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AN OUTLAW'S THEOLOGY

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Martin Luther King

This call for a worldwide fellowship that lifts neighborly concern beyond one's tribe, race, class and nation is in reality a call for an all-embracing and unconditional love for all mankind ...I am not speaking of some sentimental and weak response...which is just emotional bosh. I am speaking of that force which all of the great religions have seen as the supreme unifying principle of life. Love is somehow the key that unlocks the door which leads to ultimate reality. ...

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action...If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.

Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the sons of God, and our brothers wait eagerly for our response... The choice is ours, and though we might prefer it otherwise, we must choose in this crucial moment of human history.

“Beyond Vietnam,” 1967

John Lennon

Imagine there's no heaven...
Imagine all the people living for today...
Imagine there's no countries...
Imagine all the people living life in peace...

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world

You, you may say
I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one

“Imagine,” 1973

Pathway #1: Outlaw

Chapter 1: How did I become an outlaw?

A: Through a ritual of peacemaking—raiding Selective Service draft board offices.

Near midnight on July 10, 1970, the FBI arrested me and seven others during three raids on Selective Service draft boards across Minnesota. The press dubbed us “The Minnesota 8.” Six months before, in one night, we had pulled off the largest draft raid in American history, destroying tens of thousands of files in two centralized facilities holding over forty-five boards. For that raid we called ourselves “The Beaver 55.” The FBI was steamed; the anti-war Resistance community, ecstatic. This time, by morning, I and the others were indicted on “sabotage of the national defense.” We faced ten years in federal prison.

The *Minnesota 8* were fairly typical white, middle-class, Mid-western American youths. To a man, we were also college graduates and over-achievers who sought, in different chosen careers, to realize the American Dream. Although media depictions often stereotyped “student radicals” and “draft resisters” as degenerate, dope-smoking, lazy drop-outs who conspired in communes where they collected welfare, espoused Free Sex and Marxism, the opposite was more accurate. One of the 8’s mothers struck a chord that rings true to this day.

Look, my Peter is just an average kid who realized an obvious thing— that he can't kill. He isn't a kook or a weirdo—he's my son. Can't you people look into your hearts and realize that when kids like my Peter do things like this that something is seriously wrong with the country? (Mary Simmons' interview on, “Dialogue” a program of KDWB, St. Paul, produced by Connie Goldman and emceed by Earl Craig, 1971)

When I first studied the Vietnam War, I did *not* disapprove. Over time I embraced pacifism and obtained a legal deferment as a Conscientious Objector. I served two years of Alternative Service, so fulfilling my military obligation. Slowly, ever so slowly, I came to realize that “something is seriously wrong with the country” and felt the urgent need for more bold and risky acts of nonviolent Resistance—acts of civil disobedience to publicly “Resist illegitimate authority!”

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Although I had obtained a Masters degree in theology and worked as a lay Catholic theologian, it took me even more time to passionately embrace nonviolent civil disobedience as the *only* practical mode of moral action. Like Martin Luther King, I struggled against an easy acceptance of the linkage between social injustices inside America and America's Vietnam War, but in time the linkage became crystal clear. Yet, central to my personal development is my forthright admission that my Resistance was not simply a matter of enlightened self-discovery. No, I actually had to be blown-away by a Vietnam veteran. In 1969, Gordy, a Marine veteran, told me about his battlefield conversion.

In Vietnam Gordy was a Section Leader and Forward Observer, India Company—the “Igniting Eye”—Third Battalion, Fifth Marines. The gist of his story:

We burned as many homes as we had matches for. You were a better Marine if you did more fantastic things, if you could burn more hootches... The meaner you could be, the more gooks you could kill was the whole idea. (Trial transcript—“TT”)

Gordy told me that now he woke up at night with battlefield flashbacks and attacked his wife. You can imagine how flabbergasted—and frightened—I was. At that time neither of us knew about post-traumatic stress syndrome. What happened was that this medaled Veteran influenced and transformed me more than I did him. Before we first met I was a peacenik, afterwards a war criminal. How did that happen?

Gordy told me, as he did a judge and jury later as a witness at my trial, that during one flashback, while he was setting fire to a Vietnam village, he had a battlefield conversion.

In dealing with myself, coming back and thinking I was right. And thinking that the things I had done were right because it was what I had been taught in boot camp, and then viewing it from the other side, instead of a gook, it was a human being. Instead of a hootch, it was a home. That really socked it to my head. It really blew my

mind. Because I have never thought of a hootch being a home, it was an old grass hootch. And they were peasants, they weren't people. (TT)

What blew my mind was not his realization of the oneness of all humanity because I already believed that everyone was a child of God. What knocked me off my chair was the emotional intensity of what he was saying. If I would ever claim to have had a prophetic revelation laid at my feet, this was it. The thunderbolt simplicity of what Gordy confessed changed me forever. It forced me to surrender the complexities of theological abstractions and academic verbiage and yield to the passions of my heart.

After listening to Gordy, what more facts or truths would I have to ponder before I formed my conscience of Resistance? I mean, another human being comes into your personal space and says, *Hey, I went through this experience called Boot Camp. See, I didn't know it at the time, but it was a religious experience. Every day the DIs chanted and we chanted with them. "Kill!" I went in a kid and came out a killer. I mean, Man, I put on that uniform and there's nothing I can't do. Least not nothing in the Nam. Dig it, Man, I'm gonna burn down your house. I'm gonna kill your kids. I'm gonna rape your wife. I'm gonna blow you apart, Man!...* I sat there near shit-in-my-pants freaked out: This guy's a walking time bomb!

Should I pretend that Gordy didn't scare the bejesus out of me? That the other stressed-out veterans I began to regularly meet didn't make me lock the bathroom door behind me when they were around? I liked these guys; admired many. But they were not totally in control. *I was spooked!* Try to grasp what it was like to sit behind my safe desk in the Catholic students' Newman Center, in a room lined with books and books about books, and have someone, anyone, come in and tell you that on another day he had gotten up in the morning, said his prayers, got with his squad and spent the day burning down people's homes, destroying food caches, and even killing people? He then went back, ate chow, smoked dope, knelt by his cot: "Now I lay me down..." and went to sleep.

Gordy's visit wasn't a public relations or an information sharing junket. He was in serious

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trouble. His night-time flashbacks were family horror shows. He wanted something from me; that's why he came. He didn't just want to understand what happened or why. He wanted something to *stop* happening: he wanted the war to end. He wanted peace of mind and soul. And, he was asking me how I was going to help him.

Gordy's demand, "We've got to stop the story from being told. We have to shut the system down." I knew what he meant—bring the battlefield home!

Previously I had sought various measured ways to act. I had written numerous letters, preached sermons and marched. But Gordy challenged me to *do more* than act according to my conscience. He came seeking spiritual counsel after hearing me preach. He wanted me to preach not just in church but on the streets, in the suites, and inside draft boards! Who else, he sensed, to bring the spiritual truth revealed through his battlefield conversion to all people? As I later argued in court: to heal America and vets like Gordy it was necessary for me to raid draft boards.

Raiding a draft board was my ritual of peacemaking—an attempt to bring peace to myself, to my country, but most of all to Gordy. That is my story. The draft raid broadcasted my religious conviction—the truth that my God is a peacemaking God, not a God of war-making. But it did more than that—through the nonviolent draft raid God became present in the minds and hearts of others who heard His call, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Why do I raid?

A: I raid "to be in the presence of God."

When I burgled draft boards I was seeking to be faithful to the radical spirituality being championed by the Roman Catholic Church at its Vatican Council II. Pope John XXIII was opening the Church's tightly shuttered windows, letting in the light of day from the outside world of other religions and secular societies. He issued "*Pacem in Terris*" ("Peace on Earth") and the Council proclaimed, "The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office." The *Documents of Vatican II* spoke about "building up the international community." They issued warnings about the apocalyptic perils of "total war" and the need to work toward "the avoidance of war" and "curbing the savagery of war." I was cowed by the Council's

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challenging call for “the total banning of war, and international action for avoiding war.” Most of all, I pondered their mandate, “It is our clear duty, then, to *strain every muscle* as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent.” (My italics.)

After meeting with Gordy, I closed the door and sat back down at my desk. The walls closed in on me, crumpled me. I felt so small, so inconsequential; powerless. I glanced over and scanned the shelves, not just books but my beloved books—*I love these books!* Then I got up and took a few, a bible here, a text of Aquinas there, the *Documents of Vatican II* and slammed them on the floor: *Lies!* I rushed out onto the street, gasping.

No more books, no more sermons, no more marches—one song rang through my ears as anthem, “We’re on the eve of destruction!”

I walked across the Washington Street bridge that connects the U of Minnesota’s east and west banks. Westward was the heartland of radicals, activists, hippies—and at its center the Twin Cities Draft Information Center (TCDIC). There I met men who had just returned from prison. Others with court cases pending. Several with sentences hanging over their heads. All were active Resisters. Humorously, I was instantly pigeonholed as TCDIC’s “resident theologian” but like Gordy these men didn’t care about why I was Resisting, just that I would *Do it!*

On the Beaver 55 raid I burgled the State Director’s office—a rare treasure. Since Minnesota is a rural area, the Director, for administrative efficiency, centralized scores of rural draft offices in the St. Paul metropolitan Post Office where he maintained his own office. The Director was the last court of appeal for assigning draft status, say, for deciding whether someone got a 4-F deferment for being physically unfit or 1-0 and being granted Conscientious Objector status. So, unaware of the war booty in his top desk draw, I opened it and *Thank you, Jesus!* I confiscated hundreds of blank draft cards and official stamps and personally carried them to Canada to enable the silent return of exiled war resisters. *Have valid draft card...scoot back across the border.* The FBI soon knew: I stole and destroyed 1-A files. I acted with all my heart and protested with every aspect of my mind and will. I followed my conscience. I destroyed paper property, not human bodies. I drew symbolic blood from ripped draft cards. I put my life in

harm's way to prevent harm to others.

“Ripping paper! Why did you think the government cared about that?” A fair question, often posed. Consider this: You take the Torah, Koran, New Testament, Bhagavad-Gita or any other sacred scripture, stand on a street corner where you then defecate on it or burn it—What happens? Or, if you take the sacred breads of the Eucharist and do likewise, what happens? Some people might curse you. Others might throw something at you. Or, everyone just laughs and walks away.

Now consider this: You lift a wafer-thin piece of paper the size of a credit card from your wallet. You set it on fire and raise your arm high. What happens? *They* drop out of the sky, jump out from behind the bushes, scramble from their agent provocateur positions in the crowd, throw you to the ground, knee you in the small of your back, yank and wrest your arms around to handcuff you. Quickly and expertly they right you, drag and rush you away from the crowd, off the streets into a waiting unmarked police van. I ask, *What is it we Americans hold more sacred than the draft card?*

Was the judge answering “Nothing is more sacred than a draft card!” when he said:

While these defendants are not criminals, in the sense that robbers for instance are, whose crime is that they take money or property from others, they are criminals in an equally, if not more serious sense, because their criminal conduct strikes not just at the pocketbook of others but at the very *foundation of government* and therefore at the security and well being of all. (TT. My emphasis.)

Just pause a moment here. Destroying paper files strikes at the “very foundation of government”? If so, isn't the Selective Services System, clearly then, a bedrock governmental institution? Not just an optional or secondary or temporary war time institution but one that *must* operate or else the foundation of government starts to collapse?

Ritual of Peacemaking

Why do I raid? To be at that site, that place, a nondescript file room where the power that transforms life into death is manifest and present. I enter draft boards to perform a ritual of peacemaking—to bless the paper symbols of human lives; consecrate them. I intone *Peace!* as I tear and rend asunder their symbolic bodies; freeing captive souls.

Willie Sutton was alleged to have said that he robbed banks because that was where the money was. I raided draft boards because that's where the ritual of war-making makes manifest the killer's God. I wanted to make manifest the peacemaking God.

There is simply no other place to go. No other physical location anywhere in America like the draft board. It is the war machine's sacred spot; the secular State's Holy of Holies.

