Contrasts and Conflicts

RALPH EARLE

I. HIGH CHURCH, LOW CHURCH

There are at present three major threats to American freedom. They all come under the general category of totalitarian state. There are three kinds of totalitarianism that seek to supplant our democratic form of government. One is the socialistic, another is the communistic, and the third is the Catholic.

As I do not wish to engage in any political wrangling, I shall refrain from discussing the recent tendencies in Washington toward a highly socialized form of governmental control. I would simply comment that it is contrary to the American way of life, to that which has made the United States the greatest and most envied of all the nations of the world. One needs but to travel abroad to gain a profound appreciation for the wonderful privilege of living in America.

In our recent trip to Palestine, where we spent Christmas in Bethlehem and Jerusalem we visited fourteen foreign countries. Over and over again we had the same experience. When urged to buy something, we would say: "But I have no Egyptian, or Italian, or Syrian, or Lebanese, or French money." Always the same quick answer came: "But we'll take your American dollar." Of course they would, and did grab it gleefully. We came back to this country more thankful than ever before for the stars and stripes. As far as I am concerned, I want to continue to live in the "land of the free," and I want it to stay free.

The second threat to American freedom is Bolshevistic Communism. How real this threat is none of us can actually realize. We pray God that this fair land of ours shall never be turned into such a vast prison camp as Russia and its unhappy satellites.

But I am mainly concerned here with the third threat—Catholic totalitarianism. The kind of a government the Catholic Church wants in every country is the despotism of a Franco, with its persecution of Protestants, and not the democracy of America, with its freedom for all. Because we have so many good Catholic friends and neighbors we may not wish to believe that the Catholic hierarchy could have any malicious designs against our democracy. There is, however, plenty of evidence to prove that this is the case.

An immense amount of such evidence has been collected by Paul Blanshard and presented in his book; American Freedom and Catholic Power, one of the most significant books to appear in 1949. Every Protestant minister should by all means read it. The Beacon Press is to be commended for its courage in publishing it.

This evidence, as given by Blanshard, consists almost entirely of quotations from official Catholic sources, all carefully documented and hence irrefutable. The author was trained in both theology and law, and has had a varied experience in journalism. He has lived in Italy, Mexico and Spain, where he studied the Catholic church at close range. In this book he does not attempt to analyze and criticize Catholic theology, but simply to deal with the political policies and aims of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Far from ranting and raving, Blanshard largely refrains from even intruding his own opinions. But that makes the book all the more powerful in its appeal to the reasonable mind and in its devastating exposure of the undemocratic and unchristian aims and methods of Catholic politics.
laymen who Mr. Blanshard fondly hopes will read the book. The author shows how the Catholic church has formed organizations in almost every field of American activity to hold its own people, young and old, with a tight rein, and also to infiltrate the Protestant masses. The Catholic leaders are very much alive to the value of publicity, and have exploited it to the Nth degree by mammoth parades and in the press.

In the chapter entitled “Church, State and Democracy,” the author emphasizes the fact that all Catholic policies and activities are directed from Rome. We have the anomaly of a foreign power—for the pope is the political ruler of a sovereign state—dictating to millions of American people in matters of education, of voting, and of civic interests in general. It is this foreign domination of the daily lives of a large part of our population which especially distresses the author and should distress every true American. Though Mr. Blanshard does not say so, one is almost driven by the documented evidence to the conclusion that no one can be a fully loyal Catholic and at the same time a truly loyal American citizen.

The chapters on education and public schools ought to arouse every person who cares about the future of our nation. The Catholic church is utterly and unalterably opposed to public school education as un-Christian. In some of the large cities of the nation the Catholics already have a strangle hold on the school system.

By coercive measures in commanding the vote they have been able to get a majority of Catholics on the school board of communities where they actually constitute a minority of the population. The Catholic leaders boast of their progress in this field and of their aim to get control of American education. What true American with red blood in his veins wants to see that happen?

The chapter on “The Church and Medicine,” is pathetic. Anyone reading it would hesitate to let any loved one, and especially an expectant mother, be taken to a Catholic hospital. No one knows how many lives have been sacrificed on the altar of theological regulation of medical practice. The quotations from official Catholic sources in this chapter are nothing short of revolting. What a travesty on Christianity.

