to find their grounds for it in the very liberal ideas and ideals of which, in reality, it is so deeply subversive.” They will applaud

his well-aimed broadsides against such atrocities as affirmative action, tendentious political activism dressed up as Blairite “citizenship” programs, and the “systematic deracination” of Westeners brought about through the media and indoctrination in schools. They will be gratified by his citations of such overlooked thinkers as Sir Arthur Bryant, his defiantly antimodern belief in the existence of “national characters” and the efficacy of the hereditary House of Lords (now, sadly, a strictly academic discussion in the United Kingdom), his vast erudition, his open-mindedness, and his willingness to believe the best of others (which latter traits are not especially widespread among most of those who call themselves liberals).

Yet they will find as well things with which to disagree. Classical liberalism, while it is often congruent with conservatism, is not the same as conservatism—and the alliances the two camps make are often uneasy. The Thatcher governments, for example, were marked by a kind of schizophrenia, in which debased Whiggism warred constantly with populist nationalism and paternalistic High Toryism.

In Defence of the Realm ignores the roles played, or possibly played, in the formation of British national identity by such factors as Celtic paganism (which itself placed considerable emphasis on individual freedom), Greek and Roman philosophies and conceptions of government, and pre-Protestant “liberalizing” initiatives such as Magna Carta and Simon de Montfort’s first English parliament. Conway almost entirely avoids discussing what he called in his *Right Now!* interview “the subtle links between genetics and culture”—although there is a sympathetic and detailed discussion of what he terms, in the present work, the “strangely neglected” writings of William McDougall.

Approbation, or disapprobation, of *In Defence of the Realm* will also be partly a matter of individual personalities. Many people of a conservative bent, especially if they are Catholics or High Anglicans, will not especially relish reading perfervid rhetoricians such as the aforementioned Richard Price, who, it should be remembered, was a fervent supporter not only of the American but of the French Revolution, for which he was famously denounced by Burke—which denunciation Conway views as unjust. Those of us who are uncomfortable with Man-

ichaeism, whose nationalism is more visceral than ideological, and whose historical sympathies are engaged by orthodoxy more than nonconformism, kings more than parliaments, Stuarts more than Hanoverians, Tories more than Whigs, and (in the case of American readers) the South more than the North, will probably find the classical liberal eschatology a little dry—even as we recognize the good things it contains, while honoring the motivations of scholars such as David Conway, who give the other 99.99 percent of liberals a good name.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, published in London.

Lessons From Experience

by Thomas Fleming

The Hunt for Confederate Gold

by Thomas Moore
Alexandria, VA: Fusilier Books;
318 pp., \$17.50



Consider these two premises: First, in 1865, the Confederacy is collapsing, and President Davis, concerned about the funds in the treasury, sends a young naval officer out on a wild expedition to hide the gold, to be used some day to help the South.

Second, in 2005, knowledge of the whereabouts of the hidden gold comes into the possession of a young descendant of the naval officer, and the members of a “neoconfederate” society known as the Fellowship of the South are determined to keep the gold and put it to its intended purpose, but first they have to frustrate the schemes of federal agents.

If this sounds like the plot outline of a cheap thriller, that would be half right. *The Hunt for Confederate Gold* is a thriller with many familiar elements: an alienated hero who only finds himself in accomplishing his mission; a stubborn young woman who challenges his assumptions before joining the crusade; a crusty old scholar of the Old School who just happens to possess the encyclopedic knowledge necessary to put key pieces of an historical puzzle together; a power-crazed federal agent so obsessed with his own