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CORPORATION LAWYER . . .
SAINT OR SINNER?

The New Role of the Lawyer in Modern Society

By BERYL HAROLD LEVY. Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Company, 1961. 175 pp. $4.00

Is the modern corporation lawyer a saint or sinner? Mr. Levy never really answers the question which he poses in the title. In fact, the title of this book is not a fair representation of its subject matter. The work is a sketchy history of the legal profession in America during the last century with special emphasis on several of the most famous attorneys from New York "institutional firms" whose part in creating modern America is an unwritten page of history. The title implies that the book deals only with the "corporation" lawyer; although the emphasis is on the large firm which represents the corporate client, the book is about lawyers generally.

Mr. Levy admits in the preface that the book is not a legal treatise. "If any lawyer should stray into these pages, I hope he will remember that this book is not to be read as though it were a legal document . . ." The main purpose of the book is to answer questions from the general public "about what lawyers are doing in our society—or to our society." It is not a book on the law, but about lawyers—their attitudes, their hopes and aspirations, their accomplishments, their function, and their future in American society.

The author's basic premise is that the role of the lawyer is changing in our changing society. As our civilization has become more complicated, which all will agree that it has, so has the law. New political theories, new governmental practices and requirements, new scientific developments, changing social and political philosophies, improved business procedures, and revolutionary changes in management-labor relations create new legal problems to which the lawyer must supply the answers. These tremendous changes in the last century have necessitated the association of lawyers in one office to handle the problems of clients and has also required the individual lawyers in such offices to specialize. The author labels the New
York firms with twenty to seventy members "law factories . . .
as they are good-naturedly called nowadays, even among the
lawyers themselves." He does not use this label disparagingly,
but admits that the practice of law has become so complex that
to satisfy all the clients' needs the firm must have lawyers to
take care of regular corporation work, tax matters, real estate,
estate planning, litigation and others.

Some of the significant changes in the role of the modern
lawyer have been from the "county courtroom" to the "city
conference room," that is with the growth of administrative
agencies and such procedures as the pretrial conference, the
time lawyers spend in the courtroom has been greatly dimin-
ished. "The rise of administrative agencies . . . has demanded
a new breed of lawyers and a new rubric in the law unknown in
1900: administrative law." The modern lawyer now practices
preventive law. It is now his major duty to keep his clients
out of trouble.

Perhaps the most interesting section of the book to students
and lawyers is that part which describes the behind-the-scenes
actions of such famous attorneys as Francis N. Bangs, Francis
L. Stetson, John W. Davis, and Paul D. Cravath. However, this
reviewer is of the opinion that this material would not be of
interest to the layman—for whom the author says the book was
written. The author finally turns to describing the modern
lawyer as a member of society in the final three chapters. For
this reason, this reviewer thinks the author has failed in his
stated purpose. The historical development would not be of
sufficient interest to the layman to hold his attention to the
final three chapters.

The reviewer feels that the book is a practical contribution
to the law student and the novice attorney who wants to learn
more about the profession in which he has chosen to make his
life's work. It clearly points out some of the demands which
will be placed upon him and the standards by which he will be
measured.

W. Kendall Lipscomb, Jr.