Few issues have been as divisive within our Republic in our time as that of "war and peace." Discussion has centered, not upon abstract questions, but upon "this particular war" in which the United States is engaged in southeast Asia. The ambiguities of our national commitment are many, and no one can claim to be able to see all of them, to say nothing of resolving them. At this writing no one can foresee the extent of casualties in that struggle.

The Christian cannot view with complacency the divisions within the life of the nation he loves. He cannot do less than attempt to understand the causes of these divisions. He ought prayerfully to hope that he can translate such comprehension as he may have into responsible action—into being redemptive in his role as a citizen.

Four years ago this writer ventured to write an article under title, "Today's Perspectives on War and Peace." Many changes have occurred since that time, both in the world scene and in the public climate. One of these has been the polarization of thought upon the issues involved: On the one hand there has been a hardening of the pacifist position and a tacit broadening of the definitions relating to it; on the other has been the subtle shift of issues. This latter means that less is said concerning war itself, and more concerning the responsible use of power. It is to these two poles of the question that present attention is drawn.
such as the historic Peace Churches, until a few years ago most pacifists derived their impetus from personal religious principles. More recently, however, non-religious pacifism, especially selective pacifism, has been adopted widely as a personal creed. Pacifists whose objection is not primarily to war itself, but to this particular war, appeal with increasing urgency for full recognition of their status. Many religious leaders feel impelled to champion their cause.

The theory behind selective pacifism is not new; actually it is a modern refinement of the "just war" theory. Earlier of course the definition of a just war was formulated by the Church, which was frequently in a position to implement its decisions through liaison with the civil power. Certain guide lines for decision concerning the just or unjust character of a war were laid down. These are well-known, and include the existence of gross formal moral guilt on one side, undoubted proof of this guilt, gross injustice on the part of one (and only one) of the contending parties, proportionality of punishment to guilt, imposition of limits of justice and love in the prosecution of war, and lawful declaration of war by the authority charged with the task of carrying out the mandates of justice.

Today's selective pacifist may or may not be in a position to evaluate the war against which he protests in harmony with any structured set of principles. Some have doubtless sought to do this, and feel that they have reached the reasoned conclusion that the current war in southeast Asia is an unjust one. Others have, or so it seems, settled the question upon grounds quite other than the classical ones. Some appear to decide the issue upon humanitarian and/or esthetic grounds. Certainly one cannot discount the appeal to the humane; that modern warfare has become increasingly destructive of property, life and human values, affords a persuasive argument against any war which is not conducted on the clearest and most unambiguous grounds. The grim prospect of total war increases the force of this argument. It is far from certain that there would be any victors in a general nuclear war, or even that Western civilization would survive it.

The political and selective pacifist, recoiling with horror at the thought of such a war, may well feel that in resisting such an operation as that in Vietnam he is working to prevent the ultimate holocaust. Those who cannot agree with him will nevertheless feel that the prospects of total war make it essential to prevent its incidence in some way. The non-pacifist will of course retort that the halting of the spread of Maoism in southeast Asia may prove to be the way of preventing a nuclear catastrophe later.

The pacifist, whether motivated by religion or by secular concerns,
will also point to the pragmatic contention that each war sows the seeds of future wars, and that some effective alternative must be found to the use of war as an instrument of international policy. Every serious consideration of the question must take account of the failure of wars to resolve (at least in any ideal sense) the problems which tend to pit nations against one another. Seldom do the conditions surrounding a military victory conduce to a just settlement. The relative strength of the victor tempts him to impose further injustice upon the vanquished. This problem is exacerbated when unevenly matched powers join forces as temporary (and unnatural) allies against a common enemy. The emergence of the U.S.S.R. as the champion of a new and brutal form of imperialism following World War II is a case in point.

Whatever the ambiguities in the pacifist position, the political and selective pacifist will be heard in our time. He feels that he has the Nürnberg Trials on his side. He envisions a day, twenty years hence, when his children will ask him what he did to stop the atrocities in Vietnam—just as children in Germany ask their parents what they did to halt the slaughter at Dachau, Auschwitz and Belsen. Whether the issues and situations involved are parallel or not is not the reasoned question when the emotional issues of Vietnam are involved.

The non-religious pacifist does also gain credibility in the face of the movement toward securality. The “secular theologian” can scarcely do otherwise than defend the secular pacifist. It does of course place a heavy load of decision upon the youthful individual, involved as he is in matters of self-interest, to make a valid decision in matters whose intricacy baffles those of three times his age and twice his experience. The committed Christian would add also that the younger protester faces a compounded problem when, as is so often the case, he has grown up relatively untouched by the Evangel. It is asking a great deal to expect the secularized person, in a secular society, to render a decision embodying sacred dimensions.

II

Those who are unable to assume the stance of the pacifist are also forced by the demands of our times to assess the existence of vast military might within the developed nations. No merely quantitative survey of weaponry or of manpower potential will satisfy the conscientious thinker, and more especially the Christian thinker as he faces his world. Military power exists as a brute empirical datum, and there is no realistic hope that it will pass out of existence. Moreover, there is an equilibrium between major powers (perhaps an equilibrium of terror!) which if disturbed seriously will issue in probable conflict.

