

the cause of new problems that must then be solved in turn. The Eternal Victim myth accords with no revolutionary ideology because it is, fundamentally, antipolitical. It reflects an attempt to flee from the problems of power to a place of untried "purity."

It is no accident that these contradictions of the Berrigan ideology, concealed toward Asians and blacks, come out in the open where Israel is concerned. For the central archetype of this ideology is nothing else

but the crucified Messiah as Jew, which, for two thousand years, the Church has sought to raise up at the expense of the historical reality of the Jewish people. What Berrigan means essentially when he claims to be a Jew, and even the "true Jew," is that he is Christ, the suffering Messiah, in whose name all actual, finite Jews must be judged apostate.

And so, it seems, we are right back at the beginning, back to that messianic appropriation of Jewish

identity which must ever raise up anti-Judaism as its left hand. It is not surprising, then, that every Jew with a memory, reading the Berrigan speech, must feel himself back at the very font of anti-Semitism, while Christians will remain largely mystified and uncomprehending of this charge. Damn Jews! Why don't they ever lie down long enough to be our prime candidates for the Crucified Messiah! With philo-Semites like these, who needs anti-Semites?

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possess the same basic structure of myth and belief, yet each proclaiming itself the one true path to salvation though equally unable to confront the new demands on the spirit posed by twentieth-century technological society.

If there has been a reversal by the Church of its officially sanctioned anti-Jewish prejudice, yet undone is to break down the wall of officially sanctioned ignorance toward Islam ("Mohammedanism" as it is usually erroneously referred to by Christian writers). Rabbi James Rudin ("Relations Never Better") tends to judge the health and quality of interfaith dialogue on the amount of support for the State of Israel; something he would not be so inclined to do if he were addressing himself also to Muslims. On the other hand Jews and Muslims should have something to say to each other, for despite the current Arab/Israeli conflict they have had more fruitful relations in the past than either had with Christianity (see *Jews and Arabs, Their Contacts Through the Ages*, by S.D. Goitein). While Muslims are excluded from the religious establishment here in the United States and are a tiny minority, we should remember that in Asia and Africa they far outnumber the Christians. Islam has been successful in this country in converting Third World-oriented blacks. It may be useful for Christians to understand themselves as members of a group claimed to be an older, "superseded"

form of revelation, as they have claimed the Jews to be.

I do not propose any sort of synthesis between the three great monotheistic faiths. I would hope such a dialogue could bring about a deeper understanding, not only of each other, but of ourselves. Perhaps it would dispel the lack of seriousness of some of our theologians, such as J. A. T. Robinson and Harvey Cox, referred to elsewhere in the January issue [in George W. Forell's review of their most recent books—Ed.]. Perhaps though we may not reach any accord on the Middle East conflict, the reaching out to each other, the attempt to define and assert the Spirit among men as carried through a common Semitic origin, could strike a spark to kindle the spirit of peace in the Middle East, the all-Holy One sending his mercy on the land of the Holy.

Shalom, Salaam, and Pax.

Joseph McCarty

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## Christian Opinion: The Mideast War

To the Editors: The short article by David Hunter ("Jewish-Christian Ceasefire: Weighing Alternatives," *Worldview*, January) explaining the "institutional response" of the National Council of Churches to the recent Middle Eastern war is interesting, not so much as a defense of the NCC position (personally, I feel that NCC has no compulsive reason to take any stand at all, and I would hope that in future it and my local church would emulate

B'nai B'rith on Vietnam and take no "position"), but as an example of NCC's political and spiritual failings.

Hunter, a high official of NCC, does not even mention the two most common categories of Christian opinion, sometimes overlapping, which make up the larger part of the heavily pro-Israeli response which is exposed by every public opinion survey. He mentions the inheritance from Christian missionaries to Arab countries (certainly minute in terms of the numbers of American Christians affected), the New Left syndrome (which can't possibly affect more than 5 or 10 per cent of American Christians, even though it may be important to twice that percentage of the clergy), the direct influence of American Jews on American Christians (probably substantial, but to some extent self-canceling, since many Christians doubtless respond negatively to Jewish concerns, and many influential Jews are not Zionists), and a fourth strange category of those "concerned" with international affairs. I can't for the life of me place that group, and assume Mr. Hunter must be referring to people who agree with him and with his colleagues at NCC.