Of course at the time I was speaking Catholic and expressed myself in traditional theological language, innovating a bit by calling draft raids "socio-political sacramental acts." When hearing this phrase, many fellow Resisters shook their heads, some confounded, others laughing, all in agreement with my final conclusion, *Let's raid!* For me, the traditional Catholic seven sacraments were private rituals and to counter the Draft a *public* sacrament had to be ritualized or I would have no way to properly respond to Gordy's battlefield experience.

I needed to possess these sacred draft cards—this sole piece of paper that every eighteen year old male must register to possess and so become *possessed* by the killing god. "Possessed"—once you realize that registering with the Selective Service System (in war or peacetime) is the *only* act that every American male must do under threat of exile or imprisonment then you sense the sacral power that this special piece of flimsy paper possesses...and endows the possessor with. Like the tabernacle with the Eucharistic hosts, the draft office contained America's sacred cultural symbols. Once possessed, these paper symbols sirenically lure the average guy to "step over the line" at the Induction Center and in so doing transform himself from Joe Citizen into a socio-political killing weapon of the God of war.

Understanding what registering with the Selective Service System really means is necessary for understanding why I cobbled together this hyphenated phrase, "socio-political sacramental act."

As noted, registering for the draft is the *only* act that every American male at eighteen must do. There are no exceptions. If you are mentally ill, a novice in the monastery, Joe Athlete, deaf and dumb, a paraplegic—your physical condition is not relevant. If you are eighteen and breathing then you must register or face exile or imprisonment. Now obviously there are deferments. But that's only *after* you register. Myself, I was in my Franciscan monk's robes when the Novice Master drove me into a small Indiana post office to register. No exceptions; some deferments. While registering is an act that bestows social and political identity, its potency lies in the fact that it is the necessary and culturally defining way for a male to lay claim to being a full-bodied American.

Aristotle said, "We make war that we may live in peace." I claimed, as did all Resisters, that these files expressed America's religious truths. It is religious in the sense that America grounds its national identity in the claim that it is "One nation under God." Likewise its currency proclaims, "In God We trust." So the 1-A draft files symbolically represented America's religious truth that the act of killing is a foundational and sacral act of the State.

Consider: A draft card endows you with godly power. You are authorized to have the God-like experience of killing someone and not being held accountable! Although you commit the primal crime of fratricide, namely Cain slaying Abel, you are to have no guilt. I knew that the average citizen, at first, would consider my claim about the sacral power of draft cards to be an exaggeration, but my insight into this paper card's power was further validated by the FBI's own action after the Beaver 55 raid. It was headline news that J. Edgar Hoover sent in over one-hundred agents to track us down. No doubt, the FBI knew the power of the 1-A card—and the sacrilege we committed by destroying them.

More than once I broke into America's Holy of Holies. Trespassed on sacred ground. Blasphemously prayed to and invoked the God of peacemaking. Stood before the face of the God of killing, trembled as He raged and reached out to clutch my soul. I stole lives He had sentenced to die. I held the draft cards high and consecrated them, "Peace!" Outraged, His howls and hatred, His hot spit of blood into my eyes, His curse laid like hot irons branding my soul—these I still feel this moment; always. Inside the draft board I was in the presence of the God I

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worshipped, the peacemaking God.

I also broke into draft boards because I knew—as I know—that peacemaking makes the human family safer and stronger than does war-making. More importantly, I also wanted to boldly call you forth, challenge you to Resist and choose to become a peacemaker. So if I would not witness to peace, how could I expect you to? If I would not put my life in harm's way, how could I expect soldiers who did so to respect my witness and pause even a nanosecond to listen to "Resist!" and "Peace!"? If I wanted others to turn away from worshipping the God of killing through the ritual of warring, who else would show them how to enact the ritual that makes peace manifest? If not me, how could I ask you to put your life in harm's way?

Was the judge intuitively *spiritual* and accurate when he proclaimed, "You gentleman strike at the foundation of government..." because we were destroying the Draft System which is the State's equally sacred and secular, profane and holy foundation?

The eighth sacrament!

The prosecutor of course would have nothing to do with my theological musings. He exposed them as a frail shield of my cowardice. In his closing argument to the jury he summed up:

Now what's Mr. Kroncke's argument? He says, *I did as you charge but I committed no crime. I administered a sacrament.* Seven sacraments are not enough! To Baptism and Confirmation and the Eucharist and Penance and Holy Orders and Matrimony and Extreme Unction we add the EIGHTH SACRAMENT of the Roman Catholic Church—ripping off draft boards! (Prosecution Closing, TT)

To wit,

[The prosecutor] accused Kroncke of trying to "weasel his way out" of his crime with a theological paper. ("Jury convicts two more of Minnesota raiders," Mary Papa, *National Catholic Reporter*, January 1971)

I am my father's son

At my father's funeral two years before my trial, I spoke of him as being "a good man." I loved

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my father deeply. I knew the greatness of his mind and heart, and I shared many of his faults and sins. He was obediently patriotic. In 1943 with three children at home, he enlisted in the Navy while I was in my mother's womb. He was German-American and a chemist to boot. Both facts made him suspect during the war against the Nazis. However, he heard the Call to Arms as a call to serve others. In his heart, as for so many of his generation, the war against Hitler was near a holy crusade against evil. Consequently, I was born while he was in the South Pacific. Of greater import is that my father was a devout Roman Catholic. He believed that there was no higher calling than obedience to the truths of the faith. God certainly was Caesar's superior, but Dad taught me that each had just and proper claim on my moral obedience. He strove to be faithful and obedient to these higher powers. In this and so many other ways he was a good man.

My father vigorously rejected my pacifism and opposed my filing for CO status. He held to the Catholic tradition's "Just War theory" that provided moral guidance for going to war. For me, it just enabled every nation to justify every war! He died before I started raiding draft boards, and I've often wondered whether I would have become a raider—an outlaw—if he had lived. Yet, now I must tell you something he never told me while he was alive, that is, how he himself came to resist illegitimate authority.

Father and son: "a clear conscience"

My outlaw life does have a certain pattern as I am the son of Charles Otto Kroncke, Jr. Inscribed on his gravestone is "Thy Will Be Done." He was a man I watched kneel every day in prayer at Holy Mass until I left for the seminary. His counsel, "a clear conscience is a greater thing than physical pleasure." As my trial began, my mother—for the first time ever—shared with me my father's letters to her during World War II. This man I called Dad I still hear speaking. (Note, I was born on 6 August 1944.)

"Francis, I think you should read your father's letters." All are to "Sweetheart." Most dated as "Somewhere in the South Pacific." All signed, "Devotedly yours, Charles."

She is my sweetheart too. After my father's early death at fifty-nine years of age we bonded in the special way a grown son can as a friend to his mother. I watched her loneliness. It drowned her. She was in her early fifties with eight living children, few marketable skills, but an irrepressible

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spirit. Now she is equally frightened and amused by my Hippie friends. She is totally out of her league when trying to grasp the crazed “radical politics” of the day. Like most women of her generation she followed where her husband led. Now she leads; reaches out to heal me by confirming me as my father’s son.

I read several sections to the jury but none was as heart-breaking for me than reading.

Sweetheart, I am walking in front of rows and rows of white-crosses. And the only reason this is justified is that in twenty to twenty-five years our sons won’t have to go to war.

I brought *Somewhere in the South Pacific* to jurors who had lived through those times.

17 October 1944

I think you are right about Charles. He will have to be a little gentleman. In fact I want all my sons to be gentlemen. I don’t want them to be sissies but I don’t want roughnecks either. It seems that some people think that being a roughneck is a mark of a real boy and I may have once myself, but no more. Although I have seen no violence I have seen some of the results of it, and now I know how much value should be put on the finer things of life. I sincerely mean it when I say that my own ambition, my one ambition is to have my children grow up as Christian ladies and gentlemen. People who glory in violence and war, in my humble opinion, are to be pitied because they are very abnormal. Please don’t mind my getting philosophical on you, but that is the way my thoughts run. God grant that the day will soon come when I will be with all of you again and can enjoy these finer things.

7 October 1944

Since I too wish I were with you but to sit around regretting things is not going to help Charles or George. What I did, I did with the best intentions a father and husband ever did. I prayed hard before I joined, for guidance. I’m

not trying to justify myself, but you know, Sweetheart, I did not leave to shirk my duties. I would willingly die this moment if by that action I could aid you and the children in any manner whatsoever.

11 November 1944

How are you and the children? I hope and pray all of you are well. Today is the 26th Anniversary of the end of the last war. I wonder when this one is going to be finished? I hope soon. War really throws everything out of joint. When one thinks of all the lives and time, material wasted in prosecuting a war, one wonders whether civilization has really progressed as far as some claim. One thing, however, it should teach us to appreciate is peace and do all in our power to prevent any more of this foolishness. I am in one of my reforming moods but when I think of all the time I could be with you and the children, and think of all the others in similar circumstances, I get mad. Of course, I know I volunteered but I feel that that is something I should have done. It is the whole idea of wars that makes me mad. Let us pray that this war will end these silly controversies. I hope that our children will never see another war. If they don't, our sacrifices will not have been in vain. With all my love, I am Devotedly yours, Charles

Mother gives me these letters so that I can testify, "I'm sorry to say that my father was wrong. Wars only lead to wars. The violence has to stop with someone. *It stops with me.*" These letters enable me to share in my father's powerlessness to end war. Mother wants the jurors and judge, everyone to know that I am my father's son, willing to put my life in harm's way for the greater good.

Dad and the "Manhattan Project"

Nevertheless, such letters fail to convey my true patrimony since they barely tell the story of my father's own moral courage and his profound patriotism. After enlisting, since he was a college graduate, Dad was made a Lieutenant, j. g. Since he was a chemist he was assigned to a military laboratory on the base at Oak Ridge, Tennessee. My mother was greatly relieved to have her husband stateside. She was pregnant with her fourth child, me, and her eldest, my sister Martha,

had just turned six. Not long after his arrival at Oak Ridge, however, Dad telephoned Mom to tell her that he was being shipped to the South Pacific. What happened?

In brief, Dad learned that he was working on a weapon of mass destruction, namely, the Atom Bomb. Oak Ridge was part of the *Manhattan Project*. As dedicated and patriotic a conservative Republican citizen as he was, and as morally responsible as he remained, he could not in conscience as a faithful Roman Catholic work on a weapon that negated every premise of the “Just War” theory. He never discussed this with me, and I only learned about it after his death through his letters. I still wonder how he felt when he had to admit to his superiors—possibly other Roman Catholics—that he had to resist their authority and claim that he must be faithful to a higher authority?

As mentioned, my father passionately debated with me as I formed my early views on nonviolence and filed for my Conscientious Objector status. Pacifism seemed to him to be a worthy ideal, but impractical. He couldn’t grasp how I could position myself over against the authority of the State even though I cited the moral condemnation of “Total War” by Vatican Council II. Dad knew how much I was influenced by the visionary spirituality of the Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. He would always remind me—scold me!—that Teilhard submitted to papal authority and accepted censure and did not seek to publish his works during his own life time. “How can you, Francis, not submit?”

Why did I argue a “Defense of Necessity”?

“In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience.”

And, “For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged.”

Also, “It is our clear duty, then, to *strain every muscle* as we work for the time when all war can be completely outlawed by international consent. This goal undoubtedly requires the establishment of some *universal public authority*

acknowledged as such by all, endowed with effective power to safeguard, on behalf of all, security, regard for justice, and respect for rights.” *Documents of Vatican II*. (My emphases.)

As attorney *pro se* I led an eight-day trial with thirteen witnesses: Vietnam veterans, theologians, an American historian, an ecologist, a national journalist, several nonviolent activists, even Daniel Ellsberg (whose intent was to release the “Pentagon Papers” as evidence in support of his witness statements). The judge had approved my presenting a “Defense of Necessity.” This is a section in the Model Penal Code that permits a defense argument that an alleged crime was committed because the accused was responding to the moral mandate of another law with higher authority. A common example is stealing a car to take a pregnant woman to the hospital, or, more problematic, blowing up a dam, drowning and killing thousands in order to save millions. My claim was for the highest law, God’s law and His authority as made known through the Roman Catholic Church and its *Documents of Vatican II*.

