

Catholicism in America¹

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My opportunities for studying Catholicism in the United States were fragmentary, in the course of a year devoted to university teaching and travel. I had the good fortune to be teaching at what is generally taken to be the best of the Catholic universities, Notre Dame, Indiana; and it was in the main from this particular listening post that I picked up my information and my views. I did travel a good deal in the Middle West and the Far West and this gave me an opportunity to see in passing some aspects of Catholic life. As well, I went to non-Catholic universities and was able to see both the reactions of non-Catholic Americans to Catholicism and the work of Catholics in non-Catholic universities, particularly through the Newman centres. I was also a steady and, in some instances, horrified reader of the Catholic press.

What I want to do is to examine American Catholicism as a social and political phenomenon. I do not think that anything I have to say is directly relevant to the problems of Catholic higher education in this country, except in so far as comparisons are always likely to turn out to be instructive. American society and its problems are so remote in many if not all respects from the problems of any European society that it is hard to see at first that American Catholic higher education offers either models for us to imitate or examples of what we should avoid.

Perhaps I ought to make it plain at the start that I conceived an enormous affection and respect for the society of the United States. It is possible that it will in fifty or a hundred years produce one of the great civilizations of the world. My critical comments, and there will be many in the remarks that follow, are those of an admirer. Perhaps I might even, before I begin my analysis, try to explain what it was about American society that fascinated me and filled me with affection and, it is not too much to say, a certain intoxication.

Every bookish child in England and America grows up in two worlds, two countries, one wholly of the imagination and one which is a mingling of fact and fantasy. For both, London is the London of *Pickwick* and the executions on Tower Hill; castles and country houses, moors and

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woods and villages, are often first encountered in poems and stories. The encounter with fact modifies rather than destroys the world of the imagination. The actual Thames is still for me the Thames down which Lizzie Hexam rowed her boat. And so when, in 1957 and 1958, I first strolled in Washington Square, went by train up the valley of the Hudson, crossed the windy plains of Oklahoma, saw the towers of Denver from the heights of the Rockies, the shock of delight was more than delight at the spectacle of natural beauty or the ingenuities of man: it was the response of one whose sensibility was what it was through the early reading of American literature and history. I carried with me—it would be hard not to—the stereotypes of American society one derives from the English intellectual weeklies, from satirical treatments of American life in novels written and films made by modern Americans, from such sociological studies as *The Organization Man*, *The Torment of Secrecy*, *The Lonely Crowd*; but these—useful as they may be at a certain level of abstraction—I soon discarded. What remained with me, what conditioned my response to the American scene, was a certain mode of feeling that I obscurely recognized to have been the fruit of an early acquaintance with Washington Irving and Hawthorne and Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain and a hundred half-remembered tales set in the villages and towns of New England, among the cabins and mansions of the South, and in the vast spaces of the desert and the wilderness.

No doubt there are a dozen Americas, and which America is yours will depend not only upon what you bring to your vision of it in the way of impressions derived from literature and history, but also upon the place from which you look. The place in which I lived and worked for a great deal of my time was the town of South Bend, Indiana, and the Catholic University of Notre Dame which is situated on its outskirts. My vision would certainly have been a different one—though not necessarily a contradictory one—had I lived in, say, the handsome town of Minneapolis and worked in the State University of Minnesota, or in one of the private universities of the East, Yale or Princeton, or if I had spent my time on one of the campuses of the Pacific coast, Stanford, say, or Berkeley.

My first big impression is of a countryside and a people which, despite television and air-conditioning and motor cars, are in some ways, hard to define but easy (or so I think) to feel, closer than one would have suspected to the rough and egalitarian America of Andrew Jackson, closer, even, to the America of the revolutionary era than we are to the

England of Burke and Johnson. In some strange way 'the acids of modernity'—a phrase first coined, I think, by Mr Walter Lippman—have eaten less deeply into the American soul than into the European; and this despite the far more spectacular application, in America, of modern technology to the business of living. (To me the most unnerving of these applications was the glass door, in bank or supermarket, which silently opened itself as one approached it.)

It may seem strange that I should have derived this impression of nearness to an earlier and simpler America from living in South Bend, Indiana. For South Bend is not American in the way the small towns of New England and Virginia are American; and a Catholic university is almost by definition un-American if we are to believe a variety of American commentators from the vigilant Mr Blanshard to the rabble-rousing white Protestant politicians of the Deep South. I must try to explain myself.

