

# Religion and American Democracy

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*A Reply to*

PAUL BLANSHARD'S

**American Freedom  
and Catholic  
Power**

by GEORGE H. DUNNE, S.J.

THE AMERICA PRESS

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . . .

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**Father George H. Dunne** entered the Society of Jesus in 1926. After his preliminary studies in classics, science and philosophy, he went to China, where he spent some years in study and teaching. Returning to the United States, he took a doctorate in Political Science at the University of Chicago. Later, he taught in the Institute of Social Sciences at St. Louis University, and at Loyola University, Los Angeles. At present he is stationed at St. Francis Xavier Church, Phoenix, Arizona.

As one devoted to the elimination of racial and religious prejudice, Father Dunne is well qualified to expose the bigotry underlying Paul Blanshard's *American Freedom and Catholic Power*. The keenness of his analysis and his power of laying a finger on the weaknesses of Blanshard's case stem from his law school days before becoming a Jesuit, as well as from his brilliant philosophical and theological studies as a member of the Order.

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*(This formula is now in general use in the Archdiocese of New York)*

## **I: Preface to Criticism**

*Paul Blanshard's controversial articles about the Catholic Church, which originally appeared in the Nation magazine, have now been published, in extended and revised form, as a book (American Freedom and Catholic Power. By Paul Blanshard. The Beacon Press, Boston, 1949). In this article and others which will follow I shall examine the book, which the author himself represents as "a reasoned and temperate discussion of the place of Catholic power in our national life" (Blanshard, op. cit., p. 3) and which Dr. John Haynes Holmes recommends as "accurate, sound in argument, objective in spirit—a solid piece of work if I ever saw one" (quoted in the advertisements).*

**I** THINK IT IS IMPORTANT at the outset sharply to define the scope and purpose of these articles. I do not intend to "answer" Blanshard's charges. This needs to be made quite clear, inasmuch as Blanshard's favorite rebuttal to any criticism is to boast that his critic has not refuted his accusations (cf. Blanshard's letter in the *Humanist*, August, 1948, p. 54). To refute Blanshard's charges would require several volumes. A paragraph, a sentence, even a phrase suffices to make an accusation. A book may be required to refute it. To make a charge it is enough to say that the Catholic doctrine on a specific moral problem is based on nothing but "arbitrary theological formulas." To refute the charge adequately would require a comprehensive discussion of the precise nature

of Catholic doctrine, its history, the sources and principles of Catholic moral theology. The fomenters of bigotry, whether racial or religious, have always taken full advantage of this fact.

The issue with which I am concerned in these articles is whether Blanshard's book is, as he and his publishers contend, an objective criticism or a contribution to the literature of religious bigotry. In examining this question I shall, of course, answer some of his charges, but only for the purpose indicated.

Neither shall I be able within the limits of these articles to call attention to all the examples of prejudice in Blanshard's book. They are legion. Often prejudice lurks in a nuance, in the turn of a phrase, in a sly innuendo. (For an example of the latter, see his remarks about the priest in the confessional: "Particularly when the penitent is a woman, her mind in the process of unburdening her regrets and worries is delivered, so to speak, wide open to the priest." Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, p. 39.) It is when he employs this technique, as he does over and over again, that Blanshard operates on the lowest level of religious bigotry and takes his proper place alongside the *Menace*, with which he likes to think he has nothing in common (see Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 266). I shall have to be satisfied to point out the main distortions which vitiate the book so completely that even the just criticisms and truths which it contains are hopelessly compromised by the prejudice of the whole. And this is, perhaps, the most unfortunate thing about the book. There are serious questions about Catholic attitudes and policies which need to be frankly and honestly discussed. The Catholic attitude on the question of the union of Church and State is one. Blanshard has so poisoned the atmosphere that the possibility of a healthy airing of these questions is greatly lessened.

Certain other preliminary observations are called for. Blanshard and his publishers make a point of the fact that his book is well documented. It is quite possible to write a book in which, for the most part, the facts, *to the extent that they are stated*, are correctly stated and well documented, but which is yet prejudiced and false.

Let me give two examples of how this is done. The first is one, of a great many, taken from Blanshard's book. It is possible to cite abundant documentation to establish the fact that the Catholic Church teaches that "there is no salvation outside the Church." This is an indisputable fact. If one leaves it there, without adding the theological commentary which explains the doctrine, the reader is left to infer that Protestants, Jews and pagans are necessarily lost. A wholly false impression is created upon the basis of a documented fact. The whole truth is that the Church teaches that no man is lost unless he deliberately rejects God. Those who are in good faith and live according to the lights given them are "inside" the Church whether they know it or not. Protestants might be amused at the notion of possibly belonging willy-nilly to the Catholic Church, but they hardly have grounds for being furious—as they might well be, if they thought they were inevitably assigned to hell by the Catholic Church.

My other example is a little anti-semitic tract I might compose in the style employed by Blanshard throughout his book, merely by substituting "Jewish" for "Catholic." Its effect is produced by mixing facts with bigoted slantings:

The American Jewish *people* have done their best to join the rest of America, but the rabbis have never been assimilated. They are still fundamentally Eastern European or Near Asian in their spirit and directives (cf. Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 10).



It would be a mistake to judge the *power* of the Jewish community in terms of numbers only. Even a minority bloc in the population can make a tremendous impression if it is closely knit (cf. Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 11).

The Jewish synagogue is an important item in the technique of denominational display. The synagogue is usually a big synagogue, and often an oversized synagogue.

. . . The big synagogue in the American community is the Exhibit A of rabbinical power, and the Jewish people have accepted it as their symbol of success even when it is heavily mortgaged (cf. Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 12).

The observer of any Jewish religious ceremony is impressed by its foreign character. Even the names of their feast days emphasize their foreign provenance: Rosh Hodesh, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukah, Lag Beomer, Shavuot. They are celebrated with elaborate ceremonies in the synagogues, with impressive pageantry and a great many chants sung by a be-shawled cantor and be-shawled choral assistants. These chants sound strange to ears accustomed to the traditional American melodies of Cole Porter or even though he is a Jew, of Irving Berlin.

These feasts and their ceremonial pageantry, commemorating events that happened thousands of years ago in a remote and foreign part of the world, annoy and disturb non-Jewish Americans, who are likely to ask: "Is not such religious observance of servility to the historic memories of the Chosen Race utterly contrary to the American tradition?" "What good American cares about the Bar Cochba Revolt, sixty years after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem?" "How did this Asiatic posturing ever get to the United States?" (cf. Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 15).

I am ashamed to have written this even by way of example. It is anti-semitism worthy of Gerald K. Smith—or of Paul Blanshard.



Each of the facts stated, to the extent that it is stated, is true and easily documented. Yet the total impression created is wholly false. It is not necessary here to analyze the technique employed to achieve this misleading result. It should be obvious to the discerning critic. What is difficult to understand is that otherwise intelligent and discerning people (a Norman Thomas for example—cf. *Nation*, May 14, 1949, pp. 560 ff.), are blind to a prejudice in Blanshard which they would detect immediately if it were anti-semitic instead of anti-Catholic.

Whether Blanshard employs these techniques consciously or subconsciously I do not know. That is a question that touches upon his honesty. I think it is altogether probable that Blanshard is honest in his convictions. An objectively dishonest criticism may proceed from a subjectively honest man who is blinded by his own prejudices. I suppose it is quite possible for a Blanshard to get to heaven hating the Catholic Church.

One of Blanshard's troubles is that he suffers from a delusion of his own infallibility. He does not admit the possibility of his being in error. Consequently he does not admit the possibility of anyone disagreeing with him for reasons of honest and independent intellectual judgment. If you are a Catholic layman and disagree with his doctrines, it is because you are duped by "the priests." If you are a priest (after a few chapters of Blanshard the very name has acquired a sinister connotation) and disagree with him, it is simply because you are a dummy for a ventriloquist Pope.

Thus, in answering an article of mine (see *Commonweal*, March 12, 1948), in which I discussed his first three *Nation* articles, Blanshard dismisses me contemptuously: "Naturally, my criticisms would be offensive to a member of the priesthood because a priest is bound by oath to accept and propagate the very policies which I

hold to be reactionary" (*Humanist*, August, 1948, p. 53).