One could go on endlessly, for the book is a vast mine of information. But, we must forbear. We can only hope that what has been said will serve as an appetizer and that every Protestant minister will read this book. The Catholics rely on the typical tolerance and blindness of American Protestantism as one of the most important factors in their success. It is time for the true spirit of American freedom to rise and resist the attempted encroachments on our essential rights and liberties.

Another volume dealing with the same question, but from a slightly different point of view is Avro Manhattan’s The Vatican in World Politics, which is reviewed in this journal, Vol. IV, No. 4, Winter, 1949, page 155. In Manhattan’s work, the character of the Roman Church as an international force is analyzed in the same manner as Blanshard treats its role as a power within a given society.

Over against the High Church claims of Roman Catholicism we have another very prevalent phenomenon on the American scene, which we have chosen to characterize as Low Church. It is true that some of the small sects operating in this country make just as absolutist demands on their members as does the Catholic church. In general, however, the sects are apt to be more democratic and congregational in outlook.

Two studies of this phase of American religious life appeared in 1949. One was a revised edition of Elmer T. Clark’s earlier work (1937) on The Small Sects of America (Abingdon-Cokesbury). The other was a book entitled These Also Believe, by Charles S. Braden and published by the Macmillan Company. The subtitle gives an indication of its contents: “A Study of Modern Cults and Minority Religious Movements.” It might be assumed that these two books would largely overlap each other, but such
tigation does not deal with the smaller denominations and churches, but rather with the religious movements outside the main stream of Christianity. In fact, some of the movements he describes could not carry the label “Christian” at all. He writes of Father Divine, of Psychiana, New Thought, Unity, Christian Science, Theosophy, the I Am Movement, the Liberal Catholic Church, Spiritualism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Anglo-Israel, the Oxford Group Movement and Mormonism.

On the other hand, Clark is primarily interested in the smaller denominations and sects, most of which have broken off from the larger denominations. Many of these groups which Braden treats at length are merely listed in the appendices of Clark’s book.

There have been a number of brief and popular studies of this field in recent years. One recalls especially Marcus Bach’s very interesting books; They Have Found a Faith which we reviewed three years ago, and Report to Protestants, which we reviewed last year. But Professor Braden of Northwestern University has given us a far more thorough and comprehensive treatment of the history and literature of these marginal movements. One thing that Bach and Braden have in common is a very sympathetic and appreciative attitude toward these groups and a desire to understand their points of view. One senses in Clark’s book more of the typical attitude of a member of one of the larger denominations, who feels a bit impatient toward the smaller groups that have broken away.

Clark has divided the small sects into five main groups: (1) the Pessimist or Adventist; (2) the Perfectionist Subjectivist; (3) the Charismatic or Pentecostal; (4) the Communist; (5) the Legalistic or Objectivist. Each of these is treated at considerable length, two chapters being devoted to the last group. There is an introductory chapter on “The Sectarian Spirit in American Christianity,” and a concluding chapter on “Characteristics of the Small Sects.”

Actually, if one wishes to gain some understanding of the multicolored scene of American religious life today he should read both of these books. If only one can be purchased, I would recommend Clark’s Small Sects of America, which, incidentally, costs only half as much as the other. It is a very important reference book in which the minister can check up on any small religious movement he may encounter in his pastoral work. On the other hand, if one is confronted in a serious way with Unity, Christian Science, Spiritualism, or Jehovah’s Witnesses he can be thankful for the availability of such a scholarly, authoritative treatment as he will find in Braden’s book, These Also Believe. It will help one to understand why so many groups.

Manifestly it would be impossible to review adequately either of these volumes. Clark calls attention to the fact that there are more than four hundred different religious groups in the United States today. About half of these, however, have fewer than seven thousand members each. Clark’s book treats these smaller sects, “concentrating especially on more than one hundred that are unusual and relatively unknown.” (p. 9) It thus fills a special need.