In fact, to underscore the procedural role of invoking a higher authority, a priest witness of mine reminded the judge that in the courtroom a witness is called and required to reference a higher authority to ensure the court that he/she is not lying. Traditionally this requires placing your hand on the Judaeo-Christian bible and saying out loud, “Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” Those who do not want to “swear” have an option to affirm, but the intent remains the same, that a higher authority than the State itself is invoked. This priest witness reminded the judge,

The Court itself sanctions the use of an oath as an authority which will protect the type of testimony that I am about to give. It appeals to a higher authority as a sanction for believing that my testimony will be truthful. (TT)

In this light I admitted that what was clearly a secular crime was mandated by my obligation to not commit a spiritual crime, that is, *intentionally* taking a life under any circumstances, notably State approved battlefield murder.

Although I began my Opening Statement with, “We did it. And I want to tell you why,” and clearly had no expectation that the jury would acquit, I was twice surprised by the judge. First, when we went into his chambers before the closing argument phase I expected him to rule that he would *not* allow me a closing, so terminating my Defense of Necessity argument. But he did not. He said, “Frank, you can proceed to make your closing argument.” This meant that I could sum up and succinctly make my case for the jurors’ deliberation. “Succinctly” I presented my closing argument for an hour and a half, going over much of what I have presented here. Then surprise #2: After my closing argument, the judge directs the jury in *Instructions to the Jury, Number 15* that they *cannot* consider any evidence or testimony I submitted—including my just completed closing argument. *Wow!* Why all of a sudden was he pulling the rug out from under my feet? Why would he not want the jurors to deliberate on all the testimony and evidence presented during the trial? He did not want them to hear anyone or anything, and so sternly yet fatherly he instructed, “I direct you that everything Mr. Kroncke has said here for the last week, all the testimony of his witnesses, everything is *irrelevant and immaterial*.” (TT, my italics)

Voiceless

“Irrelevant and immaterial.” What a majestic act: I lose my voice! I lose it because my witness and story is not to be heard. All my life it is my voice that conveys my story. Deep from within me it is my distinct, personal, intimate power of expression. Upon it ride the images and imaginations of my spiritual beliefs, all my hopes and dreams, all facts and truths as I know them and as they live through me. I am baffled because now I have no voice.

This is not hyperbole. I am not speaking allegorically. I intend no metaphor. One moment I turn to you, my juror, and weave my life story into and throughout yours. About the atrocities of the Vietnam War and the crimes of our government, I speak clearly. My voice is passionate. I expose the sufferings of Innocents: skin burning alive with napalm. My voice is truthful: classmates, friends, cousin and kin, my whole generation, lied to and betrayed by elected officials. My voice is hopeful: “Pacem in Terris,” *Peace on earth* declares my spiritual leader, Pope John XXIII, and so I declare “Peace!” My voice is confessional: I am just one guy—reaching out in despair, frustration, anger, almost hopeless, but then not—with gritty hope I act as best I can. When the leaders no longer listen, then words are not enough. The draft raid is my way of speaking, “Peace!”

Baffled: I am left standing before this judge as if I am a man who has been speaking gibberish for a week. Consider: It isn't that I am heard and judged. It isn't that my story is discussed and debated by the jury, fellow humans. No. I am *not* a human. I am irrelevant and immaterial. Humans speak. I am not to speak. Humans are heard. I am not to be heard. *They will come with steel cuffs, lace iron chains through my pants, hobble my ankles. I will shuffle off to the inside darkness of prison.*

But something goes wrong—for the judge. After two hours of deliberation, the bailiff summons everyone back into the courtroom. The foreman, a Korean War veteran, rises and asks for clarification, “Can we read the *Documents* ...?” The normally patrician, unruffled judge—palms down, leaning forward, almost teetering off his magisterial chair, indignant—thunderously retorts, “*No!* You cannot read the *Documents of Vatican Two!*”...*Kapow!*... Although he instructed the jurors that they were not to consider my arguments, the *Documents of Vatican II* and Pope John XXIII's “Peace on Earth” stayed in the evidence box— and the jurors were reading them!

Amazingly, we found out later that the jury was initially split six-six. Despite my bold and clear opening statement affirming that I was “guilty as charged,” they had listened to my moral and spiritual story as to *why*. They also read the Council's condemnation of “Total War.” I was confused, more than a bit stunned, and still reeling from hearing myself rendered “irrelevant and immaterial.” Yet here my jurors: farmers, small town folk, WWII vets, women who had lost husbands and sons to war, as I had urged, were applying the Council's condemnation to America's war in Vietnam. They did not dismiss my response to the call of obedience to a Higher Allegiance. They were struggling as I was with being equally American and Christian. I was truly amazed, momentarily awed—they affirmed the Council's call to laymen like myself to follow their conscience and so engage the world's problems and offer solutions. They heard my father's words. They saw across time: two men struggling to be good men as they sought to be peacemakers in their times. The father: WW II naval officer; the son: Vietnam War draft raider.

My Dark Night of the Soul begins

What no one else in the courtroom senses is that my Dark Night begins at this moment when the judge takes away my voice. He strikes me dumb. Cuts out my tongue. I exit the courtroom and

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so enter prison: voiceless. *Irrelevant and immaterial.*

Ah, the irony: I who searched all my life for a way to tell the story of God our Father Almighty and share the vision of the loving Jesus am rendered mute and dumb. For decades I studied history and theology and strove to become one of the best of the best. I was proud to be Catholic. I was proud to be American. “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country,” called for faithfulness to the Catholic vision and the American Dream. When I heard Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream!” my commitment to Christian nonviolent action and American justice intensified. I was determined to witness everywhere to this twinned sacred and secular dream of peace on earth.

Twice condemned! Within a week the local archbishop complements the secular judgment as he circulates a letter forbidding pastors from allowing me, “a criminal,” to enter their pulpits. To me: “You have no right to preach in a Catholic Church, nor do you have my permission to do such. With cordial best wishes, sincerely yours” For him secular authority was fulfilling sacred need—the heretic is banished. I lose my Catholic story. I can no longer imagine the world as I was trained to do as a seminarian, young monk and Catholic lay theologian.

I lose my American story. I can no longer imagine the America of my youth. I was raised as Charlie’s son to be a conservative, law abiding, patriotic and proud citizen of the greatest country in history. I celebrated Columbus and was inspired by John Wayne. I am now condemned as a violent felon—America’s prisoner, an outcast.

I lose: the war goes on

“As to Francis X. Kroncke, I sentence you to a maximum of five years imprisonment. Your time to be served in a federal penitentiary...”

Ah! The moral prize is mine: I did so witness, to all that made me proud to be Catholic and American. “But is it a hollow victory?” I ask myself. Yes, a cruel twist—that I am dumb, no longer with a story to tell you or anyone about how I hold my world together. On the People’s behalf, the judge hears the story of Christian nonviolence that holds my world together and judges it worthless. I am crushed; lamed. My artfully woven American-Catholic story lay

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discounted and discarded, its pages shredded and strewn on the courtroom floor. I admit it. I lose. All draft raiders and draft resisters lose. The war goes on as the trial ends. *Irrelevant and immaterial.*

Chapter 2: Teilhard made me do it!

A personalizing universe

One man's life and theology was the prime source for the radical reforms of Vatican Council II and equally of my transformation into a pacifist—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., a French Jesuit priest and renowned scientist (1881-1955). Twice in my life he became a spiritual wellspring. In my youth for my pacifistic conversion and now today as an elder for my Earthfolk vision (which is Pathway#3).

As I prepared for trial I was ready with a moral and spiritual story that tapped the Roman Catholic tradition and the values of America's secular democracy. Powerful stuff. *Maybe*. But if Teilhard had been alive, I would have stated, "Your Honor, I now call Father Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to the witness stand."

For my final three undergraduate years at St. John's University (Minnesota), I was in an Honors Program that studied the "Great Books" curriculum founded by Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago. My honors thesis was titled "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Personalizing Universe." Teilhard was a co-discoverer of "Peking Man," and elected to the French Academy of Science. He served as professor of geology at the Catholic Institute in Paris, director of the National Geologic Survey of China, and director of the National Research Center of France. Of note, as a soldier-priest he was an unarmed stretcher-bearer in World War I. For his battlefield valor he was awarded the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur in 1921.

Teilhard interpreted Evolution as primarily and ultimately a spiritual phenomenon. He forwarded a vision of a "Divine Milieu" in which the sacred is present through everything and everyone. Simply, Teilhard's spiritual vision radically altered my life's journey. After reading him it was inevitable that I ended up raiding draft boards. Consequently there was no way I could explain myself without talking about Teilhard.

Teilhard rightly earned his reputation as a highly controversial scientific and spiritual figure. He saw matter and spirit as two co-equal aspects of Evolutionary energy. For him the presence of God could be sensed inside an atom as well as throughout the universe. Spiritually, his thought

dynamically energized the reforms articulated by Vatican Council II. Its embrace of scientific knowledge, its openness to the world, but most notably its engagement with the world expressed Teilhard's vision and values. Council phrases such as "People of God," "men of goodwill," and "sign of the times" reflect his influence. These were also the three Council themes which most influenced me.

When my father chose to study chemistry at Notre Dame, he faced the same moral dilemma that Teilhard did. During their generations, there was a definite split between science and theology. Scientific knowledge was at its base both atheistic and amoral. However, as with my father, so with Teilhard's pursuit of paleontology there were exceptions made for certain dedicated Catholics. Yet since he advocated embracing Evolution as a way of doing theology Teilhard was censored by the Vatican during his life-time. He was ordered not to seek publication and he obeyed. His writings, nonetheless, were mimeographed and circulated "under the table" among religious and secular intellectuals, worldwide. In 1964 I had to obtain written permission from the local bishop to enter the "Library of Forbidden Books" (*Librorum Index Prohibitorum*) housed in the Benedictine monastery attached to the university. As a lay scholar I could not read Teilhard without hierarchical approval. A sign of the rapidity of change that marked the Sixties is that within two years Teilhard's books were stocked in the paperback section of St. John's student bookstore.

Teilhard artfully integrated values of the religious, secular and scientific worldviews. But the most daunting challenge was the quite explicit demand that I carve out a personal spirituality based on accepting the insight that my personal presence and moral acts create the world, right now. My existence is God's existence, embodied and manifest through my humanity. More, my personal presence is only fully manifested as I engage the Other—you! In Teilhard's vision, I in my person am all and everything that Evolution is striving to create. Consequently, I, through my personal presence, imagine and so create the world. There is no world other than the personal world, which is created by my engagement with you, the Other—and with God as embodied and manifested through you.

The core tenets of Teilhard's spiritual imagination are: 1) As the brain manifests a mind, so does

the Earth manifest a mind-sphere—"Noosphere." As the heart manifests a spirit, so does the Earth manifest a spirit-sphere—"Christosphere." As the body manifests personal presence, so does the Earth manifest a hyper-personal presence, Life itself. In concert all express the Divine Milieu. 2) It is absolutely true that every human being and every human action counts. This means that every person and personal act—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual—nurtures the Divine Milieu.

Teilhard celebrated God as present "in and through everything." This is termed panentheism. Evolution is God's way of revealing the fullness of humanity. The Earth is alive. We—you, me, every person—are the consciousness and conscience of the living Earth.

Life as a relationship

How I make myself present depends upon how I engage other people. Translated into my terms, if I kill someone then the collective human brain (Noosphere) thinks murderous thoughts. If I murder someone, the human heart is cold and evil (Christosphere). If I slay someone, I block the realization of the presence of the Divine Milieu. There is nothing that I do that does not have a direct impact on the character and quality of Evolutionary life on Earth. *Everything* I do counts.

