

## *Vietnam Undeclared*

by Francis X. Kroncke

*You ask me about Vietnam, my son, 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 is truly spiritual. 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 power. It brings individuals and we 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 son, 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.*

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### **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 describes a war. Likewise, it was heroic deeds, honorable actions and moral nobility, selfless sacrifice—all that

describes 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.

The significance lies in the historical singularity of the fact of being undeclared. School books fail to footnote another such American war which was not declared. Of greater moment, the fact that "Vietnam veterans" as a social type have been outcast and abandoned, rendered socially invisible, and are denied legitimacy as veterans call for an examination of this singular fact, for plumbing the many meanings of its singularity.

Being undeclared, Vietnam was not liturgized, and war is a liturgy. A liturgy is that which makes whole, which grounds an event of spiritual proportion to mundane time and space; it is that which provides borders, boundaries, in brief, the battle ground. Without declaration, nothing can begin nor end. Vietnam Undeclared is, then, without beginning and without end; it is a reality untethered to time and space. As such, it must be judged either trivial or of a profundity never before tapped.

*My son, the word Vietnam is volcanic. Observe but those who speak it. But observe further that it is never received by ear nor 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 which unites a people on every level: individual, social, political, historical, psychological and religious. This ritual public proclamation is the clear and distinct beginning of 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 person 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. Though 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 liturgy.

When the war is over the liturgy concludes in a set way. As with the beginning so the end is ritually declared (headline: "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 symbols of new life bedeck him—flowers are hung 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. He is forbidden to wear his uniform except on special occasions. He visually assumes 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 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 nor 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 African or Vietnamese or American. Blood flows through the veins of the individual and courses through the heart of a People.

To shed blood is a mythic act, for it is the slaughter of a People, not just 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 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, it's shedding is ritually required for the people to continue to liturgically define itself 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 morally illegitimate; not warriors and soldiers but 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 spiritual power. Surrender encompasses the denial by the enemy that his spiritual power was real. Indeed, 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 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 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 brief, 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 wholly.

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 act while enabling the individual to transcend his own will and morality.

### **War is the individual as an act 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 normal 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 soldiers. It is the soldier's prime duty to kill. In normal times such killing would be common murder. The murderer would be transformed from citizen into convict, and himself executed. In war, the soldier is not murderer but Hero. It is his duty, the stuff of his obligation, to kill. His daily identity is grounded in the ritual of slaughter. It is this ritualization—his murder by consent of his People—that protects the individual from becoming a cold-blooded murderer. The common murderer is not protected by ritual. In fact, his violation is defined by his assumption that he can enter the spiritual zone occupied by soldier without collective ritual. The murderer's terror is his denial of the necessity for public ritual, for personal transcendence. In effect, he declares *personal* war: he mimics the collective act of declaration. He declares as enemy the People itself as he slaughters a citizen.

War is this 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 this rebirth. From the war America is created anew. When it comes to tell its Mythic Story, its official People's history, America marks its textbook chapters by these phases of self-transcending dying and new birth. Time is given meaning as it relates to the boundaries of war: post-Civil War, pre-World War I, post-World War II. As such each generation learns that history, the Story of the American People, is set in spiritual terms. Each chapter is marked by sacrificial blood. The overall Story is that of the People being mythically born again as Warrior. 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 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 fundamental spiritual beliefs. For the People war is publically spoken as holy. It is a primary expression of the relationship of that People with their God. The declaration is an altar call for witnesses who are true to the moral vision, who desire to be standard bearers of God's truth. Winning a war is interpreted as a validation of the People's holiness. Losing a war blankets them with guilt, a sense of uncleanness (immorality), and a sense of abandonment by their God. A People who has lost a war interpret such 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 spiritual 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 to do so 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 the exit ritual, the individual will not be at peace; he will be caught in a timeless and spaceless zone where he is neither person 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 exist, not live, without time and space. For him the war will never have begun nor ever end.