South Bend is, predominantly, a town with a population whose origins are in central Europe—Poles, Hungarians, Germans, with a sprinkling of English, Irish, Italian, and other groups, and a growing number of Negroes, many of them from the South. And yet, how profoundly unlike Europe it is, whether at the level of the first impression—the enormous and elegant motor cars, the always clean and well-pressed clothes, the fabulous supermarkets, the curious fact that there were no benches on which to sit under the high trees of the noble Jefferson Boulevard—or at the deeper level of personal acquaintance and friendship. For most, for virtually all those I met of the second generation, Europe is unregretted and as distant as another planet. They may still be practising Catholics or Lutherans (almost certainly far more assiduously practising Catholics or Lutherans than were their fathers or grandfathers in Europe) and a few Christmas and Easter customs survive from the European past. But these are Americans, not, except in a quite technical sense, citizens of Polish or Hungarian or German origin; they have found in the great Republic of the West more than a home and a refuge: they have found a place where they can stand up. No doubt there is something to be said for a society, such as that of England or France, where the egalitarian present is secretly but profoundly modified by the hierarchical past, and something of this is now being said, very unconvincingly, to my mind, by such American 'new conservatives' as Mr Russell Kirk; but, fresh from Europe, one feels the charm and the intoxication of a society which has never known, in quite the European way, the pressures of the social and ecclesiastical hierarchies. How much

more must this charm, this intoxication, be felt by those who have chosen, or whose fathers or grandfathers have chosen, to make their homes in America rather than in Europe. One guesses, too, that the thousands of Negroes who come in a great torrent from Mississippi and Alabama and the rest of the Deep South to the industries and towns north of the Mason-Dixon Line are in part moved by the hope that the United States may be for them what it has been for the immigrants from Europe.

Notre Dame, the most eminent of the many—perhaps too many—Catholic universities in the United States, is by any of the standards by which one measures the work of a university an impressive place, with a great many distinguished and devoted scholars on its Faculty. It has suffered a little, both in the United States and elsewhere, from its (now quite undeserved) reputation for being above all a football school. Certainly, football, that strange and ritualistic activity whose heroes are taken up into the folk mythology of America, is far more important there than is cricket in any English university, perhaps as important as association football is to the followers of Arsenal or Manchester United. In this, at any rate, it is as thoroughly American as any of its non-Catholic rivals. It has many of the features which distinguish most American from most European universities, notably its concern for young men who would in some cases at least be unlikely to get as far as a university in Europe. But this is closely connected with that egalitarian temper of American society I have already touched upon. In this, too, Notre Dame is a very American institution.

But these are comparatively trivial matters. At a deeper level, Notre Dame in particular, American Catholicism in general, seemed to me to illustrate the thesis long ago put forward by Tocqueville, that there is, in principle, and setting aside the irrelevant political attitudes of European Catholicism, a striking affinity between Catholicism and egalitarian democracy.

Tocqueville wrote (I translate very freely):

I think it is wrong to look upon the Catholic religion as by its very nature hostile to democracy. Of all the various interpretations of Christianity, Catholicism strikes me as by far the one most favourable to the equality of [social and political] conditions. In Catholicism, the religious community is made up of two elements only: priest and people. Only the priest is raised above the rest of the faithful: all below him are equal. In Catholicism, so far as dogma is concerned, men of every degree of intelligence are placed on the same level. The

wise man and the ignoramus, the man of genius and the man in the street, all are subject to the same creed in all its details.

. . . It strikes no bargain with any child of earth, and, weighing each man by the same standard, it brings every class of society without distinction to the foot of the same altar, just as such distinctions are confounded in the sight of God.