Teilhard integrated the Evolution chapter of modern science into the fundamental Christian story. He held great regard and respect for both the secular world of scientific knowledge and the truths of spiritual revelation. He did not deny either, nor have one absorb or replace the other. For him secular space had a spiritual aspect; spiritual space had a secular aspect. These notions were the source to his and my understanding of sacraments, that is, that sacraments reveal the spiritual aspect of profane and secular moments and spaces. He sparkled with fire and passion as he wrote a "Hymn of the Universe" and celebrated a "Mass on the World."

I believed Teilhard with my whole heart. I was ready to weave his vision into my trial defense. Every day I strove to live, consciously, in this Divine Milieu. It was why I was so ripe for Gordy's message. For in the Divine Milieu every person counts, there are no gooks. Everyone enacts a ritual of peacemaking as they embrace "that of God" in you, me and the stranger—even the enemy. For my testimony I coined the Teilhardian-like phrase "socio-political sacramental acts," so linking the secular and the spiritual which are two-faces of the same coin.

Specifically, it was Teilhard's insight that every personal act counts that would prove to be the difference maker for me. Teilhard's "personalizing universe" intellectually converted me from being a Conscientious Objector to a "Catholic Radical" draft board raider. He made me understand the worldwide impact of my personal moral action. He also made me understand that physical objects and the material world could manifest the presence of God, if I made them manifestations of my mind and heart. Objects such as 1-A cards would remain only inert paper items unless I used them to make manifest their spiritual presence, that is, as enlivened manifestations of the killing God.

What distinguished Teilhard from his intellectual and scientific predecessors was that he interpreted Evolution as a dynamic phenomenon that had two relational polar points. One was the physical starting point, Evolution's Alpha Point. This was the pushing-forward energy of physical Evolution. The other was the spiritual end point, Love's Omega Point. This was the pulling-towards energy of the Heart of God. Both points anchored the Divine Milieu and their interaction was the dynamic that pushed-pulled Evolution forward to create human life.

The truly radical and revolutionizing import of this dynamic relationship between the Alpha and Omega points was that, together, they effect a "hominization" of the Earth (and of the universe). Consider: To become fully human you need to be born of the flesh (pushed out of your mother's body onto the planet!) and then have your personality—what makes you specially you—drawn-forth by those around who love you. This "becoming fully human" dynamic is the heartbeat of the universe (of Evolutionary Love). In this light, you are Earth's body, and your loving heart makes the Earth fully human—transforms it into the "Living Earth."

If Teilhard was right, every human being manifested *my* person. I was in relationship with every single person even though I didn't directly know him or her. Simply put, each of us is always present to the other. Moreover, it was impossible for me as a person not to be in relationship with every other person on the earth. Humans are, in this light, one person, as we are all one biological unit or gene pool, and one spirit.

We create and live within a Divine Milieu where God's Evolutionary Loving is present through everything and everyone. Possibly it is clearer now why Teilhard's vision radically changed my life, and why after reading him it was inevitable that I'd end up raiding draft boards.

Teilhard's world-wide-web of the human heart

Teilhard's work anticipated, found complementarity with, and blossomed in the understanding and insights of the work of Quantum theorists and today's Gaia visionaries. Teilhard's most revolutionary statement was that every action we take, everything we do and say, has an impact on the future. This was an early insight into the *human* "Butterfly Effect." That is, what one person or a group does, whether positive or negative, impacts every other person. From that perspective he wrote, "Some reflections on the spiritual repercussions of the Atom Bomb."

In Teilhard's vision while my actions may initially be small and judged insignificant, they have a way of being amplified over time. To me, this meant that every person was someone with whom I could be in relationship and consequently was vital to my discovery of who I am. Additionally, every personal act of mine and yours has some degree of impact on every other relationship in the cosmos. In essence, I couldn't become me or reach my full human potential unless I nurtured my relationship with every other human. I had to find a way of inviting others to receive me and for me to receive them. But wasn't that *physically* impossible? Of course. But maybe not *emotionally* impossible.

In another way, Teilhard anticipated the emergence of the world-wide-web. He moved me to understand that I am a heart on a world-wide-web of the human heart. His Divine Milieu made me feel, as I walked through my physical day at my college in central Minnesota, that I was simultaneously in communion with everyone in the global web of the Living Earth. Every thought I think is part of the Noosphere. Every thought you think influences me. Obviously, this is not a direct A to B connection. But how could it be otherwise? Do you really believe that what you think is not important? Not powerful? That you are merely an isolated someone about whom others don't care? Possibly only God cares? Not in Teilhard's word. Not in mine. In the Divine Milieu you are as important and powerful as everyone else.

Teilhard's vision led me to make deep contact with an impassioned emotion that I had always

been connected with but about which I had no concepts or imagination. Reading him I heard “Awake!” and it dawned upon me that I was the *Living Earth*. Just as I was called by my faith to be a “People of God,” so was I commanded, as all others are, as you are, to profoundly grasp and passionately embrace myself as Earth’s heartbeat and conscience. I came to imagine the everlasting Earth as forever hearth and home. That the Earth is us. That we humans are lively manifestations, presences of Earth. We are its consciousness, its imagining. We are Earth’s passion. Earth is hearth and we its flaming breath of fire. We humans are full-flesh in blood and gasp, birthed from the Living Earth: seed, flower, bloom and fade. *Whoa!*

War as a suicidal act of killing yourself

If you accepted Teilhard’s worldwide web of the human heart as I did, how would you respond to a call to war? If you understood that every action you took—every thinking, feeling, kinesthetic, creative action—affected every other human, then what would you feel when you slew another? Isn’t his or her bloodshed your own blood? Isn’t war an act of killing yourself? Simply suicide? If you felt this way as I did, how else could you respond but to conscientiously object—resist illegitimate authority through acts of nonviolent civil disobedience?

To hammer this point home, imagine thinking about killing people all day long. It’s easy to do, just turn on the TV and follow one show after another, from movies to the news to Hollywood gossip, and you cannot but be moved to think violent thoughts and steep yourself in violent images. More significantly, doesn’t it make you feel that such violence is justified? That national defense requires that the enemy be slain? That violence is “just the way it is” in urban areas? That sexual violence and rape is the price sexy women pay in the world of glitz and glamour and free sex?

I know that I can think, feel and accept all these violences if I emotionally distance myself from what I am actually seeing and hearing. But if I let myself deeply feel what I am seeing and hearing in terms of our relationship, that is, that it is you who is being harmed, then since you are integral to my being me I can no longer tolerate all of this violence. If I see the enemy as my personal family and seek to intimately embrace them as my brothers and sisters, then I experience war as a direct, personal attack on all I hold sweet and dear. It matters little which nation’s soldiers are on the attack. Once I behold and revere everyone as a darling brother or sister

within the People of God, I can no longer imagine killing them, unless I am suicidal. If every Other human is genetically and spiritually my sibling, a child in the one human family, then they are me: to slay them is to slay myself.

I accept that this might be quite a leap for you and many others—to go from Teilhard’s vision to enacting a ritual of peacemaking in a draft board. But that was where Teilhard took me. As I joked, “Teilhard made me do it!”

“To live as if I am no one’s enemy”

I was intellectually living within Teilhard’s Divine Milieu when Gordy brought me out of the clouds, down into my heart, evoking a passionate commitment to nonviolent civil disobedience. He made me feel in a radical and disturbingly new way—he made my heart beat cosmically. He had acted on the battlefield not from some moment of intellectual clarity but from an overwhelming primal emotional impulse. In my words, Gordy did not want to feel as if he was anyone’s enemy. He not only did not want to name anyone as his enemy, he wanted *to live as if he was no one’s enemy*. To live affirming that everyone was one of the People of God.

Feeling in this unusual manner—heart beating cosmically—I faced the harsh truth that after attending Holy Mass I could still live as if I am someone’s enemy. Although a sacred ritual, Mass did not transport me to the spiritual state of living as if I am no one’s enemy. I had to confront the almost unthinkable possibility that my spiritual language and sacred rituals were more a part of the problem than the solution. It soon became quite clear that I only had to look at the Catholic hierarchy and observe how they passively responded to the war for a validation of this unhappy insight. Other than Pope John XXIII himself, nearly all of the Church’s hierarchy of Cardinals and Bishops did *not* walk the walk that the Holy Spirit revealed to them during Vatican Council II.

Personally, I was beyond being highly distressed. I was in continual anguish and torment. I yearned to feel the comfort, forgiveness and holiness of the sacraments that I had experienced all my life. I wanted to feel their promise once again—“peace beyond understanding.” But I didn’t; couldn’t. I was genuinely troubled by the fact that I could not recall one Catholic chaplain ever telling me that after he offered Mass on the battlefield a soldier came to him and said that he had

to throw down his arms. You can understand then that when Gordy told me that he did throw down his arms, I was blown away by not only his courage but the spiritual message he carried. I understood that if Gordy had only been suffering battlefield fatigue, he would have gone AWOL, then hopefully sought some psychiatric care. But he didn't; couldn't. Rather, deeply wounded in body and soul, he brought back a message, a revelation of staggering simplicity —“There is no need for war anymore.” Hear him again: All humans are family, everyone a gook, and every person One People of God. The Living Earth is home to all. Not a part or sector of it is a hootch. In this light, all warfare is friendly-fire.

Gordy spoke through me to the jurors. I testified, “If we are to have peace on earth, we must all live as if we are no one's enemy.”

Chapter 3: “Slave of the State”

Fact: I took on the United States of America and was beaten down. The trial: January 11 through 18, 1971. My appellate citation: “United States of America, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Francis X. Kroncke and Michael D. Therriault, Defendants-Appellants, United States Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit 459 F.2d 697 (1972).” The appellate court affirmed my criminality and relegated me to being “a slave of penal servitude to the State...for the time being, the slave of the State.” (Ruffin v. Commonwealth (62 VA 790, 1870) It fêted me as outlaw and punched my final ticket for passage into the caged world of penitentiary justice. Mentally and spiritually, I was pummeled into submission and irrelevancy. My judicial master held me to be less than a man. He felt no qualms about not respecting me. He had heard my words but to him they were just garble, impotent sounds: *irrelevant and immaterial*. He did not listen to my voice. I was, in his eyes, a barbarian; one outside the law. I struck at the foundation of his government and so magisterially anointed he cast me out.

As so often happened, a stranger revealed still other truths.

Conflicting standards. The actions of the “Minnesota 8” illustrate again the agonies which confront our nation and particularly our young. While deploring their methods I thank God for their courage. Authority will never be respected and obeyed until it is accompanied by equal responsibility and justice.

We attempt to instill in our children a moral if not religious conscience. We teach them to do what is right regardless of what others may do. That is, until the question of military service arises when we say, “Forget about your conscience! Be quiet and do what you’re told.”

The single most overwhelming problem facing our country today is the growing skepticism, cynicism and mistrust of authority which says one thing and does another—which holds one standard for itself and another for others. (Mrs. Elizabeth P. Franzen, Minneapolis, Letter to

Editor, *Minneapolis Tribune*, January 6, 1971).

“Authority will never be respected and obeyed until it is accompanied by equal responsibility and justice.” The lady hit the nail on the head! She knew that it was the judges, not me, who were “striking at the foundation of government.”

Sentencing

At sentencing, I asked the Judge:

What do you think putting me in jail is going to do? Am I going to be rehabilitated? How am I going to serve my community by being in jail? Now I am willing to undergo the experience, obviously, or I wouldn't be here today. But I would like to know from the depths of your person: you give out sentences to people, like five years of a person's life or one year of a person's life. Do you understand what happens to people? What is going to happen when I am in prison?

You are a man who sends people to prison. I am a man who, I guess, tries to make people think. That was my job. Or I send them to God, whatever you want. I sort of have a vague idea from talking to people what prison is like. But have you experienced jail? Will you come to see me in jail? Will we share that in any way, or will I be out of your life for good? I know that what I have said is probably not as eloquent as what others might, but I guess this is not the time for eloquence, but really for honest truth.

