"Minnesota 8" trial, January 1971: testimony of Francis X. Kroncke

2009 Notes: The following testimony and comments are taken from "Patriotism Means Resistance" written in 1971. I have not edited the text, valuing the cadence of oral testimony. Some commas, quotation markets, etc., have been cleaned up. Footnotes have been added, although the complete story, trial documents, etc., are on www.minnesota8.net A 2004 revision of my memoir is "Outlaw or American Patriot?"

BACKGROUND

Twelve people, common, everyday people, with telephone book names and Minnesota map addresses, men and women who could have spent mornings and afternoon telling us of their lives, their moral choices, how the drama of their life was unfolding somehow. Now, the twelve of them and four alternates were locked into Mike and my life and we into theirs. They may never again have to judge someone. They may never again have to be judged! Oh, how I wondered about them. What did they say to their wives and husbands, their children and friends, about us and the trial experience? Did they really search their souls? Were we but nothing and no one to them? Did they cry or pray or worry about us at all? 12 names ... 12 people ... 12 lives ... 12 cosmic patterns—whirling around the obscene Orders, the demonic Law. How did they see the drama, the struggle, the light?

The Twelve:

Harold L. Hill, mechanic and truck driver, married, vet, son joining army.
Gladys Jaenson, telephone order board at Daytons, married, son 1-A.
John Delsing, book binder, retired vet, sons in marines.
Ronald Bisson, claims representative insurance co., married, vet.
Irene C. Sathre, school bus driver, 11 children, 3 boys in service.
Jean M. Vrness, a braser, married, young sons.
Mrs. Dorothy Rush, Shaklee products supervisor, married, two navy vets.
Cyrus A. Anderson, married, installs doors for Overhead Door Company, son a vet.
Anna Gertner, married, farmer, three vets.
Edward V. Oswald, assembler for Ford Motor Co., married, foster children for 14 years, a vet.

Mary L. Decker, housewife and part time worker for "Weight Watchers", husband an ex-marine.

Alternates:
Miss Mary E. Nelson, retired accountant.
Mr. Lyndon Rubel, farmer, married.
Mr. Dale A. Klemenhagen, mechanical engineer, vet.
Mr. Claude T. McClure, vice president of materials of Onin division of Studebaker Corp., married, son in service.

These 12 were *my* people. Persons who had not only to judge me but to judge themselves. Would they make the moral decision for peace? How doubtful I was of myself. I was afraid of my lecturing habits since when I begin to speak my mind often wanders and I talk about a thousand side-issues. Would I be clear? Would my words be more than my words, the words also of Truth and Love? If any day was to be my day it was 18 January 1971, a Monday, in Minneapolis. All my life's mental, moral and physical growths and struggles would culminate in that courtroom. Not because the Government was there, but because I would be talking with 12 other people ... 12 other humans and we would decide about truth, power, love, hope, good and evil, together.

As with most consciously approached days of decision and action, the early moments of the morning passed by in mechanical orderliness. "Call your next witness," Neville said. "I now call to the stand as my next witness, Francis Xavier Kroncke." I was playing the formalities to the hilt! I rose, walked towards the Clerk of Court, raised my hand, swore truth, "So help me God!" and took my place in the microphoned, swivel chaired witness stand with my back to the wall, my chair turned towards the jurors, my beard brushed wide, my eyes carrying out to the audience, my human family, my true body, now poised to speak through my mouth. The collective, communal voice spoke my life's journey.

TESTIMONY

"Being an attorney per se[1] I'm going to try to talk to the relevant issues about my life and why the act of July 10th occurred. I, in a sense, do not like talking about myself but I do feel that there's truth behind every person's life and I hope that you will see that truth behind my life.

Presently I'm twenty-six years old and I live in St. Paul. I grew up in the East Coast, a town called Bayonne, New Jersey; come from an Irish-German Catholic family. We have nine kids in the family; five girls, four boys, eight of whom are living. My youngest brother died when he was two years old.

At present the family is rather diversified as families—large families become. People involved in all types of pursuits; academic, professional, otherwise.

I was educated in the Roman Catholic school system from kindergarten up to my Master's Degree, and one of the reasons that our family sent us to Catholic schools was not only to allow us to become good sorts of scholars, to learn well, but to become good people. It was my father's overriding concern that we always be confronted with and guided by spiritual concerns.

Where we grew up in the East Coast in this town of Bayonne, for the greater part of my life I have been very familiar with violence. It was a town that's three square miles long and had at the time a hundred thousand people living in it, so most people lived "up." There weren't very many trees, the city cut down the only tree in our block when I was about eight years old.

My brothers, one who now is a professor at the University of Wisconsin, I remember him being involved in gang fights. I remember another one of my brothers opening a kid's head with a rock. I remember that we couldn't go out on the streets at night so that you know that very honestly that the concept of achieving things through violence or living in violence is something that I am familiar with.

Two significant things stand out in that period of my life. One is the fact that up until I was about twenty-one years old I went to daily Mass and Communion in a Catholic church. That was basically due to my father who also got up and went to Mass and Communion every day of his life,

[1] Kenneth E. Tilsen represented my partner Michael D. Therriault. The court granted my petition to proceed pro se. Ken did all the customary legal work, e.g., file motions, negotiate for witnesses. Legal lore says, "Anyone who defends himself has a fool for an attorney." Stuart Wells and Arnold Beneke, attorneys, provided counsel.

as far as I know, till the day he died. Since obviously it has a profound effect upon a young man, why his parents are doing this and what it means, and my father has had a very profound effect upon my life. He is not alive today but I will try in the course of talking with you to guide you to see why or how I understand religion and a lot of that is due to the way he understood his life also.

The other driving concern in my life was basketball. It's about all I played for until I was probably into college. It's about the only thing I did, was sports. I was never involved in practically anything else but playing basketball. I was about as big as I am when I reached high school, so you can imagine then, a big, gangling guy like myself wanted to play basketball.

My family did influence my understanding of what life means. One personal incident in the family was what happened to my two year old brother. When my brother was two and I was about thirteen or fifteen, he came up one day when we were on vacation and laid down next to me and in the course of about thirty seconds my brother turned from a live human being into a human vegetable. He just went into convulsions; he was bitten by a mosquito and was given encephalitis, and the influence of this upon my life was the realization of the frailty of life; that a fully alive person could, through an act of nature, all of a sudden turn into nothing. I was young and I saw a lot of suffering because Joe was the youngest of the family, and this profoundly—I'm sure I wasn't very philosophical about it at the time—but it just profoundly changed my life, about my way of perceiving of what was the value of life and how life could be plucked away from you and when life was taken away from you what that means to people, and I guess ever since that time it is very honest for me to say to you that whenever I do read a statistic that one person has died, you know, I begin to understand what that can mean to people.

I lived in the East Coast for seventeen years and then my family moved to Hastings, Minnesota which is about twenty miles south of St. Paul. This was about 1959.

Many things happen in large families, many of you know, broken arms, people getting sick. My dad wanted to stay in the East Coast but he had a heart attack and everything, but 3M out here, Minnesota Mining—my father was a chemist—hired him, brought him out even though he had a heart attack because he was a chemist in a field they were interested in, so we ended up coming to Minnesota.

When I came to Minnesota from the big city, so to speak, and I saw the fact that in Hastings some of the streets weren't paved, I said, *I'm not going to stay here!* I never saw anything like that before, so I went back East and went into the seminary.

I guess all through my life in my family I was the one who was going to be the priest. That happens— maybe you are familiar with that, especially with Catholics, Irish Catholics, they like to have a priest in the family, so I went into a Franciscan seminary in Staten Island, New York, and the next year. I was a junior in high school and this was called the minor seminary. They take people that young, and was preparing to become a Catholic priest, and the next year because my family lived in the Midwestern part of the country I had to change geographical areas, so I went to a seminary in Indiana, and after I graduated from high school, which I graduated from in the seminary, I went into what is called the novitiate.

The novitiate is a period of intense preparation for the priesthood. It's a year when you sort of go away from the world usually in some place like the countryside. They have a building and you study very intensively the religious life. I changed my name at the time. I was called Friar Otto. The idea of changing your total identity and becoming a new person in Christ was the idea.

Now the seminary's influence on me was that it was really the first time in my life that I ever began to read, and of course in the seminary even though people are very young they are confronted with the concept of, "What are you going to do with your life?" So I guess ever since around fifteen years old this is a real pressing question every day. You always have the pressure on you of whether you're going to stay in or leave the seminary. The idea is whether you are worthy enough.

You know, you have to keep asking yourself, *Am I worthy to serve God?* Questions like that, and I think these evoked in me at the time a real questioning about what is life and the meaning of life and how do I want to live my life and what type of service do I want. Do I want to serve people spiritually? Am I worthy to do that?

Some of the teachers in the school—the interesting things that were coming up at that time were the reintroduction into America of folk-singing, where most of us, people my age when we went into high school and stuff, they had the hootenannies and everything, but the interesting things

about the folk songs is that a lot of them were songs about people and people's struggles, about the struggles of blacks, you know, about the problems of peace.

That influence of that type of music now at this period in my Church's development began to be the type of music that they would sing in Church, so no longer were people in the sense singing—at least the young people in Church—songs in Latin but they were singing songs in English and they were singing songs about peoples' struggle, songs about, you know, the problems of the blacks and the problems of bringing peace, so in a very real way I think it's honest for you to understand that all around us, you know, we are sort of a generation of Americans whom all around us even in like our religious practices in the church, you know, these songs which demand and call us to be concerned about people were there.

Of course at this time being in a seminary I was—I had to sign up with, the Selective Service and I did that in a small town in Indiana and I was never politically aware, I mean, I just never read the newspaper and read politics. I still have an aversion to political things in a way. *I have* to let you understand that. When I went down to sign up for the Selective Service, I just remember sitting there with the Novice Master and I was—the lady was very kind and we were thinking out things and she asked me if I was a Conscientious Objector and I didn't know what that meant at all, but I just remember how funny it was since I was going to be a priest, why did I have to go sign up since I didn't have to serve? Since I knew that, but anyway it wasn't any big thing. I just sort of remember that little office there in a town called Auburn, Indiana, and I received what is called a 4-D deferment which means that religious people do not have to serve in the armed forces. Consequently it never entered my mind again, the problem of war.

Now it was about a half year later while I was halfway through this novitiate that I decided to leave and very honestly the reason I left the novitiate was because it was too wealthy. Coming from a rather lower middle class family with nine kids, you know, you can imagine the problems, like you people share too. One of the things that really bothered me was the contradiction that the place—I never lived so well as when I was in the seminary and I felt somehow that that would destroy my concept of service, so I left the seminary but I still had the ideals of living in a community of trying to serve people.

It was a very hard thing for my father and my family to accept, my leaving the seminary. It was a very hard decision for me to make. It took me about a year to make that decision. Remember, I

am young at this time too, just getting out of high school. But the whole thing is the family. For, all these times, you know, "You know you were the one Francis who was going to become the priest," you know, and to make that decision even at that young age demanded that I in a sense try to speak to my parents, saying: "Because I love you and because I want to serve you I'm doing something that you don't understand." This was a source of difficulty for my father but as is characteristically true through my whole life, my father and I talked this out, talked it through and he and I in a sense, he was my—I would call my spiritual guide, if you want, through my whole life and so what he decided for me, really, was that I would go to St. John's University up here in Collegeville.

My father happened to have gone to Notre Dame when he was a young man and we couldn't afford to go to Notre Dame, though that was his big goal, so the second best in a sense, if you want—I'm sure St. John's wouldn't like to hear that—was that I went up here to Collegeville. It was in February of 1963 now, and the reason for my going there—and my father made a big deal about my not going to the University of Minnesota because he didn't want me to be confronted with all those reckless ideas—that I would go to St. John's and that I would not only receive a good education but that I would be at a center of religious learning. St. John's is the largest Benedictine—which is an order of priests—the largest Benedictine monastery in the world, and at that time in the history of my church there was a great council—this Vatican II that I have tried to talk about several times in the course of the trial— was going on and there was a lot of changes and especially in what is called the liturgy or the religious worship services.

At this period, as I tried to mention before, we prayed in English instead of Latin and we sang songs, and again the songs were usually songs of "No more war" or songs about showing the absurdity of people being racist or people hurting me another. I decided then to study medicine. If I couldn't serve the soul I thought I'd serve the body. That is where I was at, at the time, and I received from the Selective Service a 2-S student deferment.

