

the speech. The "evidence" admittedly is hearsay.

On the specific issue of King's charge that "so far we may have killed a million of them [Vietnamese—probably South Vietnamese, although the antecedent of "them" is ambiguous; but it could not be interpreted from the text to refer to Southeast Asians as Mr. Neuhaus now implies], Mr. Neuhaus disavows Dr. Lefever's ascription to him of the words "We in the Movement make up facts" to suit our needs." The words Mr. Neuhaus used, as I remember them, were essentially as Dr. Lefever has quoted him; but they struck me as words of impatience calculated to dismiss what must have sounded to Mr. Neuhaus like a trivial concern for evidence or authentication. Then, as now, Mr. Neuhaus evidently believes that the subject requires no further examination. . . .

Mr. Neuhaus' defense of Dr. King's rhetoric and figures looks very much like Charles R. Garry's posture in defending the charge that 28 Black Panthers have been murdered by the police. Mr. Garry knows in his heart of hearts that this is a conservative figure just as Mr. Neuhaus knows about Vietnam. Mr. Garry called Edward Jay Epstein a "white racist" on the David Frost Show for daring to ask for the sober, supporting evidence. Mr. Neuhaus believes that Dr. Lefever occupies a position on the "extreme Right" because he has challenged, like Mr. Epstein in the other context, a "reckless" use of data, half truth, and pretension to factual accuracy in behalf of a deeply held conviction. Mr. Garry and Mr. Neuhaus are passionate advocates and preachers; rhetoric is their stock in trade. It is generally not permissible to talk back to them, and to do so is to invite *ad hominem* response.

Professor Smylie's response to Dr. Lefever is more unexpected and therefore all the more disappointing. There can be no doubt that Professor Smylie, like Mr. Neuhaus, holds a different perspective on recent foreign policy from Dr. Lefever. But Professor Smylie is an historian, analyst, and teacher more familiar with the arts of the library and the classroom than of the courtroom or the street demonstration.

Two shocking assertions are contained in Professor Smylie's letter. The first and dominant one is that Dr. Lefever is guilty of "Joe McCarthyism," which, according to Professor Smylie, consists of charging that opponents or critics "have been: (1) duped, (2) used, (3) have given aid and comfort to the enemy, (4) and are therefore in danger of treason" . . . and that their case (5) "cannot stand on its own merit" and (6) makes them "guilty by association." . . . That McCarthy was guilty of this kind of reckless rhetoric is obvious, but his basic abuse was the abuse of procedure and of power not merely of language. To charge Dr. Lefever with "Joe McCarthyism" is not only to commit a contemporaneous abuse of language (or "betrayal" as Paul Ramsey might say) and an unconscionable insult to Dr. Lefever for challenging currently fashionable discourse, it is to commit a deeper historical insult and abuse of memory by forgetting that McCarthy's threat lay in his recklessness with procedure and with power.

In his second shocking assertion, Professor Smylie underscores how much we may have forgotten not only about Joseph McCarthy and the way he embodied a danger to our traditions and institutions, but about the character of those traditions and institutions. This is his assertion that "the burden of proof against charges made in *In the Name of America* rests upon those who have involved us so deeply in Southeast Asia." Certainly, for individuals, Professor Smylie would not endorse such a principle of "guilty until proven innocent" . . .

The divisions we have recently experienced in our body politic and in our foreign policy consensus *will not* be overcome easily or quickly, as Dr. Lefever's, Mr. Neuhaus', and Professor Smylie's differences amply demonstrate. Possibly they *should not*, since the divisions have been deep and fundamental. They *cannot* be overcome unless we all put passion in the service of truth and subordinate to due process in our public policy formulation. This was the essence of Dr. Lefever's plea.

Robert A. Cessert

"THE BETRAYAL OF LANGUAGE"

Palos Park, Ill.

Dear Sir: Thank you for Paul Ramsey's lesson in semantics ("The Betrayal of Language," *worldview*, February). It is helpful to learn that the terms "mercenary" and "systemic violence" are "category-mistakes" (one wouldn't want to make that sort of mistake in relation to Vietnam). I suppose "the obfuscations of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee" is a phrase used with categorical precision since it is the author's. I wonder if he would regard "Vietnamization" as a category-mistake? It was also enlightening to learn that it is reckless "rhetoric" to link the Vietnam war to domestic issues. The complicated argument advanced for the requirement that they be separated amounts to little more than a preference on Ramsey's part.

However, Paul Ramsey is not a semanticist; he is a moralist. The most interesting sentence in the whole article is this one: "Perhaps the Vietnam war was wrong from the beginning, and became a disproportionate commitment at 'X' point in time." I can recall Ramsey defending the Johnson decision to bomb North Vietnam with arguments about proportionality at a CRIA seminar in 1966. Does he still see it as a just war? Did it become disproportionate at some "X" point in time? If so, what should the Christian's response be? These questions are worth discussing if Ramsey will discuss them.

In the current issue of *Christianity and Crisis*, Howard Moody calls Paul Ramsey an "armchair analyst" (in relation to another problem). I must say this disappointing excursion into the niceties of Vietnam debate seems to support Moody's judgment. Rev. Keith A. Leach

Pittsburgh, Pa.