I could see no tension between Catholicism, as it was lived, practised and discussed at Notre Dame and elsewhere, and the presuppositions of American democracy. Tension there is, of course, between Catholicism and the general pattern of American life today. The habit of divorce, the pornography of the bookstalls, the hedonism taken for granted by the advertising man, these and many other commonplaces of life in America - and, in some degree at least, of life in western Europe—are plainly discordant with the Catholic ethos. But so far as political principles - and still more practice - are concerned, there seemed to me to be perhaps too little tension between American Catholicism and what is sometimes known, by such bodies as the American Legion and by some of the congressional investigating committees, as 'Americanism'. Here I do not wish to exaggerate. Such Catholic weeklies as *America* and *Commonweal*, such learned periodicals as Notre Dame's own *Review of Politics* and Fordham University's *Thought*, contain some of the most incisive, independent comment to be found in America. But the more popular Catholic press tends to reflect and flatter the crudest political prejudices, is obsessed with Communism to the point of mania, and is in general by no means a source of sweetness and light in public affairs. But to arrive at a just estimate of the social role of Catholics in America, one has also to note that in such matters as race relations and labour relations the Catholic Church has on the whole a better record than the other religious bodies. All I want to do is to stress how thoroughly American, for better and for worse, is Catholicism in the United States. This is nowhere more striking than in the absence of any general debate (when I was there - things have changed recently), such as is commonplace among Catholics in Europe, on the morality of nuclear warfare. The utterances of European ecclesiastics, even of the Pope himself, sound a curiously muffled note by the time they reach the United States.

But what may - what does - strike visiting Europeans as an absurd simplicity, an unbearable crudity, at the level of political debate, especially over questions of international politics, is connected with a simplicity and a forthrightness in human relations that are rooted in the

utopian and egalitarian side of the American political tradition. Even the spoils system, which in my ignorance I had supposed to have disappeared some time in the 'thirties but which flourishes still in the State of Indiana, rests upon a stubborn never to be disappointed belief in the virtue and capacity of ordinary men, and a distrust of all government by specialists, members of a scholarly caste. This is bound to distress those European intellectuals whose secret and unavowed utopia is so often the China of the mandarins; but to those of us who are at times bored by the adulation of elites and establishments in Europe, the plunge into American society provides a refreshing experience.

When we are in love even the imperfections of the loved one are dear or are explained away. Perhaps it is evident that I am a little in love with America. This is not any stranger than that Americans should fall in love with Europe or Englishmen with Italy. I own that I have great difficulty in explaining myself on this point to some of my friends, who assume that because I dislike what seem from Europe the salient aspects of American culture - commercial radio and television, political conformism, the cult of violence and so on (everyone knows the list) - I must have found life in America scarcely tolerable. When I assert that on the contrary America was for me a great liberating experience for which, in retrospect, I seemed to have been preparing myself for more than forty years, the reaction is often one of extreme puzzlement. And I can see that nothing I have so far said does enough to clear up what is, even to myself, so mysterious. In part it may be explained by that modification of the sensibility through early reading which I have already spoken of. At the first sight of the Mississippi I could no more restrain an uprush of feeling than could Dr Johnson when he stood on the soil of Iona. In part, it is the extraordinary, the *piercing* character of the American scene, all that prodigal display of nature which is the background of American life once one escapes from the horrors and enchantments of the great city, New York or Chicago (though even these have a superbly dramatic natural background). I think of what Henry James once described as 'that terrible, deadly, pure polar pink that shows behind American winter woods'. I think of the little towns of Indiana and Michigan in the Fall, the brilliance of the foliage in the tree-lined streets, the sharp smell of the wood-smoke, the civility of the white frame houses. I think of the long perspectives of the Middle West, Iowa, or Nebraska, with the great elevators standing up like cathedrals. Most of all I think of a day which began in the desert, on the borders of Arizona and California. From the almost unbearable heat and sterility

of the desert we drove into southern California along a road which dropped mile by mile into a fertile valley with its farmsteads and little towns and dark groves of peaches and apricots. It was like being restored to the human condition. And when we passed from the valley to the sea coast, to the white town of San Diego beside the dark blue Pacific, one realized that this was indeed a new world - new Spain, new France, new Italy, new Poland, new Germany, new England, the great republic of the philosophers' dreams, Europe's second chance.

