BRUCE MARSHALL, A MODERN SATIRIST

DISSERTATION

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PREFACE

Many people of my acquaintance shun satire. They feel that it may be understandable, but that it is bound to be cutting, offensive and steeped in that which they so hate even in the best of friends—cynicism. Perhaps I was of this school when I first chanced upon Father Malachy's Miracle. That was in 1933. My own conversion surprised me. I liked this extravagant farce. It was warm, tender; yet it was merciless irony. Furthermore, the sharp thrusts of seedlike satire so adeptly planted in the turned soil of my mind blossomed out into a pleasant world of thought. Thus it was that Bruce Marshall stimulated me and challenged me on to the heights in the land of the satiric. His other well known books came into my grasp. I read them all. A chance acquaintance deepened into friendship that fast became intimate. I wanted to know more of Bruce Marshall; to understand his mission; to interpret his attitude toward his faith; to learn of his home life, the reasons for his conversion, the background against which he wrote. Above all I wanted to follow the life line of his thought; to agree and disagree with him.

The gates of every channel that would open wider my knowledge of this dark, smiling, sharp-featured Scotsman were far flung with an eager hand. Thus I am finally able to offer in this thesis the

the results of my study of some of Bruce Marshall's published novels in the light of modern satire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. - For his five years of devoted and unfaltering guidance along the path toward a true appreciation of good literature I owe a real debt of gratitude to Reverend John Hooyboer, C.S.C. I am grateful to Father also for his helpful suggestions in the compiling and editing of this thesis. To Sister Eileen Mary, S.H.N., I am greatly indebted for painstaking library service that was both thorough and prompt. To Mother Mary Joan, my Provincial Superior, to Sister Mary Olivia, High School Supervisor, and to the devoted Faculty of the University of Portland I owe many sincere thanks for the opportunities offered and the pleasurable profit derived from my graduate studies.

Sister Gerard Mary, S.H.N.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY EVALUATION

Upon looking into Bruce Marshall's novels we find ourselves face to face with a sardonic-on-the-surface yet tender-underneath portrait of a section of Catholic life. This portrait has many tones and shadows whose value we, as inexperienced craftsmen, hesitate to give full interpretation. We need experienced critics who will compel the eye to stop and the ear to hear, who will focus for us color and form, who will guide us toward the pictorially significant. Drawing upon such critic guides from the American literary world we find that we have many who have been most generous and most just in their estimate of Bruce Marshall's literary worth.

Turning back the pages of the New York Times to 1931 when Mr. Marshall made his first great success in Father Malachy's Miracle we find:

> Even Chesterton, whose wit was rather more brilliant than Marshall's, fell somewhat short of Marshall's clarity and tolerance.[1]

Richard Sullivan, writing for the same paper more than a decade later, says of Mr. Marshall:

1. New York Times, "Father Malachy's Miracle," June 7, 1931. p. 7.

> Bruce Marshall writes with such easy and engaging warmth--his prose is at once deft and apparently effortless--that the importance of his matter is sometimes almost hidden behind the pleasant shimmer of the words.[2]

In the same vein Katherine Bregy, well-known author and lecturer, writes, recognizing true artistry in

> . . . Bruce Marshall's characteristic blending of realism and fantasy, of sensuality and mysticism, in a rhythmic prose which hammers upon the memory and the emotions like poetry.[3]

Miss Bregy, herself a convert, possibly notes the mysticism revealed in Marshall's work from the springboard of her own awakened Catholicism.

We read in the Times Literary Supplement:

> Mr. Marshall's characters are all human beings and he makes it possible for us to watch their mental and spiritual processes in a sort of slow motion cinema film which omits nothing. He makes no attempt to win sympathy, to create heroes, he wants to show us a group of characters as they are.[4]

Others, too, have taken keen satisfaction in Mr. Marshall's facility and penetration in reading character and analyzing types. Joseph McSorley, review critic for The Catholic World recognizes that

> Mr. Marshall is by turns kindly, sharp, amiable, ruthless, tolerant. His vivid pictures reflect wide-ranging sympathies and skillfully highlight the peculiarities of different types. . . . He

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2. New York Times, "Anthropomorphic Bigou," Richard Sullivan, 52:5. (Sept. 1, 1946)
3. The Sign, "Yellow Tapers for Paris," Katherine Bregy, 26:59. (Oct., 1946)
4. Times Literary Supplement, "Prayer for the Living," March 22, 1934. p. 217.

> contrasts the lovable weaknesses of little people with the crust of egotism that hides the humanity of the upper classes; he turns from the drawing of a memorable "comic" to sketch an episode spiritually moving and illuminating.[5]

Father McSorley further adds in point of admiration:

> Readers familiar with Catholic teaching and customs will get much joy and no little fun from his pages; others will become aware--possible with amazement--of the incomparably dramatic quality of Catholicism.[6]

Bruce Marshall sees the need of faith in a materialistic world. Emphasis on this lack of faith runs a dark thread of worry through the comparatively light-toned literary pattern. Christopher Morley, novelist and essayist as well as contributing editor of the Saturday Review of Literature until 1941, catches the spirit of this deep religious feeling in stating that

> . . . the reader begins to see that under frolicsome and even ribald charade there is deep feeling. The kingdom of heaven is attained by violence, even the violence of humor.[7]

Putting similar stress on the same opinion in The Atlantic Monthly, a truly reliable source, Edward Weeks affirms:

> The greater the fear and uncertainty the greater the need for faith. That is why, despite our shell of skepticism, men everywhere are listening for the note of affirmation. I have never met Bruce Marshall but I think I should enjoy doing so. I read him to be a fearless Scot with a trinity of virtues which would make him distinguished

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5. The Catholic World, "The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith," 161: 438. (Aug., 1945)
6. Ibid.
7. Book of the Month Club News, "The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith," Christopher Morley, July, 1945.

> in any modern company of novelists: he writes with an open heart, a salty understanding of frailty, and with the most delightful impertinent with . . .[8]

Apropos of the same, The Saturday Review of Literature observes:

> . . . there is warmth and beauty and good humor in Mr. Marshall's faith as well as wit in its defense.[9]

For those who feel that Mr. Marshall carries his satire beyond the realm of the reverent or the conventional we quote Eugene P. Willging, editor of Best Sellers:

> Probably . . . Marshall may be strong meat but yet adults should become acquainted with one who ranks with Evelyn Waugh in style and, to my mind, above him in interest.[10]

Again we quote:

> Caricature is inevitably given to exaggeration. Satire, reasonably enough, is onesided. By and large, Mr. Marshall does not overstep legitimate bounds; and, although there is another side to the things he describes, his pictures, so far as they go, are sufficiently true to life. He speaks as a prophet striving to put the fear of God into hardened hearts, not presenting facts as a scholar would, nor balancing evidence in the temper of a judge.[11]

Cuthbert Wright expresses his attitude toward Marshall's satire even more definitively:

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8. Atlantic Monthly, "The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith," Edward Weeks, 176: 127. (July, 1945)
9. Saturday Review of Literature, "The Charming Irreverence of Mr. Marshall," Jonathan Daniels, 28: 7. (July 14, 1945)
10. Best Sellers, "Yellow Tapers for Paris," Eugene P. Willging, 6: 96. (Sept. 15, 1946)
11. Catholic World, "Yellow Tapers for Paris," Joseph McSorley, 164: 84. (Oct., 1946)

> There is a rare type of Catholic writer whose forte is to poke fun at the follies and shortcomings peculiar to those of his own household of faith. Huysmans inaugurated that sort of thing in our time; other examples are his archenemy and compatriot, Leon Bloy, and the late Frederick Rolfe during the English nineties. These men were witty and savage and devastating, but the golden gift of humor was unknown to them. Mr. Marshall is a humorist, and his peculiar sort of humor . . . might be defined as a quality akin to the Christianity which hates the sin, but does not hate the sinner.[12]

Of all Marshall's works his three books Father Malachy's Miracle, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith and Yellow Tapers for Paris have been by far the most successful. Critics, in general, estimate them highly. It has been pointed out well of Father Malachy's Miracle, published in 1931 and a Book of the Month Club selection for that year, that

> it is an essentially Catholic book, literally steeped and bathed in honest supernaturalism. It is also a work of art, which cannot be said for every authentically Catholic book.[13]

Referring also to this particular novel Calvert Alexander, S.J., maintains that Bruce Marshall has here written "one of the shrewdest pieces of satire in recent years", and that should he write no other this novel alone "would entitle him to a high place in modern satire."[14]

As for The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith, honored likewise as a Book of the Month Club selection for 1945, it has

12. Commonweal, "Fun in the Family," Cuthbert Wright, 14: 367 (Aug. 12, 1931)
13. Ibid.
14. Alexander, Calvert, Catholic Literary Revival. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1935. p. 239

been proclaimed the "best novel of Catholic clerical life to have appeared since the days of Canon Sheehan".[15]

Joseph McSorley ascertains that, faintly suggestive of My New Curate and other narratives about Catholic priests, "it will be ranked first in its class by many a discriminating critic".[16]

Though somewhat less favorably received than its two predecessors, Yellow Tapers for Paris has many ardent proponents. Virgilia Peterson, for one, says:

> . . . its moral conception thrusts like a spear into the lazy spirit to drive it a little farther along the tough road of the truth.[17]

The novel receives this tribute from the New Yorker:

> Out of the confusion, religious compulsion, self-interest, loyalty, cynicism and good humor of these unimportant Frenchmen Mr. Marshall makes a warm and lovely novel, written with a unique combination of wit and intelligent Catholic piety.[18]

Agreeing with these and other contemporary critics, I believe that in writing "with fingers that strip of the shell of fruitful nut to show the delicious core"[19] Mr. Marshall has joined the ranks of modern satirists as one whose vigor and keenness in contemporary comment and whose insight into the dilemma of modern affairs has

15. Commonweal, "A New Scotch Curate," Edward Skillin, Jr., 42: 315. July 13, 1945
16. Catholic World, "The World, The Flesh, and Father Smith," Joseph McSorley, 161: 438. (Aug., 1945)
17. New York Herald Weekly Book Review, "A Faith Outlasting Moral Crash," Virgilia Peterson, 23: 3. (Sept. 1, 1946)
18. New Yorker, "Yellow Tapers for Paris," 22: 98, September, 1946.
19. Best Sellers, "The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith," Eugene P. Willging, 5: 64. (July 1, 1945)

proven and will prove invaluable. In my analysis I have chosen as representative of the finest and most effective examples of Mr. Marshall's work his three novels: Father Malachy's Miracle; The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith; and Yellow Tapers for Paris.

