

singled out for lavish praise and honor by the Church which had abandoned them to their fate. It is almost as though by so doing the institutional church could free itself from the taint of its acquiescent conformity and lay claim to a kind of innocence by association. Amery has a word to say on this score, too.

... we may certainly thank God for the strength of the confessors, who came forward in spite of everything; we may thank him, too, for the shining example of the few; thank him for those martyrs who found their lonely way to the sacrifice of their lives out of the undergrowth of tactics and reservations, of complex feelings of loyalty and oblique front-positions. But *we have nothing to be proud of—not we!*

Or, even more to the point being stressed here, "If the Catholic heroes—to whom so much importance is attached today—were prophets, then they were *prophets against the milieu of their own church no less than against the superior power of the heathen.*"

Americans, and especially American Catholics, should be troubled by this thought. Here too and now we can say that the Church is speaking, but once again its voice is that of the "unofficial" minority which has chosen to disregard the seductions and reject the threats and demands of the American milieu. Not in the words of Cardinal Spellman or Archbishops Lucey or Hannan, but in the acts of the much-maligned draft card burner or the "peacenik" on the picketline might some future writer find the proper witness of the

American Church. Even so disturbing a "word" as Roger LaPorte's self-immolation by fire (laying down his life, as it were, for some unknown friend in Vietnam who might perish in the fire loosed upon the earth by some American Catholic pilot carrying forth his "nation's historic mission to liberty") may have earned greater merit in some eternal reckoning than all the carefully non-committal utterances of the American hierarchy taken together. One questions whether even they are impressed by what they say. Certainly none of them took their November statement seriously enough to testify before Congress on behalf of a draft-law revision which would have protected the rights of the "just war" or, if you will, "selective" conscientious objector, who just might have come to that position by following the recommendations included in that statement. Could this, too, we must ask, be evidence of capitulation to the milieu?

I think it is, and that is why I feel it is essential that the Amery book be read widely and taken seriously. When the day comes (as it almost certainly must) for someone to describe and analyze Catholicism's failure to give adequate witness in "the world as it is" for Americans in these 1960's, let us hope he will do so with the same combination of intellectual honesty and truly pious concern Amery has brought to his analysis of German Catholicism's "capitulation" to the "world as it was" under National Socialism.

correspondence

MORE ON THE "NUCLEAR OBSESSION"

Berkeley, Calif.
Dear Sir: I have only recently started reading *worldview* and was fascinated to read the last article in the series of five by Jack Walker on "The 'Stately Minuet' of the A.B.M. Debate" (April). After explaining the position taken by various civilian and military leaders with some brief reasonings backing these positions, he arbitrarily states that he "... rejects the idea that thermonuclear weapons have become 'ultimate,' i.e.,

that it will *never* be possible to devise an effective defense against them. And the neutralization of ICBM's, moreover, ought to be an attractive objective. Yet the nuclear obsession seems to have imbued too many otherwise discerning individuals with an unreasoning fear of the unknown."

Unfortunately, he has set up a straw man to knock down. Secretary McNamara has only said he counsels against setting up an A.B.M. system now because it

is known *not* to be effective. Whereas the military, and apparently Mr. Walker, are in favor of going forward immediately with current proposals and are trying to convince us that we will be safe and sound behind this leaky sieve masquerading as a shield.

The Secretary of Defense's view is (as quoted in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, April, 1967, p. 47): "The Soviets have it within their technical and economic capacity to offset any further damage limiting measures we might undertake, provided they are determined to maintain their deterrent against us. It is the virtual certainty that the Soviets will act to maintain their deterrent which casts such grave doubts on the advisability of our deploying the Nike X system for the protection of our cities against the kind of heavy, sophisticated missile attack they could launch in the 1970s. In all probability, all we would accomplish would be to increase greatly both their defense expenditures and ours without any gain in real security to either side. . . . I believe that, once started, an A.B.M. system deployed with the objective of protecting the United States against the Soviet Union would require an expenditure on the order of \$40 billion over a ten year period."

The following exchange took place between Congressman Minshall (Rep., Ohio) and Secretary McNamara before the House Appropriations Committee during the recent Defense Budget hearings:

Mr. Minshall: I think the result of the whole colloquy is neither the Soviet Union nor the United States would survive as a nation in an all-out nuclear attack.

Secretary McNamara: I think that is a fair conclusion.

Mr. Minshall: If we had a reasonably sophisticated A.B.M. system in effect as would the Soviet Union, would that change the picture in any way to survive as a nation? . . .

Secretary McNamara: Not if they maintained, as we think they would, their deterrent power.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff can only say in answer that "nobody can say at what point of nuclear destruction a nation is no longer a viable society."

My view is that the best interests of the United States would be served by pouring on our best diplomatic strength in an effort to negotiate an agreement with the Soviet Union to limit both offensive and defensive strategic weapons systems.

I should also like to point out that a change of position by some scientists from backing defensive measures in one decade to being sceptical of defensive measures in the next decade may just reflect the

fact that in the earlier decade one was protecting against slow moving vehicles (airplanes at 400 miles per hour), whereas in the present decade against rather fast moving vehicles (rockets at 15,000 miles per hour). This may pose a significantly different problem!

Robert W. Birge

The Author Replies:

New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir: I suppose the disagreement between Mr. Birge and me turns on the definition of "effectiveness." Indeed, the entire public dialogue on the problem has been much confused for the same reason. Secretary McNamara did *not* say that an A.B.M. system would be ineffective, in the normal sense of the word. What he said was that it would be ineffective because the Soviets would build up their offensive forces to the degree required to overcome it. The problem simply cannot be understood, then, if one uses phrases such as "leaky sieve." One has to decide whether to accept or reject Secretary McNamara's key assumption, i.e., that the Soviets would do precisely what he expects them to do. Since I wrote my brief piece on the subject, the evidence has increased that the Administration will decide in favor of the so-called "thin" A.B.M. system, sufficient to defend against the projected Chinese nuclear threat of the mid-1970's. In other words, an "effective" defense is possible.

What I must object to, however, are the assumptions Mr. Birge seems to have made about *my* position. I am *not* arguing that an A.B.M. system would make us "safe and sound," and I am *not* arguing against meaningful arms control agreements. All I am trying to say is that if an A.B.M. system would assist in deterring an attack, or if it would save some lives in the event deterrence failed, then the money needed to construct the system would have been well spent. And I am trying to suggest that the *most unlikely* arms control agreement is one that would prevent countries from constructing *purely defensive* weapons.

I am not going to try to compare quotations in detail, as between the statements of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs. Both are readily available, and anyone interested in the problem should read both. Anyone who does so will, I think, conclude that Mr. Birge has taken out of context a brief phrase from the Joint Chiefs' statement. Further, it should be noted that Secretary McNamara's use of the word "we" does not include *any* of his military advisors.

Jack Walker

July-August 1967 13