

relationship between critical and "speculative" philosophy is dynamic-reciprocal.

Here at our own small undergraduate program in philosophy [at Alderson-Broaddus College], we proceed on the following view of its nature and task: Philosophy is the identification of, and analysis of assumptions—these assumptions may involve one's personal frame of reference, or the corporate frames of reference of significant human enterprises such as education, science, history, politics, religion, public policy. Analysis includes "honing logical tools," study of terms, the nature of meaning, etc. to be sure.

Murchland appears to be defending this kind of inclusiveness within the discipline of Philosophy. It is a needed and important perspective.

Dan R. Unger

of political processes and the conditions requisite for humane political life. They know no firm criteria in terms of which to guide or judge foreign policy. They have in large degree given up the Biblical assumptions about the nature and condition of man and the political wisdom of the historic church (including "just war" doctrine) in favor of the optimistic, individualist, rationalist (and therefore anti-political) stance of modern secular culture.

The churches failed to build on the foundations of Christian realism laid by Reinhold Niebuhr and a few of his successors in theological ethics. Can they now lead the nation in appropriating a deep and decisive lesson from the Vietnam experience, and begin to reconstruct an authentically Christian understanding of and ethic for politics?

Harry R. Davis

MORE ON "THE CHURCH AS ACCOMPLICE"

Beloit, Wis.

Dear Sir: Gordon Zahn's indictment of "the church as accomplice" to "atrocities and war crimes" in Vietnam (*worldview*, March, 1971) strikes me as both overstating and understating the case.

On the *overstating* side, for example, "war crime" is a legal concept (though a dubious one) on which the church should not rely too heavily, at least until legal processes have run their course. The Calley verdict indicates that Mr. Zahn exaggerates the deficiencies of military courts. It is surely not as obvious as Mr. Zahn assumes that "atrocities" have been a pervasive pattern on the American side in the war, consequent on official policy. He does not take account of the complexities of applying the principles of noncombatant immunity to the conditions of insurgent warfare. He would have done better to base his case on our mass bombing strategy rather than on My Lai.

More importantly, Mr. Zahn *understates* the issue by focusing narrowly on the treatment of noncombatants. If we are to indict the churches for failure to function as prophetic keeper of the nation's conscience in relation to Vietnam, must we not frame the question more broadly, and analyze more deeply? Ought not the churches have been asking themselves and the nation, both before and during the fact, whether the war itself is a necessary and justified one—applying to the case *all* the "just war" criteria? Instead the churches, like the rest of the nation, at first tacitly accepted the war, and more lately have tended to condemn it on confused and essentially emotional grounds.

In deeper historical and theological perspective, the churches were in no position to think and act adequately about Vietnam because they have no basic ethic for politics. They possess little realistic insight into the nature



in the magazines . . .

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that presumably distinguish intellectuals—are usually in short supply in government bureaucracies. Yet these are the very qualities that (presumably) enable intellectuals to acquire and use specialized data. Thus the old argument that only government initiates can devise foreign policy because only they have access to the data on which it must be based—that argument is progressively weakened as the number and sophistication of private sources increase and government information is made available by law to students of public affairs. Curiously, it is often populist critics who invoke the elitist idea that intellectuals should defer to more knowledgeable bureaucrats."

PAMPHILUS