

Reflection on the Contemporary Scene
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For Americans, the issue in Vietnam is not only one of war and peace, but a test of the ideals of democracy; for Christians, the issue of Vietnam breeds guilt for the indecency of man. As for the vocal Americans, there is a continual process of bearing witness to their political beliefs. Likewise, isn't it a Christian's duty to bear witness to his faith?

Once we agree that Christians have a communal role in the Vietnam War, it is our duty to decide what that role is. After we come to an agreement with our personal stands on the problem, we must see how we can voice those stands most effectively. The answer may be moratoriums or violent protest or silent vigil, or becoming part of the majority of Americans who are silently viewing the war in our case by simply living our faith inconspicuously.

To start with the Christian stand in the war is the best way of approaching the situation. But for Orthodox Christians, the problem becomes more personally demanding since the Church takes *no* official stand on the war. It is up to the individual to examine himself as a Christian.

If we are truly Orthodox Christians, there can be little question about our feelings on the war. We want peace. We want the killing to stop now if the end is going to come about legally. The governments involved are going to have to try a little harder. It is mostly the dissatisfaction of the progress of the respective leaders that has bred a large anti-war movement in the U.S.

This anti-war movement has shown its strength most recently in the monthly moratoriums since October. Never have more people of diverse backgrounds come together for such a principle. As with many of the organizations of this era, the anti-war movement has no primary negative tone as some reviews of their activities have suggested in relation to the direction of being anti-Nixon, anti-American, and anti-war. But it has a very positive basis: Peace. Nothing good can ever be founded on destructive or negative pretenses. The leaders of the movement have recognized this and as result have propelled the drive.

Another form of demonstration may be violent protest, taken up, by radical youths as the most effective way of aiming their views. But we as Christians must reject this method based on Christ's teachings. To be against violence in Vietnam is to be against violence in America.

Silent protest of the war is, for a Christian, admitting to be a prisoner of this world, a prisoner of society. As long as we are Christian, we are free, for we have seen the true light through Christ. "If ye continue in my word, then ye are my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32) We are not only

free members of society, but we also have a mission to improve our world. For a Christian to simply live his life inconspicuously is denying Christ's discipleship.

Out of these three ways of protesting, a Christian may only consider the two non-violent ways. To try to stay uninvolved and uncommitted as a political view on the war is right for the Church since it cannot fully represent every member of the community in its decision. But for individuals to remain silent is *not* Christian. If Christ had fulfilled His mission in one or two towns of Galilee, Christianity would probably never have come about. But He and His disciples tried to reach as many people as possible with this teaching. This is what we, as disciples, must do, remembering that it is only by God's grace that we will succeed.

The entire question of war and peace, of love and hate, is irrelevant without Christ. And yet, once there is Christ, there is perfect harmony. It is between the reach and grasp of Christ that we live in.

In our struggle, war and hate and evil become real barriers which must be broken down if we are truly constantly devoting all of our energies to grasping His eternity of meaning.