CHAPTER II

QUALIFICATIONS OF A GOOD SATIRIST

A satirist has well been defined as a cross between a preacher and a wit.

> Like the preacher, the satirist aims to reform a sinful and careless generation; but to achieve this end, he adopts the methods of the wit.[1]

In his war against evils that affect society, he finds the weapon of wit to be the most powerful of all tools. Lashing out with it in roguish fashion against the follies and vices of men and institutions, he discusses the object of his thrusts in such a way as to render them subtly ridiculous. He is witty at the expense of the person or thing he wishes or pretends to wish abolished.

Although to accomplish his purpose the satirist borrows his weapons from the humorist, he must not confuse the arrow with the target.

> Humour is of an age, satire of all ages; humour is of one particular civilization, satire of all countries.[2]

The scope of satire is then far wider than that of humour. Satire is born to scourge and to judge the ever recurrent and persistent vices and follies of human beings as such.

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1. Catholic World, "With Cap and Bells," Benjamin Masse, S.J., 141: 177 (May, 1935)
2. Knox, Ronald, Essays in Satire. London: Sheed and Ward, 1929. p. 34.

> And for anybody who has the humility to realize that it is aimed at him, and not merely at his neighbors, satire has an intensely remedial effect; it purifies the spiritual system of man as nothing that is human can possibly do.[3]

Contrary to the role of humour, then, satire plays the part of an excellent disciplinarian for the one satirized; whether it is such for the satirist or not is a thing much open to question.

The literary manner of the satirist blends a critical attitude to humour or wit to the end that human institutions may be improved. His aim is not so much to tear down as it is to inspire remodeling.

> If the critic simply abuses he is writing invective; if he is personal and splenetic he is writing sarcasm; if he is sad or morose over the state of society he is writing irony or mere gloom.[4]

In order that his message ring true the satirist must direct his satire at someone who possesses a quality, but his interest should lie not in the person but in the principle. Belittling men and events, he aims to expose weakness and to awaken the strong disgusts that mark the beginnings of good taste. Horace laid bare the foibles of men falling in love; Pope wrote his mock heroic epic The Rape of the Lock about touchiness in aristocratic families; Swift, in Gulliver's Travels, deals with examples of man's egoism. These are petty but universal things; the themes of ordinary life.

Whether satire is good or not depends ultimately upon how the satirist uses his lash and employs his wit. He is sometimes justly

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3. Ibid.
4. Thrall and Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1936. pp. 386-387.

accused of irony and ridicule of a nature that antagonizes the very person he is seeking to persuade. This antagonism is the result of sarcasm directed at people rather than at the foolishness of people. It is invective that shares only contempt, and is never softened by laughter. Good satire keeps a certain measure, is used only on suitable objects, and is only used when needed. Horace points to this well in his theory of satire. He claims that the main business of satire is to attack those who deserve it; that it should have nothing to do with malicious censure. He further maintains that a true satirist is no threat to a community; he is not a dangerous creature with hay on his horns. Thus he insists on the need for genial raillery and a spirit of good humour prevailing through all. This treatment he distinguishes from that of the mere buffoon who was "wont to indulge in unmeasured and unseasonable laughter at the expense of friend and foe alike."[5]

In addition, the clever satirist presupposes that the error attacked is a dangerous obsession of only a small part of the commonwealth. His task is to see that the vice is checked before it widens its influence. In so doing his variety of tone must employ all notes with wise harmony. In due proportion he must both love and hate. What impels him to write is not less his hatred of wrong and injustice than his love of that which is just. Carefully he makes the age old distinction between the sinner and the sin. Like-

5. Atkins, J.W., Literary Criticism in Antiquity. Vol. II. Cambridge University Press, 1934. p. 60.

wise in due proportion, he must move from grave to gay, seeking to affect the minds of men not less by the congruities of virtue than by the incongruities of vice. As laughter dispels care by pointing out the absurd, so it attacks wickedness by gravely and deliberately robbing it of its pretensions.

Concentration is one of the first necessities for ironing malice out of satire. Irony loses its effect when long drawn out and when long sustained becomes unbearable. Brevity and terseness give point to satirical attacks. These do not ask that we take delight in another's discomfiture. If the satirist overshoots his mark his readers will begin to sympathize with the victim. Satire in that case no longer "serves to make an oblique comment on an obvious evil."[6]

Oliver Wendell Holmes has said, "Do you know that you feel a little superior to every man who makes you laugh, whether by making faces or verses? Are you aware that you have a pleasant sense of patronizing him?"[7] Aristotle had the same idea when he wrote that comedy imitated men who were a little worse than the average. Such is the triumphant laugh of pure superiority. One of the surest marks of a satirist is this same air of superiority to that which he is attacking. His attitude does not admit of the earnestness of the reformer, or of the violence of the denunciator, or even of the

6. Smith, Stephenson, Craft of the Critic. New York: Crowell Company, 1931. p. 55.
7. Buck, Philo M., Literary Criticism. New York: Harper Brothers, 1930. p. 292.

seriousness of the true critic. His tone is that of mockery; the mild contempt of the man who is above such untowardness.

If, however, the satirist shows too much confidence in his own righteousness, we wonder how he can be sure. He may be discovering defects in others really in himself or satirizing absence of traits he himself regrets. In order that satire does not become an end in itself he must have standards or touchstones. Whoever relies on a superior attitude alone runs the inevitable risk of the performer who is forgotten as soon as the show is over. He becomes like

> the affected lady who puts on a false refinement and lisps and clips all her words and fancies that natural utterance is a sign of rustic upbringing.[8]

Only when satire attains to the genuine and rings with sincerity will it endure.

The infirmities exposed in satire should be more than physical. Bitter satire like Juvenal's has gone so far as to thrust at personal appearance. Pope exploits all manner of delinquencies, and in his refined speech drives mercilessly with refined cruelty. When Pope forgets to sting, he catches the more all-encompassing attitude of the satirist who mingles "the sweet of his good manners with useful of his advice to a wayward generation."[9] The bitter laugh flung a little too far and too wide is more noticeable in

8. Catholic World, "The Bitter Herb of St. Jerome," Laurence W. Smith, S.J., 143: 444. July, 1936
9. Buck, Philo M., Jr., op. cit., p. 297.

Rabelais or Swift.

To increase its sharpness satire assumes different forms. Its most common medium is the essay. Less frequently it is prone to garb itself in drama or verse. To sugar coat the pill it sometimes adopts the fantastic and only gradually shows its teeth. Thus Rabelais portrays lineaments of French society under guise of imaginary giants whereas Swift pollards the littleness of eighteenth century England under guise of dwarfs. Still less frequently is satire found in comedy, although Aristophanes admits of an unusual amount. The spirit of satire is too close to triumphant laughter to permit comedy to be all satire.

The satirist never seems to appear accidentally on the scene. Aristophanes died in 380 B.C. when the glory that was Greece had already become dim. Juvenal scorned decadent Rome. Skelton and Rabelais lived between two worlds at the end of the Middle Ages. The first Samuel Butler came after the Puritans who were bent on making of this earth a hell. The corruption and contemptible manners of the eighteenth century goaded on Dryden, Pope, Swift and Voltaire. Lord Byron "went his mad way across Europe only after the excesses of Romanticism and the national headaches that followed the French Revolution."[10] In all these instances the general tone of culture was low. A degenerate society calls forth satirists, whose mission seems to be to purge out evil and corruption. The alert satirist is aware of his opportunity and puts to work the worthy device of

10. Catholic World, "With Cap and Bells," p. 179. (May, 1935)

satire. As long as men will note the foibles and deficiencies of the times in which they live and contrast these with their own ideals there will arise the discriminating laughter of their contempt - SATIRE.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH'S NEED FOR SATIRISTS

No one who has eyes to see can be blind to the fact that we live in one of the great critical times of history. That there is a crying need for genuine Catholic literature to sustain the faithful in such a crisis is undeniable. That there are those in Catholic ranks who have come forward to meet this need is likewise undeniable. Both the need and the evils of the times have offered a particularly tempting challenge and an enviable opportunity to the pen of the satirist.

Foremost among the exponents of satire in Catholic ranks during the last decade are Evelyn Waugh, Bruce Marshall, D. B. Wyndham Lewis and J. B. Morton. The two arch satirists in the group are Evelyn Waugh and Bruce Marshall. Waugh has a flair for depicting the shallowness and inanity of our times, while Marshall seems mainly interested in religious foibles. These two Catholic satirists on the offensive have not failed to register many a bull's eye. The fencing weapon that Voltaire and thousands of lesser Voltaires have used has changed hands. The laugh is on the heretic. Ever since the Reformation the Church has been on the defensive. For two hundred years every effort was made to minimize her influences. She was forced to turn her thoughts to survival. About the time of the reign of Leo XIII the siege was over in the main lines. In litera-

ture it was natural for Catholics to turn to satire, a remarkably good weapon of assault. In the footsteps of Chesterton and Belloc, who were the first to see its possibilities, came Waugh and his school. The satire of this group has been effective chiefly because theirs is an unshifting standard of truth and morality. Their satire has been Catholic because, though unlabeled, its basis has always been common sense. It is satire that has had at heart public integrity in the city and in the nation. True, it is not written in the pleasant, good natured vein of a sort designed to amuse rather than to set men thinking. Waugh's work is pure tragedy; it is revolting; it is horrible, but in the manner of modern life it is real. There is no skeleton left lurking in the closet. Marshall is deemed irreverent. Pharisaic pietism will refuse to see the true orthodoxy and the basic reverence implicit in the handling of the two clergymen, the most-High Church Weary Willie and the skeptical Tired Tim. None will essay to deny that either of the two men has neglected the possibilities of satiric expression in the Catholic cause.

The Church has dire need for satirists such as these. We have plenty to say. Those who say it must possess that impersonal hatred which is a noble and a rare gift of God to man. Righteous indignation must not cease to exist, for in its place will come a deadly tolerance and indifference to crimes against life and property. There is an important minority population that will give satire a proper welcome and its generous support. Wider acceptance of the work of Catholics in satire will make the efforts of satirists

even more effective.

> Adding to the number and quality of the satires produced will increase the force of the counter attack against the little, the very little, tin gods of philosophy and science, education and society.[1]

In ages past arguement could be used to good effect against doctrinal errors, and emotional appeal as a support against moral decay. Today because of an unbelief that denies the very existence of such aims and concepts we do well not to attempt argument. Rather we use a material common to all -- daily life in the modern world; by constructive ridicule we expose the fundamental weaknesses and the false position of this life. A jest becomes the most caustic of rebukes.