Today, as perhaps at few times in our century, sensitive persons are
drawn to consider to what use such power can be placed, or more especially, what constitutes a responsible use of power. History seems to suggest that at certain points, the non-use of force resulted in immediate injustice, and led finally to more massive employment of force. The situation of Czechoslovakia in 1938 is a case in point, for subsequent events indicate that the non-use of power (military if necessary) led not only to immediate injustice, but to a situation in which more massive employment of force became inevitable.

It is important to remember that while our Lord commanded that we love our enemies, there are situations in which the demands of justice seem as urgent as the command to charity. It is not, of course, always a simple task to decide where the right and wrong of a conflict-situation between nations lies. Aggression is usually rationalized by the one committing it; and it seems to many in our age that communist powers have made a fine science of the semantic juggling of terms which were formerly helpful in determining the rightness of issues in international disputes.

Many feel it to be a warranted assumption that nations entrusted with major-power status have a moral obligation with respect to the maintenance of the rights of smaller and weaker states. Great problems emerge when the apparent line of duty with respect to such states coincides with the national interests of the power assuming such obligation. Such problems become greater also in a world in which ideological struggles force a polarization of thought, a duality between groups of nations. There exists without doubt an overly simplified view of today's power struggle, by which for example our nation tends to divide the "free" from the "communist" world. This has come as a response to a prior division of nations by the U.S.S.R.—and this is what the cold war has been about!

The presence of relatively weak, freedom-loving states on the border of a large totalitarian state frequently creates difficult problems for non-totalitarian powers. Ambiguous situations can emerge, and commitments may prove to be larger in practice than they appeared initially and in theory. And yet most citizens of our Republic feel that we have some responsibility to nations who request assistance against a powerful and hostile neighbor. Events of the very recent past indicate the perils which lurk in such a situation. It is an easy step from a "presence" in an area to an involvement which seems to be demanding beyond the limits of the practical and the tolerable.

Certainly the Christian will feel sympathetic with the attempts of a government to assume responsibility for peace keeping. (Few in this time are fooled by the semantic juggling of the communist nations at the point of the definition of "peace-loving" states.) But however noble the ideal of serving as a guardian of peace around the world, the occasions for dis-
turbances of the peace are so numerous and so complex that any nation, however good its intention, may be tempted to move beyond the requirements for securing either peace or justice. Then too, the temptation is always with us to see the maintenance of peace as primarily a military task, to the exclusion of other processes and procedures, such as the economic and the cultural.

More important still is the peril of becoming so committed to the principle of the use of national resources in military power (for however laudable purposes) that the creative use of material resources for other purposes is abandoned or forgotten. Many current protests against our national involvement in southeast Asia stem basically from the fact that our military commitment there makes it impossible for us to meet the most pressing economic needs in our domestic life. It is rather widely felt that the ends of justice at home are being poorly served because of an over-reliance upon one form of power.

There are larger questions involved in the use of power. The Christian must never lose sight of the fact that the temptations to irresponsible and badly conceived uses of power are always with us. Original sin remains a constant in human experience, and the corrupting potential of power dare not be overlooked. Some feel that responsibility in the use of international force will be more easily maintained if unilateral action is replaced by some form of collective means for security. Many feel that the United Nations should become more and more largely the agency for the resistance to aggression and for the reconciliation of conflicts of interest between or among states. Supporting evidence is frequently found in the fact that the Korean conflict was a multinational affair, while the conflict in Vietnam is unilateral. This argument has its flaws, for the Korean War could not have been undertaken had not certain powers been sulking outside the U.N. at the time; and there are at least token forces from other nations engaged in Vietnam.

Finally, the responsible use of power is complicated by the tendency of great powers to preserve the balance of power which exists at the moment. This may frequently lead to conflict which centers mainly upon retaining the status quo, and may involve the great power(s) in what appears to be the support of unjust forces. In such matters, the maintenance of justice rather than the preservation of "balances of power" is the mark of responsibility.

The fluidity of today's thinking with respect to the issues related to war and peace suggests that the Christian conscience is being burdened in...
new and forcible ways. The problem is aggravated by the fact that the war in Vietnam is unconventional in the sense of being an undeclared war. If interventions to preserve the freedom of smaller nations should be undertaken by our Republic in the future, the condition will probably remain with us, for it tends to produce gray areas in the field of social and political morality.

One can scarcely hope that the issues at stake will lose their problematic quality in the near future. Quite probably conditions will tend toward the increase of public anxieties in these matters. If there be any category by which a resolution of at least some public tensions can be effected, it may be that of Christian responsibility. Whatever measures in public policy may be undertaken to build a better order, it is doubtful whether any will be outstandingly successful until we produce more responsible men. And this will not be achieved, we are persuaded, apart from the resources of Grace, which provides men and women with new sources of motivation, new sensitivities to the deeper ranges of human need, and new willingness to submit every temporal issue to the scrutiny of the eternal.