Ministers, Martyrs, and Mystics: Religious Antiwar Activists in the Vietnam Era

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Abstract

This thesis is a biographical exploration of the lives and experiences of five individuals who came to protest the Vietnam War due to their religious beliefs: A.J. Muste, who was ordained as a Dutch Reform minister but later came to describe himself as a Christian pacifist; Norman Morrison, who was a Quaker; Abraham Heschel, who was Jewish; William Sloane Coffin, Jr., who was Presbyterian; and Daniel Berrigan, who was Catholic. Examining the lives, experiences, actions, and writings of each of these men illuminates the subset of activists of the Vietnam period who came to protest the war due to their religious beliefs. In addition to their different religious identities, these men varied widely in age and background, and yet they all shared in the prophetic tradition of concern for suffering in the world. Their actions, writings, and examples influenced countless people both then and now.

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Table of Contents

Chapter I.

Introduction

The protest movements that emerged in reaction to American involvement in the Vietnam War were unprecedented in size and scope and have left behind distinct cultural memories that tend to focus on the youth, student, and counterculture movements; however, there were many other groups that made up the movement, including the vitally important subset of those who protested based on their religious beliefs. The Vietnam period saw exponential growth of religious antiwar activism, including the establishment of interfaith groups such as CALCAV/CALC (Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, later just Clergy and Laity Concerned). Religious groups with little prior history of antiwar protest also began to develop antiwar subsets, such as that of the Catholic Left.[1]

The activism and protests carried out by religious individuals and groups had distinct elements influenced by the prophetic tradition of concern for suffering and injustice in the world, and was banded by the ethical and moral beliefs of the protestors. While some of these activists had spent years working as radical pacifists, for others, as the war escalated, so too did their involvement and their tactics. As Charles DeBenedetti documented, they "could see no other way [than acts of civil disobedience] to dramatize

[1] Patricia F. McNeal, *Harder Than War: Catholic Peacemaking in Twentieth-Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

the immorality of devastation waged without ethical purpose."[2] To bring home this immorality to the wider American public, some religious activists burned draft cards; a small handful burned themselves.

While scholars have noted that it is hard to pinpoint exactly how much of an effect the antiwar movement had on policy and decision making, historian Melvin Small argued that "the antiwar movement and antiwar criticism in the media and Congress had a significant impact on the Vietnam policies of both Johnson and Nixon … antiwar activities and dissent were important factors for the decision makers."[3] Arguably both Johnson's decision not to run for reelection in 1968, and Nixon's decision not to escalate to some of the more extreme options (such as the use of nuclear weapons) for fighting the war both came as a result of antiwar activism.[4] Through the exploration of the actions of religious protestors and the examination of the experiences and thinking behind them, we can better understand what was going on at the time and what sort of effects they had, both in the short and long term.

As David Cortright pointed out, "antiwar protest, actual or prospective, has become a consideration in the calculations of government leaders and has started to emerge as a potential influence in the global politics of peace."[5] Religious activists and groups were sometimes given special access to and attention from policymakers, including meetings with officials such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, both

[2] Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 219.
[3] Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 115–16.
[4] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*, 148, 163.
[5] David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 155.

due to their role in society as religious leaders, and also because some (such as the leaders of CALC) were perceived as more moderate and mainstream, and thus more in line with the average adult voter.

Religious activists played an important part when it came to conscientious objection and draft resistance, despite having aged out of being draftable themselves. Cortright noted that "the Vietnam era witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of conscientious objectors to military service…. During the course of the war 170,000 men were classified as conscientious objectors."[6] Much of the counseling and advising for CO status and draft resistance was provided by religious activists and organizations, such as that provided by William Sloane Coffin in his role as chaplain at Yale, and by Daniel Berrigan to students at Cornell.[7]

Religious antiwar activism proved impactful on some churches and religious sects. Shawn Francis Peters argues that the draft board action carried out by the Catholic group known as the Catonsville Nine "pluralized how, and in what ways, one could be a good Catholic. The events at Catonsville, undertaken by 'good Catholics' – among them priests and missionaries whom rank-and-file Catholics had always been taught to revere – opened the possibility of a new American Catholic identity."[8] Religious antiwar activists left an important legacy in multiple arenas: on policymakers, on the public, on their own religious institutions, as well as on themselves and their peers. As Mary Hershberger

[6] Cortright, *Peace,*167.
[7] William Sloan Coffin, *Once to Every Man: A Memoir* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 230; Jim Forest, *At Play in the Lions' Den: A Biography and Memoir of Daniel Berrigan* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017), 101.
[8] Shawn Francis Peters, *The Catonsville Nine: A Story of Faith and Resistance in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 329.

concluded in her book *Traveling to Vietnam*, "those who worked tirelessly to end the war, unpopular and maligned as they were at the time, gave their nation the gift of a partially redeemed past."[9]

However, scholarship on religious antiwar activism during the Vietnam period remains somewhat underdeveloped. While a number of individual figures and specific religious groups have received attention, there are still quite a few gaps. Examining religious antiwar activism across multiple religions, and comparing and contrasting the experiences of those who came together to protest because of their different faiths remains an under-researched area. Much of the scholarship tends to focus more either on microhistories, with individual biographies and studies of the protest movement within a single faith; or on the broader antiwar movement, frequently with only incidental exploration of religious activists. I have focused on five activists who each came to protest the Vietnam war through their religious beliefs, with each representing a different religious background, thus allowing for exploration of both individual experiences and as well as a look at a slightly broader context. The five activists I have chosen were all fairly prominent individuals within the movement, but I believe placing them in context with one another opens new opportunities for study and understanding. These five activists are: A.J. Muste, Norman Morrison, Abraham Heschel, William Sloane Coffin, and Daniel Berrigan. Muste had a complicated religious background, but by the time of the Vietnam war identified as a Christian pacifist. Morrison was Quaker, Heschel was Jewish, Coffin was Presbyterian, and Berrigan was Catholic.

[9] Mary Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 231.

As much of the scholarship around this topic tends to fall on either the macro or microhistory spectrum; I hope that finding a place somewhere in the middle will offer new insights. I will examine individual choices and actions, thought processes and motivations, and how they each wrote and spoke about their activities. How did each of them come to their faith? What path brought them to protest the Vietnam war? How did their religious beliefs inform their actions? How did thinking about the war, the politics of protest, theology, and morality change during this time? In what ways did they understand some or all of their acts of protest to be part of their religious practice? To best explore and understand these individuals, their experiences as religious antiwar activists, and the choices they made, I look at the larger antiwar movement, the various groups that some of them were affiliated with, such as CALCAV and the FOR, and the writings by and about each of these individuals.

Definition of Terms

AFSC. The American Friends Service Community, which "originated in World War I, initially to provide alternative service for conscientious objectors from the Society of Friends. Its Quaker orientation led it to other forms of social service and reconciliation after the war and from domestic to international action."[10]

CALCAV/CALC. Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (later just Clergy and Laity Concerned), an interfaith antiwar movement that emerged in New York in 1965 and spread nationally to mobilize the religious community against the war.[11]

[10] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 22.
[11] Mitchell K Hall, *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990),14.

Catholic Left. The Leftist Catholic antiwar activists of the antiwar period whose aim "was not only to stop the war in Vietnam, but to work for justice and peace in both the church and society."[12]

Catholic Worker Movement. "A tiny but tenacious fellowship begun in 1933 by itinerant French mystic Peter Maurin and journalist Dorothy Day… it extended its doctrine of prophetic love to the repudiation of war, and its loving concern for social outcasts to Catholic conscientious objectors."[13]

CPF. Catholic Peace Fellowship, formed in 1964 "whose sole focus would be peace and an effort to effect change in the government's public policy in Indochina…[through] nonviolent direct action and resistance.[14]

CNVA. The Committee for Nonviolent Action, formed in 1957, "its specific purpose was direct-action protest against nuclear weapons."[15]

FOR. The Fellowship of Reconciliation "began in 1915 amidst opposition to World War I, and it served as a community of support for conscientious objectors to that war. Thereafter it promoted social justice and internationalism, opposing war and other forms of violence."[16]

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[12] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 174.
[13] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 21.
[14] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 139.
[15] Nancy L. Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 9.
[16] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 21.

Historic Peace Churches. Quakers/Society of Friends & the Anabaptist sects Mennonites and Brethren. "They rejected war absolutely… their pacifism was rooted in a tradition which stretched back throughout Christian history."[17]

SANE. The National Committee for a Sane Nuclear policy, "founded in 1957 to work for a nuclear test ban treaty and for disarmament."[18]

SDS. Students for a Democratic Society, "founded in 1960 as an outgrowth of the Student League for Industrial Democracy."[19]

WRL. The War Resisters League, "founded in 1923 as the American branch of War Resisters International. WRL offered support to pacifists and conscientious objectors… a 'radical pacifist' group, meaning it followed the Gandhian example of nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience."[20]

Background of the Problem: History and Historiography

To refer to the protests against American involvement in the Vietnam War as a single antiwar movement is to reduce an enormous, complicated, cross-section of groups, movements, cultural shifts, and actions down to a single monolithic scene. Lingering cultural memory of antiwar protestors seems to distill down to hippies and students (particularly the student group SDS, the Students for a Democratic Society). However, much of the movement began with sober adults, from roots such as the historic peace churches, the nuclear disarmament movement, and the rise of ecumenical interfaith

[17] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 19.
[18] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, 10.
[19] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up,* 11.
[20] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, 9.

groups. Religious groups provided much of the backbone, organization, and activism of the antiwar movement throughout the Vietnam era. As my study involves looking at specific individuals who came to their activism through their religious faith, I have surveyed scholarship on the larger antiwar movement as a whole, on religious antiwar activism, and on specific activist groups and people. The existing scholarship has highlighted the importance of religious activists in the larger Vietnam antiwar movement and has pinpointed some of the important shifts that occurred during the time, such as the growth of the ecumenical movement, or the rise of the New Catholic Left. However, because the scholarship tends to be focused either broadly or narrowly, there are areas still left to be explored across the various religious antiwar activists.

Beginning with the broad based, the 1990 book *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*, by Charles DeBenedetti, is a thorough analytical evaluation of the antiwar movement, from its roots to its ruins. This book has been and continues to be a seminal antiwar text that has frequently been referred to by later scholarship. *An American Ordeal* remains a detailed and useful exploration of the movement, its origins, its successes, its failures, and why and how it fell apart. The author points out that the central fact is that "the war was always about America. From start to finish in the arguments over intervention, the welfare of the Vietnamese people was secondary."[21] Also central to understanding the movement is just how broad and multi-dimensional it was: there was no such thing as a single movement. The author notes, "antiwar activists did not establish a single directing organization, coordinated leadership, or ideology. They drew on varied constituencies. They offered contradictory critiques of

[21] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 4.

American society and foreign policy."[22] The movement was almost as bitterly divided as the country itself. DeBenedetti concludes that "the most distinctive quality of organized opposition to the war was its moral thrust."[23] The religious activists and groups within the movement were an important part of this moral thrust, and the book regularly references them. However, because it is a study of the broader movement, it lacks in-depth exploration of the beliefs and actions of religious activists, and conflates them with the larger movement. In the introduction of the book, in talking about the storm that was the war and its protests, the author wrote, "in the roiling darkness a Catholic priest wrote from hiding that America was 'hard to find.'"[24] This priest was Daniel Berrigan, and while *An American Ordeal* is a thorough exploration of how DeBenedetti understood this quote, it doesn't really address why and how Daniel Berrigan came to write those words.

Similarly, Tom Wells' 1994 history *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* is broad scholarly overview of the antiwar movement, driven largely by oral interviews. Wells interviewed participants from all sides, including ordinary citizens who were both for and against the war, leadership of various antiwar movements, participants in the youth and counterculture movements, and government officials from both Johnson and Nixon's administrations. Wells' main thesis is that the antiwar movement had far more power than its members understood, and that the "activists' failure to appreciate their actual political power hurt their cause. That failure spawned defections form the movement… not least important, it aggravated dissension over strategies and tactics among activists, thereby depleting energies, hardening internal divisions, and reducing

[22] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 389.
[23] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 403.
[24] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 1.

the movement's capacity for coordinated action."[25] Wells argues that "the American movement against the Vietnam War was perhaps the most successful antiwar movement in history. The movement did not exert its influence in any neat way, but its impact was clearly considerable."[26] Because these interviews were conducted many years after the Vietnam War, many participants had since died, and those who were available to be interviewed were relating their experiences at many years remove from when they actually occurred. Though Berrigan and Coffin were still living at the time of publication, neither were interviewed for this book.

Todd Gitlin's 1987 book *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage* is a history of the movements of the sixties through the lens of the SDS and the youth movement. Gitlin was himself a leader of the SDS in the earlier part of the movement, and so the text is both a memoir and a history. Gitlin argues, "the early New Left of the early Sixties… aspired to become the voice, conscience, and goad of its generation… itself ignited by the civil rights movement, it was the small motor that later turned the larger motor of the mass student movement of the late Sixties."[27] However, he argues that the antiauthoritarian nature of the youth/counterculture movement contained the seeds of its own destruction; "the express train of antiauthority was hard to brake."[28] This book is almost entirely based around the SDS and other student movements, and so it has little information about the antiwar movement outside of what was going on with the students

[25] Wells, *The War Within,* 2.
[26] Wells, *The War Within*, 579.
[27] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, Bantam revised trade ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 26.
[28] Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 232.

and youth, but provides a lot of insights into what Gitlin and his peers were thinking and feeling about the time.

Clara Bingham's 2016 book *Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost Its Mind and Found Its Soul* is another oral history exploration, by a journalist focused mostly on the events of the years 1969-1970. The author interviewed people from a very wide range of backgrounds, including students, antiwar activists, politicians, soldiers, federal agents, members of the counterculture, counter-protestors, and more. However, her interviews were performed between 2012-2015, meaning that everyone she interviewed was recalling events from a remove of almost fifty years, and also, many of the important figures from the time were long dead. Because of this, the focus rests largely on those who were young at the time of the events. Bingham also does not provide analysis; she herself describes, "Witness is a selective history. It provides a snapshot portrait of the many movements and events of 1969-1970, and it leaves readers to draw their own conclusions."[29] It provides an interesting balance to some of the other histories, as the religious antiwar activists and groups are almost entirely absent from this book.

Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan's 1984 book *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* similarly is a non-scholarly look at the antiwar movement that provides a lot of details about the who, where, and when of antiwar activities, but it does not provide much in the way of analysis or depth. It is useful as a sort of guidebook to the various groups that protested the war and what their

[29] Clara Bingham, *Witness to the Revolution: Radicals, Resisters, Vets, Hippies, and the Year America Lost Its Mind and Found Its Soul* (New York: Random House, 2016), xxxiv.

activities were. The authors note, "to us, the antiwar movement during the Vietnam era is important not because it stopped the war, which it may or may not have done; rather, it is important because it existed."[30] It provides useful documentation for deeper study of people, groups, and events.

Neil Sheehan's 1988 book *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* is another work by a journalist, though in this case, one who was on assignment in Vietnam during much of the war. It is both a biography of one of the military officers in Vietnam as well as an in depth look at how the US got involved in Vietnam, and an accounting of the events of the war. It is a useful resource for understanding what was actually happening in Vietnam that the antiwar activists were protesting back in the US.

Drilling down from the broader movement to specifically religious antiwar activism, Mitchell K. Hall's 1990 book *Because of Their Faith*, is a history of one of the interfaith antiwar groups, CALCAV - Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (later just CALC - Clergy and Laity Concerned). Hall notes that the group was important in organizing and mobilizing religious communities against the war, and had more appeal (especially in earlier days) for the American middle class. He argues that "it mixed pragmatic with moral arguments and used moderate tactics such as petitions, vigils, electoral politics, and rallies."[31] Hall's exploration of one particular group within the larger movement shines light on different ways of protesting, the diversity of the movement, and the ways in which some of the antiwar protestors were distinct from the counterculture movement and the student movement. Daniel Berrigan, Abraham Heschel,

[30] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, xi.
[31] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, x.

and William Sloane Coffin were all involved in the founding of CALCAV, although Berrigan later drifted away from the group as he became more radical in his choices and actions. *Because of Their Faith* provides an insightful look at one particular religious antiwar group, but it misses out both on some of the larger trends as well as individual choices and actions.

Michael B. Friedland explores the rise and growth of the ecumenical movement, which was vital to religious antiwar protest, in the 1998 book *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet.* He traces the origins of the ecumenical, interfaith social justice movements to the civil rights movement, and links the antiwar and civil rights movements together. He notes that "by the 1960s, many clergy viewed their ministry as an opportunity to challenge their parishioners to create a better society."[32] This was shown by participation both in the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement. He notes that particularly after Selma, clerical activism began to grow exponentially. Friedland looks at the actions of CALC and its members throughout the war, including when and how some members wound up parting ways with the group. He highlights how Daniel Berrigan resigned from CALC when he came to believe its moderate actions were ineffective. Friedland is rather critical of Berrigan's choices, highlighting his increasing radicalism as alienating and exclusionary among many of his fellow peace activists. He also traces the eventual postwar backlash in society against religious leaders committing civil disobedience and other direct actions. However, he concludes that neither the civil rights movement nor the antiwar movement would have been anywhere near as effective without the participation

[32] Michael B Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5.

of clergy. While this covers some of the same ground as other books about the antiwar movement, it does not go into depth, but Friedland's linking of the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement provides some insights. He also explores the importance of individual choices and actions a bit more than some of the other scholarship, but his main focus is on the link between the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement.

Joseph Kip Kosek's 2009 book *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* is a scholarly exploration of Christian pacifism (largely Protestant) beginning with WWI through the early 1960s and the civil rights movement, as well as its legacy in the antiwar movement. It provides a lot of background for religious antiwar activism in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly through the lens of the FOR, and has a lot of focus on A.J. Muste. Kosek notes, "the roster of people who were, at one time or another, leaders in the FOR reveals a hidden history of American political dissent. At the head of the list stands Muste, dubbed 'the No. 1 US pacifist' by *Time* magazine in 1939."[33] He argues that the FOR "was distinctive in combining religion, absolute pacifism, and a broad field of social action" and that "the decline of the Fellowship's strain of radical Christianity has not led to enlightened secularism, but rather to an impoverishment of political discourse about violence."[34] Kosek also concludes that the revolutionary anticolonial struggles of the 1960s were one of the causes of splintering among antiwar activists of the Vietnam era, for "the slippage between nonviolence and guerrilla warfare contributed to the fragmentation of the left in the United States." He feels that "without the tight Christian nucleus that had guided the

[33] Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 4.
[34] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 4, 7.

Fellowship of Reconciliation, nonviolence was unable to sustain its astounding advances."[35] His exploration of the antiwar movement of the 1960s raises more questions than it answers, but it does provide useful context for religious antiwar activism, and for Muste.

Looking at the exploration of a single religion in the antiwar movements, in both *The American Catholic Peace Movement, 1928-1972* and *Harder Than War*, Patricia McNeal traces the emergence of peace movements within the Catholic faith, traditionally a religion known for its just war doctrine. McNeal explores the Catholic Worker movement that emerged in the 1930s as the first true American Catholic antiwar group, but describes how the Vietnam War gave rise to multiple American Catholic peace movements. McNeal points out that in the early twentieth century, "as members of an immigrant church, Catholics in the United States continually sought to dispel the label of foreigners put on them by American nativists."[36] This tended to lead to their unswerving support of the US during wartime until faced with the growing moral challenges of the Vietnam war. McNeal highlights that while in the early days of the Vietnam war, Catholic peace groups such as the Catholic Worker and the CPF were considered "fringe" Catholics, "as more time passed their prophetic messages concerning the war were recognized as the major contributions of American Catholics to peace and the antiwar movement."[37] Looking at Catholic antiwar actions, she highlights the importance of the draft resistance movement, including draft card burning, counseling for conscientious objector status (which dramatically increased among Catholics as the war went on), and

[35] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 238.
[36] McNeal, *Harder than War*, xiii, ix, 1.
[37] McNeal, *Harder than War,* 146.

draft board actions such as the Catonsville Nine action, in which Catholics destroyed hundreds of draft cards in massive acts of civil disobedience. She devotes a large segment of the book to the Berrigan brothers, Daniel and Philip, who were part of the Catonsville action, and argues that they "emerged as the architects of a new political and theological movement."[38] McNeal's work provides insight into the exponential growth of Catholic antiwar activism, and Daniel Berrigan's importance to the movement, though her viewpoint at times comes off in a slightly hagiographic way. This scholarship also is limited to the Catholic antiwar movement, only briefly touching in interfaith movements. McNeal acknowledges the importance of religious activism in the period, but is only focused on one element. She notes in her introduction, "two recent political studies of the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era... made me acutely aware of how significant and distinctive a force religion was in the American Catholic peace movement when compared with the broader antiwar movement."[39] One of the studies she mentions was the previously discussed *An American Ordeal*; the second is Melvin Small's *Johnson, Nixon and the Doves*.

Melvin Small's 1989 book *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* attempts to track the actual effectiveness of the antiwar movement in changing actions, beliefs, and policy. He notes that while some people believe the antiwar movement was unsuccessful or that it even prolonged the war (by giving hope to North Vietnam), "most observers think it contributed to the pressures that produced the American withdrawal from Vietnam."[40] He argues that antiwar activism played a big part in influencing decisions made by

[38] McNeal, *Harder than War*, 173.
[39] McNeal, *Harder than War*, ix.
[40] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves,* 21.

policymakers, such as Robert McNamara's resignation as Secretary of Defense, and Johnson's decision not to run for reelection in 1968. He also evaluates some of the other elements of the antiwar movement; he notes that media coverage of the antiwar movement was often extremely unbalanced, "the media tended to underplay the numbers involved, stress the violence and radical aspects, and thus convey a negative image of the protestors."[41] He looks at the fact that both Johnson and Nixon seemed to believe that the antiwar movement was subversive and had ties to communism, and allowed for extensive (and frequently illegal) intelligence gathering among the movement by both the CIA and the FBI. He tracks public opinion, and how many journalists, intellectuals, and social leaders stopped supporting or began actively opposing the war, particularly as the credibility gap began to widen between what the government was saying and what was actually happening in Vietnam. He highlights that during Nixon's tenure, Congress, particularly the Senate, became more antiwar, influenced by public opinion and their constituents. He explores several direct and indirect responses by policymakers to antiwar actions. Small concludes, "those who exercise their rights as citizens to gather, protest, and petition in comparatively small numbers have more of an impact on their leaders than one would expect."[42] Small's text provides answers as to why the antiwar movement was important, and why further studies are worth writing.

In these books and others, the importance of religious antiwar activists in the Vietnam era becomes readily apparent, but the scholarship tends towards exploring the very broad movements (such as in *An American Ordeal*) or looking through a very

[41] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves,* 42–43.
[42] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves,* 234.

specific lens (such as *Harder Than War*). I hope to land somewhere in middle by exploring Muste, Morrison, Heschel, Coffin, Morrison, and Berrigan, and their individual choices and actions, as well as the ways their experiences compare and contrast. They all protested the war due to their religious beliefs, but their backgrounds and their experiences were quite varied, as were their writings and actions. By looking at these five somewhat interlinked activists, I hope to illuminate the larger religious antiwar movement. Why did some of them choose to stay within the bounds of lawful protest, as Heschel did, while of them choose to commit radical acts, like Morrison's self-immolation? How did their religious beliefs play into these actions? How did each individual's choices reflect the wider themes and ideals of the antiwar movement? What were their legacies? Each of them had moments of fulfilling all the roles of my title: as ministers, as martyrs, and mystics. And even more than mysticism, they were prophetic witnesses. As Abraham Heschel described, "the purpose of prophecy is to conquer callousness, to change the inner man as well as to revolutionize history."[43] This is a study of the changes of the inner men, as well as the acts to change the course of history.

Methodology and Sources

I am researching the experiences, beliefs, goals, and actions of five specific antiwar activists of the Vietnam era who came to protest the war due to their religious beliefs: A.J. Muste, Norman Morrison, Abraham Heschel, William Sloane Coffin, and Daniel Berrigan. Four of the five of these men were prolific writers, offering many options of primary sources written by the individuals themselves. The fifth, Norman

[43] Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 17.

Morrison, left behind very little of his own writing, but his wife wrote both a pamphlet and book about him, filling in the gap that he was not able to. Through these and other sources, I will study how my subjects came to their religious beliefs, how these beliefs influenced their activism, and how their experiences compared and contrasted with each other, as well as with the wider antiwar movement. I will examine what drew them to protest Vietnam, and how they chose to go about protesting. I will explore how each individual thought about war in general and Vietnam in particular, what their thoughts were on the politics of protest, and how and why this thinking may have evolved. I will study the aftereffects and consequences of their activism, and how it played out both personally and more broadly.

I will research what the activists had to say about themselves and their experiences by studying their own writings. Most of them were published, and some of them were prolific writers, offering a great deal of primary source material to explore. A.J. Muste wrote nonfiction books, essays, and articles, participated in multiple interviews, and has an archive of papers at the Swarthmore Peace Collection. Norman Morrison was not a published author, but his papers are at the Swarthmore Peace Collection, and his wife wrote a pamphlet and a book about him. Abraham Heschel wrote many articles and books, both religious and existential, and contributed to *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, a book put out by CALC in 1967, as well as other CALC writings. The CALC archive is also available at Swarthmore. William Sloane Coffin wrote a memoir, several nonfiction books, and left an archive of his papers at Yale, including a great deal of correspondence. Daniel Berrigan wrote essays, books, poetry, and even a play (*The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*), and correspondence with his brother Philip, who

was also an antiwar activist. I will also study periodicals and newspaper articles written about these individuals, exploring the actions they took, what their peers thought about it, and how mainstream journalists wrote about them. Additionally, they all have a number of secondary sources about them available, including biographies and histories. Most of the materials written by and about these individuals are available through the Harvard libraries. Digital archives of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post,* and *I.F. Stone's Weekly* are all available to me. In some cases, these individuals were interviewed on film or were subjects of documentaries that are available through the Harvard Libraries or through streaming.

Chapter II.