I don't understand—and I would like you to explain to me—I don't understand what putting us in jail is going to do. I would like to understand your position. I would like to understand how you think. I would like to understand the System that you claim allegiance to. I want to understand this country. I want to understand its people or I wouldn't have acted, and I think you owe it to me in honesty and to

the people here as you sentence us to tell us. (TT)

Jailhouse dreams

Once back in jail awaiting transfer to federal prison, the voices of judicial judgment haunted my sleep.

“Those who act out of an allegiance to a Higher Law than the Law of the Land are making Jungle Law.” (TT)

“Lastly, I want to talk with you about...the Vietnam War and the Selective Service System. In that connection I advise you that you have a very limited responsibility in this case. It is solely to make a determination under these standards of Law which I have stated to you as to whether these defendants are guilty or not guilty. And that is all. You have no philosophical, or religious, or theological responsibility at all! Well, I advise you that you have no such responsibility. If the Vietnam war is wrong. If the Selective Service is unfair, and if other things are wrong in this country, the remedy lies in the Halls of Congress or in the Executive Branch of the Government. In our tripartite system of government it is the responsibility of Congress to enact the laws, even bad laws if they have a mind to and some of them may be very bad or very good. It is the responsibility of the Executive Department to enforce those laws and our responsibility, the Judicial Branch of the Government, to interpret them and to apply them to particular fact situations, as we are doing here today.” (TT)

I twist and turn, groan into barred darkness:

“Religious doctrine or belief of a person cannot be recognized or accepted as an excuse or justification for his committing an act which is a criminal offense against the law of the land...Further, it is

the law that no one has the right to determine on a personal basis which laws will be obeyed and which will not, because of alleged evils.” (TT)

Waking restlessness, echoing sighs of resignation:

“Well, Mr. Kroncke I guess that I don't have to defend myself but I took an oath to enforce the law when I was made a judge.”

“And I was baptized before God to live a free life!”

“I can't ... maybe it would have been better to have ruled right away and had none of the evidence.”

“It might have been.”

“But I didn't think that was fair to you and I didn't think that was right, and if the purpose in your mind is to focus attention on the evils, we have been here eight days doing it, or six days, and maybe there is some advantage to that, but the law as I see it is what I read, and I'm sorry but that's the way....” (TT)

Me,

“This is a difficult for me to say because, in a sense, I realize that I am naming you, in my understanding, as an immoral and evil person to people. But somewhere the problems of society go on, and somewhere people have responsibility, and you are the type of man who has had many people come before you with problems, especially with reference to the War, and you have, seemingly consistently— as have all the judges in this District Court—handled

them in the same way, saying: ‘Well, the responsibility lies somewhere up there’...with some unknown God called the State.”
(TT)

Finally, a battle-screed resounds down through millennia justifying war:

“I don’t need to argue whether this is an act of violence or not, but it is an act of destruction of property. If everyone in this country who didn’t like the law took it unto himself to say, ‘I don’t like the law’, automobiles are killing too many people in this country, and therefore I am going to break-in and destroy the plans for next year’s automobile—and they kill more people than the Vietnam war has killed every year, pretty near—if you take the law into your own hands because you don’t like the result that you see, then we have no government and no laws at all. We just then have anarchy and the Court cannot countenance the proposition, despite the sincerity and the eloquence of your arguments, that because you are motivated by religious principles or otherwise to do what you consider to be a moral duty, that you therefore have the right to say, ‘The law doesn’t count. I believe it is wrong and therefore I am going to do my best to impede it.’ That is just so contrary to our System, that it has consequences far reaching.” (TT)

So a final judgment is rendered:

“To condone their conduct or to dismiss it with a slap on the wrist would be to invite continued lawlessness and to approve violence as an agent for change. Change may well be needed in America but change without order results only in chaos. Those who act out of allegiance to a higher law than the law of the land are making jungle law.

Freedom cannot exist in a society which permits violence. These misguided men are wrongly manifesting their opposition to the present state of affairs through recourse not to the law but to rebellion against the law and that is wrong, that is a crime sanctionable, as are all crimes, by conviction and punishment.”

(TT)

My mother

What lay ahead? How was my family taking all this?

Mrs. Charles Kroncke, mother of Francis Kroncke, spoke for most of the parents when she gave her view of her son's impending imprisonment. 'I am sorry to see him go to prison, but I am very proud to see my young man stand up for his convictions and take the aftermath,' the Hastings woman said. 'It will be a great loss to us all, but somehow I don't feel their actions will have been in vain. Their views will affect society and my son will emerge from prison as fine a person as he is today. I am very proud of him.' ("Winners prepare for jail with party," Peter Vaughan, *Minneapolis Star*, November 1971)

Oh, it is so painful to read "my son will emerge from prison as fine a person as he is today." How little we all knew! How white, middle-class, and naively trusting were we in the Church and democratic State. But I had no way of responding to her then. Not her, not even myself. I had no voice. I honestly had no way any longer to speak about either the past which was a record of my failure or the future which was a journey into a darkness I was not in any way prepared to enter.

All that I did have, curiously, was a sliver of comfort in prayer, in the only prayer that yet resonates with me today:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master,

grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love;

for it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Chapter 4: Peacemaking Theology

What did I learn from attempting to be a peacemaker and failing at every turn? As I entered prison the “irrelevant and immaterial” mantra rang so loud and continually inside my head that I could not think a clear thought for near a decade. A Dark Night of the Soul is a traditional spiritual reference to a *via negativa* journey through the dark inner recesses of one’s mind and soul—the Shadow realm. For some this means a wrestling with devils and demons—however the disturbing dark forces that lie in ambush inside one’s psyche are named—and also a gut-wrenching experience of the absence of God in one’s life and world. Prison and the decade after became my Dark Night.

Although I was not self-aware about this as I entered prison, my inner sense of depthless emptiness arose because I had just had all my connections to the patriarchal Father God faith ripped and shredded from my mind and soul. Without my knowing it, an unintentional consequence of my trial was that, like Adam and Eve, I was exiled, cast out of paradise (America and the Church), shamed and cursed as a secular and theological *Outlaw!*

Ten years later, 1983, I began writing two essays that would mark the beginning of my movement out of my Dark Night towards the sunlight—a very dim sunlight! The first one was “Vietnam Undeclared.” I wrote it to my two sons to help them better understand my Vietnam War years and the world they had inherited from my generation. Fittingly, it presented all that I knew to say about my past right up to and at the moment when I entered prison. “Vietnam Undeclared” was my final articulation of my failed peacemaking theology and contained the first awakenings of core themes of my Outlaw Theology.

In this essay I strove to clearly articulate to my sons how I understood the role of war-making both theologically and, as I came to grasp, mythically. Note well: I discerned and described the role of war as mythic story and social ritual. This was a critical and pivotal insight, that is, that America is an institutionally organized society where institutions express dominion and which individuals can *only* do so through their institutional identities. Institutional rights override individual rights, and, quite clearly, are the source for individual rights, not vice versa.

Consider: When near five years old we take our children out of the family environment and

place them in a bedrock institution so that they can learn how to live institutionally. They stay there for anywhere from twelve to twenty years before graduating to their next institutional identity. Normally, they do not return to live in their pre-institutional family home. In fact, their institutional education focused on enabling them to move easily into their next institutional identity. Our corporate and market based economy requires that a young child adapt to the institutional world. He/she must learn how to embody institutional ways. This requires following specific liturgical social rituals, of which registering for the Draft is a legally mandated one.

Our educational institution graduates every male into the military institutional realm. *Every male* successfully graduates into the military through registration, for most this occurs at the close of their high school years. All other institutional options, such as higher education or a corporate job, are not assured but must be competed for. There is no competition required to enter the military job pool—all applicants are guaranteed acceptance. So it is logical to conclude that the objective of the primary educational system (elementary through high school) is to prepare males directly and females indirectly for adopting their military institutional identity. In point of fact every American male reading this who at eighteen registered with the Selective Service System has a military identification number—that remains uniquely his. All of this came home to me in spades as I stood before the judge and received the maximum prison sentence, “Five years to be served in a federal penitentiary.” The *maximum* sentence for a first time offender and committed non-violent activist...just one criminal act but it rocked the foundations of...of what? *Hmmm*, Francis, you really pissed them off. No, *threatened* them. *What did you actually do, Daddy?*

At first I was uncomfortable with this notion of social ritual and liturgy. All I knew were the ceremonies of the religious institutional way. For me ritual and liturgy had more to do with God and saving my soul than providing insights into secular institutional society. Yet since I had felt the absolute wrath of society for my transgression of institutional ritual—Resisting the draft and destroying its liturgical elements, that is, the draft files—I had to re-think “What does their reaction tell you about what you actually did by raiding draft offices?” I had to accept that society functioned in a way I had *not* been educated to understand. In brief, my trial transcripts should be read as a child’s primer on why war is an institutionalized social ritual in American society.

In contrast to our institutional ways, in most non-Western and/or non-industrial societies a child grows up learning near everything while living in a family or kin structure. Even when a child assumes a group identity, such as being part of a clan or tribe, it is a kinship based system and one's family identity remains as the individual's bedrock identity and learning environment. As I reflected on why the Selective Service System was the only institution every young male at eighteen must identify with through registration under penalty of imprisonment, I realized that the social group that was served and the cultural identity formed by registering with the SSS was quite obviously *the* bedrock institution of American society, here, the military institution. From this perspective I re-examined the SSS and soon spied its character and social function as a ritual with describable liturgies. This is what I wanted my sons to understand about the world I was bequeathing to them as father.

Being a media drenched society, the liturgy of war-making is regularly and continually telecommunicated. It is noteworthy that old movies showed the Call to War as "Uncle Sam wants you!" These words tapped into a sense of obligation. For my son's generations current calls are less to war than to consider war-making as an act of personal self-realization and signs of one's maturity. "Be all you can be!" "Army of One!" and "Army Strong!" The locker-room macho banter about *war making a man out of you* or the oft heard judicial sentence to Boot Camp as an alternative to incarceration: *You'll go in a boy and come out a man!* underscore the warrior sense of masculinity, namely, that it is formed through acts of "manly" violence and the shedding of blood.

As I wrote I also answered many of my own long-standing but unresolved questions. For the longest time I could not get a handle on why the State came down so hard on us—hearing "five years" terrified me. I of course knew that the draft system was the supply line of battle-field-hands for the war, and I had an intuition about the secular sacramental character as I spoke of the raids as "socio-political sacramental acts." Nevertheless, it took a lot of reflection on things that my Dad had told me about how he entered and exited WWII for me to be convinced that indeed war for America was a ritual act, and that registering, going to Boot Camp, and preparing for battle were actually a series of liturgical acts. Once I discerned that Endless War was a mythic story, truly a story of origin for secular America, my analysis and interpretations fell into place.

Yet I don't want to gloss over the not so veiled emotional tone in this essay. At its conclusion I had no answers, no quick fixes, no bright paths for my sons to follow. I doubt if you'll miss sensing my not so thinly muffled resignation that the theology of war-marking would remain effectively unchallenged and hegemonic *ad infinitum*. At that moment in time, I no longer believed that any extant theology or path to enlightenment, whether Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, et al., either desired to or could challenge and defeat the theology of war-making. The world my sons were inheriting from my generation was imprisoned deep within the most forlorn and dark recesses of a Dark Night's realm where Endless Warring thrived (as Cold Wars and hot wars). As their father I had failed to find even a slither of Earth where they could dwell peacefully and comfortably at home.

"Vietnam Undeclared"

You ask me about Vietnam, my sons, and words die upon my lips. For Vietnam is more than I or my generation can define, describe or express. As a word it is a dictionary entry, a noun denoting a geographical spot but beware this simple deception for Vietnam is more than seven letters. It is seven letters with seven times seventy times seventy meanings. While millions have uttered it, few have heard it with identical understanding. For Vietnam is one of those rare words, one of an awesome few in human history, which truly conjures spiritual insight. When it is spoken, the deepest emotions of the human soul are unleashed. When it is voiced, a People dreams. Upon its sound America once again trembles, holds tight its pounding heart, and kneels in prayer. Yes, Vietnam harbors this majestic power. It brings individuals and us the American People to our knees. But to what or whom does Vietnam drive us to worship, to pray? This is why words die upon my lips. For Vietnam has delivered me and the American people into a time and place which is sacred but of a sacredness outside of our tradition, our history, our religious understanding.