With the election of Mr Kennedy as President of the United States the American ideal type is in process of losing one of its defining characteristics: Protestantism. Protestantism here does not mean necessarily any orthodox kind of non-Catholic Christianity, but simply a repudiation of Roman Catholicism with the corollary that such repudiation shall not take a Jewish or Islamic or other quite non-Christian form. Mr Eisenhower was in this sense a Protestant, even though on the eve of his election as President he was denominationally unattached and even though the reasons, in the intellectual order, for his ultimate choice of Presbyterianism are obscure. To be a Protestant in this sense is not to be committed to any set of doctrines or dogmas of a theological kind; but to have that attitude to religion that goes with being white, Gentile and of north-European origin. If Protestantism as a characteristic of the true American is to be extracted without pain, no better instrument for the operation could be found than Mr Kennedy. He is in his physical appearance, educational background and dedication to the public service, a dedication made possible by his inherited wealth, typical of the most admired kind of upper-class American - and this is a sense of upper-class quite different from that which goes with the term in Europe. He may lack the common touch which Truman, Eisenhower and Nixon had in such very different ways; but he is, but for his religion, as ideally American as they are. But the religion is there; and in Mr Kennedy it may even appear a trifle bizarre, out of character, where it was not out of character in, say, Al Smith or James Curley. It may even lead to the desperate conclusion that Catholicism is now no longer so firmly tied to a certain racial and social stereotype: lace-curtain Irish, Italian grocer, Polish miner, German farmer, immigrant worker from Mexico, French-Canadian lumberman, Navajo Indian. Plainly, the American ideal type is changing; and if all goes well in the next hundred years being a Gentile and of north-European stock may cease to be so stringent a requirement; and possibly by 2062 there may even be some doubt over the pigmentation of the ideal American.

All this is an unavoidable consequence of the mobility and fluidity of American society. When I was a teacher at Notre Dame I remarked upon the frequency of Polish and Italian names, alongside the others, on my class registers. An old member of the Faculty, who had seen Notre Dame grow from a relatively small Catholic college that first achieved all-American fame through its prowess in football to the great university it now is, told me that a generation ago such names would have been rare. The vast majority of the names would have been Irish, Scottish, English and German: the old ruling class of American Catholicism. Just as the old hierarchies are dissolving within American Catholicism, so also that hierarchical system within which Catholics, along with Jews and Negroes and Mexicans and American Indians, occupied a relatively low place in American society (at least, low in esteem) is changing; and the election of Kennedy merely places a seal upon a development already indicated by such apparently contradictory phenomena - apparently contradictory, that is, of what the Kennedy victory stands for - as the election of the late Joseph McCarthy as *Republican* Senator for Wisconsin and the large Catholic vote for Eisenhower.

'Catholicism' and 'American democracy' are systematically ambiguous terms. Catholicism: this means Cardinal Spellman, the *Brooklyn Tablet*, the Legion of Decency, the Knights of Columbus, Democratic party machines with fringe connexions with the underworld in half a dozen cities, Bing Crosby, Mrs Clare Booth Luce, Bingo, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen; but it also means Dorothy Day and the House of Friendship, *Commonweal*, *The Catholic Worker*, Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, Fordham University and the University of Notre Dame, Trappist monasteries in Kentucky and Benedictine monasteries in the Middle West, leaders of the C.I.O., Bishop Wright of Pittsburgh and Archbishop Rummel of New Orleans, Father John Courtney Murray and *avant garde* poets. The ambiguities of American democracy I need not go into for they are tolerably familiar; though at a later stage I shall want to suggest that the concept of American democracy presupposed by such professionally anti-Catholic writers as Mr Paul Blanshard fails to do justice both to the present and the past of this democracy, makes it both simpler and cruder than it is. But the ambiguities of American Catholicism, as of Catholicism in other countries, need some extended treatment because they are less familiar and because both the critics of Catholicism and the loudest of its spokesmen present us with a crude simplification that can scarcely satisfy the demands of the conscientious sociologist and historian.

Catholicism, like Judaism – if I may speak for a moment from an external standpoint – is one of the great historical puzzles and curiosities. Something very like it already exists, as I think most historians would now admit, certainly as early as the third century. As Newman remarked, whatever primitive Christianity may have been, it was certainly not Protestantism. It has persisted through a variety of civilizations and social orders, with changing fashions of devotion, styles of piety, and with changing institutional structures, but with a recognizable identity of spirit and doctrine through all the changes. What the Church was in the declining years of the Roman Empire she recognizably still is. Liturgical forms and utterances that were already venerable in seventh-century Rome are still to be heard wherever Catholics of the Latin rite (it is important to remember that there are Catholics of other rites) are to be found, in North America or Brazil, in India or China, in a valley of the Apennines or in the Australian bush. She has lived through classical antiquity, the dark ages, the middle ages ‘when the cathedrals were white’, the absolute monarchies, the liberal revolutions. Men have often supposed, not without reason, that as an institution she was hopelessly decadent and corrupt, morally indefensible and intellectually bankrupt, a curious fossil of something that was once alive. But so far this judgment has always turned out to be wrong; and I think few historians – quite apart from all questions of theology and belief – would care to prophesy that in any imaginable finite time Catholicism will be dead.

