

the stratosphere of general principles and help Christians make their way on the streets of daily decision. And the way the Christian Church works at these specifics is in community, not as moral Lone Rangers. The more specific such corporate judgments are, the more risk of error and the more chance of disagreement among constituents. But a faithful Church has to risk that specificity and controversy or become irrelevant. It does so with modesty about its pronouncements, knowing its own fallibility, and also its own sin. . . .

In executing this task as a community, or in personal decision-making, solid familiarity with the circumstances is crucial. The best methods of gathering and sifting data therefore become important parts of Christian decision-making. In a complex society, the resources of sociology, psychology, political science, and more recently as we approach the awesome question of the control of human life, physics and

molecular biology, are fundamental partners in making responsible social ethical decisions.

At the center of the data-gathering task is the positioning of the decider himself. Crucial choices about the issues of war and peace, black and white, rich and poor, cannot be made from twenty rows up in the grandstand. We get the lay of the land by walking on it. Alexander Miller in describing where the best theology is carried on once said, "The safest place for the theologian is in the midst of the social struggle." The same thing is true about any Christian who wants to find his way in the knotty moral problems of modern society. Christian decision-making takes place in the setting of involvement. Our teacher will be Christ himself who is found where the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, and the prisoner visited (Matt. 25:31-46). The fundamental context for Christian social action, therefore, in the words of Bonhoeffer, is "to participate in the suffering of God in the world."

correspondence

"IN DEFENSE OF DEFENSE"

Lookout Mountain, Tenn.

Dear Sir:

"For the first time in history, Man has the power of veto over the evolution of his own species through a nuclear holocaust. The overkill is enough to wipe out every man, woman, and child on earth, together with our fellow lodgers, the animals, the birds and the insects, and to reduce our planet to a radioactive wilderness."

Thus Lord Ritchie-Calder in the lead article of the January, 1970 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, in discussing the need for early action to save earth from man and his numerous pollutants.

In advocating the A.B.M. defense system, Robert A. Gessert states in the November, 1969 issue of *Worldview*:

"... we have completed acquiring the strategic nuclear forces conceived to be adequate. At present these are designed to ensure that we could absorb a Soviet attack and still have sufficient remaining weapons—from our Minuteman forces, from our Polaris/Poseidon submarine-launch forces, and from our B-52

manned bomber forces—to deal a retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union."

The difference in emphasis and concept between the foregoing statements is such that on the surface it is difficult to conceive that the writers are talking about the same thing. The statements are not irreconcilable, however, as the difference between them arises primarily from differences in basic assumptions.

Discussion of nuclear exchanges by the military and its supporters is nowadays based on studies of destruction made under Secretary McNamara which stately excluded from the calculation the destruction which would be caused by firestorms and by fallout and by other long-range effects. Theoretically, this exclusion was necessary since there were available no studies which disclosed the exact, or even approximate, number of deaths from these phases of the nuclear blast.

The statement by Lord Ritchie-Calder obviously takes these phases into consideration, apparently on the assumption that as the destruction of animal life would be total, the exact or even approximate number of deaths is of only academic importance. The military and its supporters obviously cannot reason from this basis and must continue to becloud the issue by pretending that a fraction of only the immediate deaths resulting from certain selected phases of a massive nuclear strike is the total number of deaths which would occur. Otherwise, far more people would become alerted to the overriding need for this nuclear madness which stalks the earth to be ended once and for all.

Kurt W. Krause

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