The rituals and liturgy of war is integrated and adorned with the rituals and liturgy of a People's dominant religion, here American Christianity. As such, when the citizen undergoes the soldiering ritual of Boot Camp he emerges endowed with a new moral status. Although Christianity preaches "Thou shalt not kill", the soldier accepts his primary role as killer with moral approbation. His killing is interpreted in terms of God's will that the Evil One, the Enemy, be slain. Though the soldier slays his human brother, he is not marked like Cain. Rather, the soldier is like God's Son, Jesus, who gives 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 essence, 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 Peace to complete its cycle. Peace in Christian terms is the resurrectional peace, that of being born again. Peace is the public proclamation that the War is ended. Peace is the transition to normal times; to the moments of individual story. The leader 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, plumber, or dancer. As the soldier achieves peace with himself and immerses his warrior self within his citizen self, so the People come to peace.



*My son, since Vietnam was not declared neither has it begun nor 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. If Vietnam was not a war, what was it? How can we of "the Vietnam War era" 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, haunting and spirits. Vietnam Undeclared is an historic first, an anthropological novelty. For Vietnam Undeclared is 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 battles in the streets of 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 visions into daylight.*

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

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Vietnam was not a war because it was not declared; it lacked the key elements of ritual and liturgy. Once said, how do we account for what happened, all the events which we try to capture, wrap up, and market as "The Vietnam War"?

Why did the political leaders—the Country 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 war, World War II: the war to end all wars.

## **The myth and ritual of World War II**

My father told World War Two 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 interpreted the day and speech as the moment of his commitment—he left three children, me in the womb, 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 our sons will not have to go to war." This was more than belief, it was 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, everlasting Peace.

World War Two vets *knew* that it was the war to end all wars. With their souls they felt the hatred of the Enemy, Adolf Hitler and the German People (the source of the 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 of 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 earth, all peoples of every nation—despite any individual nation's neutrality, the soldier knew that he fought to save all nations from the Enemy.

As these veterans recount their Story, the mythic power of the War is manifest. The familial bond is severed, and the brother is named as Enemy. Consider that many, like my father, were quite ethnic Germans. He spoke German until he was four years old—in a second

generation 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? 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 affirmation 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 transforming moment. My father went off to war "for the duration." Time was suspended. 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 Fascism. Such was the Space they walked upon, 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 fixed 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 year old), 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 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 War" had been answered. With a clear sense of what had happened, when it had happened, and why it had happened, my father joined thousands of other World War II vets and relegated "WW2" 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 War.

These cyclical holidays healed my father. For though War ceases for the collective, the drop out of time and space into the mythic can never be contained by the individual. He has lived as an act of his God. He has been selected and chosen. He has transcended his own ethical and moral consciousness. War has spiritually transformed him, and he exits war struggling to contain his heart, mind and soul in the mundane 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 release 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.

### **The battle of the Gods**

My father was empowered by ritual to know and feel the Enemy. Why then did my father's generation not so empower mine? Why did the 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*, as a *political person* but not with 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 in his 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 "peace time draft."* After World War II, President Truman did not disband the draft. The professional army not only began to grow, it became stable as part of the 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 called the Cold War, it was anything but cold—in stark contrast, the heart of the People raced in a state of perpetual fear and war readiness. America remained in a never-ending state of war.

By deciding not to end the draft, 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 "Democracy," it never returned to existence as a geographical place. Indeed, Americans continued to live in eschatological tension—*as if* time was still suspended and each day was but one in the Final Days. The world was not yet safe for Democracy. This is a critical fact. World War II never brought Peace. Hostility 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 draft ("a peace time draft") rejected the surrender and submission of the Enemy. Although the visual presence of Nazism and the Chrysanthemum Emperor faded, they endure invisibly through every anti-Democratic evil which could be named and numbered. Indeed, Truman dropped the Atomic Bomb but he declared that it had only obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki—it had not eradicated the Enemy and his evil. In point of fact, by maintaining a peace time draft, Truman revealed quite clearly that the War had not been won! Consequently, instead of a *temporary* war time draft (the practice throughout American history) which was used as an instrument of 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 the institutionalization of the peace time draft.

