

that it is becoming more and more aggressive in extending the frontiers of Catholic authority into the fields of medicine, education, and foreign policy. In the name of religion, the hierarchy fights birth control and divorce laws in all states. It tells Catholic doctors, nurses, judges, teachers, and legislators what they can and cannot do in many of the controversial phases of their professional conduct. It segregates Catholic children from the rest of the community in a separate school system, and censors the cultural diet of these children. It uses the political power of some twenty-six million official American Catholics to bring American foreign policy in line with Vatican temporal interests.

Against such a challenge or offer alternatives to any of its policies, the hierarchy exerts its great power as a pressure group; "no editor, politician, publisher, merchant, or motion-picture producer can express his defiance openly—or publicize documented facts—without risking his future."

In sum, Catholic clericalism is battling, sometimes openly, sometimes secretly, against American freedom. In their thrust toward exclusive monopoly for their doctrine and discipline, clerical interests invade all the freedoms which are the characteristic of the American way of life. Mr. Blanshard suggests repelling this invasion by means of a resistance in which truly democratic Catholics would join with all other Americans loyal to democracy. This resistance would aim to free communication between Catholics and non-Catholics on matters of faith and morals, especially as these affect medicine, marriage, divorce, and sex. It would seek to exclude mere priests from exercising authority in medical issues. It would seek to abolish clerical censorship and inquisition over what is written, read, spoken, or listened to. It would seek either that parochial schools should be made to meet the educational requirements of the free public schools or that they be replaced by such schools. It would keep inviolate and strengthen the American principle of separation of church and state. It would require that bishops and others of the hierarchy, being appointed from Rome by the ruler of a foreign state, should register as foreign agents under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. It would make sure that Catholic judges loyally follow the law of the land without conforming it to that of the Catholic Church. It would distinguish what is the property of the clergy and tax it like other property. But it must seek these ends in the spirit of freedom and fellowship with the Catholic people: "American freedom is their freedom and any curtailment of that freedom by clerical power is an even

more serious matter for them than it is for non-Catholics." It requires essentially liberating Catholicism, the sacramental religion, from Catholicism, the imperial political power. Can this be done? Mr. Blanshard is not sure, but he is sure that the nation is at the point where the risk must be taken.

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2. A Catholic View

By William S. Lynch

IT BEGINS to look as though the subject treated in this book still cannot be discussed dispassionately and effectively. Maybe it is the nature of churches, races, and nations to defy considerations free of extraneous feelings or points of view. A Catholic reader of this book is going to be thoroughly provoked, a non-Catholic is going to be horrified. And so, since the Catholic Church seems to be one of those things on which no one can look with complete indifference, judgments from written materials will have to be made only after studying a wide variety of viewpoints.

This author is quite correct when he says "probably no phase of our life is in greater need of candid discussion than the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to American institutions, and certainly no important factor in our life has been more consistently neglected by responsible writers." Even so, he succeeds in muddying further the waters of understanding between Catholic and non-Catholic. On his own premises, the effectiveness of his work should be judged from the standpoint of furthering American unity and of bringing a large minority group into closer concordance with a puzzled majority. In this he has failed.

Paul Blanshard would appear to be a man of modern sentiment whose liberalizing is literal and dogmatic, one of those who are shocked by departure from scientific formula as they see it. Such people give short shrift to their less intellectualizing fellows whose desires transcend the antiseptic lab and who resist the statistical dot they may have to become. For ignorance and depravity there can be no patience, but these are not to be confused with traditional, spiritual, and even poetic satisfactions found in social institutions. Mr. Blanshard considers benighted. In fairness, this book does contain several incidental phrases which, if searched for and found, provide technical evidence that the author knows there is a decent thing or two to be said of the institu-

tion he shows in such sinister light.

Many people do not like the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church on birth control, abortion, cremation, divorce, and a number of other things cutting across social and moral ethics. Many Catholics do not like them. These are matters which relate to individual conscience and social consequence. Democratically speaking, the individual may or may not subscribe to them as he sees fit. Under guarantees of freedom of conscience he is free to choose his beliefs. If, however, the believer attempts to coerce non-believers to his practices, the issue becomes a different one and the coerced can be expected to protest. It is this failure to distinguish between the Catholic's right to believe what he does and the non-Catholic's protest against being forced to subscribe to Catholic practice which confuses the issue and invalidates much of what is said here. In short, the author is out of order in questioning implicitly or explicitly the Catholic's right to refuse euthanasia, or to believe in miracles. He is on better ground when he criticizes efforts to make non-Catholics do the same.

Until a better job has been done in interdenominational and intercultural understanding, it is reasonable to expect distrust of the Catholic as there is of the Jew, the Negro, and others who for one reason or another do not fit neatly into the dominant mores pattern. This is particularly true of a group as large and as well organized as the Catholic. This distrust is compounded further by the relatively recent period during which Catholic immigrants have swelled the size of the Church in America. In turn, Catholics have viewed with too much alarm the uncomprehending world about them. Leadership has been directed too much to the problems of staking out political and social claims and not enough to the cultural.

