

that long interval, Palestine never became a national home for any other people, has never been regarded as a geopolitical entity, has never been an independent state . . . each conquest absorbed it as occupied territory to be ruled from without. . . . For the Jews, and for them alone, this was the one and only Homeland, the only conceivable place where they could find liberation and independence.

What most of us in the West do not appreciate in concrete experiential terms is that what is at stake for the Arabs is two per cent of their total territory, while what is at stake for Jews is their very existence. Heschel does not evade the question of the Arab refugees but gives a summary of what all who have worked in the situation

well know; Israel is fully aware of their distress and the injustice against them but is kept powerless to eliminate the scandal by maneuvers of the Arab powers to maintain Arab refugees homeless as a pawn in the game.

Yet beyond these different areas of not knowing and not realizing, is a more decisive region of Western Christian thought at which Heschel barely hints. As the Glock and Stark study (*Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism*) pointed out years ago, it is implicit in our most basic religious attitudes that the Jewish people was outdated by the advent of Christianity, that if they survive it should be only in exile, and that the retaking of the Land (although we were party to it) constitutes a religious problem to us. We had hoped we somehow had a gentlemen's agreement with

the State of Israel and our own Jewish friends that the whole "religious bit" would be kept out of it, and that American Jews would somehow "have the common sense" not to identify with the State of Israel.

It is our own doctrine of secularization, of separation of Church and State, and of the compartmentalization of religion that is very seriously threatened, and along with it our sense of how to live in the modern world. The State of Israel in its many-faceted paradoxical and concrete reality challenges us to rethink some fundamentals of our ideology. Not everyone will agree with Heschel's presentation, interpretation, and judgments. Many even among his fellow Jews will take issue with him. But the book is magnificently worthy of reflective reading.

Of Religious Communities and Political Action

American Catholics and Vietnam
edited by Thomas Quigley. Eerd-
mans. 197 pp. \$4.50

by Vaile Scott

Thomas Quigley introduces his collection of essays entitled *American Catholics and Vietnam* as "... a small voice joined with many others in protest. It is what we, and the authors gathered here, can do after all the acceptable methods of registering dissent have been used up — speaking, signing petitions, picketing and politicking." A few pages later on, in the foreword, Gordon Zahn writes, "I cannot help feeling (and this implies no criticism of the eminent contributors) that the picture which emerges is one of a change that is

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both too little and too late."

These prefatory statements by Quigley and Zahn constitute a sweeping indictment of the American Catholic community and the effectiveness of its institutions; of American secular society and the political processes by which it functions. The charge is leveled against what both men apparently regard as an almost hopeless response, on the part of American Catholics especially, to the war in Vietnam and to the draft system.

The impact of this indictment tends to overshadow the contributions of the other fifteen authors whose articles make up the remainder of this volume. While it is unlikely that all of the contributors to the book are in complete and unanimous agreement with the outlook projected by Quigley and Zahn there is sufficient reason to accept the fact that most of these writers, along with a significant

number of Catholics and other Americans, are more or less in sympathy with at least certain of the implications of their indictment.

One editorial problem with the book is that in relationship to the title, the content is too diffuse. The range of topics extends well beyond Vietnam and includes an historical survey of moral and theological principles relating to war and peace in general, and articles on such issues as parish renewal, education, the draft, the peace movement and church reform. In effect, the book represents the views of a certain group of Catholics who are responding to the whole life style of the Church in America.