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 were terrified by this novel Specter which arose. Few thought the draft other than a reasonable and sensible security measure, one taken to ensure that the Enemy did not resurrect and catch America unprepared. Only the name "Pearl Harbor" needed to be mentioned for all critical questions to be answered and fears calmed. "Democracy must be vigilantly guarded!"

My father and all World War II vets were deceived, and their birthright as warriors was stolen by Truman's act. "Victory in Europe!" "Peace Declared!" Sadly, both were lies. They were lies widely believed, and ones which the fathers passed onto their sons. The sons were raised in the Cold War, 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 Enemy was not vanquished, rather only transformed from Hitler to Stalin. Over time, these personalities became insignificant as Communism and Socialism—systems and life styles—were identified as the Enemy. Such were the proper Enemy 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 exit from the realm of the spiritual. His was an act of

disobedience fraught with mythic consequence. From that day forward, he exercised his presidential powers in terms of his Commander-in-Chief powers. For him, the whole earth, the globe was "America" and he claimed it as the proper battleground for Democracy. America's job was to police the world—he set forth to garrison the earth.

The meaning, function and reality of “solider” was altered. The Cold War's "Peace Time 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 "Peace Time Draft." Notably, the soldier became an economic unit; a necessity for the War Economy. He ceased to fight Enemy People, rather he slew "isms" such as the "specter of Communism." Boot Camp became installed as a rite of passage for eighteen year old males; a required social experience which validated one's masculinity (although it was equally sought for its reference on a job application). Boot Camp became a hazing ritual, somewhat of the stature of fraternity hazing.

The Peace Time Draft negates the need for the ritual of public Declaration. It assumes the existence of the Warrior's spiritual act—that creative act of perpetual war. A war which is for "beyond duration," so, paradoxically, each soldier (as in Vietnam) serves a pre-set, restricted term. A time he describes not in terms of "war years" but as "drafted for two years!" These are years of ordinary time, not extraordinary. Consider: They are years lived in "normal time," calendar time replete with dates ticketed for furloughs and R&R. This is so because all time is Peace Time insofar as Peace is War.

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

Why did Truman do this? Why did he turn from the God of Peace to the God of War? Why did he deceive and betray my father and the 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 a God's transformation of the earth, wherein War vanquished Peace. In this light, Truman suffered Hitler's curse. Both transformed their People into permanent soldiers cast into a millennial battle. Both replaced the Will of the People with the

Will of the State. Both worshipped and sought totalitarian powers. Hitler's vision was couched in non-Christian, pagan terms and imagery. Truman's vision was couched in Christian and Democratic terms and imagery—ones he twisted and perverted, standing their place and meaning on its head. Hitler espoused a fascist totalitarianism. Truman conjured a democratic totalitarianism. Both were priests in service to the God of War, whose benediction is "War is Peace." Truly—apocalyptically—since World War II, Americans have lived in a perilous spiritual state.

### **The draft as sacramental ritual**

The key to understanding why Vietnam was not declared, then, is the spiritual character of the draft. The draft *is* the never-ending ritual Call to War. More, it is the sacramental ritual of the God of War, functioning much like the ritual of Christian Baptism.

As a youth I believed that we were at peace, and, at the same time, I was fully aware that at eighteen I was obligated to enter the draft. Like most middle-class white Americans, I anticipated that I would be deferred. There were student deferments, fatherhood deferments, and for me, specifically, a divinity deferment. I approached the draft as a social obligation. I did not give its existence much thought nor plumb the meaning of its historical uniqueness. I defined myself as a *Catholic* American in harmony with the dominant moral values of Protestant America. Only when I sought status as a Conscientious Objector did the mythic structure and power of the draft reveal itself.

