

PEACEMAKING AND THE CHRISTIAN

Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: If politics is the "art of the possible," as a number of articles in *worldview* have argued, an intriguing area of potential disagreement exists for the modern Christian between varying visions of "what *really* can be done," including that arena wherein the individual citizen must confront himself and his government's foreign policy. The morality of any complex of strained or broken international relationships is hardly a cut-and-dried affair. Perhaps one may never have many of the answers, but most men crave for at least a few tentatively concrete responses to aggravated relations among the nations. And even if President Kennedy was correct in suggesting that such problems are not so much to be "solved" as to be "managed," it can safely be maintained that the past and present record of the nominal followers of Christ exhibits no monopoly on solutions.

The solutions reached by individual Christians are born in the intersection of relevant and irrelevant frames of reference. Despite the lack of leadership from the majority of the episcopacy, there has taken shape in the last several years a Biblical-pastoral reference frame which can be politically sophisticated and concretely influential in the public actions of individuals. The modern form-critic and de-mythologizer of the Scriptures soon learns that, at times, the Biblical writers and editors had little conception of the many difficulties later to confront their 20th Century co-religionists. . . . Even the forward-looking Fathers of Vatican II revealed their confusion in the often muddled and self-contradictory texts of so fine a document as *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. And yet, John and Paul or the Conciliar Fathers are not totally irrelevant, although they may require more imaginative thinking of the Christian than in the past.

The Scriptural sayings and exhortations, when vague and general ("Love your neighbor"; "Blessed are the meek", or "Blessed are the peace-makers"), often disclose their fuller meaning when understood as "tip-offs" or "clues" to the type and tenor of life the individual Christian may be required to live in situations such as in a powerful and industrialized country during wartime. In ascertaining this deeper significance, one must open himself to the workings

of the Spirit (John 14, 26). Further, one needs the courage to admit the possibility (John 3, 8) of more than one solution.

One consideration is paramount and central. The man, for example, who concludes that concern for his brother is incompatible with violating the image of God in which that same person has been created may opt, variously, for "cooperation" or "non-cooperation" with Selective Service in opposing war (or a war). Whatever his choice, he ought not base it on a neo-isolationism or a latter-day Quietism. Somehow, the Christian vocation of peacemaking entails more than eschewing the institutionalized slaughter of war and demands a more meaningful involvement in or concern for the problems of today. The peace-maker is guaranteed no ringing successes in this twilight zone, nor are there any ready-made answers just below the surface of centuries of bankrupt intellectual meanderings. But certainly a perverted parody of God's merciful love for men will it be if the Catholicism of the 1960's can be epitomized thus: "See how casually these people hate one another."

Vincent Kelly Pollard

"AMERICAN RELIGION AND THE WAR"

Princeton, N.J.

Dear Sir: Please reassure the Rev. Mr. Neuhaus on the following points:

1. I am not "lonely." Certainly I don't feel lonely, and actually know that I am not. It is, if anything, rather this "consensus dissent" on the Vietnam war that (only) *seems* to make me "a lonely figure" (*worldview*, October). That's the way it was designed.

2. I am not "much in demand at high-level religious conferences that want to present 'both sides of the question'." I know of no such conference that lately has wanted to hear both sides.

3. Even if there were such a "demand," it would not have produced from me the "supply." This is because of certain odd views I have about the *ethics of advocacy* and the *ethics of discussing* public questions. These would prevent me from believing that brief both-sided panels are the way to enlarge and deepen Christian understanding of our political responsibilities.

4. Neuhaus' "consensus" defense of the consensus is enough to refute the argument that no one *should* feel unchurched if they disagree. That's the name of the game of Christian persuasion today.

Paul Ramsey