If I have any criticism of the articles in general, and apart from their editorial context, it is that they tend to be a bit shopworn. The contributors are for the most part prominent writers whose by-

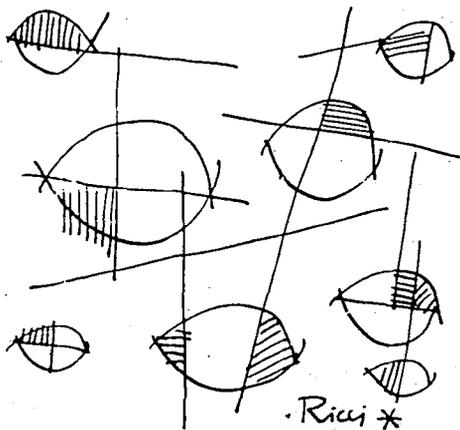
lines frequently appear in the journals of opinion many of us read. They include such names as Daniel Callahan, John Deedy, Michael Novak, Mary Perkins Ryan, Philip Scharper, and Robert McAfee Brown, many of whom have authored their own books. Among the essays in this volume, some are reprints, others are summarizations or condensed forms of more extensive works published elsewhere.

The testimony given by Quigley and Zahn, to revert to them, is issued in a tone of anguish and with a degree of pessimism which tend, as do most protests, to see issues in polemic terms. I believe that any evaluation of *American Catholics and Vietnam* must focus upon the Introduction and the Foreword they provide for the book. This is not to say that many of the ideas, arguments and points of view expressed by the other contributors are not important. They are. But the purpose of the book is to protest and this purpose is accomplished in the first twenty-five pages.

The central most important question which is raised by this book is *whether* the conclusion that "all of the acceptable methods of registering dissent have been used up," and that whatever change has occurred is "too little and too late," is an acceptable perspective for the religious person. Underlying this conclusion, I believe, there is an unacceptable theological interpretation upon which Zahn and those who agree with his position base both their concept of Christian morality and their view of the relationship between the Christian community and the secular world. I would prefer to locate other perspectives from which to view the problem of the American Catholic response to Vietnam, rather than to engage in a theoretical discussion of Zahn's theology. These alternative perspectives may be found by considering the existential situation in

terms of the processes which are currently functioning within the American Catholic community and within the secular society.

It was apparently by coincidence that *American Catholics and Vietnam* happened to be published about the first of November. This was only a few days before a cliff-hanging Presidential election brought an end to a long and tumultuous political campaign in which Vietnam and the draft were key issues. It was only two weeks before the American bishops, meeting in Washington, D. C., issued their pastoral letter, "On Human Life." This pastoral letter addressed itself, among other things, to the war in Vietnam and



to the draft. Both the political campaign and the pastoral letter were fresh in my experience as I read *American Catholics and Vietnam* and sensed the deep frustration which Quigley and Zahn projected in their interpretation of events. It occurred to me that the interconnection of these events could serve to illustrate that there are other perspectives than the one which Thomas Quigley and Gordon Zahn offer.

By mid-November of 1968 this country was in a positive mood to

end the war in Vietnam as quickly as possible. It is conceivable that the general population may still be prepared to accept measures to end the war which the Nixon Administration has not yet adapted. The campaign also made the public more aware of the inequities in the selective service system so that a new Republican President could propose an end to the draft. The Vietnam war and the draft are not, in any sense, resolved. Public opinion in November, however, was not what it had been before McCarthy went to New Hampshire, and before L.B.J. decided not to become a candidate for re-election. There is after all some indication that "The Times They Are A-Changin'." Some may still insist upon the relative insignificance of these changes in the political climate. I will argue, however, that in the day-to-day course of events, opinions are modified, policies do gain or lose public support, issues are analyzed and evaluated from different perspectives. Furthermore, it is within this process somewhere that substantive changes do occur, and it is out of this process that the real breakthroughs do come. This is what the serious business of politics is about.

Many forces and influences within our society initiate, lead, encourage and otherwise promote those changes and breakthroughs. We tend to be rather unsophisticated in this area of our political life. We simply do not know enough about the processes by which human values and moral judgments come to affect the formulation of political policies and the evaluation of national issues as well.