This is a fair example of Blanshard's technique throughout his book. Let us examine it closely. It reveals much about the hollowness of Blanshard's claim to be an impartial and objective critic. To say that he disagreed with me, to point out that my facts were wrong, or to insist that my argument was faulty for such and such a reason, would be fair debate. To dismiss from the start anything I might have to say, upon the ground, clearly implied, that a priest is incapable of being honest, sincere, objective or intellectually convinced, is not fair debate.

I have not at any time taken an "oath to accept and propagate" any policies, nor do I know of any priest who has. I am a Catholic because I believe in the truth of the Catholic doctrinal position. I do not agree with all the policies of every or of any Pope, much less of every or of any bishop; nor is there anything in my faith which obliges me to do so. (Blanshard constantly confuses policy with doctrine, doctrine with policy, and confuses matters of pious belief, of opinion and of historical interpretation with doctrine.)

If Blanshard had said that, as a priest, I would find it extremely difficult and, usually, impossible to express public disagreement with the policies of a bishop, he would have been on solid ground. I should have agreed with him and would be in a position out of my own experience to document the charge. But to say, as he does, that the only reason I do not agree with his criticisms is that "Father Dunne is not *permitted* to agree with me" (*Humanist*, August, 1948, page 57), indicates Blanshard's inability to admit that on any matter upon which he has pronounced judgment there is any room for an honest difference of opinion. I scarcely need to point out that Blanshard's attitude is immeasurably more intolerant than the intolerance which he attributes

to the Catholic Church and which so infuriates him. While the Church regards anyone who disagrees with her doctrinal position as in error, at least she admits that those who disagree with her may be honest, sincere, in good faith and not necessarily fatuous.

It is true that there is a widespread and dangerous tendency in Catholic circles to resent and condemn any criticism of Catholic institutions, ecclesiastical policies or ecclesiastical personalities. It is not true, as Blanshard supposes, that every rejection of his or any other criticism is due to this tendency.

Georges Bernanos, in his *Lettres aux Anglais*, wrote a fiery criticism of the hierarchy and the clergy far more caustic, severe, and even violent, than anything Blanshard could write. Besides the essential difference that Bernanos wrote out of a passionate love for Christ and His Church that could not brook in silence her betrayal by ministers of mediocrity who consistently sacrifice truth and justice to expediency, there is the other essential difference that Bernanos was not blinded by prejudice.

Blanshard believes that as a priest I am bound to find offensive any criticism of the policies and attitudes of Catholics, especially of the clergy, high and low. It is an adequate answer to tell Blanshard and his supporters that my favorite author is Léon Bloy, the searing blasts of whose volcanic criticisms would curl Blanshard's hair.

Nothing healthier for the Church in this country could happen than the emergence of a Bloy or a Bernanos in our midst. If they emerge, they will be anathematized in many Catholic circles. They will also be warmly welcomed by many other Catholics, who, like myself, reject Blanshard's book as an unfortunate contribution to the cause of bigotry.

## ***II: The Great Catholic Conspiracy***

**S**EVERAL YEARS AGO I delivered a speech before 15,000 people at an anti-Ku Klux Klan rally in Los Angeles. The audience represented a good cross-section of the community: predominantly working class and middle class with a sprinkling of the upper class. There were Gentiles and Jews, Protestants and Catholics. Undoubtedly there was a minority of Communists in the audience, possibly several hundred. The overwhelming majority were simply citizens concerned about the preservation of American and democratic ideals threatened by KKK terrorism. The chairman of the meeting was the Attorney General of California. I was one of eight speakers. Another was the District Attorney of San Francisco, a devout Catholic.

There was not a subversive word or an un-American word uttered in a single speech that night. There was a great deal said about the dignity of man, the inalienable rights of man, about justice, about charity, about fair play, about the brotherhood of man, about democracy. The audience responded with enthusiasm. I came away with the exalted feeling that such a demonstration and manifestation of the dynamism of democratic ideals inevitably arouses.

Subsequently two reports, one of four pages, the other of nineteen pages, were mailed upon stationery marked "Confidential" to the Coadjutor Bishop of the diocese, to my own superior, to certain parish priests and, I suppose to others. These reports purported to describe the meeting in detail. They caused me a great deal of trouble.

The author of these documents, it turned out, was the chief of the private police force of a large industrial plant notorious for its anti-union labor policy. His thinking and consequently his reports were obviously controlled by two assumptions that reflected the bias of his mind: labor unions are "Red" and foreigners are "Reds."

When I read his two reports on the meeting—copies of them came into my hands—I was astounded. It was impossible to recognize in his description the meeting in which I had participated. Yet the curious thing about it was that his actual reporting from the factual point of view, apart from minor details, was substantially accurate. How did he manage to paint a wholly deceptive picture without deviating very materially from the facts?

By a very simple technique: he began with the assumption, simply stated as a categorical fact in the first paragraphs of his initial report, that the 15,000 people assembled in the Olympic auditorium were "a subversive group." Once that assumption was made, the most innocent details observable at any mass gathering acquired a sinister and conspiratorial flavor. For instance: "8:40 P.M., people began to arrive in the hall . . . 8:45, Father Dunne arrives and takes his place on the platform . . . 8:47, there are small groups of people clustered in the vestibule . . . 8:50, some people are going out, some coming in. . ."

The conspiratorial atmosphere has been established. The mind of the unwary reader, who has himself witnessed exactly the same details at the fights, or the wrestling matches, at political conventions, business conventions, Rotary Club conventions, now begins to sense something sinister in all these goings on. The simple act of someone stepping outside to take a smoke, or leaving the balcony to hunt for the gentlemen's lavatory, becomes a significant detail in the vast mosaic of

conspiracy that is being built up. The groups of people gathered in the vestibule (probably making dates for bowling the next night) become furtive, shadowy figures discussing in sibilant whispers the master plan for dynamiting the City Hall. When Father Dunne called upon the churches and the labor unions to spearhead the "fight for democracy," clearly he was urging his listeners to seize the weapons nearest at hand and pour out into the streets to man the barricades. Since Father Dunne is manifestly "an absolute subverter of the American way of life," his very virtues become vices. The fact that "he is clear, direct and intelligent in his presentation," that "he does not use notes, nor read his speech, gives the listener *the impression that he is convinced of what he is saying*. At no time does his audience lose the trend of his thoughts." *For these very reasons, "Father Dunne becomes more dangerous."*

Note the subtle way in which this kind of propaganda operates. The supposition of subversive conspiracy once accepted, then the very fact that Father Dunne speaks with sincerity proves that he is insincere; the fact that he speaks with conviction proves he is merely cunning.

Then there is the master touch. "Father Dunne speaks with a slight accent." Ah-ha! South Side Chicago with a heavy coating of Los Angeles, flavored with Chinese and French? More probably Jewish or Russian! In any event—foreign! The last doubt about his subversive character disappears.

What has all this to do with Paul Blanshard's book? A great deal. The technique so effectively employed by my friend, the industrial cop, to destroy my reputation is the technique employed by Blanshard against the Church. I recommend both documents to the political science departments of our universities as study material for their courses in Propaganda Analysis.

In the first paragraphs of his book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, Paul Blanshard states the premise in terms of which all his facts will be interpreted. "The Catholic problem," as he sees it, is "the matter of the use and abuse of power by an organization that is not only a church but a state within a state, and a state above a state." From that point on Catholicism is dealt with as a vast conspiracy in which, as in all conspiracies, the masses of the people—in this case the Catholic laity—are helpless pawns and dupes, held in bondage and shrewdly manipulated by a closely knit and well-disciplined and extraordinarily efficient *Politburo*, which is the hierarchy, and its political commissars, who are "the priests."