I, at this time, had no idea about the Selective Service. Like everybody else I just filled out my forms and sent them in and after a couple of years of studying medicine, basically biology, in one class—I was taking a class called Philosophy—a professor asked a question. He actually asked about if we ever thought about greenness, *greenness* in leaves. It was a very strange question, but whatever the question did to my mind is that I became very interested in philosophy at the time and so I decided to study philosophy and medicine.

Now the distinction that came is that the study of philosophy is the study of who man is and who we are. It asks questions like that, and of course this very well fitted in with what I was interested in, in the past, but when I first went to college I didn't think about studying that. I decided to study medicine, but now in college the two sort of came together.

You must—looking back at St. John's I was there for three and a half years and it was a tremendous period of conflict for me. I couldn't resolve the questions of whether the religion that people were talking about was very real. When I was at St. John's I wasn't a joiner or an activist. I never involved myself at all in anything approaching political things. I was mostly just concerned about questions about who man is and what is the meaning of life, but I never joined anything.

The only thing that I did relate to was several Honors programs. They had—these were academic programs only, where we tried to study the classics of western Civilization, you know, the main thinkers and what they said, and I just joined two programs. One was—they were both Honors programs—and the significant thing at this period was that I was really in conflict but the conflict wasn't on political issues.

The conflict was purely on moral questions and the conflict was a big conflict with my Church, whether the Church, that was for me so wealthy, the question to me was whether that was real. Were they really—what was the religious thing they were trying to do with the world? Were they really dedicated to the people?

I had all kinds of questions. I continued like to go to mass and communion but I continued like in a sense to get farther and farther away from the church, from what I understood to be the Established Church, if you want, at the time.

I wasn't as aware then as I am now of the fact that my Church was also going under a tremendous re-examination of itself, you know, but at that time with a little less vision than I have today I was just very torn apart. I really—I have to explain to you that I became interested in a man, some of you may be familiar with, that's got a long French last name. His name is Teilhard de Chardin, and this is the Honors thesis that I wrote to graduate with. [Note: I showed the red bound thesis to them. "Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's Personalizing Universe."]

Only if I may say without trying to point myself up as being, you know, different than other people, there's only eight of us who graduated with it {an Honor's degree, *egregia cum laude*} but we wanted to do it, that's all. This is a study of a man that I spent most of my last years in college with and I think to understand even the action of February 10, that —July 10—that we are brought here with, I have to give you a little idea about the influence of Teilhard and how he changed my understanding of religion. That is, that up to this period of my life my relationship to God had been purely intellectual, you know, man believes in God by just saying he does. He says in his heart, "I believe in God." Basically people understood that religious people weren't too concerned with what went on in the world because they were concerned about the kingdom of God which was afterward and that even though they were supposed to be kind and nice to their friends, that the thing that you're supposed to be basically involved with was spiritual things and it would be better to say a prayer, you know, than to walk down the block and help somebody.

Now this man Teilhard created a great turmoil in the Catholic church at the time because what he came to bring together was an understanding that the way to be with God was to be actively involved in what goes on in the world, and you know it would take me probably, to be very honest with you, about three hours to explain it to you because he is a scientist and he's concerned about what is called the Theory of Evolution— but what he tried to show us was that he accepted what contemporary science is telling us, the fact is that man is evolving. But he said that most scientists when they understand evolution have come to understand that man has ceased to evolve physically.

They know this, you see, and around the Forties and the Fifties, these evolutionist thinkers were despairing of life on earth. They were saying man has ceased to evolve physically and they said this just tells us that man is going to just destroy himself.

They looked at the mind, man's ability to think, and the only thing that they said is, "Look what man has done with his mind. Man is the best killer in the world." That's just what they said. Man can destroy, you know, man is the only animal that, like it commits suicide, and the mind is what they call—well, I will translate it—they call is an epiphenomenon. It's something outside of the physical and it was basically a curse and they were very despairing of what man could do with the world, but Teilhard was also— he was a Frenchman and he was a Jesuit priest

and he was what was called a paleontologist, he studied fossils. He was a biologist studying fossils and Teilhard said, possibly if we can see a different meaning in the world, if we look at it this way: that evolution shows (though we have ceased to evolve physically, which all scientists agreed with) that we have come to understand that man is evolving in the psychic and spiritual realm.

Now if you come to understand that, it changes your whole view of the world now, you see, because Teilhard being very religious began to raise questions like to my mind, an understanding that if we are to change or to evolve in the psychic and the spiritual, it means that we must relate to the physical because he saw an intimate connection between what happens to the physical and what happens to the mental.

If I just, say, for a minute, show you that in the basic theory of evolution is that they start out with little things called one-cell amoebas. I think you have all seen that in high school biology, and evolution is traced along a growing sort of what they call, "complexity in physical life." They go up from animals called sponges, which are like lots of cells together, to what they consider a higher grade of life, these little things—the biological term is coelenterates, they look like a little hand—and these are single cells and when you get up here you have an entity which has a stomach, a rudimentary stomach, but the things that Teilhard showed and what most scientists agreed with was that as they looked at evolution and saw that the animal entities grew in physical complexities from single cells like when you got with fish, you know a fish is a very complex animal. It has like you have—you look at a fish, you have gone fishing, you cut a fish open, he has lungs, he breathes, he has a stomach, he's very complex. He seems far removed from a one single-celled animal, but the thing that like a fish has that the scientists know—saw was different, was that at this level the physical complexity, he began to exhibit psychic characteristics.

In other words this is what we call instinct, is that fish—a fish never lives by itself. It always lives in groups that you always call "schools" of fish. The significance here that scientists began to realize and talk about was that at a certain level of physical life you began to have psychic manifestations which we call instincts.

The fishes communicate with one another. They go around in a school and some fishes, when there's danger, one fish will communicate to another fish, you see. When they go hunting for food

together and they reproduce together and they sort of have the beginnings of what is called the family. We use—or the fishermen say schools of fish. They don't call them families. Now these characteristics though began to continue as we go up from the fishes to the amphibians, which are like frogs, animals like that, scientists noticed that as the animals became more physically complex like they began to form heads and nervous systems, they also began to exhibit more need for me another. More need for one another, that if you—I guess maybe you can only take my word on this but this is how Teilhard influenced me—is that like with the frogs, they have a very close sort of family situation. If you study frogs, you can study where frogs live and you find out that frogs won't go outside of certain areas. They sort of like live in their little area and they have very complex inter-relationships.

Now biologists study this, you know, this is the type of thing they study, so finally when you get up to what type of animals that we are, called mammals, the curious thing is that man is the most physically complex animal of all. He has the exact same characteristics as an amoeba. We say an amoeba is "alive." You have studied them, you look at them under a slide in high school biology, they wiggle around, they are alive. They breathe and they reproduce and we can actually say that an amoeba, a single-cell is alive, and you say the same thing about yourself. We are such a massive animal, thousands, millions of cells, you too are alive.

Now the curious phenomena that happened here though like I tried to just briefly tell you, that all scientists say is that as far as science can say man has ceased to evolve physically, that this type of evolution is not going on, you see, so that many of them were despairing so that they had this view that life is just going to destroy itself. The planet's just going to die out and this was scientific analysis, you see, and Teilhard was one of the few scientists who said that the main characteristic about man as a mammal is that he is the most physically complex animal that there is, and all biologists that I have come in contact with have agreed to that, but he also exhibits this thing called thinking. He seems to have organized, you know, psychic characteristics.

Take this for, example, when you look at all of other life and if you ever study squirrels, whatever your favorite animal is, or a dog, all day your dog is concerned about living. He eats all the time. He lives, you know—his main reason for living all day is to gather food and to live and to protect.

Man is the first animal who lives for intangible things, for things he can't touch. Men live, and what do you live for? Like for honor and for love and for hope and for trust. Humans are the only animals who will starve themselves to death in order like to do something noble, e. g., a man in a desert or in a struggle. Men will sacrifice. They will consciously give up or take themselves away from physical things and deny themselves physical things, but the main things that men live for, and I think this is quite obvious, is things like for love and for trust of one another.

Now the change that this gave me, like my understanding of religion, was this real ability to understand that if I was to come in contact with those things in man's life like love and hope and faith and trust and honor, which the Catholic church was concerned with and many Catholics at the same time came to understand this and Vatican II uses a lot of Teilhard's thoughts—again you can only accept my word, maybe after the trial you might want to look at that *Document* {*Documents of Vatican Council II,* introduced as evidence} some time—but they began to realize that in order to come in contact with these religious characteristics of like love and hope, they had to be involved in the world. That somehow even though we didn't know exactly how, that the way that you build the earth effects what religious people call the kingdom of God.

Know that in the Catholic church at the time many people, and like when I was doing my study I had to defend this in front of a whole panel of priests, you know—many people began to realize what the consequences of this was, that to be a religious person meant to be involved in the world and that religious acts were acts that you committed in the world that we talk about every day.

In other words without trying to explain this, the word they kept saying was to "Build the earth." People knew that if they began to understand these insights, and this is how I understood religion, is that I could not walk the street any more without being sensitive to how people build cities, for this tells me something about God. I had to, to be sensitive to the way people—what they did with physical things, what they did with matter, what they did with their bodies. Like if people killed people, that told me something about how they related to God. It gave me a driving understanding to realize that there is a relationship between the physical world and the spiritual world and this was very compatible with a lot of things that were going on in Roman Catholicism and I may speak to that later, but at this time, a point I want to leave here, and I will try to come back to Teilhard, and I wanted to show that several

things were coming into my life—the relationship of science which was a very big thing in America, science and ecology and religion, that those two things spoke to one another. That people who were involved in religion and the other thing was this overriding understanding which I didn't quite understand at this time, of how necessary—what it meant that in order to enable myself and enable other people to come into contact with God it meant that I had to be involved in the world, but not because the world is all that there is to God.

In other words we are not just acting in the world or just building the earth and creating better cities, but that that was a way, that it was a way of allowing God's presence to be understood, but I will have to refer to that a little later because at this point I must, and honestly admit that even though I published this paper by Teilhard I, myself, was an extremely angry man.

What I took out of Teilhard's understanding was what people called elitism—is that I felt what this told me at the time was that the people who were going to continue this evolution, the people who were going to fulfill the vision of Teilhard were only an elite few and I was very upset to see that most people never asked themselves questions about life. I was very upset and angry and very bitter at this period of my life that people would not take moral standings.

I looked at the world and even though again I wasn't very political person at the time, and I saw the injustice and everything, I began in a very real terms to really *hate* people. In fact one of the other papers—it might seem a contradiction to the hope and vision that Teilhard gave us here, that I wrote in college was entitled, "The World to be Destroyed, the reflections of a twenty-one year old" and I basically felt that man, through his misuse of nuclear power and science had really only got himself to the point where the world could be destroyed and I, you know, I left —and much in conflict at the time with my father who didn't buy my pessimism, and he read Teilhard as much as I did and we used to argue all the time.

The other thing that I have to say about my college years that was significant was my relationship to the Selective Service, is that at this point when I was a senior and I lived with two men, a fellow by the name of Jim Hunt. Father Bill Hunt is his brother. And a man by the name of John Lauerman[2]. Jim Hunt[3] was a Conscientious Objector and John Lauerman was going into the military. He's presently a Captain over in Italy in the military, he's doing it for his

[2] John was from Olivia, MN.

[3] James Marshall Hunt was the first pacifist I ever met. At first I thought he was a bit of a screwball. He came to have a lasting influence on my personal development. He became my best friend.

career. I had never been confronted with Conscientious Objection and I was at the point where even by going to grad school you could lose your deferment, so I decided that what would I do if I was 1-A and continued to study, and the question that occurred in our apartment all the time was when the news came on at night Jim and John would go at it, you know, one guy saying you can't go to war, and the other guy saying you can, and John saying to Jim that, "If I go to war and come back again you probably realize I'm going to hate you," and I was sitting in the middle of this and I had really no formed opinions about either thing at the time, but the war—at this period I was a senior in college, it was 1966 and I was twenty-one—the war began to be an issue, and just from my religious background—I wasn't politically informed about the war, at all—just from a purely religious background I decided that, you know, probably I couldn't kill anybody and I had a tremendous conflict with my father because as I shall try to bring out later, my father, who is dead—died in 1968 or otherwise I might have called him as a witness since our lives are so intertwined—was the type of—he tried to stay a really fervent Catholic but when the war broke out, World War II, he had three kids at the time, he was over 30 and he volunteered to go into the navy, and to refresh my understanding of my father's position on things I took out some of the letters he wrote to my mother at the time, over the weekend, and read his exact thoughts.

