

a duty which, alas, religious bodies have often failed adequately to perform—to criticize and assess the assumptions, aims and methods of contemporary society. What shocks me most about most of our so-called radical theologians is their social conformity, though it is the last thing of which they conceive themselves to be guilty' (p. 126).

The book has four appendices, most interesting of which is 'Grace and Nature in East and West'. Here Mascall summarizes some of the contributions to the 1953 Chevetogne ecumenical conference on grace. One of the most intriguing questions considered is the relation between St Thomas Aquinas and St Gregory Palamas. There are many possible lines of inquiry, and Mascall does little more than list

them. For example, it is significant that Palamas's opponent, Barlaam the Calabrian, was a professed nominalist and appears to have been horrified by the intellectual realism of Thomist scholasticism. Likewise, St Thomas's principle of existence (*esse*) may have more in common with the Eastern view of the divine energies than at first sight appears; both Aquinas and Palamas were anxious to counteract an essentialist trend. It is a pity that Dr Mascall confines this discussion to a few pages of an appendix, even though, of course, it falls outside the scope of the Gifford Lectures. Perhaps in his next book he will take the investigation further.

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**CONSCIENCE VERSUS LAW.** Reflections on the Evolution of Natural Law, by Jeremiah Newman. *The Talbot Press, Dublin, 1971. 193 pp. 90p (pb).*

Those who would dismiss the spectre of Rome rule in a 32-county Ireland as nothing but a creature of Dr Paisley's imagination, should read ch. 11 of this otherwise only slightly instructive book; which may help them to appreciate one real fear affecting Protestants—and not only Protestants—in that part of Ireland which rejoices under the palladium of Britannic liberties (e.g. gerrymandering, indefinite postponement of local elections, imprisonment without trial for being believed to harbour bad thoughts, 20 per cent unemployment, as in Derry . . .). For in that chapter the President of Maynooth, holder of one of the highest academic posts in Ireland, puts forward in all seriousness the following case for the maintenance of the *status quo* and the continued illegality of divorce in the courts (and contraceptives for sale in the shops) of the Republic of Ireland. 'In a society in which the great majority of the people prefer a social fabric in which divorce is not recognized, to introduce it in the name of a minority seems extremely close to legislating directly for the good of the part' (175). 'Divorce legislation and secularization have gone hand in hand' (as in the Code of Canon Law, which contains divorce legislation?) and 'the state has a political obligation to resist the secularization of a Christian society' (176). (No argument is offered for this highly dubious assumption, which leading Christian theologians might wish to dispute.) 'As far as contemporary Ireland is concerned, . . . it is equally clear that

politicians, *qua* politicians, have a very grave duty to exercise care if by introducing divorce legislation they would find themselves "rocking the boat" in the direction of secularism' (181). ' . . . a time may come when the clear majority of the population will positively call for the introduction of divorce. Can today's politician say that this time has already come? If not, why should he stimulate its coming? Would it not be time enough to cater for it when once arrived? Indeed should not the wisdom of the politician be employed in seeking ways and means—in so far as lies within his province—of staving off that day as long as possible?' (181). *Mutatis mutandis*, this is the sort of thing we might have expected from a Mr Faulkner, or at least from a Lord O'Neill; and it may serve to remind us of why consistent civil rights fighters like Miss Bernadette Devlin have campaigned for civil rights in the Republic too.

For the rest, this rambling history of natural law doctrine is neither very original nor very instructive; yet there are tantalizing glimpses of a book Dr Newman might have written, to see what sense could be made of 'conscience' in a totalitarian or authoritarian society, and how such conscience might function in that kind of society, when the stock liberal escapes to 'individual conscience' and 'a pluralist society' are (commendably, in Dr Newman's view, as in that of this reviewer) excluded. Read 'Kantorowicz' (78) and 'Kavanaugh' (193) for the mis-spellings in the text.

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