Vietnam is word of incantation and exorcism. As such it draws forth all that is darkly evil and foreboding within the individual and American soul while simultaneously calling forth all that is brightly good and healing. My sons, Vietnam is scrawled in blood across the corpse of my generation, yet it is also our anointing for new birth. Vietnam is the last word of our death and the first word of our new tongue. Be patient with what I will say to you. Ponder it, reflect upon it,

let it take you to the new sacred ground. Let Vietnam become your tradition, for it is my patrimony. Speak it to heal generations to come.

- 1 -

Vietnam was not a war

To grasp Vietnam, you must first understand war. This is requisite because Vietnam was *not* a war. Yes, it was killing and murder, rape and pillage, atrocity—all that which takes place in a war. Likewise, it was heroic deeds, honorable actions and noble, selfless sacrifice—all that which takes place in a war. But it was not a People's war, and it was not an American war. It was neither because it was undeclared.

What is the significance of being undeclared? After all it can be argued, Vietnam was as described above. Indeed men dressed in uniforms, appropriations were allocated, military alliances were strengthened, and the Evening News brimmed with footage of carnage, pain and triumph.

Being undeclared, Vietnam was not liturgically ritualized—and war is a liturgy. A liturgy is that which makes whole, which grounds an event of spiritual proportion to mundane time and space. Without declaration, nothing can begin or end. Vietnam Undeclared is then without beginning and without end; it is a reality untethered to time and space. As such, the act of non-declaration must be judged either trivial or as an unusual act whose profundity has never been tapped.

My sons, the word Vietnam is volcanic. Observe those who speak it. It is never received by ear or loosed from the tongue in weak conversation. It is a word which beckons, entices, erupts; even its triviality addresses the profound.

War is the naming of an enemy

War is a public proclamation of the existence of an enemy. The enemy is proclaimed and named. War is the way in which a People defines itself as unified as it separates from this enemy. The public proclamation is a ritual which initiates the liturgy that unites a People on every level: individual, social, political, historical, psychological and mythic. This ritual public proclamation is the clear and distinct beginning of collective memory. Through this public proclamation the

People are made whole, become one People, one nation—live their common name,
“Americans!”

Under this common name, not their individual identities, war is waged. “America is at war!” shouts the proud citizen; it is not he at war but himself as People. He is not personally responsible for battlefield slaughter rather it is the People who slay the enemy through him. In this way the public proclamation bares the soul of each individual as it evokes and reveals the collective soul of the nation, of the People. War then is primarily a transforming and transcending act. As it transforms individuals into the People, it transcends the moral limitations imposed upon individuals by the collective. It effects this through a specific liturgy of which ritual public declaration is the necessary first step in the naming of the People and its Enemy.

Prior to the proclamation the People were united, after it they are unified. Before they were private citizens, after they are warriors. Before their leader was presidential, after he is Commander-in-Chief. War describes that time when each individual person is intensely aware of and lives his collective identity. While some become soldiers, all become warriors; don the mythic armor. “America at war” means each citizen at war. During war each is a patriot regardless of the humbleness of task, whether knitting socks for soldiers at the front or dive-bombing from out the clouds. Each individual person is unified in a common pursuit—the slaughter of the Enemy.

The ritual and liturgy of war

Citizens enter Boot Camp where they become soldiers—the physical and visual symbols of the transformation into warrior. The soldier’s visible alteration: cut of hair, mode of dress, attitude of walk and salute, are ritual marks of distinction. While all citizens are warriors, only soldiers are trained to kill. Although covert and spy actions are part of warring, it is the visible battles of the soldiers which are cheered and wept over. How the soldier fares, overcomes obstacles, manifests bravery... dies...is how the People emote. It is to them that Purple Hearts are awarded, to their families distinguished Crosses bestowed. The soldier is the emotional embodiment of the identity created by the public declaration of the war. The soldier is the individual transcending his own morality as he becomes People at war. The soldier is the heart and soul of the People.

The soldier comes into existence through ritual and gains meaning through the liturgy of war. He lives in myth, a creation of the collective soul of the People. He has real existence and spiritual meaning only when war is declared; he has no individual character—he is as he acts out, creates war, as he kills: this is his liturgical rite.

When the war is over the liturgy concludes in a set way. As with the Beginning so the End is ritually declared in headlines: “Victory in Europe!” “Peace Declared!” Once declared, the soldier demobs. He re-transforms through disrobing. It is a public ritual embraced within celebration. As the soldier returns home symbols of new life bedeck him—flowers are strung around his neck, women (regardless of stature as mother, wife, sister, child) hang upon him, hugging and kissing, a festive atmosphere blooms under swirls of confetti and booming sounds of drum and brass bands; people dance in the streets.

After the parade, his discharge, his re-transformation is complete. Thereafter he is forbidden to wear his uniform except on special occasions. He adopts current dress and style. At the same time, he is re-bound by personal morality. No longer can he act on behalf of the People. His is once again an individual, not a collective soul. He ceases to have liturgical meaning. He no longer has meaning in the mythic realm.

Without ritual the soldier cannot be created. Without ritual citizens cannot become warriors. Without ritual neither the individual nor the collective can speak or hear “War!” There is no warrior discourse or embrace either private or public; no liturgical moment.

War is a transcending moral act

War is bloodshed. Blood is a term used to define a People, “We share the same blood.” It is a blood defined by a boundary of time and space, by a history and a nation. Blood is German or Irish or Armenian or Kenyan or Vietnamese or American. Blood flows through the veins of the individual and courses through the heart of the People.

To shed blood is a mythic act, for it is the slaughter of another alien People, not just of an individual. Cain was accursed and marked not just because he slew Abel but because in so slaying his brother he was shedding his own and his People’s blood. His sacrilege was that he did not transform his brother into enemy, rather he slew his own People—and such is murder, not

war. For this he was marked and condemned. There is no morality which makes brother slaying acceptable. Only when brother is named as enemy can his slaying be justified through war's ritual and liturgy.

To shed a brother's blood requires naming him as enemy. It is a naming grounded in a spiritual, transforming power, in the power of the People in service to their God, for it changes all individual enemies into a Public Enemy. It is a naming drawn against an offense of mythic proportion, against an act judged evil.

Once named as enemy, the brother's blood is not considered familial. Quite the contrary, its shedding is ritually required for the People to continue to liturgically define themselves as a distinct People. Unless the enemy's blood is shed and victory won, the People stand at risk of losing their identity, history, and spiritual ground. As such they would be rendered morally illegitimate; not regarded as warriors and soldiers but as murderers like Cain.

War's loser must surrender. It is surrender a step beyond submission. It is a spiritual renunciation replete with acts of contrition and implorations for forgiveness, but more significantly it is a renunciation—a sundering of a People's mythic power. Surrender encompasses the denial by the enemy that his mythic power was real. Righteously, the loser is accused of war crimes, adjudged to have acted outside of myth and ritual, and cast outside the spiritual realm and named as criminal, as moral outlaw. Indicted like Cain his blood-shedding is not redemptive rather it is denounced as a common crime: murder. Denied the power of his ritual, the loser is deprived of identity, control over his own myth and history, and allegiance to his God who is now proclaimed a false god.

The loser is forbidden to ritualize the war. Liturgically, he cannot ceremoniously end it. There are no parades. His soldiers' uniforms are badges of disgrace. He cannot frame time within the war's historical boundaries. Collectively and individually the loser is denied mythic existence as a People and is forced to bear the full weight of his bloodshed which is now interpreted solely as a lawless and morally illegitimate act. In sum, the loser is rendered into parts, never to be whole, never to be People again. War's loser ceases to exist on the collective, mythic level. Like Cain, the loser wanders, cast forth from the realm of the holy and whole.

War then is a set of rituals and a liturgy which morally and spiritually wholes and heals a People through the naming and slaughter of an enemy People. As such it is an act which transcends individual will and action while enabling the individual to transcend his own will and morality.

War is the individual as an agent of God

When war is declared—FDR and World War II: “This day shall live in infamy!”—men step forward and submit themselves to spiritual reformation. It is spiritual because they now will do what is morally forbidden in normal times. They murder. They enter the sacred zone. They touch the creative power which is, in profane times, reserved only for God. As warrior they render death. They do so by offering themselves as sacrifice. They ready themselves for murdering by a ritual preparation for redemptive dying—an act of self transcendence.

Once declared, a People hears that its sons and fathers are going to be transformed. They will no longer be citizens: farmers, teachers, professional athletes, welders, rather they are to become warriors. War is a realm of self-transcending dying—an individual death is given collective meaning. The dying soldier is America dying, yet he is America being born as his death is sacrifice offered in hope of his People’s rebirth. From the war America is created anew. When it comes to tell its mythic story of origin—its official People’s history—America marks its textbook chapters by these phases of self-transcending dying and new birth. History is given meaning as it references the boundaries of war: Revolutionary War, post-Civil War, pre-World War I, post-World War II, and so on. As such each generation learns that the story of the American People is set in mythic and spiritual terms. Each chapter is marked by sacrificial blood. The overall story is that of the People being mythically reborn again as Warrior Nation.

Each generation is taught to seek these rituals and to conduct this liturgy—to create its own time of moral transcendence. Each seeks to test its mettle, reveal its spiritual character and strength through the liturgy of war. For only in this realm of moral transcendence can a People live its collective name, become Americans. A generation which does not fight a war is a lost generation, one whose worth is untested and unproven.

The spirituality of war

War is grounded in a People's collective spiritual vision. It reveals a People's fundamental spiritual beliefs. Among the People war is publically spoken about as being a holy crusade. As such it is a primary expression of the relationship of that People with their God. The war's declaration is an altar call for witnesses who are faithful to the moral vision, who desire to become standard bearers of God's truth. Winning a war is interpreted as a validation of a People's holiness. Losing a war blankets a People with guilt, a sense of uncleanness (immorality), and of abandonment by their God. A People who has lost a war interprets such as a blight in ritualistic terms: as a call to purification—a return to basic fundamentals beliefs. After losing a war, a People calls itself to revitalization rituals, rituals of new birth or new baptism, rituals of re-confirmation, re-identification encompassing confession, cleansing, exorcism, and anointing. After victory, like rituals are enacted although they are rituals to release fullness and blessing. They are rituals of celebration, joy, and triumph—the exaltation of God. Yet after victory or defeat the common goal of all rituals is to return to normalcy, to the everyday, to life lived without intense collective emotion—to the mundane and profane.

When war ends it is urgent and critical that the soldier not linger in the mythic zone where he will be tempted to become a murderer. The ritual of exiting, of cleansing, of purification must begin. He must be re-formed as father or son, as plumber, executive, dancer, or mailman. He must hear the war undeclared. Not for this to happen is to jeopardize his sanity because it was men, women and children that he killed, and if not re-formed he will continue to kill and become a terror at home. Without an exit ritual, the individual will not be at peace; he will be caught in a timeless and spaceless zone where he is neither citizen nor warrior. He will be accursed and marked like Cain: condemned, a wanderer never at rest, never at home, without myth or history. He will merely exist, not live, outside of time and space—in exile. For him, the war will never have begun nor ever ended.

The rituals and liturgy of war are integrated and adorned with the rituals and liturgy of a People's dominant religion, here American Christianity. Although Christianity preaches "Thou shalt not kill!" the soldier accepts his primary role as killer with moral approbation. Although the soldier slays his human brother, he is not marked like Cain. Rather, the soldier is like God's Son, Jesus, who gave his life in selfless sacrifice that others may be saved. The soldier's slaying is understood and valued in terms of this risk, this sacrifice he is offering. His slaying is the slaying

of himself more than of his enemy. Thus, what is in normal times murder becomes a healing, whole rendering act. In sum, war as ritual slaying is how the individual transcends ethical and moral limits and enters into the sacred realm, emerges as a spiritual partner with God.

