

## Correspondence

### MR. REAGAN'S INAUGURAL

To the Editors: I wish to register my objection to Wilson Carey McWilliams's page of humbug in the March issue of *Worldview* (Under Cover: "Private Lives and Public Visions").

Mr. McWilliams not only misreads stock market fluctuations but also election returns. He constructs an "heroic" strawman by carping at a rhetorical flourish in the president's inaugural address. The speech, as expected by most financial and political analysts, reaffirmed the president's long-standing commitment to less government expenditure and regulation, lower taxes, more economic growth, and an unapologetic steadfast foreign policy. To expect a speech from Mr. Reagan endorsing different policies is to cynically hope that he would disavow the basis for his electoral victory. Expectations of that kind are neither Churchillian nor democratic.

No honest observer of our election had any reason to expect President Reagan to renounce his oft-stated regard for individualism and instead advocate "government policies to strengthen our relationships." As Mr. McWilliams knows, the U.S. Government is prohibited from instituting policies to advance religion, and I expect that even he might object to bureaucrats meddling with his friendships.

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### AN AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

To the Editors: In his review of *The National Interest and the Human Interest: An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Books, December, 1980). George S. Weigel, Jr., compliments the book for asking the right questions about U.S. foreign policy but criticizes the answers on grounds that they are "ideological." I would like to respond to this point, not so much to defend the book (readers will assess it for themselves) as to discuss what I believe is a common misunderstanding in policy analysis.

What does it mean to be ideological? In one sense every comprehensive understanding of reality or set of beliefs is inescapably ideological. This is the

sense in which Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines ideology as "a way of thinking." In a second, less general, sense the term "ideological" carries negative connotations suggesting that a way of thinking is impractical or empirically inaccurate....

The merit of a way of thinking cannot be determined by whether the ideas constitute an ideology, as they unavoidably do (in the first sense), but by whether the ideas themselves accurately reflect reality. If one believes that a way of thinking, or an ideology, deserves criticism, it is more helpful, intellectually straightforward, and less subject to hidden political bias if one simply identifies the point that is inaccurate and suggests a more accurate alternative. Not to proceed in this manner obscures the truth. Whether new ideas correspond to a critic's ideology is not a sound basis for judging the extent to which the new ideas reflect reality.

*The National Interest and the Human Interest* describes the differences between (1) an explicit, innovative ideology (based on values which define the human interest) and (2) an implicit, frequently disguised, widely held ideology (which accepts traditional definitions and assessments of the national interest). To measure policies that serve the national interest against policies that serve the human interest is admittedly a different way of thinking than normally guides U.S. or Soviet policy-making. But that does not mean that this new approach is any more ideological or less accurate empirically than the familiar approach....

Presumably Weigel would (as I do) encourage us to test the beliefs of our own ideology against the hard facts of political reality in order to minimize distortion and dogma. With this purpose in mind, it is significant that although Weigel several times characterizes *The National Interest and the Human Interest* as ideological, he does not attempt to show that the evidence in the detailed case studies either is factually incorrect or in aggregate leads to any conclusions other than those stated. Indeed, policies aimed at meeting the needs of the human species often do conflict with policies shaped by the national interest as traditionally defined.

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### EL SALVADOR ET AL.

To the Editors: According to Thomas E. Quigley ("Great Decisions '81"—Latin America and the Caribbean, *Worldview*, January), the Roman Catholic Church has provided "a framework, a language, and a motivation" for revolution among "the poor and oppressed" of El Salvador and other nations of Latin America. This view begs two questions: (1) How sound is the *substance* of this new Catholic teaching? (2) Does the Church also supply military training, rifles, grenade launchers, bombs, mines, electronic detonators, salaries for guerrilla armies, field communications, and trained military leaders—and if not, who does?

Quigley would have us believe that "the people" of El Salvador support the armed guerrilla army (estimated at five to ten thousand well-trained cadres and forty thousand irregular militia). Yet "the people" did not support the "final offensive" publicly announced for early January, 1981. They did not support a general strike called in their name.

Besides, a majority of the Catholic clergy in El Salvador does not support the guerrillas. Bishop Rivera Y Damas, using traditional just war theory, seemed to tell his congregation in a sermon in January that revolution is not yet justified. He saw plenty of injustice in the present regime; he saw insufficient reason for hope that the revolution would bring about greater justice. He clearly said that one condition for just revolution has been met; he shrank back from a decision about the other three conditions.

While Quigley believes that the new theology of revolution carried by some of "the Church's pastoral agents, priests, sisters, and lay catechists" will bring greater justice, other Catholics in Central America, North America, and elsewhere read the evidence quite differently. Even independently of geopolitical considerations, the case that "liberation theology" brings genuine liberation is dubious. Nicaragua and Cuba are good evidence against it.

I would oppose a leftist revolution in El Salvador on its own merits. I also oppose it for geopolitical reasons. The Soviet Union is currently supporting Cuba at the level of \$12 million a day. Cuban and Nicaraguan military officers have been training El Salvadoreans in units of as many as a hundred at a time,  
(Continued on page 30)

Irish history and helps us to understand how the poor of all ages continue on in the face of despair.

