

in the magazines

"Despite the overt, proselytizing religiosity of our present culture and society, we live in a post-Christian era. People *try* God, or original sin, as others try the newest medicine." Gabriel Vahanian, writing in *The Nation* for December 12, lists the reasons why he thinks the tenets of Christianity no longer prevail in the modern world. "First," he writes, "Christianity is today synonymous with religiosity. Its appeal to the masses is almost entirely based on a diluted version of the original faith . . . For the sake of easy consumption, the radical character of biblical faith is diluted into religiosity; purely formal, innocuous and somewhat hygienic . . . And religiosity often is but the cunning by which secularism triumphs over and wipes out faith in God and, instead, sets up faith—faith in anything—as an end in itself."

"Second," Dr. Vahanian continues, "in proportion as Christianity is displaced by religiosity, it no longer inspires contemporary culture; its spirit does not impregnate the ethos of our time. As a result, Christianity stands in apposition, if not in opposition, to the modern world . . . Third, Christianity has at any rate lost its hegemony . . . Certainly, it does not make itself felt in international relations . . . It has lost even more on the national level—what with the assimilation of democracy with syncretistic religiosity, of which politicians, among others, speak eloquently and fervently."

The task, as Dr. Vahanian sees it, is to reinterpret—without dilution or heresy—the essential tenets of the faith in a new synthesis which vitally influences modern man's self-understanding. The contribution of Paul Tillich must contend with the relativism, the "infinitesimal compartmentalization" of a world in which "God is a superannuated projection: He is dead."

"Pluralism" in our society is a further aggravation, Dr. Vahanian feels. "Social, political and international events, rather than religion itself, have forced religious groups to tolerate and sometimes to borrow from each other. Contemporary society is a melting pot which affects not only national or ethnic origins, but also religious affiliations, even while its syncretistic religiosity is affected by the pressure of international relations." Therefore, "a blanket of anonymity is descending upon religion, whose resurgence in the last decade perhaps is just a cover-up for the absence of faith in God, a luxury necessitated by the 'death of God.'"

•

The Foreign Policy Association's bimonthly pamphlet, *Headline Series*, continues its theme, "Great

Decisions, 1960", with a November-December issue devoted to "U.S. Foreign Policy: Ideals and Realities." In this issue, the confrontation of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. is discussed in terms of ideas, strategies and interests by Paul H. Nitze and Kenneth W. Thompson.

The "great decisions" we must face in our foreign relations involve, in Mr. Nitze's view, primarily a reappraisal and clarification of the basic elements of policy. "I believe we are called upon to clarify once more the character of our purposes and of our objectives as a nation," he writes. "I believe we must reassess the nature of the threat we face and particularly the objectives and aims of the Soviet Union. I believe we have crucial choices to make as to the principal means we wish to employ and to rely upon to advance our policy. I further believe we should reassess the degree of effort we are putting behind our national policy and the character of the modifications in our domestic life which might enable us, as a nation, to make a greater and more effective effort in the world."

More immediate considerations, involving specific courses of action in a given situation, are taken up by Mr. Thompson, who reviews the recent history of international events and the decisions that were made within the range of alternatives that basic policy had established. He then turns to the issues of the moment and concludes his discussion with a look at the probable shape of policy in the next decade. "Future historians," he writes, "will judge American foreign policy by the progress that is made henceforth to strengthen its machinery for negotiation . . . Never in history have the stakes in diplomatic negotiations been so momentous."

Another regularly issued pamphlet is *Social Progress*, published monthly by the United Presbyterian Church. The October issue contains two noted writers in two related articles—Roger L. Shinn on "The Affair Between Church and Culture" and C. Wright Mills on "The History Makers", an analysis of our fate and the emerging realities of what Mills calls "the Fourth Epoch."

•

In other publications:

"A New Foreign Policy for New Conditions" by Chester Bowles, *The New York Times Magazine*, December 20.

"Christianity and World Religions, A Symposium", *Christianity Today*, December 21.

"The Job of the Washington Correspondent" by Walter Lippmann, *The Atlantic*, January.

PAMPHILUS