A.J. Muste

In April of 1966, A.J. Muste led a contingent of activists to bring the American protest against the Vietnam War all the way to South Vietnam, "to witness for peace and call men to justice." The group planned to hold a press conference in Saigon on Wednesday, April 20, followed by a demonstration at the American Embassy on April 21. But the local police cancelled their press conference. The activists were eventually allowed to move their event to a heavily guarded city hall. A number of Vietnamese "students" were allowed in, who quickly turned the event into a small riot. Muste and the others were pelted with objects and verbally threatened, while the rioters displayed signs and slogans such as, "We Cannot Live with Assassins. American Troops Are Welcome." Muste and his fellow activists were escorted by police back to their hotel, and the next day, were forced to the airport and ejected from the country. It was revealed after the fact that the Saigon authorities had arranged the riot.[44] In interviews upon his return, Muste said he was unconcerned about the riot and subsequent ejection; he felt he had achieved one of his primary goals: to show the Vietnamese people that there were Americans who deeply opposed the war.[45] Muste also stated that in his long life of protest, he had experienced far worse treatment from American police and authorities.[46] All his many years of struggle and experimentation with religious and political ideals had brought

[44] Leilah Danielson, *American Gandhi: A. J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 323-326.
[45] Jo Ann Robinson, *Abraham Went Out: A Biography of A.J. Muste* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 208.
[46] Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam,* 60-61.

Muste to the place where he could "practice both reconciliation and resistance," combining his deep and abiding religious beliefs with his practical experience in protesting.[47]

Abraham Johannes Muste was born on January 8, 1885, in Zierikzee in the province of Zeeland, Holland, the oldest of six children. The family was poor, but Muste remembered, "my general impression of my early childhood is that it was a happy one." He had few memories of his life in Holland as the family immigrated to America in January of 1891, sponsored by his maternal uncles who had settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan.[48] In his sketches for an autobiography, Muste reflected, "I am certain that the experience of emigration and immigration, coming so near the beginning of my life, had a good deal to do with shaping its entire pattern and determining my basic attitudes toward the human experience." He considered the life of the biblical Abraham and concluded, "the crucial thing about men, or societies, is not where they came from but where they are going… what is of even more significance about Abraham than the fact that he emigrated… is that there was no city, no society or community for him to move into… Abraham 'went out, not knowing whither he went.'"[49] Muste, too, was to trod new paths and create new communities.

When the family first arrived in America, Muste's mother was sick, and so the family all stayed at a hospital in New York until she recovered. When one of the hospital attendants realized that Muste's first name was Abraham, he began calling him Abraham Lincoln, which raised Muste's curiosity: "I began to read everything by Lincoln or about

[47] A. J. Muste, *The Essays of A. J. Muste* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1967), 374.
[48] Muste, *Essays*, 15, 19.
[49] Muste, *Essays*, 23-24.

him I could lay hands on. Early I learned to say… 'With Malice toward none; with charity for all… to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.' This is how I learned about the American Dream. That is the American Dream."[50]

After his mother's recovery, the family settled in Grand Rapids, and Muste began attending school, which he found "an utter fascination. That apparently there would never be an end of things to learn frequently produced a state of delightful intoxication."[51] As a young man, Muste already felt a calling to the ministry, and his family and community encouraged this path. In 1898, he started at the preparatory school of Hope College, founded by the Dutch Reformed settlers of Michigan, and continued there for college in 1902. He completed his course work in just three years, allowing him to graduate in 1905.[52] Muste then spent a year teaching Greek and English at Northwestern Classical Academy in Orange City, Iowa, largely because he had fallen in love with a girl from Iowa, Anna Huizenga, who he would later marry.[53]

In the fall of 1906, Muste started at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary of the Dutch Reformed Church in New Jersey, while also taking courses at NYU and Columbia. Muste found New Brunswick somewhat lacking in academic rigor, but it provided him "with a supportive environment for mediating between Calvinism and liberalism" and for figuring out his identity in general.[54] In his classes at Columbia, he

[50] A. J. Muste, *Not by Might: Christianity, the Way to Human Decency* (New York: Harper, 1947), 130-131.
[51] Muste, *Essays*, 30.
[52] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 8-9.
[53] Muste, *Essays*, 42.
[54] Danielson, *American Gandhi,* 39-40.

was exposed to the teachings of John Dewey and William James; James, in particular, "bequeathed to Muste the notion that it was possible to be both an idealist and a realist."[55] Muste graduated from seminary in 1909, was ordained, took a trip to Iowa to marry Anna, and returned to New York to take on the ministry of Fort Washington Collegiate Church in Washington Heights, New York.[56] In one of his autobiographical sketches, Muste, a baseball fan, recollected that "one advantage of the location was that it was only a few blocks north of where the Yankee ballpark was then located." Another benefit was that he was able to take classes at Union Theological Seminary.[57]

After just few years of working at Fort Washington Church, Muste began struggling with his religious beliefs. He recalled, "by the fall of [1914] I could no longer acquiesce in giving the impression that I accepted the literal inspiration of Scripture and the whole corpus of Calvinist dogma, at least as then interpreted."[58] Biographer and historian Leilah Danielson argued that the ideas he was exposed to at Union Theological drove Muste's changing beliefs: "what Muste learned at Union challenged Calvinist doctrine to its core… through his courses at Union, Muste's sense of religion's purview expanded, and he soon became deeply interested in politics."[59] Muste felt compelled to leave Fort Washington Church as he no longer followed the official dogma.

Muste was soon offered the role of minister at Central Congregational Church in Newtonville, Massachusetts. The Congregational Church fit more with Muste's religious beliefs at the time (as Danielson described, "Congregationalism shared the Puritan and

[55] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 42.
[56] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 44.
[57] Muste, *Essays*, 43.
[58] Muste, *Essays*, 44.
[59] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 45-46.

Calvinist heritage of the Reformed Church, yet had a more liberal style…[and] had broken with Calvinism"). The church was also close to Concord, the home of Henry David Thoreau, and the community still felt deeply connected to his ideals. Muste was invited to join a discussion group run by some of the local leading religious thinkers, who helped nurture his interest in Thoreau, nonconformity, and spirituality.[60] Muste described, "the first two years at that pastorate were in every way delightful and stimulating…. I was accepted into the circle of some of the leading preachers and theologians of Boston. Spiritually, as well as physically, I felt myself seeing the places that Thoreau and Emerson had looked upon."[61]

Unfortunately, that peace could not last. As Muste remembered:

> It was into this idyllic situation that the lightning bolt of World War I fell… as the months passed and the bitter and bloody trench fighting developed, it became clear that the United States would go in… thus, along with other Christian preachers, I had to face – not academically but existentially, as it were – the question of whether I could reconcile what I had been preaching out of the Gospels… with participation in war.

Muste reflected, "It was a problem which I could not evade because I had been brought up to take religion, specifically the Biblical teaching and Gospel ethic, seriously, and to abhor the sham which enables a person to preach what he does not desperately try to practice."[62] Muste had also begun to be influenced by Quaker thinking and peace testimony, as his circle of friends had introduced him to the writings of Quaker mystics, particularly those of Rufus Jones.[63] He recalled not having had strong feelings on war one way or the other prior to World War I, and reflected that, "it is hard to tell whether,

[60] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 50-51.
[61] Muste, *Essays*, 45.
[62] Muste, *Essays*, 45-46.
[63] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 53.

or when, the conscious adoption of a pacifist position would have occurred if the situation had not backed me into a corner, where the Yes or No had to be uttered." But as he wrestled over the months of war in 1914 and 1915, he came to conclude, "I could not 'bend' the Sermon on the Mount and the whole concept of the Cross and suffering love to accommodate participation in war."[64] Thus, in 1916, having been backed into the corner where he found his answer, Muste fully embraced pacifism, and joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), helping to create a Boston chapter of the group.[65] The FOR was founded in England 1914, by the Quaker Henry T. Hodgkin and a group of Protestant pacifists, and it quickly spread to the United States.[66] As Joseph Kip Kosek described, "the Fellowship of Reconciliation was distinctive in combining religion, absolute pacifism, and a broad field of social action… it was the original American proponent of modern Christian nonviolence."[67]

When it came to his newly discovered pacifism, Muste noted, "for the most part the people of Central Church in Newtonville, Massachusetts, welcomed, or at least easily accepted, my espousal of pacifism and my pacifist activities in the first eight months or so of 1916. Toward the end of the summer, as United States entry loomed more distinctly, some warnings came of trouble ahead."[68] When the US formally declared war in April of 1917, relations between the church and its minister began to unravel, leading to Muste's resignation. Muste then spent some time at the Providence, Rhode Island Friends' Meeting. The Quakers offered him a place to live and a small salary for

[64] Muste, *Essays*, 46-47.
[65] Muste, *Essays*, 47.
[66] Cortright, *Peace,* 70.
[67] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience,* 4.
[68] Muste, *Essays*, 51.

teaching, leading discussion groups, and maintaining their library/reading room.[69] Muste also began doing some work for the organization that would become the American Civil Liberties Union, helping conscientious objectors get better treatment.[70]

In the fall of 1918, Muste moved to Boston, sharing space with another pacifist minister also affiliated with the FOR, and forming a group they called 'The Comradeship.' As Muste described, "those of us identified with The Comradeship in late 1918 and early 1919 were wrestling with the question of how to organize our lives so that they would truly express the teachings and spirit of Jesus, or, in other terms, faith in the way of truth, nonviolence and love."[71] They were also deeply concerned with equality, both racial and economic. This concern led to the new path that Muste's life took in 1919. It was rumored that a general strike was going to break out among the textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and The Comradeship decided to get involved. As Muste wrote, "our discussions about community had sprung out of a feeling that somehow we had to try to translate the ideal of brotherhood into reality. We had also a feeling that nonviolence had to prove itself in an actual struggle; otherwise, it was a mere abstraction." Several of the group therefore decided to assist the striking workers.[72]

Muste and the others were invited to sit in on the strike committee meetings, and before long, Muste was asked to take on a leadership position, beginning his long involvement with labor. When the Amalgamated Textile Workers of America (ATWA)

[69] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 21-23.
[70] Muste, *Essays*, 52.
[71] Muste, *Essays*, 55-56.
[72] Muste, *Essays*, 57-61.

union was created, Muste became their general secretary.[73] As Danielson argued, "the Lawrence struggle and the subsequent challenge of organizing …the ATWA forced Muste, the religious idealist, to deal with practical questions… to answer these questions, Muste turned to the pragmatic philosophy of William James and John Dewey." As Danielson explained, "pragmatism seeks to reconcile idealism and realism by holding that 'truth' emerges out of the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment, theory and practice, and thus is always subject to change."[74] Muste thus learned to balance his idealism with practicality.

In 1921, Muste retired as general secretary of the ATWA to become the educational director of the recently established Brookwood Labor College in Katonah, New York. Brookwood was intended to train workers and union leaders in the history of the labor movement, as well as provide education and tools to aid in labor struggles.[75] Muste felt that Brookwood was to a certain extent "a spiritual child of the Comradeship… it had substantial financial support from individuals in the radical pacifist group. Most comrades felt, I think, that Brookwood was an outgrowth and expression of their ideals." However, "Brookwood was essentially a labor school… [whose] standing ground was that of radical 'laborism' and not religious pacifism." Muste also pointed out, "in my own case it served in this respect as a transition [away from religious pacifism]."[76] Muste spent twelve years of his life (1921-1933) devoted to Brookwood. During that time, he moved further left politically. As he remembered, "I began to read

[73] Nat Hentoff, *Peace Agitator: The Story of A. J. Muste* (New York: A. J. Muste Memorial Institute, 1982), 52-53.
[74] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 66.
[75] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 58-59.
[76] Muste, *Essays*, 86.

fairly extensively in the literature of Marxism…. I turned to these books and periodicals in the late Twenties as I had turned to mystics and early Quakers a few dozen years earlier, not out of academic interest but because I faced conditions and problems about which I felt I had to make decisions."[77]

In 1933, the deepening Depression combined with growing tensions in various branches of the labor movement led to Muste's departure from Brookwood, and his activities afterward pushed him even further to the political left.[78] Muste later referred to the years from 1933-1936 as a "detour." That time in his life was "marked by intense and almost uninterrupted participation in the mass struggles of that period… and equally intense and seemingly continuous involvement in political discussion and maneuvering."[79] Some of the struggles included helping to establish the American Workers Party (AWP) and Muste's eventual involvement with the Trotskyites. Further divisions and in-fighting led to Muste being ousted from his leadership position with the AWP.[80] Muste and his family were living rather precariously at the time, while both he and his wife suffered from health issues. Worried friends of the family helped to raise money to send the couple abroad in the summer of 1936.[81]

Reflecting on this period in his life, Muste wrote, "what had become of my pacifism when I became a Trotskyist? I surmise that not a few of my associates of that period would say that I never ceased being a pacifist at heart and therefore was never a

[77] Muste, *Essays*, 133.
[78] Muste, *Essays*, 147-148.
[79] Muste, *Essays*, 149, 155.
[80] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 88-93.
[81] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 60-61.

true-blue Marxist-Leninist – and there is something to that."[82] He continued, though, that during that time, "I did fully embrace the view that only revolutionary action by the working class and other elements, under the leadership of a vanguard party, could bring in a new social order; and that revolutionary action did not in principle exclude violence; that violence in taking over power would almost certainly be necessary and hence justified."[83] Explaining his move away from pacifism, Muste wrote, "Insofar as I can make this episode intelligible to myself and others, the 'explanation' goes like this: I have to *experience* ideas, rather than *think* them. I have to learn what they mean in practice, to act them out. Also, as I have indicated before, life, or at least responsible living, means to me being involved in the struggle against injustice and tyranny."[84] Furthermore, "in the Thirties, we faced a terrible situation. The ultimate betrayal, the sacrifice of my inner integrity, would have been to stay out of it, not to resist, not to be on the side of the oppressed." He related:

> I did not know how to apply nonviolence effectively to the situation… for a time, I tried to reconcile my Christian pacifism with involvement in the struggle as it was then taking shape…. I came to feel that I was more and more a caricature of a Christian pacifist, and only a half-baked revolutionary, and that I had to choose. I chose revolution, recognizing that it might involve violence. (I did not, having given up my pacifism, think I could remain a Christian.)[85]

As Nat Hentoff put it, "Muste's basic credo is that major social dislocation is necessary to achieve a just society."[86] Muste went through several personal social dislocations throughout his life, but his various detours eventually allowed him to find balance: "I

[82] Muste, *Essays*, 136.
[83] Muste, *Essays*, 136.
[84] Muste, *Essays*, 136.
[85] Muste, *Essays*, 137.
[86] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 15.

know in a far deeper sense than I did thirty years ago that you cannot overcome violence by violence or establish democracy by dictatorship. I am sure my earlier experience has been helpful to me in my attempts to develop nonviolent methods and a more revolutionary movement in later years."[87]

During the Europe trip in 1936, while sightseeing in Paris, Muste stopped at the church of St. Sulpice. As he remembered, "almost from the moment I came into the sanctuary, a deep and what I can only describe as a singing peace came over me…. I seated myself on a bench and looked toward the alter and the cross. I felt, 'This is where you belong, in the church, not outside it.'"[88] After this experience, Muste returned to Christianity and to pacifism. Biographer Jo Ann Robinson argued, "to exaggerate the importance of this moment in the life of Abraham John Muste is impossible. It is the point toward which all the forces of his formative years had pushed him, and the point from all activities of the remaining thirty-one years of his life would emanate."[89] Danielson, slightly more cynically, stated that "while Muste was undoubtedly genuine in recounting what happened in the church of St. Sulpice, his Christian pacifism also offered a resolution to his dilemma of how to remain an idealist without becoming an ideologue. He had, by his own admission, become increasingly rigid, intolerant, and out of touch with reality in his move to the left."[90] It was, however you look at it, a major turning point in Muste's life.

[87] Muste, *Essays*, 137.
[88] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 97-98.
[89] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 63.
[90] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 201.

In an essay Muste wrote in 1936 about his return to pacifism, he noted, "pacifism – life – is built upon a central truth… God is love, love is of God. Love is the central thing in the universe."[91] In 1939 he wrote, "I am again a Christian pacifist. Though in my own thinking and feeling there is no separating these two terms as I define them, nevertheless I am first and foremost and altogether not a member of a secular anti-war movement, but a member of the Church of those who trust for redemption in the love of God and in Christ."[92] When he returned from his trip abroad, Muste rejoined the FOR, and was elected to their national council as Industrial Secretary.[93] As Danielson argued, "over the course of the late 1930s Muste would draw upon his experiences in the labor movement and the secular left, his understanding of the prophetic tradition, and his religious faith to craft a new radical politics based on nonviolence."[94]

In 1937, Muste was appointed director of the Presbyterian Labor Temple in New York. Muste described that, "more perhaps than some who have not had the experience of separation from the Church and from the Christian faith… I can understand the cry of the Psalmist: 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord' than to dwell anywhere else on earth. Being back in the church is to be 'back home.'"[95] In 1940, Muste was coaxed away from the Labor Temple by the FOR leadership, and was appointed the Executive Secretary of the FOR.[96] Danielson noted, "when the FOR hired him as national secretary in 1940, he attempted to transform the organization into a vehicle for building a mass 'nonviolent direct action Movement' that reached out to 'oppressed and minority

[91] Muste, *Essays*, 201.
[92] Muste, *Essays*, 208.
[93] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 101, 103.
[94] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 202.
[95] Muste quoted by Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 67.
[96] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 76.

groups… as Gandhi did in the India National Congress.' His efforts helped to lead to a renaissance in American pacifism."[97]

Not long after Muste's return to pacifism, World War II exploded. As Kosek argued, "in the tumultuous period that began with the Spanish Civil War and ended with the atomic destruction of two Japanese cities, Christian nonviolence faced its bleakest hours… sophisticated liberals, progressives, and radicals offered moral and even religious justifications for the slaughter."[98] Muste held fast to his regained Christian pacifism through all the challenges of World War II. As Danielson noted, "Although World War II was a time of creativity and dynamism for the pacifism movement, it was also a time of marginalization and defensiveness, as pacifists' opposition to the war brought them the enmity of not only the public, but also of longtime friends and allies."[99] In 1941, Muste addressed these divisions, stating: "we must indeed do our utmost to remain in fellowship with our own countrymen and fellow-church-men… if community is to be temporarily broken, it must be they and not we who do the cutting off, and even then we must harbor no ill will." However, "in time of conscription and war, we cannot retire for practical purposes from political activity, from attempting to influence the nation's course, especially when there are still certain democratic channels available for doing so."[100] Muste very personally understood maintaining fellowship during the war: his son John decided to serve in the Navy during WWII. John Muste recalled of his father, "since I was only seventeen, he had to sign my papers, and he did without making me feel I'd

[97] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 9.
[98] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 146.
[99] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 10.
[100] Muste, *Essays*, 226.

disappointed him. He didn't withdraw any of his love because I was not taking the same position as he was."[101]

Throughout the war, at a time when many of his peers gave up their absolute pacifism, Muste persisted in believing that nonviolence was the only answer. Muste wrote, "we want to see Nazism wiped out; we do not speak of wiping out Nazis because we see no evidence that killing off people who hold certain ideas, or are temporarily spell-bound by them, is an effective way to get rid of those ideas."[102] He highlighted how much the US was willing to sacrifice for mobilization to fight a war, arguing "until individuals and nations are prepared to sacrifice as much in practicing reconciliation and nonviolence as they sacrifice in the pursuit of war, we cannot reasonably expect an end of wars."[103]

The atomic bombs the US dropped on Japan became another turning point for Muste. As Danielson pointed out, "the explosion of two atomic bombs confirmed Muste's worst fears about the deleterious effects of modern warfare on democratic institutions and practices."[104] From that point onward, the realities of nuclear war were always on his mind: "nuclear war is politically irrational and morally an indefensible and hideous atrocity, whoever perpetrates it. Preparation for such war is also politically irrational, and since there is no guarantee that the preparation will lead to anything but war, the preparation itself is an atrocity and degradation of mankind."[105] After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Muste dedicated speeches, articles, protests, and a book (*Not by Might:*

[101] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 144-145.
[102] Muste, *Essays*, 235.
[103] Muste, *Essays*, 265.
[104] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 231.
[105] Muste, *Essays*, 388.

Christianity, the Way to Human Decency) to fighting the system that could lead to nuclear warfare.[106] Muste began withholding his federal income taxes in 1948; instead of tax dollars, he sent the IRS a copy of Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience."[107] Muste explained, "I have refused to pay Federal income taxes because I felt I had to find every possible means to divorce myself from any voluntary support of the crowning irrationality and atrocity of atomic and bacterial war."[108]

As historian Charles DeBenedetti argued, Muste and the FOR "occupied a special place in the regenerating peace movement of the 1950s… drawn to the defense of the powerless, radical pacifists believed that peace required individual acts of resistance to challenge arbitrary authority based on violent force…. Peace meant saying 'no to Power,' Muste wrote, and '*action now.* "'[109] Danielson highlighted that as the Cold War expanded, "Muste sought to build a nonaligned 'third way' and antinuclear sentiment through his leadership of and organizational efforts on behalf of the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA) and the World Peace Brigade (WPB), both of which exemplified the prophetic, existential style of political activism he had pioneered in the 1940s."[110]

Working to encourage mass action in the 1950s, Muste helped to create and edit *Liberation* magazine, founded in 1956. Danielson argued, "*Liberation's* historical significance lies in its blending of concern for the alienation and conformity of American life with a radical political agenda…. *Liberation's* editors and contributors… tended to

[106] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 244.
[107] Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam*, 56.
[108] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 125.
[109] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 22-23.
[110] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 14.

advocate various ways of challenging American society."[111] DeBenedetti pointed out, "*Liberation* signaled a new movement in American radical culture and politics. It gave radical pacifism a revolutionary wing, and it crystalized many of the differences between radical pacifists and other peace advocates, thereby defining the terrain on which the evolving antiwar movement would fragment between 1955 and 1975."[112] *Liberation* thus foreshadowed many of the trends that would come to the forefront of the 1960s.

In the midst of the 1950s, Muste had to face personal tragedy as well as aging and recognition of his own mortality. He was asked to retire as secretary of the FOR in 1953 when he was sixty-eight, though he was given the title of secretary emeritus.[113] And then his wife Anna died in September of 1954. As he poignantly wrote in his sketches for an autobiography, "I did not know in my bones that people reach retirement age and younger men take their place. I did not know either that, when this happens, you just keep on. I did not know in my bones that a being you love and have loved for years on end can die, and that a home can cease to be… such things are all just talk until they are experienced."[114] Hentoff quoted a family friend who noted that Muste was "very lonely for a while after Anna's death… but there was always his work, and he took on so much of it that I doubt if he allows himself much time now to remember that he is alone."[115]

One of the projects Muste took on at the time was helping to create and write the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) pamphlet, *Speak Truth to Power*, which was published in 1955. DeBenedetti called it "the sharpest faith-based challenge to the

[111] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 270-271.
[112] DeBenedetti, *American Ordeal*, 25.
[113] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 266.
[114] Muste, *Essays*, 12.
[115] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 148.

pursuit of peace through armed preeminence."[116] Laying out its terms, the pamphlet stated, "Acceptance to the doctrine of violence is so widespread that man is becoming hardened to mass extermination, and indifferent to mass human suffering."[117] It made the point that it is impossible to simultaneously work for peace and prepare for war: "a willingness to resort to organized mass violence under any circumstances requires a commitment that condemns all other desires and considerations to relative ineffectiveness."[118] It argued that humans must reject the concept of the ends justifying the means, especially in a nuclear age: "is it not clear that to resort to immoral means in order to resist what is immoral is not to preserve or vindicate moral values, but only to become collaborators in destroying all moral life among men?"[119] Danielson felt that *Speak Truth to Power,* "essentially summarized Muste's thinking since the 1940s… it offered a practical rationale for its advocacy of nonviolence, but it also conceded that its argument was ultimately based on faith." Additionally, much like *Liberation* magazine, "the aim of *Speak Truth to Power* was to initiate dialogue and action."[120]

One of Muste's many battles against nuclear weapons came against the Civil Defense Drills. These exercises were held beginning in 1951, supposedly as a way to help save civilians in case of nuclear bombs, though "many proponents saw them as a way to bolster the American public's anti-Soviet resolve." [121] When the drills were held, all civilians were required to take shelter or face charges. In June of 1955, one such drill was

[116] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 16.
[117] American Friends Service Committee, *Speak Truth to Power, a Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence* (Philadelphia, 1955), 2.
[118] AFSC, *Speak Truth to Power*, 14.
[119] AFSC, *Speak Truth to Power*, 31.
[120] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 273.
[121] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 197.

held in New York, but Muste and a group of fellow activists decided not to cooperate. Muste and company, "remained seated on benches in City Hall Park in New York City, holding signs that declared 'End War… the only Defense against Atomic Weapons.'"[122] They were arrested and fined, but this act of protest was repeated year after year. By 1960, hundreds followed Muste's lead in protesting the drills, and the drills were finally cancelled in 1962.[123]

Muste also helped create the group that became the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA), whose major goal was disarmament.[124] The CNVA come to exist around the same time as SANE (the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy), and Muste participated in both, but as Robinson put it, CNVA was more for "radical pacifists interested in direct action and civil disobedience" while SANE "attracted liberals and moderate pacifists who preferred traditional methods for educating public opinion," so the CNVA got more of Muste's attention.[125] Some of the CNVA's many actions included the voyage of the *Golden Rule*, in which activists attempted to sail into nuclear test sites in the Marshall Islands, to publicize the evils of nuclear weapons. There was also the 1960-61 San Francisco-Moscow Walk for Peace. Peace activists from across the US and Europe began walking in San Francisco in December of 1960, handing out CNVA leaflets and urging disarmament everywhere they walked. The Walk finally ended in the Soviet Union in October of 1961.[126]

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[122] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 162-163.
[123] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 198.
[124] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 279.
[125] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 103.
[126] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 279-282.

