

Religion in Life - Autumn 68

Instrument of Thy Peace. By Alan Paton. New York: Seabury Press, 1968. 124 pp. \$3.50.

A Creed for a Christian Skeptic. By Mary McDermott Shideler. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968. 167 pp. \$3.95.

These are two delightful books, very different from each other yet converging in Christian realism and spiritual depth. Either could be read with interest and profit by a thoughtful person at any level of theological erudition.

Dr. Paton's book interprets one after another the petitions of the familiar prayer of St. Francis. The book is written, he says, "for sinners, and by one of them," for all who wish to be better, purer, less selfish and more useful, and who wish to keep their faith bright and love warm in a dark world. In these readings, each three or four pages in length, a word from the Bible, from the winsome saint of long ago, from contemporary or at least more recent writers, and from the author's own mind and heart are skillfully woven together. One would have to be dull, indeed, who did not receive a lift of spirit from them.

In any writing by Alan Paton, whether a novel or a comment on current affairs, one has come to expect a moving literary style which searches the soul of the reader. This book is no exception. As devotional reading what is distinctive about it is that the author does not hesitate to narrate incidents from his own experience, interwoven with contemporary news headlines, to bring out the Christian depths in the prayer of St. Francis. The author's message is much like that of Martin Luther King, though I do not find King mentioned, and with that eloquent voice now stilled, this book may well be turned to often to rekindle courage and faith.

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