Few men understand that satire can be harnessed like electricity and converted into a powerful intellectual and moral force. That such wit can be transformed into political power is proven by what James Russell Lowell accomplished in the Bigelow Papers, writing in Yankee dialect. By referring to a certain low brow politician as "John P. Robinson he", indicating his inferior mentality, he literally drove him out of political life. A menacing blade, satire can puncture pretentiousness and awaken fear, yes, even in legislative bodies. As Ronald Knox has so aptly said:

> The tyrant may arm himself in triple mail, may surround himself with bodyguards, may sow his kingdom with a hedge of spies so that free speech is crushed and criticism muzzled. . . .

1. America, "Catholic Letters Waste a Weapon," C.J. Maguire, 68: 18.

> One thing there is that he still fears; one anxiety still bids him turn this way and that to scan the faces of his slaves. He is afraid of laughter.[2]

In spite of both the field and the need for the satirist we find that there is a great lack of appreciation for the efforts of this particular group of writers. Many are wont to disregard them entirely and thereupon forfeit the aid which these men can give beyond measure. This neglect might be attributed to several causes. First of all, the satirist is traditionally open to suspicion just because he is a satirist and liable to indiscrimination in the use of invective. Secondly, he has no appeal for an emotional and sentimental public. His must be a discriminating reading public. In general, no such Catholic reading public can be found. So many of our Catholic readers are much given to greeting with enthusiasm worthless printed matter because they discern in it "good Catholic aims". Lastly, the material with which the modern satirist deals may be objectionable in itself to some. But this unattractiveness does not decrease the merit of the work. The task of the satirist is not to ignore or gloss over the existence of evil nor its importance as a factor in life, but to expose the perversion in its proper light. Perhaps we are too ready to throw up our hands in horror at anything that violates our complacency; therefore, we administer "a silent condemnation" treatment to satirists.

> We are afraid of their frankness and of their explosive qualities. The implication of their work may go too far even into the thoughts and lives of

2. Knox, Ronald A., op. cit., p. 35.

> good Catholics for our comfort, and so we choose not to accept them. The cherubic but mature fact-facing of Waugh and the delicate religious probings of Marshall must be too pertinent for our tenuous well-being.[3]

Although the Catholic reader finds no difficulty in believing Christian doctrines, he sometimes seems reluctant to admit that there are those who find difficulty in living up to them. Let him rather stir himself to the fact that if satirists purge evil more openly and roundly than ever before it may well be held as proof, and not erroneously, that Western culture is in decay.

Satirists will go on, then, in spite of condemnation on the part of some as well as enthusiasm on the part of others, still flaying prevailing abuses with courage, and uprooting smug satisfaction. The need is for more irony — and even a dash of malice. We read in Exodus that the lamb and the unleavened bread of the Jewish Passover had to be eaten with bitter herbs. Our modern literature will do well to find itself cleansed with the bitter herb of satire.

In Mother Church is the universal truth. Like Jeremiah of old her Catholic satirists cry out in exasperation and anger for all to convert before the hour is too late. And it has been ever thus. The inspired writers of the Old Testament used satire vigorously. Patristic literature was not above it as exemplified in the wealthy contribution of Saint Jerome. The Catholic Chaucer's Canterbury Tales are full of satire. Father Lelac, the Jesuit satirist, pub-

[3] J. Maguire, C. J., op. cit., p. 18.

lished in the eighteenth century under the title History of the Famous Preacher Fray Gerundio, "a devastating and most amusing satire on the pulpit eloquence of the day".[5] In more recent times Chesterton has been made famous by his satirical tales, and Belloc by his grim and sardonic political satires. Satire has become the dominant trend in American literature since World War I. Pungent satirical editorials appear daily in our Catholic periodicals. As a weapon it is being more freely wielded than ever before. It is a summons to general mobilization of all Catholic forces in a crusade against the onslaughts of a new barbaric invasion. Let us see that the prophet Satire is accepted, yes - even in his own country.

5. Brown, S.J., Stephen, Survey of Catholic Literature. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1935. p. 29.

CHAPTER IV

BRUCE MARSHALL, A MAN FITTED FOR THE TASK

Few novelists in recent years have received so surprising a reception as has been accorded Bruce Marshall. This reception has wavered between enthusiasm and condemnation. Some have hailed him as the creator of a new element in modern Catholic fields, others have threatened to burn him at the literary stake. He has been welcomed as the most brilliant of writers on the modern scene, and he has been accused of an influence almost shocking. All this clamor, divided between condemnation and enthusiasm, has aroused interest in the man himself.

Irrespective of what may be Mr. Marshall's position as a novelist, his satire is of the most glorious sort. Few writers have ever attempted his lucid and hilarious pictures of deep seated dogmatism and unbelief. A writer must have wide knowledge, a keen eye, ready wit, and a smooth style to bring to life in caricature the various characters and times that he depicts. Both by natural talents and through varied life experience Mr. Marshall possesses a rich and generous fund upon which to draw for his satiric attacks.

Bruce Marshall was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on June 24, 1899, and was christened Claude Cunningham Bruce Marshall. His father, Claude Niven Marshall, was a stock broker. His mother,

Phyllis, was the daughter of the late William Glen Clark of Edinburgh. Both parents were of thoroughly Scottish descent. This ancestry has remained unbroken on both sides, except for an English paternal grandmother. To his typically Scottish heritage the young Marshall owed many of his talents. His was the traditional Scottish ability to observe shrewdly. This has stood him in good stead when pertinent satire has called for a keen eye for human foibles. His natal gifts also included a mind endowed with a good share of logic, a tongue that has lent to his satiric comment pithy, if not always too charitable, expression, a love of frankness, and a salty understanding of the lusty character of the Scots and Celts. In addition, he was possessed of a gift for literary composition and an aptitude for Latin and other languages. One is puzzled as to where to attribute his gift of sparkling and warming wit, for wit does not come offhand in conjunction with Scots. Yet none can say after reading Marshall that he is thrifty with his humour; he gives it out in handfuls. Despite his strong Scottish background, we find the ingredients in Marshall's writing less insular, the sentiments less nostalgic than shown in Burn's suppers, purple heather, and the sly jokes belonging to old Scottish literary formula.

Of his childhood Mr. Marshall says:

> I was a very serious child and used to play at Presbyterian and Episcopal church services at which I officiated robed in a bath towel, with my sister and her governess as an unwilling congregation.[1]

1. Letter dated June 30, 1948.

His mother, who was the disciplinarian of the family, died when he was but nine years of age. After her death Marshall's father sent him to Edinburgh Academy to boarding school. Here he was at first very unhappy and ran away twice. It was at school that the boy's first literary tendencies revealed themselves. When thirteen years of age he edited a paper called The Junior Journal. Among other things it included a hair-raising short story. The Junior Journal was rolled off by hand from jellypads. In regard to the reception of his first literary attempt Mr. Marshall, with his customary whimsy, gives the following enlightenment:

> The copying ink used was green in colour and was soon found smeared all over my cubicle at school. The production was actively discouraged.[2]

As far as actual encouragement is concerned Marshall seems to have had very little of it all along the arduous road. The career of an author held no appeal for his conservative relatives. His grandfather, who died before he was born, wrote philosophical works on the back of old biscuit bags. His family concealed this activity, and it was discovered by the boy only by chance. Furthermore, Marshall claims that to this day his surviving aunt will never mention his literary works in his presence. His writing started, as he puts it, solely "in a vain desire to see my works in print."[3] No further attempts at juvenile publication are noted throughout Mr. Marshall's younger years, but from his own school days we judge

2. Idem.
3. Idem.

that he gained the knowledge of prep school antics and adolescent manners which he so playfully employs in his Prayer for the Living.

From Edinburgh Academy Marshall went to Trinity College where he remained until his seventeenth year. At this time he enrolled in Saint Andrew's University. It was while he was at Saint Andrew's that he perfected his more than moderate ability for golf and cricket. It was also at Saint Andrew's that he began in earnest to visualize himself as a writer. His first real attempts were inspired by reading an Anglo-Catholic novel whose title he fails to remember but whose author was Guy Thorne. As an Anglo-Catholic of eighteen his writing was confined mainly to short stories with a religious basis.

Converted to Catholicism while he was still only eighteen years of age, Marshall took a brave step away from his all Protestant ties. He was received into the Church by the Jesuit Fathers on the first day of January, 1918. As is so often the case, a slight episode led this intelligent man to make the final step toward the true religion. He describes it thus:

> My actual conversion to Catholicism took place when I attended a week-day celebration of the Eucharist in an Edinburgh Anglican church. I believed then that the Anglican communion service was the mass, and I received a rude shock when the verger bullied two intending communicants into not communicating so that the clergyman might stop after the prayer for Christ's Church Militant Here on Earth without proceeding to consecrate.[4]

4. The Queen's Work, "His First American Interview," Daniel A. Lord, S.J., May, 1932. p. 10.

Catholic literature, also, influenced Marshall to some extent in his groping path toward the truth. He mentions in particular all the novels of that great Catholic novelist, Robert Hugh Benson, and more especially a classic Catholic book, Cardinal Gibbon's The Faith of Our Fathers. Since entering the Church Mr. Marshall has read Catholic literature rarely. Estranged from it by its frequently appalling unreality, he feels it a great pity that, as a whole, Catholic critics should be afraid to see life portrayed in Catholic novels as it really is.

With the assurance that he had found his true religious bearings there came to Mr. Marshall a certain piquancy in his religious observations. Surrounded by a completely Protestant atmosphere as he was, he came to know the loneliness and persecution of a Father Smith. He came to know life amidst a dearth of Catholic neighbors and the painful hostility of a Scotch unbeliever. His, too, was the cherished dream of a Father Malachy who prays so fervently that all Scotland will return to the ancient faith. It is because of his spirit of loving at-home-ness with Catholicity and his common experience that Marshall is enabled to present home truths and preach sincere sermons with real religious feeling and to clothe these in a Catholic family language. His religious honesty and his deep unmistakable familiarity with the things of religion were implanted in his own being throughout a definite sequence of years; years straightened by the power and purpose of God. It is thus that we find in Marshall's work so many passages of con-

vincing presentation of Catholic belief, an elevated spirituality, and a lively argument that makes sure the footing of this satirist who laughingly pirouettes on the edge of the precipice as he poinards his thrusts at those below.

