

WORLDVIEW'S First Twenty Years: A Word From the Publisher

In 1914 Andrew Carnegie inspired twenty-nine of the most prominent Christians and Jews of the day to establish The Church Peace Union. His objective and theirs was to enlist the resources of religion in the struggle for world peace.

That objective still guides the successors of that original group, since 1961 known as the Council on Religion and International Affairs (CRIA). Through studies, discussions, seminars, and publications we try to ask and answer the tough questions of war and peace, justice and reconciliation on the basis of values rooted in religious tradition and nourished in a continuous critical interaction between realistic analysis and the insights of faith.

Since its first appearance in 1958 *Worldview* has been central in CRIA's work, the most public and visible way in which we present international issues in the context of ethical concern. Today our rapidly expanding readership—from government, business, religion, media, and the academic community—is finding a breadth of vision and depth of analysis that is all too rare in the publishing world.

In this Twentieth Anniversary year I am pleased to salute the editors and authors who bring you this lively forum, but most of all you, the thoughtful readers (and letter-writers) who make possible *Worldview's* distinctive contribution. As we continue to think and work together over the next twenty years perhaps the elusive world of peace, justice, and human freedom we envision will be a bit closer than it was in 1914 or is today.



Philip A. Johnson

Publisher
President, CRIA

Correspondence

A "Durable Solution" to Fascism?

To the Editors: In "A Fascism in Our Future?" (*Worldview*, November, 1977) Dale Vree writes persuasively and pointedly about certain political and moral dangers now threatening the "democratic" nations. As he says, fascism may indeed come to us in the guise of something else and "triumph under another name."

However, the overall worth of what Mr. Vree says is somewhat lessened by his two closing paragraphs. It is extremely unsettling to have him say that the "only manageable and durable solution" to fascism is "religious faith." He appears to offer an overly simple answer to a very complex moral and political difficulty. While one easily sympathizes with his sentiments about faith—he is generally on the mark in what he offers as some of its defining characteristics—it does not seem that fascism or even the threat of it can be so easily forestalled by religious faith, even by that variant of it known as Christianity. One need only look at the main facts of recent European history to have legitimate doubts as to the strength of religious faith as a counterforce to fascism. And even the quickest perusal of such facts ought to occasion anything but optimism concerning the ability of religious faith to work against the Fascist outlook and its obvious attractiveness to a great many people, including those who should know better. One might wonder what religious faith did to prevent the blossoming of the Fascist movement and its subsequent popular acceptance in Italy and Germany. In particular one could wonder as to the whereabouts of the "soldier of Christ" in those countries and against whom (or what) he employed his combat skills in "daily battle."

It may be that "traditional religion" does call for self-discipline and sacrifice and that it does in truth protect us from "decadence and cultural polarization." At least one would hope

so. Still, even if it can be so efficacious, its accomplishments clearly have not been sufficient to prevent a Hitler and an Auschwitz, a Mussolini and a March on Rome. Perhaps then it is quite understandable why religious faith is "supposedly discredited" as a solution to and prophylaxis against fascism.

Warren Thompson

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Dale Vree Responds:

Actually, I was not greatly concerned with defending democratic nations against fascism. Indeed, in my last paragraph I spoke of the "danger of politics—any kind of politics..." and went on to speak of the paganism of liberals and conservatives as well as of Fascists and Marxists. I ended on an eschatological note, hoping for the Day when all false gods are desecrated.

The context of the remark that religious faith is the "only manageable and durable solution" was this: There are three fundamental alternatives to the jaded life: Marxism, fascism, and religious faith. I indicated a preference for religious faith for the reasons stated in the article—but *not* because it *has in fact been* an antidote to Marxism and fascism. (I could argue that the success of fascism—especially Nazism—presupposed the substantial secularization of European society, but I would rather pursue a different point.) AI-

(Continued on page 66)

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Rabbi by Murray Polner

(Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 244 pp.; \$8.95)

