allies. The reader is forced either to accept the sincerity of Colson’s religious professions or to reject Hughes’s credibility as a judge of character.

Before reading Colson’s own account, I was disposed to applaud the emergence of a “new” Charles Colson; his book eliminates any lingering doubts. Those who come to the book with other expectations, however, may be disappointed. Woodward and Bernstein buffs on the prowl for hidden Watergate tidbits will find little to satisfy their appetites. Some of the purported White House dialogue would be unbelievable even if it were attributed to David and Julie—for example, this election-night exchange between Nixon and Colson:

“What’s wrong, Chuck? Why aren’t you smiling and celebrating?”

“I guess I’m a bit numb, sir.”

“This is a night to remember. Have another drink. Let’s enjoy this.”

And, while Colson obviously means to be following his conscience (over the protests of his legal advisors) when he decides to plead guilty in the Ellsberg case, it is never quite clear just what he is accepting legal culpability for; all we are told is that at that point “legal niceties made moral nonsense.” What is clear is that Colson felt that the acceptance of some sort of legal penalty was necessary to clear the record of his “old” life. His account of his jail term contains some of the most moving passages of the book—especially those that describe his feelings of defenselessness, his fears, and his struggles to discover a sense of divine vocation in the experience of imprisonment.

Observers of American religious movements will discover some interesting variations on traditional “evangelical” themes in the kind of Christianity to which Colson and his “brothers” adhere. It has elements of traditional fundamentalism, as well as of the “neo-charismatic” movement. But there is also a strong emphasis on service and “discipleship” (the influence of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings is acknowledged at several points). Colson makes much of the power of “Christian love” to affect reconciliation between his former “political enemy.” Harold Hughes, and himself; there are also regular references to continuing political differences among “the brothers.” But it would be unfair to infer from this that the “new” Colson has an “apolitical” religion. Colson’s present commitment to a “prison ministry” includes efforts to bring about prison reform, for example. Rather, what seems to be operating here is a desire to explore the connections between personal and structural righteousness, with a corresponding wariness—manifested in Senator Hughes’s decision to find “better” ways of pursuing his goals than by a continuing involvement in the political process—about employing partisan political means to promote peace and justice. If Charles Colson is willing to check these possibilities out for us, I for one want to encourage him.

The Past Masters: Politics and Politicians 1906-1939 by Harold Macmillan

(Harper and Row; 240 pp.; $15.00)

Gabriel Gersh

Already at the author of a political apologia in six stout volumes, Mr. Harold Macmillan has prevailed on an indulgent publisher to allow him a postscript. The Past Masters is a collection of biographical essays and other musings by a man who in half a century of public life has seen much and forgotten nothing.

As a literary craftsman the author is not the equal of Lord Butler or the late R.H.S. Crossman. But Mr. Macmillan has other gifts of communication. In dining clubs and drawing rooms, or in the simulated intimacy of the television studio, his talk is matchless.

These dozen essays by Mr. Macmillan do not pretend to being more than a footnote to his published memoirs. Their value is in recapturing the flavor of his conversation: ruminative, allusive, anecdotal, stylishly epigrammatic yet never unkind. They reflect, too, a kaleidoscopic character whose many facets bewilder as well as attract.

We recognize the crofter’s grandson, the classical scholar at Balliol, the proud Grenadier, the compassionate Christian, the M.P. who courageously challenged his supine prewar leaders on the issue of unemployment and rearmament, the Duke of Devonshire’s son-in-law, the dedicated businessman reputed to have refused the traditional peereage of a retiring Prime Minister because he did not think that publishers ought to be earls.

Again and again in these pages other men’s lives become the vehicle of his own beliefs, as when he writes of Lloyd George: “He can indeed claim to be the founder of the Welfare State. Whether he would have approved all its developments is hard to say. For he believed like all men of peasant stock in hard toil, self-respect and self-reliance.”

Yet Mr. Macmillan is no ascetic. There are few problems, he implies, that cannot be resolved by reasonable men over a decanter of sherry. It was thus temperament as much as political conviction that determined his early allegiance to the Conservative Party: “To sit and talk to Churchill was like a young man at Oxford arguing with dons or even professors—and plenty of drink and cigars provided. To be sent for to Neville Chamberlain’s room was more like an interview with the headmaster.”

The Prime Minister who in office was unfairly reviled as an apostle of materialism is at heart a romantic. Hence his particular tenderness toward those who from humble origins struggled to reach the height of success and power: Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald. And hence the sustained reverence that Mr. Macmillan brings to his essay on the Whig aristocracy—those rich, proud, powerful men in their fine houses, enlightened patrons of the arts, yet far from despising the commercial opportunities of their age. He relishes their combination of “advanced ideas” with an element of aloofness and almost disdain, especially for Tories who come from minor families and whose history has a tinge of vulgarity.