The chapter on “Perfectionist or Subjectivist Sects” is especially interesting to us. The author deals briefly with the philosophy and history of perfectionism. He then glances at Wesley’s teaching on the subject. With this background he surveys the history of perfectionism in American Methodism. He notes that Methodist ministers are still required to affirm that they are going on to perfection, that they expect to be made perfect in this life, and that they are earnestly striving after it. He also admits that Christian Perfection is still a part of official Methodist theology, that it is still included in the “Discipline.” However, he goes on to say: “But though perfectionism lingers on in the official doctrine of American Methodism, where it is still embedded, it did not long remain a vital tenet, and The Methodist Church cannot in any real sense be classed today
The change did not, however, come without warning. In the issue of May 8, 1835, the “Christian Advocate” bemoaned the fact that “Christian holiness is at present time so little talked of and so little enjoyed in the Methodist Church.” In 1840, the bishops affirmed that the doctrine was “a leading feature of early Methodism.” They added: “It is not enough to have this doctrine in our standard.” In 1870, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, called for a revival of emphasis on perfect love. Said they: “Nothing is so much needed at the present time, throughout all these lands, as a general and powerful revival of scriptural holiness” (p. 57). But by 1894 the tide had turned and the bishops issued a warning against the “party with holiness as a watchword.” Says Clark: “Vital holiness was passing out of Methodist faith and practice. Finally, all traces of the doctrine were carefully eliminated from the songs of the church in the hymnal published in 1935” (p. 58). He cites as an example the second stanza of Charles Wesley’s hymn “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling,” in which the line “Let us find that second rest,” was changed to “Let us find the promised rest.” He comments: “Nothing was allowed to remain that might remind Methodists that their church had ever endorsed a second work of grace!” (p. 58).

All of this, of course, caused schisms in Methodism. Dr. Clark presents a rather lengthy list of these. In addition he describes a number of perfectionist groups, of which the Church of the Nazarene is the largest, which did not split off directly from the Methodist Church.

As a sideline on this largest of the distinctively holiness denominations, some might enjoy reading a very entertaining book entitled For Heaven’s Sake, by Hannah Smith. Mrs. Smith is the daughter of one of the leading elder pastors of this young denomination. She describes her revolt against the strict rules and revival methods of the church in which she was reared. Yet the tone of the book is neither flippant nor sarcastic. All through the narrative she expresses her highest respect and admiration for her father, who is still alive today. But she could not seem to follow in his footsteps. The book is certainly an interesting case study in the psychology of religion.

II. HANDICAPPED TWINS

In her book, Halfway to Freedom, the Life reporter Margaret Bourke-White speaks of India and Pakistan as “these handicapped twins” (p. 11). She portrays vividly the economic upheaval in India caused by its partition into two countries. These two twin nations are both greatly handicapped by the artificial barrier which has been set up between them. India has experienced more than its share of suffering and hardship in the past, but the founding of two separate nations has only served to aggravate an already bad situation. Halfway to Freedom is an excellent factual presentation in words and photographs of India’s condition today.

But there is another pair of nations which could also be characterized as “these handicapped twins.” Israel and the Kingdom of the Jordan present an almost equally sad picture.

Almost from birth the lives of the twin brothers Jacob and Esau presented both contrast and conflict. They were decidedly different in personality, tastes and outlook. Conflict seemed inevitable. Thus it has been with their descendants, the Jews and Arabs. The Arabs have stayed at home through these centuries, while the Jews have been in exile away from home, scattered over the whole earth. When the Jews started to flock back into Palestine after the first World War the fires of ancient hatred were fanned into flame. Actual fighting has now ceased, but a deep-seated hatred still remains. Most important of all, Palestine is now divided between two separate nations, Israel and Jordan. Even the city of Jerusalem belongs to both camps, the old city inside the walls to the Jordan Kingdom, the new city to Israel. If one goes to Haifa or by plane to Lydda—hoping to visit the old shrines of Samaria, Jerusalem and Bethlehem he is in disappointment, as many travelers in recent
months have found to their sorrow. In order that we might get to Bethlehem for Christmas Eve and spend Christmas day in the old city of Jerusalem, we flew to Cairo and Beirut and entered Palestine by way of Damascus and Amman, coming in the back door, as it were. An Israeli visa on our passport would have barred us from all Arab territories, and conversely our visas of four Arab nations barred us effectually from Israel. (Road to Bethlehem)

Naturally, those who have extended opportunity to observe the unhappy situation have tended to form rather definite conclusions. Millar Burrows spent the winter of 1947-48 in Jerusalem as director of the American School of Oriental Research there. He has written very emphatically his impressions in his recent book, *Palestine Is Our Business*.

Living on the Arab side and seeing the distressing sufferings of the Arab refugees, many thousands of whom are Christians has led him to throw the blame on Jewish shoulders. He discounts the Jewish claims to Palestine and asserts strongly that the Arabs have been robbed of their rightful home.