I registered robed as a Franciscan novice monk. Though my religious status garnered an automatic deferment, I had to register—it was compulsory. At that time, there was no Conscientious Objector status granted to Roman Catholics (only to “historic Peace Churches, such as the Quakers), and even if there had been it too would only have been a deferment. Clearly, my spiritual and moral beliefs, I realized, were defined by the Selective Service System, not vice versa. Any claims I would have made based upon religious belief were to be interpreted and evaluated by the Draft Board. The Board’s omnipresence and omnipotence was not lost upon me. Although I possessed not a splinter of political belief, I returned to the monastery awed by the presence of the Draft—for now, under my monk's robes, I carried the paper symbol of an



awesome power. Truly, I felt its presence as icon—it made real the touch of a godly presence. The flimsy paper—as thin and frail as a communion host—was truly sacramental, that is, it made present the God of War.

As the Vietnam War formed—slowly, bit by bit and battle by battle—I confronted the God whom Truman worshipped. Mine was not a bold and abrupt confrontation, rather it was incremental and almost accidental. Immersed in my religious beliefs, I was swayed by the pacifistic interpretation of Jesus' Way. I became one of a small wave of Roman Catholic Conscientious Objectors. In so pleading my case I was forced—by the accusatory and prosecutorial bent of my Draft Board—to articulate who my God was. In so doing, I began to see who the Board's God was.

The Board assumed the role of Spiritual Director. They rightly intuited that my claims were blasphemous. They forcefully re-instructed me in proper Spiritual Formation. In brief, they asserted that my training had been faulty, and that I had a malfunctioning moral compass.

Catholic moral theology claims that there can be a Just War. The premise is that religion can, under certain well defined instances, morally permit or condone a war. However, even while in battle, the warrior must follow strict moral mandates, In this tradition, war, itself, does not suspend moral judgment and obligation, rather it is religion which sets the conditions for specific moral suspensions. In this spiritual perspective, God is a God of Peace, but being also a Just God, He allows warring in pursuit of this same Justice.

The Draft Board did not worship this God of Peace. Indeed, they mocked what they termed my naive and innocent view of human nature—"Pacifism!" More, they intimidated me, repeatedly threatening me with jail and prison if I persisted in such an unpatriotic posture. They confidently countered my theological claims, insisting that I was twisting and perverting what most Christians believed—just to save my hide! The nagging insinuation was of my cowardice both physical and moral.

What the Board presented to me—as shocking as John the Baptist's head on a platter—was the fact that for me and my generation the draft was not a choice, rather it was a

foundational institution, indeed, a male's primary and defining obligation. Consider that every eighteen year old male—regardless of physical, mental or moral stature (paraplegic, mental defective, convict or Joe Jock)—*must* register with the Selective Service System. If he does not, he will be either imprisoned or exiled. Registration meant salvation or damnation.

Registering for the draft, then, is the baptismal act for the God of War. Non-registrants are denied identity as Americans (and in the Board's eyes as proper Christians). In fact, not to register was interpreted as an act of traitorous support for the Enemy. It was clear that to claim identity as an American (more specifically as a male American), I and my generation had to register.

I approached my Draft Board in fear and trembling. I had never considered myself anything but a full-blooded American. Yet, my religious beliefs compelled me to witness to a life of non-violence. Why, I asked, can't the Draft Board let me serve my God and America? Finally, after three years of testimony and pleading, the Board, in exasperation and without affirming the validity of my beliefs, granted me Conscientious Objector status. However, they bestowed it as a badge of cowardice, and I retreated into my two years of Alternative Service.

As I was performing my Alternative Service as a staff member at the Catholic student center on the University of Minnesota campus, I had occasion to preach at Sunday Mass. Consequently, many young men came to me seeking moral counsel. Like me, common to this assortment of heroes, cowards, the confused, and saints was the struggle to ascertain whom they worshipped. Most dreaded that they would have to kill, but it was a dread counterweighted by the fact that not to kill would mean social and cultural death, oftentimes manifest through rejection by their family or self imposed exile to another country.

