

is a meaning, says Tillich, even to the meaninglessness of life as lived in torture by those who know not the True God and who know that they know Him not. "The courage to be is rooted in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."

The Protestant and Politics by William Lee Miller. Westminster. 92 pp. \$1.00.

by **Bernard Murchland**

"We must dirty our hands," Albert Camus wrote in his early days as a rebel. With that statement he summed up his vigorous plea for social commitment in an absurd world.

In this slender volume, William Lee Miller calls for political awareness with Camusian energy. He also indicates the absurdity of the present political scene in America. And he sees both in the broader context of Christianity's relevance to all political activity. "Christianity," he writes, "gives no precise answer to any of the dilemmas of life—certainly not the political ones. But it provides what's more important: direction, understanding, commitment. There is no 'Christian' position—but there *are* better and worse positions, relatively just and relatively unjust acts, and the Christian should seek what is good and just."

Mr. Miller's preliminary concern is to establish the non-political character of the American citizen and censure his fellow Protestants rather severely (and humorously) for the part they played in creating it. A curious combination of idealism and individualism, Miller argues, accounts for its distinctive traits.

Thus the traditional American

Father Murchland, of the University of Notre Dame, contributes frequently to a number of religious journals.

When American philosophers and theologians begin to take seriously the cross of anxiety and anguish; when they come to see that the insane and those menaced by insanity often live more profoundly the human situation than those whose lives are untroubled by doubt and free from

emphasis on private success and rugged individualism has militated against public responsibility; a successful two-party system has tended to abolish political extremes; an immensely productive economy has given the business man a veto over the politician; and the recent emergence of technology has made the scientist the archpriest of modern society. As a result: "a nation with a most unpolitical tradition has now become the nation that most urgently needs political understanding."

The particular value structure that is honored in American society is the root cause of the political absurdities that abound among us. Nor have most attempts to relate religion to politics done much other than further muddle a confused situation.

The confusion runs all the way from the familiar "politics is dirty" attitude, found among some religious groups, through the moralizing errors of the conservatives (with their monstrous judgmental looseness), on to the crusading, my-country-right-or-wrong, God-is-on-our-side zeal of the "patriots."

Mr. Miller indicts a lengthy litany of such attitudes. And in explaining the relationship between religion and politics he is careful to avoid the pitfalls of moral specificity. The Christian faith is essentially rooted in the broad reality of God's transcendence and immanence. It does not relate itself to concrete situations in the form of offering clear-cut answers, ideals or principles. Rather it offers creative variations of the key virtues of love and

tragedy; when they see that risk and failure are fundamental human categories; when they begin to face the issues Paul Tillich has faced—American philosophy and theology will have come of age. Will Herberg has forwarded this future maturity of American intellectual life.

justice. Understood thus, religion furnishes invaluable insights into the nature of man and history—insights without which political maturity is impossible. Man is in no sense a simple creature; he is a complex in whom conflicting demands (of individuality and sociality, sin and virtue, reason and the irrational, historical pressures and present challenges) mysteriously co-exist.

And here we find the chief merit of Mr. Miller's book—its solid argument for Christian realism, which is primarily, and most sanely, a matter of taking all points of view into consideration, including the Ultimate one. It knows that we are rarely granted the luxury of an either-or choice in human, and especially political, affairs. It accepts limitations and urges on us the courage to endure the endless efforts, frustrations and new beginnings that are necessary to realize anything human. This kind of realism in the political domain stems indisputably from the special awareness of God the Christian has. The Christian God is not a Greek idol, a pagan monolith, an abstract principle (like Aristotle's Prime Mover) from which lesser principles are more or less univocally derived. He is rather the ultimate challenge in every situation. In a word, He is Love.

I would like to see William Lee Miller further develop these principles, here briefly adumbrated. It would be an important contribution in a time when we all fear some nameless horror; a time, too, in which we all suffer deeply from the lack of *real* leadership.

What We Are For

by Arthur Larson. Harper. 173 pp. \$2.95.

"What we are for," in the author's opinion, "is the active, positive force for change in the world." Yet by appearing only to oppose the revolutionary Soviet offensive on all fronts, we have come to represent in the world's eyes an "ill-defined force for countering change." To offset this image, Mr. Larson suggests several ways to re-think our position in the affirmative.

Voices of Dissent

Grove Press. 384 pp. \$1.95.

The continuing tradition of articulate American radicalism is embodied in this challenging anthology of articles from Dissent magazine. Among the authors who appear are Irving Howe, Lewis Coser, Norman Thomas, Paul Goodman, Harvey Swados, Erich Fromm, and C. Wright Mills.

Education and Freedom

by H. G. Rickover. Dutton. 256 pp. \$3.50.

To this passionate critique of twentieth century American education Admiral Rickover brings the insights of professional knowledge and a sense of urgency gained from a career of public service. "The future belongs to the best-educated nation," he writes. "Let it be ours."

International Politics in the Atomic Age

by John H. Herz. Columbia. 360 pp. \$6.00.

How a variety of factors, most notably technological advance and nuclear power, has fundamentally changed the traditional structure of international relations is the subject of this study. The author recommends and outlines a whole new approach to the problems of co-existence which, in their turn, demand new concepts of sovereignty, security, and defense.

Island in the City: the World of Spanish Harlem

by Dan Wakefield. Houghton Mifflin. 278 pp. \$4.00.

A distinguished piece of social reporting, this book communicates not only the observable grim facts of daily life in Manhattan's "El Barrio," but also a true understanding of the personal tragedies of its inhabitants.

The Tragedy of American Diplomacy

by William Appleman Williams. World. 219 pp. \$4.75.

"The tragedy of American action is not that it is evil, but that it denies American ideas and ideals," writes the author, who supports this conclusion by tracing developments in modern U.S. history that reveal a basic misunderstanding of our role in world affairs.

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