Marshall's studies at Saint Andrew's were interrupted after one year by the advent of World War I. He entered the war in 1918 as a cadet in the British army and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal Fusiliers on June 25 of the same year. His first novel, A Priest of Mars, was written in the trenches. Regularly he sent five pages home to a friend in England. Wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans on the Western Front, ironically enough just six nights before the armistice, Marshall subsequently lost a leg.

Upon returning from the war Mr. Marshall set out to complete his education at Edinburgh University. From this institution he received a Master of Arts degree in 1924 and a Bachelor of Commerce degree in 1925. He had left the army determined to become a novelist but was practical enough to know that it took writers a long time to live by the pen alone. In 1926 he was admitted to membership in the Society of Accountants in Edinburgh. Although prosaic, his profession would be a sure means of obtaining employment abroad. His understanding of the ups and downs of such a profession explains his many amusing references to the bustling importances of the accountant and his less amusing references to their cowardice in upholding the right under complete compulsion of losing their jobs.

He pokes fun at these clerks because he knows them and loves them best. As for Marshall himself:

> . . . an intellectual grounding, a strong sense of the nausea and futility of human slaughter, and a gnawing political awareness prevented him from keeping his eyes forever fixed on the balance sheet.[5]

While he was still an articled clerk, struggling to complete his university education, Marshall's first published novel, This Sorry Scheme, was honored as one of the six winners in a Harrap and Company prize novel competition. The novel was published with little success in the United States. It was not until his publication of Father Malachy's Miracle in 1931 that Marshall really "arrived" in America.

As soon as Marshall had acquired his diploma he moved to Paris, making his home there from 1926 until 1940 when the Germans drove him out. He selected Paris for his home because neither his Catholicism nor his interest in literature was appreciated in his home town of Edinburgh, where three centuries of Presbyterianism had "robbed its citizens of all sense of beauty".[6] As for the Catholicity of Paris, when questioned on the matter at one time, Marshall said:

> 'I find the French are either exceedingly good Catholics or exceedingly bad Catholics. It is an anomaly that France has the most intelligent and most devout priesthood in Europe and that her laity often gives one the creeps. But I

5. Wilson Bulletin, "Bruce Marshall," 13: 84.
6. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., op. cit., p. 10.

always reflect HOW VERY MUCH WORSE THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN HAD THEY BEEN ANGLICANS, PRESBYTERIANS, OR METHODISTS."[7]

In 1928 Marshall married Mary Pearson Clark, a Scots girl whom he met in Paris. His only child, Sheila Elizabeth Josephine, born March 19, 1931, is at present studying with the Madames of the Sacred Heart at Hove, England. It is to her that he dedicates his most popular work, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith: "For Sheila, who may one day read this book."

When compelled to leave Paris in 1940 at the outbreak of World War II, Marshall again joined the British army. Starting out with his former rank of Lieutenant while serving in the Royal Pay Corps, he finished with the rating of Lieutenant Colonel in the Displaced Persons Division of the British Element of the Allied Commission for Austria. Once more, as during the first war, Marshall wrote while soldiering, and it was "during this recent period of military service that he began really to make his name as a writer."[8] His greatest success, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith, was written on Saturday and Sunday afternoons between January and June during these war years. It was the haunting questions of these and his first war years, and the atmosphere of mental and physical conflicts during such times that has impressed an indelible mark on Mr. Marshall's thoughtful analysis on war problems and gained him skill in satirizing munitions, racketeers, and war futilities.

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7. Idem.
8. Romig, Walter, The Book of Catholic Authors. Michigan: Walter Romig Publishing Company, Vol. IV. pp. 160-163.

His is an immense distaste for petty outlooks and performance when human lives are at stake. His insight into the realities of war life as he himself has known them has lent vitality to his lampooning of soldiering and has put the right edge on his army dialogue.

Since the war Mr. Marshall has maintained a peaceful and quiet residence in France. Conservative by nature, he spends his days earning a modest living and planning his literary career. When asked about his recreations Marshall answers: "Writing novels if regarded as a Chartered Accountant; Accountancy if regarded as a novelist."[9] He has little leisure to cultivate hobbies other than, as he expresses it, "annoying my wife by my manual clumsiness."[10] The year 1946 saw the publication of Yellow Tapers for Paris, a novel almost ruthless in its satirization of the selfishness, corruption, stupidity and wickedness of Paris in the six years preceding the armistice of 1940. Close upon it, in 1947, came Vespers for Vienna, a semi-farcical satire on army red tape in occupied Austria. In the spring of 1948 Marshall visited the United States. On a lecture tour scheduled under the management of W. Colston Leigh, Incorporated, New York City, he traveled to the cities of New York, Washington, Boston, Chicago, Milwaukee, and New Orleans, and went through the states of Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. He posed for his picture with a group

9. Who's Who, "Bruce Marshall," London: A. and C. Black, Limited, 1935. 2. 2219.
10. Letter dated June 21, 1948.

of Mount Mary College girls in Milwaukee on a brief informal visit there, and must have been gratified to see this picture printed in the Catholic newspapers of the Northwest. As for his impressions of the United States, we quote:

> I admired especially its capacity for youthful enthusiasm and the courage to express and practice a generosity which is no longer very fashionable in Continental Europe. I deprecated especially the perpetual ooze from your appalling radio programmes and your shocking comic strips which would be read in Britain only by children of eleven.[11]

We note a wealth of enriching experiences throughout the years of Bruce Marshall's life. These have been the telling factors in his ability to write fiction that has a soul as well as a body. He himself states, and knowingly, that good writing is accomplished not by using a camera but by piecing together those patterns of life which have been thrown at one's feet. Bruce Marshall knows his priests, his laity, his parish activities, his Scotland and his France. He knows the manager of the Garden of Eden Dance Hall, the ambitious showman, the kind of people they marry, the dinners they give, the posters they find stimulating to business. He knows the "broad-minded" ecclesiastics and those who are wise with the wisdom of the saints, looking simply and bravely into the tangle of life. He draws these worthies with a sure touch. Capturing successfully the little close-up experiences of humanity he is convinced of the general state of the world and gives to his searching investigation

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11. Idem.

a broad canvas. His keen perception of the juxtaposition of the sacred and sinful in human society is full of penetration. Marshall realizes that the only proper subject of fiction is to be found in the ordinary persons of the world and their daily performance of seemingly dull, repetitive tasks. He counts as most valuable in his writing the fact that he himself was forced to earn his living among ordinary people in an unliterary atmosphere, since "the subject of literature is essentially unliterary people."[12] His advice to young writers is to avoid the pitfall of unreality

> by going out into the world and seeing it for yourself before you attempt to interpret it for others.[13]

So true to life is Marshall in his portraitures that the reader can hardly escape the disturbing suggestion of resemblance between the people satirized and himself. Had he not lived so fully perhaps Bruce Marshall would never have been able to mirror so clearly for us the many things that we must see and that we may be made aware of best through the prism of liquid laughter.

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12. Idem.
13. Extension, "The Art of Writing," Bruce Marshall, May, 1948.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW HYPOCRISY

It is amazing to discover how Mr. Marshall with his always gay and yet discerning satire covers a broad field of modern philosophies with the ease and definitiveness of an Aristotle. To awaken the vigilance and zeal of Catholics in guarding against those sophistries which are the indictment of our age he employs every measure of subtle irony that could possibly be linked with hard-hitting common sense. Like Georges Bernanos one of Marshall's deepest concerns seems to be that most dangerous of present day defections from Christ which is known as "the new hypocrisy". It is the demon that springs from mediocrity. In the words of Father Smith Mr. Marshall chides:

> It's what I call the new hypocrisy. . . . In the old days people pretended to be better than they were, but now they pretend to be worse. In the old days a man said that he went to church on Sundays even if he didn't, but now he says he plays golf and would be very distressed if his men friends found out that he really went to church. In other words, hypocrisy use to be . . . the tribute vice paid to virtue, but now its the tribute virtue pays to vice. . .[1]

These are they who rather hide their faith than rejoice in it. Forgetting the injunction of Our Lord to let their light shine before

1. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1945. p. 86.

men, they seek no occasion to display it. Rather they turn their lamps low; as low as they can without extinguishing the glow entirely. Catholics in name only, they are quite incurably anti-clerical, earthy, and a little more than superficially cynical. Theirs is an ominous shortsightedness; an underestimation of the dread disease of mediocrity.

> Mediocrity is a colorless and odorless gas; allow it to accumulate undisturbed and suddenly it explodes with a force beyond all belief.[2]

The fear in the hearts of all, whether believer or unbeliever, should not be so much that Christians are less numerous, but that the number of mediocre, hypocritical Christians should increase. Mediocre Christians possess only the vocabulary of morals. Principles cannot save without men. Followers of the new hypocrisy warp practice and shackle it irredeemably. Father Smith's mind wanders toward this thought as he pronounces the words of baptism over the whimpering of the baby boy and girl:

> How easy baptism was and how kind God had been to institute so simple a sacrament, and how heavy were the responsibilities of godparents and how lightly they took them as a general rule! . . . What were these two babies now going to become? Were they going to be for Christ or against Him or followers of the middle way, bowing both to God and Mammon.[3]

They are a poor type of Christian who have nothing to do with Christ. For them Christ does not enter into life, love, money, society, home,

2. Commonweal, "Mediocrity and Sanctity," Georges Bernanos, 39: 222.
3. Marshall, Bruce, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

death, or sorrow.