The last years of Muste's life were consumed by protesting the Vietnam War. Even before the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August of 1964, Muste loudly opposed US policy in Vietnam.[127] In fact, after the French loss at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam in 1954, he had warned "that the American obsession with preventing the spread of Communism would lead it into an unwinnable war."[128] In a 1964 assessment made on Vietnam by Muste and a colleague from the War Resisters League (WRL), they noted, "we are trapped… in a situation where no traditional military victory can be won in South Vietnam regardless of how many troops and how much more equipment is poured in."[129] After the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, Muste immediately began working to build opposition to the war, and was a featured speaker at one of earliest antiwar rallies on December 19, 1964, in New York.[130] As Muste wrote in a 1965 essay: "I cannot get it out of my head or my guts that Americans are away over there, not only shooting at people but dropping their bombs on them, roasting them with napalm and all the rest… many knowledgeable people make out a convincing case for the proposition that many of our acts in Vietnam constitute war crimes under the Nuremberg pattern."[131]

Unfortunately, even as the antiwar movement was beginning to come together, it was simultaneously already starting to fracture. There were political maneuverings over the Students for a Democratic Society's (SDS) antiwar march in April of 1965, as the SDS chose a policy of non-exclusion (of communists and Vietcong sympathizers) that upset many of the established peace liberals, who issued a statement which supported the

[127] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 87, 98.
[128] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 305.
[129] WRL Memo, quoted by Robinson in *Abraham Went Out*, 195.
[130] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 100.
[131] Muste, *Essays*, 500.

march while disassociating themselves from certain "elements." This statement was covered by the *New York Post*, which inflamed the situation further. Muste quickly worked on mending the fractures between himself and the SDS ("the spirit of understanding and reconciliation with which you approached all parties concerned was instrumental in preventing a public rupture which would have served the interest of no one" was the response of one of the SDS leaders, Clark Kissinger).[132] From that point on, Muste took a stand against exclusionary policies. Muste argued that, "the United States course in Southeast Asia… is both untenable and indefensible" and that "the main requirement of the 'peace movement,' the nonviolent, revolutionary movement, is to plan and execute its own job more wisely and efficiently, rather than become absorbed in and divided by a controversy over 'fronting.'"[133] Muste worked to build support across different groups who opposed the war, and so it was that the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee came to be. As Danielson described, "the Parade Committee brought together pacifists, liberal peace activists, New Leftists, civil rights workers, Communists and Trotskyists, and others who agreed to seek unity in their opposition to war, while at the same time acknowledging and respecting their differences."[134]

In June of 1965, Muste led the CNVA to "Speak Out" against the war on the steps of the Pentagon. Muste and others gave speeches, while activists attempted to share their message with Pentagon staff. Robinson recorded, "at least one employee of the Pentagon was definitely touched by the CNVA effort. One day following Speak Out, John M. Jones, a naval officer with ten years of service, sent Muste a check for five dollars and a

[132] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 111; Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 197-198.
[133] Muste, *Essays*, 467, 476-477.
[134] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 311.

note that he was resigning." Muste followed up with the man, who replied, "Your visit to the Pentagon acted as a kind of catalyst to some rather basic moral values that had been smoldering inside of me for some time."[135]

Over the summer and fall, plans for the October 16 International Days of Protest by the newly created Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee nearly broke down due to infighting, largely over slogans and signs. Muste intervened, and was able to get everyone to work together.[136] As DeBenedetti described the antiwar movement in 1965, "with the war escalating and domestic tensions rising, pacifists broke into opposing liberal and radical factions that quarrelled over the meaning of Vietnam, America, and nonviolence." But "A.J. Muste remained above the controversy- not aloof, but beyond it. 'My attitude on all these things is frankly an experimental one,' he once confided. 'I don't want to be separated from these young elements at this stage.'…the development of sharp differences within the movement was to be expected, he cautioned, but not turned inward."[137] Muste worked hard to build coalitions to fight the Vietnam war, recruiting people from the many walks of life he'd been a part of, from clergy to intellectuals, from civil rights workers to nuclear disarmament activists.[138] Fellow peace workers noted, "what made such a broad based coalition possible was the personality of A.J. Muste… while few of the groups had ever agreed, worked with, or much less trusted one another, they were all united in their respect for A.J."[139]

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[135] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 199.
[136] Wells, *The War Within*, 53.
[137] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 117-118.
[138] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 311.
[139] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 200.

October of 1965 also saw the first public draft card burning after Congress had declared it a crime. David Miller of the Catholic Worker burned his draft card in New York, an act that Muste watched and supported. Several other such burnings followed, including one in November at which both Muste and the Catholic Workers' Dorothy Day spoke. Muste was subpoenaed by a federal grand jury for his support and participation in these actions.[140] At the inquiry, Muste stated:

> I plan to do my utmost to bring home to my fellow-Americans the truth about war as I see it, and about the war in Vietnam and current American foreign policy, and to call upon them to face the question whether reason and conscience do not require them to withdraw all support from these policies and in particular to call for an immediate halt in American military action in Southeast Asia.[141]

After Norman Morrison and Roger LaPorte self-immolated in November of 1965 in acts of protest against the war, Muste released a statement as chairman of the CNVA. He wrote that while he was "profoundly moved by the spirit of these actions, we would strongly discourage anyone planning to follow the example… there are other ways to protest against war and violence." He instead encouraged people to "join in mass demonstrations… acts of civil disobedience… and to consider withdrawing their participation in the war by refusing to serve in the armed forces, refusing to pay taxes for war, and refusing to work in military industries."[142]

In February of 1966, Muste and the Fifth Avenue Parade Committee picketed the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, wherein President Johnson was receiving the National Freedom Prize. Muste had actually been invited to the dinner itself, but instead led the protestors

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[140] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 201.
[141] Muste, *Essays*, 462.
[142] A.J. Muste, CNVA Statement, Folder 1, Box 1, Norman Morrison Collected Papers, Swarthmore College Special Collections, Swarthmore, PA (hereafter Morrison Collected Papers.)

outside.[143] March of 1966 saw the Second International Days of Protest. The New York march on Fifth Avenue had at least 20,000 participants. As Zaroulis recounted, "The venerable A.J. Muste gave voice to the enthusiasm, hope, and confidence of the occasion. The parade and the response to it, he said, was 'evidence of the power of unity. I hope that all of us… will take the lesson of what happens when there is unity among the forces oppose to this war, whatever their differences.'"[144]

In the spring of 1966, with Muste as chair, the CNVA organized the trip to Vietnam that would end in a riot and their forcible removal. For Muste, this experience only pushed him to work harder to build coalitions to help protest the war. He continued to participate in protests and teach-ins. One such set of teach-ins eventually led to the creation of the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (the MOBE). As had become entirely too common, divisions threatened to tear the group apart from the beginning, but Muste was able to help hold them together with his skill at reconciliation and coalition building.[145]

1966 also saw Muste serving as co-chair of the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee, a case involving three GIs who were court martialed for refusing to fight in Vietnam. On June 30, 1966, the Three held a press conference where they announced, "We will not be part of this unjust, immoral, and illegal war. We want no part of a war of extermination. We oppose the criminal waste of American lives and resources. We refuse to go to Vietnam!"[146] Muste and the Defense committee sought to publicize the case and

[143] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up,* 78.
[144] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, 80.
[145] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 326-327.
[146] John F. Bannan, *Law, Morality, and Vietnam: The Peace Militants and the Courts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 64.

establish it as a legal test case. Muste wrote, "it is a matter which involves the civil rights of all men in the armed services, their right to think for themselves, to discuss the issue raised by the War in Vietnam, and to refuse to obey orders to commit what they believe to be war crimes."[147]

Conscientious objection had always been close to Muste's heart; as he wrote in a 1966 essay, "Where else would a young man 'vote,' i.e., exercise his democratic duty, if not at the point where he is called upon to do what he holds is unwarranted and injurious, not only to himself but to society? What does the Nuremberg trial mean if not that young men do not obey, but disobey, orders at that point?"[148] Even earlier, in the 1950s, he had written, "Non-conformity, Holy Disobedience, becomes a virtue, indeed a necessary and indispensable measure of spiritual self-preservation, in a day when the impulse to conform, to acquiesce, to go along, is used as an instrument to subject men to totalitarian rule and involve them in permanent war."[149] When the Three were court martialed in September of 1966, Muste attended the trials. The defense lawyers were not allowed to address the legality of the war, and three men were convicted and sentenced. Though as Robinson highlighted, "the case increased communications between the peace movement and G.I.'s and underlined the special price paid in the war by minorities and people of color" (one of the Three was Black and another Puerto Rican).[150]

In December of 1966, Muste received an invitation to visit North Vietnam. While the trip was planned as another protest, Muste additionally felt the need to "connect with

[147] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 213.
[148] Muste, *Essays*, 511.
[149] Muste, *Essays*, 372.
[150] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 212-214.

the North Vietnamese people, to express his shame and outrage at the conduct of the United States toward their country."[151] Along with three other religious activists (Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Toronto, age sixty-seven, assistant bishop Ambrose Reeves of Chichester, England, also age sixty-seven, and Pastor Martin Niemöller of Germany, age seventy-five, and president of the World Council of Churches) Muste set out in January of 1967, arriving in Hanoi on January 9. The group stayed for a week, touring wastelands of bomb damage, visiting hospitalized civilian casualties, and meeting with President Ho Chi Minh and Premier Pham Van Dong.[152] The massive amounts of devestation in Hanoi made it quickly apparent that the Johnson administration had been lying to the American people about their bombing practices. After seeing the utter destruction that had already taken place in North Vietnam, Muste sent a telegram to Washington, "For God's sake stop lying! Let us stop this bombing practice or say honestly to our government, to the world, and to ourselves, 'We are trying to bomb [the] hell out of the Vietnamese people!'"[153] Muste wrote to President Johnson upon his return as well, stating that while he could not promise that Hanoi would meet US demands, "if bombing were stopped, a new climate would exist and the possibility… of a cease fire would be greatly enhanced."[154]

The now eighty-two-year-old Muste immediately threw himself back into work, describing his experiences in Vietnam, continuing to work on behalf of the Fort Hood Three, and organizing for the Spring MOBE campaign. But he began to feel unwell, visiting his doctor on February 10, then the hospital for tests on February 11, 1967.

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[151] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 328.
[152] Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam*, 83-86.
[153] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 329.
[154] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 219.

Shortly after his arrival at the hospital, he lost consciousness, and died soon after, likely of an aneurysm. Many of his friends and family felt that last trip to Vietnam had been what killed him.[155] On February 13, hundreds turned out for a tribute to Muste at the Community Church of New York. The following week saw a memorial service at the New York City Friends Meeting House.[156] The journalist I.F. Stone penned a moving farewell in the February 20, 1967 issue of his *Weekly*:

> A. J. Muste was a wanderer on the face of the earth, a Witness in the ancient sense, driven by an impossible compulsion, to fulfil a truly Christian mission…. Like that carpenter's Son, he was a life-long agitator, a radical pacifist. He once estimated that in 50 years he had been arrested 30 times…. He lived a life of poverty, and in the Middle Ages would have been recognized as a saint. His latest pilgrimage for peace was to Hanoi. "The world needs a revolution," he once wrote, "in feeling, in sensitivity, in orientation, in the spirit of man"…. It is a measure of his worth, and of his place in the peace movement, that though he died at 82, he leaves so sharp a sense of loss, a gap in the leadership there is no one to fill.[157]

I.F. Stone was not the only one concerned about the gaps in antiwar leadership left by Muste's death; Nat Hentoff, who wrote a 1963 biography of Muste, felt that there was no one else who "could be a bridge between just about all sections of the radical non-community."[158] Muste had connected with the young, the old, the liberals, and the radicals all alike.

The April 1967 Spring MOBE action was perhaps the memorial that Muste would have most appreciated; as DeBenedetti wrote, "thousands of people found a way to express unity beyond the divisions in their ranks."[159] During the MOBE march, one of

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[155] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 220.
[156] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 330-331.
[157] I.F. Stone, "Farewell to A.J. Muste," *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, February 20, 1967, http://www.ifstone.org/weekly/IFStonesWeekly-1967feb20.pdf.
[158] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 332.
[159] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 175.

the floats was a memorial in Muste's honor, boasting an enormous banner with his photo.[160] The MOBE newsletter also instructed that in Muste's honor, "in lieu of flowers, friends are requested to get out and work – for peace, for human rights, for a better world."[161]

Writing between 1957 and 1960, and reflecting on the many paths his life had taken, Muste described that:

> My work for four decades has been mainly in social movements, in economic and political struggles. I am aware of the limitations of such activity. It has, furthermore, its own peculiar temptations, to some of which I have fallen prey. But I believe that these struggles are important and that my place is in them. What I have come to believe increasingly is that they must be carried on by nonviolent methods, and in love.[162]

Though he stepped from the path of nonviolence and Christianity for a time, he returned to it stronger than ever, and remained a Christian pacifist for the rest of his life. It had been a struggle, and he wrote with personal feeling that "it was surely by the hard road of spiritual agony that men like George Fox and James Naylor arrived at clarity, power and serenity." Muste had walked such a road, and know of what he spoke when he said, "I am suggesting that we shall achieve confidence and power only in the degree that we do not deceive ourselves about ourselves. This experience of self-examination and repentance is not something which takes place once and for all. It is a state rather than an event."[163] Muste's experiences of spiritual agony and self-examination were in part what made him so successful as an organizer. As Charles DeBenedetti described, "articulate in speech and writing, Muste could reason with intellectuals; experienced in radical movements, he

[160] Danielson, *An American Gandhi*, 334.
[161] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 223.
[162] Muste, *Essays*, 91.
[163] Muste, *Essays*, 419.

could rally activists; self-consciously prophetic, he could distinguish vision from reality. He did not act the part of a hero. He just modeled what he believed, and his radical pacifism was the more accessible for that."[164]

Muste believed, "the Christian way is to refuse to cooperate with evil and to accept the consequence. The consequence is the Cross… to put it another way, the capacity to suffer unto death on behalf of our fellows is the real power that makes human life possible, and creates and maintains human society."[165] Though Muste frequently wrote and argued from the position that Christianity was required for true pacifism, he was willing to accept that religious belief itself was not required for true dedication: "I know atheists in the movement who are religious in the very real sense that they are committed to pacifism, not as a technique, but as a way of life…. Religion, after all, implies an individual's commitment to something beyond himself. It need not have anything to do with institutionalized churches and dogma."[166]

In assessing Muste's flaws and failings, Hentoff noted, "among some of his colleagues, the most frequent criticism of A.J. Muste's own 'revolutionary living and action' has been that he tries to sustain too many projects and committees simultaneously."[167] His divided attention was one of the major causes of the split from Brookwood, as well as disagreements and fallings out in other groups and with other people. Muste agreed with Hentoff's assessment: "I find it difficult to say no, especially to younger people."[168] Though a flaw in some lights, in others, the fact that he did

[164] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 21.
[165] Muste, *Essays*, 293-294.
[166] Muste quoted by Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 187-188.
[167] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 176.
[168] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 177.

connect with so many people across so many different groups aided in his coalition building.

Muste was an extremely inspirational figure to many within the pacifist and social justice movements. As Hentoff recorded, "many later full-time workers in such units as the American Friends Service Committee, the F.O.R., and other pacifist organizations remember a Muste visit to their schools as having either awakened their interest in pacifism or confirmed their barely nascent views on the subject."[169] Danielson highlighted, "without Muste's leadership, antiwar activists concurred, the coalition against the war in Vietnam would not have been possible."[170] Zaroulis wrote, "in his presence warring factions within the Movement time and again put aside their antagonisms to take up practical solutions. He was a respecter of persons, and all in turn respected him." She also noted that prior to his death, "he had arguably been the single most important person to oppose the war in the early days, the mid-sixties, when the great mass of the American public had yet to awaken to the nightmare that was Vietnam."[171] Muste himself said:

> I've always tried to keep communication open between radicals and non-radicals, between pacifists and nonpacifists. It goes back to something very fundamental in the nonviolent approach to life. You always assume there is some element of truth in the position of the other person…. You keep the lines of communication open, and you act on your own ideas.[172]

Muste died years before the Vietnam War came to its end, and his loss only encouraged growling splits in the movement that had barely held together with his

[169] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 207-208.
[170] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 15.
[171] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, 81, 102.
[172] Muste quoted by Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 251.

leadership. Robinson concluded, "by most measurable standards, Muste's labors to make a better world and to 'create a climate' in which war and nuclear weapons would not be tolerated had largely failed. But measurable standards were never his sole criteria for action." She related:

> He cut short lamentations about the powerlessness of the peace movement. "I agree that there is a sense in which the so-called peace movement has failed," Muste told a querulous correspondent. "[I agree] that I have failed, as you suggest… [but] joy and growth come from following our deepest impulses, however foolish they may seem to some, or dangerous, and even though the apparent outcome may be defeat."[173]

Muste's deep religious beliefs, self-examination, and reflective practices were part of his ability to accept failures and powerlessness, and what also allowed him to find joy in his unending work for peace and justice.

[173] Robinson, *Abraham Went Out*, 224.

Chapter III.

Norman Morrison

"What can we do that we haven't done?"[174] This was the question that Norman Morrison posed to his wife on the fateful morning of November 2, 1965: the day that he set himself on fire in front of the Pentagon in an act of protest against the Vietnam War. In Anne Morrison Welsh's book about her husband, she remembered, "we had done everything I could imagine doing to try to stop the war: praying, protesting, lobbying, withholding war taxes, writing letters to newspapers and people in power."[175] But all these many actions, everything she could imagine them doing, had stopped nothing: troops kept landing, bombs kept falling, and the bodies of soldiers and civilians alike piled up in ever-growing numbers. In early 1965, there were 23,000 American troops in Vietnam; by the end of 1965, there were 184,300 American troops in Vietnam.[176] Norman Morrison, a devout Quaker, acted to try to stop the growing war machine of death and destruction.

Norman R. Morrison was born in Erie, Pennsylvania on December 29, 1933, the oldest of two boys. His dentist father died unexpectedly when Norman was thirteen, and the family relocated to Chautauqua, New York, where they had a summer cottage. A Presbyterian pastor in Chautauqua "introduced Norman to the idea of listening to God and to the social and political impact of faith in the world" and encouraged him in his

[174] Anne Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light: Norman Morrison's Sacrifice for Peace and His Family's Journey of Healing* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 4.
[175] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 4.
[176] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*, 25–26.

plan to enter into the Presbyterian ministry.[177] In 1952, Morrison enrolled at the College of Wooster in Ohio to fulfill this plan, though he soon found himself drawn to the small Quaker meetings on campus.[178] He met his future wife, Anne Corpening, while she summered in Chautauqua in 1955. She recalled that he already was living his life "by a philosophy of guided drift, which was about being open to direction by God."[179] Norman felt that this philosophy led to him knowing that Anne would be his wife; two years later, they were married in a Durham, North Carolina Friends Meetinghouse.[180]

In the meantime, Morrison had graduated Wooster with the class of 1956, and begun seminary studies at Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh. His second year, he studied abroad at New College in Edinburgh, Scotland, and he and Anne spent time traveling through Europe.[181] They returned to Pittsburgh for Norman's final year of seminary. As Anne described in her book, "in Edinburgh, Norman had found himself caught in a moral dilemma over ordination… he was increasingly drawn to Quaker practice of the 'priesthood of all believers.'" The pair had explored several European Quaker centers during their time abroad, and as Anne noted, "even before he graduated from seminary, Norman knew that his place was not in a Presbyterian pulpit."[182] They joined the Pittsburgh Friends Meeting, though Morrison worked to complete his seminary studies. On May 12, 1959, he graduated the same day that their oldest child was born. In the fall of 1959, the family moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where they spent two

[177] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 10.
[178] Anne Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart: Norman Morrison's Legacy in Viet Nam and at Home* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2005), 7.
[179] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 19.
[180] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 8.
[181] Paul Hendrickson, *The Living and the Dead: Robert McNamara and Five Lives of a Lost War*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 217.
[182] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 20-23.

years working to establish a Friends Meeting. Anne wrote that, "Norman was greatly committed to peace and social justice and worked hard for these goals. Our new meeting frequently sponsored public discussions on political issues."[183] Morrison found himself in conflict with some of their superiors at the North Carolina Yearly Meeting, as he was more liberal both in politics and theology. He got involved in the local Civil Rights movement in 1961, joining an effort to desegregate a local theater, and helped to host Freedom Riders at the Charlotte Meeting. Then in 1962, Morrison accepted a job as the executive secretary for Stony Run Friends Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, and the family relocated to Baltimore, where they would remain until his death. Stony Run and Morrison were not always a perfect fit; his wife recalled "as the civil rights movement and growing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam escalated tensions in the nation, Norman brought a radical Quaker posture to a meeting that didn't fully embrace him or his prophetic vision."[184] But his wife largely remembered their time there as happy, particularly their last year, after youngest daughter Emily was born.[185]

On June 11, 1963, the Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc self-immolated on a street in Saigon to protest the treatment of the Buddhists in South Vietnam. Over the years of the war, several other Vietnamese Buddhist monks and nuns followed suit. As Thich Nhat Hanh wrote, "by burning himself, Thich Quang Duc awakened the world to the suffering of the war and the persecution of the Buddhists… [his] act expressed the unconditional willingness to suffer for the awakening of others." Trying to express the meaning of these acts, Nhat Hanh wrote, "I know the self-immolation of monks and nuns

[183] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 23-24.
[184] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 25-27.
[185] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 30.

was difficult for Westerners to understand. The Western press called it suicide, but it was not really suicide. It was not even a protest. What the monks wrote in the letters they left behind was intended only to move the hearts of the oppressors and call the world's attention to the suffering of our people." It was an intensely spiritual act, and one that Thich Nhat Hanh believed was based in love: "the essence of our struggle was love itself, and that was a real contribution to humanity."[186] The act of self-immolation was a gift to the world.

On March 16, 1965, the first American self-immolation took place: "Alice Herz, a member of Women Strike for Peace and a refugee from Nazism, set herself afire on a Detroit street. The eighty-two-year-old woman died of her burns ten days later."[187] Per a *New York Times* article, Herz informed the firefighters that rushed her to the hospital, "I did it to protest the arms race all over the world. I wanted to burn myself like the monks in Vietnam did." Additionally, she'd had a note in her purse that stated, "I wanted to call attention to this problem by choosing the illuminating death of a Buddhist."[188] Herz's act received little notice at the time, except among peace activists, but it became part of a growing opposition to the war. April 17, 1965 saw the 20,000 strong Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organized march on Washington. Vietnam Teach-Ins went national across campuses.[189] However, most of American society supported the war, and in May of 1965, Johnson got an additional $700 million approved by Congress for

[186] Thich Nhat Hạnh, *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1993), 43, 44, 47.
[187] Small, *Johnson, Nixon & the Doves*, 35.
[188] David R. Jones, *The New York Times*, "Woman, 82, Sets Herself Afire in Street as Protest on Vietnam," *New York Times (1923-),* March 18, 1965, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/woman-82-sets-herself-afire-street-as-protest-on/docview/116821113/se-2.
[189] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 111-115.

military actions in Vietnam.[190] As 1965 continued on, Vietnamese air sorties began being measured in the thousands, as were bomb tonnage figures.[191] As these terrible figures climbed into numbers that were nearly inconceivable, Morrison "ardently preached against the war, planned peace vigils and conferences, lobbied in the halls of Congress, and withheld taxes that supported the conflict. He wrote regularly to politicians, including a few direct pleas to President Lyndon Johnson and his press secretary."[192]

As Anne Morrison Welsh wrote in her 2005 pamphlet, *Fire of the Heart*: "November 2, 1965. What happened that day changed my life… it deeply affected countless individuals in America and overseas. It moved the hearts of generations of Vietnamese. Years later, we learned that it had a significant impact on Robert S. McNamara." She described:

> On that day, my husband, Norman R. Morrison, gave his life in protest of the Viet Nam War. He gave it freely, standing about forty feet below McNamara's office. I do not know if Norman was even aware of the proximity to McNamara. He was, however, excruciatingly aware of the suffering of innocent people in Viet Nam, and of our GIs returning wounded or in body bags, so much so that his heart was breaking. Something beyond him compelled him to try to stop the war in the strongest way he could imagine, giving his life by suffering self-immolation in the Buddhist tradition.[193]

It was only 1965. It had only been a little more than a year of American troops truly on the ground in a war that would stretch until the fall of Saigon in 1975, but that year alone was more than Norman Morrison could take.

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[190] Small, *Johnson, Nixon & the Doves*, 43.
[191] Small, *Johnson, Nixon & the Doves*, 61.
[192] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 41.
[193] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 3.

In explaining Morrison's life and his choices, Anne Morrison Welsh highlighted that her husband held strongly to a life philosophy of guided drift: "in the Quaker tradition, it is often called 'holy obedience.' In a Quaker meeting, where Friends wait prayerfully for God's guidance and inspiration, the worshiper's job is to listen, then try to respond. Norman believed his life depended on responding faithfully."[194] A few days after Morrison's immolation, his wife received a letter from him, with his explanation and his goodbyes:

> Please don't condemn me…. For weeks, even months, I have been praying only that I be shown what I must do. This morning with no warning I was shown, as clearly as I was shown that Friday night in August 1955 that you would be my wife… at least I shall not plan to go without my child, as Abraham did. Know that I love thee but must act for the children in the priest's village.[195]

Morrison had prayed, listened, and then responded, for having received his message, he felt he could do nothing else but act upon it.

The mention of the priest's village was a reference to an article Morrison and his wife had read in the November 1, 1965 issue of *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, titled "A Priest Tells How Our Bombers Razed His Church and Killed His People" by Jean Larteguy.[196] In it, the priest, Father Currien, described the experience of having his church bombed, "The first bomb fell at 6:05 on my church. There was nothing left of it. I ran for shelter to the presbytery…a second bomb crushed it and I was pinned under the beams. Children cried, women shrieked and the wounded moaned." The next morning, Father Currien and the survivors fled, facing further horrors, "on the way I buried as best I could the bodies of

[194] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 19.
[195] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 14.
[196] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 14.

my faithful. Yes, I remember now I buried seven of them completely torn to bits. I had to abandon some wounded and dying."[197] For Morrison, reading about the experiences of Father Currien and his people brought about a sudden, visceral moment of direction that led him to take action. As scholar Sallie B. King described, "the second event precipitating Morrison's self-immolation was, as he understood it, a direct message from God, showing him with utter clarity what he must do."[198] The atrocities in Vietnam had to be stopped at any cost, and Morrison was prepared to pay the highest of all costs, following his deep faith.

Morrison brought his youngest daughter, still an infant, with him on that fateful day. Because his immolation was not filmed, and witness statements provided mixed testimony, it was unclear exactly what his actions and intentions were for Emily Morrison. As Paul Hendrickson wrote, after much research and many interviews:

> What made it so horrifying, awesome, and impenetrable all at once was that Norman R. Morrison had a child, his own infant daughter, in his presence. Her name is Emily, and she was nine days from her first birthday. Had he held her in his left arm while he'd soaked himself with his right? Some thought so. Did he set her down ahead of time and then move off ten or fifteen paces before removing the cap from the glass gallon container that contained the yellowish liquid? This too was reported. Did he release her just as the flames were licking up from his shoe tops, which is where he apparently struck the match, and, if so, did he do it of his own volition or out of a panicked response to the screams of onlookers?