I have attempted to rough in this historical perspective because I am convinced that the kind of criticism of American Catholicism represented by Blanshard’s books and by common educated attitudes rests upon, in part, a failure of the historical imagination. Catholicism *is* for Blanshard Cardinal Spellman and the Legion of Decency, parochial schools and the Bingo parties to pay for them. There is a wonderful remark in *American Freedom and Catholic Power*. Blanshard is speculating about the historical origin of Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters. After remarking that ‘Freud’s wisdom was not available to the Popes and theologians who first imposed celibacy upon a reluctant clergy’, he continues: ‘The anti-sexual emphasis of early Christianity came partly from the Orient, where certain ascetic cults glorified celibacy, masochism and dirt, and thus gave lazy men of that time a chance to escape from family responsibility without condemnation’. This is the authentic voice of Babbitt. For such a mind it is not only the complex phenomena of Catholicism that are unavailable: equally the natural rights philo-

sophy of Jefferson and the Puritan traditions of the early American colonists must be quaint, outdated, unprogressive and even - for has not a statistically verifiable majority of Americans repudiated these traditions? - unAmerican.

I do not propose to say much about Catholic theology except in so far as it impinges directly upon social and political matters; but it is perhaps important to indicate why it is likely to be found scandalous by more than the Paul Blanshards - by the great mass of educated opinion, even where there is sympathy springing from the historical imagination. The scandalousness of Catholicism does not, I think, lie in its idiosyncratic moral views, though it is characteristic of a certain kind of American approach to religion that it should be the moral and practical aspect of Catholicism that preoccupies such a critic as Blanshard. The scandal springs quite simply from the claim of the Catholic Church to teach what is held to be Divine Revelation with authority and the claim that all men are called to the obedience of faith considered as belief in what the Church proposes, with (it is held) Divine authority, to be believed. It is not of course necessary here to argue that such faith is reasonable or that the claim of the Church is well grounded. But it is important to emphasize that the claim of the Church and the nature of the faith solicited by the Church is necessarily scandalous to American society in general. The moral idiosyncracies of the Catholic Church are no stranger and no more different from the current mores of American society than, say, those of the Jews, the Mormons or the Quakers, though they are in some respects different. What is for many Americans strange, and more than strange - incredible - in the intellectual atmosphere of today, is that a body of men as institutionally identifiable as the Elks or the American Legion and with buildings of brick and stone as familiar in the street as Walgreens and the A. and P. and with pastors externally so like the reverend gentlemen of the other American sects as to be indistinguishable from them, that such a body should be thought to be the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God in the world, and the only authentic version of this Body and this Kingdom, that *this* should be what is believed by the worker at the next bench, the neighbour down the street, the man or the girl your daughter or your son wants to marry, the teacher in the school or the professor in his chair - and by President Kennedy, Justice Brennan of the Supreme Court and Senator Mike Mansfield - this is a thought to dizzy and appal. That *this* should be believed in the century of nuclear fission and antibiotics is fundamentally the reason why Mr Blanshard cries from time to

time, his voice thick with rage: Medieval! Medieval! In so crying he understates the case. It is more than medieval – it is primitive, as primitive as ritual circumcision, David dancing before the Ark and the belief in miracles. And if it is this, then it is either a gross superstition to be swept into the lumber room along with other superstitions that have clogged and hampered the progress of mankind; or it is worse than this: a conspiracy on the part of men who really know better to gain power and riches through their control over the ignorant and superstitious masses.

The first thing I should like to suggest is that Catholicism is in many of its features closer to the early American tradition than other intellectual currents in American life, those influenced by pragmatism, especially in the form given to it by Dewey, late Protestantism – especially Unitarianism and Transcendentalism – and ethical relativism in general.