In like fashion the gentle, humble Father Malachy, while praying for the coming of John Henry Newman's Second Spring, gazes out mentally over the world of investment companies, cinemas and hotel lounges and sees so many ever passing who were neither for Him nor against Him. The attitude becomes more concretely exemplified in the spirit of the hard-driven, grasping little accountant Bigou who, wavering valiantly between the best and the worst that life has to offer, petitions God on the occasion of his daughter's First Communion: "Make Odette a good girl, not too religious, but make her a good girl."[4] Or it is seen in a milder degree in the spirit of the plain tired French working girl who "had photographs of Father Damien and Shirley Temple pinned up above her desk."[5] She, no doubt, resembled those of whom Bigou thought when he reflected that "there must be quite a lot of people in Paris who went to early Mass on Sundays, but there didn't seem to be any of them left on Mondays."[6]

The mediocre Christian soon becomes a very indifferent sort of person. A living contradiction to the truth he possesses, he loses hold on that most essential of Christian virtues, charity. At times he goes about feigning to understand, but the word "charity" has no precise meaning as applied to the universal world of human beings. It is hopelessly mixed up in a world that insists upon pre-

4. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946. p. 30.
5. Ibid., p. 44.
6. Ibid., p. 93.

ferring Barabbas to Christ; a world that, like Pilate, thinks that by limiting the field of choice Christ will go free. Marshall, with implied comment, speaks out resolutely concerning this lack of Christ's good charity. He sees such individuals in the guise of the poor mourners returning from visiting the graves of their dead who sat in the filled bus "eyeing one another with stolid, indifferent, hostile disinterest."[7] As Bigou so pointedly thought, they were all in the same boat, yet no one cared about anyone else's getting out of it safely except himself. It was the thoughtless preoccupation with one's own worldly worries and a lack of the warmth of brotherly love that made busloads of humans sit opposite one another hating one another. It was contentment with the easiest way, with accepting the inevitable of a poor lot. What mystery that God's love should continue to pour itself out on little creatures who were so petty and mean, so sinful and ungenerous. What mystery to Father Malachy as he considers that

> the soul behind that bulging red face had been redeemed by Christ just as surely as had his own, and Our Blessed Lord, while He hung on the cross, had seen the funny little dent in the middle of the peaky, peering woman's nose just as clearly as He had seen the broad, bland visage of Pope Pius the Eleventh and, so mercifully good was He, loved it just as much.[8]

Although charity and a willingness to share be the mark of the true Christian,we who feel ourselves to be such must hesitate to

7. Ibid., p. 169.
8. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. New York: Doubleday, Doran Company, 1931. p. 3.

point an accusing finger at others before we vigorously polish the knockers on our own front doors. For it was at the side altar of a church that "lonely in his box the dead man lay, with his rubble of mourners behind him, come from God, gone to God, and nobody caring."[9] It sometimes seemed to Father Smith that God made up to well-intentioned Protestants for the Faith that was not theirs. They were better at loving their neighbors than some Catholics were.

Mr. Marshall has as much sharp and sad fun with those who act and speak out of motives of human respect as any free thinking satirist has ever had with pompous pretense. Underneath it all we note his own profound current of belief, not only in the tenets of Catholicism but also in its basic values. With open candor he calls the Reformation not just "the Reformation" but designates it as that "horrible piece of open sin."[10] It is the same lovable candor which inspires the Bishop to prefer a house boy whom he cannot cure of improprieties, but who goes to Holy Communion every day and has God in his soul, to one "of those clever ones who are all genuflections and no rosary."[11] The former was at least not of the "all-for-morning-prayer-but-never-at-it kindergarten of thought."[12] Father Smith felt the same way about Miss O'Hara's choir which, with its singing as bad as its accents, he felt sure Almighty God would hear

> with a lenient ear, because every false note

9. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 197.
10. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 7.
11. Ibid., p. 153.
12. Ibid., p. 208.

> was meant as praise, which was not always true of trillings from hired sopranos in Milan, Seville and Vienna.[13]

Nor was the same sincere little priest "going to be shamed out of talking about the things of God just because a tramload of worldlings was staring at him."[14]

In skillfully etched contrast to those who have the courage of their convictions we have the unstable Bigou, so typical of his kind, who under social compulsion reluctantly avoids the practice of his religion so that his friends will not scoff at him. Where heresy and indifferentism were in the saddle one's own was a lonely voice. Confused as he was, he was afraid to ask if any found peace with God

> because it would be asking a question that really mattered, and questions that really mattered never got answered even if they got asked.[15]

Besides, when there is such absence of any true religious feeling among one's fellowmen one begins to wonder if they aren't the ones who are right. Bigou is a good man. His instincts, his affections, and most of his convictions are good, but the diverse opinions of the times are too much for his goodness. He makes the deadly concessions which the world demands. Probably he would have gone to Mass occasionally had "he not been afraid of the criticism of his friends."[16] Probably his wife would have died fortified with the

13. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 6.
14. Ibid., p. 28.
15. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 292.
16. Ibid., p. 87.

sacraments had he not thought that

> she mightn't like him sending for a priest with the Lacordaires always liable to be peering through the glass door of the loge and see him going upstairs.[17]

In his slavery to human respect Bigou but resembles the crowd; the parents who, when the children in front of the church knelt down, stood "because they didn't wish to look too pious in front of their friends."[18] They were of the world that was

> 'about' being good and being bad and not 'about' trade winds and centres of depression and chemists' shops and the price of war loan, as deep down in their hearts most people knew, only they were afraid to say so out loud in case other people would laugh at them.[19]

Under a kind of desperate compulsion they reluctantly shift from one allegiance, one name, one program to another dimly aware all the while that in none of them is real promise. Perhaps they really want to love God, but always there looms up the vast and dreadful incongruity between the virtue they so wistfully respect and the tainted world to which their daily lives are attached.

So the little lives go on. They heedlessly waver between hope and cynicism, letting the hushed voice of conscience be drowned by the loud voice of expediency. The Father Smiths and the Father Malachys go on grieving over a world where religion is still so true but where people live it in such a way that it seems so false.

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17. Ibid., p. 54.
18. Ibid., p. 31.
19. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 119.

These priests, full of faith and courage as they are, experience great difficulty in reclaiming souls deep in the pitfalls of hypocrisy and human respect. The battle is uphill and the reclamations transitory. With all the fulness with which priests are bound to be aware of it, they see the seamier side of life. They are blessed with true consolation when their daily struggle is rewarded, as it frequently is, with the last minute repentances of human beings representing a mixture of good and bad, brave and craven, generous and mean, with instincts that co-exist in every soul. But as Father Smith so whimsically meditated as he tended the dying sailor:

> Mightn't it have been a bit more merciful on God's part to have set a time limit on repentance, say forty-five? There would have been no inducement for sinners to keep putting things off to the last moment then and it would have been a lot easier for priests.[20]

Or as the Abbe Pecher pensively tells Bigou as he hastens to a death bed:

> We are God's bottle-neck. . . People filter in and filter out through us; the trouble is that we see so little of them in between. But perhaps it is not altogether their fault. Perhaps it is too much to expect them to be Christians when our civilization has made it so difficult to believe in God in railway termini and streets.[21]

Whatever may tax the virtue of these ecclesiastics they are not of that number who go about nervously apologizing for God. They are not afraid to be themselves in crowds.

20. Ibid., p. 19.
21. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 124.

To sum up, Mr. Marshall alternately uses stinging comment and displays relish for beauty and fun in order to bring home some very definite views. He feels with Chesterton that it is not the Christianity has been tried and found wanting, but that it has not been tried. Passionate in his own belief, he stands firm in the hope that the Christian faith has power to save and that its strength will yet be known as a guiding light or as a destructive fire to men and women who prefer the religion they practice so feebly or treasonably. His contempt for the mediocre Christian who reduces the word Christian to a mere margin and who has lost the reflexes and convictions of a Christian seems bottomless. The power of his pen does not spare their fundamental weakness of lack of charity. Having lost sight of the surpassing wonder of sanctifying grace they have also lost sight of the Catholic ideal of conduct. Because the twentieth century denies the spiritual life, that the ideas of charity should be vague even to Catholics does not become strange. Of slavery to human respect Marshall makes a horribly funny farce — funny if not too horrible. To his mind this slavery denotes that heroism, generosity, and martyrdom have slipped from the Christian concept and that a vague conformity to a patter of "decent worldliness" has usurped its place. But Christ is still the ideal. Like leaves falling from autumn trees sinners drop repentant at the feet of the Master as life draws to a close. There are always priests, good priests, who will see God beneath the clay and will pour the merits of Christ's passion over the forgetfulness and the sorrow for not being sorry of these

dying souls. Marshall's sympathy points up for these repentant creatures because he feels that habit, not hatred, has alienated them from God. He puts a silk shirt over the ulcer.

Bruce Marshall's views on so-called "Catholic" moderates delight me, for they show him to be a man discerning, alert, and adroit in pointing out the follies of the times. His Faith is sure and practical. He is no dreamer. He is a thinker. To share his thoughts widens and broadens the horizon of one's own vision. To share his thoughts through the medium of satire intrigues.

CHAPTER VI

THE SCOURGE OF UNBELIEF

If Bruce Marshall shows pity for those who try to explain away the hard sayings of the Gospels and minimize the Faith that is in them until their religion is no longer an ideal, he shows infinitely more pity for those cliques of atheists and agnostics (not confined to any land) who are bitter enemies of the very Cross itself. With clear and reasoning vigor he gives the reader a good time as well as some good ideas at their expense. He mocks the intelligence of these deluded individuals who are so busy understanding, organizing, and explaining life, society, morality, the law, the nation, industry, health, leisure, love and pleasure exclusive of God and future life. Their rebellion against Christ evidences itself in their pagan doctrines, pagan morals and pagan institutions. The most telling battle against the sources of evil must be fought on the terrain of this total disbelief. The sting of truth is in Marshall's phrases as he attacks paganism, Protestantism, and intellectual pride. With blunt honesty he preaches against these ever present snares to Angus, to Elvira, to Joseph Scott, to the Bishop's Bad Brother, to Lady Ippecacuanha, to Mr. Shyman Bell, to Chanu, to his penitents and to scores of others.

When Father Malachy invokes his Lord, his Lord's Blessed Mother, Michael the Archangel, and all the saints and enacts his

miracle to convert bonny Scotland to the Catholic faith, the world, and especially bonny Scotland, gasps for a moment but upon recovering itself sturdily refuses to believe. "The Babylonians at least had the decency to believe the finger when it wrote on the wall, . . ."[1] These people would refuse to pay attention to Almighty God Himself if He appeared in their midst and painted "in pentecostal scarlet upon the ballroom floor."[2]

How sad and ludicrous is the greatest achievement these pagans boast of -- they no longer believe this world to be a preparation for the next. Nothing reaches beyond the natural. The only wisdom is the wisdom of the senses. Unbelievers, all around them is unbelief; in the next house; in the next street. Like most of his kind the Bishop's brother

> was among the first to laugh at those who deprived themselves of pleasures here below so that they might find a more lasting habitation beyond the grave. . . . he would have scorned the name mystic even if he had known precisely what it meant.[3]

To him as to Edinburgh Father Malachy's Miracle was no miracle at all. It was "just auto-suggestion or mass-hypnotism or sheer fraud."[4] Nevertheless the realities of God went on in Scotland like wheels hidden behind the face of a clock which men were too unskilled to open. The lights of heaven were inextinguishable even though there was constant striving to put them out. Father Smith taught, as was

1. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 20.
2. Idem.
3. Ibid., p. 90.
4. Ibid., p. 132.

taught in the time of the Apostles, that Catholics believe in Baptism and the Virgin Birth

> firstly, by obedience, because God tells us to believe these doctrines; and secondly, by logic, because it is only reasonable to suppose that He Who stuck in the stars and twirled the planets and tugged the tides can override the limitations which He Himself has imposed upon their movements.[5]

Paganism does not admit of any such logic or loving trust; it admits only of self and the worship of gods of one's own choice. Fashioned by each individual for himself these gods are passion, pride and vice. They manifest the will of the world against God's Will.