The sole objective of the conspirators is "power." And since the "Catholic problem" is "not primarily a religious problem" but "a political problem" (Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 3), all the goings-on in the Catholic Church are related solely to the drive for power. If there are huge and magnificent Jewish synagogues in this country, as there are, and huge and magnificent Protestant churches, as there are, these edifices have presumably been built to provide fitting and adequate temples for the worship of Almighty God. But when Catholics build "a big church" (the italics are Blanshard's), as they "usually" do (actually, of course, for every "big" Catholic church in this country there are a dozen "little" churches), it is merely a "technique of denominational display." "The big church in the American community is the Catholic hierarchy's Exhibit A of ecclesiastical power" (p. 12). These "traditionally showy edifices must be weighed carefully in assessing the real hold of the Catholic hierarchy upon the American people" (*ibid.*).

In the parish to which I am presently attached a rapidly growing community has rendered the formerly

commodious church wholly inadequate. In addition to the six Sunday Masses in the church, we now have four Masses in the school cafeteria. I am a daily ear-witness to the complaints of the people who do not like being shunted over to the cafeteria, or forced to stand jam-packed in the vestibule or in the nooks and alcoves of the church, and who are subjecting the pastor to constant pressure to build a larger church. Before long, despite his reluctance to add to the parish debt, he will be forced to yield. This is how conspiratorial priests impose intolerable burdens upon a mass of enslaved and powerless lay Catholics for the sole purpose of building huge monuments to ecclesiastical power.

When tens of thousands of Shriners parade through the streets of Chicago, this is simply a colorful and exciting spectacle about which no good American need be disturbed. But tens of thousands of members of the Holy Name Society parading through the streets of Boston are a sight to send cold chills through the spine of every patriotic Protestant American (p. 13). The pageantry of a Shriners' parade, with thousands of American businessmen looking oddly out of place in their Arab fezzes and baggy pants, is part of the great American tradition. The pageantry and ecclesiastical costumes of Catholic religious processions "annoy and disturb non-Catholic Americans" who ask "how did this medieval posturing ever get to the United States?" (p. 15).

It got here because this country—unlike many European countries, Protestant and Catholic, and now communist—believes in religious freedom. Most Americans, whether Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, are determined to preserve this freedom—the freedom to build churches and schools, to gather in halls or in stadia or to parade peacefully in the streets with whatever pageantry pleases them, and the freedom for people like Blanshard who are



annoyed by the Cardinal's "red cloak three yards long" (p. 15) to go to the ball game when Catholics parade.

The busy offices of the Federal Council of Churches or of the Protestant Mission Societies or of the Anti-Defamation League are presumably a legitimate part of the American scene. The busy offices of the NCWC become a honeycombed nest of conspiracy "full of busy young priests, lobbyists, pamphleteers, journalists and lawyers, who coordinate the Catholic population of the country as one great pressure group when any 'Catholic issue' arises" (p. 29). Knowing how discouraged some of the people in the NCWC headquarters sometimes get in their efforts to bring understanding, to say nothing of acceptance, of Catholic social philosophy to the Catholic population, lay and clerical, I am sure they will be amazed to learn of their success in coordinating the Catholic body into "one great pressure group."

Blanshard lists several dozen Catholic organizations, ranging from the National Catholic Educational Association to the Catholic Total Abstinence Union (pp. 29, ff.). The assumption of conspiracy once made, it suffices to compile an impressive list of participating organizations to fortify the impression of conspiratorial and subversive tentacles reaching out into every cranny of American life. My friend in Los Angeles employed exactly the same technique in reporting the meeting I addressed.

To Blanshard it is significant that Catholic Action describes itself as "an army engaged in a holy war for religion" (p. 31). There is a phrase that should open the eyes of the most tolerantly inclined! As one who has actively participated in many Catholic Action cells I am in a position to reassure Blanshard's frightened readers. The nature of this "holy war" consists chiefly in frank self-criticism of one's own attitudes and behavior patterns in terms of Christian ideals of justice, charity and

truth, and discussion of how to Christianize one's environment, chiefly by the force of example.

We are well beyond the point of absurdity when the annual selection of a Catholic Mother of the Year is described as part of the sinister plot—the hierarchy “boldly appropriating” an American idea and perverting that idea to its own sinister ends (p. 31). I do not know whether the Jewish people select a Jewish Mother of the Year, or the Methodists a Methodist Mother of the Year, but if they did, I should think it an altogether appropriate custom and not at all an act of sabotage.

By the end of his second chapter Blanshard is so carried away with his obsession about conspiracy that the most serious and damaging and sweeping charges are presented as incontrovertible facts: “Is it surprising that, with such a perfect instrument for the control of conduct, the priest does not hesitate to extend the directive power of the confessional into the regions of politics, sociology and economics?” (p. 39).

Lacking Blanshard's talent for sweeping generalizations incapable of proof, I cannot state categorically that no priest has ever introduced politics, sociology or economics into the confessional. I can state that in forty-four years as a Catholic I have gone to confession to literally hundreds of priests and have yet to hear anything remotely touching upon these matters mentioned by my confessor. In twenty-three years as a Jesuit I have lived on close terms of companionship with hundreds of priests. I think I know what their attitude towards the confessional is, and it is possible to say that Blanshard's charge is a grotesque caricature and a base libel.

Every object seen under water is a caricature. Blanshard sees everything Catholic through the aqueous prism of conspiracy.

### III. *The Church and Democracy*

“UNDERNEATH ALL its ponderous verbiage, the Catholic theory of Church and State is quite simple. It is essentially a variation of the doctrine of the divine right of rulers” (Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 44).

This is how Blanshard disposes of Catholic political philosophy. His “proof” is a truncated text, which Blanshard misunderstands, from Leo XIII’s encyclical, *The Christian Constitution of States*.

Certainly the Catholic theory is that the ultimate source of public authority is God, not the multitude and not—the point ignored by Blanshard—the prince. The question in terms of which the doctrine of the divine right of rulers is resolved is whether this authority, whose ultimate origin is God, rests proximately in the people, who may delegate its exercise to prince or president, or proximately in the prince, who is then answerable not to the people but to God alone. The latter alternative is the doctrine of the divine right of rulers. The former alternative, which vests sovereignty in the people, is Catholic political theory.

Naturally there have been Catholics, as there have been Protestants, as there have been atheists and agnostics, who have defended the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Bossuet, the French orator and bishop (1627-1704), was one of the more eloquent of these. They were apologists for a system and were influenced more by their own social, economic and political predilections than by a rational analysis of the implications of the Catholic philosophy of man and society.

To those of Blanshard's readers who are honestly interested in knowing what Catholic political theory is, I recommend *The Growth of Political Thought in the West*, by Harvard's Professor Charles H. McIlwain (not a Catholic), the leading authority in this country on this subject, and Heinrich Rommen's scholarly work, *The State in Catholic Thought*.

In evaluating Blanshard's critique of the Catholic position, it is important not only to understand what the Catholic position really is, but also to understand what Blanshard's position really is. There is no doubt that between the true position of Catholics and the position of Blanshard there exists a basic conflict.

Blanshard is a political positivist who regards the state as the unique and absolute source of all rights. This is essentially fascism. Blanshard will not like to be told this. He is peculiarly sensitive on this point (p. 243). The fact remains that in its logical consequences his theory is indistinguishable from Mussolini's "nothing above the state, beyond the state, outside the state."

That this is Blanshard's position is clear from the scandal he takes, and expects all Americans to share, in the fact that Catholic political philosophy affirms the right and, in some circumstances, the duty of citizens to resist the law. Far from being, as Blanshard alleges (p. 52), an un-American attitude, this is the theory in terms of which the Fathers of the American Revolution justified their revolt against England.

Undoubtedly Blanshard would reply that his insistence upon absolute submission to the law, regardless of its character, applies only in a democracy and that this absolves his theory of any taint of fascism. It is true that the probabilities of tyranny are far less where people are free to elect their representatives than under a dictatorship. But it is infantile to pretend that the possibility

is non-existent. It is quite possible, for example, that the majority of the German people, after years of propaganda, would have approved the racist Nuremberg laws. But the Nuremberg laws, even if approved by a majority vote, would still have been unjust and inhuman.

