

RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE AND THE
VIETNAM WAR

**A study of religious protest movements in the United States
before and during the War in Vietnam**

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Introduction

On November 2, 1965, Norman R. Morrison, a thirty-two-year-old Quaker set himself on fire near the entrance of the Pentagon. About one hundred yards from Secretary of Defence, Robert S. McNamara's office Morrison doused himself with kerosene and lit a match in protest against the increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. Within one week after Morrison's death, Roger A. LaPorte, a member of the Catholic Worker Movement, kneeled down in a cross-legged position (following the example of the Buddhist monks who had immolated themselves in Vietnam) in front of the United Nations' office in New York, poured gasoline over his body and set himself on fire. LaPorte died the next day. Before his death LaPorte was asked why he had turned to such a rigorous action, and he replied: "I'm a Catholic Worker. I'm against war, all wars. I did this as a religious action."¹

A hand full of people in the United States followed Morrison and LaPortes' actions in protest against American involvement in the Vietnam War. In the fall of 1965 protest movements against American military presence in Vietnam were already being organized, but actions like mentioned above were uncommon, and most were religiously inspired.

The protest movements of the 1960s are generally associated with hippies, students and Civil Rights activists. However these groups were not the only ones to protest America's actions. Although the United States had (and still have) a large Christian population, it is a secular nation that has a traditional separation of church and state. It is known that Quakers, like Morrison, are pacifist and have questioned and protested the government on several occasions. However, during the 1960s

¹ Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc, 1984), 1-3.

several other religious groups were speaking up too. In May 1966, five clergymen from different denominations came together and founded the interdenominational, national religious protest organization, Clergy And Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV). From this point on, the New York clergymen John C. Bennett, Richard John Neuhaus, Abraham Heschel, Daniel Berrigan and William Sloan Coffin organized several national actions and demonstrations to protest the war.

As mentioned above, usually the student movement and hippies are associated with anti-Vietnam demonstrations. Academic overviews of the protest movement at large rarely focus on the religious contribution to these protests. Upon skimming the bits and pieces of this contribution to the antiwar effort, it quickly followed that the previously mentioned CALCAV takes in a unique position in the religious antiwar movement. As we will see, it was a widely respected – and therefore arguably more influential – large, interdenominational effort led by spiritual leaders and clergymen.

Religiously inspired protest directed against the U.S. government was not a new phenomenon in America. The prohibitionist and abolitionist movements, for example, were also religiously inspired. Religious protest directed against the U.S. government's foreign policy, however, was quite rare, especially in times of war. Moreover, what set the religious Vietnam War demonstrations apart as a religious protest movement was the seemingly unique combination of a clerically led² and an

² The precise definition of clergy excludes the religious leader of the Jewish community, the rabbi. Until the modern time, rabbis have been lay scholars of Torah and, unlike Christian ministers and priests, they are not members of any consecrated religious order and their traditional spiritual leadership derived solely from their scholarship. By contrast, in modern times the role of the rabbi has expanded greatly to include responsibilities, similar to those of Christian ministers and priests, towards providing personal counseling and social work for and within their congregation. Therefore, when using the term clergy or clergymen in this thesis, the Jewish religious leadership of the rabbi is included. Judaism Ethics, Morality Community: Judaism Leadership/Clergy, <http://www.patheos.com/Library/>

interdenominational effort, which the prohibitionist and abolitionist movements lacked.

The abolitionists did have a non-denominational character, but the leaders of the abolitionist movement were not clerics. William Lloyd Garrison, for example, a prominent American abolitionist and co-founder of the American Anti-Slavery Society, was a journalist by profession. One notable exception was Henry Ward Beecher, a Congregationalist clergyman, who actively auctioned slaves into freedom. Most abolitionist, however, were politicians, journalists and entrepreneurs.