People, for example, chided him for leaving his family, sort of leaving them in the lurch, if you like, but he said that the reason that he went to fight in the war was because he felt he had a obligation to the country, but the main reason was so that his sons and his daughter, in his exact words, would not have to fight a war in twenty to twenty-five years, and my father believed that a man owed his obligation to the state and he continually confronted me with this, that the religious response to the present American situation was for me to go in and to become a good soldier, and he could never understand this appeal to conscience.

It took us about three years for him to finally get around to accepting my position of being a Conscientious Objector, but at this point, my senior year with Jim and John and the war as an issue, the questions of nonviolence and its relationship to Christianity first came up and I honestly said from my past that I had never thought—I was twenty-one years old now and I had never thought about nonviolence. I was a senior in college but I had never participated in a protest march or anything like that.

The questions which Jim raised to me, who was the conscientious objector, seemed to give me more problems than the things that John was raising and so I really sort of looked into what nonviolence meant and at first I understood nonviolence, as unfortunately most people understand, as meaning that I had to convince myself that I couldn't do any violence at all, like I couldn't be unkind to anybody or that I couldn't call myself nonviolent if in any way at all someone attacked me and I defended myself at all, and that I had to be very willing that if some idiot come up and beat me over the head until I died that I had to smile at him. That was nonviolence, and that's what I thought it was and so I said, I'm not nonviolent. I'm not a pacifist, I don't believe in killing but, gee, if someone attacks me or someone comes over there and starts beating up the woman next to me I'm supposed to sit there and say, *Love, I love you, peace,* you know, and I just said to Jim, I can't be a Conscientious Objector but then things began to come into my head, sort of the influences of Vatican II.

Here we had this major Council in the Church. Council is more than what the prosecution tried to bring out last Friday, you know, just more than an encyclical letter—encyclicals are letters that the Popes write out. They don't carry that much authority, but a Council forms doctrine for Catholics. In other words when the Council comes out and says something you really have to think about it. It's not just a letter. It's something which is sort of saying, before you act you better really reflect upon these things because this is the way we feel you should be developing your morality. So Vatican II started coming down with a lot of these sort of things: condemning going to war, condemning nuclear politics and the question that I always thought when those issues came up was they were condemning Russia or some other country but not America. Never in my mind did I ever become critical of the United States or of its policies.

I wasn't, again, very political at this period, and at this period my brother George enlisted in the Navy and my brother Charles was deferred so he was not in any position of being a Conscientious Objector, there was no precedent for it in my family, and my dad told me about some of the things that he did, like when he was in the Navy as a lieutenant, he was a chemist, he was assigned to Oak Ridge, Tennessee and he was very enthusiastic about going down there until he found out that the reason that the scientists were doing there is that they were working on the atom bomb and my father requested a transfer because he didn't want to be involved in that and so he went—he was—so he went to the Pacific and I used to say to my father, well look, you did those type of things. Don't you understand my objecting to involving myself in

creating things like atomic or total war, but the—I finally got myself to the point where I did file what is called a Conscientious Objector Form 150 with the Selective Service and I filled it out, and I wrote them, oh, forty some odd pages of why I was a nonviolent Conscientious Objector, and I wrote them all about Teilhard, and I tried to explain to them all about this sense of evolution. I didn't quite have it as clear in my head as I do now, but I tried to explain the thing that we have to do is that we have just got to stop doing certain things. We have to stop, you know, creating nuclear weapons because it's just so silly and stupid, you know, to create enmity between people. The one thing that we are called to do is to try to be together and people kept saying, that's stupid, that's simplistic, that's naive but it's moral, you know, and that's the only thing I had at the time, was that it was moral, and my father posed the question again that I did not have the proper sense of Duty, the proper sense of commitment. I tried to say, "Dad"—as I tried to say many times in my family, you know—"what I'm doing flows from the moral conviction that you gave me."

I said to my Dad: "Viewed through the way you look at things you felt that the way to bring peace, to prevent me from going to war was to go to war, and the only thing that I'm trying to say is that in continuity, in the same tradition that you're in I don't want my sons to go to war, the only way we can do it today is by not going to war." We have got to try it. Men have gone to war for thousands of years. Somebody somewhere has got to say it stops *here*. We are not going to go to war and take that risk. We know what happens from war.

I remember him saying that going around the islands in the South Pacific, specifically one island was just full of crosses and he said that some of these men are known only to God, and he said in this letter to my mother, something very close to the effect that these—you know, that these islands aren't worth the life of one marine. He said that these men did not die for this island, they died for the principle that they believed in and he said that the conscience, the conscience of a man is worth more than any physical pleasure and that's the type of thing that, Dad believed, if you believe then you understand what I'm doing. Just at that time, just again being around '66, it wasn't that clear, and so I filed for my C.O., went to my Local Board for a whole hour and I was so frustrated that they just didn't understand what I wanted to do and so it happened to be at this period that I was going to go to graduate school so they decided that they wouldn't give me this C.O. but I had to take the deferment. I had to take the deferment, you know, so I said, okay, forget it, and I walked out and I said, you know—I had never been so

disillusioned in my whole life, that these people kept saying things like, "I am a Catholic, I fought in a war," you know, as if that's supposed to mean for all Catholics, or they wanted me to condemn everybody who went to war. They said well, I fought in World War II. I said yes, don't you understand that's your response and this is my response.

I can't condemn other people. I want everyone to make the moral decision. Their own moral decisions on what they should do, so, okay, this gets me up to graduation from St. John's, and at the same point that I'm struggling with these ideas I find myself very bitter with people in general, I guess I should say.

I want to be honest about that because that was a very violent period of my life. Extremely violent type person, very sarcastic and bitter. It comes out sometimes in the trial when I get frustrated, you know, my immediate response is to put people down. Something I had to struggle with. So after graduation I went to California for a summer and worked at what is called the Easter Seal Camp for Crippled Children and Adults, and the significance of this was that I saw in the course of this summer four to five hundred people, mostly children, of every conceivable physical illness and disability, you know, from blindness to cerebral palsy to bad hearts, to people who—ballet dancers who fell down who were paralyzed and, you know, all types of tragedies, but this thing about life at this point for me was that I still couldn't get along with the counselors because I thought that they were educated people and they didn't receive, weren't sensitive to life, but these people that I tried to relate to really made me see life again, like what happened to my brother, you know.

The frailty of human life and the fact that there were just thousands of people living today with all types of physical illnesses that most people tried to avoid. California was one of the few states where they recognized the need to give life to people whose, part of whose life had been destroyed. Like California is one of the few states which builds ramps so that people with wheelchairs can go to their schools without stairs. This is still a problem we haven't solved here in Minnesota very well. And so the question was raised again, why the contradictions of a lot of things? What is life? Why does God do this to people? Why would other people do this to people? or Why does it even happen? And I just couldn't honestly through that summer say that the question was resolved. It was brought up to me again, you know, and I tried to fit this into this scheme of evolution. Where do these people go? Should we just rule these people out because they are less than human in a sense? Is that the solution?

You know, those questions were questions to me, but I—they were just there and I came back to Minnesota then, to attend the University of Minnesota where I was going to go to graduate school and study what is called to American Studies. I was interested in studying what America was, who America is, and they have a program called the American Studies and it was something new at the time, this program. You study American philosophy and all about the American people and at the same time I was a dorm counselor at the University. This is a way of working your way through graduate school. I was a dorm counselor for the football team. All these big guys, all they did is care to play football and that was interesting too, you know, and I was there and I was a pacifist, they played football and they used to pick me up and throw me around and we used to have lots of fun.

I basically talked about nonviolence, but some of these things at this point were just sort of swirling around. The whole thing about, Am I going to be a nonviolent person? You know, Am I going to be, relate to my Church, what am I going to do with my life, and for some reason I decided to go study religion and the reason for that is this, is that I just knew that religious—you know, religious people try to deal with ultimate questions like what is life all about, and I didn't find like philosophy or economics or history dealing with those questions and so I decided that I'm going to go see what religious people are going to say.

I still wanted this at this time, but for the first time in my life I was not related to the church, I didn't go to Mass or Communion or anything. I just sort of did my own thing, if you want. In my own way I dropped out of society and just went to graduate school, and so it happened that through Vatican II—and later on in my Closing Argument I might be able to read a passage—that Vatican II was encouraging people in the church who weren't ordained like the young man Mark Jasenko who gave witness here, and myself, we are not priests, should study theology because they thought that we would have added insight. We are people who will be getting married and sort of take professional jobs and that we should study it, you see, and so there was this big move on in the Catholic Church.

Lots of schools opened up graduate programs to study theology, so I thought, hell, that's fine, I'm going to study theology. I didn't have to make a commitment to be a priest. I could just go study it. I didn't know what it would be all about but it sort of interested me, and there was a priest at St. John's who was very influential in the development of, the development of the change in the liturgy, the worship service of the church, his name is Godfrey Diekmann and I just

went up and talked to Father Godfrey and I said, I want to go study theology, and he said, Well, where do you want to go. I said, I don't know, I just want to study theology, I'm interested in it, and I don't have any money, I said. So he said if I got you a scholarship to the University of San Francisco, would you go, and I said fine, so there I was off to San Francisco, and this was in February of '67.

The interesting thing, to give you an analysis of where I was as a person at the time, was that when we arrived in San Francisco—we left in the blizzard of '66 and it took seven days to drive all the way out to San Francisco, and when we got there we parked and went in and we said, "Here we are, you know, give us our scholarships and tell us where to live because we have never been to San Francisco before." I was with another fellow and the people said we are sorry, L.B.J. is escalating this war in Vietnam, you can't get your , you can't get your rooms, you're going to have to take out loans at the bank, so everything just started going bad and we were kind of down. This guy John {Schneeweiss}[4] and I, we went to Mass and Communion then, we thought that would be a good idea to begin our theological studies, and went out to the car, sat in the car and we realized something was different. Someone had broken in and stolen everything that we brought with us! "Oh," I said, "what a way to begin!" Here it was an eight day downpour, and we were sitting in front of this church, the cops come by and they—I said to them very naively, "How could this happen right in front of this Catholic church and someone comes and steals everything?" and he says, "Don't you know that the Haight-Ashbury is only eight blocks away?" and I said *hate what*? I didn't know what—you know, I didn't know anything about that, and San Francisco was then to be an interesting thing. John interestingly enough had to leave and he enlisted in the Air Force and he was supposed to be getting out this summer and he continues to be interested in peace and religion and we are still close, but there I was in San Francisco pursuing, back in 1967, you know, my beginning of my theological understanding, and I had to—because it was the cheapest place and most students lived in the Haight-Ashbury, and coming from St. John's I was very naive about this, the first time I saw long haired people and all this stuff about the drugs and everything else I didn't relate to it. Really for the years I was in graduate school I just *lived* there.

[4] John was one of those unspoken heroes—soldiers who spoke out at public rallies while still in uniform. He died at age 44 of cancer, leaving a wife (Sally) and two children. A senior officer secured his release from service practically moments before the military police came to arrest him.

The interesting thing about it was that, you know, people were seeking—they really seemed to me that these young people who came from the exact same background that I did, the things they were asking were the same questions I went to graduate school for, What's life all about? They knew about the complexities of the society, they knew about the war much better than I did. They knew about the things that—the misuse of science that was going on and they knew that— you know, they wanted to relate and develop a better world for mankind but they didn't know how to do it either, and many people related—many of the young kids who were just living there—to this man Teilhard, to his vision, except they said well no one is going to believe that though, and they basically said that the only solution is a spiritual solution. *Let's not get involved.* The thing that we have to do is find God and I really—even though Haight-Ashbury has been sold to the American people as a big drug thing, the real thing is that it was a real quest.