Amidst the swelter of events which overwhelmed many like myself as the War escalated, I realized that my deferment itself was an act of allegiance to this God of War. By accepting Conscientious Objector status I was validating the moral premise of the God who, in effect, had stated to me that there could be a Just Peace. That is, that peace could be justified under certain strict rules. More, that during this Just Peace, I would be bound by strict moral mandates, namely, to wage peace only insofar as it advances the goal of War—killing the Enemy.

As I had come to reject the terms of Just War so I rejected its twin, Just Peace. My rejection of both was concretely manifested in my destruction of my draft card. This apparently simple, almost trivial act—the burning of a piece of paper—rent the tabernacle curtain of the God of War. If I had ever questioned the foundational stature of the Selective Service System, I was no longer left in doubt. My decision not to carry that piece of paper made me a criminal—worse yet, it made me a blasphemer!

In resisting the draft as I burned my card I encountered the full sacramental import of the act which Truman ritualized. He endowed the tool of conscription with symbolic meaning and power. He redefined the cultural mooring of American Society. No longer was the individual *family* the anchor of society, rather Society—in its political form as *State*—was the anchor of the family. The family would henceforth exist to serve Society, not Society to serve the family. Of greater import, Society, itself, was personified not in the People but in the State—the political apparatus. Truman's retention of his extraordinary war time title of Commander-in-Chief was a mythic break with presidential tradition. He defined himself as Military Chief, not as Chief Executive. 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.

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. The truth of my interpretation was dramatically articulated by the judge who sentenced me and six others for raiding draft offices. His justification for delivering a maximum sentence of five years was, "You gentlemen are worse than the common criminal who attacks the taxpayer's pocketbook. You strike at the foundation of government, itself."

For my generation, the draft card became our foundational bond as males and citizens. The draft card was symbol of the God of War. To destroy this card became, paradoxically, a violation of the 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 had found as a draft resister. His Cause was judged ignoble, stupid, meaningless—"not a real war!" 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. Though 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, indeed, 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, an instance of liturgy.

Vietnam was not a war, rather it was a phase of the Endless War, a series of battles in The Final Solution—the Eschatological Peace Time War. Yet, what the priests of the God of War failed to grasp was the individual's need for ritual entrance into and exit from liturgical war. Although America remains 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? Don't the priests of War understand the importance of ritual and liturgy? As answer, consider, in a totalitarian State, that 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 Peace, a service which contained a ritual for Just warring. It was a Society, my father believed, which held the End as Peace for its individual citizens.

One individual Vietnam Veteran grounded answers to my questions in his flesh. Gary came to me while I was still doing my Alternative Service. He came after Mass to my office and

began to talk about the war. He stared at me. He knew that I had not been to Nam, but he sensed, he stated, a bond. He began to speak, and as he did he transformed me into a draft resister—because he, too, was resisting the God of War.

Gary was a hero. A small town Minnesota battlefield decorated genuine American hero. He had lied about his age and enlisted in the Marines to fight the Communists. In Vietnam he was a Section Leader and Forward Observer, India Company—the "Igniting Eye"—Third Battalion, Fifth Marines.

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.

He was a terrifying instrument of the God of War. *"We burned every village we went through."*

Animals were killed and rice scattered on the ground during village clearing operations so it would rot. If we encountered any resistance or any possible evidence of enemy resistance, we would destroy the village.

*"We burned every village we went through."* He had answered the Call, he now sought the Peace. But it was denied. When he came home he continued to burn every village, specifically, his own. He sat three feet from me but we journeyed side by side in spiritual quest. What he wanted to know was why the battlefield dreams would not stop. More, why was he beating his wife and kids? Why had his home, his bedroom, his mind and soul become an Enemy village—one he burned every night; one he reconnoitered every waking moment?

Gary wanted Peace. He had nobly sacrificed himself to satisfy his God. He wanted back into normal times, the every day, the remembered boredom of small town life. But he could not find his home ... he only found himself as abandoned.

