

# Correspondence

## Moral Leadership and the Middle East

To the Editors: I can well understand and appreciate the political and economic exigencies that have produced a one-sided rhetoric in which all concessions must come from Israel and that finds Israel being intransigent in the Middle Eastern conflict. It appears that it is in the American interest to pursue a policy of accommodation with Arab oil powers. Nevertheless, one element I think is essential is blatantly absent from such discussions on Israeli policies as those of Mark A. Bruzonsky ("U.S. Israeli Policies: Reading the Signs for '77," *Worldview*, September) and Bruzonsky and Israel Singer ("Dependent Israel: The Two Options," *Worldview*, April). This aspect is morality. Oddly, only Rabin and the Israelis are faulted; America may justifiably pursue a self-interested course of action. But when our friends (and Israel is politically and morally a friend) seek their national security, we quickly lose patience. It is interesting to note that Bruzonsky and Singer find someone such as Rabbi [Henry] Siegman to be courageous in his stand because he joins the many critics of Israel, rather than those who remain steadfast in their belief in the justice of Israel's cause.

It is unfair to reduce the relationships between the Arabs and Israel to an equality of insecurity, hysteria, and mistrust. It is dishonest to "forget" that in Israel's twenty-eight years and four major wars the Arabs either instigated the conflict or openly attacked Israel, as in '48 and '73. To speak of atrocities and belligerence on both sides is tantamount to equating offensive fighting with defense, comparing the bully to the victim.

The Holocaust is not only the central event of modern Jewish history, it is relevant to contemporary civilization. Thus it is a legitimate pivotal point in international thinking. The Israelis are constantly being asked to listen patiently to Arab rhetoric—to "under-

stand" their style of hyperbole and appreciate the Palestinian consciousness. Yet we never demand of the Arabs that they give care to Israel's unique experience and its historic context. Can a legitimate Middle East settlement be based upon such an incongruous intellectual position? How far can appeasement go before we abandon our moral credibility? We have convinced many Israelis and a great number of Americans (Jews included) that Israel's current diplomatic position is unacceptable. They now join the popular parade of those "appreciating the Arab position" on Palestinian rights and territorial demands. We have succeeded in undermining a people whose only real defense against hostile enemies was their spirit of belief in the ultimate justice of their cause and the morality of their existence. Perhaps we are so ruthless with Israel because we, as Americans after Vietnam and Watergate, are no longer so sure of ourselves. The Vietnamese experience has shaken our ability to see others clearly, while Watergate has upset our own moral sensibilities. We are admittedly in a state of confusion. In a very acute observation about American foreign policy Nathan Glazer has pointed out that we are unique in relating American values to our policy decisions.

We can no longer continue to be smug in our demands upon Israel. We must listen to its needs. Concessions are not necessarily the answer; let us remember that concessions failed to appease Hitler, and they will also fail to satisfy the Arabs, who have only one legitimate concern: the effects of another war that may invoke catastrophe by pushing Israel to the limits of its psychological capacity to cope with the nagging specter of Jewish insecurity.

It is apparent that most observers think that Israel must agree to significant political and territorial compromises and concessions. However, even in asserting this, we are aware that these concessions are linked to the realities of power politics and, in effect, constitute what Kissinger has derided as the moral mortgaging of Israel. We must ask, at least ourselves, about the justice, legality, and morality of coercing Israel into concessions that mean, in effect, we are negotiating over the very survival of Israel. Granted that this may eventually become a reality, but we

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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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political affairs. Among the eeriest sections of the present book is the description of the various ways in which Stalin's millions of victims rationalized their misfortune to the glory of the very system that was oppressing them. It is a moving instance of the power of a certain kind of civil religion. Carmichael emphasizes that, despite Khrushchev's admissions at the Twentieth Party Congress, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union has still not admitted nor disowned the purges in the thirties. Indeed, Carmichael argues, the placing of blame for other abuses on a "personality cult" surrounding Stalin rather than on the system itself was a kind of personality cult in reverse. Much of the information is familiar from the writings of Robert Conquest and others, but Carmichael's analysis is attractively succinct and frequently original.

