

# Correspondence

## Catholics and Liberation

To the Editors: In "Catholics Called to Action" (*Worldview*, March) James Finn explores in a thorough, realistic, and critical way many of the historical preparations for and current influences on the "Call to Action" process by which the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops chose to celebrate the Bicentennial.

I'd like to suggest that the delegates voted as they did, not merely to respect each others' work, but in many instances as prophetic voices. Certainly, immediate implementation of all recommendations is not foreseeable. But just as certainly, those present were saying: "The Gospel can make a difference. This is what it would be like if the Church as a whole endeavored to bring Gospel values to bear on our world."

People are generally moved to take action on those issues they *perceive* as touching them directly. What we all need is an imaginative and creative sense that will enable us to perceive that the wider problems are often responsible for our most personal and painful problems. And, to paraphrase: "What reward do we deserve if we act only out of self-interest? Do not the pagans do as much?"

To Mr. Finn's conclusion that the Detroit Conference was a call addressed not only to the bishops, I say it is imperative that he and others continue to reiterate that statement, urgently and at all times.

The members and associates of NAWR, the National Assembly of Women Religious, have been heavily invested in the process thus far and are working steadily to continue it. Information may be obtained and collaboration offered through: NAWR, 1307 South Wabash, Chicago, Ill. 60605.

Sister Maggie Fisher, RSCJ  
NAWR Director of Development  
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To the Editors: *Worldview* has never made secret its hostility to the new theological tendencies from Latin America, often narrowly referred to as the "theology of liberation." This has been clear since Richard Neuhaus's review several years ago of Gustavo

Gutierrez's book (in "Liberation Theologies and the Captivities of Jesus," *Worldview*, March, 1973). The March, 1977, issue, however, approaches the ridiculous with two juxtaposed articles attacking the tendency, each in contradiction of the other.

Thus, James Finn begins in "Catholics Called to Action" by blaming the "revolutionary impulse from Latin America" for being a "major tributary" in influencing U.S. Catholics to condemn modern military power in "utopian" and "pacifist" terms.

Gordon Zahn follows immediately in "Take Up Your Gun and Follow Me" (also the theme of the issue's cover) with the charge that liberation theology opens "the way to virtually uncritical support not only for wars of national liberation but for the full range of guerrilla tactics, not excluding indiscriminate acts of terrorism."

"Liberation theology" is at once accused of naively spreading pacifism and crassly rejecting it.

While neither piece shows any understanding of the complexity of experiences and currents involved in this theological tendency, Gordon Zahn's is the most disconcerting. One would presume that a pacifist looking at the contemporary Latin American scene would first of all critique the neo-Fascist wave of terror organized by many reigning states in that area. With that done, he might then legitimately comment on the inadequacy of the path chosen by Nestor Paz. Undoubtedly, there would be many similar criticisms of that path by Latin American "liberation theologians," since the guerrilla movement has hardly been the locus of their theologizing.

It is deeply disturbing, in this case and in so many others, to watch *Worldview* make the late liberal retreat to neo-conservative strains, with all their internal inconsistencies.

Joe Holland  
*Center of Concern*  
Washington, D.C.

Gordon C. Zahn Responds:  
Joe Holland should not be all that surprised if James Finn and I have radically different perspectives as to the nature and origins of Catholic pacifism. For the record, I am far more enthusiastic over the peace-and-disarmament provi-

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## WORLDVIEW

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Worldview* is to place public policies, particularly in international affairs, under close ethical scrutiny. The Council on Religion and International Affairs, which sponsors the journal, was founded in 1914 by religious and civic leaders brought together by Andrew Carnegie. It was mandated to work toward ending the barbarity of war, to encourage international cooperation, and to promote justice. The Council is independent and nonsectarian. *Worldview* is an important part of the Council's wide-ranging program in pursuit of these goals.

*Worldview* is open to diverse viewpoints and encourages dialogue and debate on issues of public significance. It is edited in the belief that large political questions cannot be considered adequately apart from ethical and religious reflection. The opinions expressed in *Worldview* do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Council. Through *Worldview* the Council aims to advance the national and international exchange without which our understanding will be dangerously limited.

Philip A. Johnson, *Publisher*

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