

was the best among a weak cohort of leadership options, Jacobs shows that there were no real options by the time Diem's handlers worked their magic: such relatively perceptive American critics on the ground in **Saigon** as General **J. Lawton** Collins (a Catholic himself), were ignored or discredited. Jacobs persuasively argues that the American **Friends** of Vietnam (or Vietnam Lobby) – a public relations vehicle serving Diem's interests rather than those of his country – was nearly as effective as its harshest critics later alleged. As he astutely notes, just because the United States was already committed to maintaining a pro-American regime, there was still "a difference between justifying an anticommunist South Vietnam and justifying Diem."

In highlighting the vast gulf between American ideology and Vietnamese reality, Jacobs slightly underplays the mediating role which some American Catholics assumed, poised between hopes for a genuinely Christian democracy in Vietnam and greater cultural authority at home. **This** is an argument I tried to make in a biography of Dr. Tom Dooley, a figure that receives a fresh and insightful treatment from Jacobs. *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam* is the one book that I wish had existed when I was conducting my own research! Now that it is here, historians of the Vietnam War era and postwar American religion will find their work greatly enriched by this provocative, wonderfully well-written book.

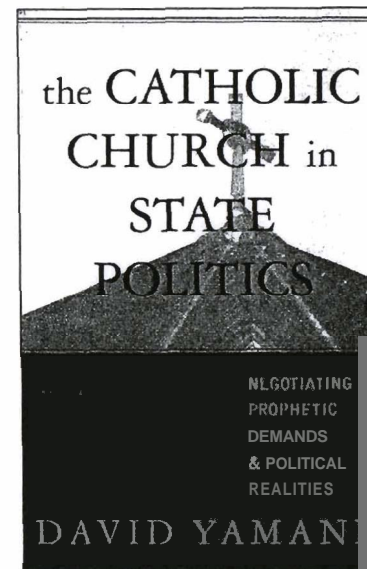
JAMES FISHER  
Fordham University

*The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands and Political Realities.* By David Yamane. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. 208 pp. \$24.95.

Until the early twentieth century, the Catholic bishops in the United States expressed their collegiality through occasional councils and meetings. In 1917 the bishops for the **first** time came together in the formal organization that eventually mutated into today's United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, whose **efforts** and accomplishments at the national level are widely known and variously judged. *The Catholic Church in State Politics* demonstrates that the national level is today only the more visible of the collegial functioning of the bishops in the United States. David Yamane has provided a much-needed and fascinating study of the emergence and operation since the 1960s of Catholic conferences at the state level. Thirty-five

such conferences are in operation today; in **2002** the average conference budget exceeded **\$400,000**.

The book begins with a history of the conferences; it then explicates the **internal** structures of the conferences; next it studies the strengths of the conferences and assesses the challenges they **face** in making Catholic perspectives heard in state law-making. As Yamane makes plain, the principal function of these conferences is not to teach Catholics; it is to influence public policy and law state by state. In the concluding chapters, Yamane analyzes the conferences' place within the overall life of the church in the modern, secularized world. The book is a cautious celebration of the state conferences' efforts to help see a "seamless garment of life" ethic be given legal effect.



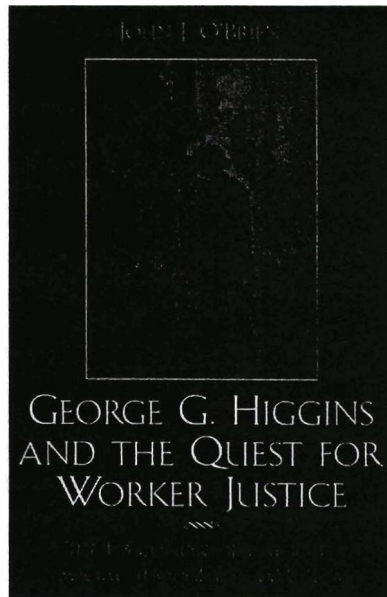
The book is well-written, thoroughly **documented**, and, in its consideration of questions of **ecclesiology** and of liberal political **theory**, both **insightful** and provocative. There can be no doubt but that David Yamane has done a great service by providing a rich empirical account of the work of the church at the level of state politics. Readers will vary in their assessment of the appropriateness of the work Yamane describes and admires, but this is a book to be read by anyone with an interest in how the Catholic Church in the United States clothes the public square at the state level, where many of the hot-button issues arise and receive resolution that is frequently **final**.