Gary was fatigued. The War had not remained in Vietnam. For him America was Vietnam. Vietnam was America. (As cartoon Pogo proclaimed, "I have met the Enemy ... and it is us!") He was shattered beyond his inability to glue the pieces back together. At one mass rally he had tried to enact the exit ritual—he flung his medals over the White House fence. He tried denial, rejection, seclusion, booze, grass, even prayer; he was unconsolated.

Gary could not get a grasp on "Vietnam." He was beyond accusation. He loved America—Why didn't America love him back? I could not answer his questions.

Gary wounded me with friendly fire. He absorbed me spiritually into his suffering and his quest. My response was to battle more fiercely through non-violent witness, and I raided several draft boards in protest. At my trial, he testified as cited above. I entered prison, and he, accursed, continued to wander.

Mythically, Gary was condemned to experience himself only as Cain. His self reflection revealed the face of a fratricidal murderer. I shared his reflection. Both of us could only see ourselves as criminals. Neither my non-violence nor his violence delivered us and made us whole.

### **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 lies. The details did not fascinate me. All around me the lies were embedded in concrete and iron bars. I was "in country." The prison population was dominated by veterans of wars and Draft Resistance.

Prison gave me the final clue to Vietnam. Prison has its entrance and exit rituals, but they are enacted solely by the individual isolated from the collective. While "inside" ("in country") the individual is at war with the State. Prison is a perpetual state of war. The Enemy is defined as the other convicts. The spiritual direction announced is, "Do your own time!" (A statement repeated and supported by my chaplain's sermons.)

"Do your own time!" means do not form bonds with your fellow convicts. They—other people—are the 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 with purity of heart, which required a renunciation of all my former social and personal bonds, and regeneration through the spiritual discipline of the prison Rules. This advice was akin to that forwarded by the head of my monastic Order. As a monk I was commanded to surrender my will to Father Superior. I was to take no pains to direct my life, rather, I was to submit to his Spiritual Direction. The goal of this 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.*

The Warden succeeded. Prison—a war zone like Vietnam—overcame me. It drew out all the hatred within me, made me desire to the point of morally willing the death of a guard, and set me about "burning every village" I entered. I left prison a spiritual murderer. I left "doing my own time," totally self-absorbed ... accursed as Cain, and a wanderer.

*"Do your own time!"* describes the spiritual state where every person is a gook. It is a state of perpetual war.

Vietnam like prison was a sentence. Meted out as is the penalty for theft or rape or drug dealing—"Five years!" Inside prison I was aware of the perpetual state of war which certain Americans are born into because of skin 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 "grunts" were filled by Americans of like description.

*"Do your own time!"* is all that anyone can do during perpetual 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. Though 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).

Gary was told, "You did your time!" He had served his tour of duty. He was told to forget about Nam—not to think about motives and reasons and justifications. He visited me in prison and we stared blankly at each other. We had lost our language. We could only recognize ourselves in the other's face ... and weep alone in our separate darknesses.

*My son, 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 has no place for soldiers, only criminals. Yes, only war criminals. Not soldiers but marauders, terrorists, assassins—genocidal maniacs. The totalitarian State wants only to obliterate the Enemy. ("Nuke them!" "Bomb them back to the Stone Age!") In its perpetual 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 the 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. 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 live never whole or healed. To do so is to live criminally. Denied exit from this myth, the Veteran comes to see himself as Enemy ... and his final act of Duty is suicide—liturgical self murder.*

*My son, I, myself, have drunk from this cup. I drank myself into many a stupor of self-loathing. I berated myself for my lack of courage, the courage to slay myself.*

### **Peace that surpasses understanding**

Gary was the first to be healed, to find Peace.



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.

*"... instead of a gook, it was a human being."* Gary stopped doing his own time. He was redeemed and delivered. *"Instead of a hootch, it was a home."* Gary had come Home.

Inside the ritual-less War, Gary performed his own ritual. Denied the consolation of collective liturgy, he became a priest of a new presence. How this happened, I do not know. I can only celebrate it!

