

Correspondence

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a country that is far too sorely unequal already. It is a proposal, anyway, that might clarify the moral and public policy issues involved.

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Richard John Neuhaus Responds: Since we have fought on opposite sides of the barricades, so to speak, over who should control New York City's schools, it is understandable that Mr. Shanker and I have dramatically different understandings of the role played by the United Federation of Teachers. The issue at hand, however, is Mr. Shanker's view of private foundations. I frankly do not understand his protest, since he reiterates his position that foundations should be "controlled by government officials accountable to and removable by the people." That is the position I attributed to him, arguing that such a policy would destroy private foundations. If it is Mr. Shanker's position that government-controlled foundations would still be private foundations, that is an intriguing proposition deserving of further elaboration. His reasoning that the government should control funds which would have been collected in taxes had the government not exempted them seems to me to mean "that anything that escapes going into government coffers is in effect a government expenditure." As questionable as its underlying assumptions may be, the notion is hardly original with Mr. Shanker. Following the recent lead of some economists and policy planners, the federal government has this year adopted the concept of "tax expenditures," which, as I understand it, is based upon a line of reasoning similar to that embraced by Mr. Shanker. One hopes that Senator Javits and others will be taking a careful look at these apparent shifts in the operative assumptions in this area of public policy.

Some of the instances cited by John Raines sound like outright fraud and ought to be investigated. I agree with him there is no one-to-one correlation between foundations

and the multiplicity of powers in play. I am not so sure that "family bias" is a bad thing or that it is as determinative as Mr. Raines suggests in the way foundations actually operate. It is widely agreed, I believe, that in both the private and public sectors there is no one-to-one correlation between ownership and control. In any case, Mr. Raines is surely right that the issues touch on basic questions of social and economic policy and deserve more careful attention than they are receiving at present.

Religion & Ecology

To the Editors: I can only hope that Thomas Sieger Derr's approach to religion and ecology ("Religion's Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis," *Worldview*, January) does not indicate that those who profess to link religion with public affairs are adopting a head-in-the-sand approach to potentially significant problems.

Whatever the merits of Derr's basic argument, he does it no service by distorting the evidence he uses. It is conceivable—if unlikely—that Arnold Toynbee simply adopted the argument of a UCLA historian and made it his own. There is no evidence to suggest Toynbee set about "persuading" the *New York Times* to print his piece; it was an abbreviation of a longer article in the British journal *Horizon*. It was identified in the *Times* as such, and it ought to be beneath the dignity of *Worldview* contributors to misrepresent things to that extent. But the larger issue commands our attention.

Those who ponder the relationships among population, food, pollution, and natural resources (energy in particular) have been warning us that the industrial nations cannot continue their policies without threatening the planet itself. Some of the observers have pointed out that Christian doctrines have made their own contribution to the problem. This does not imply that such doctrines are the only source of difficulty; had Derr taken the trouble to read the longer Toynbee article

he would have noticed as much. The observers suggest that if the problem is as serious as it appears to be, we have no choice but to re-examine some of our doctrines as a step toward deciding what we must do.

An immediate question, of course, is whether our concern with the lives of individual human beings is traceable to anything but an *a priori* social assumption that unlimited economic growth is necessary and that individuals are needed as laborers. Admittedly, the pursuit of such a question can lead to an apparent lack of concern about human life, but it is manifestly unfair to launch comprehensive attacks against individuals who raise such questions in the first place.

The same observers remind us that if we permit things to continue as they are, thousands—perhaps millions—will die of starvation; indeed, they are dying now. While a range of feasible alternatives remains to be explored, it is increasingly clear that human disaster can be avoided if we adopt, e.g., a comprehensive approach which distributes the world's resources (food included) on an *absolutely equal basis*, while we go about setting up a longer-range plan for planetary and human survival. To some, of course, such a decision would appear compatible with Christianity, but some Christian thinkers are in the forefront of the resistance. Why?

With some reluctance I conclude that, in the manner typical of all social organizations, Christian organizations are more interested in their separate existence and survival than in facing up to the problem facing all humanity. Journals such as *Worldview* have a great opportunity to join the inexorable social



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transformation already in progress, but they seem more determined to defend the old doctrines at whatever cost. Admittedly, redistribution of the sort mentioned here would require the end of the nation-state system as we now know it, the substitution of some type of collective, or communal, ethic for the individualist one we have advocated, and the termination of elite-mass models of organization.