People were really asking questions, and that's the way that it influenced me, so when I was in graduate school and I became a little more aware of the social problems and I began to study science and theology, and the thing that really came to me at this point was, you know, was there's a lot in the American culture as well as a lot in my Church which went together. Like American culture was very interested in science. People had discovered nuclear power. People believed in evolution, we were a highly technologized society, had all types of technology, and many people who taught me had great visions about what we could do with all of this. They said, you know, what we could do with technology. Like for example they would describe to me, I came to understand this, like we are one of the first generations of human beings who—every sense that you have in your body has a technological extension. In other words like you can pick up the phone and hear around the world. You can dial anywhere in the world. Look at the TV and at evening, you can see around the world. You can get in an airplane tonight and we can all go to dinner in Japan if you want, you know.

We can move. Every sense we have has really sort of a whole world-wide extension and that this led like myself to understand, to begin to sync to this understanding of Teilhard that I had, was that the world was really one, that the world could be one, that there was—that the concept of staying in one country was no longer a really understandable thing because most young people— maybe it will reflect upon your own children—even in high school kids can travel to France in the summer and the kids in college, when I was in college, they would go for a whole

semester to Europe and people were able to travel and they could feel the fact that if they wanted to talk to someone in Yugoslavia, they could call them up on the phone and talk to them.

Now this is something that generations before us didn't have, and so even coming just as the American culture, you know, people were just excited about what we could do with the earth and that we could, people were saying, advance the vision that Teilhard has about man evolving psychically if we only knew what to do and how to really use this technology and how to use the nuclear power, and so as a lay theologian I began to relate that view of science and stuff to what was going on in my Church, and at this point, this man Teilhard, as I tried to say before, in Vatican II, was becoming much more influential. Vatican II was talking about the fact, as we have read in some selections, that they were banning total war, that they were saying nuclear power shouldn't be used to build arms but nuclear energy should be used to build a better life for men. They were saying that we can't let people live in ghetto situations. These are actual things from the document. You see, they were saying that the young men—like they were saying to me, anyway—young men, you must begin to really understand your society and speak to that society because it is important how people live and in what conditions that they live, that the Council felt it was important to speak to the issue of war, and I found out that most of the young people who were with me studying theology were very far ahead of me in talking about the war.

Now San Francisco, as you know, you can always say, sort of that things in the Midwest are a little bit behind. That's what they always told me anyway like on the coast. Like people were doing things like draft Resistance and turning in their draft cards and I had never come in contact with that before, and they were saying that these were effective ways of responding to Vatican II, that these were ways, that the way to begin to bring peace to the world is you start with yourself, you know, and that puts the whole responsibility on you and I never liked that very much, you know, they said like if you believed in this evolution you have to realize that you have to begin to love. You can't wait for the next guy to do it, it has to start with you.

They said that in the sense that you are life itself and what you do with your life does count, what everybody else does with their life does count also, and this is again, I guess, the first period when I was studying science and theology and trying to understand my religious views. I would come out and talk to my classes that I was participating in, with the vision of Teilhard, with saying that the religious understanding today, the strong tradition in the Catholic church was that

we must build the earth to begin to understand God's presence, that people were talking this way, see, and they would say like, man, you know, that's not going to work because America is, you know, having this war and that's a nice, naive view of the world but this country, America, which you're so turned on about, you know, has all these problems and then they would relate to me things that I'm sure you have heard about yourself, about how America is an imperialistic country and how we exploit people and things like that, and at that period of my life I just— I didn't relate to that at all.

I was interested still in becoming a Conscientious Objector but I had never at that point had any type of critical view of the United States and this is even signified by, like the two Master's theses, I wrote another thesis about Teilhard and the other thesis I wrote on was an the problems of leisure—what was going to happen to America when people theoretically are supposed to have more time, free time now—I think most of you know that probably you feel you have less time now than you did in the past. I don't know. Some people work more than people in the past have, but these are the types of things that I was interested in and even though like I was surrounded with most of my friends who were theologians were very involved in social work. They had houses for runaway kids or they went into draft Resistance or something, and they were always arguing about the politics and theology and I wasn't interested in politics and theology at the time, and so I basically spent those two years much more convinced that to be religious, and I came to understand it better as I studied the tradition, as I studied the Scripture and began to realize how the Scripture speaks to this understanding of building the earth—and I might be able to talk to that a little later—I became convinced that I had to do something, but I didn't know what to do and everybody's saying—I kept saying well look, maybe the thing I should do is I should go teach. Everybody said, *Look, if you go teach, you're part of the Establishment*. The thing that you should do is resist the draft and start building alternatives to what's going on in America, alternatives to the Establishment, but anyway I didn't.

I was accepted at the University of Chicago to do my doctoral work and this is the first time in my life that I had ever decided to go to a non-Catholic institution, as was the University of Chicago, to do a PhD study for, study my theology, and I will have to backtrack a bit, I'm sorry. When I—right before—the last year that I was in San Francisco, remember I told you I got robbed, right, so I ran out of money and I had to go around and try to find a way to live and the easiest way to go to graduate school and live is get another teaching job, so I went around with

this little thesis here, you see, and I sat down with a few of these presidents of small Catholic girl's colleges and I convinced them that I could teach theology. I had only *started* my Master's program, but people were so interested in Teilhard that because I had done some work on Teilhard they hired me and in this small Catholic girl's college called San Francisco College for Women right behind the University I was going to in San Francisco, and so they hired me. I was twenty-one years old and they gave me a full-time contract to be an instructor in theology, and so during the year of 1967 to '68 I was also, while I went to graduate school, was going to teach.

Now I got at this time from my Selective Service Board—again they refused even though I asked them to, to act upon my C.O. status because I wanted that thing resolved—they gave me a teaching, deferment which is a 2-A deferment but the thing about teaching and the way that that changed things, for the first time in my life I had to get up there and talk to other people about what it means to be religious and I found that to be very embarrassing, a difficult thing to do.

I was sitting up there in front and I was teaching seniors. I was one year older than most of these girls, and saying, this is what you should do with your life. This is how you answer these grave questions about who you are, what you must do as a person, and this was, this really hit me, like I was, you know, close enough to them to come to realize that I had to be really responsible and respond to what they were doing and that I couldn't fool around and play the game that here I am, the great professor, I have all the knowledge and I'm giving it to these kiddies, because I was basically almost their age, you see, and this is the way that the politics began to enter my life, is that I realized that one of the things that was happening in America was that there was a great interest in politics and so that in order to give them a responsible understanding about what's going on in America I began to bring in and talk about political issues. I began to talk about the black struggle, I began to study the relationship of religious thought in America to the development of America itself, and about the most interesting thing that came to me at this point was several studies which began to make me aware that there's a large segment of the American society who accept sort of America as a religion.

In other words there are people who sort of believe that America can do no wrong, that this is an attitude of a lot of people and that the theologians that I was reading said that one of the religious crises of today is the fact that many people look to America as a religion and they felt that this was a form of idolatry, that they are very uncritical of their country, that whereas the

president was sort of like God and things like this, and like that was the first time from a religious perspective I saw people criticizing what was going on in the country and came to realize that there might be conflict or some conflict between people who have religious beliefs and the cultures that they lived in, and in order to explain the turmoil that was going on in the Catholic church like in relation to the black struggle, you know, there were people coming down saying we should support the blacks, and other people saying we shouldn't support the blacks because they break the law, and things like that, I began to realize as I say, in my Tradition that it wasn't just this clear, it wasn't clear that religious people always supported the State.

It was quite obvious that there were large periods of our history when Christians were persecuted because of what they believed came in conflict with the State. The most significant thing I guess at this point to me was the fact that in the early Church it was the law of the land to worship the emperor and they refused because they believed in the one God and so they got killed, but it's also true that the early Christians used to meet—there's a letter called the *Letter to Pliny*, it's just a historical document found in about the year 67 or something, and in it it's the Roman emperor describing, he says, "We don't understand these Christians." They get killed because it's against the law of the land for them to have their communion services. Like the Romans outlawed the fact that they could get up and have communion services. They weren't allowed to meet religiously and share what we call the Communion or the Eucharist, and even though they knew they would get killed the Christians did this. They would get up early in the morning and do this, and a lot of them died—they died rather than not have the symbol of their faith, you know, to share in this Eucharist, and so like I—again I hadn't received my C.O., I never Resisted, I was never at a Peace march, I was twenty-two at this time and I was just coming across these ideas and this is what I was still basically interested in, giving people the vision of life. What we could do with science, what we could do with the world and what became more aware to me as other people pointed out was that in order to do this I must respond, that every individual must respond, is that if mankind is to advance no one else is going to do it. It's not going to happen from outside of the world. We are going to do it, you see. God is within us and we find God by relating to other people. We don't find God by going off in some corner of the world and sitting down and try to say, "God, where are you?" We find God among other ways, by being involved with other people and the Catholic Church seemed to carry that across most

vividly at this period when I began to teach and try to relate these in a concept they called the Body.

The word is usually the Body of Christ and what they meant by this was the fact that all people must look at one another in a different way, in a new way. This is how I understood it, is that St. Paul says, which was something that I was—which really affected me—he says, when you look at one another, he says, only realize not only that they are your friends or you should like them but that you are muscles and bones of one another. That was a strange thing, you know, look at other people, not just realize that they are your friends or you should like them but that you're muscles and bones with one another, that you are *that* intimately connected with them, that you know, what happens to their life happens to your life. He gave me a different concept of myself so that when I looked around at the world and saw other people I realized it was difficult at this time to do this because remember I was trying to tell you how I disliked people at this time, these things began to gnaw at me, that if I really believed in what this man was saying, that I had to realize that all people, not just the intellectuals, not just the elite people, but *all* people, people like the common man on the street, the janitor in the school, that I had to care for that person, that life, you know, that *life* meant that I was to love other—anybody who came across my way and needed to relate to people, that I had to do that but everybody had to do it too but that I had to do it too and here I was telling people about life, telling these young women that they're going to get married in a couple of years and raise families, what they should do with their lives, and like it raised this great sense of "What a hypocrite you are!" It's a very hard thing to teach, to get up there and say "love" and then you go out and you hurt people yourself, you know, and this was very, you know, very much to the fore in my head and the same thing with the political situation. I realized in a sense that I had to become somewhat political because it made sense that I couldn't talk about building the earth and not be concerned about what was happening to other people. I couldn't—I had to be concerned about, you know, what happened to people economically, that if there were people who were starving in the world, didn't have good housing, that these had to be primary concerns for me and I had to relate to them somehow.

For example, I guess, we submitted a memo explaining our principles upon which we were basing our defense, and it's a quote from a scripture passage, First Peter, Chapter 4 and it says, "And now dear friends of mine I beg you not to be unduly alarmed at the fiery ordeals which

come to test your faith as though this were some abnormal experience. You should be glad because it means that you are called to share in Christ's sufferings. If you are reproached for being Christ followers that is a privilege, for you can be sure that God's spirit of glory is resting upon you," and just another example like from Matthew in Chapter 6, it says that, "No one can serve two masters. He is bound to hate one and love the other or support one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and the lovers of money at the same time."

It was passages like that, among others in the whole context of the Scripture, that made me realize that to be—possibly to be a theologian wasn't going to be comfortable thing in my life, that maybe I would be involved with conflicts not only within myself but possibly in trying to bring the understanding of Vatican II, you know, to other people, that I would be in conflict. I had to, you know, continually ask myself what it meant and what it meant that I would teach, because like I—everything that I do I try, and I mean like every other person, you fail sometimes, but I really try to understand the responsibility.

Like when you get up in front of a class of people, you know, like you meet people for a semester, that may be the only time in your whole life you're going to meet those people, they are people like you, people right now, twelve people on the jury, you know, people who are involved in one another's lives, like there's a responsibility. There's something—you just can't walk into a class and read to the class and then walk out. I mean, they're human beings and they're living and somehow, especially from a religious perspective, you know, you have to—I came to realize—you have to somehow be sensitive to that and try to understand it, so when you talk about the Scripture, the Scripture wasn't just a book. It was something that people *did*, you know, and something that was intended to make people affect the way that they live their lives, and we had many conflicts with my students because I used to raise the questions my friends in graduate school raised to me, that the task of the theologian was to be involved, you know, not just in teaching but to be involved in social and political things.

I also began to teach or try to, at least, teach courses on non-violence and explain to people why I was a Conscientious Objector and I must admit that at this time in a sense I became much more Catholic and I guess slightly open to radicalism, and that's how I left San Francisco, very convinced about my Catholic faith, that I wanted to know it and understand it and open to the fact that I had given some little critical view that it was, that my friends who were really concerned about building a better world and that could mean that people could be critical of

the country you are living in and that it wasn't incompatible, that patriotism wasn't a blind thing, but that in—especially from a religious perspective you might end up being critical.