Hendrickson went on to conclude, "what I've also come to think is that maybe it isn't necessary to know. Indeed maybe trying to pin the Emily part of it down goes in a

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[197] Jean Larteguy, "A Priest Tells How Our Bombers Razed His Church and Killed His People," *I.F. Stone's Weekly,* November 1, 1965, http://www.ifstone.org/weekly/IFStonesWeekly-1965nov01.pdf.
[198] Sallie B. King, "They Who Burned Themselves for Peace: Quaker and Buddhist Self-Immolators during the Vietnam War," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 20, no. 1 (2000): 128, https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2000.0016.

mistaken direction. Because no matter what happened at the last, or what the intent was, a child was saved, was led away from death in an eye's blink."[199] At a time when so many children were dying by fire in Vietnam, this struck a chord with many people in America and in Vietnam alike. As Morrison himself wrote in his farewell letter to his wife, it also had biblical undertones: the threat of sacrificing one's child that ends in the child being saved, like Isaac and Abraham.

Morrison's sacrifice proved enormously moving and important for Vietnamese people on all sides of the war. Within a few weeks of his death, North Vietnam produced a stamp honoring him.[200] Shortly after Morrison's death, the Vietnamese poet To Huu composed a poem in his honor, titled "Emily, My Child." As translated by Tran Van Chuong and Felix Greene:

> Emily, come with me,/So when grown up you will know the way
> and not be lost./"Where are we going, Daddy?"/"To the riverbank, the
> Potomac."/"What do you want me to see, Daddy?"
> "I want you, dear, to see the Pentagon."…
> "Look this way! /For this one moment, look at me!
> Here you see not just a man with a child in/His arms./I am of Today,
> And this, my child, my Emily, is the life of all/our Futures.
> Here I stand, /And together with me/The great heart of America,
> A light to the horizon/A beacon/Of justice."…
> Now my heart is at its brightest!/I burn my body
> So the flames may blaze/The Truth.[201]

Anne Morrison Welsh described both the importance of the poem as well as the importance of Norman's act for many Vietnamese people she encountered, both in the US and in Vietnam, "on our visit to Viet Nam, we learned that almost everyone of the

[199] Hendrickson, *The Living and the Dead*, 188-189.
[200] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 17.
[201] To Huu, as translated by Tran Van Chuong & Felix Greene, quoted in Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 102-103.

war generation, in both the North and South, knew that poem." She further described, "Emily as the innocent child who survived death became a symbol of hope for the Vietnamese in a devastating war."[202] It wasn't just that Morrison had committed his sacrificial self-immolation; it was the combination of that immolation with the survival of his child, delivered from the flames, that spoke so strongly to the Vietnamese. Morrison Welsh at one point ran into a South Vietnamese immigrant at a retreat at Pendle Hill, who told her, "People in South Viet Nam were also moved by Norman Morrison's death, not just those in the North. All we knew about America was bombers and bombs and helicopters and soldiers. Then came Norman Morrison, this voice of conscience!"[203] Morrison's immolation honored the suffering of the Vietnamese in an action drawn from their own culture, humanizing Americans for the people being victimized by the US war machine.

Americans largely had very different reactions to Morrison's immolation, finding it incomprehensible and/or deeply troubling, with many questioning whether Morrison was mentally ill. But there were some who felt much the way the Vietnamese did; one of Morrison's best friends from college, Don Reiman, related his immediate reaction to Morrison's immolation to Paul Hendrickson, "Emily symbolic of Vietnamese children. The Americans who felt revulsion at the idea she was endangered would look & feel differently at news accounts of children napalmed in Vietnam."[204] Hendrickson also related another interaction he had with a Wooster (Morrison's alma mater) professor of Russian studies: "Dan Calhoun, who arrived the year Norman graduated, and never met

[202] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 27, 29.
[203] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 29.
[204] Hendrickson, *Living and the Dead*, 211.

him, told me one day several years ago over coffee in the student union: 'He made it a moral question: you couldn't intellectualize it after that. I knew I felt a little angry at him at the time. It forced me to face it. I wonder if it didn't make McNamara face it, too.'"[205] Hendrickson absolutely felt that Morrison's act made McNamara face it: "what I fervently believe, and cannot prove, is that Norman Morrison's act became the emotional catalyst for the secret turn [that McNamara took against the war]."[206] McNamara himself mentioned Morrison both in his memoir *In Retrospect*, as well as in the 2003 Errol Morris documentary *The Fog of War*. In McNamara's description, "antiwar protest had been sporadic and limited up to this time and had not compelled attention. Then came the afternoon of November 2, 1965. At twilight that day, a young Quaker named Norman R. Morrison, father of three… burned himself to death within forty feet of my Pentagon window." McNamara admitted, "I believed I understood and shared some of his thoughts."[207] Though McNamara took no immediate action, his thoughts about the war began to change. None of the previous war protests had moved him the way Morrison's sacrifice did.

And then a week later on November 9, 1965, a young Catholic worker named Roger LaPorte self-immolated at the UN's Hammarskjöld Plaza, dying from his injuries the following day. As described in *An American Ordeal*, LaPorte's immolation was influenced both by Morrison's act as well as by the cruel words of counter-protestors. LaPorte had participated in a draft-card burning ceremony just four days after Morrison's death, during which time participants held a moment of silence in Norman's memory. At

[205] Hendrickson, *Living and the Dead*, 210.
[206] Hendrickson, *Living and the Dead*, 196.
[207] Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 216.

the ceremony, counter-protestors were heard chanting, "Burn Yourselves, not Your Cards."[208] DeBenedetti described, "their hatred overwhelmed Roger LaPorte. A twenty-two-year-old Catholic Worker from upstate New York…. LaPorte could not comprehend the depth of anger directed at his pacifist friends. They later surmised he sought to protect them by absorbing the surrounding violence."[209] LaPorte survived long enough to give a statement, attesting to the first responders who attempted to help him, "I'm a Catholic Worker. I'm against war, all wars. I did this as a religious action."[210]

A.J. Muste, in his role as Chairman for the CNVA published a statement about the self-immolations of Morrison and LaPorte, acknowledging the troubled responses many were having to such acts: "people will have distorted views and be asking the wrong questions if these actions of deeply committed people fail to remind them forcibly that we live in a society where there is a vast amount of lethargy and conformity… where multitudes 'go along' with a war in which they do not believe." He continued on:

> The other reaction to the recent cases of self immolation is a very widespread feeling that there is something very terrible about taking life. If this took place in a society in which life is very precious, and taking it forbidden or very rare, it would be understandable and no doubt sound. But ours is a society composed of people who somehow feel that death – the death of hundreds, thousands, millions in war is not terrible in the same sense. It seems somehow normal, human, civilized. Nay more, in this society people feel that it is somehow normal, civilized, and even beautiful to <u>kill</u> thousands, millions for one's "country" and, even more, this is society in which people contemplate, for the most part calmly, the self immolation of the whole of mankind in a nuclear holocaust.[211]

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[208] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 129.
[209] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 130.
[210] Thomas Buckley, "Man, 22, Immolates Himself in Antiwar Protest at U.N.: Man, 22, Sets Himself Afire," *New York Times,* November 10, 1965, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/man-22-immolates-himself-antiwar-protest-at-u-n/docview/116723046/se-2.
[211] A.J. Muste, CNVA Statement, Folder 1, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.

Muste strongly emphasized the utter hypocrisy of those expressing horror at the taking of one life who simultaneously completely avoided thinking about the brutal bloodshed going on in Vietnam: the bloodshed these sacrifices were made to stop.

The funeral pamphlet that was published at Morrison's November 21 memorial service contained the words and thoughts of many of his friends and fellow Quakers as they struggled to contextualize and understand his actions. E. Raymond Wilson wrote, "final judgment on his act of self inflicted death by fire in front of the Pentagon we leave to an all wise and compassionate God, whom we believe loves all men, can judge their motives and would have all mankind reconcile to one another and to him."[212] He, like many, felt the act was too big to bring his own judgment to: Morrison's act was for God alone to judge. In the same pamphlet, John Roemer wrote, "Norman's act cannot be considered primarily as a public protest. He cared, of course, for its effect on the public, but above all, what guided him was a personal moral imperative that he could not countenance this terrible evil any longer."[213] It was not a public performance; it was a deeply personal act. Lawrence Scott struggled with what some considered an act of suicide, "Quaker tradition has firmly held that each man should be willing to sacrifice his life, but not end it by his own hand. Most of us would be in agreement with that tradition and feel it confirmed in our inner hearts… yet God in His infinite wisdom has given each of us a measure of freedom to live or sustain or give our lives as we will."[214] Marie Klooz reflected, "if Norman Morrison had thrown himself on a live grenade and saved the lives of bystanders around him, he would have been considered a kind of hero." She continued

[212] E. Raymond Wilson, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[213] John Roemer, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[214] Lawrence Scott, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.

"because he gave his body to be burned and he gave it with love, we cannot know the consequences. St. Paul neglected to say what they might be. He should have added another verse: that those who give their bodies to be burned with love light a light, – a candle, perhaps, in the darkness – that shows the way that we cannot foresee."[215] It was clearly an act they all struggled with, and yet most respected and honored his choices, and refused to pass judgement upon him.

The pamphlet for the memorial service also contained excerpts from a lecture that Morrison was working on when he died. In his lecture notes, he wrote:

> The church of the spirit is always being built. It possesses no other kind of power and authority than the power and authority of personal lives, formed into a community by the vitality of the divine-human encounter. Quakers seek to begin with life, not with theory or report. The life is mightier than the book that reports it. The most important thing in the world is that our faith becomes living experience and deed of life.[216]

Morrison's moment of guided drift the day of his immolation was his vital divine-human encounter. His faith became manifest in the experience of the self-immolation he enacted in order to try to end the horrors of the Vietnam war. As his wife observed, "with all his heart, Norman wanted to be used as one of God's redemptive agents in society. To Norman, holy obedience meant being willing to take risks, sowing seeds in faith without knowing what fruits might come."[217] Morrison was following the dictates of his religion and his experience to an end that he hoped might prove redemptive, and this was his deed of life.

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[215] Marie Klooz, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[216] Norman R. Morrison, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[217] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 43.

Morrison's choice is best understood through the context of his religious beliefs. Sallie B. King pointed out, "when considering the sanity and 'normalcy' of the self-immolators, it is important to remember that these acts were committed as both religious and political acts in a time in which the bombing of children was a 'normal' action." King also noted, "it is fundamental to Friends' practice to actively seek and then obey the word of God as it speaks to them in the 'still, small voice' within. In this sense, Norman Morrison was being a good Quaker, indeed a model Quaker, in obeying God's order, as he understood it, to sacrifice himself."[218] Morrison prayed to find a way to do something that might stop the war, and he understood his prayers to be answered with a direction that he then followed. But even among Quakers who understood to a certain extent, Morrison's act could be a hard choice to accept. Isaac Barnes May wrote, "Morrison's death was a controversial example of Quaker resistance to war, one that divided even the Religious Society of Friends. Though his measures were extreme, Morrison's conduct was motivated by many of the same religious ideas that led Friends to prison rather than engage in military service."[219]

It was also vital to understand the context of what was going on both at home and in Vietnam. The Vietnam war saw new levels of Quaker resistance, greater than any previous American conflicts. As May observed, Vietnam "felt morally compromising in a way that the World Wars and the Korean War had not. Among many theologically liberal, unprogrammed Friends, opposing the war and involvement in the antiwar movement became an essential aspect of their faith."[220] Doing everything in his power

[218] King, "Burned Themselves for Peace," 131, 136.
[219] Isaac Barnes May, *American Quaker Resistance to War, 1917-1973: Law, Politics, and Conscience* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 2.
[220] May, *Quaker Resistance*, 64-65.

possible to stop the war was essential to Morrison as part of his living faith. May argued, "Morrison's actions were driven by his theological and religious convictions… [his] choice to die was tied to his attempt to live out the principles of the Quaker peace testimony."[221] However, these convictions were not shared by all of Morrison's community, and his choices proved quite contentious, both then and now. May noted that different sects of Quakers reacted quite differently: "liberal Friends… opted to commemorate rather than condemn him" while some of the more moderate and conservative groups implied "that Morrison should not be seen as a martyr but as an individual who was suicidal and mentally ill."[222] Morrison's wife remembered, "controversy raged in the media about whether Norman was a fanatic or a saint, his death a suicide or an act of heroism. A few commentators declared it an act of insanity."[223]

Even within the context of his Quakerism, it was a difficult act for many to understand. As Anne Morrison Welsh reflected, "sacrifice by self-immolation is terribly difficult for most of us Westerners to comprehend. It is not part of our culture, as it is within the Buddhist tradition of Vietnam, in which it is considered the strongest possible statement of one's conscience through suffering." She continued and offered another lens with which to understand: "there is, however, a reference in one of the most familiar chapters of the Bible. In the thirteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he begins with a list of exceptional gifts and acts... the list ends with, 'And if I hand over my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing.'"[224] For the love of the priest of the bombed-out church, for the children suffering in that village and all villages, for all

[221] May, *Quaker Resistance*, 71.
[222] May, *Quaker Resistance*, 71.
[223] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 45.
[224] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 56.

the people, soldiers and civilians alike in Vietnam, Norman Morrison handed over his body to be burned.

Morrison's immolation is frequently featured in texts about the Vietnam antiwar movement. In the 1970 book *The Struggle is the Message*, sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz cited, "protest became the order of the day as the escalation of the Vietnam War mounted. Confrontation in the form of silent days of protest, draft card burnings, and even symbolic suicides (self-immolation by Norman Morrison, Alice Herz, and Roger Laporte) were employed with considerable effect."[225] In *Who Spoke Up*, Nancy Zaroulis began the book by describing it, "In the late afternoon of November 2, 1965, Norman R. Morrison, a thirty-two-year-old Quaker… set himself on fire."[226] She went on to discuss the immolations of Alice Herz and Roger LaPorte as well, and concluded "death by fire is a peculiarly horrible death. The suicides of Morrison and LaPorte shocked many Americans into asking – for the first time – why are we in Vietnam? And what about our involvement there is so monstrous that these two young men protest it in this monstrous way?"[227] Joseph Kip Kosek's book *Acts of Conscience* meditated on the topic, noting the "uncomfortably close connection between sacrifice and suicide." He continued:

> Alice Herz, Norman Morrison, and Roger LaPorte set themselves on fire, in separate incidents in 1965, as acts of protest against the Vietnam War… their deaths carried Christian nonviolence, with its focus on individual public displays of suffering, to alarming ends… other radicals had engaged in hunger strikes and other severe measures, but they generally regarded suicide as a final limit that a resistor should never reach. Now

[225] Irving Louis Horowitz, *The Struggle Is the Message: The Organization and Ideology of the Anti-War Movement,* (Berkeley, CA, Glendessary Press, 1970), 10.
[226] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up,* 1.
[227] Zaroulis, *Who Spoke Up*, 5.

> that limit was a matter of debate, as Daniel Berrigan compared the death of LaPorte to the sacrifice of Christ.[228]

These acts of sacrifice brought a great deal of attention to the war, and thus Morrison's sacrifice was one of the key moments of the early antiwar movement.

In an antiwar movement that saw thousands of protests and direct actions, the birth of countless radicals, and many moments of extremism, Norman Morrison's self-immolation stands out, a religious act of protest that remains distinct to this day. Morrison believed so strongly in following the tenants of his religion when it came to protesting the war, he gave his very life in an effort to stop it. The war raged on unabated another ten years, and in a certain sense, his sacrifice did not directly accomplish anything. Yet in another light, it was one of the strongest, most forceful acts to oppose the war, and one that spoke to people near and far: to his family, his friends, his community, to Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, the Secretary of State, and to hundreds of thousands who joined in opposing the Vietnam War. One of Morrison's best friends at college, Donald H. Reiman, became a professor of literature, and in 1981 was invited to receive an honorary degree at Wooster, their alma mater. On that occasion, Reiman gave a talk about his friend Norman Morrison titled "Witnesses." As he came to conclude what mattered most about Norman's action, Reiman stated, "to my mind, the most important good that Norman Morrison did was simply to bear witness – in a way that placed his selflessness and his sincerity beyond all question – to the power of altruistic human love." He ended his lecture, "Norman Morrison is one of the vast cloud of witnesses who, led by faith, have ventured beyond the ordinary possibilities of human action to explore

[228] Kosek, *Acts of Conscience*, 241.

and defend the farthest frontiers of love and virtue." [229] Norman gave his life for his beliefs and for his love, suffering terribly in an attempt to end the suffering of others.

Unlike my other subjects, Morrison did leave behind reams of books, or articles, or interviews. He didn't establish or lead any antiwar groups. But what he did bequeath was an incredible number of people who spoke on his behalf with grace and dignity, honoring the choices he made. And he left behind a legacy of the deepest belief in working for a more peaceful world. As his wife wrote, "over time, countless unforeseen effects of Norman's sacrifice have emerged, as a fallen leaf floats out on the water, gets swept into a current, and goes far downstream. These mysteries, I believe, are part of what connects us to the heart of God and to one another."[230] The ripples of Norman Morrison's sacrifice continued on through the end of the war and well beyond.

[229] Donald H. Reiman, "Witnesses," Folder 1, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[230] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, xiii.

Chapter IV.

Abraham Heschel

In a 1967, Rabbi Abraham Heschel was interviewed at Notre Dame. When the interviewer asked him about his recent writings and concerns, Heschel spoke out:

> I cannot forget what I have seen and been through. Auschwitz and Hiroshima never leave my mind. Nothing can be the same after that. After all, we are convinced that we must take history seriously and that in history signs of the future are given to us. I see signs of a deterioration that has already begun. The war in Vietnam is a sign that we don't know how to live or how to respond. God is trying us very seriously. I wonder if we will pass the test. I am not a pessimist, because I believe that God loves us. But I also believe that we should not rely on God alone; we have to respond.[231]

For Heschel, following the tenants of his deeply felt religion meant that he had to speak out when it came to human suffering, and the Vietnam war saw endless amounts of suffering, particularly among children and civilians.

Abraham Joshua Heschel was born in Warsaw, Poland, on January 11, 1907, the youngest child in a distinguished Hasidic family. Hasidism was a pietistic Jewish movement: "led by rebbes, rabbinical leaders who position was inherited, father to son, and whose efforts were not simply to teach, but to inspire and transform their followers."[232] Heschel's father, Moshe Mordecai, was one such rebbe, and his mother, Rivka Reizl, was descended from a famed Rabbi (Levi Yitzhak). It was understood that Heschel would also become such a rebbe, and his childhood was spent with special tutors

[231] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity,* edited by Susannah Heschel (NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996), 390.
[232] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Essential Writings*, edited by Susannah Heschel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 19.

and rabbinical texts. In an interview, Heschel stated, "I can trace my family back to the late fifteenth century. They were all rabbis. For seven generations, all my ancestors have been Hasidic rabbis."[233] Unfortunately, Heschel's father died in the typhus epidemic of 1916 when Heschel was just nine years old, leaving the family bereft and facing conditions of terrible poverty, at a time when World War I was causing chaos across Europe. As his biographer described, Heschel came of age "during unstable years, the decade following World War I and the Bolshevik revolution. Europe was in crisis, and competition was fierce for his generation's minds and souls."[234] Heschel's maternal uncle took over Heschel's religious education, and through his uncle, Heschel was exposed to the teachings of the Kotzker rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendl Morgenstern of Kotzk, who "battled for personal and spiritual authenticity… [he] was dismayed at human mediocrity and militantly defended absolute standards."[235] The Kotzke rebbe's teachings were almost diametrically opposed to what Heschel's father had been teaching him, and the Hasidic traditions of his family and his great-grandfather the Apter Rav. As described by Heschel's daughter, "the Apter tradition was about love, gentleness, nourishing the soul, overcoming depression and sadness. The Apter Rav insisted that we serve God in joy." Meanwhile, "the Kotzker tradition was sharp, relentless, austere, and not at all steeped in compassion. His emphasis was on truth, justice, integrity." Heschel walked a careful line between these two, a balancing act between "loving compassion and radical demands for truth."[236]

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[233] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 383-384.
[234] Edward K. Kaplan, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Prophetic Witness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 57.
[235] Kaplan, *Prophetic Witness*, 39.
[236] S. Heschel in Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 169-170.

Heschel became interested in attending university, which meant leaving his family and community behind. Attending a secular institution was not considered appropriate for a Hasidic rebbe in training, but after a number of family meetings, Heschel convinced his family to let him go.[237] In 1925, Heschel moved to Vilna, Lithuania to study at the Real Gymnasium, to prepare for university, and then to Berlin in 1927 to further his studies at the University of Berlin, completing his doctoral thesis (a study on the prophets) in 1932. He had an extremely difficult time trying get it published, a requirement to actually receive his PhD, due to the ever-increasing antisemitism that came with Hitler's rise to power in 1933. He was finally able to publish in Poland in 1935, and officially received his doctoral degree. In October of 1938, Heschel was arrested and deported back to Poland along with thousands of other Polish Jews.[238] Julian Morgenstern, the president of Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, in an attempt to save some of the European Jewish scholars, recruited a group of refugee professors known as "the College in Exile", one of whom was Abraham Heschel. Despite this invitation, Heschel struggled to obtain a visa.[239] In the summer of 1939, Heschel left Warsaw for England, where it was easier to obtain a visa. Heschel escaped just weeks prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland, leaving behind his mother and three of his sisters, all of whom were killed during the war. Heschel arrived in New York in March of 1940, and after a short visit with some surviving family, he proceeded to Cincinnati. Unfortunately, Hebrew Union College was not the best fit culturally or religiously; Heschel was far more traditional than most of the staff and students who were largely Reform, and the cafeteria

[237] Kaplan, *Prophetic Witness*, 69.
[238] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 21-28.
[239] Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940-1972* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 2.

at Union did not even serve kosher food. He struggled to adjust to American customs and American Jewish Reform practices, as he also worked at gaining fluency in English.[240]

An additional agony was the knowledge of what was going on in Europe, and how little America was doing to assist Jewish refugees. In a 1963 interview, Heschel recalled the horror he felt in the early 1940s when he could not make American Jews around him understand or care what was going on in Europe; he remembered "if they [had known] about our indifference [to them] in Warsaw, the Jews there would [have] die[d] of despair. However, my words fell on deaf ears."[241] In a 1965 speech, Heschel remembered:

> I speak as a person who was able to leave Warsaw, the city in which I was born, just six weeks before the disaster began. My destination was New York; it would have been Auschwitz or Treblinka. I am a brand plucked from the fire of an altar of Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated to evil's greater glory and on which so much else was consumed: the divine image of so many human beings, many people's faith in the God of justice and compassion, and much of the secret and power of attachment to the Bible.[242]

The world he had grown up in, his friends, his family, his community: all these were scattered or destroyed.

In the March 1943 *Hebrew Union College Bulletin (*later also published in the February 1944 issue of *Liberal Judaism)*, Heschel published a statement about World War II, one that would contain many of the same thoughts he had regarding Vietnam: "If a man has beheld evil, he may know that it was shown to him in order that he learn his own guilt… let Fascism not serve as an alibi for our conscience. We have failed to fight

[240] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 10-13.
[241] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 43.
[242] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 116.

for right, for justice, for goodness; as a result we fight against wrong, against injustice, against evil."[243] In April of 1943, Nazis began the systemic destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. Heschel's mother died of a heart attack during the assault; his sister Gittel was deported to Treblinka and murdered.[244] Heschel's first experience with political activism in America came in 1943, when he joined the Jewish march on Washington on October 6, in an attempt to advocate for European Jews. Approximately four hundred rabbis and the Jewish War Veterans of America marched down Pennsylvania Ave, and were received by Vice President Henry Wallace, though without much effect.[245]

In the fall of 1945, Heschel joined the faculty of Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, a much better fit for him culturally and religiously, and he remained on staff there until his death. Many of the JTS faculty had been trained in Europe, and worship in the chapel was more traditional than that of Hebrew Union.[246] In December of 1946, he married Sylvia Straus, a concert pianist, and in May of 1952, his daughter Susannah (his only child) was born.[247] His daughter reflected, "I am still amazed by my father's courage, after losing his family in the war, to fall in love, marry, and have a child. I must add: he was never depressed, never moody or withdrawn or melancholy."[248] The fifties also saw an extraordinarily productive period of writing for Heschel; he published several of his most prominent books on religion and theology: *Man is Not Alone* in 1951, *God in Search of Man* in 1952, and *Man's Quest for God* in 1954.[249]

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[243] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 209–210.
[244] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 47.
[245] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 52.
[246] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 71-72.
[247] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 68, 85, 136
[248] S. Heschel, in Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 25.
[249] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, xx.

In the early 1960s, Heschel's life reached a turning point when he revisited the subject of his dissertation: prophetic consciousness. His daughter recounted, "it was revising his dissertation on the prophets for publication in English during the early 1960s that convinced him that he must be involved in human affairs, in human suffering."[250] As Heschel described in *The Prophets*, "a prophet is a man who feels fiercely. God has thrust a burden on his soul, and he is bowed and stunned at man's fierce greed… the prophets remind us of the moral state of a people: Few are guilty, but all are responsible."[251] Heschel came to understand that teaching and writing were not enough; he needed to be actively working toward ending the suffering around him. In explaining his involvement in the peace movement, he remembered, "the more deeply immersed I became in the thinking of the prophets, the more powerfully it became clear to me what the lives of the prophets sought to convey: that morally speaking there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings."[252] And so it was that Heschel spent the rest of his life working to protect the sacred in all humans, leading to his involvement both in the Civil Rights movement as well as the Vietnam antiwar movement.