The leaders of the temperance movement, by contrast, were mostly clergymen instead of laymen. Before the Civil War, Reverend Mark A. Matthews and Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher had already stressed that alcohol may be God-given, but alcohol abuse was definitely demonic. The Civil War temporarily put a stop to the temperance movement, but the Prohibition Party sparked the debate again in 1869. It was soon followed by other organizations such as the Knights of Father Matthew and the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals; all organizations based on independent denominations. Compared to the religious antiwar movement of the 1960s, the temperance movement did have a strong clerical basis, but it lacked interreligious collaboration.

Considering the unique position of CALCAV as a clerically led and interdenominational organization protesting against the Vietnam War, one has to wonder what it was that triggered the interdenominational clerical interference in U.S. foreign affairs. Historian Mitchell K. Hall is one of few who have dedicated a study solely to the religious contribution to the protest movement against the Vietnam War and to CALCAV in particular. Although Hall provides an excellent and detailed overview of the history of CALCAV and its actions, he fails to explain satisfactory

how this unique group came into being. What conditions provided the climate for this enterprise? How far could the interreligious collaboration stretch? What do we know of these actions, since most anti-war movements of the 1960s are regularly associated with student movements? And, if any, what were the results of these actions?

In this thesis, the main focus lies with exploring and comprehending the factors that produced this unique protest movement. In order to do so, interreligious cooperation and collaboration before the Vietnam War will first be explored and discussed, after which interreligious collaboration during the Vietnam War will be examined until the signing of the Paris Accords in 1973. After the signing of the Paris Accords, American presence in Vietnam officially ended. Although the U.S. government kept supplying South Vietnam, for American civilians the war was over and the protest movement had reached its primary goal, ending U.S. involvement in former Indochina.

1 Interreligious Collaboration before the War in Vietnam

Interreligious collaboration and pacifism after World War I

From the very beginning of World War I Abraham Johannes Muste (1885-1967), a prominent religious leader in his time, inspired fellow Christians to speak up against the use of violence and warfare in World War I and beyond.³ Religious protest movements against acts of aggression clearly already existed but what exactly did these protests entail? Why did it not gain momentum until the Vietnam War? Furthermore, to what extent were these protests a clerically led interreligious effort?

In 1891, the Muste family moved from the Netherlands to America. The family settled down in Michigan where they were loyal to the Dutch Reformed Church. Muste earned his bachelor's and master's degree from Union Theological Seminary in 1905 and 1909 respectively. During these years in college, Muste grew interested in socialism and pacifism. This newly found interest resulted in the co-founding of an American branch of the (originally British) Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) in 1915, where he acted as the executive director from 1940 until 1953.

The interfaith FOR members opposed U.S. entry in World War I and called for nonviolent alternatives to all conflicts, including the war. Before he became the executive director of the FOR, Muste served as minister for several churches. Because of his sense of righteousness, which would determine Muste's life path, he never prolonged his stay in most. From 1915 to 1918, for example, Muste became a minister of the Central Congregational Church in Newtonville, Massachusetts. On Easter

³ Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal. The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 20.

Sunday, March 31, 1918, Muste preached on the futility of war shortly after one of the prominent sons of the church had been killed in World War I. That very afternoon, the congregation decided he and his family had to move out of the church's parsonage.⁴

During the 1920s, after the United States had entered World War I, pacifist sentiments became more widespread. In 1928 the pacifist sentiments culminated in the negotiation and signing by sixty-one nations of the Kellogg-Briand Treaty, which outlawed war as a way to resolve international differences. Unfortunately, the treaty could not deliver the desired and expected results in reality. After World War I American citizens supportive of the pacifist movement, including Muste, defined their arguments more closely. Nonviolence and cooperation were the key words to the movement, for which the FOR would become the leading organization. Like the Kellogg-Briand Treaty, however, the Fellowship too had little effect in real life. According to theologian Ira Chernus, these advocates of nonviolence explained the paradoxical growth in pacifist believe without the desired results as a problem deeply rooted in modern society: "Since violence and war are produced by the structures of society, violence and war will not end until those structures are radically transformed."⁵ In other words, a nonviolent, reciprocal society could only be obtained if capitalism would be discarded, because capitalism divides people into conflicting classes and it dehumanizes its largest class, the working class. According to the Fellowship this class had no power and therefore no individual dignity. Capitalism thus both caused and disregarded human suffering, which in their eyes was a form of coercion, and therefore of violence.⁶

⁴ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 20, 21.