From small towns in Texas to upper-income California suburbs to the Hasidic strongholds of Brooklyn, Polner surveys the state of Judaism in North America today. The focus is on the rabbi, especially the pulpit rabbi in the local synagogue, but this in fact opens up the whole picture of Jewry, since Polner clearly agrees with sociologist Charles Liebman that rabbis are "the most important figures in American Jewish life today." The book is written in a very accessible style and includes a glossary of Jewish terms for the outsider, which also means Polner is keenly aware that many Jews are "Jewishly illiterate." Largely through interviews with local rabbis Polner reveals the widespread uneasiness of Jews about being "different" in a way that might provoke latent anti-Semitism. Especially outside the major urban centers there has been a fearfulness about relating Jewish ethics to "controversial issues" such as race relations and the war in Vietnam. For all the uncertainties Polner believes the rabbinate is probably less demoralized than many other professional groups. The bottom line for many in rationalizing their labors is the survival of the Jewish community itself, especially as that survival is threatened by the assimilationism most painfully represented in intermarriage with non-Jews. At present, solidarity with Israel may be the major cohering factor in Jewish identity, but almost all the rabbis Polner describes and interviews long for a deeper and more positive allegiance to Jewish thought and practice. As a lovingly critical overview of American Jewry today, *Rabbi* is a book to be warmly welcomed.

Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church by Frederick Sontag

(Abingdon; 223 pp.; \$8.95)

Few religious movements in recent years have stirred a political storm comparable to that surrounding "the Moonies." With the ongoing investiga-

tion of "Koreagate" one assumes the Unification Church will be in and out of the spotlight for some time to come. Sontag, a California-based philosopher, here offers a sympathetic—some think a much too sympathetic—analysis of the movement and its leader, including a nine-hour interview with Mr. Moon that, he says, is the last he will grant—ever. A strength of Professor Sontag's approach is that he deals with the movement primarily as a religious phenomenon, treating the political involvements only as they relate to the creed of the group. Of course those who are chiefly interested in the Unification Church for political reasons will view this as a weakness. The fact remains that this is an important study for people who want to understand what the Moonies are about.

The Counter-Insurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance by Douglas S. Blaufarb

(The Free Press; 356 pp.; \$12.95)

There is no dearth of books on why U.S. policy in Vietnam was a disaster. Blaufarb's contribution is to put that failure into the context of counterinsurgency thinking as it developed from 1950 to the present. It was an experiment in which the author was intimately involved and from which he draws his chief conclusion that the U.S. is not very good at counterinsurgency and should not rely on it in the future.

Idi Amin Dada: Hitler in Africa by Thomas and Margaret Melady

(Sheed, Andrews, McMeel; 184 pp.; \$7.95)

Thomas Melady was ambassador to Burundi, 1969-72, and the last U.S. representative to Uganda. Parts of this searing indictment first appeared in *Worldview*. The authors conclude with a call to the United Nations to send forces to halt the genocide in Uganda.

Correspondence (from p. 2)

though I believe religious faith is good for individuals and societies, my argument for Christianity in particular would never rest with an enumeration of its practical benefits. I believe Christianity to be true—but did not have the space to argue that in the article—and I would never recommend Christianity primarily because it is a means to some other end. I would never urge that we all become Christians just so that we can avoid fascism (or Marxism). That is a terrible abuse of Christianity—actually another form of idolatry. Professor Thompson asks what religious faith did to prevent the blossoming of fascism, where the "soldier of Christ" was when fascism was becoming popular. What Professor Thompson seems to be urging is that religion be *political*, that it involve itself in the externalization and impersonalization of the struggle between good and evil. He is prescribing exactly what I warned against: locating the Enemy outside oneself rather than inside.

Yet I do not believe that political involvement—whatever its dangers—*necessarily* involves the Christian in idolatry, and therefore I would not deny the Christian layman the liberty of being political (in *almost* any way he chooses). Nor would I require that he be political. From the perspective of Christian theology, nonidolatrous political options are properly *adiaphora*—matters indifferent. (Fascism is not always and everywhere idolatrous—just as, say, liberalism is not. I can conceive of a faithful Christian having supported fascism—especially in its earlier phases and its non-German forms—over liberalism, and vice versa.) However, I do not believe the Church, the Bride of Christ, should embroil herself in such matters indifferent. I do not believe there is such a thing as a "Christian social ethic" *obligatory* for the Church and for all Christians (and I say this as a Christian who happens to be a Socialist). I do not have the space to develop this argument, but I would conclude by saying I can think of very few concrete cases when the Church should take sides in politics, and I do not think the Church has any theological basis for taking broad theoretical stands as between democracy and dictatorship, socialism and capitalism, or freedom and slavery.