Heschel met Martin Luther King, Jr. in January of 1963 at the National Conference on Religion and Race. As his biographer noted, "having experienced the ravages of European anti-Semitism, Heschel had an abhorrence of American racism that began when he stepped off the boat in 1940."[253]At the conference, Heschel addressed how antithetical he found race and religion to be as concepts: "to act in the spirit of religion is to unite what lies apart, to remember that humanity as a whole is God's

[250] S. Heschel, in Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, xxiii.
[251] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 62.
[252] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 225.
[253] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 215.

beloved child. To act in the spirit of race is to sunder, to slash, to dismember the flesh of living humanity." He continued, "few of us seem to realize how insidious, how radical, how universal and evil racism is. Few of us realize that racism is man's gravest threat to man." He emphasized, "how many disasters do we have to go through in order to realize that all of humanity has a stake in the liberty of one person; whenever one person is offended, we are all hurt."[254] King gave the final speech at the conference, and he and Heschel became allies and friends. Heschel marched with King at Selma on March 21, 1965, and remembered, "I felt a sense of the Holy in what I was doing…. Even without words our march was worship. I felt my legs were praying."[255] The two maintained a friendship through the end of King's life, and worked together at many important points; Heschel introduced King at his 1967 Riverside Church address, and King spoke at a 1968 celebration of Heschel.[256]

After an initial period of neutrality and even support for the war, in 1965 Heschel decided to join the antiwar movement; as he described, "I concluded in 1965 that waging war in Vietnam was an evil act… above all, it was a war that couldn't be morally justified."[257] Heschel's daughter remembered, "a journalist once asked my father why he had come to a demonstration against the war in Vietnam. 'I am here because I cannot pray…. Whenever I open a prayerbook I see before me images of children burning from napalm.'"[258] Heschel described, "I very early discovered that large numbers of innocent civilians were being killed by the indiscriminate bombing and shooting of our own

[254] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 65-67.
[255] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 222, 225.
[256] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 37-38.
[257] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 225.
[258] S. Heschel, in Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 17.

military forces, that numerous war crimes were being committed… as a result, my concern to stop the war became a *central religious* concern."[259] Heschel came to understand that the way the Vietnam war was being waged was in opposition to everything that he believed, and once he came to this conclusion, there was no going back.

Thus, in the fall of 1965, Heschel helped found the organization that became CALCAV (Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam). It began as an ad-hoc group of New York area clergy, but at a press conference about the group and their work, Heschel declared the group would continue to come together to organize and protest. As Daniel Berrigan described, "at the end of the conference, Heschel laid a firm hand on [my] shoulders and asked, 'Are we finished, do we go home content, and the war goes on?'"[260] Heschel addressed his own reasons to the press, "I felt that the Federal government had all the facts and was competent to make the necessary decisions. But in the last few weeks I have changed my mind completely. I have previously thought we were waging war reluctantly, with sadness at killing so many people. I realize that we are doing it now with pride in our military efficiency."[261] As historian Mitchell Hall pointed out, "most people coming out of the Protestant and Catholic churches and the various branches of American Judaism found few organizations they could fit into comfortably. The major religious groups within the antiwar movement, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, The American Friends Service Committee, and the Catholic Worker, were predominantly pacifist."[262] Heschel, while opposed to the Vietnam war, never identified as a pacifist,

[259] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 226.
[260] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 159.
[261] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 14–15.
[262] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 12.

and so the creation of CALCAV gave him a home for his antiwar protest. Heschel noted, "[CALCAV] came into being specifically to provide a religious comment on the war that would not be allied to the traditional peace movement."[263] CALCAV brought Heschel many interfaith friendships, including with Daniel Berrigan and William Sloane Coffin. As Kaplan described, "Heschel had finally found his true community. He relished these religious activists, who admired him as an embodiment of the biblical vision of peace and prophetic outrage they shared."[264]

According to biographer Edward Kaplan, Heschel faced criticism from some of his colleagues for his ecumenical involvement in the antiwar movement; many of his peers at JTS were pro-war, or at least opposed to speaking out against the war.[265] But Heschel felt "no religion is an island. We are all involved with one another."[266] Heschel joined the steering committee of CALCAV and frequently lead and participated in actions. As Kaplan noted, "Fasting and prayer were Heschel's favored tactics of spiritual opposition."[267] July 4, 1966 saw a two-day public fast lead by Heschel, Daniel Berrigan, and Richard Neuhaus. Heschel introduced the fast stating, "we have gone beyond the policy of brinkmanship; we may have started to descend into the abyss." As the *New York Times* article about the event noted, "the clergy committee calls for an immediate end of the bombing of North Vietnam, immediate de-escalation of the war and negotiations with all concerned parties, including the Vietcong."[268] But as Hall highlighted, "the growing

[263] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal,* 145.
[264] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 302.
[265] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 299.
[266] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 119.
[267] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 305.
[268] "3 Clergymen Here Begin Protest Fast," *New York Times*, July 4, 1966, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/3-clergymen-here-begin-protest-fast/docview/117463101/se-2.

belief within CALCAV was that military escalation in Vietnam and verbal attacks on war protestors at home indicated that the U.S. government was not genuinely interested in seeking a political solution to the war."[269]

At the January 31, 1967, CALCAV first national mobilization in DC, Heschel meditated on the prophet Ezekiel and the situation in Vietnam: "the mire in which we flounder threatens us with… the dilemma of losing face or losing our soul. At this hour Vietnam is our most urgent, our most disturbing religious problem, a challenge to the whole nation as well as a challenge to every one of us as an individual… to speak about God and remain silent on Vietnam is blasphemous." He continued on, "Most of us prefer to disregard the dreadful deeds we do over there. The atrocities committed in our name are too horrible to be credible. It is beyond our power to react vividly to the ongoing nightmare, day after day, night after night. So we bear graciously other people's suffering."[270] He also offered an analysis of the situation, highlighting, "what is being done by our government is done in our name. Our labor, our wealth, our civic power, our tacit consent are invested in the production and use of the napalm, the bombs, and the mines that explode and bring carnage and ruin to Vietnam." As always, he emphasized, "to be human means not to be immune to other people's suffering."[271] For Heschel, through the lens of his religious beliefs and practice, what the US was doing was both immoral and in opposition to his understanding of God's wishes for humanity.

Heschel also pointed out:

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[269] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 30.
[270] Robert McAfee Brown, Abraham Heschel, & Michael Novak, *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience* (New York: Association Press, 1967), 49-50.
[271] Heschel, *Vietnam: Crisis*, 52.

> We are fully aware of America's moral commitment to give aid to democratic governments all over the world… however, we do not fight in Vietnam as allies of a freely elected democratic government but rather… as allies of a despotic military oligarchy. Is it the destiny of our youth to serve as mercenaries in the service of military juntas all over the world?[272]

Ngo Dinh Diem, the Southern Vietnamese leader put into place by the CIA in 1955, was used to sabotage the elections agreed to by the Geneva Conference. He and his family ran a brutal dictatorship, provoked crisis after crisis among his own people, suppressed the Buddhists (leading to a crisis), and he spent most of his time and energy trying to prevent a coup. He was assassinated by his own generals on November 2, 1963. The military juntas that followed were equally tyrannical and even less stable.[273] Heschel incisively called out America's actions in Vietnam as the antithesis of fighting for democracy. He added, "because the government of South Vietnam is corrupt, distrusted by and alienated from the majority of the people… America's identification with Vietnamese juntas not only thwarts any effort to bring aid to the destitute peasants but defames our image in their eyes." He aptly predicted, "it is a war we can never win. For, indeed, our superior weapons may well destroy the cities and the hamlets, the fighting forces and the villagers who support them. However, what will our army have left behind? Tombs, tears, havoc, acrimony, and vast incentives to hatred and rage."[274] Not only was the US involvement in Vietnam morally wrong, he also foresaw that it would end badly.

As part of the CALCAV mobilization, on February 2, 1967, Heschel was one of the CALCAV representatives that met with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Though he had encouraged William Sloane Coffin to be the spokesman for the group,

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[272] Heschel, *Vietnam: Crisis*, 54.
[273] Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988), 45, 174, 179, 331, 334, 370-371.
[274] Heschel, *Vietnam: Crisis*, 54-56.

Heschel ended up breaking down in the midst of the meeting and expressing his anguish about the war. They group left the meeting frustrated with their inability to get through to government officials.[275] But on the whole, the leaders of CALCAV felt their first national mobilization had gone well. As Hall described, "it broke down the feeling of isolation many activists felt in their own communities… and gave them a renewed confidence in working as part of a national effort."[276] Workshops held during the mobilization also helped participants develop ideas for how to spread the antiwar message among their communities and congregations, helping to expand CALVAV further. It also allowed for the planning of the "Fast for the Rebirth of Compassion" to begin the following week, which perhaps a million people participated in.[277]

On April 4, 1967, when Martin Luther King gave his speech at Riverside Church in New York speaking out against the Vietnam War, Heschel, as part of CALCAV, introduced him and spoke the following: "The state requires that the citizen risk his life for it; the acceptance of sacrifice is one of our essential duties, but it is also the duty of the citizen, who, after careful study, becomes convinced that a war his country is involved in is both morally wrong and politically absurd, to do his utmost to stop it."[278] In his speech, King suggested steps to get out of the war, recommended conscientious objection as an option, discussed the ways that the Vietnam war was a symbol of deeper problems in America, and ended with a call to action, "now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter – but beautiful – struggle for a new world." CALCAV and many others in the peace movement felt King's Riverside speech "added respectability to the

[275] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 228.
[276] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 38.
[277] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 18.
[278] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 82.

movement and helped to legitimize dissent against the war."[279] However, editorials in leading papers such as the *Washington Post* were extremely critical, accusing King of damaging the Civil Rights movement and his own credibility.[280]

In June of 1967, the Six Day Arab-Israel War took place. As Kaplan described, "for Heschel, as for most Israelis and Jews around the world, the threat to Israel brought back memories of the Nazi genocide." The war also led to Heschel receiving stringent demands to stop his anti-Vietnam War activities, for fear of losing US support for Israel. He got direct pressure from the Israeli embassy, and calls from prominent Israelis.[281] But while Heschel refused to stop protesting the Vietnam War, he simultaneously felt strong support for Israel, and took a trip to Palestine that July. As Kaplan described, Heschel "celebrated the resurrection of Israel and his messianic hope for peace among all peoples: 'There is great astonishment in the souls. It is as if the prophets had risen from their graves.'" But many of Heschel's Christian friends were concerned about the increase of tensions in the areas, and Israeli occupation of Arab territories.[282] Many clergy wondered "how could the Vietnam dove be the Israel hawk?"[283] This issue wound up being just one of many tensions that lead to growing fissures in the antiwar movement.

October 21, 1967 saw the March on the Pentagon, after the events of which, Mitchell Hall noted, "discussions on Vietnam within religious circles turned increasingly to the effectiveness of protests alone in ending the war." CALCAV published their "Statement of Conscience and Conscription" on October 25, 1967, Heschel being one of

[279] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 42-43.
[280] Wells, *The War Within,* 128.
[281] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 313-314.
[282] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 315.
[283] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice,*186.

the signatories.[284] The statement argued, "Congressional indifference to appeals for justice has convinced us that it is no longer enough to speak in defense of the rights of conscience. The time has come to act in defense of these rights…. We deny both the right and the competence of a government to stand in judgment upon the conscience of its citizens." The statement pushed for non-violent resistance to induction to the military, offered support to those resisting, and encouraged churches and synagogues to be "sanctuaries for conscience."[285]

The second CALCAV national mobilization in DC was held February 5-6, 1968. The day prior, Heschel and other leaders of CALCAV presented the CALCAV commissioned book *In the Name of America*, about the conduct of American forces in Vietnam, which snagged a headline in the *New York Times*. It highlighted the fact that "American conduct in Vietnam has been marked by 'consistent violation of almost every international agreement relating to the rules of warfare.'"[286] As Friedland noted, "although the moral problems of the treatment and/or killing of prisoners and civilians were a main source of concern to the authors and signers… they were also worried about what the destruction of moral restraints would do to Americans at home."[287] During an interfaith service on the first day of the mobilization, Heschel gave a speech stating that, "a nation so rich in the appreciation of human dignity, in generosity and compassion, is destroying its own integrity in order to perform a game of power… we must not seek

[284] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 56.
[285] CALCAV, "Statement of Conscience and Conscription," CALC Publications and Public Relations, Series IV Box 1, 1967 Folder, Clergy and Laity Concerned, Swarthmore College Special Collections, Swarthmore, PA (hereafter CALC Records).
[286] Edward B. Fiske, "Clerics Accuse U.S. of War Crimes: A 'Consistent Violation' of World Rules is Found by Interfaith Group," *New York Times,* February 4, 1968, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/clerics-accuse-u-s-war-crimes/docview/118325633/se-2.
[287] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 201.

refuge in personal dissent. We must endeavor to reach the hearts of all Americans."[288] On February 6, CALCAV sponsored a silent vigil prayer at Arlington national cemetery comprised of nearly 2,500 participants. Martin Luther King led the ceremony, at which Heschel also briefly spoke, offering a lament from Psalm 22.[289] The following week, Heschel signed on to two advertisements taken out in the *New York Times:* one supporting the right of free speech and the right to exercise one's conscience (partly in response to the indictments of the Boston Five, one of whom was Heschel's friend William Sloane Coffin) the other advocating for peace and negotiated settlement in Vietnam.[290]

The 1968 CALCAV mobilization also brought the organization to the attention of the FBI, though "the FBI found no evidence of communist affiliation or violence tendencies on the part of CALCAV. Reports on the organization described its activities as 'dignified.' Disregarding its own intelligence, however, the FBI placed CALCAV under Internal Security and Selective Service Act investigations."[291] The CIA had also begun an illegal domestic spying program against the antiwar movement in 1967, later to be known as Operation CHAOS.[292] Heschel had specifically already shown up on the FBI list as a "potential subversive" due to his work with the Civil Rights Movement, and was tracked by them from that point on.[293]

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[288] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 321.
[289] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 63; Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 322.
[290] "Display Ad 213 -- no Title," *New York Times,* February 11, 1968, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/display-ad-213-no-title/docview/118356119/se-2; "Display Ad 211 -- no Title," *New York Times,* February 11, 1968, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/display-ad-211-no-title/docview/118356019/se-2; Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 322-323.
[291] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 64.
[292] Wells, *The War Within*, 183-184.
[293] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 221.

In March of 1968, Heschel was honored by the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative Movement for both his scholarship as well as his activism.[294] Martin Luther King spoke on Heschel's behalf, and also took the opportunity to speak out against the Vietnam War. During the Assembly, Heschel faced questioning about his activism in the antiwar movement, but he offered the reply: "I have to be afraid of God. I don't want to be responsible for murder, for the killing of innocent people." He did, however, point out that his antiwar work was moderate, and that his activism came out of his faith. Just two weeks after the Assembly, King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4. Heschel went to Atlanta to participate in the funeral.[295] Heschel's daughter described, "while my father gave his political support to a wide range of African-American leaders, it was the spiritual affinity he experienced with King that lent their relationship a particularly strong and profound intimacy."[296]

The summer of 1968 saw CALCAV making a big push for amnesty for draft resistors.[297] The group was continuing to grow in size, and by 1969, it had a mailing list of 25,000 people, and around a hundred branches across the country.[298] They held their third Washington Mobilization February 3-5, 1969. Heschel's speech there began with a reflection on the memory and legacy of Martin Luther King, and moved on to plead the case for draft amnesty. He argued, "We have forgotten the very principle of our origin if we have forgotten how to object, how to resist… Law and order can only be sustained if tempered with love and mercy." He continued, "Nothing is as urgent, nothing is as

[294] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 324.
[295] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 327-329.
[296] S. Heschel in Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 39.
[297] Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice*, 213.
[298] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 78.

necessary as moral catharsis. What we need are new resources for believing that society is willing and able to heal the injured, to overcome despair, to deny the inevitability of war and violence." And he concluded, "If America cannot forgive those who objected to the war, then it destroys the bridge over which it must pass herself – to receive forgiveness from those who are victims of this war."[299]

On the last day of the mobilization, Heschel was a member of the CALCAV delegation that met with National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. CALCAV secretary Richard Fernandez remembered that Kissinger "couldn't deal with Rabbi Heschel in the room." Heschel asked Kissinger, "How could you as a good Jew prosecute a war like this? Don't you think if we keep doing this, America will look more and more like Nazi Germany?" From one European Jewish refugee to another, the question apparently hit hard.[300] After the meeting, the mobilization was wrapped up with an interfaith worship service at the Metropolitan A.M.E Church. Heschel and Coretta Scott King led the procession out. The following month, CALCAV placed ads in the *New York Times* and other periodicals challenging Nixon, "How Patient Must We Be, Mr. Nixon? Must We Be Patient About the Killing?" It detailed American deaths and injuries, and described that "180 pounds of bombs have been dropped for every man, woman, and child in both North and South Vietnam." It added, "Passover and Holy Week are times of decision. The way of Exodus and the way of the Cross inspire the resolve to pursue God's will for man's healing. Now is the time for turning; from war to peace, from death to life."[301] As

[299] Abraham Heschel, "Vietnam and the Future of the American Empire," 1969 CALCAV Mobilization, CALC Publications and Public Relations, Series IV Box 1, 1969 Folder, CALC Records.
[300] Wells, *The War Within*, 293; Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 333.
[301] "Display Ad 207 -- no Title," *New York Times,* March 30, 1969, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/display-ad-207-no-title/docview/118577692/se-2.

Mitchell Hall described, "the Nixon administration reacted to such criticism by trying to minimize any effectiveness the antiwar movement might have with the general public."[302] But Heschel continued to attend demonstrations and meetings, writing and speaking out against the war. His daughter remembered, "the anguish my father felt over the war in Vietnam was relentless; I often found him in the middle of the night, unable to sleep."[303] Kaplan described, "the Vietnam War showed no sign of ending. It remained a constant source of pain to Heschel… he could not maintain the intensity of his life without bringing on a crisis."[304]

In August of 1969, Heschel suffered a debilitating heart attack that he was not expected to survive. It took him several months to recover, and he was unable to participate in the October 1969 Vietnam Moratorium events.[305] But by 1970, he was back on his feet and in action, albeit a bit slower and more fragile. Heschel went to the funeral of one of the students killed at Kent State as a representative of CALCAV, and spoke out against the violence both at home and abroad.[306] In March of 1972, he joined in a protest highlighting the call for general amnesty for draft protestors. He circulated an unpublished paper, "The Theological, Biblical, and Ethical Considerations of Amnesty," which argued that the exiled and imprisoned draft resistors, "[were] guilty of seeing earlier what all honest men should now see (when it is rather late) that the war in Vietnam was a stupid, immoral, absurd adventure for which it is not worthwhile shedding the blood of a single soldier."[307] In the fall of 1972, he wrote a letter to the editor in the

[302] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 87.
[303] S. Heschel in Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, xxv.
[304] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 339.
[305] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 340-341.
[306] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 227.
[307] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 362.

New York Times, addressing the upcoming presidential election and the war: "If the prophets Isaiah and Amos were to appear in our midst… would they not be standing amidst those who protest against the violence of the war in Vietnam[?]"[308] Heschel's stress over the war further debilitated him; as Kaplan described, "Heschel's resilience was weakened by the news of the massive human suffering inflicted by U.S. bombings in Southeast Asia."[309] Nixon began Operation Linebacker II, a massive round-the-clock bombing of Haiphong and Hanoi, in mid-December of 1972 (sometimes referred to as the "Christmas bombings"). The human suffering was immense, with thousands of civilians killed.[310] In the midst this, on Friday, December 22, 1972, a troubled Heschel celebrated Shabbat with friends and family. He died that night sometime in his sleep.[311]

Heschel's daughter described her father: "prayer for him was a service of the heart but also a service of the body. Religiosity was not only a private, inward affair, but a public act: marching in Selma, speaking out against the war in Vietnam." She continued, "When his friend Daniel Berrigan urged him to go to prison as an act of protest against the war, my father responded that he could be more effective by talking to people, changing their political views. Religious commitment had to constructive and transformative – that was the prophetic message he lived."[312] Heschel believed that the most valuable use of his time was speaking to people, in person and through his writing, trying to wake them up to the presence of human suffering in the world. Heschel also

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[308] Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Jews and the Election." *New York Times,* Oct 27, 1972, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/jews-election/docview/119370529/se-2.
[309] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 359.
[310] Wells, *The War Within*, 558-559.
[311] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 375.
[312] S. Heschel in Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 18.

believed that, "Jewish tradition enjoins our people to obey scrupulously the decrees issued by the government of the land," and so he tended towards being law-abiding, but he also held that "whenever a decree is unambiguously immoral, one nevertheless has a duty to disobey it."[313] Thus while he felt he should work within the confines of the law, he was supportive of friends who chose the path of civil disobedience, understanding that these friends were following the dictates of their own morality. One of Heschel's last acts was to accompany Daniel Berrigan to the rally that was held outside Danbury prison when Philip Berrigan was released from prison on December 20, 1972. [314]

Heschel was a moderate; while opposed to the Vietnam war, he was not a pacifist. He was never indicted or jailed over his antiwar work. But in his writings, speeches, interviews, and person to person, he worked to end the war by sharing his thoughts and his beliefs. He contributed one of the three essays in the book *Vietnam: Crisis of Conscience*, which was published by CALCAV in May of 1967, and sold more than 50,000 copies in its first year.[315] Heschel saw across boundaries of race, religion, and nationalities, and encouraged others to do the same. "First and foremost, we meet as human beings who have much in common: a heart, a face, a voice, the presence of a soul, fears, hope, the ability to trust, a capacity for compassion and understanding, the kinship of being human. My first task in every encounter is to comprehend the personhood of the human being I face."[316] He emphasized the importance of the inner life, of believing in something greater and larger than oneself: "It is the attachment to what is spiritually superior: loyalty to a sacred person or idea, devotion to a noble friend or teacher, love for

[313] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 226.
[314] Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical,* 372.
[315] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 47.
[316] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 120.

a people or for mankind, which holds our inner life together…. Unless we aspire to the utmost, we shrink to inferiority."[317] He lived his life in a spirit of radical amazement, "endless wonder unlocks an innate sense of indebtedness… the world consists, not of things, but of tasks. Wonder is the state of our being asked. The ineffable question is addressed to us. All that is left to us is a choice – to answer or to refuse to answer."[318] For Heschel, he always chose to answer.

[317] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 144.
[318] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 188.

Chapter V.

William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

On October 16, 1967, Yale chaplain William Sloane Coffin addressed the enormous crowd at Arlington Street Church in Boston, capping a day that had seen a five thousand strong antiwar rally on the Boston Common: "Men at times will feel constrained to disobey the law out of a sense of obedience to a higher allegiance. To hundreds of history's most revered heroes, not to serve the state has appeared the best way to love one's neighbor."[319] At the end of the service, some two hundred students turned in their draft cards. As Coffin described, "this was the first of several times I was to receive draft cards. While always moved, I was never more so than this time." Equally moving was the final hymn; one of Coffin's favorites, "Once to every man and nation/ Comes the moment to decide/ In the strife of truth with falsehood/ For the good or evil side."[320] Later that week, during the March on the Pentagon, Coffin and several other antiwar activists attempted to turn the collected draft cards in to the Justice Department. For these acts, on January 5, 1968, Coffin was indicted by the Federal Government for conspiracy "to counsel, aid, and abet draft resistance."[321] Standing against the war in Vietnam was to be Coffin's moment of decision for the side of good. He had fought in the army in World War II, served in the CIA during the Korean War, attended and

[319] Min Yee, "67 Burn Draft Cards in Boston: 214 Turn in Cards, 5000 at Rally," *Boston Globe,* October 17, 1967, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/67-burn-draft-cards-boston/docview/366794620/se-2.
[320] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 243.
[321] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 249, 260.

worked at Yale, and had many ties to elite society. But the war in Vietnam changed his path in life.

As biographer Warren Goldstein wrote: "into this world – wealthy, liberally Protestant, Republican in politics, structured, public and philanthropic, energetic, driven by a sense of noblesse oblige, and suffused with the optimism of the postwar boom economy – William Slone Coffin Jr. was born on June 1, 1924."[322] Coffin's childhood in New York was one of great privilege; he described it as "an American version of Tolstoy's world. It consisted of lively and loving parents, of tutors as well as teachers, of countless games and many houses all staffed by a more than adequate number of servants."[323] The death of his father, William Sloane Coffin, Sr, in 1933, however, threw this world into turmoil. Coffin noted, "after my father's death we still had enough money to live on but only if we used it sparingly." His mother chose to make a new start, and moved them to Carmel-by-the-Sea, California. The family still maintained connections to privileged East Coast society, such as Coffin's uncle Henry Sloane Coffin, the president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, as well as many of the men who had been classmates and fellow members of the Skull and Bones society with Coffin Sr.[324]

In 1938, Coffin's mother took him to Paris to study music, and then to Geneva in 1939 for further musical education, though the oncoming storm of World War II drove them back to the US in 1940. That fall, Coffin attended Phillips Academy, Andover, where he excelled in history and English, as well as piano.[325] School was set against the

[322] Warren Goldstein, *William Sloane Coffin, Jr: A Holy Impatience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 11.
[323] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 3.
[324] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 8-9.
[325] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 24-29.

backdrop of the war in Europe, and the recognition that the US was almost inevitably going to get involved. Coffin remembered, "the best college students seemed to be pacifists. But I rejected their morality as completely as I did the selfishness of the isolationists. To me they were setting purity above relevance…. Never did it occur to me that fighting fire with fire might simply produce more ashes." He also remembered that after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, "the opposition to the war evaporated and at Andover patriotic feelings were running high."[326] After his graduation at Andover in the spring of 1942, Coffin was admitted to Yale Music School. He explored various options for joining the war effort, and wound up joining the army in May of 1943. Coffin noted, "I can now see why armies all over the world prefer to draft men at eighteen rather than at twenty-five. Wearing a uniform makes an eighteen-year-old feel manly, yet obeying orders relieves him of the necessity to affirm his independence."[327] He was recruited by military intelligence, sent to officer training, and was eventually stationed in France to help train troops. Among the memories that stuck out to him during his time in the army was the day President Roosevelt died. Coffin was not previously very interested in religious practice, but that day, he went to find a church. He reflected, "perhaps I was looking for a place large enough, symbolically, to absorb the event… not being much of a believer, I didn't pray, but I remember crying." He was also starting to have doubts about the nature of war: "I was beginning to wonder if all the violence might not simply change the world into a more turbulent rather than a more peaceful one."[328]

[326] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 32-33.
[327] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 33-34.
[328] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 37, 46, 48.