**The Pursuit of Loneliness:  
American Culture at the  
Breaking Point  
(Revised Edition)**  
by Philip Slater  
(Beacon; 205 pp.; \$8.95/\$3.95)

The original version was something of a bible among sundry counterculturalists in the sixties. The updating is much less confident of the revolutionary impact of the counterculture and other celebrations of social discontent—although the counterculture does perdure, we are told, in the form of "the new culture" (cooperative, collectivist) vs. "the old culture" (competitive, individualistic). As before, Slater argues that the more we think we are free the more we are enslaved, that technology has become our master rather than our servant, that money should be the means rather than the end of labor, and related plitudes of the disaffected. A new element is Slater's discovery of the women's movement. He opposes sexual stereotyping, deplors woman's captivity to domesticity, advocates collective rearing of children—and does all this with an impassioned sense of fresh discovery. No doubt the revised edition will be welcomed, as was the original, by adolescents grateful for adult confirmation of their dawning suspicion that all is not right with society and the world.

**Jerome  
by J.N.D. Kelly**  
(Harper & Row; 368 pp.; \$15.00)

**Saint Paul  
by Michael Grant**  
Scribners; 250 pp.; \$14.95)

Two books by noted British scholars of early Christian and Roman history. Kelly's is the first full-scale biography of Jerome, the fourth-century polemicist and producer of the "Vulgate" version of the Bible, in the English language. Through Kelly's scholarly preoccupations comes the strong feeling for an awesomely gifted, although far from winsome, figure of immense importance to world history. The wider significance of Paul, beyond the circle of Christian believers, is also the focus of Grant's study. This is less a biography of Paul than a profile of his thought as it is illuminated by historical background. Grant's hypotheses about Paul's relations to other Jews and to Jewish Christians are sometimes controversial and almost always relevant to contemporary discussions of Jewish-Christian relations. Grant also takes strong issue with "political theologies" that portray the gospels as revolutionary and Paul as passive toward secular authority. He argues that Paul's interpretation of Christianity is culturally and politically "incendiary" and that this has been demonstrated again and again in Christian history.

**The Hundredth Year:  
The United States in 1876**  
by John D. Bergamini  
(Putnam; 402 pp.; \$12.95)

Following the newspaper clippings, the editor gives a page or so to what he considers the chief event of each day of 1876. The result might be mildly interesting to those with only sketchy knowledge of American history.

**Correspondence (from p. 2)**

must not delude ourselves into believing that this is also honest. In pursuing such a course we forfeit our integrity and our historic claim to moral leadership.

Norman Saul Goldman  
Rabbi, Congregation Beth Shalom  
Dover, Del.

Mark Bruzonsky Responds:  
Rabbi Goldman commits two historical sins that so color his perceptions that he fails to recognize the moral-political linkage Israel Singer and I outlined in April ("Dependent Israel: The Two Options"). As for my more recent article ("U.S. and Israel: The Coming Storm"), it is primarily an analysis of political realities—which Rabbi Goldman seems to acknowledge—but not *ipso facto* advocacy of immoral policies, as he charges.

For his first sin Rabbi Goldman seems to believe that only Jewish history is tragic. Comparing tragedies is useless, and besides, the Holocaust does indeed stand by itself. But if the Holocaust, either unconsciously or for self-serving reasons, is now turned into an excuse for moral myopia toward others and for politically motivated Sampson-like threats, then we Jews of today become guilty of a form of sacrifice. Furthermore, I hope Rabbi Goldman will attempt a future-orientation considering the possibility of tragedies even surpassing the Holocaust should we continue to be unable to use reason to dominate passion, intercultural understanding to counter chauvinistic impulses. I hope the Rabbi will ponder the implications of the passage I quote in my Excursus in this issue: "Observers with different opinions on the substance and process of the conflict are coming to agree that nuclearization could happen very suddenly, if indeed it has not already happened." As Secretary Kissinger has indicated, "We do not underestimate the dilemma and risks that Israel faces in a negotiation. But they are dwarfed by a continuation of the status quo."

The Rabbi's second sin is his insistence on comparing Hitler with the Arabs, the Holocaust with contemporary Jewish survival, and American