There are two features of the early American tradition which are present and are intellectually alive in a full sense only in Catholicism: a belief in natural law; and a belief in the supremacy, in the last analysis, of the religious categories over all secular categories, both for the individual and in the context of the state. In these two respects Catholicism and one interpretation of American democracy are in collision. The belief in the omniscience of state sovereignty expressed mythologically in belief in the popular will as constitutive of social and moral norms is one interpretation of what American democracy means, and it involves the view that minority cultures, standards and moral outlooks are to be tolerated but not in such a way that such minorities should be effective in checking the popular will in social policy. This comes out in Blanshard's discussion of abortion, sterilization, divorce etc. It is not that Blanshard objects to people having odd views on such topics. What he objects to is the use of a variety of social and political pressures to resist what is (mythologically) the popular will in these matters: either by attempting otherwise than through the electoral process to ensure conformity to Catholic standards; or by bringing pressure to bear on individual Catholic doctors, judges and so on to conform to Catholic standards; or by educating children and young men and women in schools and colleges, other than those publicly provided by the community, where these minority doctrines are taught as true.

Now, just as the Catholic view rests upon certain premisses, about the teaching authority of the Church, about the ability of reason to

establish norms in the moral sphere, so what we may call the Blanshard view must presumably rest upon certain premisses. I have tried very hard to discover what these are and tentatively I would suggest they run somewhat as follows:

(a) A belief that the natural and social sciences provide guidance for the right solution of a variety of moral and social problems.² It is hard to know what to make of this. In this sense of scientific, it is supposed that hypotheses in the social sciences can by some logical operation provide us with moral standards. I know of no such operation and I do not believe Blanshard does either.

(b) A belief that in some sense the rights of majorities are sacred.

(c) A belief that democracy ought to prevail, not only in political institutions but also in religious institutions. It is a frequent gibe that the rulers of the Catholic Church are not elected and answerable to the membership of the Church; and that their policies are not subject to popular scrutiny and control.

(d) A belief that deep cultural differences - this is the root of the opposition to separate Catholic education, and above all to its being financially aided by the State - are incompatible with a healthy democracy. American society would be healthier if it were culturally monolithic, at least in fundamentals (what these may be is another question).

(e) A belief that fundamentally the Catholic Church is not a religious phenomenon - though one wonders if Blanshard would really approve of *any* very lively religion: plainly the kind of religion he finds tolerable is that represented by the 'community church' - but an international conspiracy to seize political and economic control of the world. It is not clear what the motives of this conspiracy are thought to be, but they are presumably of the same kind as those attributed to Communists by good American Republicans and to American Republicans by good Communists; though what *these* are supposed to be is not clear.

(a) is without sense, for the reasons I have given. (b) seems to me a sinister doctrine, especially if it precludes appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober; but it plainly fits in with some of the prejudices of modern American society, prejudices in which many Catholics share. (c) is simply to say that Catholicism is false and I think this is what has

²Cf. 'No matter how overwhelming the evidence may be, no Catholic social scientist is permitted to declare publicly that birth control, socialism, civil marriage . . . or sterilization of the feeble-minded is a scientific solution for a social problem.' Paul Blanshard, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, Boston, 1949, p. 230.

to be said by a non-Catholic: with the corollary that any other religion with an hierarchical structure is unacceptable. This includes at least Mormons, the Greek Orthodox and the Protestant Episcopal Church, as well as the Catholic Church. (d) is a serious point and well worth discussing. (e) suggests that Blanshardism in part belongs to the conspiratorial genre of historical and social theory and the way evidence is handled – not that much of Blanshard's evidence is false or, except by scholarly standards that would be inappropriate to the books he writes, inaccurate – often suggests this. E.g. horrific utterances by Catholic writers are quoted with gusto, liberal utterances are quoted as either uncandid or – if they are complaints about abuses – as evidence for the abuses they attack.

