Religion and American Politics, 1960

God and Man in Washington
by Paul Blanshard. Beacon Press. 251 pp. $3.50.

by Arthur Moore

Mr. Blanshard’s newest book seems to appear at a propitious time. In an election year, particularly a presidential year with one very prominent Roman Catholic seeking the office, there is a market and even a need for a book surveying the religious scene in Washington today.

The book’s introduction has a forbidding title—“The Church-State Pit-fallfront.” Despite this martial note, the author adopts a friendly, candid and modest tone. There is even a mild exhortation out of a civics text to remind the reader that “Washington is YOU.” There is an admission that the problems to be discussed are complex and the terms of discussion in dispute. Acknowledging that he will editorialize from time to time, Mr. Blanshard claims he has attempted only a popular survey in which he has striven to preserve “a point of view that is neither sectarist nor sectarian, a point of view appropriate for a tolerant liberal democrat who believes in the practice of freedom in a pluralistic society.”

It is in the chapter on the Supreme Court that difficulties begin to arise. Mr. Blanshard has told us in his introduction that he considers this chapter the most important one in the book. He begins with a tribute to the present Supreme Court and it is evident that his whole approach depends heavily upon such decisions as the Everson, McCollum and Zorach cases. It is in fact this dependence that leads to a certain shiftiness and uncasiness in the writing of this chapter. It is obvious that Mr. Blanshard has his own definition of the rather ambiguous wording of the First Amendment. The closer the Supreme Court approaches this definition (as in the McCollum case) the more Mr. Blanshard sees it fulfilling its constitutional function. If it seems to shy away (as in the Zorach case), then Mr. Blanshard wonders if public attack is not “softening” the Court. Now, this is understandable and perhaps even natural. But it is also dangerous for it leads the author to use words such as “separation” as if their practical meaning was agreed upon at the very time that he is explaining that their meaning is not agreed upon. Thus Mr. Blanshard attempts to be a partisan and a guide at one and the same time and without differentiating these functions.

It is in the chapter on Congress that this fatal flaw begins to show forth its enormity. Mr. Blanshard has much less respect for Congress than for the Supreme Court, which seems sensible enough but which leads him to assume congressmen susceptible to religious pressures in a way that seems questionable. Thus, in discussing Communism and the clergy, Mr. Blanshard makes some astonishingly flat statements without documentation of any kind.

“To put it bluntly, Catholicism’s policy vis-a-vis Communism is made in Rome by the Pope and the Vatican’s Department of State and not by the American bishops. This means in practice that European considerations often outweigh American considerations in arriving at official policy. Since there are more Communists in Italy than in all the Protestant nations of the world combined, the Vatican naturally tends to feel somewhat more desperate about Communism than do Protestant nations.”

This paragraph, appearing after a discussion of attitudes toward Poland, raises so many questions as to merit an entire discussion by itself. Most specifically, it raises the old question of a conspiracy to serve Vatican needs rather than those of a “Protestant nation” (presumably the United States). In short, it raises the question of treason. It also raises the question whether Mr. Blanshard meant to raise that question in such an offhand way.

This last question, concerning his intentions, is one that Mr. Blanshard objects to vigorously. His feeling is that current popular religiosity and “tolerance” operate against anyone who honestly attempts to ask embarrassing questions. To a certain extent, of course, he is right. An honest question demands an honest answer. The further question, then, is how honest is the question?

Mr. Blanshard is maddening in this respect. His tone is one of friendly and open discussion. But what are we to make of his assertion on “Vatican policy” concerning Communism, quoted above? Are we to deduce that Senator Kennedy favors aid to Poland because Cardinal Wyszynski and Premier Gomulka made a deal and that (say) The Brooklyn Tablet approves wholeheartedly of this aid? Mr. Blanshard surely knows more about politics than that.

Or what shall we say of the following assertion in discussing the Presidency:

“The ‘apostate’ taboo undoubtedly worked against James F. Byrnes of South Carolina in the Democratic conventions of 1910 and 1944. He had been

Mr. Moore is Associate Editor of the Methodist monthly World Outlook.
baptized a Catholic but had transferred his allegiance to the Episcopal Church after his marriage. When this 'irregular' religious history was revealed, Byrnes was stricken from the eligible list for Vice-President on the Democratic ticket at the behest of boss Ed Flynn of New York, a Catholic."

After reading his autobiography, one does not suppose that even Mr. Byrnes thinks he failed to become the Democratic nominee solely because he joined the Episcopal Church.

The point is not that these are isolated shockers that crept into the book but that unsubstantiated charges such as these appear with great regularity once we are really into the substance of Mr. Blanshard's work. Despite his protestations, they are usually directed against Catholics.

The question is not whether Mr. Blanshard is anti-Catholic (he obviously is) but why and how he is anti-Catholic. Well, Mr. Blanshard is (as he has told us) a "liberal." Now, if there is a contemporary term in greater dispute than "liberal" it would be hard to know what that term might be. Mr. Blanshard suffers from no such doubts: He is a "liberal" and so are those who agree with him. They are for "democracy" and that is insured by "a wall of separation" and no clerical raids on the till. Anyone opposed to the public school for any reason is "divisive" and "authoritarian" and these are the two worst sins.