⁵ Ira Chernus, *American Nonviolence. The History of an Idea* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 83,84.

Following this same rhetoric Muste became deeply involved in the workers movement for unionization and labour rights. This concern for the working class increasingly moved him toward socialism and communism. Muste aligned himself with followers of the communist leader Leon Trotsky. He was convinced that force and coercion were the only effective measures to gain justice for the working class. Because of this conviction, and his earlier experiences with the church's discontent concerning his outspoken character, Muste saw no way to combine Christianity and a communist revolution and he therefore left the church in the 1920s for over a decade. In 1936, Muste rejoined the church and the FOR after meeting with Leon Trotsky in Norway. To this day it remains unclear what exactly changed his views. Somewhere along that trip, however, he realized that the church would always be his true home and he therefore broke with communism and committed himself once again to Christianity, love, nonviolence and interreligious collaboration. While committing himself once again these principles he never truly abandoned Marxist thought. Although he had devoted himself to nonviolence and condemned a revolution by "any means necessary", he still viewed capitalism as the instigator of social problems and social inequities. Nonviolence was the key to revolution and change not just in the economic respect, but in every aspect of life since Muste saw no difference between spiritual transformation and a social, political, and economic revolution to establish the Kingdom of God.⁷ As he put it in his famous words: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."⁸ Muste remained true to these principles until his death in 1967. However, World War II posed a problem in his rhetoric, since the Nazi threat seemed to be immune to the nonviolence. How did Muste and other religious pacifist

⁷ Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 133.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

organizations in America deal with the critique of the untameable Nazi-beast and what were their answers, if any, to U.S. military involvement in World War II?

Interreligious collaboration and pacifism after World War II

For Muste and many other committed to the principles of pacifism and nonviolence, the answer to the Nazi threat was a difficult one. Often they were criticised for holding on to their principles because nonviolence would simply not have worked against such an aggressor. However, Muste cleverly turned these accusations around and stated:

When a crisis develops, people turn upon the pacifists, figuratively hold a gun to his head, and demand: “Now how would you pacifists stop this thing?” – in five minutes and painlessly.⁹

To Muste, and coincidentally to the FOR, a war was never caused by one evil nation attacking an innocent nation, no matter how evil that nation is. This rhetoric automatically strips any conflict, be it in resolving class and labor conflicts or international conflicts, of its historical context and lacks to recognize all involved parties as part of a system of relationships. Of course, Muste condemned the evils of fascism, but he also considered America a war-like and imperialist nation that should not fool itself in claiming to fight for freedom and prosperity since this was particularly lacking within their own borders. Why, Muste asked, did they not fight for the protection of freedom everywhere? Moreover, U.S. policy ignored many oppressed

⁹ A.J. Muste, *Non-violence in an Aggressive World* (New York: Harper, 1972), 179-180. Cited in Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 137.

peoples and only seemed to call for war when “our own imperialist concerns or native economic lords required that particular war.”¹⁰

Muste’s argument was adopted by the FOR, which at the time was one of three leading Christian pacifist movements during and after World War II. The Fellowship, as mentioned, originated during World War I when it served as a community of support for conscientious objectors to that war. At that time the FOR counted nearly twelve thousand members. If we may believe their own website, on which it stresses their non-denominational character, their members included Jews, Christians, Buddhists and Muslims but also “people of other faith traditions, as well as those with no formal religious affiliation.”¹¹

Another Christian pacifist movement was the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Like the FOR, the AFSC originated during World War I. Initially, in 1917, it provided an alternative service for conscientious objectors from the Quaker Society of Friends. Because of its Quaker orientation the AFSC contested all forms of violence and refused to serve in the military. Instead, AFSC members helped political refugees and civilian victims of war. Like the FOR, the AFSC was not only involved in protests against war, but it was also committed to resolve social injustices. Even to this day the AFSC has remained active in helping people overcome social injustices, economic difficulties as well as helping victims of war and violence.¹²

Both the AFSC and the FOR occupied special places in the peace movement of the 1950s. Already in the 1930s both had been active in internationalist and anti-intervention campaigns, and both had engaged in political action in that decade and

¹⁰ Muste, *Non-violence in an Aggressive World*. Cited in Chernus, *American Nonviolence* 139.