Carefree as a sparrow, and with a note of levity that is half burlesque, Mr. Marshall airs his observations on Protestants, too, and at most unexpected times. The Reverend Humphry Hamilton is a classic example of the generic word. This distinguished gentleman of the Anglican sect had

> read volumes of anthropology and comparative religion and metaphysics and had quite honestly arrived at the conclusion that the Old and New Testaments were greatly exaggerated accounts of the spiritual history of an obscure and over-imaginative nomadic tribe.[6]

These words make Father Malachy ever so unhappy because, not having read Bertrand Russell and Freud, he considered such talk blasphemous.

Just as Protestant, but not quite so much a gentleman, is Councillor Thompson, Chairman of the Protestant Action Society, who

5. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith, p. 107.
6. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle, p. 55.

accosts Father Smith and threatens:

> We don't want any dirty Catholics in this part of our town. We don't want them carrying on their blasphemous activities in the fruit market. And if you'll no get out, we'll make you.[7]

And in his passionate outburst the Councillor throws back the intellectual progress made by man through the centuries. This attitude, however, has its gratifying, though rare, exceptions, as seen in Dr. Gillespie, rector of the High Kirk, who smiled pleasantly at Father Smith, took off his hat, and apologized for the unruly conduct of some of the members of his congregation toward the benign priest. Father Smith understood that Doctor Gillespie was

> a large unhappy man anxious, like himself, that men should come in for Christ's wedding feast.[8]

Marshall's laugh becomes a little more pronounced when he gets past the proud, bigoted, or often simply misguided Protestant to the unpardonly ignorant individual. Lady Ippecacuanha was of this class. She was

> a religious woman and believed that God was in most places, even in Roman Catholic Churches. . . . she came to the conclusion that she rather liked the smell of incense, which was, after all, ever so much pleasanter a disinfectant than carbolic.[9]

Ignorance of propriety made Presbyterians advertise religious services with placards that read "BRING YOUR GIRL TO EVENSONG"[10] or

7. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 43.
9. Ibid., p. 57.
10. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 18.

"COME TO EVENSONG. IT'S CHEAPER THAN THE PICTURES. GOD DOESN'T MIND IF YOU HOLD HER HAND,"[11] as if they were promoting the sale of some household beverage. Reverend Humphrey Hamilton was of the opinion that plain chant didn't hold a chance against such slogans.

The prejudices and environment of Protestants placed them thousands of years and a solar system away from their Maker. No matter to them that one would be just as entitled to believe that two and two make five as to believe that Our Lord would let the world be deceived in essential matters for almost sixteen hundred years. The Faith had gone from them because

> men had been foolish enough to seek to reform from within, failing to understand that a doctrine was not necessarily untrue because its adherents did not live up to its implications.[12]

Having dispensed with the Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, men and women were supposed to lead virtuous lives without any of those helps which Christ Himself had instituted. Protestants

> did not seem to use their churches on weekdays like Catholics, dropping in to say a wee prayer to Our Lord between buying the cabbages and seeing about the sultana cake.[13]

The Protestant verger who found Father Smith praying in the High Kirk on Saint Andrew's day shook his head in amazement for he was not accustomed to the spectacle of private devotion.

It is pleasant to be one's own master; to put one's philoso-

11. Ibid., p. 41.
12. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 41.
13. Idem.

phy of life under a bushel and to look askance at "religiosity". Unbelievers and those who are not of the Household of the Faith can do so for they make final meanings such illusive things. Blind, ignorant, they go on killing one another in a fierce desire to survive. An erring populace, their shallow thought ends in the belief that God must be abolished. In satire replete with flavor and precision Marshall exposes one of the basic causes of their folly. They are so often victims of the sinister demon of intellectual pride.

The degrading of reason by so-called "intellectuals" has destroyed the notion of principle. They and their host of followers do not think; they simply believe or disbelieve. As one old lady remarked to another at the scene of Father Malachy's Miracle: "Thae Catholics is wrang, Jeannie; and even if they prove they're right they're wrang."[14] The intelligent appearance of a judicial wig gives a man power to lay down the law irrespective of social justice. Those entrusted with authority pronounce their ultimatums to a nation with less hesitation than they predict a winner for golf finals. Never having dipped their fingers into philosophy, influential, "learned" men know more than Plato. They know all the answers. Yet the deeper forces of life are lost to them. Father Smith ardently prays for the soul of D.H. Lawrence "who had known so much and who had known so little."[15] The scholarly Father Malachy listens with forbearance to Mr. Shyman Bell who

14. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 132.
15. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 150.

> liked articulating words which sounded to him sonorous and did not particularly bother his head as to their meaning.[16]

And again, he listened with even more forbearance to a certain Mr. Ink who wanted to buy the rights to his miracle and who, upon Father Malachy's protests, looked much grieved and bewildered over the spurning of his offer. Prophetic and serious, Bacquereot warns his cafe companions that France will pay "for her unwillingness to think logically."[17] Her downfall will come from pseudo-scholars who accept all theories from Vienna to Cambridge. With open minds and empty heads these pseudo-scholars supply a large amount of thunder, but not very much lightning. They substitute shoddy nonsense for Gospel truths and justify the shaky platitudes by the words "American" or "democratic". All things, no matter how extraordinary they may be,are "expressible in terms of natural laws".[18] The thinkers were, therefore, dead opposed to Father Malachy's miracle because, as they declaimed,

> "Agnosticism. . .has been for fifty years or more the only religious philosophy possible to the educated man and woman; and any attempt to justify, by a juggling that is as anachronous as it is clumsy, a supernaturalism repugnant to the intelligent mind is doomed to failure."[19]

Little wonder that it "was becoming increasingly difficult to talk to people about things that really mattered."[20]

16. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle, p. 177.
17. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 35.
18. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 176.
19. Ibid., p. 217.
20. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 126.

When error is intellectual Mr. Marshall judges that we are too complacent about it; such error has done and is still busily doing great harm. In the midst of what he considers to be the far greater error of the mind we as Catholics too often identify evil mainly with the breaking of the sixth commandment. This criterion is based on what he terms a "short range rather than a long range morality."[21] It stresses fornication at the expense of scarcely stressing sweated labor, corrupt politics, profiteering, unjust wages and gangster films. With candour the Abbe Pecher says:

> There's been too much fuss made about women showing their knees in church and far too little about armaments and cruelty and oppression and employers underpaying their employees and sickness and unhappiness and false national ideals . . . for not only do we want our young men and young women to be pure, but we also want them to be kind and compassionate to distant as well as to near unhappiness.[22]

Feeling rather keenly on this point, with blunt honesty Marshall rebukes these young men and women as well as their elders for what he deems a lesser concern for evils inherent on mismanagement of industry and maldistribution of wealth.

In summary, we see that Mr. Marshall's religion is not one of sentimental preferences; his convictions are firm; he condemns only after careful observation. In this chapter we have seen how with logical and penetrating satire he scoffs at unbelievers who bereft

21. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 134.
22. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 79.

of Faith depend solely on their human minds to determine their goals and discern their paths; who bereft of God worship no further than the pagan idol. These unwittingly deride the very reason they claim to have embraced as a basis for all things. Completely reliant on the invention of man and oblivious to original sin, they subject themselves to every human fallacy. Marshall's darts are also aimed at those Protestants whose feeble ideas so frequently lack even semblance of backbone -- the bigoted, the ignorant and the intellectually proud. He deems intellectual pride to be the root of most of the evil and uses much playfulness of expression in discriminating against it. His "pet peeve" appears to be that we spend a disproportionate amount of time condemning the impure and do not put into sufficient disrepute the sins of the spirit. The modern world is wise according to its own lights, but its wisdom is foolish and not that of Christians. Yet, as Mr. Marshall is so painfully aware, the blind scramble of the intellectuals to escape from Christianity into every pagan refuge continues. And where, he wonders, will it all end?

CHAPTER VII

THE MYTH OF PROGRESS

It is characteristic of our world today that the material cause is the only genuine cause; that economic determinants are the sole ones of human events. This is the coarse materialism that has the power to weigh down the things of a seraph -- the tyranny of money over human beings. Mechanical inventions have progressed out of all ratio to spiritual perfection. The answer and the end-all to everything is an electric ice-box in every kitchen and a heliocopter in every back yard. Advocating a return to principle as the only effective formula for true progress, Bruce Marshall laughs at the exponents of that crusading faith which knows nothing but those things that are profitable here and now. His laughter is the laughter of the children of God; the laughter we so sorely need these days.

Rich men have become too selfish. It becomes harder and harder for them to abandon prosperity and live each day as if it were their last. They are bored with office routine and crazed with the desire of easily gotten wealth. What they term as financial independence becomes avarice for huge fortunes, amassed by the comparative few at the expense of others. As a result there are hundreds of millionaires, and millions of citizens who cannot earn

a decent living. The unregulated urge of the profit motive and concentration on material things becomes a menace to God and man. Father Smith meets this menace at every turn.

> A rage against the rich rose in the priest as he thought of how easy things had been for them and how difficult for Angus. It was so simple for them, with their green lawns and their limousines and their conservatories and their holidays at Dinard, to talk about what they would do if they were workingmen, but it wasn't so easy for the working man, especially when he hadn't any work to do.[1]

A simple priest himself, he is not of the aristocracy. He does the spade work; he is covered with dirt commingled with sweat; he is never too sure he is progressing and yet he goes further than his confreres who seem so certain of their answers, gleaned from a materialistic philosophy. Freewheeling of his bicycle between his missions in Scotland his constant solicitude is for his parishioners, not for their pocketbooks. "That was the only sense in which ambition was lawful for a Christian: ambition for the work and not for self."[2] A good man, secure in his Faith, he remains an obdurate idealist.