After four years in the army, Coffin returned to the US in the spring of 1947. He was able to finagle an offer to enter Yale as a junior in the fall of 1947, choosing to study political science, as he considered a possible future working in diplomacy. But he quickly came to realize, "the experience of the last four years had raised profound questions about the human condition… increasingly I found myself drawn to those most interested in the subtleties of good and evil." After some exploration, he realized, "the theologians seemed to be in touch with a deeper reality. They too knew what hell was all about but in the depths of it they found a heaven which made more sense out of everything, much as light gives meaning to darkness."[329] But while he was drawn to theology, he found himself struggling with what he believed, if anything. Coffin didn't connect with the local churches or with Christian students, "yet every time I was ready once and for all to deny the existence of God, to throw in my lot with Camus (whom I admired above all the existentialists), at such moments I would always have an unsettling experience which would start me wondering all over again."[330]

During his senior year, the CIA came calling, coaxing Coffin to join up, which he very nearly did. But that path was derailed when he attended a conference at Union Theological Seminary for students considering the ministry, attending mostly in deference to his Uncle Henry, but also because Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the speakers. Coffin recalled, "on that occasion [Niebuhr] was as eloquent a man as I had ever heard… he painted a picture of the woes of the world including American racism and poverty, and had spoken of the need for church people to protest injustice in the

[329] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 79, 81-82.
[330] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 82.

name of God and human decency." The conference struck Coffin very deeply, causing him to apply to Union Theological Seminary with the goal of becoming a minister.[331]

After just one year of study, Coffin's time at Union was interrupted by the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950, which inspired Coffin to join the CIA after all in order to aid in the fight. Coffin was assigned to a station in Munich, where he trained Russian expatriates and refugees to return to the USSR and gather intelligence for the US.[332] Coffin recalled, "the people who impressed me most were the older Russians who increasingly helped in the instruction… it was not so much their patriotism – that was to be expected. What struck me was their patience and their conviction that ultimately in this world you have to do what is right, and only penultimately what is effective."[333] Coffin slowly lost faith in the work he was doing; in his memoir he remembered, "before leaving the agency I was beginning to feel uncomfortable with human problems defined in solely national, political terms. I was always looking for their roots in human nature and for solutions that would make sense universally and spiritually… more than ever I wanted to be a minister."[334]

In the fall of 1953, Coffin started at Yale Divinity School (in part because it was closer to his mother than Union Theological), graduating in the spring of 1956. After graduation and ordination as a Presbyterian minister, he took on a one-year chaplaincy position at Philips Andover. In December of 1956, he married Eva Rubinstein (daughter of the pianist Arthur Rubinstein). The following year, Coffin took a job as chaplain at

[331] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 87-88.
[332] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 75-76.
[333] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 111.
[334] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 113.

Williams College. And then in the fall of 1958, Coffin returned again to Yale, this time as chaplain.[335]

While at Yale, Coffin began to get involved in the Civil Rights movement. The Montgomery bus boycott caught his attention, and led him to invite Martin Luther King Jr. to campus to give an address at the Yale chapel. Coffin remembered, "I had been stirred by the power of King's words and by his ability to translate them into action. Equally impressive was the power of his followers to sustain these actions."[336] After a 1961 speaking engagement at UNC Chapel Hill, Coffin connected with some of the students there, learning about their participation in sit-ins. Their use of direct action for their cause captured his interest. In May of 1961, he decided to get involved, choosing to participate in a Freedom Ride. He was arrested in Alabama, and the judge sentenced him to a month in jail (later overturned), causing Coffin to reflect more deeply on the injustice of the courts. He noted, "I used to think that, had lawyers behaved like lawyers, bishops like bishops, senators like senators – had everyone simply done his job, the country would have been spared endless agony."[337] After his experiences in the army, the CIA, and the Civil Rights movement, Coffin's faith in American establishment was beginning to falter.

Coffin expressed in his memoir, "like most people I too believed 'serving one's country' meant essentially serving one's government in wartime."[338] The war in Vietnam, however, would challenge that belief to breaking. His biographer noted that

[335] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 126-131.
[336] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 146.
[337] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 147-169.
[338] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 90.

when the early antiwar movement got underway in 1964, Coffin, "kept his distance, waiting more than a year before throwing himself into the public debate."[339] Coffin only began to be concerned with what was going on in Vietnam after the Viet Cong attack at Pleiku led to Johnson approving Operation Rolling Thunder (sustained US bombing of North Vietnam) in February of 1965. Coffin offered a prayer about Vietnam that following Sunday, "O God, keep us human, obsessed with tenderness in the midst of all this inhumanity."[340] Coffin remembered the April 17, 1965 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)-led antiwar protest in Washington as the first "real visibility the [antiwar] movement received" but, "after much vacillating, I finally decided not to go." He had issues with the fact that the SDS and the New Left, "although staunch in its opposition to totalitarianism and violence on the right, tended to be agnostic when it came to the violence and totalitarianism of communists… finally, and crucially, the rhetoric of some SDS leaders was becoming more and more anti-American."[341]

Due to his chaplaincy work at Yale, Coffin spent a great deal of time providing pastoral care for students, many of whom were extremely troubled about what was going on in Vietnam. He recalled, "it was of great comfort to students that so many of the faculty were as distraught about the war as they."[342] The students helped to push Coffin into facing what was going on in Vietnam: he remembered one student accosted him about not speaking out against Vietnam, and then provided Coffin with a file of information on the conflict (including an article written by A.J. Muste). Coffin spent hours looking at the file, which helped convince him that he should get involved in the

[339] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 147.
[340] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 147-148.
[341] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 211-212.
[342] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 240.

antiwar movement.[343] He also had many pastoral discussions with students who were considering draft resistance; he recalled spending "hours trying to help work their way through emotional conflicts caused by a combination of the war and the national selective service system."[344] The students influenced Coffin, and Coffin influenced the students in turn.

When Coffin decided to join the antiwar movement, he started from a fairly conservative position, helping to launch the group Americans for Reappraisal of Far Eastern Policy (ARFEP), which was a very moderate exploration of foreign policy in Southeast Asia.[345] His protest actions at the time included writing to members of Congress and holding teach-ins. In a February 1966 letter, he noted that in protesting the war, "the big thing now is to give every bit of encouragement we can to those Senators who are willing to debate the whole issue. Obviously there is not going to be a change until the American people want a change, and this will only come out when they get further educated."[346]

Toward the end of 1965, a New York based group of religious leaders came together to form the group that became Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV).[347] By the end of 1965, group leaders including Daniel Berrigan and Richard Neuhaus were considering expanding to the national level, and invited Coffin to join

[343] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 200.
[344] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 230.
[345] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 214.
[346] Letter to Mr. S.W. Leigh, February 11, 1966, Yale Library Box 19, Folder 37**,** William Sloane Coffin, Jr. Papers, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereafter WSC Papers).
[347] Mitchell K Hall, "CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War," in *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement,* ed. by Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1992), 39. See also Heschel chapter.

them.[348] Coffin soon became a member of the steering committee and helped to hire the full-time executive director, Richard Fernandez.[349] It was through CALCAV that Coffin became acquainted with Abraham Heschel, who became a great friend and influence in his life. CALCAV was exactly the sort of organization that suited Coffin best at that time, for as historian Mitchell K. Hall noted, "CALCAV remained very concerned about its moderate image, and repeatedly stressed that it was not connected to radical, pacifist, or traditional peace organizations."[350] In CALCAV, Coffin was surrounded by his peers: moderates who opposed the war based on their religious beliefs and morals, but who were not hardline pacifists.

CALCAV held their first national gathering in DC from January 31-February 1, 1967. The members of the executive committee put forth a position paper, "The Religious Community and the War in Vietnam," which stated, "Each day we find allegiance to our nation's policy more difficult to reconcile with allegiance to our God. Both the exercise of faith and the expression of the democratic privilege oblige us to make our voices heard." The gathering began at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, and then continued to a silent religious vigil in front of the White House. Participants then proceeded to the Capitol to talk to their representatives, and held an interfaith service after dinner. The following day saw more services, workshops, and a closing ceremony back at New York Avenue Presbyterian that included speeches by supportive US senators.[351] Coffin found the experience deeply moving, remembering that "instead

[348] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 216.
[349] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 27.
[350] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 32.
[351] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 34-36.

of feeling alone and isolated, we were all together in the church, some two thousand of one mind, praying, singing hymns and applauding the speeches."[352]

Afterward, several members were able to meet with White House and executive officials. As Hall argued, "CALCAV's association with the American religious mainstream earned it greater respect in the Johnson administration than most other groups in the antiwar movement."[353] This respect and access included the opportunity to meet with some members of the White House Staff, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Coffin and Heschel were part of the group that met with McNamara. Coffin recalled, "McNamara stated his opinion that the war was a proper concern of clergy… he understood, he assured us, our unhappiness and was doing his best to exercise restraint in the conduct of the war." But as Coffin went on, "what was so disconcerting once again was that [McNamara] didn't come across as a war criminal... we agreed that it was a dangerous world when so much evil could be done by a man who was really 'a nice guy.'"[354] Access to some of the highest levels of government did not provide much in the way of actual progress in stopping the war, despite providing an opportunity to air grievances to the people engaged in running the war.

Even as Coffin became more dedicated to the antiwar movement in general and CALCAV in particular, he grappled with what he personally was willing to do and what sort of actions he thought were effective and appropriate. In a letter from May of 1966, in response to a note about withholding income tax (something Coffin was not doing), he wrote, "if we are to escalate protest I think we need all kinds of people doing and not

[352] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 225.
[353] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 37.
[354] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 228-229.

doing all kinds of different things."[355] He described the difficulty he found himself in: "only civil disobedience will reach the White House, but civil disobedience will lose our constituents at home." He continued that he would be in favor of civil disobedience if "we had a couple of rings [of people] interpreting to the wider world what we were up to. I would also be for it if we could somehow get away from draft cards, and make the whole protest one of an anguished conscience full of love of country."[356] Coffin wrestled with the ways in which participating in civil disobedience might alienate him from the very people he was trying to reach, and feared that his actions would be misread and misunderstood: "those engaged in [civil disobedience] tend not to communicate with the public at large. The monk turns himself into a burning signpost pointing at the war, but most Americans instead of reassessing the war simply reassess him."[357]

The continuing escalation of the war pushed Coffin into accepting increasingly radical protest actions. By the summer of 1967, there were almost half a million American troops stationed in Vietnam, and the casualty counts continued to climb higher and higher.[358] In May of 1967 Coffin wrote, "I am more and more convinced of the necessity of organizing civil disobedience this summer. But we must find the right way."[359] In his memoir, he noted that, "in retrospect, I think it was the passivity of Congress as much as anything that pushed me and many like me toward civil

[355] Letter to Edward C. Severinghaus, May 10, 1966, Box 17, Folder 10, WSC Papers.
[356] Letter to Kenneth Spence, March 29, 1967, Box 19, Folder 40, WSC Papers.
[357] Letter to Mr. Paul Krasner, Editor, The Realist, April 20, 1967, Box 19, Folder 40, WSC Papers.
[358] Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves*, 95.
[359] Letter to Mr. Milton Leitenberg, May 17, 1967, Box 19, Folder 41, WSC Papers.

disobedience."[360] He quoted himself from the words he published in the Yale alumni magazine:

> My own feeling is that the war is so wrong, and that we are so wrong in not seeking to end it… that it is time for those of us who feel this way to come out from behind deferments and exemptions, take our medicine like men, or as the more recent expression goes, "put our bodies on the line." I feel this is particularly true of religious people, who have a particular obligation to a power higher than that of the state.[361]

As he moved further toward radical action, Coffin leaned increasingly on his religious beliefs and his moral conscience as the driving force behind what he was willing to do. As the laws of man failed him, the laws of his God and his religion offered both solace and motivation. He came to believe, "when sinking in our sense of helplessness, we reach out for a love greater than we ourselves can ever express… cry out for a thimbleful of help, and you receive an oceanful in return."[362] Coffin outlined, "religious faith often goes through three stages: conscious, self-conscious, and finally unconscious. That takes time. Only when you've reached the third stage are you free."[363] It seems that perhaps Coffin only truly reached that third stage as he faced Vietnam. As Coffin explained in the Yale alumni magazine (and reprinted in his memoir), "I am against violence as I am against draft card burning, which I consider an unnecessarily hostile act. This is also not to advocate anarchy, for when a man accepts the legal punishment, he upholds the legal order… but this is to advocate-as a last resort-a form of civil disobedience which I view as a kind of radical obedience to conscience, to God."[364]

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[360] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 234.
[361] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 236.
[362] William Sloane Coffin, *The Heart Is a Little to the Left: Essays on Public Morality* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England [for] Dartmouth College, 1999), 48-49.
[363] William Sloane Coffin, *Letters to a Young Doubter* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 73–74.
[364] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 236.

While Coffin himself never felt that violent protest was the answer, he did understand why some inclined in that direction. He participated in two separate debates on civil disobedience (both times on the pro side), wherein he argued that violence in acts of civil disobedience lessened its effectiveness, as public and media attention were drawn and concentrated on said violence, but he acknowledged, "if one's heart can go out to St. Peter cutting off the ear of the High Priest's servant in the Garden of Gethsemane, one's heart should be able to go out to all who are moved to violence because of the sufferings of others."[365] He understood that following one's conscience could lead down unexpected roads. In discussing the actions of the radical group known as the Weathermen, he noted that "they wanted no palliatives; they wanted a revolution. So did many of the rest of us, but we were interested in the depth of change, not just its speed... we were convinced nonviolence was more revolutionary than violence."[366] But Coffin recognized and understood their frustration with the lack of progress in stopping the war and revolutionizing society.

By the fall of 1967, Coffin found himself participating in the actions that would lead to him being arrested and indicted as one of the Boston Five, including the October 16 Boston protest and draft card turn-in, and the October 21 March on the Pentagon. Despite this indictment, though, Coffin was able to keep his job at Yale. Yale president Kingman Brewster stated:

> Even though I disagree with the chaplain's position on draft resistance…. I feel that the quality of the Yale educational experience and the Yale atmosphere has gained greatly from his presence. Thanks in large part to

[365] William Sloane Coffin, *Civil Disobedience: Aid or Hindrance to Justice?* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1972), 5.
[366] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 299.

> his personal verve and social action within and without, the church reaches more people at Yale than on any other campus I know about.[367]

The trial of the Boston Five began in May of 1968. For Coffin, the trial had a "tragic-farcical" quality.[368] The Five had originally hoped for a political trial that might bring more notice to the antiwar movement. However, the judge refused to allow the trial to become a test case for the legality of the war, and refused to allow the defendants to bring in the larger questions.[369] Additionally, the Five's lawyers wanted to focus mostly on the conspiracy charge, which was one of the weakest points of the case (the Five hadn't even all known each other until the indictments brought them together).[370] And so, as Coffin remembered, "for three weeks we lived in spiritual squalor, shortchanging ourselves and the American public by arguing a big case in so small a way… [we had wanted] to test in court the constitutionality of an undeclared war and the legality of its conduct."[371] Coffin and three of the others were declared guilty, but the verdict was appealed, and the case was eventually dropped. While the trial was not what Coffin and the other defendants had hoped for, it still received a lot of sympathetic media coverage and publicity.[372]

Unfortunately, even as divisions in the US began to grow deeper as the war continued, so too were there deepening divisions in Coffin's marriage. The couple had been having troubles for some time, but they kept up appearances during the trial of the Boston Five. By the end of the trial in the summer of 1968, Coffin and his wife Eva agreed to separate, and soon divorced. Coffin worried about his public image as a

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[367] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 255.
[368] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 273.
[369] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice like a Trumpet,* 205.
[370] Wells, *The War Within*, 232.
[371] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 274.
[372] Wells, *The War Within*, 233.

divorced minister, and offered his resignation to President Brewster. Brewster refused the resignation, stating that "it is not the concern of Yale alumni, faculty, or students." One friend informed Coffin, "A little failure in your personal life can only improve your ministry." Abraham Heschel related the story of his own father who had been divorced, and comforted Coffin, "after assuring me that God still loved me – 'even as I do, and maybe more'- he said, 'Now we shall continue to my apartment. I have just been given some excellent cognac.'" Coffin reflected, "Ideally, a man in pain should widen his sympathy to include others undergoing similar experiences. I apparently succeeded in this, as several people commented on the greater sensitivity they found in the prayers and sermons I gave that fall."[373]

On November 3, 1969, Nixon went on the offensive against the antiwar movement, giving a speech in which he asked for the support of "the great silent majority" of citizens, and stated that "North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States… only Americans can do that."[374] The White House launched a campaign to rally support for Nixon while simultaneously trying to discredit upcoming antiwar mobilizations.[375] Just ten days after Nixon's speech, Coffin participated in the March Against Death, which was part of the November mobilization against the war. Forty-five thousand marchers, each carrying a lighted candle and a placard with the name of a dead soldier or a destroyed village walked from Arlington National Cemetery, across the Arlington Memorial Bridge, on to the White House. As DeBenedetti described, "in the wet stillness, facing blinding security lights, each citizen paused to shout the name drawn

[373] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 287-290.
[374] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 259.
[375] Wells, *The War Within*, 379-381.

on his or her placard, and then continued in the procession down Pennsylvania Avenue and on to the west steps of the Capitol. Each in turn, the marchers placed their placards in waiting coffins and blew out their candles."[376] Coffin remembered it as "the most moving antiwar service I ever attended."[377] Coffin co-chaired and emceed the rally after, which did not go as well: some of the speakers were booed, and Coffin sensed that violence was brewing: "I had to admit the peace movement was no longer peaceful. Although the great majority… were committed to nonviolence, a minority of the young veterans of the movement were not. Frustrated in a way that was understandable if not excusable, they were taking on the worst features of the very people we were opposing."[378]

The 1970 May Day events at Yale proved even more disquieting for Coffin. As he recounted, "on May Day, 1970, about 13,000 people came to town to 'free Bobby Seale'… the town filled with Panthers and white radicals and each day brought word of a new group coming to New Haven with the announced intention of burning the university and city down." Coffin felt both sympathy and admiration for the Panthers, but he was appalled by the rhetoric and violence of many of their friends and allies. There were numerous threats of violence that weekend, a bomb exploded in the hockey rink, and the National Guard were called out. Coffin felt that "violence at home was fast becoming a bigger issue than American violence abroad… equally discouraging was to have to oppose natural allies… the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, even the Cambridge

[376] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 262.
[377] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 296.
[378] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 298.

radicals… were chasing the illusion of revolution here as Nixon was chasing the illusion of victory in Vietnam."[379]

As DeBenedetti noted, "in the frustration of the Nixon years, particularly between September 1970 and April 1972, most of those who remained active against the war shed whatever naïveté they might have had."[380] He might have even substituted the word optimism for naïveté. Mitchell Hall recounted, "despite years of lobbying, demonstrating, and even civil disobedience, the war in Vietnam continued…. The substantial decrease in the number of American ground troops and the accompanying reduction of U.S. casualties camouflaged the escalating air war. This convinced much of the American public that the war was winding down."[381] Coffin didn't even write about this period of frustration in his memoir; he skipped from May Day 1970 to his 1972 trip to Vietnam. Per other sources, some of his actions from that time include speaking at the May 1971 antiwar demonstrations in DC, and working on various CALC campaigns (at this point, CALC had dropped the "about Vietnam" part of their name, as they worked to expand beyond just an anti-Vietnam war organization).[382] In May of 1972, after Nixon ordered the mining of Haiphong Harbor and an intensification of the air war, CALC held an emergency demonstration in DC. On May 16, CALC members demonstrated at the Capitol Rotunda by holding a sit-in worship service, led by Coffin. He and more than a hundred of his fellow participants were arrested for this act. Coffin "helped everyone through the arrest process and led the group in singing hymns all night."[383]

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[379] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 300-306.
[380] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 297.
[381] Hall, *Because of the Their Faith*, 304.
[382] DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 304; Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 126-127.
[383] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 154-155.

In September of 1972, Coffin went to North Vietnam as one of the antiwar representatives chosen to pick up and accompany some American prisoners of war back to the US. He recalled, "I was fed up with the war, already the longest in our history, and I was tired of fighting Nixon. While I didn't expect to be inspired by the North Vietnamese – communist regimes generally depress me – I did expect to have my passions rekindled by the bomb damage."[384] After the long years of protest, some sort of rekindling was indeed necessary. Also, per Goldstein, "Coffin and his colleagues hoped they would be able to use the occasion – and perhaps the released POWs themselves – to make a strong statement against the war while they had the attention of the world press."[385] Nixon's Vietnamization was already going into effect at this point, and as historian Mary Hershberger noted, "the week that the group spent in Hanoi was the first week since March 1965 that there were no American military deaths in Vietnam… during this same week, however, American planes launched more than one thousand air strikes and more than one thousand Vietnamese were killed."[386] Coffin "came to realize how perverse it all was. Nixon was insisting that our bombing was effective but that it never exceeded the limits of decency. In fact, in North Vietnam our destruction had long ago exceeded the limits of decency but had never reached any level of real effectiveness."[387]

While this trip did initially help rekindle some of Coffin's passion to protest the war, his return to the US was not what he hoped for: "returning from Hanoi filled with new anguish, with much to report on the horror and futility of the war, I soon realized

[384] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 308-309.
[385] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 262.
[386] Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam,* 217.
[387] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 323.

that outside the circle of those opposed to it no one really wanted to listen."[388] The January 27, 1973 Paris Accords promised the withdrawal of all US troops within sixty days. As Wells pointed out, "many protestors suspected Kissinger and Nixon were up to their old tricks… more than a few activists were too numb from years of mass killing to feel much of anything…. But a large and dedicated army of activists realized there was more work to do."[389] CALC pushed to make sure Nixon would honor the peace agreements, and lobbied corporations to cease production of antipersonnel weapons, but mostly they called for support and healing of all victims of the war.[390] In May of 1973, Coffin participated in a conference on amnesty for draft resistors, which wound up being one of his last actions in opposing the Vietnam War. It had been a very long and painful stretch of years spent trying to stop the war, and Coffin was worn out; in the fall of 1973, he took a much-needed sabbatical. Not long after, in early 1975, he announced he would resign from Yale at the end of the calendar year.[391] It wound up being a year of endings; Saigon fell in May of 1975, and Coffin left Yale in December of 1975.[392]

In August of 1977, Coffin was offered the role of senior minister at Riverside Church in New York. As a *New York Times* article about his election noted, "the pulpit of the landmark Riverside Church has long been associated with intellectual power and social change… the post has been a national platform for theological and ethical change." The *Times* article also quoted Coffin's description of how he saw himself as a minister: "every minister is given two roles, the priestly and the prophetic. The prophetic role is the

[388] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 332.
[389] Wells, *The War Within*, 564-565, 567.
[390] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 160-161.
[391] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 272-273, 277.
[392] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 276.

disturber of the peace, to bring the minister himself, the congregation and entire social order under some judgment."[393] As the minister of Riverside Church, Coffin continued to support movements for social justice, including helping to push the church to be more "open and affirming" to gay and lesbian members.[394] But he also continued his antiwar work, particularly with the Riverside Disarmament Program. Goldstein noted, "the Disarmament Program's emphasis on reversing the arms race and refunding human needs struck a chord with many members of the church as well as with religious people all over the country. Their first convocation, in early December 1978, drew hundreds of clergy and laypeople to Riverside." This focus on disarmament eventually led to Coffin resigning from Riverside in late 1987, in order to take on the presidency of SANE/Freeze.[395] The collapse of the USSR left many activists feeling that disarmament issues were no longer quite so urgent, and so Coffin retired. He still spoke out on the issues he found important, and gave guest lectures and sermons, but his health began to decline.[396]

Coffin died April 12, 2006, at the age of eighty-one. As his *New York Times* obituary noted, "in the late 1970's, when he became senior minister of Riverside Church in New York -- an institution long known for its social agenda -- he used his ministry to draw attention to the plight of the poor, to question American political and military power, to encourage interfaith understanding, and to campaign for nuclear disarmament." The *Times* also noted, "In his later years, he devoted himself to antiwar crusades,

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[393] Kenneth A. Briggs, "Coffin is Nominated by Riverside to be Church's Senior Minister," *New York Times,* August 11, 1977, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/coffin-is-nominated-riverside-be-churchs-senior/docview/123208746/se-2.
[394] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 295-296.
[395] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 291, 301.
[396] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 313-314.

advocating a nuclear freeze, opposing the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf and speaking out against the invasion of Iraq in 2003."[397]

While Coffin took time to figure out his position on the Vietnam war, he never really seemed to struggle with inner demons the way that some of his peers did; he kept both his mind and his options open. He never became a full pacifist; in his last book, published in 2005, he explained, "with me, it's a 51-49 vote [for pacifism], and I'm certainly a nuclear pacifist, convinced that nuclear weapons call for a single standard and that all should be abolished. But evil has an irremedial stubbornness about it…"[398] He took time in developing his religious views, but once he had them, they were his, and nearly unshakeable, yet his certainty was not that of the closed-minded. In his 1982 book *The Courage to Love*, Coffin wrote, "it is a mistake to sharpen our minds by narrowing them. It is a mistake to look to the Bible to close a discussion; the Bible seeks to open one. God leads with a light rein, giving us our head."[399] He continued, "we should not make our peace with the world as it is, but rather move to the creative edge of whatever estate we happen to occupy."[400]

Summarizing Coffin's philosophy and choices, his biographer wrote:

> Coffin consistently used his position in the heart of the American establishment to raise questions that people could answer without feeling they had to go to jail…. As he saw it, the biblical prophets were called to name and seek redress for the sinfulness and affliction of their people – not wander in the wilderness.[401]

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[397] Marc D. Charney, "Rev. William Sloane Coffin Dies at 81; Fought for Civil Rights and Against a War," *New York Times*, April 13, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/13/us/rev-william-sloane-coffin-dies-at-81-fought-for-civil-rights-and-against.html.
[398] Coffin, *Letters to a Young Doubter*, 130-131.
[399] William Sloane Coffin, *The Courage to Love* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 7.
[400] Coffin, *Courage to Love*, 36.
[401] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 321.

Goldstein also noted, "unlike many clergy who took risks on civil rights or Vietnam, Coffin managed to hold on to his job through the sixties. He understood the advantage of a regular pulpit when it came time to preach the uncomfortable gospel and soon saw that his Yale perch gave him automatic access to audiences and the media."[402] Coffin led by example, both in what he was willing and what he was not willing to do. He walked a careful path of escalating action while never sacrificing his moral beliefs for the sake of progress.