Gary ceased to look towards the State for ritual and meaning. He stopped asking the Fathers for approval, justification and affirmation. Gary did his own time to the extreme, and found himself in the other's time—in the shoes of a gook.

*Gary found himself as gook, and so found his human face.* "Instead of a gook" coursed through him like a calming Gregorian chant, it became mantra, drew down awesome presences like an exorcistic prayer. It was Gary's phrase, his only, what to others was a passing remark, the trivial utterance of one burned out Vet, but it was consecratory, of the stature of "Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the new covenant ..." He realized that as he had treated the Vietnamese as gooks, so had the Fathers treated him. It was the phrase which re-ordinated his relationship as father and as son. He confronted the terrifying fact that he was treating his wife and children as gooks. More, he perceived that this was how fathering had been communicated through the Cold War and now through "Vietnam"—that he was to be a family destroyer, not builder. With simple clarity it came to him: the God of the State wanted not himself as father of a family, nor his family as sons, but only each and all as individuals, isolated entities doing their own time—living as criminals. Once he accepted this horror, he could purge it. He found peace.

This was transformation and transcendence. Vietnam was not supposed to be a war possessing the mythic power of Peace, truly, it was not to offer ritual and liturgical healing. It was supposed to be only "No Peace!" for it was Endless War. Gary was trained to be criminal, ever ready to slay any brother at any time in any place decreed by the State. His soldiering was an economic outlet for his class, that underclass for which the military is "work"—he was supposed to remain marginal. His soldiering was to be criminal, and he was supposed to do only his own time (in parallel and at times at intersection with those formal criminals of prison's world of perpetual war). Yet, he broke through.

He broke through at a fathering moment. Seared by molten anger at his father and Father, he raged at himself, condemning himself as bad father, hurting father, murdering father. Father who could not speak, who could not be son nor Dad ... nor, as all this was underscored, as male, "A real man!"

Real maleness. Ironically, the Peace Time Draft turned going through Boot Camp—much like the test for one's driver's license—into a test for male identity. Peace Time Boot Camp had no mythic, ritual boundary, rather it bestowed social identity, granted a guy the right to talk like a soldier, even if he had never been in battle. Boot Camp became a reference for macho barroom banter and braggadocio, a way for generations, fathers and sons, to talk over a beer.

Gary found himself with a fistful of medals, these only to bestow as patrimony. But they spoke to his son only of his criminal heart, the heart of a murderer. At this point of breakdown—much akin to the perplexing moment when Abraham halted in mid-strike upon Isaac—Gary's heart beat with joy. From out the prayer "instead of a gook, it was a human being" burst an embrace, one which bound him beyond time and space with his son, an embrace of fathering which mothers. Gary found himself consecrated as Mother, as nurturer, as Life Giver, as, in his flesh and breath, the dirt and wind of Earth.

In this time of Endless War, with its morality of criminal slaughter, in this time of spiritual death, what is not to be has become—Gary found his fatherhood by becoming a nurturing father, one who seeks to heal and make whole his son without the ritual of slaughter and outside the myth of warrior.

It was and is a peace which surpasses understanding, that "instead of a gook, it was a human being."

Gary came Home within the embrace of himself as father nurturing his wife and son; building family as a member of Earth's one human and holy family, a family of gooks.

## **Earthfolk**

It took me years beyond Gary to heal. After his visit in prison, we lost touch. I didn't want him around. I scarcely cared to know his whereabouts. I was, then, completely unaware of his healing.

I resisted more fiercely my status as gook. I persisted in doing my own time. The bitterness of prison sustained me as I hated myself as criminal. I abhorred my status as "marginal," it was not for me to live without economic worth and social achievement! But one day, a day I cannot date or position, I was stunned by a presence which spoke softly that I was "Home."

"Home!" came to me amidst the stench of alcoholic vomit. It came when I could no longer read or write. It came when I had gone beyond submission and surrender, long past despair and self loathing. It came when only the wind was my address.