Mr. Macmillan has inherited this
Whig contempt for the Conservatives, for whose party he reserves the most incisive thrusts. (The Conservative Party, he writes, is a collection of bad losers who are "apt to seek scapegoats for defeat either in the Leader or the party organization."’) Mr. Macmillan’s contempt for the Conservatives has been that of Lord Lansdowne of whom he recounts that, having held the highest offices in successive Conservative administrations, he preferred to be drenched in the rain rather than commit to being an unrepentant, unreconstructed Whig. He tells the Conservatives that “a successful party of the Right must continue to recruit its strength from the Center, and even from the Left Center. Once it begins to shrink into itself like a snail it will be doomed.” He is not afraid to think about a National Government. To him it seems more important that men and women of good will, “including politicians and even leaders of parties,” should devote themselves to the constructive work of fighting inflation rather than continue to indulge in “contests of negative recrimination and abuse.”

His message—hinted at rather than stated openly, but certainly discernible between the lines—is that Britain’s problems can no longer be solved within the conventional party framework, that that framework is unlikely to yield to something more satisfactory of its own accord, that the English are lost without strong leadership, but that strong leadership may no longer be possible in the political system the English know. The theme that echoes through the book is that of decline: of decline in British power and of decline in the character, courage, and individuality of the political nation.

Despite the lack of explicit answers to the magnitude of Britain’s crisis, the book does provoke some thought on the subject. It is clear that continuity was once a marked feature of English political life, of its leadership, its attitudes, and its institutions. Yet, more or less since the end of the Macmillan era in the early 1960’s, many aspects of political life have profoundly altered. The Conservative Party has shifted to leaders educated at grammar schools, people without a shred of Whiggery or even the kinds of Tory connections and views for which the Whigs expressed such contempt. The Conservative rank and file in Parliament consists of small-scale business, the professions, and advertising agencies. On its side, the Labor Party has a few representatives of the Whig-Liberal tradition (in ideas, not in descent), and the rest of the rank and file consists of trade unionists, lawyers, teachers, and sociologists.

In practice it is difficult to produce governing groups with set convictions—with vigor and independence, accustomed to the exercise of a firm but not arrogant authority—if there ceases to be a reservoir of people whose background and training prepares them for the task of leadership. The conduct of politicians is bound to be different if they are trying simultaneously to earn a living in politics, to establish themselves, and to absorb the conventions of democratic government. R.H.S. Crossman used to complain that if in his speeches he drew even the most obvious parallels with previous episodes in British political life, the passage would evoke no response because only a handful of M.P.’s knew what he was saying. Yet Mr. Macmillan is full of apposite references, because this history is all part of the family background into which he married. For this reason his favorite relaxation was the Trollope political novels, which give a fictional account of the same families and situations.

One wonders whether this tradition gave a quality to government that made it easier to obtain consent. Even if this is so, the Whig families cannot be recreated; yet the task remains of giving government decisions the kind of authority that allows the system to work effectively. It requires a trust among the electorate that those in power are not primarily self-seeking, and a corresponding belief by those in power that the public good is not to be exploited for their benefit. Whether in England or America, failure in this connection leads ultimately to disasters such as Watergate, and to the collapse of political authority.

The virtue of Mr. Macmillan’s book is that it does not distort or disguise the plight of England today. But, characteristically, Mr. Macmillan ends on a note of hope and faith. “It is a dangerous thing to say about the British people that they are finished. They have a remarkable power of recovery once they are determined and united.” And you can just hear him saying that, standing strong and defiant like the great oak in the forest that through his life has been the example and source of inspiration.

The Death and Life of Bishop Pike
by William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne
(Doubleday; 446 pp.; $10.00)

Richard John Neuhaus

When in 1969 the body of James Albert Pike was found in the Judean wilderness, the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church resolved to “give thanks to God for the life and prophetic ministry of James Albert Pike and recognize the depth of our loss in the dying of this creative and compassionate man.” Perhaps the prelates can be excused, even commended, for observing the ancient maxim, De mortuis nil nisi bonum. The irony of their fine words is not lost, however, on Stringfellow and Towne. The same House of Bishops had only recently censured Bishop Pike for a host of alleged crimes against propriety, if not against Christian truth, and most of his colleagues seemed relieved when Pike publicly declared himself outside the Episcopal Church.

Pike had asked his friends Stringfellow and Towne to write his biography when the time came. The request was renewed after his death by Pike’s widow and third wife, Diane Kennedy Pike, who contributes an introduction to this volume. This is, then, an “official” biography, but, more than that, it is a duty fulfilled in the exercise of the office of friendship.

The authors have successfully re-