So 1968-1969 I was going to go to the University of Chicago to finish my doctorate. By this time I had grown a beard—first time—and I finished the Master's in theology and I was very excited about that, but in criticizing myself I realized—and you may realize this now too—is that most of our lives are just too intellectual, that I had spent most of my time in going to school and I was at this time about twenty-three, and so I decided that what I should do is not go to college but that I should teach again, so I happened to get a job at a college called *Rosary College* in a suburb of Chicago called River Forest, and again I had a full-time contract for being an instructor in theology and again I had a 2-A from the Selective Service board and to give you an indication of my real politicalness at that time I *watched* the Chicago Democratic convention an TV.[5] I wasn't there. I was sitting in Wisconsin watching that saying, gee, that's really interesting. I wonder what that means, and so when I went to teach at this college I was still sort of taking courses at the University of Chicago, and I was assigned courses to teach and I really liked teaching and I still wanted, you know, I still hadn't realized the responsibility that I had to these people, again, since I was young, you know. I was almost like the same age that they were and the problems they were facing were problems I was facing, and since I was a lay theologian it prevented me also from coming into a place like maybe a priest would. People see a priest and they say, "Whatever Father says is absolutely right." I was a layman and I said something and people stood up and said, "I disagree with you," and so like, you know, in my theology class I had a little less authority because I wasn't ordained but it also enabled me to get more deeper into some problems.

The thing that I realized in order to respond to my students, I began to realize I'd have to change my educational mode, so I stopped teaching in the classroom. I developed a coffee house where I could be with students all the time and I would teach in the coffee house. I tried to make them realize that I was teaching a thing called sacramental theology, the sacraments like Baptism and the Eucharist and Communion, but the main thing behind an understanding of sacrament is that like in the Catholic faith—the Catholic tradition believes that things and acts can make God present and they call these sacraments. They take like things like bread and wine, and if people share the bread and wine, *in* the act of sharing God can be present.

[5] The infamous 1968 Mayor Daley beat-the-peaceniks convention. After which the trial of the "Chicago 7" took place.

And they also believed that acts, like in the Catholic faith marriage is a sacrament and this means for Catholics that the act of intimacy, the act of love, the act of sexuality can be a holy act and so to take—derive principles from this, the fact that, you know, things and acts can make God present. I tried to build the earth in my own little way. I tried to build a room—I thought that by people being in there would allow them to come out better. It could be a place where they would feel freer, that they would talk freer, where we would break down some of the inhibiting characteristics like of a classroom where I stand up in the front, or like now, like you can't respond to me.

In most classrooms you get up and give a lecture, it's just like this, and you might have questions to ask but unfortunately the way the jury structure is, you know, you're not allowed to ask me questions so I don't know if you are following me or where you are, and this is usually what it's like when you teach, and you read your notes, the students sit there taking notes.

So we created a coffee house and it was basically again, I really felt that the coffee house was like a sacramental room, you know, I mean like I was approaching, I was trying to create. I realized that I could do this but I didn't know how to do it, you know, but like I was trying and like we built a coffee house and this is like where things sort of began to happen, and at this period in time the "Milwaukee Fourteen" draft raids happened. Like Father Al Janicke, who gave witness, was one of these priests and I happened to know another young man who was involved in these actions, and they were Catholics, you know, and so the news comes that these people—two friends: Jim Hunt and another friend of mine, this college roommate of mine, dropped down when I was in Chicago and said that they had been in Milwaukee, that this guy Fred Ojile was in jail, and I said, "What for?" and he said, "He burned draft files." "Well, he's crazy," I said. You know, he burned draft files, what was that all about? So they began to tell me what that was about and I really, like most people's immediate response, was I thought that was really strange, you know. I mean what were they trying to say? But being a theologian, you know, I had to relate to it. This was an important thing, so like some of these people from this group came down and talked to my school, and well, they not only raised questions to the students but they raised questions to me. Here I was, to the students a big Peace person and then they kept saying, "Well, how do you understand these things like draft raids?" and things like that, and so I had to wrestle with the problem and I'd listen to these people and I had to say, Does this relate to my

Tradition? Are they people who are just religious people, who like to do political things, or is their politics directly, you know, a religious act?

So I went up there to their trial and I talked to some of the priests and I had to find out who these people were, who "Catholic Radicals" were. At this time I had only very faintly heard about what a Catholic Radical was, and they began to tell me more about a tradition in the Church, and then they began to say, well this is—they took Pope John's encyclical and the *Documents of Vatican II*, and there were five priests in this group among other Catholics, and they kept saying, well, what do you think this means, you know? What do you think that means, and a combination of questions about total war. What does it mean here when Pope John says, you know, you can obey—*you must break man's law sometimes to obey God's law?*

I said, I don't know what it means, you know, and I had to go back and think about it, so I said, well, I'm a Conscientious Objector. That's what—I still have this thing on file, I said, and they said, well, that's not enough, don't you see, the fact is that the government isn't responding to ending the war.

They said—they began to give me a little history of like the Peace Movement, and this came out and these are the things I began to talk to my classes about too, is that people had marched and I hadn't marched ever at this point in my life either.

You know, they had protested, they had written petitions, they had worked for Peace candidates, they had tried to elect Peace presidents and it seemed that the only people who weren't working within the System were the people in the System, the people in America were taking to the streets to lets—they were taking to the streets and the ballot box to let the people know in power how they felt, and so they raised the issue for me for the first time and I had to confront this issue in my own religious consciousness, that even though I went along with the Selective Service System as a Conscientious Objector, is that the System was not going to end the war, but that I had to, in myself, witness that the people of power weren't going to be responsive. That in the tradition of America when the people in power aren't responsive, the people themselves do things and we have these rights, like under the Bill of Rights, the First Amendment and other Amendments of Free Speech and stuff, that when we do not just have electoral politics. We have the right to petition. We have the right to do the things that the

people in the Peace Movement had done and that—and the fact at this time these people had done all these nonviolent things.

So like these were issues that came to the fore. I began to try to integrate my study of science and theology with the study of politics, and I began to study a little bit about the war and the first book I read was the one called—it's by a Vietnamese, a Buddhist monk, about Vietnam. It's called *Lotus in a Sea of Fire*,[6] and this man was a religious man from this other culture in this other country in which we were involved with, and he made me aware of the complexity of these issues. He said it simply wasn't the Americans fighting the Communists, that there was a whole group of people in Vietnam who didn't want either the Americans or the Communists there, you know, and that they had their own tradition, their own history, that the Buddhists—that the religious people were very involved and so at this point of my life I was called into really trying to understand these things and again the students were asking questions.

The political—my relationship of theology and politics was even stronger because through this coffee house I tried to bring in all kinds of people from Right and Left to speak about what was going on in America, and some of the people who came in—the most influential to me were some of the Black Panthers. At this point my attitude towards the Black Panthers was probably the same attitude you have, you know, Black Panthers were really, you know, strange people to me. They were violent, revolutionary and stuff like that, and so like some of the Black Panthers talked, and they talked about four or five times in the course of the year at this school. [7]

We had days to study what was going on in society and stuff. The thing that the Panthers did, like I found out, is that there are things happening in the United States that I didn't know about it. Things that I found very hard to really believe. Like I was against racism, but how do I relate to what was going on in Chicago's ghetto? I realized that there was a group of people who had grown up in America, like the Panthers being just young blacks, who were really—realized

[6] Nhất Hạnh Thích.

[7] As fate had it, my main Black Panther contact was Fred Hampton. He was a dynamic, truly charismatic young leader. At our last meeting, sitting in a college faculty lounge, he said, "Frank, the difference between you and me is that you go that way and I go this way." He was pointing west to the suburbs and east to the inner city. Later Fred was murdered by Chicago police. The day I read his obituary, I left my desk at the Newman Center and walked across the Washington Street bridge to the West Bank of the university, walked up the steps of the Twin Cities Draft Information Center, met my first passel of draft resisters. These were nonviolent activists, many of whom were not motivated by Catholic or even religious beliefs.

that the way that they—the only way that they could bring a real consciousness of their struggle was like to go into the streets and try to organize people, and that these men that I met were not stupid people. They had tried to study the issue. Some of them were young men, some of them were younger than me, who were very committed to trying to raise the conditions of their people. They wanted to work for better housing and better jobs and for human respect, and that in order to do this they were *willing to die*.

Now I was nonviolent at this time, much more committed to nonviolence. Nonviolent people were always saying, "We are ready to die for other people," but usually when you come from —when you're sitting up on the podium lecturing the people, it is easy to say, I'm willing to die for other people. They talked about "Our people," that "We have to feed the young kids," and we need "better" medical care, and you know that some of the people in power's response to that might be to have him removed. It just confronted me that here were people who were really saying, *We are going to try to rebuild the earth*, and I was confused at the time and very open and confused and discussed the whole problem of violence and nonviolence and who the Panthers were and stuff, and I had come out with a great respect for these Black Panther people and I will not go into that, but I will just say that the thing they raised to me was a realization of what it means when you say Peace and Responsibility, you have to face up to that if you are going to talk about peace, something might actually happen to you.

Now I never really thought that that might happen. You know, I always talked about the fact of being nonviolent and dying for people and committing my life to Peace, but I just, you know —the first time in my life I had met young people who in the midst of social problems in the country were trying to do something about it, and it scared me so much that I didn't know how to respond to it, that I had decided to sort of leave Chicago because I couldn't respond to it.

I know a lot of this is hard to listen to, it's hard for me to say a lot of it, but I do want you to understand why we are here today, and so before the break we were talking about describing the years 1968-'69 when I was teaching in Chicago and some of the issues that confronted me.

This is the first time that I did public speaking outside of the classroom and I spoke as a man interested in Conscientious Objection to a church group and the response in Chicago at that time, at this particular church group, was the fact that I was called a Communist. It was the first time

in my life in the sense that something like that had happened and it kind of disturbed me because I understood myself as coming out of a religious tradition and not having any specific or definite political beliefs, although my political understanding was developing and there was a variety of things like that, a lot of things coming to bear. The responsibility I felt I had as a teacher, as a theologian and my—the obligation to teach people about what was going on like in Vatican II, and to relate to the political issues that were happening all around the country, I guess makes me in a sense want to leave Chicago and get outside of—get away from being in that role. I wanted to spend some time getting myself together, as people say. You know, trying to find out really what I should do, because the pressures were, the pressure was there to act in so many ways, to act in response to my Church and even the responsibility of being a theologian. I wanted to know exactly what that was going to mean to me, and during this year a very deep, spiritual thing happened to me, is the fact that my father died and this meant a lot of things, I guess, in many different ways, because my father and I had been so much together on discussing religious issues all the time. In fact the last thing my father and I talked about was what's called incarnational theology—why God became man and then a couple days after I went back I found out that he had died right before Christmas. We always talked about these things, and all of a sudden here I am alone with all these questions. I don't have my father to argue with. I don't have anybody to argue with, no one to really sort of help me, guide me, and—but I had to come to grips with the issues so I had like this in mind, if I may, from Vatican Council II, the documents *On the Church today*, to try to understand, to tell you like the responsibility I felt as a theologian alone, you know, because now I primarily defined myself, you know, that's what I am. *I am a theologian.*

Sort of like as I look over my life what I was sort of brought up to be, and it says, "With the help of the Holy Spirit it is the task of the entire people of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age and to judge them in light of the divine Word. In this way revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage."

Now when you're involved in trying to get up day by day and talk to people every day, you know, about how they should live and how they should die and how they should love and how they should feel, you read something like that and it's a real burden and I still feel the burden in trying to communicate, like, to you and the task today, and you also realize how you fail all the time to communicate to people. You also realize how intimately connected what you do with

your life is with how people see what God is doing. I mean, people have a right to look to theologians and to people in the church who say they are concerned about these issues, to see how they live. Not just how they talk but what do they do, because if we, you know, of all people I guess in a sense aren't doing it, how can I ask you to do it? How can I ask you to be concerned about these problems, or how can I ask my students, but anyway I really wanted to get away from all that and I was hoping to go to Mexico for a year and study some politics and religion down there, and just sort of get away from having to talk because when you have to talk about it every day, you know, you keep hearing yourself saying things and I say to myself "Do I really believe that, and if I do believe that am I living any differently?"

