

“Misplaced Morality”

Chicago, Illinois

Sir: I am writing to express my reaction to Volume 1, No. 1 of *Worldview*. There were a good many good things in the old *World Alliance News Letter*, but now and then an article or editorial left me disturbed. I must say that the first issue of *Worldview* disturbs me considerably.

To a large extent my uneasiness derives from what seems to me to be an impossible mixture of ethical considerations and political considerations in the magazine. It is not that I doubt that there is some workable combination of ethics and politics, but rather that the particular combinations made by your writers strike me as bad ones. Your writers are not uncritical of American foreign policy in many of its details, but they seem to be so basically committed to the use of force, and to the policy of maintaining a preponderant force, that their arguments about ethics are all conditioned by these basic commitments.

An example of this is the article by William Lee Miller, entitled “Misplaced Morality.” Mr. Miller seems to argue that there are whole areas of foreign policy in which it is not appropriate to raise ethical questions. So he says, “The right thing in politics is rarely done by the man who tries intentionally to do ‘right.’”

While I would grant that there is something to his argument that Americans are too likely to expect things to be absolutely right, or absolutely wrong, yet the whole article is such a piece of sophistry that I get the impression that Mr. Miller could make the worse appear the better no matter what was the worse. In the end he seems to think he has made an ethical case for the “limited war” position of Kissinger, and indicates in his opinion that the real ethical test of the present will only be passed by those who will go along with the “unresolved contest, perhaps including sometimes limited military contests with the Communist world.” In other words, he appears to argue that the ethical man will work for little wars and avoid the big wars.

Of course, Mr. Miller is not one of *Worldview's* editors, but it seems to me that he has expressed that tone in the magazine which makes me uneasy.

Then you print Will Herberg's long review of Ernest W. Lefever's *Ethics and United States Foreign Policy*, in which Mr. Herberg says that “religious leaders, especially in America, are particularly prone to a delusive idealism.” He goes on to claim “that the best of our statesmen have shown a deeper understanding of the actual relation of ethics and

religion to politics than have most of the official spokesmen of religion.” Finally, he says, “It is this creative combination of religious insight and political realism that is the best resource in the present hour.” This may be a valid reflection of your editorial policy, and you may be right. But I would feel better about *Worldview* if at least one of its editors was a religious pacifist and was allowed to apply his own insight to some of the tortured arguments for “realism” that run through the magazine. And would not this be a fairer policy for The Church Peace Union, the magazine's publisher?

Basically, my objection to *Worldview* is that it seems prepared to espouse only one special theory of the relation between ethics and world affairs.

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Sir: I subscribed to *Worldview* in the hope of finding a fresh approach to international affairs, particularly from a religious point of view. To say that I am disappointed is an understatement.

In your January issue, William Lee Miller begins his article on “Misplaced Morality” with a superior dismissal of the priest who spoke on the concept of “a just war.” But Mr. Miller ends his article with a suggestion that we may have to follow Kissinger's concept of “limited war” with Russia. Limited to whom?—to the soldiers who fight and not to non-combatants, women and children? . . . Is it “moralism” to protest brutality and to question whether it is worth doing to “save America” from Communism? Mr. Miller writes of “drawing many lines” but gives no concrete suggestions. I think that for an ethical approach I shall have to depend on those whom too many present day theologians deprecatingly refer to as “secular” thinkers—on the “atheist” Bertrand Russell and the “humanist” Walter Lippmann . . .

Again, is it “realism” for Will Herberg, in his review of *Ethics and U. S. Foreign Policy*, to use the Dulles cliché of “the free world that is confronted . . . with a totalitarian enemy,” etc., without any analysis of the constituents of the two groups? “The free world”—including Spain and Franco, France and Algeria, the Turkish dictatorship, King Saud, etc.? “The totalitarian enemy” without any breakdown of its constituents—all the people of Russia and China lumped together as “enemies”? Is this to be *Worldview's* “ethical” approach . . . ?

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