Leaving aside the mysterious elect group of the "concerned" and going back to us reprehensible characters who don't carry a conscious burden of "concern" over the Middle East, there are two additional categories of American Christian opinion, either of which is of much greater significance than any of the first three categories listed by Mr. Hunter. One is composed of the very numerous

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adherents to "prophetic" evangelism, who relate current events in the Middle East to biblical prophecies of events leading to Armageddon, and who view the anti-Israeli armies in the Middle East as Satanic in origin and significance. I'm quite sure there are more American Christians in that category than there are American Christians who have any idea of what the NCC is all about. And I can assure you from personal contact with them that they are very "concerned."

Mr. Hunter does not refer at all to the most significant single category of American Christian opinion—those American Christians who, viewing the prolonged cat fight in the Middle East and being too humble to make moral judgments of that very confused centuries-old mess, ask only what it means to the United States. And they see dictatorial or feudal Arab regimes, pulsating with hatred of the United States, apparently determined, with the noisy encouragement of the Soviet Union and to the applause of the knee-jerk anti-Americans around the world, using enormous quantities of arms supplied gratis over the years by Marxist states to destroy a small country which, though socialist and sometimes paranoid and with a dubious background, does cooperate with the United States. They know that the defeat of Israel is a defeat for the United States, at least in the short run, and they distrust projections into the long run. They probably won't be willing to put money or lives into any large-scale effort to defend that American interest, but it looks to them like an American interest, and opinions are cheap. American Christians, like most other human beings, are nationalists. If one condemns them for their nationalism, one must condemn most other people in the world for *their* nationalism.

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David R. Hunter Responds:

John W. Bowling's reaction to my words in the January issue of *Worldview* is a worthy addition to the analysis of American Christian response to the Middle East situation. While my article does not say so, and should have, it was in reply to a request to speak from the perspective of the National Council of Churches' experience. The four kinds of common response to the Middle East crisis identified in my article constituted an analysis of the observable response of the NCC constituency as reflected in the reactions of their elected or designated representatives who comprise the Governing Board of the NCC. Professor Bowling grossly underestimates the strength of all four within the NCC constituency—thirty-one national church bodies with a membership of some 43,000,000 people. This strength is not so much in numbers as in fervor, resulting in an inexhaustible readiness to exercise concern.

Professor Bowling quite rightly goes beyond the NCC constituency and identifies a large segment of American Christendom in the more conservative evangelical tradition who are quick to associate present-day happenings in the Middle East with the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Such association is not heard in our forum, but it certainly is a significant part of the total American Christian spectrum.

In Professor Bowling's identification of the nationalistic oriented Christians who ask only "what does this mean for the United States?" we have an alarmingly accurate description of a vast part of middle America who do not permit themselves to become informed about the rights and needs of people outside of our own country except as the realization of these rights impinges on our own welfare. These are the adherents of a civil religion in our day who have never been possessed by the universal ethic of Judeo-Christian tradition. They are in the Church without being of it, as all of us are from time to time. From a Christian perspective, for them,

the concept of a Christ who died for all men does not carry very many implications for the Arabs and Israelis who suffer and die in the Middle East or the Vietnamese who bleed and perish in Indochina. Professor Bowling has brought into perspective the silent majority who usually do not respond at all.



## The Great Berrigan Debate

On October 19, Fr. Daniel Berrigan spoke on the Middle East crisis before a group of American university graduates of Arab descent. While highly critical of both the Arab states and Israel, the talk has since been particularly attacked for its views on Israel. Still others have found the talk, however, a beginning point for dialogue on the route to peace.

Contained in this 36-page booklet is the text of Fr. Berrigan's original essay ("The Middle East: Sane Conduct?"), with responses by Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Robert Hoyt, June Stillman, William Novak and Allan Solomonow. Also included is the transcript of the televised discussion between Prof. Hans Morgenthau and Fr. Berrigan.

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