The life of Bigou, the insignificant, underpaid, overworked accountant sheds further light on the evils of utilitarianism. He lived in a shabby flat and he was of those whose wives die of overwork and disease that costs too much to treat. When his wife died, the master of ceremonies "had not bothered to come up stairs because

1. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 119.
2. Ibid., p. 178.

it was only a cheap funeral."[3] Under economic compulsion to hold his job, Bigou reluctantly helps to defraud his own nation by arranging dishonest tax returns for the corporation that employs him. To Bigou it appears that only the rich with money mania achieve their goal, as exemplified in the persons of M.M. Terasse and Dupont, his employers. His meted out existence at times becomes unbearable and he is driven to say:

> Life's altogether unjust. All the world over the poor are starving, and yet in Brazil they burn coffee to keep the price up so that the rich don't lose their profits.[4]

As for Father Malachy, he knew that "in New York men cared more about money than salvation."[5] Regret was his that the countries of the world did not seem to be able to think in terms of grace rather than in terms of coal; in terms of cathedrals rather than in terms of stock exchanges. As he scanned the cars drawn up outside the Garden of Eden Dance Hall, he reflected "that the owners of those cars did not come by them by frequenting the sacraments."[6] Poor Father Malachy! And then there was the world's attitude toward his miracle. The loud-voiced utilitarians, the grinning stockbrokers, the newspaper syndicates, the motion picture producers, and the money-mad promoters came from near and far to see and misunderstand it. There was Mr. Bleater who demanded that he make exorbitant payment for the loss incurred by the removal of the dance hall

3. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 63.
4. Ibid., p. 112.
5. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 33.
6. Ibid., p. 116.

from its former site. There was Mr. Shyman Bell who could not see the reason why they should not

> come to a satisfactory understanding about the -- about the financial side of this very religious -- of this very religious miracle,[7]

which Father had brought off. There was Mr. Ink who was interested in the miracle professionally -- miracle or fraud, there was money in the business. And there were the British who thought the miracle in very bad taste and liable to damage trade. No wonder that Father Malachy went back to the life of a choir monk "which is, perhaps, so useful because it is so useless."[8]

Still using his satire in countless directions in order to make his beloved church more lovable, Mr. Marshall also turns his attention toward the present day tendency to glorify science as a sole measure of progress. We call this an age of science; we substitute it for religion as a saviour of the human race. Owing to science there will be no jails, no insane asylums, no cheats, no murderers, no gamblers, no liars. Science will eliminate passions, prejudices, and original sin. Through the glorious medium of science men will love one another and will be made perfect.

Father Smith does no agree on the matter. He claims that

> history shows that most human inventions tend to be used for evil rather than for good purposes. If I were Almighty God - he says - I should not have allowed James Watt to watch that beastly kettle boil. And I think I

7. Ibid., p. 203.
8. Ibid., p. 306.

> should have silenced Marconi and Edison as well. For all these inventions defeat the main purpose of the Church: that man should be still and know that He is God.[9]

It was a pity, Father thought, that one ever heard anything on radios at all. New inventions were coming out much too quickly and amusements were becoming so mechanized that people would no longer need to use intelligence to fill their leisure hours. The newly ordained Father Scott saw in the myth of progress only the reverse of progress,

> For true progress was moral rather than mechanical: if there were to be more switches, more buttons, more batteries, there must also be more restraints, more austerities, more unselfishness, more humilities, more prayers, more contemplations on the real end of man.[10]

The holy Bishop agreed with both the old priest and the young priest, and he further brought to mind

> that far greater than the marvels of trains and aeroplanes and wireless telegraphy was the miracle of the Blessed Sacrament, in which Jesus came and came again in a clean white wind.[11]

Still, scientists would not believe, and they would go on their nonsensical and sunless way striving to discover the chemistry of miracles, the mathematics of faith, and the pharmacy of the sacraments.

Politicians grown pompous in their pretentions naturally become another object of Mr. Marshall's effective stabs. Under the misconception that they are contributing to the advancement of the community and the world about them, they are completely lacking in

9. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 56.
10. Ibid., p. 159.
11. Ibid., p. 141.

the inner virtue of great men who, when put to the test have the understanding and the power to meet it. Within them is no moral growth, no true devotion to the cause, no generous or self-sacrificing detachment. They are as cocks getting ready to herald a false dawn by their crowing.

Bigou thought that the politicians were bound to realize that dishonesty in high places could not be hushed up forever. What he did not suspect was how easy it was for such men to put themselves in a position to step on other people's toes. Worldly success was a game not meant to be played by his simple, ingenuous soul. From time to time, in Yellow Tapers for Paris, Marshall interrupts the progress of his tale with a searching summary of puerile decisions on the part of authorities, and their insatiate selfishness; a summary which provides a sort of derisive accompaniment to the steady descent of tottering peoples into an abyss of confusion.

> The politicians went on getting down to things. It was decided to open the 1937 Exhibition on time. It was decided not to devalue the franc any more, although of course it might slip away to 130 to the pound. It was decided not to intervene in Spain. It was decided to take stern steps to suppress tax evasion and to do away with wooden railway carriages. It was decided not to abolish five-centime pieces because the owners of Rolls-Royces and Minervas found that they still came in very handy for putting in the plate on Sundays.[12]

Bruce Marshall indulges in very good literary sport at the expense of these politicos who are so concerned over the word while the

12. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris, p. 125.

spirit falters.

Wars are not due to the failure of the Christian religion but rather to the failure of individuals, such as these politicians, who have ceased to follow the teachings of Christ. Thus it is that, because of the fundamental weaknesses of so many members of the human race, men of right dispositions and small means lose arms and legs in seemingly hopeless wars whose purposes appear to be to make the world safe for democracy. Almost sharp in his denunciation of those who in betraying themselves betray nations, Marshall uses to the full frank and honest satire on the disillusionments of wars to end wars. Men courageously go off to war believing that the world is going to be a wonderful place after the battles are won. The event dashes the expectation. Victory comes and after victory there is left only the corroding hearts of forgotten heroes and the economic depression that makes the lives of the poor even more necessitous. In a cafe conversation Verneuil pathetically says: "They told us that this war wasn't going to be like the last and that nobody was to be allowed to make money out of it."[13] In spite of what the radio and the press said, Verneuil had come to know that not all were fighting for Christian civilization, nor would they ever be, save by God's good grace. Men were hoping to win wars not because they were trying to become better but because they were trying to become stronger. It would be as the French officer said;

> Our grandchildren will say that it wasn't only

13. Ibid., p. 193.

> because of the lack of seventy-fives and aeroplanes that France fell in 1940, but also because Frenchmen didn't listen to the still, small voice in time of peace.[14]

The soft-spoken Bishop, who approached so close to sanctity on his death bed, knew it, too, and gave timely advice to those he left behind, for he was sure that life was going to continue to be hard in

> a world which did not seem to understand that it was at war solely because men and women had not been willing to go on practising those reticences, moderations, and obediences out of which had grown their civilization.[15]

There would not be so much of the true purpose of life lost to the world if it were not for the blare and noise of a sensation-loving press -- a press that emphasized no points of fixety to feed minds and give them power. With a flicking of a phrase Mr. Marshall draws not blood but wholesome mirth for a world ruled by newspaper slogans. Sane writers who write from a wealth of experience are not acceptable to this press because their writings, though informative and full of common sense, are considered "old-fashioned" and unprogressive. Sensationalists, on the other hand, from all walks of life, can attack any principle of religion or morality and get widest publicity and approval. It didn't make sense to Father Smith that these conditions actually existed, as he was one

> who had never been able to understand how people who split their infinitives, read Edgar Wallace for pleasure, and believed that black cats were unlucky should be intellectually insulted by the

14. Ibid., p. 287.
15. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 175.

> doctrine of transubstantiation; but then nothing ever did make sense in the Daily Bugle, which simultaneously held up for the admiration of its readers Steve Donoghue, Dean Inge, the Dolly Sisters, the Aga Khan, and Mrs. Aimee Macpherson.[16]

Father Malachy wasn't at all so sure that the press was always right and that modernist sinners who died in a state of final impenitence would be able to escape hell on the ground that no educated reader of the Daily Bugle believed in it. To add to little Bigou's confusion as to the outcome of the war the Paris-Soir felt competent to state that

> France and Great Britain were still more united than ever, the enemy was still retreating forward, and the allies were still advancing backward.[17]

Such was the overwhelming verbiage of the press whose duty should have been not so much to attract as to teach.

The myth of progress has ironic bearing on modern problems. Mr. Marshall is quick to perceive the hurt to God's work in a materialistic philosophy that turns away from inner faith to outer works; in scientific research that lacks its first premise in the Creator; in a political system that renders unto Caesar only; in wars that are waged but that men may betray themselves over and over; in a literary world that embodies in its work masterpieces of inaccuracy. Much of the Church's prayer is woven into his text; the prayer that all humankind may see and understand that Christ has said: "I am the

16. Ibid., p. 123.
17. Marshall, Bruce, Yellow Tapers for Paris. p. 232.

Way and the Truth and the Life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me."[18]

18. John, XIV, 6.

CHAPTER VIII

FADS AND FOIBLES

Alert not only to the great underlying causes of human unhappiness, but also to those lesser evils and discrepancies which, although not necessarily sinful in themselves, are the outcome of pagan attitudes and the loss of Christian culture and ideals, Mr. Marshall does not neglect to play upon the fashions, foibles, fads and inanities of an ultra-modern civilization.

We are living in an age of affectations. What is considered smart this year is out-dated as the calendar moves along. Passing fancies, as they are, fashions never satisfy because it is not in their nature to satisfy. Because they are products of a particular time or period they cannot please forever. There is nothing in them that gives eternal hope, and often there is nothing in them in themselves of positive evil. Be that as it may, the theme behind these modernisms is not often the truly Catholic theme of improvement of standards in the manner of living, refinement, lofty and Christian aspirations or the enlightenment and elevation of the human race. It is rather the theme of a pleasant life filled with good things -- the raiment and the drink with which the lily of the field is not concerned. More often than not the consequences of these seemingly harmless modern trends in external tastes are more tragic than we

think. Beautiful Catholic concepts of living can become swamped under Paris hats. Mr. Marshall, himself so fully aware of the danger, alternately chuckles and sighs over many of the passing foolishnesses of human foibles. Others he bitterly deplores.

Modern ideas on dress is one of his first points of attack. Women who wear overalls are in for a scathing. There is also the question of make-up. It is Father Smith who bemoans the fact that so many women make themselves more unattractive than they really are by painting their lips until they are unable to eat or drink without leaving some of their artificial beauty behind them on cups and napkins. For the benefit of Miss Agdala and her kind Father Smith propounds:

> I sometimes wonder, Miss Agdala, what a fashionable young woman would do if she awoke to find that her lips had turned permanently over night, the colour she painted them.[1]

It is the same distaste for gaudy display that prompts Marshall to describe the chorus girls at North Berwick Station as fluttering about

> in very worldly clothes and, with their golden hair and ebony hair and with their high heels and with their lips like rivers of blood. . .[2]

Young women no longer wore high-laced boots "because the rubrics had changed in these matters." And they wore their coats loosely over their shoulders. It was the good fortune of Miss Greta Garbo to have

1. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 108.
2. Ibid., p. 162.

hit the top in the cinema world because of the superb way in which she could wear a mackintosh. So it went, and women went about with china faces, glass hair, powder puffs, unnaturally thin eyebrows, and Pekinese dogs hiding their immortal souls.