War as liturgy then must emerge into peacemaking to complete its cycle. Peacemaking in Christian terms is a Resurrection peace, that of being born again. Peacemaking is the public proclamation that the war is ended. It is the transition to normal times; back out of the mythic realm to the moments of individual story. The leader once again becomes President and relegates his Commander-in-Chief functions to professional soldiers. The declaration of *Peace!* initiates the transformation from warrior to citizen. The soldier symbolically re-dresses as businessman, teacher, laborer, or dancer. As the soldier achieves peace with himself and immerses his warrior self within his citizen self, so the People come to be at peace.

My sons, we must accept this tragic situation that since Vietnam was not declared neither has it begun or ended. Yet you and I have fingered the Wall. We have touched this collective marker and held in our hearts our own familial loss. We know that Vietnam existed, was...exists, is. You ask, If Vietnam was not a war, what was it? How can we of the "Vietnam War generation" explain and interpret our experience? Surely something happened, but what?

Because it was undeclared I cannot, my generation cannot, speak in traditional ways about Vietnam. We cannot repeat the Call which we did not hear. Yet though undeclared, Vietnam communicated. And this is where it crosses over into mystery, mystification, bafflement and assumes the shape of specter, of haunting and ethereal spirits. Vietnam Undeclared is an historic first, an anthropological novelty. For Vietnam Undeclared is a People warring while denying they are at war; as such Vietnam is a peculiar communication.

More, Vietnam Undeclared is a People warring with itself. "Vietnam" has come to mean the way we in America warred/war against ourselves. It was as much the mindless abandonment of troops in Indochina as it was the mindful engagement with citizen protestors in the streets with the domestic police.

Yes, this is the connection. “Vietnam” is more than war. It is more than a forlorn peasant country in Indochina. It is more than mass marches on Washington, DC. “Vietnam” is more than Undeclared—it is a communication of something previously unarticulated, never before grasped.

I tremble as “Vietnam” screeches through my mind, sweats my palms, races my heart, and drags nightmares and dreadful visions into daylight.

My sons, grasp my hands, look more closely with me at the ritual of war as it has played itself on the small stage of our own family.

- 2 -

Why did the political leaders—the Nation’s Fathers—not declare the war? Why did they send their sons off without ritual? Clearly, *the character of the relationship between fathers and sons* had changed since the last ritualized wars, the World Wars, I and II: the wars to end all wars.

The myth and ritual of World War II

My father told World War II stories within a framework of time and space. Without stating it as such he set the war’s boundaries by the rituals of entry and exit. December 7, 1941 was the date which tethered the ritual. He detailed where he was when Pearl Harbor was bombed. He cited the city, described the room and the radio set through which FDR declared the war, and he interpreted that day and speech as the moment of his commitment—he left three children, two children and a pregnant wife, and a career job to enlist. From that day forward he did not look back. He had no moral doubts. Emotionally, he was at war. He was America at war.

While never wavering in his patriotic and moral duty, he hated war. His letters from the Pacific stated: “Dear Sweetheart...as I walk along and see the rows and rows of white crosses, my only consolation is that in twenty years to twenty-five years our sons will not have to go to war.” This was more than belief, it was passionate emotion; it was his soul as father. It was a clear and straightforward statement of his connection to his God, a God who would—through him as soldier—redeem and triumph. Who would—through hated war—bring peace, and end war for his sons.

World War II soldiers *knew* that it was the war to end all wars. Deep within their souls they felt the hatred for the Public Enemy: Adolf Hitler and the German People (the source of Axis fascism). Their cause was just, more it was eschatological—a battle of Final Days where loss meant the obliteration of the moral foundation of Western Christian culture. There was scant public discussion about the economic or political benefits of conquering Germany, Italy or Japan. Rather, it was a battle between Fatherlands. It was a battle of truly mythic stature: at stake was the World, all peoples of every nation—despite any individual nation’s neutrality, the soldier knew that he fought to save all nations from the demonic Enemy.

As WWII veterans recount their story, the mythic power of war becomes manifest. For them the familial bond was severed and the brother named as enemy. Consider that many, like my father, were proud ethnic Germans. He spoke German until he was four years old—in a second generation American home in northern New Jersey. Since he was both college educated and a chemist he was followed by the FBI until he volunteered. They were seeking an answer to the question: Was he an American? Or a *German* American? Or a German spy? Despite his strong ethnic ties, the power of the war myth distanced him from his Teutonic kin—the brother was named Enemy. For my father, in Adolf Hitler, the presence of evil was personified.

After the ritual of Boot Camp and the confirmation of their soldier status, America became a Warrior Nation and the slaughter of Germans (and all Axis participants: Italians, French, Japanese) by ethnic brothers was done with ardor and heroic charge. Indeed, like so many families, there were familial German Kronckes to be slain!

Boot Camp was not just a military experience, becoming a soldier was not just a social status or a career move. Rather it was a spiritually measured moment. My father went off to war “for the duration.” Time was suspended—there was only Now, no future. Space was altered—the Home Front was wherever the soldier went. America as geography disappeared to be replaced by Democracy. The defense of the Homeland then took place wherever the soldier went. As my father’s letters indicated he was “Somewhere in the Pacific”... and it could just as well have been “Somewhere in Italy” or England or North Africa or the Atlantic. National boundaries ceased to exist, replaced by a sense of “where” spoken of in terms of presence. My father, as all soldiers, was where Democracy fought Nazi Fascism. Such was the mythic space they marched through,

cruised towards, and flew over. It was a landscape of Will and Duty. It was a battleground from which they would not, could not, return except in Final Victory or Defeat.

When it did end—again, moments captured with snapshot detail and accuracy—“Victory in Europe!” (May 8, 1945) and “VJ Day!” (September 2, 1945)—only after these events would (could) their war days be numbered. Only then could a calendar be xed and a quantifiable number be given to a soldier’s “duration”—his “time of service” calculated.

My father came home, paraded here and there, and then placed his “Lieutenant, Junior Grade” uniform in mothballs, hugged me (a toddler), and resumed his job as chemist. For a time he kept in touch with a few buddies, at times he told stories—always wistful and humorous—until the specter of the Public Enemy ebbed in his and the nation’s soul. He was home. His family was safe. The world was at Peace.

War had taken him out of ordinary time and when completed returned him. The “Call to Arms!” had been answered. With a clear sense of what had happened, when it had happened, and why it had happened, my father joined the millions of other World War II vets and relegated “WWII” to collective memory. It was ended, it was over. Its reality only relivable on appointed mythic days (Memorial Day, Fourth of July) when social and cultural ritual sanctioned a restricted immersion back into the timeless, spaceless and extraordinary experience called the Big War.

These cyclical holidays healed my father. For although war ceases for the collective, the drop out of time and space into the mythic can never be fully contained by the individual. He has lived as an action of his God. He was selected and chosen. He transcended his own ethical and moral consciousness. War spiritually transformed him, and he exited war struggling to contain his heart, mind and soul in the mundane confinements of the everyday. Within each calendar year, the veteran *must* have extraordinary, cathartic days during which he relives and transforms himself, momentarily, into soldier. These are days of memory, replete with the twin releases of grief and celebration. They are days when the collective once again issues the Call for War, recounts the details of battle, and sounds with the setting sun the Call for Peace. Such holidays

(true holy days) made my father whole and were testimony to me that I too could be soldier and a faithfully spiritual man.

The battle of the Gods

My father was empowered by ritual to know and sense the presence of the Public Enemy. Why then did my father's generation not so empower mine? Why did my President and Congress not declare the Vietnam War? The Bay of Tonkin Resolution which apologists cite as the declaration was known to be a sham as it was written. It was a Presidential excuse, a ruse on Congress—an Executive mandate but an unofficial act. Such a Resolution did not possess the stature of a ritual declaration in that President Johnson acted as an *individual* and not as Commander-in-Chief and so lacked the stature of Heroic Father. He, paradoxically, usurped the power with which he could have been invested if he had enacted the ritual by moving Congress to declare war and so unify the Will and Spirit of the People through his own will and spirit.

The president's usurpation can be explained when one foundational difference between my father's and my time is clearly exposed: the existence of a "peacetime draft." After World War II President Truman did not disband the draft. The professional army not only began to grow, it became a foundational and stable part of the national economy. President Eisenhower, a heralded soldier president, described this condition as the emergence of "the military industrial complex." Among the many things this revealed was the acceptance of the fact of perpetual war. While I grew up in the era of the Cold War, it was anything but cold. Rather the heart of the People raced in a state of perpetual fear and war readiness. We Americans remained stuck in a never-ending state of war-making.

By deciding not to end WWII's draft when the truce was signed (as was the government's way throughout America's history), Truman denied World War II a complete exit ritual, a full return to Peace. "They shout 'Peace! Peace!' when there is no peace!" (Jeremiah 6:14) aptly describes the condition. America remained mapped in war terminology as a "Democracy," and it never returned to existence as a geographical place. Peculiarly, Americans continued to live in eschatological tension—as if time was still suspended and each day was but one in the Final Days. It was claimed that the world was not yet safe for Democracy. This was a critical fact. It meant accepting that World War II never brought Peace. Battlefront hostilities

ceased but the ritual reality persisted. Boot Camp was not broken. The People's Will and Spirit was kept at war's feverish pitch, fueled by the apocalyptic imagery of an imminent nuclear holocaust.

President Johnson's usurpation was possible because the right and power to declare war was *not* returned to the People after World War II. This right and power is returned when the president puts down his mythic mantle as Commander-in-Chief *as* Peace is accepted. Truman, by instituting the peacetime draft, rejected the surrender and submission of the Enemy. Although the visual presence of Nazis and the Chrysanthemum Emperor faded, they perdured invisibly through every anti-Democratic evil which could be named and numbered. Consider that Truman dropped the Atomic Bomb but declared that it had only obliterated the two cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—it had not eradicated the Public Enemy and his evil—an evil that morphed from Nazism to Communism. In point of fact, by maintaining a peacetime draft Truman revealed quite clearly that the war had not been won! Consequently, instead of a *temporary* war time draft which was solely used as an instrument of war time conscription, the draft became a *permanent* part of American culture, society, and the economy. This permanent draft required a permanent mythic Commander-in-Chief. As Truman surely knew, historically the president was Chief Executive in normal times and Commander-in-Chief in extraordinary times, namely, only when war was declared. Possibly more transformative than his decision to drop the Bomb, President Truman grounded America in a novel mythic structure by institutionalizing the peacetime draft.

At the time, war veterans and Americans in general did not assess the significance of what Truman did because it was a historically unprecedented act. To most it appeared trivial. Numbed by the horrors of hot war, few opposed preparing to fight the emerging Red Menace. Few thought the peacetime draft other than a reasonable and sensible security measure, one taken to ensure that a Public Enemy did not resurrect and catch America unprepared. Only the words "Pearl Harbor" needed to be intoned for all critical questions to be answered and fears calmed. "Democracy must be vigilantly guarded!"

My father and all World War II veterans were deceived and their birthright as warriors stolen by Truman's act. "Victory in Europe!" and "Peace Declared!"—sadly both were lies. They were lies widely believed and ones which the fathers passed onto their sons. The sons—my

generation—were raised as Cold Warriors, which was testimony to the incompleteness of the ritual and the continuance of the liturgy. We inherited a world at war, not at peace. The Public Enemy was not vanquished, rather only transformed from Hitler into Stalin. Over time these personalities became insignificant as Communism and Socialism—systems and life styles—were identified as the enemies. Such were fitting Public Enemies for Democracy.

