

businessmen have a rare opportunity to become spokesmen in a policy debate of great importance to the entire country. Reducing regulatory pressures on colleges and universities will reduce government's tendency to regulate in other areas."

Similarly, academics should learn from their own plight that government interference in business is often misapplied. Caspar Weinberger concludes that "given the vital role academic intellectuals play in forming political and economic ideas, it is essential for them to realize that bureaucratic flaws revealed in regulation of universities — overzealousness, unevenness, capriciousness, and arbitrary actions — are endemic to the regulatory mode of behavior."

#### JEAN BLONDEL

*Political Parties: A Genuine Case for Discontent?*

Wildwood House, London, 1978, 237 pp.

Whether or not it always worked out well, the genius of the ivory tower was to provide a facility for man to step back from the exigencies of his time and take a longer and presumably deeper look at the circumstances of life. That retreat is something sorely missed when in times of troubles basic values and social order are questioned; times like ours when almost everything in contemporary society, that of both a fundamental and superficial nature, has been called to critical review. In our time, of course, much of the outcry has been neither rational nor cool-headed, and there is great need generally for the kind of ivory tower sobriety that Jean Blondel brings to bear in this analysis of contemporary political parties. Party is plainly the most important political institution in contemporary western society and Blondel is quite right in saying in the preface that persistently parties have been "both taken for granted and constantly criticized, continuously discussed and unsystematically assessed." His opinion that parties have overall had "mixed success" is reasonable. Blondel alludes to familiar criticisms of party: that it is oligarchical, servant of pressure groups, opportunistic and prone in its self-interest to make "contradictory compromises." But he is also impressed by how it has managed politics in mass society and he is inclined to the view that modern democracy may be unthinkable without parties.

To investigate this Janus-like quality of party, Blondel

examines the rise of parties, the functions they perform, the basis of their support and types of parties and party systems extant. A significant portion of his study is devoted to an analysis of the "problems" of parties, those which relate to their programs, organization, leadership and representation. What he considers to be the major problem in competitive situations is that parties are almost compelled by the logic of rivalry to be irresponsible. He says that because such systems are based on representation "it is therefore not possible for parties to reject demands out of hand or to silence those who make them." (p. 195) Consequently, the result of competition can be dysfunctional to the system. Blondel proposes as a possible solution a system based on "competitive mobilization." He wants parties to debate goals and long range issues rather than to compete purely by offering "short-term bribes" to voters.

So what of the future? Like many critics, Blondel concludes that for better and for worse democratic societies may be stuck with parties. He sees no preferable alternatives. He feels that participatory democracy is unrealistic and perceives the formation of a political combination of competent technocrats and the military as a major possibility in the years ahead. The idea is implicitly advanced that the true value of party rests not so much in what it does but rather in what it prevents!

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#### DALE VREE

*On Synthesizing Marxism and Christianity*

John Wiley and Sons, New York, N.Y., 1978, \$15.75.

Just as Jean Paul Sartre tied together the two seemingly opposite doctrines of existentialism and Marxism, so many young Christian liberals today identify themselves as "Christian Marxists."

In this book Dale Vree traces the growing emphasis upon "humanism" in Christianity, as opposed to traditional orthodoxies, and points out that Marx claimed communism to be "unmediated humanism." In his own words, Vree seeks to