

Universal Order

THE CATHOLIC PATTERN. By Thomas F. Woodlock, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1942. xxii and 201 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by ROBERT PICK

TODAY, when the planning of a new world order seems to occupy all minds, and in fact, occupies many a pen, it may be timely, indeed, to look into the tenets and the structure of the Catholic church. She, after all, is still the heir of the only planned universal order ever enjoyed by the occidental world since the downfall of the Roman Empire. Mr. Woodlock's book tells not too much of the medieval political mission of the Church as the stable center of the Western world, the very heart of its civilization, and its super-national rallying point, but it contributes a great deal toward our understanding of how this utterly unique organization—the author prefers the term “organism”—could attain, and, for centuries, preserve so firm a hold over the souls of peoples and leaders alike.

In some highly personal and admittedly partisan chapters, Mr. Woodlock

exposes his theories of our days' disorder and its causes: disintegration of the doctrine, secularism, “metaphysical apostasy,” and what he calls the “great superstition”—modern man's confidence in science and the inevitable progress through science. Similar thoughts have, recently, been brought forth by some other writers, too; to trace back to the white man's loss of absolute faith the present “mess” seems to have become, by now, almost something of a truism. But practically none of those writings have even ventured to commend any integral “solution.”

In this respect, this book differs widely from its predecessors. Most significantly, its author places his dogmatic beliefs on the beginning. Thus, the mere contrasting of the all-embracing mansion of the Catholic Church and her theocentric pattern (Part One) with the shambles of our anthropocentric modern world (Part Two) by implication makes Mr. Woodlock's credo appear as the self-evident solution of the problems we are confronted with. “Christianity,” so he quotes Chesterton, “has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found too difficult and so has not been tried.” And by “Christianity” he, of course, means the Catholic faith.

This straightforwardness is the courageous distinction of his book, and at the same time, its inevitable shortcoming—especially since the author had in mind as a reader “a modern man or woman who has never had contact . . . with the Catholic Pattern, as a pattern of life, and has never thought much about it, but who in general views the Catholic Church as a curious survival of the old days . . .” It stands to reason that very few such readers are likely to agree with Mr. Woodlock's thoughts and their implications.

But all of them will enjoy his splendid elucidation of the Catholic faith. Rarely have such all but inexplicable theological matters been dealt with in so tasteful logical and extremely clear a way as they are in these hundred pages. No one but so experienced and “omniscient” (quotation marks his) a newspaperman as Mr. Woodlock, for many years contributing editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, could undertake to familiarize non-Catholic laymen with such highly delicate subjects as the Trinity, the seven sacraments, the Immaculate Conception, the papal infallibility, or the famous “five whys” by which St. Thomas proves that God exists. He does it without any footnotes and cross references.

The boldness of his positive and orthodox Catholicism does not hesitate to introduce as realities both mystery and the miracle. “Every ‘science’ ends in its own mystery, for no science can exhaust all the reality with which it deals.” This may sound debatable reasoning, but there is no question left as to its sincerity and impressive forcefulness. He is intolerant, yes, and so is his pattern. “In nothing perhaps does it stand so completely outside the modern habit of mind as in this attitude, for nowadays we seem to reserve all our tolerance for *ideas* and even up by spending all our intolerance on *persons*.”

Brilliantly, Mr. Woodlock joins issue with higher education and the “instrumentalist” teachings. Less forceful seems what he has to say about the Catholic pattern's relationship to democracy. He restricts himself to demonstrating its consistency with the American political system. But numerically as well as historically, the Roman church is primarily a European power factor. As Mr. G. A. Borgese has brought out well in a recent article, her influence on what the coming European order is to be can hardly be overestimated. And though no doubt is left about her lack of sympathy for the Nazi pattern, Rome's more or less non-benevolent attitude toward all liberal and democratic trends on the European continent during the past 150 years is an established fact. This is a long and intricate story. Today, however, it may be puzzling to learn, once more, that “the Church has lived under all kinds of governments and dealt with all.”


Whatever our objections may be, it is a great experience to watch, in our skeptical modern world, such uncompromising thinking and believing. This is why this book is so valuable.

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Out of the Night

REBIRTH IN LIBERTY. By Eva Lips.
New York: Flamingo Publishing
Company, Inc. 1942. \$3.

