

"Great Society" will be imposed from Washington on a nation that has given every indication of solving its problems by a combination of voluntary individual action and local, state, and municipal measures. I think of Richard Cornuelle's success in establishing a private reinsurance program for banks which have been lending money to deserving college students. I think of the Western Student Movement, which has been recruiting high-stand university undergraduates to help cut down on school drop-outs by offering free tutoring services to slum children in the Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego areas. Anything that's peaceful and voluntary, as Leonard Read says, is a proper means of getting to the Great Society. Instead, Graham Wallas is being heeded, though his 1914 ideas have already failed wherever they have been tried. ♦

► **THE MIND AND ART OF ALBERT JAY NOCK** by Robert M. Crunden (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964). 230 pp., \$4.95.

Reviewed by Robert M. Thornton

THIS is the first full-length study of Albert Jay Nock, and happily for admirers of that "superfluous

man" Mr. Crunden's primary interest is not the personal life of his subject but rather what the man thought and how he came to think it.

In a scholarly fashion Crunden tells of Nock's public career as a man of letters and discusses systematically the men who exerted the greatest intellectual influence on him—Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, Henry George, and Franz Oppenheimer. He also explains Nock's fondness for such diverse personalities as the little appreciated "humorist" of Civil War days, Artemus Ward; the often misunderstood French writer of the sixteenth century, Francis Rabelais; and the cantankerous Mayor of New York in the early 1900's, William Jay Gaynor.

Crunden fully realizes that Nock cannot be neatly pigeonholed. With some justification he might be called a nineteenth century liberal (he was in favor of repealing laws and reducing government interference to a minimum), or a conservative (he wished to preserve everything worth saving and refused to entertain the illusion that society can and should be made over at the whim of reformers), or a radical (he sought true reforms and scoffed at the superficial changes that usually leave things worse

than before). But Crunden is no doubt right in tagging Albert Jay Nock a Jeffersonian, for Nock, like our third President, instinctively championed the cause of individual liberty against government intervention, even when the latter came disguised as benevolence.

Crunden not only discusses Nock's ideas and the books he read, but he also evaluates the ideas in the air during the man's lifetime. Crunden regards Nock as one of the early challengers of the collectivist ideology that began to enjoy popular acceptance during the first half of the twentieth century; as such, Nock was one of the founding fathers of the present-day libertarian-conservative movement.

Nock was one of the few intellectuals of his day not guilty of what has been called "the treason of the clerks." He never lost his faith in the power of ideas, and thus stood apart from those around him who rushed out to "do something." He knew that right thinking must precede right action and that you change the world only by changing individuals—a job not to be accomplished by any sort of "machinery" such as world government, disarmament, or welfare legislation.

Another thing separating Nock from many "intellectuals" was

the essential Christianity behind so many of his views. He opposed government doles, for instance, on the grounds that if it is truly "more blessed to give than to receive," then government takeover of charity deprives us of one of the great joys of life. He distrusted many government activities, not simply because they were questionable politically and economically but because the totalitarian state encourages a slave mentality among its citizens and discourages the sense of individual responsibility to one's God. It may be argued that Nock was a highly religious man (but not in the conventional sense) although many would class him as a heretic. Likely, he would have concurred with their opinion! Nock was not especially interested in "organized Christianity" for his religion was that of the first century Christians, a religion that was "a temper, a frame of mind" "Religion," he wrote, "is the highest effort of the human spirit towards perfection; it is an enthusiastic inward motion towards what St. Paul called 'the fruits of the spirit.'"

It must be emphasized that Crunden offers us, not indiscriminate acclaim of his subject but a disinterested work, the fruit of diligent research and serious study.