People used to say I was a good lecturer, you know. Kids come up and say, "Wow, that was really great!" and my own response was, yeah, I wonder what that really means. I can talk well, but do I act well? So with my father dead and the family sort of trying to come to grips with the whole change of life style—I am the fourth oldest in the family, so I have like four younger sisters and my younger brother I told you is dead, so some of my sisters are, like my youngest sister now is sixteen, that was two years ago she was only fourteen, and so like I felt the need that since most of the boys were married, in a way that I should try to be there for the summer and so I got a job, by an interesting coincidence, at St. Catherine's. It just so happened that I wrote them in December, asked them if they needed a person to teach Christology, it's called. It's the doctrine of who Jesus is through the ages, how people understood who Jesus was.

It just so happened that all of a sudden some Sister got sick and cancelled out so I got the job. It was kind of interesting, but I did find myself home in St. Paul teaching theology that summer, and what was happening here was twofold. As I was involved in teaching nuns, Sisters, older people, I wasn't teaching young children or kids anymore. These were people who were teaching young children and I had to realize again the responsibility that I was teaching people who were going to go out to all towns in Minnesota and North Dakota and different churches, I even had Sisters from Little Falls and stuff, who would be teaching other people that I was forming their formation, you know, directly and in the sense the responsibility of how many people I would reach indirectly was manifold, and again at this time I was confronting all these same issues and then trying to relate them to these, these older women who were trying to understand what was going on with the youth in the country, and in a certain sense they amusingly, when the summer began, looked at me as an example of one of those youths because I had a beard, long

hair and everything, but we really were able to talk not only about the youth situation and the change in America, but talking about how do we responsibly teach, you know, young children in the Catholic school system.

At this point during that summer I was also—my draft status was changed to I-A, even though I had my C.O. on file. As I tried to tell you it was never acted upon. They kept deferring me even though I didn't want it until they finally made me 1-A, so I had to—I went back to my draft board and I just said, look, you know, I want this resolved. I have this thing that's been on file now for almost three years and I, now I have a Master's Degree in Theology and I have taught, you know, and I have come to grips with these issues and this is how I really believe, so two days later they gave me the C.O. and what this confronted me with was now was the responsibility of service to my country and this is in the year '69—fall of'69 to '70, and even though I had come across a lot of criticism of the United States politically and everything, at this point in my life—and it's only like a year and a half ago now—I felt that I still had to comply with this deferment, this Conscientious Objector status, and do Alternative Service.

Alternative Service is what a young man who becomes a Conscientious Objector does. He spends two years doing a job "in the national interest." Some people work in mental hospitals, or they are employed with a non-profit organization. Most of the people who get this job become {hospital} orderlies and the Selective Service Board approves your job and you do two years and this is supposed to be instead of serving, but nevertheless you do some type of service and I was still at the point, even though I was becoming a little bit more political, a little more concerned about the social issues in the country, I still felt that I should do Alternative Service, and immediately upon getting my Conscientious Objector status I found a position that would satisfy the requirements of Selective Service.

I was going along with the System, is what I'd like to emphasize to you very much, and I took a job at the Newman Center on the University of Minnesota campus.[8]

Now the Newsman Center is a student religious center on campuses which aren't—like here in Minnesota, which isn't a religious university, and they have centers, various faiths: the Baptist, the Catholics and the Episcopalians and the Jewish people and the Moslems and Mormons and

[8] Fr. Harry Bury was the Center's director. He was an impassioned, gentle soul whose sermons and services drew hundreds every Sunday. He later chained himself in protest to the American Embassy in Saigon, Vietnam.

anybody has student religious centers where they try to reach out to the people of the campus who are interested in that religion and try to add a religious dimension to their education that's going on like at the state universities. So I took the job there but I was interested in sort of not being in the role of a theologian because it was a little too difficult for me to handle all those things that I told you were in my head, so I took a job as a program director, which meant I was going to draw up programs and get lecturers and things like that, but what happened here, in retrospect for myself quite interestingly is that I can never be with a group of people and not talk, is that I just started to teach theology again, to have theology classes that they opened up to the public, but I also started to preach, and this is, this is not something that has ever been done in the church. There have been preachers who weren't ordained but it's something that hasn't been done for like four hundred years, so I went up to the priests and I said, look, you know, like we know what's going on in the Church and the changes and I have a degree in theology and I feel I would like to understand what it's like not to lecture but to try to talk within, like the worship service, and pray with them in public, because that's the reason of a minister and the role of a preacher, to try to talk directly to families and to the spiritualities in the family, not just give academic lectures.

So they allowed me to preach and I began preaching on a regular basis and it's just my own maybe peculiar nature that when I was, like the first time I was going to preach I realized the Tradition that I was standing in. I realized that there were, for thousands of years, some men had stood up in front of other men and tried to speak God's words, that they had taken like a test, like whatever faith they believed in, but like Christians they had taken the New Testament and there were some men who had enough, I guess maybe, maybe not enough humility or whatever but they stood up and they tried to say this is how and what this means, you know, and they tried to speak to people of all ages and from all walks of life and they tried to speak the word of God, and you know, something like that just, like what it brought to me was like more than ever that I find myself again in that position of saying things and then asking myself, What does it mean for me to do this, you know?

I mean, how can I get up there and preach to people who are older than me and everything and say, you know, this is what God is, what Love means, or this is what it means to love your wife, you know? This is what, how you should live. This is how you should raise your children. These are the moral questions that you should look at, and especially since it was a university

community, that there were a lot of young people there and the issue of the war, you know, was one of the overriding issues that came there, and we often talked about these concepts now which become uppermost in my mind. This concept of the body of Christ, the fact that when I talk to these people in church on Sunday, that I was asking them and myself to change our lives so that when we went around the street and we saw people, we saw one another, the people here and yourselves, and that I realized that it must become real for me to say, you know, that you are meaningful to me, as intimate to me as muscles and bones, you know. That I must be concerned about your life. That must be my overriding concern when I look at people.

Not look at them if they have a job or a profession or are educated, you know, but that they are life and I must have respect for that life and we must begin to live so that we understand one another as a body.

We must begin to try to do that, and how to do that was really a good question for me, and this—the war brought it home to me in this way: as a theologian when I get up and talk on Sunday, when I was preaching, a lot of the young people heard what I was interested in and I talked about a lot of things. Not just the war but all the different types of elements of the Catholic faith and spirituality, secularity, you know, a lot of things, a lot of responsibility, but the war, like young men who come for counseling, and this is usually the way that I began to confront this issue that we are presently involved in, is that young men would come in and talk to me and say, I'm at the point where I'm going to be drafted, and they would like to know whether it was moral to go to war or not to go to war, and the questions that they would raise is how, as a Christian who does see other men as a Body, as a being, who realizes how they must love all people, how could a Christian, you know, pick up a gun and kill people? How can you live in that situation for years, you know, like in Vietnam?

A lot of people knew they would probably end up in Vietnam, and so they, you know, they would directly ask me that question about, *How do you develop your spirituality in the time of war?* I mean, do we just go to Vietnam, they would say to me like, and for like two years forget that we are Christians and then come back and go to church? How do we integrate it, how do we put it all together, you know, and I would find the same problems with young men who would come back from war and say, there is no place to talk about this but I have to talk to somebody, you know. I mean, this is what I did. How do I understand it. How do I live my life now? And the position that I, you know, the theologian in myself, I guess, I don't make decisions for people. I

mean, I talk about the Tradition, I say these are some of the peace traditions in the church, you know, but there have been a lot of people who have gone to war. This is the way that they thought.

You counsel people. A lot of my people who came to me, and a lot of my friends who talked to me, some of them went to war, some of them didn't go to war. Some of my friends are in jail, some of my friends are captains and others lieutenants and otherwise in the military. Some of them have seen action in Vietnam and some of them are just finishing their jail sentences, but the thing is that this was the overriding moral question that I was being continually confronted with, and I felt that I could speak to it twofold.

I could speak to the situation they were in from what was happening in America. There are traditions within the American—just the American culture. There are traditions of men who have refused to go to war. There are traditions of men who have broken laws and appealed to higher laws.

The example of slavery is most obvious. Some believed that slavery was wrong and they would help slaves flee the South and so I realized that there was much people could reflect upon, but you see when people bring these questions you have to go and find this out yourself, you know. You have to find out and talk to them about the faith, and not only that, they may ask you the question of what are you doing about it, you know, so those are questions that they were finding, the moral judgments they were trying to come to with the ones that came to me, and I came down, I guess, very convinced the more that I got closer to like the Documents of Vatican II and some of the recent papal letters and my further understanding of the New Testament, that I must become more committed to nonviolence. I must become more committed to trying to bring peace and I must—and I think came to realize for the first time that my priority—that my future life was not possibly going to be as nice as I thought it would be, and my mother always says, "Francis, why didn't you stay, become a professor, get married, have a few kids?" I thought that would happen to me too when I was twenty-six, that I would be a professor somewhere, but I realized that this might not happen if I responded to the questions that people were putting before me and I was putting before other people, and so there was a chance for me,

there was as mentioned before by Colonel Knight, there was a draft raid in the Twin Cities area[9] and there was a rally for these people and these groups of people—some group of people said that they were accepting moral and political responsibility for destroying draft files, and I really was attracted to these people because I felt again, like a lot of other young men, that these men were trying to speak to the issue, that they were very—they realized the Traditions they were coming out of. They were the type of people that when I talked to them they had tried to involve themselves in trying to understand the American tradition. They tried to understand the political situation. They tried to understand, you know, that people have tried to respond to the Selective Service but the Selective Service really has a grip on the lives of all men regardless, like I said before, like their physical and mental situation when they are eighteen.

They made me come more to face the fact that the Selective Service is a very peculiar system, unlike any other system in America, that every male has to relate to. Even after you're discharged from the army, you carry your classification with you. I think it's 5-A or something, but it seemed to be symbolically, you know, *the one piece of paper which tied people into the war, which tied people into accepting the fact that we could continue a war which I had at this time become very convinced was destroying America.* Not just destroying Vietnam, which is very obvious from some of the witnesses, but that it was destroying America.

The question that I began to perceive, or the situation was that these young men who were coming to me, these were American young men and that the issue of the war was driving a real wedge into their culture, that it was really creating deep, deep problems and I really feel and I still feel that the war is destroying our country besides destroying the country over there.

There is a statement in Vatican II where, after talking about how we must outlaw atrocity and subhuman living conditions, the Council very wisely says that these types of things poison human society, but they hurt more the people who do them than the people they are done to, and this is so true I felt for the United States, was that one of the problems was that our culture right now was being wrecked by the war. People were readily accepting the fact of mass murders and

[9] This was the *Beaver 55* draft raid, February 1971. I cased the St. Paul post office. Over 20 men and women hid out on the 14th floor for six hours, went down after midnight and destroyed all the centralized draft offices in Ramsey County. Tens of thousands of files were destroyed—with a simultaneous action in Minneapolis for Hennepin County. As the State Director later testified at our trial, we crippled MN's drafting ability for a year or so. At trial, to avoid a diversion, I did not directly state my participation as a Beaver. Also, three others (Brad Beneke, Charlie Turchick and Joan Francis) spoke publicly. I joined them in hitting the college circuit. At my arrest in Little Falls, an FBI agent said, "Guess we've caught some Beavers now!"

mass bombings, that America was becoming insensitive and that I felt that these were the type of men who were speaking to these issues, so I joined their Defense Committee and I joined the educational branch in a sense, just joined the group. Sort of the first political group I ever joined and I went around with them to colleges and we talked to students about what is actually going on in America. Why do men attack draft boards? What are they trying to show? What are the moral issues? How do people respond and for a couple months we always were confronted with the questions: work within the System, doesn't the System work? And we had to become more familiar with like the history of the Selective Service System and how the people in power have not responded. The war has not been declared by the Executive, *it has not been*—it has not been declared or approved by the Congress. There have been numerous cases brought up to the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the war and the Court refuses to consider them because they say they are political issues, and yet men like us, when we react against the Selective Service System, we come into court and say, well, we can't be tried because it's a political issue, they say, well no it isn't a political issue, you can be tried. There is a strange way of thinking there.