Dear Sir: In an article in the October, 1969 *worldview* ("Human Rights and the Peace Movement"), I remarked that we had "turned a dangerous corner" when Martin Luther King established the linkage in his mind between

domestic problems and the Vietnam war. Somewhat earlier, Paul Ramsey and I disagreed in these pages on an article I did in June, 1967, on "civilian casualties," at a time when I had to use the name "Jack Walker." The arguments now echoing in *worldview* make me feel as though I am hearing the same things over and over, but they are being shouted instead of spoken. A notable exception is Paul Ramsey, and many of those involved should read again and again his calm words in the February *worldview*. That does not mean I agree with everything he says.

A prime difference between us remains Ramsey's continued search for and near-advocacy of the use of "more discriminating weapons," otherwise unidentified, a phrase which makes me wonder if he is espousing "mini-nukes." Neither Ernest Lefever nor his critics [See "Correspondence," Jan., Feb., Mar.] have faced squarely the same question of civilian casualties in a truly forthright way. Let me argue again that wars in the world we know are not now and are not going to be "discriminating" in terms of who gets killed. If one wants to avoid killing substantial numbers of "civilians," he has no choice but to avoid war itself. It is nonsensical to quarrel about the number killed in Vietnam while we continue to imply that this war is somehow different in that regard. If we are going to address the question of noncombatants, we shall have to include our so-called "moral" wars as well, e.g., World War II. For so long as Ramsey pursues his will o' the wisp, for that long will he fall into the trap of supporting a larger defense budget than is really needed. Thus, while Lefever's critics would cut the defense budget *too much*, Ramsey might not cut it at all—and that can be just as dangerous. As I also argued in these pages, some types of military force can make small wars seem quite appealing and exciting. I fear that Ramsey comes perilously close to arguing the old anti-Eisenhower case of 1960, a case that won an election and kept employed the generals who had metinied against Ike, but a case without merit.

Similarly, Ramsey is much too curt in his dismissal of Dean Rusk. It will be clear one day, I think, that Rusk was not one of the casual adventurers who were so confident about "cheap" wars in the early '60's. We might all recall that it was "McNamara's War" until ultra-liberals decided to withdraw their support of it and blame it all on Johnson and Rusk. I can only recommend that Ramsey make an attempt to follow John Roche's writing whenever it is available. In the meantime, I cannot join in Ramsey's expression of regret that Senator Fulbright did not get to manage the State Department.

Overall, however, these are minor disagreements; Ramsey's voice should be heard again and again, because he *thinks*. As for Lefever's critics, it is almost laughable to watch them call up witnesses to testify in their behalf, e.g., Richard Falk and Telford Taylor. The critics, especially Richard Neuhaus, miss completely the central point to be gained from Taylor's book. The question remains the legitimacy of our post-World War II definitions of "war crimes," *not* whether all U.S. leaders

should be tried now. As for me, I can feel sympathy for any civilians living in a country that Neuhaus and James Smylie, for example, might one day view as a legitimate enemy; now that *really* is the type of moralistic fervor that leads to excessive civilian casualties!

Frederick C. Thayer

The Author Replies

I am sorry I offended the Rev. Keith A. Leach by seeming to read him a "lesson." Still, "semantics" or a discussion of how we use and should use terms is always in order, and urgently needed. "I suggest that we keep our eyes and minds on language as we would on our sanity," wrote Norman Rosten (*New York Times*, Op. Ed. page, March 29, 1971). "We have only a handful of crucial words standing between light and the darkness. To blur the meaning of even one is to hasten the darkness."

I take Leach's reference to me as an "armchair analyst" to be a compliment. Otherwise, I would have to believe he is peddling what for him is a demeaning characterization, and an impertinent, gratuitous one at that—since the Rev. Howard Moody, in the article in which he wrote that, nowhere takes up for refutation any of the lines of moral reasoning I have put forward on the issue he was discussing (running around the city, I suppose).

I shall not allow myself to be drawn into a substantive discussion of the Vietnam war, since my article was about *how* that war and any other foreign policy issue ought to be discussed (with considerable independence of domestic questions). The statement "Perhaps the Vietnam war was wrong . . . or became disproportionate . . ." was subjective, like a sentence in the next paragraph: "There may or may not be vital interests of our nation at stake in Southeast Asia." These sentences flank the thesis I was upholding, namely, that in debating these questions no one should ever say that national security is most challenged by a failure to solve his favorite domestic problem. That changes the subject under discussion, and it does so *by a misuse of language*.

Of course it is true, as Thayer argues, that "if one wants to avoid killing substantial numbers of 'civilians,' he has no choice but to avoid war itself." Even so, if war is still the lesser of the two evils of warring or not warring, he can avoid killing civilians needlessly directly, intentionally. Far from being a "will o' the wisp," that distinction takes the measure of how sick unto death this nation is, in that hawks and doves both agree with Lt. Calley that there is no just line to be drawn between good and bad killings in war (or in *this* war). This distinction is not a "nicety," but one on which civilization and civilized discourse very much depend.

Both Thayer and Leach take too seriously my concluding reference to Fulbright, Rusk and the "obfuscations" coming from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I meant not to defend those judgments, anyway not in that article. In this screaming, humorless age, cannot one end a piece with an attempt at a twist of irony?

I thank Frederick C. Thayer, alias "Jack Walker," alias "Black Label," for his comment. . . . Paul Ramsey