Let us look at (d). The Blanshard doctrine in this matter is a striking confirmation of the prophetic character of Tocqueville's analysis of American society. The attack upon eggheads, 'useless' scholarship, social and intellectual elites connected with the preparatory schools and the great private universities, foreigners, homosexuals – all the stock in trade of McCarthyism, still to be found in such organs as the *Brooklyn Tablet* – all this is motivated by a dislike of deep cultural differences in modern society and has many roots. My criticism of American Catholicism would be that, except in matters of sexual morality and the educational system, it is all too immersed in the common prejudices of American society. It is just not true that the separate Catholic educational system as such produces a self-conscious minority culturally different from the rest of American society. One might even say that this is its failure: for the distinctive moral attitudes of Catholicism fail to make sense except in a context of a way of life and a set of intellectual presuppositions that on the whole the Catholic educational system fails to provide. The fact of the matter is that broadly speaking Catholic culture in the United States is primitive and lacks depth and this for a variety of historical reasons. The signs of this are evident. The Catholics of America are numerous and rich. They have at their disposal material resources for educational and other purposes far greater than anything at the disposal of the Catholics of Europe. But in terms of intellectual achievements and religious experiment their achievement is poor. There are a few good and overworked theologians of whom Father Courtney Murray is the best known. There are a few prelates of outstanding energy and intellectual adventurousness. But there are no theologians such as Congar and de Lubac, Karl Rahner and Guardini, no philosophers such as Bochenski and Gilson. The best Catholic

universities are improving fast, though they are still behind the best of the private and state universities; but there are no such universities as Louvain and Fribourg, no faculties of theology to compare with the faculties of theology at Bonn or Tübingen. It is as yet inconceivable that such a monument of critical scholarship as the Jerusalem Bible should be produced in the United States. I do not advance these criticisms as though from a superior European standpoint. The reasons for the primitiveness of American Catholicism are broadly the same as the reasons for the primitiveness of American Protestantism. Here, too, a similar picture could be given. The forces that shape American culture are predominantly secular; and on the whole the most trenchant criticisms of it come from intellectual minorities that, although they have religious elements within them, are predominantly non-religious. In their acceptance of the structure of American capitalism, of the existing distribution of social power, of the values of the affluent society, of the morality of the nuclear deterrent, the mass of American Catholics are wholly at one with their fellow citizens. My conclusion is that the Blanshard view of the great Catholic conspiracy to subvert American democracy, understood as the present American way of life within the present American structure of social power, is a fantasy comparable with the nightmare belief that Americans might wake up one morning to find that the Communist party of the U.S. had taken over the Federal Government.

I should like now to abandon the polemic with Blanshardism and to attempt a wholly subjective characterization of American Catholicism, the fruit of one man's reading and experience.

My first point appears at first sight to contradict what I have just said - the *variety* of Catholicism in the U.S. The Irish Catholicism, fundamentally Irish in spite of Italian, Polish and other undertones, of the eastern seaboard provides the standard image. Catholicism in the Middle and Far West and in Louisiana has a quite different atmosphere, immediately recognizable if hard to define, as different as the Catholicism of France is from that of Germany. But there are certain general characteristics: a sexual puritanism kept in a state of permanent inflammation by the sex-in-the-head propagated from every bookstand, through the movies and television, and through the advertising media; an obsessive anti-communism - it is a fair guess that the present administration in Washington will suffer as a result of this and that Kennedy's Catholicism, far from blunting the attack, will be thought to be a provocation - a reliance where specific Catholic interests are in

tion upon the techniques of the pressure group, censorship and 'cott. These are general characteristics to be found among all holic communities in the U.S. It is surely evident that these are not uarily Catholic characteristics. Where specific interests are in ques- they are just as characteristic of New York Jews, southern whites, business, the great trade unions, the racial minorities, the southern tists and the Lutherans of the Middle West. It should also be empha- d that the sharpest criticism of these general characteristics comes n Catholics. What, for example, *The Nation* and *The New Republic* to the mass media, *Commonweal*, the *Catholic Worker*, and (on asion) *America* are to the *Sunday Visitor* and the *Brooklyn Tablet*. s not sufficiently realized that the *Brooklyn Tablet* expression of holicism is largely an expression of powerful elements among the holic laity, and that politically and socially many of the clergy, ecially on such key issues as the role of the trade unions and race tions in the South, are far more radical than the mass of the laity. gness is that certain groups among the laity have hitherto been of importance and that their power is now in decline: roughly what might call the Irish-German axis which has had such a powerful baleful influence upon American foreign policy. The frenzy and teria that so often mark the columns of the more debased Catholic ers are really an indication that this group knows it is on the way out, Catholicism as in other groups.