When Coffin took on a cause, he did so wholeheartedly. As he wrote much later in his life, in the 1994 book *The Heart is a Little to the Left*, "let us all remember what King and Gandhi never forgot – that for its implementation compassion frequently demands confrontation."[403] For Coffin, compassion was not passive; compassion demanded action, and sometimes quite physical action: Norman Mailer described how during the 1967 March on the Pentagon, Coffin literally wrestled a disruptive American Nazi to the ground, after the Nazi had attacked one of Coffin's fellow speakers.[404] Coffin felt strongly that when faced with an injustice, a Christian must fight against it, but also had to moderate that fighting spirit with love. He wrote, "the quickest way to lose your humanity is to begin to tolerate the intolerable."[405] But along with that, "however deep, our anger must always and only measure our love."[406]

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[402] Goldstein, *Holy Impatience*, 325.
[403] Coffin, *The Heart*, 24.
[404] Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, the Novel as History* (New York: New American Library, 1968), 116.
[405] William Sloane Coffin, *A Passion for the Possible*: *A Message to U.S. Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 50.
[406] Coffin, *The Heart*, 6.

Chapter VI.

Daniel Berrigan

In February of 1968, Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan along with historian Howard Zinn flew to Hanoi to receive three American prisoners of war, the result of an offer made by the North Vietnamese government to representatives of the peace movement.[407] During his time in Hanoi, Berrigan experienced the terrible onslaught of American bombings that had him taking cover in bomb shelters (the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive had started just a few weeks prior, shocking the Americans with their strength and reach as attacks made it all the way to the American embassy in Saigon. Reprisals were swift).[408] He witnessed firsthand the utter devastation America had wrought and the painful evidence of endless American war crimes. As Berrigan described in *Night Flight to Hanoi*, "what can it mean to ordinary men, endowed with ordinary resources of compassion, to view the overwhelming evidence of the death-dealing power and will of their own government? The question remains to haunt and appall us."[409] He found his experiences there troubling, moving, and transformative. He wrote, "I have seen the victims. And this sight of the mutilated dead has exerted such inward change upon me that the words of corrupt diplomacy appear to me more and more in their true light. That is to say – as words spoken in enmity against reality."[410] Yet a few months later when his brother Philip asked him to join in an act of civil disobedience against a draft board in

[407] Forest, *Lions' Den,* 112.
[408] Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, 708-711.
[409] Daniel Berrigan, *Night Flight to Hanoi: War Diary with 11 Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 58.
[410] Berrigan, *Night Flight*, 23.

Maryland, Daniel Berrigan found himself wavering. He had come a long way from his days as a young priest who accepted the Catholic doctrine of just war, but he was still unsure about taking such a step. After much thought and prayer, he agreed, and found himself a member of the Catonsville Nine. As he wrote in *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, when explaining his actions, "I went to Catonsville and burned some papers because the burning of children is inhuman and unbearable. I went to Catonsville because I had gone to Hanoi. Because my brother was a man and I must be a man."[411] And so it was that he took his first steps down a new path, following his brother into civil disobedience in protesting the war.

Daniel Berrigan was born in Minnesota on May 9, 1921, though the family settled on a farm outside Syracuse, New York shortly thereafter. Daniel was the fifth of six boys, with his brother Philip the sixth and final child, born in 1923. Daniel was the frailest of the children, unable to walk until he was four. He described himself in his autobiography, "at age two, three, four, he is already a survivor. His malfunctioning feet stubbornly refuse to bear him about the world."[412] Already at a young age, he was something of an outsider among his own family; unable to join his father and brothers in the physical labor of the farm. The Berrigan family struggled economically, particularly with the onset of the Depression in 1929, yet they were always willing to share what little they had with those less fortunate: "I remember vividly that we housed and fed a continuing number of homeless men during those dark years of loss."[413] Years later looking back on the lessons he learned in his early life, Berrigan remembered, "a father and mother that taught, quite

[411] Daniel Berrigan, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 92.
[412] Daniel Berrigan, *To Dwell in Peace: An Autobiography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 8.
[413] Daniel Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 11.

simply, by living what they taught. And if I could put their message very shortly, it would go something like this: In a thousand ways they showed that you do what it is right because it is right, that your conscience is a matter between you and God, that nobody owns you."[414] Berrigan also recalled the childhood influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, whose newspaper was delivered to Berrigan home, "through gentle osmosis and less gentle nudges, she introduced us to a sane and perennial Catholicism: a circle of prayer and compassion and service. Hand to hand, hand to mouth, she served."[415]

The Berrigan family was Catholic, and Berrigan attended the local Catholic schools. As high school students both Berrigan and his best friend, Jack St. George, started thinking about attending seminary to become priests. In his autobiography Berrigan reflected, "I became a priest and, more specifically, a Jesuit, because of [Jack]."[416] They wound up choosing the Jesuits because of "their bare-bones undersell" which stood out from the more extravagant offers of different orders.[417] The pair were both accepted, and in August of 1939, Berrigan presented himself to the Andrew-on-Hudson Jesuit Novitiate in Poughkeepsie, New York, to begin the first of fifteen years of Jesuit training.[418] He enjoyed the early days of his novitiate, and he reflected in *No Bars to Manhood*, "as with any young person of eighteen entering upon an entirely new form of life, the memories of my first years are particularly vivid. With regard to present

[414] Daniel Berrigan, *Essential Writings*, Modern Spiritual Masters (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 187.
[415] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 72.
[416] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 81.
[417] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 14.
[418] Forest, *Lions' Den,* 15–16.

convictions, I think they gave me a deep sense of the presence of God in the world, and most specifically in human community."[419]

During Berrigan's training, the events of World War II were unfolding in the world, but as he remembered, "it would reach us only as a distant rumor. What concern could it be to us? And by implication, what concern of ours were the events that would follow the war?"[420] He remembered that the news was largely kept from them, only being allowed access to some news headlines after the fact, with professors filling in some of the gaps. Philip Berrigan joined the army to fight in the war, and in a 1943 letter to Phil, Berrigan mused "to realize that the soldiering of this war is a vocation too – that would solve some of your difficulties and loneliness and the vague worries… to believe our Lord wants you as surely in a field Artillery or Air Force… and your part is to play the game (as you are doing superbly) looking on Him Who was a good Soldier."[421] Could anything be further from where they both ended up, fiercely opposed to all war? Berrigan's early unthinking acceptance of the war machine and soldiering plays an interesting contrast to most of the rest of his life.

There were many steps in his journey to pacifism and antiwar work. When the nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Berrigan was ill in hospital. He read about it in a newspaper, and as he remembered (though at many years distance):

> I read, turned to ice or stone. Neither stone nor ice. I was getting born; and I was ignorant as the unborn. I read of the obscene triumph of the president, the estimated casualties… a sense would come to me later with the force of a thunderbolt scoring its message on the wall, a sense of

[419] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 12.
[420] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 89.
[421] Daniel Berrigan, *The Berrigan Letters: Personal Correspondence between Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2016), 7.

> before and after: before Hiroshima, after Hiroshima. All unconscious as I was, hardly born, I had no sense that we had crossed a line, all of us.

Though he also noted that other than this brief moment, "far in the future, inconceivable to the mind, was any foreboding – of what that news… would exact on me, how its heat would cast my existence in a new form. All this was hidden, and mercifully so."[422] Yet some small thing had awoken in that moment, for in the fall of 1946, he began teaching at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City. There he had the experience of trying to recount the ideas of Ronald Knox's *God and the Atom* to his students, who basically shouted him down, "We did good! We saved lives, didn't we! It was them or us, wasn't it!" He pondered that, "one could undergo, as they had undergone, and their parents before them, the entire Christian induction… could receive the Christian sacraments…. And still one would go off to war, in apparent good conscience."[423] He reflected on this experience, "ancestor to child; it was presumed that violence needed no teaching, it took care of itself. It was nonviolence, civility, that required discipline and instruction, and was under perennial assault."[424] But this was still part of Berrigan's slow awakening; it would still be some years before he came to truly question the attitudes of the Catholic Church when it came to peace and war. He too, required the discipline and instruction that would lead him to pacifism.

In 1953, Berrigan left for his Tertianship assignment in France. He recalled, "it was one of the worst years in French history. The war [with Vietnam] was at a bloody impasse, the domestic government in shambles, Dien Bien Phu in the offing."[425] Dien

[422] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 105.
[423] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 108.
[424] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 109.
[425] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 124.

Bien Phu fell on May 7, 1954, ending French colonial control of the country, and leading to the 1954 Geneva Conference that split the country and set up the dominoes that led to America's deepening involvement.[426] Berrigan recalled, "the end of the Indo-Chinese colonial adventure was at hand, and the republic was stricken at the heart."[427] He witnessed firsthand what colonialism could lead to, and some of complexities of Vietnam itself. Berrigan also spent some of 1954 assisting a Jesuit military chaplain in West Germany, exposing him to situations that made him think critically about Catholicism and the military. He recalled, "I preached and heard confessions and counseled innumerable soldiers - and never once brought up, or had brought up to me, the question of modern war, the question of why we were in Germany at all."[428] He reflected on his impression of the priests he assisted in Germany, "I remember that every one of them, without exception, was totally militarized."[429]

In the fall of 1954, Berrigan returned to the US a full Jesuit, and took a job teaching at Brooklyn Preparatory School in New York, which happened to be near the St. Joseph's Catholic Worker House, allowing him to meet Dorothy Day. In a 2008 interview, Berrigan remembered, "Dorothy Day taught me more than all the theologians…. She awakened me to connections I had not thought of or been instructed in, the equation of human misery and poverty and warmaking."[430] As historian Patricia McNeal wrote, "Catholic pacifism that opposed all war did not appear in the United States until the 1930s when Dorothy Day, cofounder of the Catholic Worker movement,

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[426] Sheehan, A *Bright Shining Lie*, 134–137.
[427] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 13.
[428] Daniel Berrigan, *Daniel Berrigan: Poetry, Drama, Prose* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 8.
[429] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 14.
[430] Chris Hedges, "Daniel Berrigan: Forty Years After Catonsville," *The Nation*, June 2, 2008, https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/daniel-berrigan-forty-years-after-catonsville/.

proclaimed it."[431] She argued, "Dorothy Day was the one person most responsible for the shift in American Catholic thought away from the just war doctrine toward pacifism. By the end of World War II, she had added to the Catholic theological agenda the concepts of pacifism, conscientious objection, and nuclear pacifism."[432] Day brought this same influence to bear on Berrigan. At that time, Berrigan was finding his path in other ways as well; he got more involved in community building, serving as a chaplain of a Brooklyn chapter of Young Catholic Workers (not affiliated with Day's Catholic Worker movement, the YCW aimed to bring religion to industrial workers). He began writing poetry, and in 1957, he won the Lamont poetry prize for his first collection, *Time without Number*.[433]

In 1957, Berrigan was appointed as an associate professor at Le Moyne, a Jesuit college in Syracuse. In the meantime, his brother Philip had also been ordained as a priest of the Society of Saint Joseph, which traditionally served Black parishes. Phil taught at an all-Black Catholic high school in New Orleans, and as the Civil Rights movement grew, the two began working together with their students on Civil Rights projects (the pair also attempted to participate in a Freedom Ride in 1961, but their superiors prevented them from doing so).[434] As Berrigan explained in a 1972 interview, "I find it very hard to separate Phil's fate from mine, as a matter of affection and existence itself. I wouldn't

[431] McNeal, *Harder than War*, x.
[432] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, x.
[433] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 43, 47.
[434] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 45, 53.

know where his life began and mine ended. And I think either one of us would confess that if it weren't for the other, his own life couldn't go as well or as far."[435]

While at Le Moyne, Berrigan also established a relationship with the Trappist monk Thomas Merton, who became one of Berrigan's greatest influences, especially in becoming a pacifist. Berrigan had very much enjoyed Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and the two began corresponding in 1961. Berrigan had been inspired to write after reading Merton's essay "The Root of War is Fear," published in the October 1961 issue of *The Catholic Worker*.[436] In the article, Merton challenged that in the face of war, "the duty of the Christian in this crisis is to strive with all his power and intelligence, with his faith, hope in Christ, and love for God and man, to do the one task which God has imposed upon us in the world today. That task is to work for the total abolition of war."[437] In 2003, Berrigan wrote "my teachers, among others, have been Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Gandhi, Thomas Merton, and my brother Philip, a continuity of nonviolence and non-ideology, stemming from the early church and the prophets, from Jesus himself."[438] Philip, Merton, and Day in particular provided him with intensely personal influences on which to build his beliefs, and Merton's article was one of the many watershed moments that led to Berrigan choosing to become a pacifist.

In 1963, Berrigan was given a yearlong sabbatical in Europe, largely in Paris, but he also spent time in Communist occupied Prague and Budapest, and took a trip to South

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[435] Lee Lockwood & Daniel Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions, Modest Hopes: Conversations after Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1973), 64.
[436] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 50.
[437] Thomas Merton, "The Root of War is Fear," *The Catholic Worker*, Volume XXVIII, Number 3, October, 1961, https://merton.bellarmine.edu/s/cw/item/41002.
[438] Berrigan, *Essential Berrigan*, 280.

Africa that exposed him to the horrors of apartheid.[439] He participated in a Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) sponsored seminar in Paris, connecting with the small Catholic contingent who were participating, and traveling with them to the Vatican to discuss peace work. Berrigan then went to Prague to participate in the Christian Peace Conference of 1964.[440] He remembered, "at Prague, I met with Christians from both Marxist and Western societies, and gained some inkling of the role that churches could play in the ongoing struggles for human peace and survival…. I was also exposed to the full glare of world Christian opinion with regard to our part in the Vietnam war."[441] His trip to Europe fully cemented Berrigan as a confirmed pacifist, as he remembered:

> For me, the course of the future was made plain by everything I had experienced in Europe and throughout other continents. That is to say, I began after my return to the states in the autumn of 1964, as loudly as I could, to say 'no' to the war. I remember being afflicted with a sense that my life was truly being launched – for the first time – upon mortal and moral seas that might overwhelm me.[442]

The trip to Prague was also the impetus in forming the Catholic Peace Fellowship (CPF). Jim Forest recounted, "Dan, Jim Douglass, and I resolved to found the Catholic Peace Fellowship on our return to the United States… our main goals, we decided, were to organize Catholic opposition to the Vietnam War and launch a program to make known the fact that conscientious objection to war was an option… for Catholics."[443] Meanwhile, Berrigan's sabbatical from Le Moyne was made a permanent departure, as he was not invited to return. He was appointed instead to the editorial staff of *Jesuit Missions* magazine in New York, where he was also available to assist in getting the CPF

[439] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 151-159.
[440] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 61-65.
[441] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 18.
[442] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 18-19.
[443] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 65.

off the ground. As Patricia McNeal recounted, "the successful formation of CPF under the auspices of FOR was due to the increased cooperation between Catholics and other peace groups in America by the 1960s."[444] She also noted, "self-consciously Catholic, the founders of CPF also wanted to develop a 'theology of peace' with an emphasis on the principles and techniques of nonviolent resistance, in accordance with the Second Vatican Council…. [Jim] Forest was the catalyst, and engaged in lengthy correspondence with Thomas Merton and Daniel Berrigan."[445] Forest remembered that, "at the end of his sabbatical, Dan had wanted to be more of a worker-priest himself. He hoped he might give a day a week to the Catholic Worker… instead he spent several hours each week helping the Catholic Peace Fellowship get launched."[446]

In November of 1964, Berrigan, his brother Philip, A.J. Muste, and a group of other interfaith peace workers attended a retreat at the Thomas Merton's Gethsemani Abbey hermitage. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution in August of 1964, thus bringing the growth of U.S. military action in Vietnam to the notice of the antiwar movement. While much was discussed, the major themes that emerged were "conscientious objection to war, the challenge of technology, and a provocative question Merton raised: 'By what right do we protest?'"[447] For Merton, the priorities of the retreat were "to reflect together these days on our common grounds for religious dissent and commitment in the face of injustice and disorder… what we are seeking is not the formulation of a program but a deepening of roots."[448] The timing was well-placed for

[444] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 141.
[445] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 141.
[446] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 73.
[447] Gordon Oyer, *Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), xiii.
[448] Oyer, *Spiritual Roots*, 98.

those who were about to dedicate the next decade of their lives to protesting the Vietnam conflict. The conversations the participants had at the retreat, "affirmed their warrant to protest as something inherent, something that came from within and represented an expression of their personhood, their humanity. To protest was to respond in harmony with the Creator's intent for creation."[449] As Gordon Oyer noted, "much conversation revolved around the concept of marginality…. Merton's comments about those pushed to the wall, abandoned, and derelict serving as bearers of the true spiritual roots of protest sparked considerable discussion… without fully abandoning the institutional church, most lived in varying degrees of tension with it."[450] Oyer continued, "these men seemed to agree that their rightful place rested within the lonely margins, alongside the abandoned and rejected, where God's word and the powers that oppose it clash most intensely."[451] These reflections were particularly apropos for Berrigan, who would spend much of his life on the margins, often living in tension with his Catholic superiors and community. He also credited the retreat as an important step in his journey to peace work; in one of his letters from jail, Berrigan remembered "that infamous retreat in early 60's started things off for most of us except of course vets like A.J."[452] Reflecting late in his life, Berrigan remembered that those at the retreat "did not plan any 'next steps' in peacemaking; they did not leave with some sense of 'this is what we will do next.' What they left with, though, was a framework of relationship and discussion they could later draw upon when needed."[453]

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[449] Oyer, *Spiritual Roots*, 128.
[450] Oyer, *Spiritual Roots*, 204.
[451] Oyer, *Spiritual Roots*, 205.
[452] Daniel Berrigan, *America Is Hard to Find* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 168.
[453] Oyer, *Spiritual Roots*, 198.

In the fall of 1965, the group that would become Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV) began to coalesce under the leadership of Lutheran pastor Richard Neuhaus, Abraham Heschel, and Daniel Berrigan.[454] Berrigan's participation wound up being interrupted by other events of the fall, however. On October 16, 1965, a former student of Berrigan's at Le Moyne, David Miller, became the first to publicly burn his draft card after Congress had outlawed the act. As Jim Forest recounted, "neither Dan nor his brother Phil hesitated in leaping forward in articulate defense of David's gesture and, for that matter, any form of non-violent resistance to the ever-expanding war."[455] Just a few weeks later, on November 9, 1965, Catholic Worker Roger LaPorte self-immolated in front of the UN Plaza in New York. Berrigan was ordered by his provincial not to comment on LaPorte's action, but he spoke in what he considered a private context at a Catholic Worker mass, "beyond apparent violence, apparent tragedy, a great gift is offered to us. But the gift can be claimed only if our minds are open to it. The gift, I think, is this: an understanding that the death of a good man is always offered for the sake of life."[456] The provincial heard of Berrigan's remarks and felt that Berrigan had disobeyed orders, and so convened a meeting in which the decision was made that Berrigan would be punished with exile.[457] In his autobiography, Berrigan reflected, "because I was objecting to the war, I must be treated like a deserter or an informer. The form of punishment narrowed: there was silence, then ostracism, scorn – and finally exile."[458] At the November 30, 1965 CALCAV meeting, an empty chair bearing his name

[454] Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 14.
[455] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 90.
[456] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 93.
[457] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 94.
[458] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 181.

had place of prominence. Criticism of Berrigan's exile hit the media; a December 12, 1965 open letter was published in the *New York Times*. It argued:

> Father Berrigan should be returned because, rightly or wrongly, his removal is a symbol, a symbol as dangerous as it is complex. Here are some of things his removal says to us: 1. A priest may speak out on Vietnam only if he supports the American action there…. 3. A priest is not free to preach what his conscience dictates if by so doing he disturbs the community.[459]

Berrigan was allowed to return in February of 1966, and he remembered, "in four months across the length of the southern cone, I suffered the death of friends, unutterable loneliness, dread, even despair… and learned by everything I underwent, by reflection and prayer – the rightness of my conduct, the wrong of punishment." He concluded, "I came home worse than ever."[460] During his time in South America, he visited ten different countries, and witnessed violence, poverty, oppression, and heard a multiplicity of opinions about American involvement in foreign policy, helping to solidify his own beliefs.[461]

After his return, he took a job at Cornell University as associate director of United Religious Work, which involved teaching, preaching, and providing pastoral care, beginning in the fall of 1967.[462] As his sister-in-law Liz McAlister remembered, "Daniel's journey as a Jesuit priest often placed him in colleges and universities where he not only taught classes but worked with students building a sense of community and then sending the students to places where they would come face to face with human

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[459] "Display Ad 212 -- no Title," *New York Times*, December 12, 1965, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/display-ad-212-no-title/docview/117077622/se-2.
[460] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 183-185.
[461] Berrigan, *Trial*, 86.
[462] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 101.

suffering."[463] He taught a course on nonviolence, and often accompanied conscientious objectors to draft board hearings.[464] He was also still working with both CALCAV and the CPF in protesting the war, though he was already beginning to lose interest in CALCAV's moderate approach (McNeal described it as "too bureaucratic and concerned about their middle-class constituency" for Berrigan).[465]

Berrigan had his first taste of jail after being arrested on October 22, 1967, for participating in the Pentagon protest. He reflected, "so now I am forty-six, and at length in jail, and two reflections occur: 1. Why was I so long retarded from so crucially formative a happening? 2. What's the big joke, You there?"[466] On the same day that Daniel Berrigan was finally released from jail, October 27, Philip Berrigan and three compatriots poured blood on the draft board files at the US Customs House in Baltimore, becoming known as the Baltimore Four for this act of civil disobedience. Phil had been growing frustrated with the peace movement's lack of success in stopping the war, and had begun looking for new tactics. The Baltimore action was his first attempt.[467] While Dan Berrigan was also beginning to wonder what other options might be available, he felt a great deal more ambivalence about the sorts of actions Phil was planning. Daniel wrote an agonized letter to Thomas Merton, asking for his advice, "but will such an action communicate at all???.... [The ever-worsening war in Vietnam] is inevitably pushing good people into very dangerous waters."[468] Berrigan worried that destruction of property might be the first step towards more violent action, leading down a path he wasn't willing

[463] Berrigan, *The Berrigan Letters*, xiii.
[464] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 102-103.
[465] McNeal, *Harder than War*, 192.
[466] Berrigan, *Night Flight*, 5.
[467] Peters, *Catonsville Nine,* 28–30.
[468] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 107-108.

to follow. Merton advised "my opinion would be some of us ought to stay with Gandhi's end of it… we have to be able to define our limits."[469] Jim Forest recalled that Daniel Berrigan felt "torn down the middle by the two people [he] most admired – Phil pulling in one direction, Merton in the other."[470]

And then in February of 1968, Berrigan and Howard Zinn took that fateful trip to Hanoi. Berrigan was tormented by the things he saw there:

> *teachers workers peasants bombed*
> *in fields and churches and schools and hospitals*
> *I examined our "improved weaponry"*
> *It was quite clear to me*
> *during three years of air war*
> *America had been experimenting*
> *upon the bodies of the innocent*
> *We had improved our weapons*
> *on their flesh.*[471]

Confronting the physical evidence of what the US was doing in Vietnam radicalized him. He recorded, "evidently something extraordinary is happening to me, which I am not in a position to analyze very thoroughly now. But a great gift, granted to few Americans, is in my hands…. For the man of faith such an experience induced reflection on what God may mean by granting this trip."[472] Not long after Berrigan's return from Vietnam, Phil showed up at Cornell to convince him to join in another draft board action. Phil pointed out to him, "it must be evident by now that the government would allow men like myself to do what we were doing almost indefinitely; to sign statements, to picket, to support resistors in court."[473] In his autobiography, Berrigan remembered, "the idea was

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[469] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 109.
[470] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 110.
[471] Berrigan, *Trial*, 89-90.
[472] Berrigan, *Night Flight*, 110.
[473] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 24.

immensely attractive; it was also a shocker. But it was less frightening than it would have been months before."[474] He asked for twenty-four hours to consider his decision. A poem of Berrigan's that appeared in his *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* contained the lines, "It was a very thoughtful time/ In a sense it was a choice/ between life and death/ It was a choice between/ saving one's soul and losing it/ I was saving my soul."[475] Berrigan had come to feel that his previous efforts were not enough, and the horrors he witnessed firsthand in Vietnam required him to take action that would bring more attention; something that would hopefully be more efficacious in stopping the war. It was time for Berrigan to take a different path than the one he had been walking, and so he decided to join Phil on the side of civil disobedience. He described his feelings after choosing his path: "a sense, as I recall, of immense freedom. As though in choosing I could now breathe deep, and call my life my own."[476] And thus Daniel Berrigan became the final member of the group that would become known as the Catonsville Nine.

The group decided to hit another draft board in the Baltimore area, and this time, they would destroy files with napalm. They chose the draft board in Catonsville in part because it was housed in a Knights of Columbus building (a Catholic fraternal service order), for as Shawn Francis Peters described, "in targeting the draft board in Catonsville, they could speak out against the injustices perpetrated not only by their government but also by their own church."[477] On May 17, 1968, one member remained as lookout, while the other eight entered the draft board, began seizing files, and brought them outside to be burned with their homemade napalm. They had previously alerted the press, who

[474] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 217.
[475] Berrigan, *Trial*, 46.
[476] Berrigan, *Dwell in Peace*, 217.
[477] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 94.

photographed and filmed the action. Daniel Berrigan suggested a prayer, as all members of the group participated in feeding the fire. As Peters described, "for the activists, the fire was more than a mechanism for destroying the draft records. It was an enduring Christian symbol that evoked the Pentecost, the moment when (as recorded in the Book of Acts) the Holy Spirit took the form of fire."[478] Berrigan remembered, "we nine saw our action in a common light, both from the viewpoint of a community of faith and our views of the needs of society and international life. We hoped our experiences would urge others to discover alternatives to the imposition of death, to the socializing of death, to the technologizing of death."[479] They were questioned, arrested, charged, and jailed.