Reviewed by P. K. ROBERTS

THE American nation is, for the time being, the only one which is not to be identified as a biological, racial, or even linguistic community. It is primarily a spiritual commonwealth. In more than one respect, American nationality is akin to the Roman citizenship of antiquity or the Catholicism of the early Middle Ages, which stood, as a reality, above the original nationality of the individual. In any case, to be an American is categorically different from being a Frenchman or a Turk. This is why Eva Lips's first demand on herself "Never to compare," worked so extremely well in her Americanization; for it is of no use to measure by the same yardstick phenomena of different categories. But on the other hand, comparison and differentiation are the very fundamentals of knowledge. And this book courageously stresses the complex difficulties of the cultured immigrant to do away with the old values.

"Rebirth in Liberty" is not merely another book on post-Hitler immigration and Americanization. With all its

modesty, it is a valuable contribution to the larger subject of human adaptability and to the great saga of the power of the human spirit, as far from the pathetic "by us" attitude of so many backward-looking European *ci-devants* as it is from the all too familiar type of sloganish flattery. The growth of Mrs. Lips's enthusiasm appears utterly natural. Surprisingly soon, she seems to have felt not only the benefits but also the responsibilities of Americanism and American democracy. Some unpleasant experiences made her, for one, not bitter. But "remember," Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo said to her, "*this was not America*. This is not typical. We are rather young, you know." Her book gives ample proof of her understanding of the idealistic implications of that admonishment.

That same open-mindedness and honesty make the report on her occasional returns to Europe—a fatalistic Europe on the verge of a clearly visible catastrophe—such good reading. Perhaps this part of her book—taken as mere story—falls somewhat short of the host of contemporary foreign correspondent writings. But in personal books, as in the living together of persons, it is, before all, the trend of ideas which counts.

The Disappearing Haven

VANISHING EDEN. By Martin Birnbaum. New York: William E. Rudge's Sons. 1942. 201 pp. \$5.

Reviewed by CLYDE GREENHILL

VOCATIONALLY, Martin Birnbaum is an art expert; avocationally, he is an inveterate traveler, with the soul of a poet, a photographic eye, and a scientist's passion for minutiae.

"Vanishing Eden" is a collection of eleven of Mr. Birnbaum's travel essays dealing with Edens which he mourns—rather erroneously, in most cases—as having been despoiled by the war: the glamorous South Seas, with emphasis on Tahiti, Fiji, and Samoa; Africa, where he made a hard and dangerous motor trip across the Sahara from the Mediterranean to Lake Tanganyika, with digressions into the Congo jungles and to the Dantesque crater of Nyam-lagira, among the Mountains of the Moon; Asia, resulting in a survey of Balinese art and customs, and pilgrimages to the temples of Yunnan; and Central America, as represented by a sojourn in Guatemala and inspection of Mayan ruins there as well as in the area of Honduras and Yucatan.

The author's physical explorations are no less exhausting than his quests for details are exhaustive. He is indefatigably inquisitive about historical background, social conventions, culture, and even ornithology and botany, and his integration of facts uncovered and adventures experienced is cleverly done.

Mr. Birnbaum's style is pompous and flowery at times; nevertheless, his words fulfil their mission, which is to portray the beauties of exotic places and the lives, customs, and traditions of their peoples, highlighted by enough thrills to satisfy the most critical rocking-chair traveler. In addition, there are 106 excellent photographs and maps to guide the reader in the author's footsteps.

The Book-of-the-Month Club announces that reports received to date from members show a total of 660,000 books contributed thus far by its subscribers to the Victory Book Campaign.

Two months ago the Club sent out a special appeal to its 500,000 members urging that a million books be contributed to the men in the service.

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"A kind of Francois Villon . . . El Periquillo puts on a roaring show every minute of the time, which, of course, is why the story has never died. You will go far before you find another book, in any field, which so well expresses its age."

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San Francisco Chronicle

"El Periquillo is the perfect picturesque hero, just as this novel, with its ribaldry and gusto, conforms to a time-honored pattern. What is exceptional about it is its background and the vividness with which it pictures the dregs of a bygone world."

—N. Y. Times Book Review

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