As for man, they are not to be considered less exaggerated. There is Alastair Succoth who is much given to a studied twirl of his pseudo-military moustache, and there is Mr. J. Shyman Bell who "was looking very natty in what his tailors had described as an autumn grey suiting."[3] The Bishop's Bad Brother, although along in years, clung to a middle aged appearance by means of his well-creased serge suit, his bowler hat (worn cocked at a rakish angle) and his very white spats. Others wore Harris tweed suits with wide trousers and suede shoes.

Ludicrous caricature of the manners displayed by these worldlings is one of Mr. Marshall's specialties. Pink-putty people, they parade hotel lobbies and stretch their lips politely when spoken to. They are blue-printed in Mr. Ink's face when it puts on an intense expression that "was intended to convey such sentiments and policies as honesty, friendliness, and no Home Rule for India."[4] They appear to be happy or unhappy only in the measure that their general expressionlessness will allow. For them the kind of ethics that results in Christian behaviour must be made anathema. Social proprieties struggling to emerge from the Christian instinct must give

3. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 259.
4. Ibid., p. 222.

place to that which is new-fangled. They shrink at nothing for the triumph of the cult. Reserve is to them a weakness rather than good taste, a beauty, or a refinement. The women of the cult have none of the qualities of a Mona Lisa with her calm detachment and reverent meditation. Conservatism is to them a manifestation of weakness and not a protection for fine feelings, or an indication of strength of character, or strong reasoning powers. Thus it is that in the midst of their social gatherings there was always a great deal of meaningless chatter, a great deal of craning to see who was who and with whom and in what, and a great deal of formal bowings. There were also, when occasion called for them, Rotarian smiles, great exterior boulevard gestures and imperious waves of huge cigars.

The manner of conversation among these notables is that evolved from the brain cells of their self-created world. Frightened to say "good-bye" because it means something, they part with a "cheerio" which means absolutely nothing. Next year the acceptable farewell will be "cheery-bye" because the fashion will have changed. And when there are no racing or football results to discuss, the men folk look gloomy and say nothing. Women's conversation, as Father Smith views it, is

> the best antidote to priests seeking their society, because it is so inevitably frivolous, foolish, and boring.[5]

Realizing that a barrier of noise is the only possible screen be-

5. Marshall, Bruce, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith. p. 108.

tween souls Nora Succoth immediately strikes up a conversation with Mrs. Shyman Bell:

> "I adore dogs," said Nora Succoth solemnly and as though she were a martyr about to be burnt for her faith. "They're so much more intelligent than cats, don't you think?"[6]

Although there was much unseen virtue in the world, it didn't get talked about in these circles as much as vice did, because virtue didn't have the same gossip value.

Amid all these inconsequentialities, entertainments, amusements, and a round of daily thrills held a major part. The only sanction placed on these was that of novelty. At times the new things were flying across the Atlantic, or dancing for twenty-four hours without stopping, or getting married in diving suits at the bottom of a swimming pool. Again they were the latest jazz hits (for those who found the Psalms of David nonsensical), broadcastings, talkies, or speed trials. Always the world went bowling, bowling, bowling, and dancing, dancing, dancing. Somebody was always doing something or demonstrating about something. Everything was "on the go". Any modern novel in which the characters behaved as though they were alive was ravenously devoured. Father Malachy found it difficult

> to imagine the majority of contemporary humanity in any paradise which did not syncopate Saint Gregory and whose eternal sands were without striped bathing tents and casinos.[7]

6. Marshall, Bruce, Father Malachy's Miracle. p. 244.
7. Ibid., p. 3.

Life for the moderns was such a scurry. The noise of buses and cars snorting up the teeming avenues killed anything like meditation. Modern evaluation placed so much more agreeable a premium on living to the full this life below than on seeking the life above or contributing positively to the salvation of souls. Because to them sameness was a curse, they would never know the thrill of monotony. It would be quite impossible for them to understand souls who make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament every day and never get tired of doing so. Theirs was a failure to realize that it is not how much we do, but how we do it that really matters.

Mr. Marshall neither preaches nor pleads renunciation to those whose ways are so much with the world. Through his customary tool of ridicule he tries to shed light on man's weaknesses and to open his eyes to highly colored error that so easily leads to complete loss of faith..As a valiant soldier, he draws upon the arsenal of his words to give battle to the foibles so common to our modern earthlings.

SUMMARY

Like a brick house, built slowly and carefully from uninviting material, Mr. Marshall constructs the sum total of his philosophy of life in the satiric implications so thoughtfully and logically placed in his pages. Starting with little daily experiences as a center of approach, he cleverly widens out his rays of attack to embrace a broad range of universal human activity. He binds together by the most tenuous plots the hopes and disappointments of all God's people. Gently he points out the flaws in these hopes and firmly he insists upon the only true remedies for man's great unhappinesses. Not since the youthful Chesterton, in a deeply religious mood, evoked the spirit of comedy to bring mankind to its senses has the literary world had anything to compare accurately with Marshall's peculiar genius to penetrate beneath human quirks, follies, and eccentricities into ideals.

Marshall's plots are not exciting, yet the human interest aroused by his superb understanding of human weakness, by his warmth of characterization, and by his contagious humor holds the attention and the admiration of the ordinary reader. Because he is kept chortling there is little time for him to wince when the sword of satire strikes home. It is behind this camouflage of bursts of laughter that Marshall makes convincing his presentation of Catholic belief.

The reader soon comes to know that there will be a good time as well as some good ideas. Nor can he miss amid the fun, be he Catholic or non-Catholic, the tone of love and brotherliness that the author so sincerely and unmistakably employs. For, like the Apostle Paul, Marshall wields his whip with a deep sympathy for the one flayed. Although he presents an effective and intelligent piece of apologetics, it is evident that his purpose is not didactic, that he strives only to lead others to see the light as he has seen it and to throw off spiritual blindness. Realizing that he himself is a convert and has borne the enemy's armor, those who are not of the Faith are far less liable to take amiss the fact that he has discovered holes in it. Realizing that he never gives cause to suspect that he is trying to clear himself of anything that he finds amiss in his characters, those who are of the Faith place trust in him. The cumulative effect, therefore, of his work is entertaining and gratifyingly heartening as well as sobering.

Marshall never could have attained to his literary stature as a satirist had he not had the ability to make people, dialogue and wit so thoroughly delightful. It has been much to his advantage also to gain his points without any show of bitterness. Sweetly serious, with a clear and reasoning gaiety, his almost lyrical passages carry the reader on with a kind of gusto that does not weary. Too, there is ever an unexpected charm in his turn of a phrase that engages and intrigues one. Because his motives are revealed in such a quiet, unassuming voice, his reader stops to listen. Because his

assertions are broad-minded and intelligent, one accepts them. Although occasionally he indulges in a not too offensive touch of sentimentality, as a rule he blends real vitality and freshness with caustic and comprehensive wit into a uniform and balanced texture.

To attain desired effects Marshall uses a device of repetition (at times almost maddening) as old as Homer. The same epithets come back again and again, biting like acid and forcing into the reader's mind a realization of the deadly monotony and the complacent boredom of the purely sensuous life. This device has been used very successfully by satirists down through the ages, and Mr. Marshall is just as successful. He also employs unusual phrases to awaken his reader. One is frequently diverted by this phrasing from the seriousness of the theme. Sometimes he falls into self-consciousness in writing, overweighting his irony by too much playfulness of expression, or making his mediaevalisms quaint. Again he employs curiously strained similes, as though he had said to himself that to sound strange would be to sound strong. On the whole, though, Marshall's satire is as well written as it is entertaining and wise. It is brilliant satire brilliantly presented. His style is finished, easy flowing, simple, and almost conversational. Many of his passages can profitably and pleasurably be read and re-read for the beauty of the language in which they are clothed. He has done something really new with words and sentences.

Bruce Marshall's fancy for amusing ecclesiasticisms has been a cause of distress to some who are not used to laughter in the pul-

pit. Perhaps he does caricature and exaggerate the clergy offensively in the eyes of some, but we must remember that he is dealing in satire. He sees the "human side" of the Church. He considers priests human, and yet priests. He believes his religion to be true enough to stand the truth being told about the shortcomings of some of its exponents. It is the same motive, and not a malicious one, that causes him to attack the greed and bigotry of those outside the Church that makes him also hard on those within the fold who fail to respond in a higher degree to the message of Christ.

Others have accused Marshall of occasional vulgarity. But his vulgarity is almost a relief from the delicate and well-bred obscenity that fills the pages of our modern best sellers. His so-called vulgarisms are at worst mere fly specks on a shining surface.

Still others feel that in his anxiety to correct the notion that Catholics exaggerate the gravity of sins of impurity he leans too far the other way and almost condones them. Marshall has no intention of conveying this impression. He attempts only to create a better balance in our general attitude toward sin, and to make the beautiful in life more beautiful by contrast.

Many writers have the happy faculty of being able to write novel after novel that equals or surpasses their first attempt. Mr. Marshall is not of that happy company. It is surprising that he could have written so much with so few real successes. To me it is Marshall's three works, Father Malachy's Miracle, The World, the Flesh, and Father Smith, and Yellow Tapers for Paris that fall best

into the line of pure literature. They are exceptionally fine examples of the satirical novel. Through books such as these the hard doctrines of the Church are made extremely beautiful and palatable to the largest possible audience of readers. I personally admire and appreciate most in Marshall his quick sense of that which is pretentious, dishonest or cowardly, and his ability to put the spiritual into daily lives in such a way that it has much of the effect of praying. Marshall's pages are not only good and representative satire, but they are also a work of Catholic action, for through his chosen medium of satire he has brought home to the world about him much goodness and truth that cannot be imposed through violence or force.

One who undertakes the satirical has no easy task before him. It is too early to estimate wholly the worth of Bruce Marshall's endeavors, but certainly he has made a worthy and distinguished contribution to a contemporary movement that, should it fall short of the Golden Age of Satire, can hardly fail to surpass it in exuberant abundance.

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