My view of American Catholicism was, of course, though I was an linary parishioner in an ordinary parish of South Bend, largely ped by my experience of Notre Dame and of Newman Centres in state universities. I have to say that, odd pockets of the 'New nservatism' apart, my impression was one of an overwhelmingly ral body of men, with differences of specific issues cutting across lay- rical divisions. It was up to a point an *imperilled* liberalism. One was ays conscious of a kind of Catholic 'underworld', united very closely th the lay political groups that had formed the backbone of :Carthyism, America First groups, semi-fascist reaction in general, the background. This 'underworld' was extremely hostile to Notre me and the Newman Centres. But my impression was that these re beaten groups and that universities and bishops on the whole isted them.

Of course, one came across much Catholic anti-clericalism and much patience with some features of the ethos of American Catholicism. ere was widespread criticism of the quality of Catholic education at

every level; and a very general view that the great error of policy was to scatter scarce educational resources over an absurdly wide field. This view was general and yet there was at the same time a disbelief in the possibility of anything being done about it. This illustrates how different Catholicism is from the Blanshard stereotype. On this matter there is and can be no general Catholic policy; for bishops and religious orders are autonomous; there is no central authority capable of enforcing a policy in such a field.

Has Catholicism made a specific contribution to American democracy? It has obviously played an important role since the Civil War in Americanizing millions of immigrants. This has been a Catholic achievement in that it was the work of a curious coalition of the largely Irish clergy and the Democratic machines in the great cities. There was a moment in the nineteenth century when the Catholic Church in the U.S. might have become a loose federation of nationally organized groups. This was defeated, largely by the pressure of the Irish bishops, with the result that the immigrants were integrated within an American church. Secondly, Catholicism alone among the religious groups has succeeded in keeping within one church and even within the single congregation a wide spread of social classes and has even had some success in keeping white and coloured within the same church. The class affiliations of the major Protestant denominations are well known. Thirdly, Catholics are heavily represented in organized labour and Catholic labour leaders have often received from theologians and sociologists a superior intellectual formation to that available to other labour leaders. Fourthly, in some of the great debates within American democracy - on the rights of labour, on racial questions, on the issue of the separation of Church and State, even on McCarthyism - Catholic viewpoints have at the very lowest contributed arguments of a clearly articulated character and the absence of the Catholic voice would have impoverished the dialectic of democracy. All this is on the credit side. That there is much to be placed on the debit side I have already made clear. But the same striking of the balance would have to be made in the case of all other religious groups in the U.S.

From the standpoint of any religion the question as to how far it serves the purposes, even the beneficent purposes, of any political order is a dangerous one if it carries the implication that it is in these terms that the validity of the religion is to be judged. Catholicism, with Protestantism and Judaism, is in the U.S. corrupted by being considered as simply the religious expression of the American way of life. This is to imprison

the unconditional within the ambiguities of a social situation.

The guarantee that the authentic religious tradition of Catholicism will not be absorbed by the forces of social idolatry is to be found not in the wealth, the organization and the massive social power of American Catholicism, but in the prophetic witness of a Dorothy Day, with her total opposition to all that Americanism means for the Committee on un-American Activities; and in the stream of young men entering the purely contemplative monasteries that are now springing up like mushrooms all over the U.S., offering their ascetic challenge to the affluent society.

The Strange Ethics of the Organization Man

WILLIAM F. KENNEDY

The moral sensibilities of Americans have received many shocks in recent years on disclosures of misbehaviour in the worlds of entertainment, labour, and government. The discovery that ethical practices were no better in some of the most highly regarded of the large corporations gave public opinion a far heavier jolt. In February 1961 Judge Gancy, in the Federal court at Philadelphia, pronounced sentence on the leading corporations in the electrical manufacturing industry and their executives found guilty of violating the antitrust laws. He imposed fines totalling \$1,924,500 and handed down seven jail sentences and twenty-four suspended jail sentences. Never before had so many highly placed business executives been marched off to jail. By the usual standards they were good men, most of them family men, pillars of church and community, who had won success by years of hard work. Among those who went to jail was George Burens, father of a family of four children, whose career to this point had been another Horatio Alger story. He had risen to a vice presidency in the General Electric Company with annual compensation of \$127,000 from his first position with the