Public reactions to the action were very mixed; in a 1971 Gallup poll, two-thirds of the American Catholics polled disapproved of radical Catholic actions like that of the Catonsville Nine. Peters recorded, "one common complaint voiced by Catholics was that Phil and Dan Berrigan appeared to be so focused on criticizing their country – and thrusting themselves into the limelight – that they had neglected their primary duties as priests."[480] Michael Novak, a Catholic who knew Dan Berrigan from CALCAV, argued that "Catonsville shared in the same vice that marred U.S. policy in Vietnam; it was an escalation down whose future there was no clear limit. Catonsville was a provocation."[481] Dorothy Day felt quite ambivalent about the Catonsville action, supporting the Nine in public, but troubled by their methods and where they might lead.[482] But for many others,

[478] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 99-104.
[479] Berrigan, *No Bars to Manhood*, 35.
[480] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 123-124.
[481] Michael Novak, "Blue-Black Embers… Fall, Gall Themselves… Gash Gold-Vermilion," in *Conspiracy; the Implications of the Harrisburg Trial for the Democratic Tradition,* ed. by John C. Raines (New York; Harper, 1974), 45.
[482] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 128.

the Catonsville Nine were inspirational. Shortly thereafter, other similar draft board actions were carried out by Catholic activists in Milwaukee and Chicago, and then extending to a raid on Dow Chemicals in DC, and on the FBI offices in Media, Pennsylvania (which was the thread that eventually led to the exposure of COINTELPRO), followed by exponentially more similar actions.[483]

On October 7, 1968, the trial of the Catonsville Nine began, and the group attempted to use their trial to further their antiwar message. Berrigan later turned the transcript of the trial into a play, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*. His testimony as delivered in the play: "I went to Catonsville and burned some papers because the burning of children is inhuman and unbearable…. We say: killing is disorder/ life and gentleness and community and unselfishness is the only order we recognize/ For the sake of that order we risk our liberty/ our good name/ The time is past when good men may be silent."[484] Each of the defendants explained the paths that had led them to committing the Catonsville action. They highlighted the illegal actions of the US government and military. Berrigan testified last, highlighting the horrors he had seen in Vietnam. Meanwhile, outside the trial, protests and actions were taking place. On the first day of the trial, per Peters, "supporters of the Catonsville Nine staged the largest antiwar march seen in Baltimore in the Vietnam era. That evening, a parade of speakers addressed crowds at St. Ignatius Church in Baltimore, including Noam Chomsky and Dorothy Day.[485] Despite the Nine's efforts to make the trial political, the prosecution stuck to the

[483] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 196-197.
[484] Berrigan, *Trial*, 92-94.
[485] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 174-179.

simple facts of how the group had broken the law, and as the trial concluded, the jury easily found them guilty.[486]

In April of 1970, after all appeals were denied, the time came for the Nine to present themselves for their jail sentences. Four of them, including the two Berrigan brothers, decided instead to avoid arrest and go on the underground, feeling that doing so might in itself be another way to protest the war. Berrigan wrote:

> Philip and I, priests of the church, intend this week to resist the automatic claim on our persons announced by the U.S. Department of Justice. We believe that such a claim is manifestly unjust, compounded of hypocrisy and the repression of human and civil rights. Therefore only one action is open to us: to declare ourselves fugitives from injustice.[487]

Trying to explain why they were making this choice, he noted "we could by no means presume that the crime-trial-punishment sequence must remain intact simply because two years ago it made sense. Something else might be required; the Vietnam War was more violent and widespread than ever."[488] And indeed, April of 1970 also saw Nixon announcing the expansion of war into Cambodia, despite all his campaign promises to deescalate. After Nixon's official announcement of the invasion of Cambodia on April 30, protests broke out across the country, including at Kent State.[489] Despite the widening war, the Berrigan's choice to underground and the opinions they voiced about this decision opened them to new criticism; Phil in particular was seen by many as arrogant and unsympathetic. Historian Michael B. Friedland felt that "few were more impressed with the actions of the Catonsville Nine than the participants themselves."[490] Phil's time

[486] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 238.
[487] Berrigan, *America*, 35.
[488] Berrigan, *America*, 53.
[489] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 225-226.
[490] Friedland, *Lift up Your Voice*, 208.

in the underground was short: he was found and arrested after only ten days. Daniel Berrigan meanwhile "sheltered in a Sherwood Forest of friends and friends of friends, led the FBI on a Robin Hood-like chase that lasted four months. Dan, a threat to no one, was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list."[491] Even while living a precarious life on the underground, perhaps especially then, Berrigan relied on his religious beliefs and his faith to guide and support him. He recalled that during that time, he:

> worked very hard at becoming what I would call a 'contemplative,' someone who had an interior, who was not merely a throwaway or part of a castaway culture but was connecting with his own history and tradition…. So I would spend at least an hour and sometimes two or three hours a day meditating on the New Testament.[492]

He managed to appear at a church to give a surprise sermon, speaking movingly of the dead in Vietnam, children and soldiers alike, and pointing out, "there are a hundred ways of nonviolent resistance up to now untried or half tried or badly tried…. I believe we are in such times as make it increasingly impossible for Christians to obey the law of the land and remain true to Christ."[493] Despite the radical actions he had already undertaken, Berrigan still drew very firm lines about nonviolence at a time when revolutionary violence was becoming ever more popular. He wrote a letter to the Weather Underground, a leftist organization committed to revolutionary violence: telling them that "no principle is worth the sacrifice of a single human being… our realization is that a movement has historic meaning only insofar as it puts itself on the side of human dignity and the protection of life."[494]

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[491] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 139-140.
[492] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 11–12.
[493] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 143.
[494] Berrigan, *America*, 95-96.

On August 11, 1970, the FBI finally caught up with Berrigan on Block Island, arresting him and delivering him to Danbury Prison in Connecticut. Berrigan tried to find and make meaning in his experiences in prison. He wrote:

> One is not commanded to be on the winning side, but to be in the right place… what we do, that what we endure, will have meaning for others. That our lives are not wasted, in the measure in which we give them…. That in prison we are in communion not only with suffering men and women of our world, but in communion with the saints in every time and place.[495]

A few weeks after Daniel Berrigan was imprisoned at Danbury, Phil was moved there as well, allowing them to spend time together and keep each other going, despite the difficult circumstances. On November 27, 1970, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover made the charge that the Berrigan brothers were the leaders of a plot to kidnap a high-level government official (later declared to be Henry Kissinger) and enact domestic terrorism in heating tunnels in DC. On January 27, 1971, an indictment was issued in Harrisburg, PA, against Philip and several other members of the Catholic Left, listing Daniel Berrigan as an unindicted co-conspirator.[496] When it came to the Harrisburg indictment, Berrigan stated that he felt "the indictment was part of a continuing effort to distract people from the main issues that are before all of us who still claim to any decency. The first issue being the war itself… there was, and still is, a move on to destroy what's left of the nonviolent peace movement."[497] When asked by Lee Lockwood about the truth behind the Harrisburg indictments, Berrigan noted, "the *truth*, it seems to me, is that in times of public crisis, people discuss all sorts of things… as far as I'm concerned, such ideas may have come up in discussions and some people may have thought about them

[495] Berrigan, *Essential Berrigan*, 166-167.
[496] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, xiv.
[497] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 144.

seriously, and then said 'No.'" Lockwood also asked about the idea of a citizen's arrest (of Kissinger, e.g.), to which Berrigan replied, "I'm against the idea in principle because I think it's uncontrollable in a violent society, first of all; and secondly, because it moves a little bit too close to violence against the person to suit me."[498]

Berrigan almost died in prison, after a reaction to a dental procedure in June of 1971. This was likely one of the reasons he was paroled and released on February 24, 1972, as his death in prison would have undoubtedly led to serious bad publicity. One of his first acts of freedom was to celebrate Mass at the Catholic Worker in New York. As described by Jim Forest, Berrigan "prefaced the liturgy with the presentation to Dorothy Day of the fifty dollars routinely given to inmates as they returned to the unwalled world. Dorothy took it… dipped the fifty dollars in holy water, held up the dripping cash, and said with a smile, 'Now we can use this!'"[499] Even as Berrigan moved on, taking a new teaching job (at Woodstock-Union college, the first of many short-term teaching placements), the Harrisburg indictment continued to hang over him.[500] Unfortunately, the conspiracy really boiled down to the fact that Phil and a fellow Catholic peaceworker, a nun named Liz McAllister, had fallen in love and were attempting to communicate without prison censorship. They gave their correspondence to one of Phil's fellow prisoners, Boyd Douglas, who was secretly an agent provocateur for the FBI. This correspondence became the basis of the Harrisburg trial. The defense for the trial was extremely brief, with defense lawyer Ramsey Clark declaring, "Your honor, these defendants shall always seek peace, and they proclaim their innocence of these charges.

[498] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 144-145.
[499] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 160.
[500] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 161.

The defense rests."[501] The trial ended with a hung jury that was heavily in favor of a not guilty verdict. However, as historian Patricia McNeal argued, "the outcome of the trial resulted in a legal and political victory for the defendants… ironically, it was also the deathblow to what had come to be known as the Catholic Resistance." She pointed out:

> The group itself contained its own elements of self-destruction. One factor was that it was a voluntary association of highly mobile and widespread people with no day-to-day leader or community to hold it together. Both Philip and Daniel had very independent styles of operation…. And finally, the high price of long prison sentences was too great for many of its members to withstand. Thus, a retreat from resistance followed.[502]

The Catholic Resistance crumbled even as the Vietnam War stumbled to its end. In a 1996 interview, Berrigan remembered, "at the end of the war I was teaching at the University of Detroit. I sat there that night in front of a television, and they were doing a recap of the war and the antiwar protests. And I found myself just crying and crying. I felt utterly crushed by the memory of it all. The whole thing was so horrible and so endless."[503]

After the Vietnam War finally came to an end, Berrigan continued his antiwar activism, moving into protesting nuclear weapons and other such terrible signifiers of modern warfare. During the 1981 trial for his participation in an antinuclear action, Berrigan offered the following:

> The only message I have for the world is: we are not allowed to kill innocent people. We are not allowed to be complicit in murder. We are not allowed to be silent while preparations for mass murder proceed in our name, with our money…. It's terrible for me to live in a time where I have nothing to say to human beings except, "Stop Killing." There are other beautiful things that I would love to be saying to people. There are other

[501] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 165-168, 178.
[502] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 208.
[503] US Catholic Staff, "Is anyone listening to the prophets anymore?" *US Catholic*, May 3, 2016, https://uscatholic.org/articles/201605/is-anyone-listening-to-the-prophets-anymore-2/.

> projects I could be very helpful at. And I can't do them. I cannot. Because everything is endangered.[504]

Berrigan continued to protest against warfare and violence through the end of his life. On April 2, 2011, he was arrested about the USS *Intrepid* during a Kairos Community (another peace group Berrigan helped to found) antiwar action. He was nearly ninety, and it proved to be his last arrest, in part due to his declining health. Daniel Berrigan died on April 30, 2016, both a rebel and a Jesuit until the end.[505]

Berrigan was a Jesuit for his entire adult life, and he cared very much about his association with them, though he was often at odds with both his superiors and many of his peers. Perhaps somewhat ironically, he ran into more trouble with his fellow Jesuits in his early days of pacifism; after Pedro Arrupe became the Jesuit superior general in 1965, things became easier for Berrigan. Arrupe had been away and uninvolved in Berrigan's exile; he came to visit Berrigan during his imprisonment for the Catonsville action. Arrupe, "a survivor of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima, knew firsthand the special horrors of modern war."[506] But Berrigan's feelings about the Society of Jesus were at times ambiguous. In an August 1978 letter to Phil, Daniel noted, "a weird anniversary, entered Jebs [Jesuits] in '39, now 39 years in! Practically a lifer but as papa wd. aver, No regrets!"[507] Yet in an October 1978 letter to Phil, Berrigan detailed, "I saw the Jesuits yesterday AM at Detroit U pushing their golf bags ahead of them to a car, off for the day. It was a fractured scene out of the 40s or 50s. I thought, there but for you, went I. What a blessing to be beckoned along so gracefully + gently – yet irresistibly too, like God's

[504] Berrigan, *Essential Writings*, 32–22.
[505] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 272, 297.
[506] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 94, 100, 150.
[507] Berrigan, *Berrigan Letters*, 152.

own nudge."[508] He was one of them, yet set apart in certain ways. In general, Berrigan seemed most comfortable when loosely affiliated with a group, but still on the fringes or the outside, echoing the meditations on marginality he'd had at the Gethsemani Abbey retreat in 1964. In a 1995 interview, when asked about his staying with the Jesuits, Berrigan responded, "I felt this was mine. Whatever it was, it was mine. If they were going to get rid of me, they were going to have to make the move…. I just had the sense that I was at home."[509] In *Ten Commandments for the Long Haul*, he reflected, "at the edge of my community, I meet those at the edge of other communities. This is a bitter advantage I was first led to ponder by Merton. And I vowed I will never make a virtue of alienation. But on the other hand, I will not consent to disappear into America."[510] Thus was the balance that Berrigan walked for most of his adult life: striving to meet with those at the edge of his community, while struggling against becoming too alienated.

When it comes to evaluating his legacy, historian Patricia McNeal made the argument that the growth of Catholic peace movements during the Vietnam War era led to long-term successes and institutional changes. She pointed to the May 1983 National Conference of Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter on war and peace, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, calling it "a watershed in the teaching of the Roman Catholic church in America on the issues of war and peace. For the first time since the early Christian period, pacifism and nonviolence were officially recognized as part of the Judeo-Christian tradition."[511] Shawn Francis Peters specifically named the

[508] Berrigan, *Berrigan Letters*, 157.
[509] Jim Wallis, "Steadfast with a Smile: A Conversation with Dan Berrigan," *Sojourner's Magazine*, Nov-Dec 1995, 2, Swarthmore Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA.
[510] Daniel Berrigan, *Ten Commandments for the Long Haul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 47.
[511] McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 211.

Berrigans and the rest of the Catonsville Nine as having had a great deal of impact on the Catholic church. There was the immediate impact on draft age Catholic men, as Catholics applying for conscientious objector increased by noticeable numbers after Catonsville; he also argued, "it wasn't just rank-and-file Catholics who were challenged by the Catonsville Nine to confront issues of peace and social justice. [Two American Bishops] both said in the early 1970s that demonstrations like the Catonsville witness forced them to reflect on the morality of war and the Church's role in promoting peace."[512] When Daniel Berrigan joined the Catholic priesthood, the Catholic Worker was the sole American Catholic voice for pacifism. He helped create and inspire a multitude of ways to be a Catholic peacemaker. Berrigan believed in peace work for the long haul, recognizing that results might not come for years or decades or lifetimes. After being released from prison in 1972, he told Lee Lockwood, "I think that as the war goes on people are more and more obsessed by the necessity of delivering results, of efficiency…. I prefer to insist on the deep cultural or religious resources that remind us: We cannot induce change until we have undergone change."[513] Through his writings and his actions, Berrigan offered resources to help others undergo such change. As Jim Forest reflected on Berrigan's legacy, "his greatest gift may have been the path he, as a priest, opened (or in many cases reopened) to eucharistic life and faith for people who had been estranged from almost everything."[514]

[512] Peters, *Catonsville Nine*, 329-330.
[513] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 35.
[514] Forest, *Lions' Den*, 315.

Chapter VII.

Conclusion

Ray Price, Nixon's speechwriter, recalled in an interview, "I used to call the protestors 'the Arlo Guthrie Woodstock pot rock love contingent.' I disdained them. They were passionate, but they didn't know shit about what they were passionate about. Most of them were too busy getting high to understand anything about the way the world works. Their arrogance was exceeded only by their ignorance."[515] But the five men I studied were adults, serious, sober, thoughtful, and extremely educated. They all had advanced degrees; they had lived and traveled internationally. Muste, Berrigan, and Coffin all visited Vietnam to personally witness the truth of what was happening there. Coffin had been in military intelligence and in the CIA. Heschel had fled Nazi occupied Europe. They knew how the world worked, and they knew exactly what they were passionately protesting against. And these men were all totally and entirely against what the US was doing in Vietnam. Muste correctly assessed in 1954 that US involvement in Vietnam would lead to "an unwinnable war."[516] Heschel predicted in 1967 that Vietnam would be "a war we can never win."[517] As religious leaders, it was part of their job to think deeply about ethics and morality, and to care for the soul of America. For them, the Vietnam war was a terrible stain on our soul.

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[515] Ray Price in Bingham, *Witness to the Revolution*, 183-184. N.B., this is hardly fair to Arlo Guthrie either.
[516] Danielson, *American Gandhi*, 305.
[517] Heschel, *Vietnam: Crisis*, 56.

In February of 1965, when Operation Rolling Thunder began, Muste was eighty, Heschel was fifty-eight, Berrigan was forty-three, Coffin was forty, and Morrison was thirty-one. They all had lived experience that allowed them perspective. They also all had immersed themselves in years of deep contemplation of theology, ethics, and morality. This perspective and this spiritual immersion differentiated them from many of their fellow antiwar protestors, particularly the youth and the students who made up so much of the movement. Todd Gitlin highlighted how for himself and so many of his peers, "there were tensions galore between the radical idea of political strategy – with discipline, organization, commitment to results *out there* at a distance – and the countercultural idea of living life to the fullest, *right here*, for oneself… and the rest of the world be damned (which it was already)."[518] But for my subjects, the rest of the world was very much their concern, and though they were not free from the frustration caused by the long struggles, they largely were committed to the long view. As Berrigan reflected in 1972, after being released from prison, "what we're trying to deal with is the long haul. There's no doubt about the fact that we're in for a very long struggle."[519] Additionally, their experiences, beliefs, and practices allowed them to better integrate the tensions Gitlin described.

One of the threads linking all five together was the way in which their religious beliefs and their roles as religious leaders shaped the ways in which they viewed their work, their roles, and their ultimate goals. Their involvement in protesting the Vietnam war came out of something larger than a single issue, and their concerns encompassed the

[518] Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 213.
[519] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 8.

suffering of the world. They were all inspired by the prophetic tradition, and felt responsible for working to end the suffering and call out injustices however they could. Years before Vietnam, Muste wrote, "to love means to see a human being, every human being, as a spirit of infinite worth who must be dealt with as such. Thence the refusal of the prophets and saints to overlook or condone hypocrisy, exploitation, callousness, and injustice."[520] Muste spent decades dedicated to this belief, carrying on to the very end of his life fighting injustice, from the courts in the US to the battlefields in Vietnam. Muste also asserted, "we cannot, except in a very small degree, control the world and determine the course of history. The amount of suffering on earth is also in only a limited degree subject to our determination. But there is one thing that is absolutely within the control of each of us, namely, his own moral decisions and acts."[521] He was, perhaps the most of any of my subjects, very aware of both the practical realities of the world and his own limitations, but this very awareness only pushed him to fight harder for what little he could do to change the world.

Morrison identified so strongly with the suffering in Vietnam that he took radical action to try to end it. His wife described how Morrison was "excruciatingly aware of the suffering of innocent people in Viet Nam, and of our GIs returning wounded or in body bags, so much so that his heart was breaking."[522] Heschel's depiction of the prophet is well-suited to Morrison: "the prophet is a man who feels fiercely… the prophet is strange, one-sided, an unbearable extremist…. While the world is at ease and asleep, the prophet feels the blast from heaven."[523] Norman himself had written, "the most important

[520] Muste, *Not by Might*, 66.
[521] Muste, *Not by Might*, 80-81.
[522] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 3
[523] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 62-63.

thing in the world is that our faith becomes living experience and deed of life."[524] His wife wrote, "To Norman, holy obedience meant being willing to take risks, sowing seeds in faith without knowing what fruits might come."[525] Morrison did not know what results his deed might bring, but his awareness of the suffering in the world compelled him to act.

Heschel wrote, "the more deeply immersed I became in thinking of the prophets, the more powerfully it became clear to me what the lives of the prophets sought to convey: that morally speaking there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings."[526] Heschel also described his belief that, "the war in Vietnam is a sign that we don't know how to live or how to respond. God is trying us very seriously. I wonder if we will pass the test. I am not a pessimist, because I believe that God loves us. But I also believe that we should not rely on God alone; we have to respond."[527] Heschel highlighted, "it is… of vital importance for religious people to voice and to appreciate dissent. And dissent implies self-examination, critique, discontent."[528] Heschel exhausted himself responding to the test he felt humanity was being offered.

Coffin described how "above all, I believe we need to claim the kinship of all people, to recover the prophetic insight that we belong one to another, every one of us from the pope to the loneliest wino on the planet. From a religious perspective, that's the way God made us."[529] He described how "every minister is given two roles, the priestly

[524] Norman R. Morrison, Memorial Service for Norman Morrison, Box 1, Morrison Collected Papers.
[525] Morrison Welsh, *Held in the Light*, 43.
[526] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 225.
[527] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 390.
[528] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 106.
[529] Coffin, *The Heart*, ix.

and the prophetic. The prophetic role is the disturber of the peace, to bring the minister himself, the congregation and entire social order under some judgment."[530] He also believed that speaking out against suffering and injustice was something that religious figures in particular were called to do, as he felt they "have a particular obligation to a power higher than that of the state."[531] He worked hard to fulfill both the prophetic and the priestly roles among his students, the movement, and the wider world.

Berrigan wrote that "a movement has historic meaning only insofar as it puts itself on the side of human dignity and protection of life…. It will have a certain respect for the power of the truth, a power which created the revolution in the first place."[532] He also described, "the good is to be done because it is good, not because it goes somewhere…. I have never been seriously interested in the outcome. I was interested in trying to do it humanly and carefully and nonviolently and let it go."[533] His prophetic concerns pushed him to the edges of his community, but there he was able to meet and inspire others at the edges of their own communities.

In addition to their concern encompassing all of humanity and the sufferings of the world, as well as a larger recognition that this work was the work of a lifetime and beyond, my subjects were also set apart by the spiritual and reflective practices that brought them to their antiwar work and sustained them through the most difficult times. Muste frequently turned to reading, particularly the Bible and other religious texts when

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[530] Kenneth A. Briggs, "Coffin is Nominated by Riverside," *New York Times,* August 11, 1977, http://search.proquest.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/historical-newspapers/coffin-is-nominated-riverside-be-churchs-senior/docview/123208746/se-2.
[531] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 236.
[532] Berrigan, *America*, 96.
[533] Berrigan, *Essential Writings*, 35.

he faced difficult times. He remembered in the early days of his pacifism with some of his companions from the Comradeship, "wrestling with the question of how to organize our lives so they would truly express the teachings and spirit of Jesus… we read the New Testament – especially the Sermon on the Mount – together, analyzed the passages, meditated on each phrase, even each word, prayed, and asked ourselves what obedience to those precepts meant for us."[534] Muste also emphasized the importance of truly reflective practice, "self-examination and repentance is not something which takes place once and for all. It is a state rather than an event."[535] Morrison's wife described that he "tried to live his life attuned to an inner guide; the source of inspiration about the course he was to follow. Although he sometimes mused that this philosophy was probably more drift than guide, he said passionately, 'Anne, I dare not ignore it!'"[536] He prayed for answers and listened for the guiding inner voice.

Heschel felt, "human faith is never final, never an arrival, but rather an endless pilgrimage, a being on the way."[537] He used prayer as a reflective practice, and wrote, "prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy… prayer clarifies our hope and intentions…. Prayer is the essence of spiritual living."[538] In trying to understand human suffering, and all he had seen fighting in WWII, Coffin found "the theologians seemed to be in touch with a deeper reality. They too knew what hell was all about but in the depths of it they found a heaven which made more sense out of everything, much as light gives meaning to

[534] Muste, *Essays*, 56-57.
[535] Muste, *Essays*, 419.
[536] Morrison Welsh, *Fire of the Heart*, 16.
[537] Heschel, *Moral Grandeur*, 245.
[538] Heschel, *Essential Writings*, 141-142.

darkness."[539] One of the reasons he became a minister was because he "was beginning to feel uncomfortable with human problems defined in solely national, political terms. I was always looking for their roots in human nature and for solutions that would make sense universally and spiritually."[540] Particularly in times of trouble, Berrigan felt that he had a responsibility to nurture his spiritual growth, which meant "giving time to the world of the spirit…. I would spend at least an hour and sometimes two or three hours a day meditating on the New Testament."[541] Before participating in acts of protest or witness, he felt it was vitally important to pray and reflect: "we don't go from the street to… action. We go from prayer. We go from reflection. We go from worship, always."[542] Berrigan also expressed, "we cannot induce change until we have undergone change."[543] Muste felt much the same; as biographer Nat Hentoff described, "Muste's basic credo is that major social dislocation is necessary to achieve a just society."[544] These reflective practices nurtured and nourished my subjects through times of trouble, and offered them a connection to something larger than themselves and the immediate moment.

In trying to explain the evolution of the antiwar movement from protest to resistance to revolution, Gitlin described, "the avant-garde of the antiwar movement, growing impatient with scruples, raged against America like a drunkard against his bottle. We inverted the traditional American innocence, and located the 'city upon a hill' in the jungles of the Third World." He continued, "their borrowed identity seemed to shine a

[539] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 82.
[540] Coffin, *Once to Every Man*, 113.
[541] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 11-12.
[542] Berrigan, *Essential Writings*, 190.
[543] Lockwood & Berrigan, *Absurd Convictions*, 35.
[544] Hentoff, *Peace Agitator*, 15.

pure light on us, our love and our hate."[545] The antiwar movement absorbed the growing violence in the world, and sometimes reflected it back. But my subjects had their life experiences, their religious beliefs, and their reflective practices to rely on as a bulwark against the temptations of violence. Muste had long since experimented with revolutionary violence, and concluded it was not the way. Heschel understood violence to be in opposition to God's wishes for humanity. While Berrigan and Coffin both escalated what they were willing to do as acts of protest, they refused to turn to violence. And Morrison, the youngest and least experienced of the five, turned it only upon himself.

In the collective memory of the antiwar movement, my five subjects are often unknown and overlooked. Even in some histories, such as *Witness to the Revolution*, they are absent or barely mentioned. But there is certainly some consensus that "the anti-Vietnam War movement was the largest and most effective antiwar movement in American history," and these men all played important parts in the antiwar movement.[546] And perhaps their greatest legacy lies in the ways in which they inspired others to follow in their footsteps as antiwar activists, both then and now. World events in the last year have only emphasized to me the relevance of religion and peacemaking. Muste's words from 1952 still ring painfully true today, "Non-conformity, Holy Disobedience, becomes a virtue, indeed a necessary and indispensable measure of spiritual self-preservation, in a day when the impulse to conform, to acquiesce, to go along, is used as an instrument to

[545] Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 268,
[546] Melvin Small, *Covering Dissent: The Media and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 1.

subject men to totalitarian rule and involve them in permanent war."[547] There is still much to learn from their words and deeds today.

[547] Muste, Essays, 372.

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