It is a difficult and delicate question. Articles have been written on both sides of the issue. It is indeed a pathetic sight to see the tens of thousands of Arab refugees in the large camps on both sides of the Jordan River. We saw many families living in caves and among the ruins of Roman days. The mass migrations in Palestine, with their attendant sufferings, furnish a most striking parallel to those in India a short time before. It would appear that in both cases some of the frightened fleeing from home was unnecessary. A good background study of the present situation will be found in James Parke's *History of Palestine* (Oxford, 1949). It traces the story from A. D. 135 to 1948.

The one who wants to understand the Zionist movement which produces the new state of Israel will find a comprehensive treatment in *Trial and Error*, the two-volume autobiography of Chaim Weitzmann, Israel's first president. To me this was the most satisfying biography I read in 1949. While we are thinking of the strange twists and turns that history takes it might be well to call attention to the most significant book of the year on the philosophy of history. Last year we called attention to Toynbee's *Civilization on Trial*. To Reinhold Niebuhr there is only one true view, the Biblical-Christian. As in all his recent books Niebuhr exhibits a profound pessimism concerning man's nature, which is sinful.

**Commentaries and Character Studies**

The big news in the commentary field this year is the beginning made on the reprinting of Lange's *Commentary*. Following the lead of its closest competitor Eerdmans, who began to publish Calvin's *Commentaries* the year before, Zondervan Publishing House is rendering a great service in making available again one of the greatest commentaries ever written. For the benefit of ministers it is coming out a volume a month. Dr. Wilbur Smith recommends this set as the best commentary on the whole Bible. I can conscientiously advise every preacher to get it if he wishes to do careful expository work on the Bible.

For some time we have recommended the *Pulpit Commentary* as one of the best on the whole Bible. Eerdmans has announced the reprinting of that in 1950. During 1949 it republished the famous Keil and Delitzsch *Commentaries on the Old Testament*, in twenty-five volumes. I have gone carefully through the two volumes on Isaiah and have found them scholarly, thorough, and conservative. There is nothing better for intensive study of the Old Testament. While we are mentioning reprints we might note another important one, Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*. Some volumes of this have been rather difficult to get in recent years. Eerdmans is to be commended for making this valuable set available again.

Zondervan's Book is also reprinting the New Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, a standard work in that field. It is heartening to be able to buy some of these scarce items again.
Smith's theory concerning Hosea's marriage. He also identifies the two main emphases of Hosea's message as the inwardness of sin and the victory of grace.

Professor Leslie of Boston University School of Theology has put out his best book thus far, entitled The Psalms. Under about a dozen different headings all of the Psalms are treated. The comments are often helpful and illuminating, and the book has real value, though of course the author is liberal.

Dr. W. O. Carver, for forty-seven years professor of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has also just produced what is doubtless the most important of his eighteen volumes. He has called his study of the Ephesian epistle The Glory of God in the Christian Calling. When a book by such a thoroughly conservative scholar as Carver wins enthusiastic praise from W. E. Garrison in the Christian Century, it must have unusual value.

Lester A. Wolf has written of the apostle Paul in the first person in his book I, Paul. One or two points of interest could be mentioned. He holds that Paul went into Arabia to preach rather than to prepare. He also has Paul evangelizing in Syria and Cilicia for fourteen years before going to Antioch.

Harry Emerson Fosdick has written one of his most conservative books of recent years in The Man From Nazareth ("As His Contemporaries Saw Him"). The author tries to discover the attitudes of various groups of Jesus' day toward the Master. However, there is nothing strikingly new in the book.

Also surprisingly conservative is Martin Dibelius' new book, Jesus, published by Westminster Press. A popular treatment is to be found in Oursler's The Greatest Story Ever Told, one of the five best sellers in the nonfiction field. The story is written from the standpoint of a devout Catholic. It is interesting to note that in Oursler free from what he calls a "contented agnosticism" of twenty-five years, a scholar, widely read, thorough and fair. One is reminded of a similar experience. We recommend his book.

Two or three other books in the Biblical field might be noted at this point. After nearly half a century that has passed since Davidson's Theology of the Old Testament appeared in 1904, the long dearth of an up-to-date text has been met by Theology of The Old Testament, written by Otto Baab, professor at Garrett. While not consistently conservative it is certainly not thoroughly liberal. Not as detailed as Davidson's, it yet is readable and often helpful.