*Acts of Union* is a highly readable and moving account of a people who refuse to die spiritually. Those of us who are concerned with such cosmic issues as nuclear warfare can learn much from a people who have lived for centuries not knowing if they had a future and yet strengthened enough by humor to attempt one. The very survival of the Irish people—Protestant and Catholic—is an act of hope, and that hope will one day lead to their act of union.

—Joseph J. Fahey

### **ABORTION POLITICS: PRIVATE MORALITY AND PUBLIC POLICY**

by Frederick S. Jaffe, Barbara L. Lindheim, and Philip R. Lee  
(McGraw Hill; 216 pp.; \$14.95)

### **ABORTION PARLEY**

ed. by James Tunstead Burtchaell  
(Andrews and McMeel; 352 pp.; \$20.00)

The authors are all most definitely on the "pro-choice" side of the "pro-choice" vs. "pro-life" divide. Jaffe is former president of the Alan Guttmacher Institute, which has been one of the chief educational instruments in promoting a woman's right to choose abortion and, the pro-lifers would immediately add, in denying protection to the unborn. The authors recognize that, contrary to establishment wisdom at the time, the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision of the Supreme Court has most emphatically not "settled" the abortion issue. Curiously, in view of the impact of Moral Majority and other evangelical-fundamentalist forces, the authors focus on the Roman Catholic Church as the exclusive agency advancing a "secular" answer on abortion. They are also distressed that the "medical mainstream" has "copped out," leaving the abortion business to a minority involved in running special clinics. And, of course, they are depressed by last year's upholding of the Hyde amendment by the Supreme Court, an amendment that denies federal funds for abortions. Altogether this is a worried and defensive work. Perhaps its chief flaw is found in its subtitle, "Private Morality and Public Policy." The debate would no doubt be better informed were it recognized that the issue is one

of public morality—that is, what values, whether religiously based or not, should guide the formation of public policy? This book, regrettably, is of little help in addressing that question.

In October of 1979, Notre Dame University invited folks of differing views to a three-day intensive exchange on abortion—the ethics, practices, and politics of it. Editor Burtchaell's preface offers a spirited defense of a Catholic university's right and obligation to convene such a meeting. Apparently Notre Dame came in for a lot of flak on the subject, its critics contending either that a Catholic university *couldn't* host such a conference (Catholics are already biased in a way that determines the outcome of deliberations) or that it *shouldn't* host such a conference (it implies that abortion is an "open question" about which the university is uncertain). For all the criticism, these essays give us reason to be grateful that Notre Dame was not intimidated. Of particular interest is the essay by Professor Hadley Arkes of Amherst that details the ways by which independent agencies promote abortion in poor countries, often skirting or violating the law of both the U.S. and the host country. To both "pro-life" and "pro-choice" positions he poses the question whether foreign aid, especially in the area of population control, should be aimed at fulfilling or subverting the policies of other countries. The final essay is by Methodist theologian Stanley Hauerwas, who teaches at Notre Dame. It is a powerful appeal to Christians to be more rather than less straightforward in arguing for protection of the unborn from explicitly Christian premises. These and other essays contribute to the realization of the parley's purpose, namely, to insert care and civility into an ethical debate that will continue to embroil our attentions for some time to come.

—Richard John Neuhaus

### **CATHOLICISM**

by Richard P. McBrien  
(Winston Press; 2 vols.; xcii + 1,186 pp.; \$37.50)

A number of specialists have already expressed reservations about some aspects of *Catholicism*, but even they have generally admired the scope and balance of this work. McBrien has produced, as he intended, not a work of

controversial theology but of constructive theology. As he says, he hopes the book will be a bridge between younger and older Catholics, between progressives and conservatives, between the pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II Church. This might sound like a recipe for a bland disaster—at least it did to this reviewer—but McBrien carries it off in this continuously interesting, well-written book.

McBrien begins with the present situation of Catholicism and then, in contemporary fashion, discusses the human condition today before moving on to God, Jesus Christ, the Church, the ethical and spiritual dimensions of Christianity, and, finally, summarizing reflections. His range of references is up-to-date, generous, and widely eclectic. McBrien also provides at the end of each section suggestions for further reading.

Although the book is written to be read from beginning to end, the excellent table of contents plus McBrien's remarkable synthesizing ability allows one to read selectively and profitably. It is possible to jump from topic to topic. The book is also physically attractive, with good print and margins, although one could question the need of printing the same extensive appendix and glossary in both volumes. In spite of minor reservations, this is a highly recommended work for anyone who wants to understand what Catholicism is today and how it got to be where it is.

—James Finn

### **Correspondence (from p. 4)**

with nearly a thousand trainees returned to El Salvador by January, 1981. It would be nice if the Soviet Union were not interested in creating new Lithuanias in Central America. But the Soviet presence (via Cuba, Nicaragua, and the PLO) cannot be simply wished away....

The moral ring of Quigley's commentary seems to many of us to be based on wishful thinking, at best. Were the world as he says, one might in good conscience stand with him. Alas, it isn't, and many of us cannot.

Michael Novak

Washington, D.C.

*Note: Amnesty International Report 1980, advertised in these pages, is available for \$5.95 from AI U.S.A., 304 W. 58 St., New York, N.Y. 10019—less trouble than writing to London and half the cost.—Eds.*