**Yamane's** use of the work of such scholars as Richard John Neuhaus, Michael Perry, Steven Smith, and Paul Weithman, on the place of religion in the American public square, is deft and apt.

Of particular future interest is the fact that, **as** Yamane demonstrates, the typical conference is headed by a board whose voting members are the bishops of the state; the trend over the last quarter-century has been **away** from lay membership on the boards. Under the direction of its board, each conference employs the services of lay people trained or experienced in legislative practice, law, or other disciplines. Their practical expertise has led to influence that

unassisted successors to the apostles could not reasonably hope for. Yamane stresses that the conferences' work carries the "authority" of the (local) church in virtue of their largely episcopal-governed boards. Writing in 2004, Yamane was optimistic about the future of the conferences; he also noted (157) the reservations of then-Cardinal Ratzinger to institutional interpositions between local bishops and the Church universal.

PATRICK MCKINLEY BRENNAN  
Villanova University School of Law



*George G. Higgins and the Quest for Worker Justice: The Evolution of Catholic Social Thought in America.* By John J. O'Brien. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005. \$32.95.

Advancing the church's call to social justice primarily through his work at the National Catholic Welfare Conference (later, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) and his regular column, "The Yardstick," Monsignor George G. Higgins became a model of Christian witness for liberal Catholics during the second half of the twentieth century. John O'Brien has provided a fine intellectual biography of Higgins, treating his writings on the work of the church in the modern world and human obligations to one another. The guiding theme in this book is Higgins' role in advancing the fortunes of "public theology"—that is, a theology which is authentically Catholic, but capable of addressing the concerns of a religiously, racially, and economically diverse democracy.

Many know of Higgins' work in advocating worker justice, but O'Brien uncovers a broader range of Higgins' interests and the connection between them. Far from being a narrow advocate concerned only with the United States labor movement, Higgins helped to forge sustained relations between Catholics and Jews in the

post-World War II era. Similarly, in the 1960s he emerged as a leading advocate for &can-American and Latino civil rights, and later he would be among the United States' delegates at the launching of the Solidarity movement in 1980s Poland. O'Brien shows that the guiding principle in his participation in each of these things was Higgins' assertion of the fundamental dignity of the human person, a principle that would receive increasingly vocal and complex articulation from both the church hierarchy and Higgins throughout the post-1946 decades.

Higgins' participation in major events in church history after 1946 is noteworthy. Serving as a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council, Higgins predictably left with a redoubled commitment to making the relationship between church and world more dynamic and fruitful. Similarly, as a participant in the 1971 Roman synod on "Justice in the World," Higgins recognized himself as part of a powerful, international reform movement which steered the church away from its nineteenth-century isolationist tendencies and toward its current engagement with modernity: Here, we can see Higgins in context, both producing and reacting to this massive reorientation in the late twentieth century.

No less significant was Higgins' participation in recent American history. In addition to advancing civil rights and ecumenism during the 1960s and 1970s Higgins served as a constant advisor to and publicity agent for Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers union. In the early 1980s, he would be among the central expositors on Economic Justice for All, perhaps the most significant formal treatise on economic development, interdependence, and responsibility in modern American history. Alongside John Kenneth Galbraith, Jesse Jackson, and George McGovern, President Bill Clinton conferred on Higgins the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2000.

O'Brien provides an appendix chronicling fifty years of Yardstick columns and a complete Higgins' bibliography. This will be valuable for anyone interested in the history of the church's public presence after 1945.

JAMES P. McCARTIN  
Seton Hall University