In this context White may be implying that we can preserve the social systems we have (including religious ones) only by *consciously accepting the responsibility* for mass starvation and death, and he may or may not be advocating such an outcome. If he is, he has nothing in common with me. But, in any case, the questions must be explored. The choice will be increasingly clear, although relatively few see it now; either humanity will survive or a distressingly small number of our existing social systems will survive, with the few individuals in them treated as cogs in the machine.

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Thomas Sieger Derr Responds:

Mr. Thayer is right on one point, that Toynbee's article came originally from *Horizon* (sic, an American magazine)—which means their editors were gullible before the *New York Times*. I slipped up there, and I'm sorry. But the article, even in its longer form, is still a slick tour through a familiar theme, that "extravagant consumption . . . and pollution . . . can be traced back to a religious cause, . . . the rise of monotheism." Toynbee comes very late to the fashionable topic. It is conceivable—if unlikely—that he arrived at his conclusions quite independently of a discussion which had been filling the journals for at least six years. But I wouldn't bet on it. The resemblances between his article and Lynn White's earlier one are startling.

This minor skirmish aside, Mr. Thayer's objection consists mainly of saying that Christians tend to be against anything constructive that would rescue humanity from its plight. He offers no supporting detail, and one can only conjecture about his evidence. He seems more certain than I am that Christian doctrine is properly cast as a villain, but he doesn't say why. His round summary judgment that "Christian organizations are more interested in their separate existence and survival than in facing up to the problem facing all humanity" is silly, if not an outright lie.

I don't understand his own long-range policy (what does his last sentence mean?); but if he means that the population-resource squeeze is going to produce some fundamental social changes, I quite agree. In coping with these changes, however, the problem will be to maintain continuity with the best in our ethical tradition, not to abandon it, lest in our drive to survive "at any cost" we make some very barbarous decisions and create a life scarcely worth having.

Religion & American Power

To the Editors: Unfortunately "The End of a Promise" by Rev. Richard J. Neuhaus (Excursus, *Worldview*, February) fails to give the best picture of the goals and character of *American Report*. It is difficult to know what he refers to by "having cut itself off from those readers who had a nuanced view of American power." Certainly the editors of *American Report* consistently found sincere eyewitness journalists and investigators who told the stories "like it was" in an intelligent and not overworked style that continuously won readership to renew their subscriptions. A 1973 readership survey sample told us that 63 per cent of the readers had subscribed for more than two years.

Furthermore, that readership was not made of "a dwindling audience of refugees from the radicalisms of the sixties" any more than any other national tabloid would include such

types. The same survey revealed that 91 per cent of *American Report's* readers had been to college, 51 per cent of them having attended graduate school; that 30 per cent were professionally employed, 17 per cent educators, and 11 per cent clergy. Thirty-eight per cent described AR as giving information needed for "deciding personal stand on an issue" and 96 per cent chose military spending as the topic of first and second interest to them.

CALC and AR are not to be contrasted or compared, as Neuhaus seems to try. CALC never set the editorial policy for the newspaper, and in that way it has been said that *American Report* was "a gift to the movement." During the years that *American Report* was published many other journals were forced to close.

We like to think of AR as having come in with the Nixon era and going out, after the job of pressuring him to leave office was accomplished—by investigative reporting across the country, of which AR had done its share. Consider, especially, the problem of bringing the religious conscience and its values to bear on issues of foreign policy and the use of American power at home and abroad—these are no merely entertaining goals to pursue.

Readers of *Worldview* who may be interested in pursuing that "definitive history" of the last ten years of the peace movement should note that CALC's and AR's files are periodically deposited in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

CALC, by the way, was not only "perhaps the largest peace organization," but it is also, now, one of the few extant network organizations, with chapters in forty-two cities. With a membership drive planned in the later part of the year, it will continue growing and hopes soon to begin publishing a monthly members' newsletter. Inquiries should be directed to CALC, 235 East 49th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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