"Home"? Yes, I, in my heart, mind and soul, was Home—hearth and earthly womb for God, tabernacle for all gooks of the Earth. I was staggered. I had been raised to "Go home!"—that is, to go to Heaven. Home was a place out there, in a celestial geography, something to be earned, won through a merit system. Yes, I knew the Cosmic Christ and was deeply conversant with all the mystic terminology of Christianity but all that had been dependent upon Jesus—a someone outside of me, another son, who saved me in spite of my wretched self! His was a warrior's gain. Heaven was booty. Home was a spiritual barracks. This was *not* what engulfed me.

"Home!" was an embrace, a palpable presence. It came from within me, but from that within which is also without. Simply, I was Home when I received the embraces of others, allowed myself to be embraced, to nurture by receiving.

*My son, feel that it is your heart which is only within when it is without. It beats most fully when it is embracing. From within my heart are you born. For we males it is our heart which is our womb—from which we nurture. This is a sacred space alien to the God of War and the God of Peace. For them the heart must bleed in expiation; its blood must be shed.*

But I, male all non-violent, yet ever warrior and Soldier of Peace, had never yielded to the nurturing presence within myself which at that moment I came to know as God. Not the Father God who accepted me because his Son had nobly sacrificed himself for me (in spite of me!). No, not that Warrior God, not that God of Peace. Rather, God healing—as mother, as Mother, as that of the Father which is birthing—so I became joined to earth by the umbilical sky. I, a dot, a speck, a mere molecule of Soul, yet I, for whom all that is God was to become: flower as me, as I healed and became life giver. Me as Mother and Father God flowering.

Though the words were Gary's, the transformation within me was unlatched by the grace of his prayer, "... *instead of a gook, it was God.*" But, more aptly, more piercingly, "... *it was Home.*" The heart of each and every gook is Home, is hearth and womb for God. God, a term which should be a verb, godding. For Home is where others are received. It is where that ritual which unleashes the power that creates the Earth is enacted—the embrace of greeting, the pressing of hearts, the hug of family, the kiss of healing. Within one's Home the stranger is no more, no enemy can be named, for all are family. What terrified me and swamped me with awesome enticement as I realized myself as Home was the simple truth: to receive is to give.

Receive as Home means to clear a space and time for another, to fearlessly witness to them by sharing intimacy, to allow myself to be known, touched, kissed—it was not a reception meaning my possession of them or taking from them, rather, it was surrendering myself in godding, in an act of total openness, so revealing all my dreams and visions, darkly and brightly, myself as slayer and healer, so that, within the Embrace I and my brother become father and son, parent and child—we all one as Earthfolk.

"Home is where the heart is!" My trite, trivial, personal, burned out anti-war radical slogan. Yet, it is, I have come to know, a brief also for Jesus—just another gook. But it is what I have to offer as patrimony.

*My son, although the "peacetime draft" continues, though the president wears the mantle of Commander-in-Chief, though battles are waged in prisons and among nations, though the God of War is worshipped unceasingly ... the Vietnam Veteran, the prisoner, you and I can be healed.*

*Once you grasp this, my son, there is no Enemy. There is only Family: Holy. There are no hootches, only Home—the one Earth, wherein live Earthfolk. There is no place which is not Home. No time that is not shared with another. There can be no War—time and space can never be suspended. It is our hearts which unite and unify us, all gooks—each and all Home as God and Goddess, as Father and Mother: as Family.*

*"Vietnam" is a veil which has been rent. It is an illusion which has been shattered. It is a lie which cannot stand up to the truth ... the truth that instead of a gook, he is our brother, she is our sister ... that we are all children in the Family: Holy ... each of us an instrument and presence of Our Parents who mother and father the one Earthfolk Family, living peacefully and comfortably at-home here on the living Earth.*

*My son, you are all and more than the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle. You are flower—within yourself all beauty and seed, all male and female, all human and godding. You and I will come to full flower and seed anew as we nurture each other, you now the son and I the father, now you the father and I the son—a relationship effusing from our mothering masculine embraces.*

END

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