Blanshard, who gets quite annoyed when he is held to account for the logical implications of his own theories (*cf. Humanist*, August, 1948, p. 56), would probably say that he is astonished that I should draw an analogy between Nazi laws and laws which exist or might exist in our democracy. Let us stick to the point. The discussion is about Blanshard's political philosophy. Does he or does he not admit the right of citizens to refuse to submit to unjust laws? If he does not, his position leads logically to a justification of any tyranny that can mobilize the support of fifty-one per cent of the people. Fascism is fascism whether political power is monopolized by a single fascist leader or exercised by tens of thousands of fascist voters. If he does admit the right to refuse to submit to unjust law, then let him admit that, contrary to his present pretension, the Catholic position in this matter is thoroughly American and that the only difference between him and Catholics is a division of opinion about the justice or injustice of certain specific laws.

The laws which in many of our States require racial segregation in the schools and prohibit interracial marriage are unjust and immoral. That they may be approved by a majority of the citizens in these States doesn't make them just. The Catholic who refuses to submit to these laws is the true champion of democracy.

The real problem in this matter of the Church and democracy does not arise, as Blanshard supposes, from our philosophy. It arises from our attitudes and policies, which often contradict our philosophy. This is not a specifically Catholic problem, but it is particularly pain-

ful for a Catholic who believes that as a consequence of the Church's view of the nature of man as a free, rational, political and social being, Catholics should be everywhere the foremost champions of political freedom against tyranny, of reasoned obedience to just laws against the enforced servitude of blind obedience to dictatorial decrees, of the fullest participation by the people in the political life of the community against regimentation by a "party," and of the positive role of the democratic state in promoting the common good against the *saue qui peut* theory of political negativism.

To pretend that such is the case would be as objectively dishonest as Blanshard's book. It cannot be denied that, always with outstanding exceptions, churchmen in Spain, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Latin America and Vichy France have shown a marked preferential sympathy for authoritarian political regimes. In my opinion, representatives of the Catholic body in this country have been too uncritical of these regimes.

Yet it is manifest, in terms of Catholic philosophy, that authority, while necessary in society, stands far below freedom in the scale of Christian values. Freedom stands so high in the scale of values that God would permit men to separate themselves from Him for eternity rather than interfere with their freedom. Nor is there any way to explain why God permits the vast disorders which man has written upon every page of human history except in terms of His respect for man's free will.

The pattern of thinking which supports authority at the expense of freedom is shot through with inconsistencies and contradictions. This fact alone proves that it is not rooted in any integrated political philosophy. Thus I have frequently found an excessive admiration for dictatorship abroad combined with sturdy opposition to every increase of governmental authority at home. I have

heard the highest praise of Franco's public-housing projects from the same lips that branded every government-financed housing project in this country as "socialism." There was scarcely a piece of social legislation passed or projected during the Roosevelt Administration which I have not heard furiously criticized in certain clerical circles in which any word in criticism of the shackling of political, economic, social and cultural life in Spain or Portugal aroused angry resentment.

The trouble is that most people are opportunists. Expediency and self-interest shape their thinking and determine their policies far more than philosophy—or the Gospels. Few people are true idealists. What most people who say they believe in freedom and justice really mean is that they believe in freedom and justice for themselves. The champion of "white supremacy" can mouth the slogans of liberty, justice, equality and democracy as well as the next man, and sincerely think he believes in them.

This is not a Catholic peculiarity. It is a peculiarity of people, including "liberals" of Blanshard's persuasion. Thus Blanshard can wax indignant at the tyranny of Spanish laws which impose severe limitations upon Protestant religious activity. This is an affront to democracy. But he is singularly undisturbed by Mexican laws imposing far stricter limitations upon Catholic religious activity (cf. p. 282).

This is why Blanshard is in no position to single out Catholics or their hierarchy for criticism in this respect. But Bernanos, the Catholic who attacked evils whether in the Church or out of it, was in a position to do so. Like Bernanos, I do not believe that Catholics have any right to be like other people. The implications of their faith and of their philosophy about the dignity of man's rational and free nature impose upon them the obligation of championing freedom, justice and truth everywhere.

#### ***IV: Catholic Schools***

**W**HEN BLANSHARD LOOKS at Catholic schools, he sees a conspiracy of priests to impose unwanted burdens upon the helpless, reluctant mass of Catholic laity. (Cf. Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, p. 62). He "documents" his description by references to the prescriptions of Canon Law which define the obligation of Catholics to send their children to parochial schools (p. 64).

This is like arguing that, since the penal codes of our States prohibit the robbing of banks, the masses of the American people are in favor of robbing banks. The argument assumes that the only reason the average citizen refrains from bank robbery is fear of the law.

The truth is that, in general, laws are effective only so long as they meet with the general approval of the people. The average Catholic sends his children to parochial schools because he is satisfied that the caliber of education compares favorably with that given in public schools and, in addition, is convinced that there are certain important values found there which are not to be found in the public schools.

In our parish school here in Phoenix we have about 800 children. Last year a new school building was added to accommodate the constantly increasing demands of parents. Despite this improvement, we were forced to turn away some 300 children for whom there was no room. The entreaties and expostulations of disappointed parents reached such proportions that the distraught pastor was almost driven into hiding. I cannot quite fit



these facts into Blanshard's theory of the tyrant priest forcing unwilling parents to send their children to the parochial school.

The total incomprehension of things Catholic which disqualifies Blanshard as an objective critic is nowhere more in evidence than in his description of Catholic teaching nuns. Sometimes this lack of comprehension is merely funny; sometimes it is insulting.

"Although the Church favors unionization for almost everybody else," the poor nuns are not unionized (p. 67). And—would you believe it—even the poor wages they receive must be turned over to the orders to which they belong (p. 68)! Now if they would organize they could put a stop to all of this, bargain for decent wages, time and a half for overtime. Why, a nun could put something aside every month, buy herself a moderately priced car and a little cottage in the country to which to retire!

Blanshard seems unable to understand that nuns are not paid wages because they do not want wages. They have freely and deliberately embraced a life of religious poverty in which everything is owned in common and nothing is owned personally. The nuns have entered religious orders because they desired to follow this rule of life. It is one of his curious blind spots that Blanshard, who apparently has considerable sympathy for the idea of socialism, is totally unable to understand people voluntarily embracing the ideal of communal living from motives of Christian idealism.

Blanshard is offended by the "unhygienic costumes" of the nuns (p. 67). Unhygienic is hardly a word to apply to nuns, who are so notoriously immaculate about their persons and their houses that the cleanliness which surrounds them makes the male animal almost uncomfortable. If anyone ever finds a stray "woolie" in a convent, he should offer it to the Smithsonian Institution.

If Blanshard had said their costumes strike many people as outlandish, I should agree. So are Bing Crosbys costumes outlandish. If the Blanshards ever prevail in this country, we may expect laws telling us not only that our children must go to school but *what* school they must go to. We should not only be obliged to wear clothes but we should be told *what kind* of clothes we must wear. That would be the end of democracy. In the kind of state Blanshard would give us, Bing Crosby would have no choice but to put on a collar and tie or go to jail.

I am not being flippant. I think the fundamental attitude here expressed is extremely important. It reveals certain profound weaknesses in Blanshard's conception of democracy. He sees a grave threat to democracy in the efforts of the Breen office, administering a self-denying code adopted by the motion picture industry itself, to see that the ladies of the cinema do not take off too many clothes, at least not under the public gaze of the camera. He presumably sees no threat to democracy in laws, enforced by the police power of the state, which would oblige nuns to remove as much of their clothes as the politicians' taste in dress might dictate (*Cf.* p. 282).

It is impossible to please Blanshard. On one page he complains that "even the names of the 259 religious orders for women" are "utterly alien to the typically robust and independent spirit of American womanhood" (p. 67). On the next page, he complains that the masculine saints' names which the nuns often adopt in religion—"Mary John," "Mary Frederick," "Mary Matthew," "Mary Emmanuel" and "Mary Thomas"—are altogether too robust to suit him (p. 68).

The simple fact is, of course, that the range of temperaments among the 80,000 teaching nuns in the United States (or in almost any convent for that matter) is as broad as the range of temperaments of American women

in general. As any Catholic could have told Blanshard, in the convent are all types of personalities—there are nuns as robust and independent as any home-run queen on a professional girls' softball team (we have a former tennis champion in our convent here) and some are as shy as the proverbial violet; one may be as vigorous, except for a difference in vocabulary, as the toughest top sergeant in the army, another as feminine as Lillian Gish.