While the Supreme Court refuses to face the issue as we saw it, they would allow us to be tried and put into jail by saying that it wasn't a political issue, so a lot of these things made me come more to understand this Tradition within my Church called Catholic Radicalism that I talked about and at this time I became much more aware of men—the most popular known are these two Jesuit priests called Fathers Berrigan[10], and it was among other literature, a book like this came out and it's called "Profiles in Catholic Radicalism" and it's subtitled "Divine Disobedience" and it details and explains the lives of these different priests and especially like the Berrigans, and all the different types of radical—well, what would be considered radical social activity, and how Vatican II and the papal encyclicals spoke to these people and they were doing things like draft raids too, you see, and they understood that this came out of their religious tradition, that as priests, like I was also a theologian, they had to speak to the people and that we don't speak to people just while we are in Church, you know, in that little physical building on the end, you know, some corner somewhere, but that we must speak like Vatican II addresses itself to all the people of the world and that in a sense that while people who go to a specific church, you share historical symbols, like you share the Eucharist or Communion, you know, the bread and

[10] Daniel Berrigan, S.J., and his brother Philip who was a Josephite priest, not a Jesuit.

the wine, this is something which for thousands of years people who have called themselves Christians have shared.

Now the task was to try to go out to people outside the church who may be not—don't identify themselves as Christians and try to speak on their terms to them about some of the same religious visions that we have, the visions of Peace and the visions of Love. To speak to them in their own terms.

I can't go out to a young man who's going to the war and say, well, just, you know, here, share this bread and wine and we will understand what Life and Love is. I have to speak to people who are not in my Tradition, you know, with things that they will understand and one of the ways that this came about was—and I talked—in talking to people I further came to understand this, it wasn't something I just had. As I talked in colleges, people, you know, raised the question to me about religion and I had to understand how it came out of my Tradition that I had to in a sense attempt to commit a social-political sacrament. I had to try to speak—find something symbolic of American culture, something that was very peculiar to America and I found this myself in the Selective Service System, and because of the way I tried to let you understand how historically the people have tried to relate to that System and the Government and the people in power refused to respond, and I realized that this was the one system, you know, that would really enable young men especially, and young people because a lot of women are concerned—you know, women have been concerned about the war too, you know—about how we must stop this acceptance of war. We must stop—instead of talking—like you take the Eucharist, the Communion, you say to someone, *This is God*. This is *the body of Christ* as Scripture says for Christians. When you take your draft card, you can actually say, *This is war*. I accept violence, this is violence because by this I am willing to commit acts of violence, I am willing to go to war and somehow we need something that would say, *This is peace*, and I am committed to peace and to nonviolence.

As absurd and as ridiculous as that might sound, it has to start somewhere and it starts with us and we must *not* live by fear. Just because that Selective Service System can throw us in jail or force our friends to leave the country, we must not accept that. Look what it does. It forces some of our friends to go to war and we have known some of our friends who have come back from war and what's happened to their mind and how they feel as the young vets talk about, you know, how people can't sleep.

You have probably experienced that too, if you ever experienced war. It seems to me to be the most absurd and patently, you know, exactly opposite thing to my preaching Christianity, to allow people to go to war. If there is any one thing that destroys my preaching about Christianity it's war, because if you kill someone I can't talk to him anymore! *I can't love a corpse.* People must be alive, we must come to savor life, not carry around tickets for death like the Selective Service System, but for life, and, you know, how exactly to say that to people? You know how exactly to try to say it and what is a really dramatic and symbolic way of doing it? Well, last year when I was with these other people things also began to happen in the country, like the Cambodian invasion and the students' response to that. They killed these students at Kent State and Jackson State.

It's hard to say exactly how you do this, and that these things are finally, you know, coming together: the religion, the theology, the science, like my views, like the evolutionary view and the realization like with what was happening in the country, like if I was ever more convinced that the war was destroying America, you know, the response of Cambodia, the response of shooting the students, you know, these things and the acceptance in the sense of this by the American people, the sort of casual acceptance—well, these are things that happen by the men in power. I began to realize that, you know, that if the political people weren't going to respond, the religious people certainly had to respond. That if the political people felt that there were reasons why they weren't going to face the issues, the religious people had no excuse for not facing those issues because we are committed primarily to life, and if I have to embarrass myself by sitting here trying to talk to people about what life is and put myself in that position, then I have to be willing to do it. I have to do acts which raise contradictions for people that don't allow them to understand directly but which I hope will let them understand in the long run, then I have to do them.

So like the real problem for me about trying to do a draft raid and why we then began like to decide to do draft raids, was the issues of violence and nonviolence, like right when I first heard about the "Milwaukee Fourteen" burning draft files I couldn't accept it because I thought it was violence, and up to this time in my life I thought nonviolence basically meant *not doing* things to other people and *not doing* anything that would hurt anybody, but I began to realize that the main understanding of nonviolence is to try to respond to the human situation as humanly as you can without inflicting harm on other people, that, you know, even though planning like to

raid a draft board is something I have never done before in my life. I'm not used to breaking and entering, you know, learning all those types of crafts or whatever, that that was something that as a theologian I had to try to do because by entering a draft board, you know, I set up the situation where enough people are going to say, "Why did you do that?" They say—people who know me, people who I preach to say, "Why did you do a crazy thing like that?" They don't understand it. Then you try to say to them, "Well like property is not as important as personal lives." "Yes, I agree with that," and then they say, "Well, were you protesting the war?" And most people say, "Well, I agree. I'm against the war," but then the thing is when you put yourself in jeopardy, like the ability of going to jail, and you know people do have to look at it deeper, and I say, well, it isn't that simple. You may never have wanted to look into it as deeply before but now because I have done something and you know me, you know, you will have to look into it much deeper. And when I went back—I was arrested while I was teaching at St. Catherine's. I was in the fourth of my six weeks of summer school. I was teaching a course on sacramental theology, how to make God present to the world.

I was teaching about Teilhard de Chardin and next Monday these Sisters find me in jail, see, and you know to them too, who come out of my Tradition, it means a lot of questions but it enabled a lot of them to realize that, maybe, you know, there is an urgency to what we are doing, that maybe we can't just say another three years of the war, you know, another maybe 25,000 lives we will accept. Maybe we can't accept the fact that—well, they will begin to accept the fact that the people who leave the country are the people who are refusing to face the moral issues and that the only people who are going to face the moral issues are the people, the anonymous people that you don't read about in the paper every day, and that it is important and absolutely important that if to end the war we must act, you and I must act, and there comes a period for some of us to take acts which try to raise these contradictions to people, that we had nothing to gain by that draft raid. We—they weren't our draft files. We weren't going to make money out of it. We weren't just going to burn the place down, you know. We wanted to speak to the evil of a System and we wanted people to realize that even though we casually accept the fact that we have been at war for fifteen or twenty years, that this war is destroying the country and people must look at it and they must begin to respond to it.

I guess one thing in summing up my witness, there comes to me that my father, I remember reading that letter, said "a clear conscience is a greater thing than physical pleasure", and I guess,

you know, the thing is that I feel very peaceful about what I have done. I have made one moral decision, I have got a lot more to make, you know. In a sense, you know, I'm not on trial. Something else and other people are on trial here, the moral decision in the sense to be made here is the moral decision you are going to make.

I, in a sense, feel and know that my response to the doctrines of Vatican II and to my religious Tradition were proper ones because of the peace that I do feel within myself. Not to say to you that I am not confused, not to say to you that I haven't entered into criticism. The draft raid hasn't worked as well as it should. The American public has a strange obsession with property that a lot of us weren't quite as aware of, but people will still say, you destroyed or you wanted to destroy some pieces of paper, and so in a real way of criticism, you know, I realize that it wasn't the most effective act and it's not something I plan, I guess in the sense, to do tomorrow or next week, but what I really want you to understand is the history of the development, that in that period of time with the issues in this country and with my own personal growth and with the documents speaking to me, my commitment to peace resulted in that type of action. My commitment to peace will continue to keep me to work. It comes at times that maybe to bring out the fact that God's law is being flaunted and not respected that we have to break laws but again the System we acted against has a very peculiar nature to itself. It's not a voluntary system. It's not a—it doesn't—the property of those files doesn't belong to the individual. He cannot go down and take his file away. He has no control over it. It's a file kept on people which has control of their lives, which does wreck their future and we feel that the only person who can have control of someone's life and direct their future is God, and a person cannot be directed. Therefore in a sense we really feel and I really deeply feel that that System has become demonic and I only ask you to look as I have looked at what it has done to the United States, what it has done to the young men who have to fight in wars and to understand that as I have, as this paper that we have mentioned that I have written after the action, is that our intent is to communicate—to try to communicate these values.

If there are better ways, we hope to take them on now to communicate, but this certainly is an understandable way. It is certainly a way out of our Tradition and it certainly is a way—the type of commitment, the type of risk we must be willing to take.

The documents of my faith speak very true to me and the visions that I have for myself and for you and for all the people here is to build the earth and I guess I should—and I feel that it's—

I'm sorry in a sense that I have to talk about myself to talk to you, but God works through people and I can only hope that He in some way works through me.

If you want to ask questions, I presume that's about it."

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"You can step down," Neville said. And so I did, step down. Off that cosmically centered spot of my Witness. My inner self was locked in a wrestle with the jurors. Our arms and legs were entangled. Air wheezing sounds of sighs and heaves and grunts, and silent screams rose into a chorus of pain. As I resumed my seat my head slipped into an almost unconscious bow, after five breaths my eyes emerged to once again look at my 12 friends, the jurors, to search their faces for emotions. Some eyes spoke that they understood, were feeling with me, possibly questioning, not afraid of nor embarrassed by the wrestle. The courtroom aftermath is some long uncomfortable minutes of procedural shuffling. Soon Neville broke the humming silence and said "We'll take a recess. I want to see the Prosecution and Defense in my office to discuss the Instructions." He was talking about the Final Instructions to the Jury, but most importantly Philip was talking about whether he would now make a decision on the admissibility of our defense. It was six days and all our testimony got through, at least in its general intent. Would he dare throw us out now? This whole court experience had been such strange mental, physical and psychic terrain for me that I didn't know whether I had reached the mountain-top or not. "If Neville lets us continue, then we might have the first Resistance trial in history to argue a political, spiritual defense!" My minds wobbled around that historical perspective. "Maybe something significant will arise from all these struggles, after all?"

Now my Appeal Brief[11] is based upon what happened during the hours following the close of our testimony. In his Chambers Neville paced back and forth behind his chair, occasionally halting to grip its edge and speak. Ken, myself and Thor were seated in a semi-circle before him. Each waited to see what Neville would really do. Philip kept hemming and hawing about the Instructions —15 in all—and finally let the three of us go, not having made an explicit decision about our defense. What was up? As Ken and I were leaving, Neville came to our left and said something with almost a whisper of mystery: "Well if I make a decision now, what will you have to say for your Closing Argument?" Ken smiled but did not reply. I was going to speak but Ken

[11] Charles Bisanz was my appellate counsel. I made oral argument to the appellate court in St. Louis.

motioned me out of the room. Before we talked about what Neville had just said, Ken sketched the new legal landscape we now stood upon.

According to the Rules of Federal Courtroom procedure, Neville is bound to tell the contending parties about the admissibility of an offered defense before Closing Argument. If a defendant has been informed by that time that his defense is thrown-out, yet rises at his Closing to argue those inadmissible points to the jurors, then he can be cited for Contempt of Court. So, if Neville had made a judgment against us there in his Chambers, we would have nothing to say that afternoon to the jurors. Yet, since he said nothing, then by law he is affirming the right of our defense to be argued to the jurors for consideration during their deliberations. We left his Chambers without having received a positive legal decision from Philip, yet Ken and I could tell from Neville's tone of voice that he had something up his loose black robbed sleeve.

When Thor got up to present the Government Closing Arguments he clearly botched the job. In the District Attorney's office, the number one man, Robert G. Renner[12] is considered among his peers to be a powerful orator, though to me he is hardly that. But true to their aping ways, all the assistant DA's try to embellish their speeches ala Renner. When Thor does it, it just doesn't come off. His main point was, "But no one is above the law!" The magnificent (idiotic!) slogan of those who believe that the law develops morality, not morality the law. Thor finished his Closing in a fairly low keyed way, just rehashing how Mike and I "Did it." Then Ken got up and give his plea. Indeed it was a plea, not just Closing. He tried to share his personal pain with the jurors, how as a middle-aged lawyer, in these torn times, he goes every day to defend young men who are sent to jail for refusing to kill. Ken spoke with an earnestness that allows people like me to know that he really cares for us as people, not just as clients.

