

LETTERS

The three articles appearing in SPECTRUM under the heading "The Christian and War" are provocative and timely. Our church has wisely been flexible on this issue, recognizing its complexity and the need to respect the conscientious scruples of church members in this vital area.

The "just war" theory, which dates back to antiquity, is attracting much interest at present. At the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in joint session with the American Society of Church History last December, one entire session was devoted to the just war issue. Participating were Professor R. H. Bainton and other authorities on this subject.

77

The complexities of modern life and the hidden intricacies of foreign relations are such as to preclude an intelligent evaluation of twentieth century wars, declared or undeclared, on the basis of their being just or unjust. Such an evaluation would require among other things the acceptance or rejection of certain assumptions: for example, the domino theory of communist aggression in Southeast Asia, and the ultimate threat this poses to the security and wellbeing of the United States. Loyal and informed public servants have differed on this question.

The ethicists' six criteria of a just war listed in the article on selective nonpacifism appear to be unrealistic if not naive. They seem to ignore the fact that war brutalizes the belligerents and society in general. Propaganda seeks to make men hate, passions are aroused, bloodthirsty sermons are preached in the name of the gentle Christ. In the last two wars, "Made in Germany" was invariably stamped on the bottom side of hell. To say that a war should "be conducted in an attitude of Christian love" is to ignore all that history has taught us about the base spirit in which wars have been carried on. Violence and hatred are indeed the essence of war.

Rather than agitate as a church, as has been suggested, for a law that would provide for conscientious objection to particular unjust wars, might we not be better advised to speak out as a church, and as individual Christians, more forthrightly than we have against the horrors and futility of war? Obviously, as a well-intentioned nation we could not unilaterally renounce war as an instrument of national policy, given the kind of world in which we find ourselves. This would be naive also. But in this antiwar role the church would be recapturing its early courageous stance, a stance predominant in the church until the time of Constantine. This would be in keeping with the chief objective of the church, which is to mediate the love of God to all men everywhere.

As long as war is an accepted instrument of national policy, a nation caught in its fearsome toils, whether the war be just or unjust, tends to curtail the democratic processes and humanitarian advances and impinge on the freedoms and rights of its citizens.

GODFREY T. ANDERSON
Loma Linda, California

Three cheers for SPECTRUM. Content, format, and typography are excellent. I especially enjoyed Alvin Kwiram's prologue, G. T. Anderson's clear-sighted observations, and the editor's epilogue. They ring the bell. Perhaps SPECTRUM will be able to supply a notable lack in our present modus operandi, a forum in which different points of view on significant problems can be expressed in a responsible tone of voice. To be sure, some have attempted this, but all too often with an undertone that neutralizes whatever good might otherwise be accomplished. Two writers in the first issue take issue with current church policy on certain points, but they do so constructively and with dignity. They are obviously concerned with what is right, not who is right.

RAYMOND F. COTTRELL
Washington, D. C.

78

I am extremely pleased with the contents and format of this quarterly. Thank you for a breath of fresh air.

FRANK W. HALE, JR.
Huntsville, Alabama

I heartily endorse SPECTRUM in its initial appearance. In format, content, and quality it is most pleasing. Alvin Kwiram's introduction sets the stage for a continuum in breadth and depth. In "The Christian Scholar and the Church" G. T. Anderson provides the "magna charta" for academicians who would like to make their contribution within the church organizational structure. It is gratifying to note his observation that *dialogue* "is still a respectable and useful word." Every reader will find much in this new journal to stimulate thought and action, not the least of which is communication through well selected art forms.

WM. FREDERICK NORWOOD
Glendale, California

I like the journal's style. Its contents are exhilarating and stimulating. In my opinion the writers stayed on a high plane in discussing issues. We may not agree with all of the opinions expressed, but that makes for healthy discussion.

REINHOLD R. BIETZ
Glendale, California

Both its quiet sophistication and challenging content are a real credit to the Forum.

FRED H. OSBOURN
Loma Linda, California