Because nuns are celibates, says Mr. Blanshard, they are not qualified to teach the young (pp. 68 ff.). I do not know what the figures are, but from personal observation I am of the opinion that the number of unmarried school teachers in our public schools is such that, should Blanshard's norm of non-celibacy ever be accepted as a requirement for a teacher's certificate, half the schools in the country would have to close.

Unquestionably there are many soft spots in the Catholic educational system. Catholic educators are aware of the fact. It is from their self-criticisms that Blanshard derives much of the "documentation" out of which he builds a sorry picture of the low educational standards of Catholic schools (*Cf.* pp. 72 ff., 101 ff.) He overlooks the fact that the amount and frankness of this self-criticism are, in themselves, indications of vitality and health.

By selective documentation drawn from the criticisms of Robert Maynard Hutchins and his associates, or simply from critical articles which have appeared in educational journals, I fancy I could draw so desolate a picture of the low state of education in the American public schools that one might easily conclude that the best thing for the country would be to turn all our schools back to the Indians forthwith. I doubt, however, that Hutchins or the other critics would think the conclusion fairly derived from their views.

One of Blanshards basic fallacies consists in the fact that he opposes to the Catholic school, which he sees chiefly in its imperfections, an ideal public school which never existed on land or sea. He assumes, for example, that the principles and ideals of democracy inevitably prevail in public schools and cannot prevail in Catholic schools. He forgets that the teachers in public schools can bring their own prejudices into the class room.

Recently I was asked by a teacher in a large public high school to lecture to each of his five classes on the subject of anti-semitism. I learned from him, and from personal observation, that anti-semitism, as well as racial prejudice, was disturbingly common among the students. I also learned from him that there was scarcely another teacher on the large staff of this institution who was trying to do anything about it, chiefly because most of them shared the prejudices of their students.

This is not an isolated experience. Inasmuch as a great deal of my time for some years has been devoted to fighting racial prejudice, I have had considerable first-hand experience in this matter. On the basis of that experience I do not hesitate to assert that, if there are far too many Catholic schools which fail in this respect, their record is at least as good as that of the public schools, and in many cases much better.

It was not a Catholic school board, but a public school board which two years ago in Southern California attempted to segregate all Mexican-American children. It is not the Catholic schools, but the public schools, which throughout the State of Arizona segregate by law all Negro children and, in many localities, all Mexican-American children. It was not the students of a Catholic school, but of a public school, who a few years ago almost provoked a terrible race riot in Gary, Indiana.

My intention is not to draw up a general indictment of

public schools. I am very much out of sympathy with the extreme forms of criticism of public schools in which certain Catholic leaders have on occasion indulged. The public schools, within the limitations imposed upon them by their environment, are doing a good job. The same may be said of Catholic schools. Allowing for a certain number of incompetents, the men and women who teach in the public schools are sincere, able, conscientious, and possessed of high ideals. But they are not perfect. The same may be said of the teachers in Catholic schools.

I suppose all I am trying to say is that the best answer to Blanshard's criticism of Catholic schools is: "Let him who is without sin throw the first stone." I am also suggesting that the best place for pamphlets describing the public schools as *Our National Enemy No. 1* is the ash-can. And that is the best place for Blanshard's chapter on "Education and the Catholic Mind."

As for his chapter on "Public Schools and Public Money," I think it can be consigned to the same place. The pretension that a program of public aid for private schools strikes at the very foundations of democracy is little short of nonsense. We can dispense with hysteria and look at the facts.

Only an intolerably narrow provincial would claim: 1) that the people of England, Wales, Scotland, Canada, Holland or Switzerland were less zealous for democracy than we; or 2) that democracy did not function at least as successfully in these countries as in our own. Yet the fact is that in each of these countries public aid for private schools has long been taken for granted. As the Latin adage has it: *Contra factum non valet illatio*—which, roughly translated, means: The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

## V: *The Church and Medicine*

**I**N DISCUSSING this topic, Blanshard thinks it a startling presumption on the part of Catholic moralists to pass moral judgment on such matters as therapeutic abortion, sterilization, irradiation of the ovaries, contraception, abortion, masturbation, artificial insemination, sodomy, euthanasia (cf. Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, pp. 107 ff.). The only logical conclusion I can derive from this is that, in his opinion, Catholic moralists have no right to pass judgment on such matters. Blanshard finds it intolerable that Catholic moralists "exercise definite authority over the doctor and nurse in respect to many aspects of professional life. . . . particularly . . . in the special areas of birth, death and sexual conduct" (p. 108). In Blanshard's opinion, it would seem, the Catholic moralist has no right to intervene in anything that falls within the field of medicine and surgery. If words mean anything, any such intervention is, in Blanshard's opinion, an indefensible "priestly (in the context of his style one may legitimately regard 'dastardly' as a synonym for 'priestly') participation in medical practice" (p. 108). If all of this is not equivalent to denying the right of Catholic moralists to pass moral judgment upon anything a physician or surgeon chooses to do with knives, I do not know what it means.

At the cost of repetition let me point out again that, in this phase of his discussion, Blanshard is not arguing that the Catholic moral position on the subject—let us say, of abortion—is unsound morally. He is saying, what right have Catholic moralists to discuss abortion?

I think we can now put Blanshard into his proper niche. He is a secularist, pure and simple, who would exclude morals from almost every department of human activity.

Secularism is one of the most prevalent, and dangerous, intellectual errors of our time. In fairness it must be admitted that the Blanshards are not the only ones who have accepted the premises of secularism. In calling attention to the mote in Blanshard's eye we cannot honestly ignore the beam in our own.

A few weeks ago I gave a brief radio talk touching upon certain aspects of labor problems. Among other things I expressed some opinions, derived from an application of moral principles to these problems, about the closed shop, and stated why I regarded the legislative outlawing of the closed shop as bad legislation. I had scarcely returned home from the radio station when I received a telephone call from a Catholic businessman, who preferred to remain anonymous, taking me severely to task for my presumption in discussing such matters. He did not say that my opinion was unsound. He said I had no right to express an opinion. He said that I should "stick to religion and to the pulpit and not meddle (Blanshard would say 'intervene') in business." I pointed out to him that neither business nor labor-management relations were conducted in a moral vacuum and that that fact immediately justified me in discussing the moral aspects of problems in these fields. I pointed out that the Church had a social philosophy and that this fact justified me in discussing the social aspects of such problems. His only rebuttal was to repeat that I should "stick to religion."

This is secularism, which would imprison religion and morality within the four walls of the church, upon the theory that they have nothing to say about what goes on in the market place, in the public forum or in the aca-

demic hall. This is the philosophy which spawned Machiavellianism in politics and predatory capitalism in economics and which finds its logical synthesis in the ruthlessness of communism.

Blanshard denies the right of a Catholic moralist to intervene in the field of education, medicine, sociology, domestic relations and politics. Before taking Blanshard to their bosom, American non-Catholics should ask themselves whether they wish to identify themselves with a philosophy which dehumanizes society. I use the word "dehumanize" advisedly, because all *human* actions are moral actions.

It is necessary to say one more word about abortion. Any objective discussion of the Church's position is impossible unless there is clear understanding of precisely what that position is. The fact that Norman Thomas, in reviewing Blanshard's book, obviously misunderstands the Catholic position, suggests at least that Blanshard has not stated it clearly. The Church's position is not, as Mr. Thomas says it is, "that, if a choice must be made, the life of the unborn child, even the smallest embryo, should be preferred to that of the mother" (cf. Norman Thomas, *Nation*, May 14, 1949, p. 561). On the contrary, the position of Catholic moralists is that, wherever a choice must be made, everything possible should be done to save the mother even though the measures taken indirectly result in the loss of the child. The measures which may be taken, however, do not include the right directly to kill the child in order to save the mother.

I think that a person of Norman Thomas' intelligence should be able to recognize that there is a great difference between the two statements and that there is a supremely important moral principle involved, and not a mere casuistic quibble.