These jurors were listening to everything Ken said. When I came before them, it had been just hours before that I had sat for over three hours pouring out my heart towards them. What could I say to my twelve now? My lengthy hair and my long, full blackish beard was a comfort to me as I spoke. I began by trying to let them know that I didn't want to "snow" them, that I wanted them as people to now make a choice, a moral choice. I pointed out that I understood the

[12] Renner like Judge Edward Devitt who tried the two other "Minnesota 8" cases was a graduate of St. John's University as I was. I always felt it a lack of courage on his part to prosecute me. I infer that he anticipated having to confront my personal challenges in the context of our shared Catholic beliefs, and that he simply did not want to face the hard truths of the limitation of law in respect to morality.

government's main criticism of our actions, "Can anyone who disagrees with someone have the moral right to go and ramshackle their offices and property?" No, I said, of course not. The Draft is a peculiar system—and I re-sketched the totally involuntary nature of the System. Then I shared with them the fact that some supposed right-wingers had broken into and messed-up our Twin Cities Draft Information Center. We as Resisters understood their protest, but they, in contrast to our style, acted like a posse, they hit and ran without even the slightest effort at communicating with us. This is the difference between our non-violent symbolic act and vandalism.

While before them, I shifted between short paced walks in front of the jury box and moments of elbow leaning forward from the speaker's stand. I was tiring, yet I knew they were listening eager to hear and feel my speech. "My personal whole life as a theologian has been to speak the words—that's what a theologian means—to speak the word to the people, and I'd like to speak the word, PEACE. Try to understand what that means once I speak that word."

This word meant to me, I continued, that "it is impossible to live peacefully in a world where people justify the wholesale destruction of land and people." Think, as Professor Westing said, there is land the size of Massachusetts in South Vietnam that won't grow anything for 20 years!" This land ravaged example I hoped would sink into their Mid-western farmers' guts. Then I talked about Vatican Two, how I knew that for many of them "Vatican Two may seem like a bunch of Bishops" but that to me, from my Catholic tradition, what those Documents said implied serious things for me to do in the world.

Kenneth E. Tilsen was up there, too—right there feeling the burden of judgment, sharing the piercing pains of the moral struggle. Ken, Mike, Stuart and I were all co-defendants, and the jurors felt the truth of our communal Peace criminality through Ken's words. At that moment, I scratched on my pad "Ken Tilsen is the real number 8 of the *Minnesota 8*!" I was very thankful that when I went on trial that somehow Ken Tilsen was around to be with me.

Then I shared with them some thoughts about my family. I spoke first to how I saw what I was doing as a Resister as directly in line with what my father—and many men on the jury—felt they had to do in World War Two, i.e., take a moral stance and attack evil to protect their lives. A week before the trial my mother had told me one morning that she had been going through my father's letters. Mom always followed my Dad's advice on things like politics, and

our trial was hard for her, it was challenging and changing her, giving her new experiences. She found herself supporting me and my "hairy friends" and in a way this troubled her. She wanted to really see whether my Dad would have supported what I did. She found these letters, which I read to the jurors. They tell their own story and tell me a lot about *why* I've Resisted as I've done. They were my own intimate introduction to *Patriotism Means Resistance*.

17 October 1944
(I was born on 6 August 1944)

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

7 October 1944

"Since I too wish I were with you but to sit around regretting things is not going to help Charles or George. What I did I did with best intentions a father and husband ever did. I prayed hard before I joined, for guidance. It's not trying to justify myself, but you know, Sweetheart, I did not leave to shirk my duties. I would willingly die this moment if by that action I could aid you and the children in any manner whatsoever." {Referencing his joining the Navy}

It was this type of thought that many of us in America tried to instill in ourselves and that we tried to teach with and we tried to, you know, help ourselves grow with. And in the midst of this, my father's personal response was to go to the war, to leave a family of three children, a pregnant wife, and go over. He was accused by some people of shirking his duty. My mother was pregnant with me shortly after he went to the Pacific.

11 November 1944

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

With all my love, I am
Devotedly yours, Charles

I said to the jurors: "Unfortunately, I guess, my being here today in a certain way speaks to the fact that a little bit of that sacrifice was in vain, unfortunately."

My mind bent backwards for images, for the right words—phrases burst my head like rain drops—sentences whirled around in maddening fury and my forehead got fever hot. Everything was one blinding flash—the jurors fading into the afternoon's glare like a photographic negative. My body thrust its fleshy weight on my bones, I was tiring, tiring deep, deep arid soft. One phrase, one sentence, that would be forever the image of my whole standing before my twelve—I slumped down in my body-mind, my crystal mouth darkened, yet out came a shimmering pearl, a crystal of my life's quest and struggle: "It's like walking up to a person who is dead, you know, *it's easy to kill but have you ever seen anyone walk up to a dead body and give it Life? Did you ever see that?*" My brother Charles said that the room quaked and all the jurors quavered.

Now my cup was indeed empty. What more could I bring to these people, to the times but my father, my God, and myself? My whole young life and its single purpose were spread like a fragile spider's web before them. How they acted, whether they would just brush me off or ignore me, I didn't know. I was so tired, so bone weary that I almost didn't care. My task was

done, their task lay ahead of them. I closed with words bidding courage, words inviting them to see me in themselves and themselves in me. These last words were spoken on the rhythm of pleading melded with affection. "...we happen to be together—we are here today, *strange thing*. Next week you might say, "Last week was really strange. I was sitting in this courtroom for a week and we were talking about life"—*and we are* trying to talk about life *now.* We are trying to talk about Life. If there's any place that we go for moral decision making, it's here. *You have arrived. We* are making moral decisions.

"The war may have before seemed really far away from you. But all of a sudden it's as close to you as I am, and as you are to one another. But that's what we are talking about right now. And you might say, "I don't want the responsibility." But sometimes we find ourselves in circumstances where we realize we do have that responsibility and we have *more than the law* to fall back upon to guide us.

"We do have our conscience. We do have love, we do have friends. And we do have visions. We do have children who—maybe you will have for the first time in your life the chance to say—"I made a conscious decision to talk about peace."

"If the prosecutor can convince you that I am a vandal, that I have acted out of some type of selfish motive to get self-gain or whatever he wants to do, and you can believe that, then really—*I don't know*. I am a man like you are people, men and women. I am not seeking for power. I am not seeking to say, "Aren't you glad you know Francis Kroncke." I'm seeking to appreciate and understand life and live life, and hope that by the way I live that other people can continue to live. And I am conscious that as I act and people look at me they will know whether we are peaceful because if I am peaceful they will know that some men are peaceful.

"And when I stand up and say, "War is Evil!" and you stand up and say "War Is Evil!"—*we are* saying *something* to one another. And if we really believe deep within ourselves that we want to create a world where there will be pace, *we have to start* making -moral decisions with our lives.

"However you perceive yourself. Whether you perceive yourself within an Evolving Human Spirit or whether you perceive yourself striving to be One with God. Or however you see what you are trying to live your life for—give a good world to your children, to your friends, to your wife

or whatever—*we are now* at a point of making a moral decision as to whether we really want to talk about peace. (Pause) *This is not a game.*

"This is not a game between young, bearded people and straight people.

"This is not a game, at all.

"This is Life, and we are here.

"In a certain sense I am glad to be here. I realize that twenty-six years of my life are here. It's a tremendous period of growth for me.

"It's a tremendous wonderment about what life is that twelve people and myself and Ken and Mike could be standing here trying to talk about Life.

"In a certain real way I feel close to you people even though we haven't talked. And I am certain—in my own peculiar way—*just glad* to be here regardless of the outcome.

"But I really, really hope deep inside myself that you will be able to glimpse some of the truth in our lives and realize that there are times when men make laws that usurp God's powers and that when men make laws to usurp God's power men must stand up and break men's laws and obey God's laws.

"And this in a sense is what I'm asking you to think about and reflect together.

"I hope it is a good experience for you in the jury room. *That it will be a positive experience for your life*. That you will know what it means in some way to speak "Peace," and I hope that really some day that we will be able to get together and talk, and talk about now, and I hope—I guess I leave you with the hope that I hoped with on July 10th, a hope that you will try in your own way today to speak "Peace." It is your decision now. God guides you, I guess."

Neville: Mr. Anderson, do you have any rebuttal?

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My last words were spoken. Sealed time was hanging like a drape in the courtroom. There was a stillness hovering, each juror knew that *"the time"* was coming. Yet the Government was not through. In courtroom procedure the Government has the right of Rebuttal. That is, the Final Word. Now Thor got up to refute our arguments. Whereas in the previous cases Renner had risen {in Judge Devitt's court} and spoken a fairly familiar and somewhat reasonable conservative line such as, "I don't like the Vietnam War any more than Mr. Tilton does. And I am sure that not one person on the jury does. If there is a way to get out tomorrow, we should get out tomorrow. The only question is, How do we get out? Are they right? There is a disagreement, isn't there? You may have an opinion, and I might just happen to agree with Mr. Tilton. There is only one thing about it. If you don't get your way at the Ballot Box, that doesn't give you the right to break the law no matter how high your motivation may be." Renner was even upfront about his dedication to the System: "You will try this case on its facts from the evidence you get from that Chair and you will make a decision NOT based on compassion, NOT based on mercy, that is Not For You, that is for the Judge, that is for others, not for me. WE DO OUR JOB because it is the System. *It is the only System we know*. It is the one we have lived with, that has progressed."

Of course, our ears flinched at those phrases—I wholeheartedly disagreed with Renner, but he was a conservative and I understood his rhetoric. Only at times would he fly off into a nasty tactic, such as when he said of us, "So what have we attained? *Destroy the System! Attack! Force and Violence!* If this is the argument you wish to abide by, to be convinced by, then of course this is your right. But I would submit that we don't want GOVERNMENT BY TORCH!" Now that was a little strong, and a wee bit hypocritical for a representative of a Government which is waging an unprecedented total warfare. In response, Ken moved that Renner be censured for this professional misconduct, but Devitt (what would you suspect?) let it go by. Now when Thor came to rebuttal he reached for mighty historical and poetic imagery. But true to his pretense, like Icarus soaring past Daedalus, he drowned in a sea of his own words. Somehow some people can carry emotional invective off in a convincing way, however Thor just sputtered.

He talked about noble Motives and "the political Robert Ingersoll who on his Plumed Knight goes full and fair into Little Falls." (Who's Robert Ingersoll? Someday I'll look that up). As a second layer Thor plastered on another historical allegory: "We don't have a modern Pope Leo in Mr.

Kroncke who goes to meet the Barbarians at the North of Rome in the middle of daylight in full vestments and let him explain his view where people can accept them or reject them." Further he, finally, smoothed all this poetry off with a half-comical accusation that said, "Now what's Mr. Kroncke's argument? He says, I, like Mr. Therriault, *did as you charge but I committed no crime. I administered a sacrament.* ... Seven sacraments are not enough! To Baptism and Confirmation and the Eucharist and Penance and Holy Orders and Matrimony and Extreme Unction we add the EIGHTH SACRAMENT of the Roman Catholic Church—*ripping off draft boards!*" Now that was fairly clever, and if he stopped there he might have made some points. But he continued in his imagery to accuse me of "a four day temper tantrum." Then he started talking about the English Nobles and King John, about Divine Right and the Magna Carta. That was getting a little gooey and thick. Poor Thor, it was obvious that he was turning the jurors and even Neville off. But he dragged in his last stanzas telling the twelve, "... and you must meet the modern King Johns across the River JUSTICE and you must say, *No, Francis. No, Michael.* You must sign the Great Charter. You must live by the Law, and if you have not, you are Guilty."

Yes, the time had come to judge about guilt. The last procedural hurdle was the Neville's Final Instructions. What we feared would happen did now that our sideshow—or as Philip calls it, "Your forum"—was over. Neville was to draw up his own curtains on the Main Act.

In his instructions to the juror he said in number 15: "Now as to the testimony you have heard here for the last eight days by Mr. Kroncke and Mr. Therriault, I rule that it is all irrelevant and immaterial."

The testimony of Francis X. Kroncke—*irrelevant and immaterial.*

Sunday, July 26, 2009