All of this may sound, like a burlesque and unfair. It is not basically unfair because Mr. Blanshard's attitude is ideological and he suffers from the ideologue's fault—he does not respect his opponents as people. Consciously or unconsciously, he is more interested in debater's points scored than in understandings reached.

Nowhere is this failure really to apprehend the viewpoint of those he opposes more apparent than in the long discussion of the Presidency. This chapter is, in a way, the heart of the book and Mr. Blanshard admits that it is the one with the most news value. Sixty pages in length, it covers quite a bit of territory and varies greatly in quality and approach. There is a general historical background, an extended analysis of the Al Smith campaign, a quick run-through of the electoral chances of a Catholic candidate and, finally and most importantly, the author's own discussion of the issues he considers paramount.

This last begins with six cliches that bar discussion. Some of these six are cliches and easily disposed of in a short space. Others are not quite so simple as Mr. Blanshard would have them. Cliche number three, for example, is that opposition to Catholicism is prejudice. As Mr. Blanshard says, "some of it is and some of it isn't." This is fine, but when he goes on to assert that "sometimes an individual is anti-Catholic because he is opposed to prejudice and because he considers the Catholic Church the most deplorable form of concealed religious prejudice in modern society" one wonders about Mr. Blanshard's ability to know a cliche when he makes one up. Again, when the author defends an analogy between the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Catholic Church because "both emphasize the worship of the past and both claim a special status in modern society by virtue of tradition" the suspicion arises that Mr. Blanshard has little understanding of any kind of religion.

This rather awful mixing of categories continues when Mr. Blanshard discusses what he considers "the inescapable issues." These are six: a Catholic candidate's attitude toward divorce, mixed marriages, birth control, church censorship, public funds for parochial schools, and the obligation of Catholic parents to send their children to parochial schools. Some of this mixed bag of issues seem not only escapable but positively issues to be avoided in an election campaign under normal circumstances.

What in the world does mixed marriage (which is a religious problem and a real one) have to do with electing a President? Mr. Blanshard has an answer—the voter will question "anything in the candidate's viewpoint which seems to contradict or deny freedom of thought or the practice of tolerance in an open society." In short, "can a candidate who has accepted dictation on such issues as an individual Catholic demonstrate sufficient independence as the nation's Chief Executive?"

This standard would seem to bring down any kind of curtain, let alone wall, of separation of church and state, public and private, with a horrendous crash. In the resulting debris, no sort of distinctions can be logically maintained. The author would despise this allegation but the end result of this obliterating of distinctions is thought control to see if we are all "liberal" enough.

Mr. Blanshard, as noted before, claims to write from a point of view that is "neither secularist nor sectarian, a point of view appropriate for a tolerant liberal democrat who believes in the practice of freedom in a pluralistic society." Unfortunately, there is not a word of truth in that statement. Mr. Blanshard writes as a sectarian secularist, who believes in the practice of freedom insofar as it corresponds to his definition of freedom. This is a harsh statement and it does not take away the sting to add that it is unclear whether Mr. Blanshard realizes that this is the case.
Communist China and Asia: Challenge to American Policy
A noted expert on Chinese affairs has written a valuable and authoritative book on the meaning of the Communist revolution in China and the multiple problems it poses, both for the non-Communist nations of Asia and for American foreign policy.

The Political Economy of National Security
by James R. Schlesinger. Praeger. 292 pp. $5.00.
How we can reconcile the free-market economy with the long-term necessities of defense and security in the cold war is the central concern of this comprehensive and far-reaching economic analysis.

India Today
by Frank Morroes. Macmillan. 248 pp. $4.00.
India's foremost interpreter here offers an analysis of the forces that have shaped modern India and the character of her people, and the problems of education, leadership, unity and political welfare that make India's future of such vital importance to the world.

The Red Executive
by David Granick. Doubleday. 334 pp. $4.50.
"A study of the organization man in Russian industry," this book examines management bureaucracy in Soviet Russia, its practical goals, incentives and relationship to the Communist Party, as well as the ways in which its functions may be compared to the American system.

This Little Band of Prophets: The British Fabians
by Anne Fremantle. Mentor. 320 pp. 75 cents.
The Fabians, that group of British intellectuals whose theories led directly to the social reforms of the Labor Party and whose membership included such figures as Shaw, the Webbs, Russell, Tawney, Laski and Attlee, are the fascinating subjects of this collective biography.

Arms and Politics in Latin America
by Edwin Lieuwen. Harper. 296 pp. $4.75.
A consideration of the role of the military in Latin American politics and its effects on U.S. interests and objectives, this book serves to clarify the terms in which the current reappraisal of our policy in Latin America can be made fruitful.

Worldview
170 East 64th Street
New York 21, N. Y.

A JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
volume 3, no. 3 / March 1960

WORLDVIEW is published monthly by The Church Peace Union.
Subscription: $2.00 per year.
Address: 170 East 64th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

EDITORIAL BOARD
William Clancy, Editor
A. William Loos John R. Pannen William J. Cook

Editorial Assistant, Arlene Care

CONTENTS

Editorial Comment ........................................ 1
In the Magazines ........................................ 3
The Politics of Fear .................................... 4
Paul Ramsey
Other Voices ........................................... 8

BOOKS
Religion and Politics by Arthur Moore ............. 10
Current Reading ..................................... 12

Opinions expressed in WORLDVIEW are those of the authors, and not necessarily of The Church Peace Union.