The Catholic position is based upon respect for the



individual human life, any human life; upon the principle that the direct and voluntary killing of any innocent human being, by the state or an individual, is murder; and upon the principle that the end, however good and desirable in itself, does not justify the means. Once these values are repudiated there is no *moral* limit to the crimes that can be committed against the human person. A rigorously logical path leads from abortion to euthanasia and the gas chambers. A logically satisfying case can be made out for the extermination of all Jews. Without Jews there would be no Jewish problem, (though other scapegoats would be found to take their places). The extermination of all Catholics would be a logically satisfying solution to the problem that haunts Paul Blanshard—the Catholic problem. Once we claim the right directly to kill one innocent person in the name of a greater good there is left no *moral* ground upon which to protest the killing of tens of thousands of innocent persons in the name of a greater good—unless morals is a mere matter of numbers.

If the fetus is not a human being, then, of course, the Catholic position is based upon an erroneous premise. It would seem, however, that the burden of proving that the fetus is not a human being rests upon those who deny it and that they should assume this burden before proceeding to disembowel the fetus or to crush its skull.

It is impossible, within the limits of these articles, to discuss each of the innumerable distortions which mark almost every page of Blanshard's discussion of the Church and sex, marriage, divorce and annulment. Fortunately it is not necessary to do so. It is enough to understand from what point of view Blanshard discusses these questions.

Before accepting Blanshard as an impartial critic of Catholic doctrine, much less before embracing him as a

champion of their own ideals, American non-Catholics would be well advised to discover his opinions on the subject of sex and marriage.

In 1926 Blanshard, after a three-month visit to Soviet Russia, published an article on "Sex Standards in Moscow" (*Nation*, May 12, 1926, pp. 522 ff.). It could be regarded as a straight reportorial job which did not commit Blanshard himself. However, there is enough internal evidence in the article itself to indicate that the ideals which he found prevalent in Moscow in 1926 reflected his own ideals. At the very least, there is little room for doubt that he regarded the standards which he describes as soundly progressive.

It is well known, of course, that, presumably made wiser by experience the makers of policy in Soviet Russia have made an almost complete about face in this field since 1926. But if they have changed their ideas, there is nothing to suggest that Blanshard has changed his.

Blanshard describes a discussion meeting in which some six hundred young people between the ages of 18 and 25 participated. "Sex experience was taken for granted as a normal thing inside or outside of marriage. . . . The young people discussed sex relations, abortion and love with the candor of obstetricians." Blanshard calls this a "robust attitude."

I am reminded of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* in which love, stripped of all its nobility, dignity and meaningfulness, is reduced to the level of a mere muscular tumescence which young people discuss with the clinical coldness of laboratory technicians.

"Marriage is an agreement between two people to have each other; there is no legal compulsion to register marriage; there are no laws against people who live together without marriage." Well, that makes it pretty plain. Mar-

riage seems reduced to the same level as prostitution or concubinage in as much as the only essential element is common to all three: an agreement between two people to have each other, not "for better or for worse," but for a night, or several nights, or until they tire of each other.

Since to Blanshard the sacramental view of marriage is reactionary (*cf. idem*, p. 522), it is safe to assume that, in his opinion, this casual attitude towards marriage is progressive.

In Moscow in 1926 grounds for divorce were not needed. "The causes of divorce are matters of private concern, and, if the line is not too long, man and wife can still get a divorce in Moscow in fifteen minutes, provided both parties sign the application. Marriages and divorces for the Moscow area are granted in the same little upper room of the court building, by the same clerks."

He is surprised to find "almost no birth control movement in Russia." But he seems gratified that "the Government has turned to legalized and regulated abortion."

O Brave New World! Blanshard can have it. Apparently even the Russians no longer want it. The question is, do American non-Catholics want it? If they do, Blanshard is their champion. If they do not, they will repudiate Blanshard as an objective critic of Catholic marriage concepts.

## *VI: The Church and Science*

**M**R. BLANSHARD'S EFFORT TO PROVE that the Church is the implacable foe of science may be dismissed as old hat. Inevitably he introduces Galileo and evolution.

It has always seemed to me that the case of Galileo is one of the strongest bits of corroborative evidence that the Church is not the bitter enemy of science her unfriendly critics would like to think she is. If she were, one would suppose her critics could easily cite dozens of striking examples to support their thesis. The fact that, every time the charge is made, Galileo is the only witness they can call upon rather rebuts their whole argument. One, or even several, blunders in almost 2,000 years constitutes a remarkable record of open-mindedness towards scientific endeavor, one that few universities and few scientific or medical societies in their much briefer span of history can equal.

As for evolution, I should imagine that most scientists would be grateful for the attitude of reserve adopted by the Church in the face of the exuberant certitudes of nineteenth-century evolutionists, most of whose theories have since been rejected by science itself. It is true that many churchmen were panicked by the early wave of evolutionary doctrine, partially because so many early evolutionists, being bad philosophers, had the absurd notion that evolution dispensed with the necessity for a First Cause. The real attitude of the Church (sometimes badly represented by churchmen who lack faith in their own beliefs is that any fact certainly established by

science as true will prove reconcilable with any fact certainly revealed as true.

St. Thomas Aquinas discussed evolution briefly and serenely in the thirteenth century. The concept did not frighten him. He thought it a more grandiose conception of the way in which God operates in the universe than the conception of immediate creation. However, as a true scientist, he rejected the theory because the scientific data available in his day were not sufficient to give it plausibility. Unfortunately, not all churchmen—or all scientists—have the serenity of judgment, the detachment and the single-minded devotion to truth of St. Thomas.

There are great mysteries surrounding the origin of life, including human life. Revelation has thrown a little light on the subject, enough to make man aware of his nature, his dignity and his God. Science has also shed a little light on the subject, a very little. The rest is still in darkness. When all the evidence is in and properly interpreted, it will be seen that there is no conflict between revelation and science and that truly "God is wonderful in His works." Until then, priests and scientists can profitably tend to their knitting with patience, tolerance, modesty and humility.

Blanshard, quoting Professors Lehman and Witty, cites the dearth of Catholic scientists in this country as an indication "that the tenets of that Church are not consonant with scientific endeavor" (*American Freedom and Catholic Power*, p. 239). The logical hiatus is obvious. If the conclusion were implicit in the premises, the same dearth would be found in other countries, inasmuch as the tenets of the Catholic Church are everywhere the same. Any Catholic book of apologetics can supply Blanshard with an impressive, though not exhaustive, list of Catholics who were, and are, outstanding scientists.

The dearth of American Catholic scientists is due to other causes than the tenets of the Church: the lack of funds available for scientific research (few Catholic universities are endowed); the scarcity of well-equipped Catholic graduate schools; the cultural immaturity of the Church in this country, which was still within this generation a missionary Church. Undoubtedly there are other causes as well, and these more serious. They are the same as those which are responsible, at least in part, for the relative dearth of real Catholic lay leadership possessed of initiative, independence and courage in other fields of human endeavor. It is outside the scope of these articles to investigate their nature.

When Blanshard directs his attention to the subject of miracles, his disability as an objective critic immediately betrays him. To him, Catholic doctrine about miracles is a kind of "primitive deception" which "the educated Catholic must scorn" (p. 211). As evidence that the educated Catholic does indeed scorn the doctrine, he inaccurately summarizes a passage in *Moon Gaffney*, by Harry Sylvester, a Catholic novelist:

A sensitive and cultured young Catholic, afflicted with paralysis, is shipped away to Lourdes by his devout parents on the assumption that he can be cured by some magic power in waters that flow from the spot where the Virgin Mary spoke with Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. The young man is secretly so infuriated by the superstitions of his father that he prays fervently that no chance circumstance will cure him. He would rather not be cured at all than have his cure associated with such superstitions.

Blanshard understands the young man's rebellion as a revolt against the idea of Lourdes and of the miraculous, when, as a matter of fact, the exact contrary is true. The measure of the young man's anger, as of Harry Sylvester's anger, is precisely his respect for Lourdes and for the

miraculous. His rebellion, as that of his literary creator, is against the materialistic attitude of his pompous ass of a rich parent, who no more understands the true significance of Lourdes than does Paul Blanshard, and who thinks his wealth, which has bought him a Knighthood of St. Gregory and the fawning adulation of a few equally materialistic-minded clergymen, can buy him the favors of the Lady who had appeared to the humble, simple, child of poverty, Bernadette. The young man's rebellion is not against Lourdes, but against the terrible prostitution of Lourdes; it is not against the Church, but against the servants of Mammon, secularism and materialism who betray the Church.