In this light, President Johnson could *only* have acted as he did because he inherited the patrimony of Truman. Johnson could not declare war because America as Democracy was already at war! His Bay of Tonkin Resolution *appears* as usurpation but in fact he could not usurp what had not been given back to the People. Truman was the first president who subordinated his presidency to his Commander-in-Chief status, and who refused to conclude the ritual of war. Johnson was already Commander-in-Chief—he was not a president in need of a declaration to exercise his perpetual war powers.

Truman's act violated the collective Will and Spirit. He refused to return to the ordinary. He boldly and baldly refused to heed the Call to Peace. He resisted his People's God—the God who warred to bring Peace. Truman refused to exit from the realm of the mythic. His was an act of disobedience fraught with profound, primal consequences. From that day forward, he exercised his presidential powers in terms of his Commander-in-Chief powers. For him, the whole Earth, the world itself became a “global America” as he claimed it as the proper battleground for Democracy. Henceforth, America's self-assigned job was to police the world, and so he set forth to garrison the Earth.

The meaning, function and reality of “solider” was altered. The Cold War's “Peacetime warrior” was either its own boldfaced contradiction in terms or a novel mythic oxymoron. It became the latter in light of its source in the oxymoronic “peacetime draft.” Notably, the soldier became an economic unit, a (battle)field-hand for the Endless War economy. He ceased to fight Enemy People rather he slew “isms” such as the “specter of Communism.” Boot Camp became a faith-based site of Democratic ritual—a rite of passage for eighteen year old males; a required social experience which validated one's masculinity. Boot Camp became global America's sacramental ritual, somewhat of the stature of Christian Baptism.

The peacetime Draft negated the need for the ritual of public Declaration. It assumed the existence of Endless War, a war which was for “beyond duration,” so paradoxically each soldier (as in Vietnam) served a pre-set, restricted term. This was a period that the Vietnam era soldier described not in terms of “war years” but as “drafted for two years.” These were years of ordinary time, not extraordinary. Consider: These years were lived in normal calendar time with dates checked off and ticketed for furloughs and R&R. This was so because all time is peacetime insofar as it has become doctrine that “Peace is War”—echoing Aristotle’s “We make war that we may live in peace.”

Truman’s institutionalization of the draft was a priestly act—he propitiated his *personal* God, the God of War.

Why did Truman do this? Why did he turn from the God of Peacemaking to the God of War-making? Why did he deceive and betray my father and his war’s veterans?

No easy answers are forthcoming. Analysts can forward economic, political or social explanations and justifications but they pale in their attempts to grasp the magnitude of Truman’s act—for he was the instrument of his God’s transformation of the Earth, wherein Endless Warring forever vanquished Peace. In this light Truman suffered Hitler’s curse. Both transformed their People into permanent soldiers whom they thrust into an eschatological battle. Both replaced the Will of the People with the Will of the State. Both sought totalitarian powers. Hitler’s vision was couched in non-Christian, pagan terms and imagery. Truman’s vision in Christian and Democratic terms and imagery. Truman’s Christianity was, arguably, a twisted and perverted interpretation and use of mainstream Christianity. Hitler espoused a fascist totalitarianism. Truman conjured a democratic totalitarianism. Both were priests in service to the God of War, whose benediction is George Orwell’s “War is Peace.” Truly—apocalyptically—since World War II, Americans have lived in a perilous End-Time spiritual state.

The draft as sacramental ritual

If I had ever questioned the foundational ritual and liturgical stature of the Selective Service System, I was no longer left in doubt. My decision not to carry that measly piece of impermanent paper made me a criminal—but now I understood why it also made me a blasphemer!

As I burned my card I encountered the full sacramental import of the act which Truman ritualized. He—not I nor the Christian church nor the People—endowed the tool of conscription with symbolic meaning and power. He redefined the cultural mooring of American society. Of great import was that the State was personified and embodied not in the mythic People but in the political apparatus of government—the government became mythic! Truman defined himself as Military Chief, not as Chief Executive. His retention of his extraordinary war time title of Commander-in-Chief represents a profound mythic break with presidential tradition. Henceforth, fathers and sons...all males...would be bound by and *born into conscription*. All would be born as children of the Warrior State, and raised in worship of the God of War-making. No longer was the individual *family* the anchor of society, rather the State was the anchor of the family. The family would henceforth exist to serve the State, not the State to serve the family.

I was born into conscription—it was not a choice as it was for my father. More, there was no life outside of conscription—to defy it was to be imprisoned or exiled. For my generation, the draft card became our foundational bond as males and citizens. In the now mythic government's eyes, to destroy this 1-A card became, paradoxically, a violation of the Biblical command, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before Me."

The spiritual quest of Vietnam Veterans

The soldier in Vietnam believed that he had answered his country's call to war. He believed that it would culminate in a call to peace. But he found neither war nor peace in their proper mythic mode. Rather he found himself bewildered by the same reactions that I found as a draft resister. His cause was judged ignoble, stupid, meaningless—often derided by older veterans at VFW or American Legion meetings as "just a jungle rumble, not a real war!" By others he was lampooned as a dupe for oil cartels or as a pawn in the CIA's secret global chess game. Upon return, he became ashamed. The accusations of being "a loser" were heightened by an undertone of cowardly criminality. He was made to feel as if he were a murderer and not a soldier.

The import of the lack of ritual Declaration became manifest and magnified by the lack of a ritual exit, a Welcome Home, a victory celebration. Although the president spoke of "Victory for Democracy," he did not—could not—ritually end what had never begun. Many

Vets hungered—a hunger never satisfied, sadly, one that cannot be assuaged—for “just a simple word of thanks,” a gesture of recognition. In effect, they sought and were denied even a moment of mythic redemption and healing, nary an instance of liturgy.

Vietnam was not a war, rather it was just a phase in the Endless War, a series of battles in the Final Solution—the eschatological peacetime war. Yet, what the high priests of the God of war-making failed to grasp was the individual’s critical need for healing ritual entrance into and exit from liturgical war. Although America’s People continue to remain in a perpetual state of war, the individual cannot enter the realm of God—become an instrument of God—without ritual. Lacking ritual, the individual can only see himself as a murderer, never as a soldier.

Why was this individual need not fulfilled? Didn’t the high priests of war-making understand the importance of ritual and liturgy? As answer, consider that in a totalitarian State the individual is the means to an end, not the end itself. Before World War II, as my father believed, America was a People’s Democracy where war had to be declared. It was a society prepared to perform the ritual steps to enter the extraordinary time and space of liturgical war. It was, in brief, a society in service to the God of peacemaking, a service which contained a ritual for a “Just War.” It was a society, my father believed, which ultimately sought peace for its individual citizens.

War as prison ritual

The initial Watergate hearings were televised during my first week in prison. I paid little attention to them. I did not need proof of the history of governmental lies and crimes. The details did not fascinate me. All around me the lies were embedded in concrete and iron bars. I was on America’s Inside—“in country.” Joylessly, I found that the prison population was dominated by veterans of wars and Draft Resistance.

Prison gave me the final clue to Vietnam. Prison had its entrance and exit rituals, but they were enacted solely by the individual isolated from the collective. Going Inside set the individual at war with the State. Prison was its own perpetual state of war-making. The Enemy was defined as the other convict. The spiritual direction announced was, “Do your own time!” This was a statement repeated and supported by the staff’s Catholic chaplain’s sermons.

“Do your own time!” meant do not form bonds with your fellow convicts. They—other people—were each a Public Enemy. To be redeemed, to be rewarded with “Good Time,” I was told to isolate myself from others and submit to the State. I was clearly directed to serve the God of war-making with a purity of heart, which required a renunciation of all my former social and personal bonds, and by doing so merit regeneration through the spiritual discipline of obeying all of the prison’s rules. This advice was akin to that forwarded by the head of my former monastic Order. As a monk I was commanded to surrender my will to Father Superior. I was to take no pains to direct my own life rather I was to submit to his Spiritual Direction. The goal of the monastic quest was to strip me of self-centeredness and self-absorption so that I could serve the People of God.

In prison, the Warden wants me to learn to do my own time as the end itself, not as a means to the end of service to the People. He wants to transform me into a citizen who defines his existence as service to the State. If I undergo this transformation, I am assured, I will be successful in my return to the Free World.

“Do your own time!” describes the mythic state where every person is a gook. It is a state of perpetual war.

Vietnam, like prison, was a sentence, meted out as the penalty for theft or rape or drug dealing was—a tour for me of “Five years!” Inside prison I was aware of the perpetual state of war which certain Americans are born into because of skin color or economic status. It is commonplace to state that prison is filled with minorities, the lower class, and functional illiterates. It became commonly understood that the ranks of the in-country, battlefield “grunts” were filled by Americans of like description.

“Do your own time!” is all that anyone can do during Endless War. There is no ritual way to transcend one’s individuality and bond with the People. There are no *collective* rituals of entrance and exit offered. Although prisoners go through a Boot Camp like entrance, they too are never forgiven and reconciled. They are never healed. They can never return Home. They are accursed like Cain and endlessly wander—most circling back into prison.

My sons, in this light, it is clear why Vietnam Veterans can never come Home. There is no Home for a country perpetually at war. There is only the battlefield. What the veterans have been forced to learn—although not accept—is that the State which worships the God of War-making has no place for soldiers, only criminals. Yes, only war criminals. Not soldiers but marauders, terrorists, assassins—genocidal maniacs. In Endless War there is only one moral rule—that there are no moral rules! “Burn every village.” The State wants the veteran to do his own time and live isolated from his brother, who is forever a Public Enemy.

The State which worships the God of War has its self preservation not that of the individual soldier as its primary End. Since it defines itself as perpetually at war, its Peace is War-making. The Vietnam Veteran, in the State’s mind, must live in the mythic moment, forever. However—tragically—the individual cannot live continually in eschatological tension, as if in the Final Days. To do so is to never be made whole or healed. To do so is to live criminally. Denied exit from this myth, the veteran comes to see himself as Public Enemy... and his final act of Duty is suicide—liturgical self murder.

Summary of Pathway #1

My storyline is that of a white, middle-class, conservative, East Coast, German-Irish Roman Catholic who became a seminarian, young monk, and lay theologian, and who upon hearing the moral call of his Church, through Vatican II, resisted what he perceived to be an illegitimate authority. The joke is on me, clearly, for it was not illegitimate. In fact it legitimately rendered me “irrelevant and immaterial,” convicted me as a violent felon, and sentenced me to five years in federal prison. I simply had to learn what type of authority it was and in what set of values it grounded its legitimacy.

Why I Resisted stemmed from several conscious intellectual and moral decisions, but what proved more revealing were those things that drove me subconsciously. I inherited from my father a moral vision that was grounded in his own act of resistance to illegitimate authority, re: the Manhattan Project, yet a moral action that I came to know only after he passed away.

While I grounded my illegal activities and moral civil disobedience in the values of the biblical theological tradition, notably as mediated through the *Documents of Vatican II* and the visionary

writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., I eventually found myself as a theological outsider and, by some accounts, a theological heretic.

The experiences on Pathway#1 found expression in “Vietnam Undeclared,” an account I gave to my sons about what I learned about the function of war-making in American society. I shared that my anti-war efforts failed. All that I could conclude and share with my sons was that Americans tell themselves a mythic story wherein they are specially Chosen to bring order and democracy to the world. I explained how war became a ritual practice and how through the liturgical practices of waging war that they and all young men were supposed to discover their manhood as killers for God and Country. Finally, I shared that I continue to strive everyday to “live as if I am no one’s enemy.” I showed them the pathway of the peace criminal, as I have to you.

Onward!

I stated that I started writing two essays in 1983. After “Vietnam Undeclared,” the second one, “Prison, Bottoming out, the Mother,” which expressed what I experienced and learned while in the penitentiary came quickly on the heels of the first. I wrote it because I was perplexed that while in the most forlorn sector of my personal Dark Night that I hadn’t killed myself. I had heard a fair number of inmate stories that later ended up with suicide, so I asked, “Francis, why didn’t you off yourself while in prison?” To answer it, I had to venture back into prison’s darkness. Follow me there now on Pathway #2.