Luther Weigle's The English New Testament is a fascinating presentation of the history of the English New Testament from Tyndale to the Revised Standard Version. It will largely take the place of Goodspeed's excellent Making of the English New Testament, now out of print. One of the interesting features of the book is the sidelights it furnishes on the inside workings of the revision committee. This book is a good corrective to Oswald Allis' Revision or New Translation?, reviewed last year.

Not only do we have a new textbook in Old Testament theology, but we also have a scholarly Introduction to the Old Testament, by Edward Young, professor at Westminster Seminary. It is much longer and more exhaustive than Cartridge's Conservative Introduction to the Old Testament (1943); it is also decidedly more conservative. In fact, one would have to classify Young's treatment as ultra-conservative. The main criticism I would make of it is that it is rather too academic at some points for the average minister. For instance, in his bibliography at the end of the chapter on Kings, the author lists fourteen books. Of the fourteen, only three are in English! The preponderance of Dutch and German works is almost as heavy in the bibliography on Isaiah. Nevertheless, it must be said that Professor Young has made a valuable contribution to the conservative cause. Though young in years as well as name, he is a competent scholar, widely read, thorough and fair.
In the field of New Testament theology a serious, scholarly piece of work has been done by Elias Andrews in his The Meaning of Christ for Paul. Though not every point of view of Professor Andrews could be accepted, yet the value of his book cannot be questioned.

For those interested in archaeology we would commend W. F. Albright's new volume, The Archaeology of Palestine, the most authoritative work on the subject.

**Miscellanea**

If there has been any truly great biography of a religious leader published in 1949 I have not seen it. We have already mentioned Chaim Weizmann's autobiography. Probably one of the best religious biographies of the year is that of the famous southern Baptist preacher Robert G. Lee, written by Schuyler English at the request of the Zondervan brothers. It is a great story of a great life and will prove to be a real inspiration to every minister who reads it.

One of the outstanding conservative seminaries in this country in recent years has been Biblical, in New York. Charles Eberhardt has written the life story of the founder, Wilbert Webster White, calling it: The Bible in the Making of Ministers. Much space is devoted to outlining Dr. White's plan for a Bible-centered curriculum. The method used at Biblical has produced good results in the graduates who have gone out to preach and teach.

Of a decidedly different character is the pathetic little book, The Third Strike, by Jerry Gray. It is the story of a young man's losing fight against alcohol, told in his own words. The narrative is vivid and dramatic. But the sequel was a tragedy. The keen, capable fellow finally "batted out" and committed suicide. Everyone should read this book to be stirred again to the menace of liquor.

A refreshing contrast to this is Elton Trueblood's annual contribution, The Common Ventures of Life. Dr. Trueblood deals very sensibly with marriage, birth, work, and death.

Turning to sermons, we would note especially two series, both published by Revell. One is called Great Pulpit Masters. Volume I is on D. L. Moody and Volume II is on C. H. Spurgeon. The other series is entitled Great Gospel Sermons. Volume I, "Classic," includes sermons by Finney, Talmadge, Spurgeon, Moody, Torrey, Chapman, Gipsy Smith, Billy Sunday, and others. Volume II, "Contemporary," has sermons by such men as William Ward Ayer, Billy Graham, Harry Ironside, Torry Johnson, Robert G. Lee, Macartney, Walter Maier and Harold Ockenga—all conservatives. These four volumes should prove of real value, as will also Mr. Jones, Meet the Master, published by Revell this year.

Andrew Blackwood has written another good book, Pastoral Leadership. No wide awake pastor should need any urging to get Professor Blackwood's books. He is always helpful in discussing the work of the ministry, and this is no exception.

As in the case of biographies, so in the field of fiction; I have not seen any giants against the sky. Guy Howard, "The Walking Preacher of the Ozarks," won the Zondervan $5,000 fiction award with Give Me Thy Vineyard. It is readable and interesting; but this reviewer did not sense in it the qualities of a great novel.

Sholem Asch has come up with another fairly solid book, entitled Mary, built around the mother of Jesus. Though written by a Jew, it reflects almost a Catholic point of view in ascribing miracles to Jesus in His childhood. The book is devout and does not exhibit too much distortion of the Gospel records. It is valuable for its picture of the Jewish setting in which Jesus was brought. In some ways it is less objectionable than the author's The Nazarene.