That is the whole point of the passage in question. And that is the whole point of the novel. Elsewhere Blanshard describes *Moon Gaffney* as "the most penetrating novel that has been written about [the] Church in many years" (p. 190). Yet it is clear that Blanshard does not understand what the novel is all about. The first prerequisite of a critic is that he understand what he is criticizing.

In view of such total incomprehension it is not surprising that Blanshard's discussion of Catholic doctrine falls to the lowest level of bigotry, characterized by the employment of such loaded words and phrases as "fetishism," "sorcery," "superstition," "the relics industry."

It is not my purpose to defend here the Church's doctrine with regard to miracles and relics. The *rationale* of her position is exhaustively explained in countless volumes dealing with theology and apologetics. Or, if Blanshard regards any Catholic authority as suspect, I recommend for his reading C. S. Lewis' study, *Miracles* (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1947). The Catholic position is a reasonable position if one believes in God, the Divinity of Christ, the supernatural order. Cath-

olics do. Blanshard evidently does not. That is the difference. If Blanshard were willing to state the difference in these terms, he might establish more plausibly his claim to be an honest critic. Nowhere does he even discuss the premises of the Catholic position—and this is characteristic of his whole book. Instead he *assumes* that those premises are ridiculous. And, of course, if the premises are ridiculous, the conclusions derived from them are ridiculous.

There is no doubt, of course, that relics have been and are abused. It cannot be denied that too often the veneration of relics slips over into the twilight zone of superstition. Within the past few years the Holy See was constrained to call attention to and condemn certain excesses in this respect.

If Blanshard were a bishop, no doubt he would easily dispose of this abuse. Possibly he would simply forbid the veneration of relics altogether. Probably, however, he would soon discover that his problem was not so easily solved. People would in all likelihood find other relics to venerate—the mummified corpse of Lenin or the sword of General MacArthur or the shaving mug of Justice Holmes.

After Blanshard, as bishop if not confessor, had disposed of the relics, what would he do about the millions of devotees of astrology in this land, most of whom are products of the enlightened public schools on which Blanshard pins all his hopes, many of whom are college graduates, some of whom probably majored in science?

As far as the multiplication of identical relics in certain cities and churches in Europe is concerned, tolerance for the foibles of humanity combined with a sense of humor (something which, by the way, he seems utterly to lack) would not necessarily prove that the people of the Middle Ages were more gullible than the people of



today, but that they were more pious. Today we have learned how to divert gullibility to other ends and to exploit it for more materialistic purposes. A billion-dollar advertising industry testifies to the fact.

As for miracles, there are abuses here too, though less serious. There are some people who are constantly on the watch for miracles. Inevitably they find them, just as people constantly on the watch for Communists inevitably find them under the bed and behind the books on the bookshelf.

I could point out to these people that, as C. S. Lewis has said, "God does not shake miracles into Nature at random as if from a pepper-caster." But they would probably regard me as a confirmed skeptic. In any event, I do not see that their credulity has anything to do with the Catholic faith or with science or with anything else of much importance. These people are built that way. If they did not believe in these "miracles," they would believe in others. They would probably believe that Duz Does Everything! Because people like this find miracles where none exist, it does not follow that none ever exist.

Blanshard, as bishop, would, it is true, have certain advantages in dealing with the problems created by miracles and apparitions. This is because Blanshard seems to have most of the qualities he critically attributes to the Church: he is intolerant, infallible and unscientific.

A bishop confronted with the claim that there has been an apparition or a miracle is faced with a difficult problem. His awareness of the gullibility of people makes him skeptical. His understanding of people makes him reluctant to deal harshly with their probable illusions. His awareness of his own limitations makes him hesitant to condemn out of hand. His respect for the scientific method inhibits him from pronouncing apodictically upon the natural or preternatural character of the phenomenon

until all the revelant facts have been established beyond doubt and all the possible casual relationships examined. He knows that others in his position have made whopping mistakes, usually on the side of skepticism. He remembers Joan of Arc and Bernadette. In short, he is an unhappy man, very much annoyed by the miracle or apparition, whether real or spurious, and inclined to be cautious and noncommittal.

Blanshard, as bishop, would suffer from none of these inhibitions. He is intolerant, and so has no patience with gullible people. He is infallible and omniscient, and so can brush aside the testimony of authoritative medical scientists, Catholic and non-Catholic. He is unscientific, and so can pronounce categorically upon the psychosomatic character of *all* miracles without regard to the considerable body of evidence which seems to establish that many of the attested miracles of Lourdes and other shrines cannot be thus explained. Because modern science has shown that some disabilities are psychosomatic in character, Blanshard concludes, with riotous logical abandon, that all disabilities cured at Lourdes are psychosomatic in character.

## VII: Church and State

**B**EFORE CONCLUDING THIS SERIES of articles I should say something about the fearsome picture that Blanshard paints for the benefit of his Protestant readers about what will happen to the free institutions of this country should it ever fall under "Catholic cultural and moral control" (*American Freedom and Catholic Power*, Chapter 12).

A Constitutional Amendment would do away with the separation of Church and State and establish Roman Catholicism as "the sole religion of the nation." Non-Catholic faiths would be tolerated, but their "public ceremonies and manifestations" would not be permitted. Public schools would be allowed to exist only upon condition that religious instruction, exclusively in the Catholic faith, were introduced into the curriculum and that every other subject taught were "permeated with Catholic piety." Co-education, except in the lower primary grades, would be forbidden by law.

These are only a few of the sweeping changes which Blanshard says would be introduced into American life. Manifestly such a prospect would be profoundly disturbing to American non-Catholics. It would be no less disturbing to the vast majority of American Catholics.

The first thing that must be said is that the question here raised by Blanshard needs to be honestly faced. It is no good merely to say that no American non-Catholic has reasonable ground for being concerned when he reads such statements as that quoted by Blanshard from *Civiltà Cattolica*:

The Roman Catholic Church, convinced through its divine prerogatives of being the only true Church, must demand the right of freedom for herself alone, because such a right can only be possessed by truth, never by error. As to other religions, the Church will certainly never draw the sword, but she will require that by legitimate means they shall not be allowed to propagate false doctrine. Consequently, in a state where the majority of people are Catholic, the Church will require that legal existence be denied to error, and that if religious minorities actually exist, they shall have only a *de facto* existence without opportunity to spread their beliefs. . . . In some countries, Catholics will be obliged to ask full religious freedom for all, resigned at being forced to cohabit where they alone should rightfully be allowed to live. But in doing this the Church does not renounce her thesis, which remains the most imperative of her laws, but merely adapts herself to *de facto* conditions, which must be taken into account in practical affairs. . . . The Church cannot blush for her own want of tolerance, as she asserts it in principle and applies it in practice.

On the face of it, such a brutally frank statement seems to put American Catholics in the same boat with American Communists, who are accused of demanding in the name of democracy the full enjoyment of all the civil rights which they would themselves immediately deny to others should they once come into power. If the statement quoted above means anything, it means that only so long as Catholics are a minority will they demand full religious freedom for all; but once they have achieved a majority they will impose strict limitations upon the freedom of all other religious groups.

Do American Catholics subscribe to this statement of policy? It is my opinion that they do not.

The late Very Rev. Franz Xavier Wernz, S.J., one-time head of the Jesuit Order, is recognized as one of the

outstanding authorities on Canon Law. To his discussion of the theory of the relationship of Church and State he appends a note about religious freedom in the United States. After pointing out that in this country, where Church and State are separated, the Church has enjoyed a marvelous growth, he remarks:

Wherefore American Catholics, preferring to rely upon the freedom granted by law equally to all and upon their efforts, have not the slightest desire to substitute for these advantages that "protection" by the State which in Europe has so often meant the oppression of the Church (Wernz: *Jus Decretalium*, Vol. I. "Introduction." Ed. 3, Prati, 1913, Tit. I, No. 5, n. 41).