These factors are pointed out in this book, and in them are lessons for the Catholic who frequently is as ashamed of the low level of scholarship and censorship as the non-Catholic is amused or irritated. Similarly, religious finance in many instances takes on vulgar methods, as it seems to in almost all fields where it is required. Examples of these are presented and documented as they are on other subjects throughout the book. Much is made of the documentation of facts, by the way, and there are hundreds of them, certainly to the ordinary reader, unquestionable. How validly they are assembled and how well chosen to prove a point or established conclusion is something else again. That is a matter for a Catholic theologian. The net result in many in-

stances is not too distant from a rather low level of anti-Catholicism, as though the Ku Klux Klan had gone intellectual.

After all the charges of social backwardness, of anti-intellectualism and medical barbarism have been made and examined, there are a couple which deserve extremely serious consideration. Of these, perhaps the most disturbing is what appears to be the divisiveness of public and parochial schools. The democratic solution of this problem is without doubt the most urgent of all. Many of the others are soluble in the distinction between form and practice. The common schooling of future American citizens is basic to the integrating of America and in it lies the greatest hope of the realization of our ideals. Historically we have carried and still do carry private independent schools. Often they are based on class or intellectual distinctions which have been ignored while educational philosophers were able to find justification for them as "pilot" schools or experimental yardsticks. It is not so easy to rationalize them in large numbers on these grounds. And then we run afoul of the secularism which has evolved as a fundamental principle of public education. Even the feeble provision of released time has been ruled out. Now other denominations are establishing schools of their own. Somehow the non-denominational nature of the public schools must be maintained and at the same time deep-feeling religious groups allowed to train their young in the principles of their philosophies. Mr. Blanshard's sense of the high importance of the public school is sound, but the problem is much wider than he presents it. It is related closely, too, to the unevenness in the quality of our public schools as well as our parochial ones.

To return to the book as a whole. Here are expanded and revised the twelve articles which appeared in *The Nation* and caused the by now famous dispute with the Board of Superintendents of the New York City public schools. Whatever the merits of that debate, the book raises a number of points of concern to all Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic. Unfortunately, its effectiveness is ruined by a complete lack of comprehension of what constitutes the appeal of the Church to its members. The millions of Catholics who exist in America, as active and participating adherents of the American dream, must be something more than priest-ridden devotees of a jealous Roman sovereign.

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Fiction. The appearance of a war novel that brilliantly records the life of our airmen with honesty and without rancor is an event worth recording. Martin Quigley's "A Tent on Corsica" is commendably brief. It records the daily life of the airmen of a bomber squadron who are facing death or monotony with honest realism. In "Twilight on the Floods" Marguerite Steen continues the history of the slave-trading family whose earlier days were recorded in her fabulously successful "The Sun Is My Undoing." In comparison with these books, "Fraternity Village" comes from another world. It is a collection taken from the hundred or more popular magazine stories of rural life and character in Maine that Ben Ames Williams has been writing and selling for thirty years.

Late-Afternoon Sun Is My Undoing

TWILIGHT ON THE FLOODS. By Marguerite Steen. New York: Doubleday & Co. 782 pp. \$3.95.

By HARRISON SMITH

EIGHT years have passed since Marguerite Steen's massive, twelve-hundred-page novel "The Sun Is My Undoing" became a best seller in England and America and, with a few of its predecessors, established the pattern for today's exuberant historical novel that satiates, stuns, and apparently absorbs its readers. If it was astonishing then that Miss Steen, after writing a dozen or so varied English novels, should have turned out this exhaustive melodrama of the British slave trade, it is even more remarkable that after this lapse of time so versatile a writer should return to the same subject and the same family for her latest book. "Twilight on the Floods" is in every sense a continuation of "The Sun Is My Undoing." Here are the descendants and relatives of the original Matthew Flood, the mercantile houses and wharves of Bristol, the same African Gold Coast, the same sailing ships. It

is as if Margaret Mitchell had published five years ago a successor to "Gone with the Wind," with Scarlett O'Hara playing the part of a matriarchal great-grandmother reigning over her old plantation.

In the intervening years Bristol and the Floods have suffered a sea change since the second Matthew sailed up the Avon River with his sons in 1831 to find Bristol in flames and his old benefactress in her coffin. He established his firm and fought his ruthless way into power, so that two of his grandsons could become do-nothing gentlemen with large estates.

The novel actually begins in the year 1891. Queen Victoria sits on the throne, the symbol of peace, prosperity, and the British Empire on which the sun may never set. Under her aegis the Flood ships still sail to the Gold Coast to trade trinkets and the cheap manufactures of Manchester for gold and ivory. It has been forgotten that the first Matthew Flood had made his fortune by brutally kidnapping Negro families and selling them in the West Indies. There was still a faint smell about the family of which only young Johnny Flood, old Matthew's great-grandson, peevishly idle in his great mansion, was aware.

Johnny, perched on one of the many limbs of the family tree drawn by the author for the reader's bewilderment, becomes the center of the novel. Young Johnny runs away to sea and gets his first intoxicating and terrifying glimpse of the Gold Coast. He is the awkward duckling, small and intense, and inevitably he becomes a clerk in the family business. In the later Nineties Bristol began to give up some of its trade and prestige to Liverpool. John's brief memories of West Africa send him back to the Gold Coast as his uncle's agent, to restore the prestige of the firm by

