

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 the indignity of seeking refuge in the Conservative Carlton Club.

Indeed, Mr. Macmillan does not pretend to be other than 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-

sisted the temptation to gloss over the many aspects of Pike's person and career that made him appear a scandal, or merely ridiculous, to many. Critics will find ample support in these pages for believing Pike was intellectually frivolous, sexually libertine, politically credulous, and frequently insufferable in his estimate of his own importance. The authors trace his curious path from Roman Catholic apostate, through a period that Pike, for reasons having to do with his public role as Christian apologist, later called agnosticism, to the Episcopal priesthood, which the authors describe as "a resolution of this relationship to incest [with his mother]." In short, the wives, the mistresses, the alcoholism, the suicide of son and friend are all here. But also here are the driving talent, the reckless integrity, the insatiable curiosity, and the daring hope that the excitement of Christian existence can be rescued from the conventions of churchliness.

Describing the controversies surrounding his chaplaincy at Columbia University in the early 1950's, the authors note that "Pike was revealing himself as a remarkably obtuse figure politically. He seems to have been quite insensitive to the realities of faculty politics.... At the same time, his political obtuseness indicated an absence of guile and calculation that endured as one of Pike's attractive characteristics.... [His] way was not the way of the world and as Pike found out—ruefully—it was not the way of the Episcopal Church, but it was his way and he persevered in it." If some of his more controverted stands on racial justice, women's rights, and other issues did not seem exactly courageous, it was because of a childlike (some would say childish) quality in James Pike. He was in many respects a naïf, surprised that people should be so upset by what he said and did, and yet happily confident that the resulting public attention would make him more "interesting" to others, and perhaps to himself. As college chaplain, as Dean of St. John the Divine in New York City, as Bishop of San Francisco, and finally as erstwhile "scholar-teacher" at the late Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara, one infers it was a cardinal doctrine with this man of minimal doctrines that life should be interesting. He was determined to do his part in making it so.

Undoubtedly it is not easy to write a friend's biography. Sometimes the authors slip into exculpating sentimentality and, when the subject is homosexuality, even propaganda. In connection with the suicide of Pike's son, Jim Jr., in 1966, we are told: "society and his Church were cruelly complicit in his murder.... There was no perversion in Jim Jr. He needed to make love with his own kind. The pain of that was so unbearable he found it more bearable to kill himself. Where did that pain come from? Answer us that and you will have told us where perversion *really* is." Similarly, Pike's often unbridled ego-tripping tends to get blamed on the society and its twisted mass communications systems, as though the virtues of self-control were not available to the bishop.

Many readers will no doubt be discouraged by the inexhaustible preoccupation with Episcopalian minutiae and by the almost consistent caricature of those who do not share the authors' appreciation of Pike. Large parts of the book might have been subtitled "For Episcopalians Only," while others are "Getting Back at Those Who Got Him." Those familiar with Diane Kennedy Pike's writings on efforts to communicate with the dead or with Stringfellow and Towne's earlier book on Pike's troubles with his fellow bishops will find much of that material reproduced here. Perhaps such repetition was necessary for those who came in late.

Nonetheless, the reader who is not set upon despising Pike must leave this volume with a high regard for the man's ability, liveliness, and devotion to the truth as he understood truth. His challenge to what he called "smooth orthodoxy" was certainly admirable, at least in intent, and his services to the Christian community as an engaging apologist for the faith in the earlier years of his celebrity have yet to be acknowledged as they deserve.

Although the authors take issue with him, the late John Cogley wrote, with his accustomed sense and charity, a very large part of the truth: "Jim Pike was not an original thinker. His strength as well as his weakness was that he was an original man, who had an uncanny ability to make the secondhand look new.... The result was that his most serious moves, like his trumpeted exit

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from the institutional church, were not taken very seriously. There had been too many controversies, the publicity releases had become too frequent. If he knew this, he never acknowledged it but carried on as if his latest project would be the greatest breakthrough yet."

Pike was feisty and relentless in exposing what he thought to be the absurdities of the little establishment that is religion. For that, the big establishment of the secular culture and its media accorded him prominence and considerable influence. Only at the very end, when he consorted with mediums and dabbled in communications with "the other side," did he challenge the big cultural establishment and its conventional wisdom. For that, he was depicted as a pathetic figure whose talent had been blasted by the strain of per-

sonal tragedy. Stringfellow and Towne want to rescue the memory of Pike from both stereotypes, that of courageous iconoclast and of self-indulgent eccentric. He remains for them a man creatively out of step with his times; and a bishop whose devotion to Jesus forced him to choose against the Church. If one wants to believe them, and I do, it is because one understands it is a very different thing to have known someone as a friend. The tombstone in Israel bears two inscriptions: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels..." (II Corinthians 4) and, from the Mandaean Book of Prayer, "And life is victorious." The earthiness, perhaps the brokenness, of the vessel that was James Pike needs no elaboration. The perception of the victory that illumines these pages is the special gift of friendship.

Why Not the Best? by Jimmy Carter

(Broadman; 156 pp.; \$4.95/\$1.95)

John C. Bennett

While Governor Carter is not the mysterious figure he was a short time ago—his positions on many issues are now well known—this slight autobiography remains an important document. It reveals a great deal about the man in his own setting and about the experiences from which his positions emerge. Much of the book is interesting just as a vivid description of simple, hard, rural life in southern Georgia and of warm family relationships.

The title is unfortunate. One might infer from it that the book is full of self-praise and insufferable egotism, but this is not the case. The title is a quotation from Admiral Rickover, who was Carter's much-admired mentor in the Navy, and refers to the standards of excellence that Carter projects for himself, the government, and the nation. Carter does reveal great self-confidence and a sense of competence, indeed of quite varied competence. But then, without those qualities he never could have begun his quest for the Presidency with so little support.

The aspect of Carter's experience and character that comes through with

greatest clarity is his complete emancipation from the racism of his environment. This freedom goes back to his earliest relations with blacks and is no doubt attributable in large part to the influence of his mother. (His father was a conventional racist.) When asked to join the local White Citizens' Council, the younger Carter refused, even though when asked the third time he was told that his refusal might endanger his reputation and business. Carter opposed his minister and all the other deacons of his local church, insisting that blacks be welcomed to the regular services. His record as governor was appreciated by blacks. One can understand why blacks, especially in the South, feel that there is more significance in his overcoming racism than there is in the liberal attitudes of Northern whites who never had to pay the price.

Carter has come out clearly for a policy that would be a great step toward a guaranteed income to replace the welfare system, for national health insurance, for government employment of those who cannot be absorbed by the private sector, and for new programs in