For instance, we readily and perhaps naively assume that religious values influence society. But in our lack of understanding of the relationship between religion and politics, some of us expect the official church through its various institutions to influence national policy

on specific issues directly. When this does not happen some of us believe that the church has failed. According to this line of reasoning, the Church had failed long before the Bishops got around to issuing their pastoral "On Human Life" in which they questioned U.S. policy on Vietnam and on the draft. The Bishops' action at that time could easily be interpreted not as an act of leadership but as a response to the mood of the country. One could support this interpretation by a statement Callahan makes here: "Catholics have been far more successful in integrating themselves into the mainstream of American conformism than into the mainstream of American reform."

Other religious groups expect the official church to do more than take specific moral positions in an effort to influence policy. These groups identify human morality so completely and exclusively with the "Christian message" that the formal Christian (Catholic) community (Church) becomes the only source of hope for determining and directing moral behavior. For such groups neither peace nor any other human value can exist in a secular, "un-Christian" world. As I read Gordon Zahn this concept of the Christian message — "necessarily and always a prophetic message in an un-Christian world!" — is implicit in his writing.

I too hold a somber view of the American Catholic response to Vietnam, but not a defeatist one. For my assumptions regarding the relationship of religious values and secular society and my expectations for the Church are based upon a radically different concept of religion and of the Church. In the first place, I do not expect the Church to take specific positions on public policy issues, either in opposition to or support of specific policies. I am unhappy when the Church does act in this capacity for it then becomes less capable of doing what I expect it to do.

I also firmly refuse to accept protest on religious grounds as an adequate or acceptable response. For I do not want to see the secular community converted into a religious community. Protest, or for that matter any other form of political action, which is motivated by a desire to "Christianize" society is just another form of triumphalism. Protest is a form of political action and requires a political motive, not a religious one.

On the question of human values and morality I would venture to say that by the time such issues as Vietnam and the draft have become publicly controversial many people already know the "moral" answer. The question at this point is no longer substantive (What is moral?) but rather procedural (How to reform the political system or process so decisions can be made to change the course of events?). Popular resistance to idealistic (substantive) moral solutions is not so much opposition to the moral solution as it is an expression of frustration and a sense of powerlessness born of a feeling of political incapacity (procedural).

The new liberal, radical if you will, is the person who is sensitive to procedural questions. He recognizes the need for action, but he also sees the need to produce a more fruitful understanding of critical procedural questions.

In his foreword, Zahn seems to be unaware of process or the need to emphasize human thought to evolve a political plan. There is only the intolerable present and the ultimate tomorrow. He concludes his critique of the articles in Quigley's book by remarking "... we need much more emphasis upon action even at the sacrifice of some of the philosophical and theological niceties. . . . Perhaps if this were to happen, this volume might be the last such effort at principle-oriented persuasion American Catholics will need be-

fore they can mount a really effective opposition to war and all that makes war."

It is precisely at this point that the old theology based upon principle-oriented persuasion becomes irrelevant. As Leslie Dewart puts it, "The religious belief of man is bound to evolve as man evolves." This process suggests that as man continues to grow in a realization of his capacity to accept responsibility and to act creatively in relationship to political reality he must forsake his dependence upon religious belief in an infallibly stated "Christian message."

What does this mean for the church, defined in its broadest terms? First of all it means that theologians will have to do their theologizing out in the open in order to hasten the development of a mature religious consciousness among more people in the church. My expectations for the church, again defined in its broadest terms, is for it to challenge the theologians by raising issues for public discussion which have not been honestly and openly raised before, and for it to use its resources in cooperation with other institutions to explore new questions which have political/moral implications, and for it to help provide a range of alternatives for public consideration.

Perhaps it is now too late as far as Vietnam is concerned, but there are other issues such as the current crises in the Middle East and Biafra; the prospect of revolution in American society and elsewhere; the United States policy on China; world population; and the arms race. I do not expect the Bishops to speak on these issues. I do expect them to encourage the people of the Church to accept responsibility for such issues: I expect religious people to explore the political ramifications of this responsibility and themselves take the initiative to cooperate with others in freely creating peace in the future.