It should be noted that Father Wernz was not writing for the benefit of non-Catholic readers. His comment appears in a technical work addressed to Catholic specialists in Canon Law. Because of his recognized pre-eminence in this field, he speaks with incomparably greater authority than the author of the perfervid statement which appeared in *Civiltà Cattolica*.

The attitude of American Catholics of his day, which he correctly describes and implicitly approves, is still, I think, the attitude of the overwhelming majority today. They are sufficiently familiar with history to know that whatever the theory, in practice the union of Church and State has in every recorded instance been productive of far more evil than good. In the long run, the evils have weighed more heavily upon the Church herself than upon any other. American Catholics have no desire to imitate such unhappy experiences.

The free institutions—and, more important, the atmosphere of freedom which characterizes this country—have been created by the joint efforts of Catholic and non-Catholic Americans alike who, respecting each other's

sincerity in their attachment to their own respective beliefs, have proved it possible for people to achieve freedom for themselves without destroying the freedom of their neighbors. For having enabled Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic, to avoid the pitfalls of tyranny, bitterness and discord into which other nations, Catholic and non-Catholic, have fallen, American Catholics are grateful to Divine Providence.

It would be a great tragedy for this country, and for the world, if Americans, Catholic or non-Catholic, were to lose sight of the inestimable blessings of their heritage. Could such a thing happen here? It could, because there are extremists in both, or in all, camps. Probably the danger is remote. But it must not be forgotten that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. And the watch must be kept not only over others, but over ourselves.

I think Catholics would do well constantly to remind themselves that the more "they rely," to use the words of Father Wernz, "upon the freedom granted by law equally to all and upon their own efforts," the better off they and the Church are. The more they tend to rely upon the State to implement their moral or dogmatic beliefs, the worse off they are. It is true that error has no rights against truth. But it is also true that men are free to embrace error rather than truth, though they must suffer the consequences for so doing. That is the human condition. As St. Augustine pointed out: "Faith is an act of the will, not an act of constraint."

It is with this theory as with the theory of the Manchester School in the field of economics. The economic theory of the Manchester School is entirely sound *qua* theory. On paper, in the speculative order, it suffers from no logical weakness. To attempt, however, to translate it into a policy is disastrous. The reason is that the theory ignores the human condition; specifically it ignores the

fact of original sin. Much the same may be said of Marxist economic theory. No one can deny the theoretical superiority of a society in which what St. John Chrysostom called "that cold word, mine and thine" is unknown. But because the theory ignores the fact of original sin, the attempt forcibly to translate the theory into practice in the context of fallen human nature inevitably leads to the destruction of all human values.

This is to say that a theory which ignores or prescind from the human condition, however sound or attractive as theory, is not a practical guide to conduct. In the subject I am here discussing, the human condition is that of men who are free to embrace truth and achieve their salvation or to espouse error and destroy themselves. As I pointed out in an earlier article, God places so high a value upon this freedom with which He has endowed us and which defines our nature that He will not forcibly interfere with it even to save men from their own folly.

All of the arguments that are advanced to justify the suppression of religious error by the use of force fall to the ground in the light of Christ's example. The world of His day was as filled with false leaders, false prophets, false doctrines as the world today. Millions of people were being led astray. No one who believes in the Divinity of Christ can doubt that He could, had He chosen, have silenced the teachers of error and suppressed the dissemination of their doctrines. He did not do so. All American Catholics need ask is the entire freedom to announce "the sweet yoke and burden of Christ" without hindrance. The human mind and heart can be won only by the inner dynamism and beauty of truth. That dynamism is destroyed and that beauty obscured whenever and to the extent that force is substituted for truth's own persuasiveness. The result is that men conceive a horror of the truth, as the Saxons conceived a

horror of baptism. To this, as much as to other causes, can be attributed the extreme hatred of Catholicism that has been almost a characteristic phenomenon in those once Catholic countries where the Church came to rely upon the State to suppress error and defend truth.

I think, however, there is a much graver and more immediate threat to American democracy implicit in the philosophy of Paul Blanshard and those who agree with his point of view. The essence of our democracy and its genius is that it achieves unity while preserving diversity—*E pluribus unum*. It is dedicated to the proposition that fundamental political and social unity can be achieved in the community without destroying the cultural autonomy of groups within the community.

Implicit in Blanshard's book is the thesis that unity can be achieved only by destroying diversity. This, fundamentally, is why he is opposed to Catholic schools. They are elements of diversity, therefore "divisive" influences. This is why he is angered by Catholics marching in Holy Name parades, building churches, organizing their own professional and scholarly societies, insisting on Catholic moral standards in Catholic hospitals, etc.

The task of achieving unity without sacrificing diversity is admittedly not easy, but the only alternative is imposition by political power of a monolithic culture. That means the end of freedom and of democracy, whether the content of that culture be determined by a single tyrant or by a dominant majority. Yet implicit throughout Blanshard's book is the acceptance of this alternative: the urge to impose upon Americans a nationalistic kind of religion completely subservient to American *mores* as interpreted by Blanshard. To him every moral problem is a political problem and the norm of morality is the rule of the majority. Apparently it matters little to him that, as I pointed out in an earlier



article and as Albert Guérard pointed out in a recent review in the *Nation*, laws "even passed by the most constitutional means and with an overwhelming majority, may very well be tyrannical" (*Nation*, June 11, 1949, p. 664). The ultimate consequences of Blanshard's social philosophy are totalitarian, namely, the imposition upon society of a politically determined system of morals.

It is interesting, though not surprising, to observe the close analogy between Blanshard's philosophy and that of the present Spanish political regime, which he abhors. It cannot be denied that the dominant culture of Spain is Catholic and that Protestants comprise an insignificant minority of the population. Blanshard would be the first to protest should Spanish authorities suppress neutral or Protestant schools or should they refuse to permit a group of "liberals" of Blanshard's persuasion to maintain a hospital which insisted upon observing the code of morals peculiar to them. Yet Blanshard would impose the same and many more restrictions upon American Catholics in the name of a supposed right of what he assumes to be the dominant culture of this country (in reality it is simply a projection of his own ideas) to impose conformity upon dissident minorities.

The unity which Blanshard would impose upon this country, whether he realizes it or not, is the unity of the slave-state. The only bulwark against it is the preservation and strengthening of the rights and liberties of minorities and, to use the words of Albert Guérard, "decentralization, regional and functional, voluntary associations, and a spiritual domain locked and barred against all 'crats'—auto, demo, aristo, pluto and theo"—and, I would add, "libero" (*Nation*, p. 665).

Before bidding Mr. Blanshard a not altogether un-fond farewell, I must return to the point made in the second article of this series. Apart from the erroneous assump-

tions of his own philosophy, what Blanshard suffers from chiefly is a lack of perspective. The distorted vision which results is sometimes very funny.

A characteristic example is found in his chapter on censorship. Harry Lorin Binsse, in a book review, objects to the representation of an angel "as a material being with about the same qualities, let us say, as a humming-bird." Blanshard, oblivious of Binsse's light satirical touch, regards this with dreadful seriousness:

Why must a sophisticated Catholic journal in the United States in the twentieth century condemn a children's book for representing an angel as having the solidity of a humming-bird? Because the Pope and the Congregation of the Holy Office have said that angels are incorporeal beings, and that they will remain incorporeal (p. 190).

Binsse's comment can only be understood "as part of the total system of taboos."

To anyone who knows Harry Lorin Binsse (the man who translated into English George Bernanos' acid criticisms of the hierarchy, *Lettres Aux Anglais*) the picture of an intellectually shackled Binsse fearfully writing his piece of criticism with the Pope and the Congregation of the Holy Office looking over his shoulder is very funny.

In a church which I recently visited, a group of angels cavorted on the wall behind the main altar. They looked for all the world like a group of blond college ingenues in old-fashioned nightgowns in a dance for a Spring Festival on the lawns of Mrs. Peabody's Academy for Proper Young Ladies. I was not conscious of the Pope or the Holy Office looking over my shoulder, but I objected. I objected in the name of art, philosophy and theology.

I object to Blanshard's book in the name of the same trinity.

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