

# worldview

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Readers are reminded that *worldview* welcomes correspondence. Letters may be specific comments on articles in recent issues or general discussion, but readers are requested to limit their letters to 500 words.

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## A GLANCE BACKWARD...

With this issue, *worldview* marks its tenth anniversary. In the affairs of men ten years is a relatively brief span, and in the affairs of nations even briefer. But the last ten years have transformed much of our national life — and those issues to which *worldview* addresses itself. Ten years ago it would have seemed melodramatic and fatuous to ask if America had reached a watershed, either in its self-understanding or in its domestic and foreign policies. But this issue of *worldview* is devoted to exactly that question, and though it arouses sharply differing responses it is obviously a question which serious people take seriously.

Few could have anticipated ten years ago the extent and intensity of the dissent which is now pervasive in our society. The years of the Eisenhower Administration had brought the United States to a position of relative tranquility. Under his beneficent regime many of the anticipated accomplishments which led Walter Lippmann to support his candidacy in 1952 were accomplished: the Korean war was terminated, the two-party system was revived, and national acrimony and bitter dissension were largely dissipated.

To be sure, McCarthyism flourished but it also withered away; there were serious conflicts, such as the Suez crisis of 1956, but they were relatively brief and self-contained. The United States seemed strong enough and secure enough to relax after decades of demanding and constant attention to international problems, to turn its attention inward. A number of people devoted serious attention to problems of nuclear weapons systems and modern warfare, but their concerns seemed increasingly to be those of the specialist. The country as a whole seemed, if not complacent, relatively satisfied. Even the students, who can usually be counted on for critical analysis and stringent judgments, seemed subdued. Given our national penchant for the labelling description, it seemed natural that they should become known as the silent generation. And that the decade of the 50's was described in ways which were all variants of "the flabby fifties."

Glancing back, one can admire the combination of virtues—the optimism, the rashness, the prescience — which launched *worldview* in such seemingly unpropitious times. For at a time which did not inspire intense interest in international affairs, there was little reason to believe there would be much of an audience for a journal that devoted itself to a serious exploration of "religion and international affairs." In addition, *worldview* took upon itself other journalistic burdens. In joining the family of American journals of opinion that are devoted to religious, political and cultural affairs, it immediately shared many of the problems endemic to this group. But there was one major difference between *worldview* and most other journals of opinion.

With some possible qualifications, the leading journals of

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opinion in this country represent particular schools of thought. Most of those who read any of these journals regularly do so because they are in sympathy with the intellectual framework within which current events are considered and judged. These readers wish to see their own partisan positions discussed and analyzed, of course, but they must also hope to see these positions confirmed.

*worldview* has taken upon itself another and a different task. The program of which it is a part has been described as one which "advances no single point of view, holds no partisan position, offers no particular solution." Instead, it brings together, frequently within a single issue, men of differing and often opposing views — the liberal, the conservative and the radical; the idealist and the realist; Catholic, Protestant, Jew, and humanist.

A journal committed to a policy of publishing widely different views encounters what many would regard as journalistic disadvantages. It necessarily lacks the appeal of those journals which stake out a definite position on controversial issues of the day. It cannot crusade or gather many crusaders to its support. But this does not demand, as some partisan critics would have it, that when it deals with controverted issues *worldview* must be lukewarm, shallow or dispassionate. When it most nearly fulfills its purpose it confirms less than it disturbs; it gives the "right" answers less than it uncovers and presses the right questions.

Over the last ten years, as the United States moved from the flabby fifties into the terrible sixties, *worldview* has enlisted many of the people who are most able to discuss political actions within a moral context and to relate them to the democratic processes of our country. In addition to the contributors to this issue, *worldview* has published writers such as Gordon Zahn, Michael Harrington, Marc H. Tanenbaum, Charles Burton Marshall, Robert Lekachman, Sir Robert Thompson, Staughton Lynd, John Lukacs, Ernest Lefever, Robert McAfee Brown, Roger Hilsman, Steven S. Schwarzschild, William V. Shannon, Leslie Dewart, Bernard Brodie, Thomas Molnar, and George Houser. A journal which becomes the forum for the definite and developed views expressed by such writers is not destined to be shallow or colorless. Along with the many other contributors these writers have debated the

political and moral problems that attend issues such as, for example, the nuclear deterrent and modern war, civil disobedience and a democratic political process, the politico-moral statements that issue from major religious organizations and leading religious spokesmen, intelligence operations and an open society, the suggested relation between poverty, racism and the divisive war in Vietnam.

The response to *worldview* supports the judgment that it has remained true to its initial purpose. And the growing audience it has found suggests that William Clancy, its founding editor, was correct in assessing the need for such a journal. While there will always be a number of people who dismiss — quite unhistorically — the relation between religion and political affairs, their number is smaller today than it was ten years ago. What becomes increasingly clear both to the religious and the non-religious person is that the relation desperately needs contemporary clarification.

## ...A GLANCE AHEAD

The present state of discussion about international affairs; about the relation of the average citizen, of intellectuals and of religious spokesmen to government policy; about the relation of morality and politics — the parlous state of this discussion shows how necessary it is that we try constantly to clarify the questions that will always need contemporary answers. It is the contention of *worldview* that one source of clarification lies in the religious traditions that have helped to shape us as a people.

But to ensure that these traditions are something other than desiccated relics to which we give conventional reverence, to make them truly vivifying, demands constant and intense intellectual effort. It demands also a continuing conversation among those who have the interest, the ability and the energy to engage in the kind of intellectual exchange that is necessary. The exchange in this anniversary issue suggests the path that *worldview* will take in the coming years. During those years it will need all the support it can gain — intellectual, moral and financial. We hope that readers of this issue will lend their support to the venture which is *worldview*. J.F.