

[1962. Review of *Conscience and Its Rights to Freedom*, by Eric D'Arcy. *Christianity Today* Apr 27).]

THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG

Conscience and Its Rights to Freedom, by Eric D'Arcy (Sheed & Ward, 1961, 277 pp., \$3.50) is reviewed by Gordon H. Clark, Professor of Philosophy, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Part I of this book traces the concepts of conscience and synderesis from pagan antiquity into the early Middle Ages. Then preparing the basis for his own conclusions, the author devotes Part II to Thomas Aquinas. The last two parts are also Thomistic, but Father D'Arcy attempts to remove certain inconsistencies and oversights from Thomas to arrive at a theory of religious liberty.

Although Thomas prohibits the baptism of Jewish infants against their parents' wishes, he approves the execution of a heretic—unless he has a sufficient following to cause a schism. The author deplores this sentiment. He argues that it is morally wrong to disobey conscience, and hence it is always obligatory to follow conscience, even when mistaken. This right is a part of the fundamental justice of natural law, which a state may not violate. In working out his argument for the freedom of conscience, the author makes noteworthy assertions for the freedom to profess and practice a non-Romish religion.

Some questions remain, however. One wonders whether the argument applies only to the social situation in non-Romish nations, for the author seems to hedge on “consecrational regimes.” Then when claiming Pope Pius XII as an advocate of freedom, he notes that it was a question (not of Spain or Colombia), but of an international community of sovereign states. The pope had said only that suppression of false religion is not *always* necessary.

Apparently the author favors governmental restriction of religion in primitive societies where, “abandoned to irrational forces,” the people “are not in a position to exercise” freedom.

In view of past and present history it will take more than Father D'Arcy's cautious argument to convince us that Romanism is on the side of angels.

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