¹¹ Fellowship of Reconciliation USA: About Vision and Mission Statements:

<http://www.forusa.org/about/vismis.html>

¹² Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 82.

thereafter. The AFSC had even earned a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for its extensive relief work during and after World War II. Moreover, both organizations combined an emphasis on the Social Gospel (a movement that applied Christian ethics to social problems) with active pacifism. This meant that they were liberal in approach and pacifist in belief. Its supporters were therefore likely to be either traditional pacifists, who preferred an individual approach against war, or radical pacifists, preferring direct social action.¹³

Apart from the Fellowship and the Quaker pacifist organizations, there are two other pacifist groups worth noting, one Christian and one secular. The Catholic Worker Movement (CWM) and the War Resisters League (WRL) were both founded after World War I, in 1933 and 1923 respectively. The CWM and the WRL were smaller organizations than the Fellowship and the AFSC. The WRL was founded by former FOR members, including mainly Jews, suffragists and socialists, who preferred a more secular approach to the peace movement. Because of this more secular approach, the WRL attracted mainly radical pacifists. During World War II it had become a support group for conscientious objectors with an anarchist and secular orientation. Their stronger emphasis on revolutionary civil disobedience resulted in many of its twelve hundred members being imprisoned during protests against U.S. involvement in World War II. Because the WRL never held meetings or formed local groups, it was never as influential as the FOR and the AFSC.¹⁴

Like the WRL, the CWM was a smaller organization and it attracted mainly radical pacifists. The radical political journalist Dorothy Day founded this first American Catholic nonviolent peace movement. Like Muste, Day devoted her life

¹³ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 21, 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

from early childhood to ordinary working people. Coincidentally, during World War I Day wrote about the war as a result of capitalist imperialism. Unlike Muste, however, she wrote on a purely secular basis. She gradually found her way towards Catholicism and was baptized in 1927. In the 1930s when the Great Depression had set in, Day was even more convinced than ever that capitalism was an evil system that should be overthrown. Upon meeting the French Peter Maurin in 1932, when she was struggling with combining Catholicism and communism – since Catholics usually were against communism because of its militant atheism – she had found her partner in crime. Maurin was a left-wing preacher who did not feel that being a Catholic automatically excluded social revolutionary thought. Quite the opposite, Maurin felt that it was his duty as a member of the Catholic Church to be a (nonviolent) social revolutionary. Day and Maurin founded the CWM in 1933.¹⁵

The main goals of the CWM were based on a commitment to nonviolence and to fight social injustices, if necessary by means of civil disobedience. These principles provided the CWM with an anarchist flavour that struck outsiders as somewhat odd, because of Catholicism's traditional devotion to hierarchy and authoritarianism. By now, however, Day did not convey this seeming paradox as a problem. She was “convinced that Catholics could create a socially and politically anarchist society supported by the structure and authority of church.”¹⁶

After World War II the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Friends Service Committee and the Catholic Worker Movement were the three main religiously inspired pacifist organizations, for which the War Resisters League provided a good secular alternative. Because of the ongoing threat of the Cold War, the pacifist

¹⁵ Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 145, 146.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147.

organizations feared the outbreak of a third world war. Unfortunately, these independently operating organizations were unable to tackle this threat by themselves. Nevertheless, cooperation between them seemed impossible for a number of reasons. For one thing, the WRL was a secular organization, which the other three were not. Secondly, in promoting civil disobedience both the WRL and the CWM were too radically pacifist for the taste of FOR and AFSC members.

On the international level it were precisely those differences between these organizations and the pressure from national governments on their churches to support the official position in the Cold War, that initiated the coming together of 147 churches (from 44 countries) in Amsterdam, in August 1948. The goal of this conference was to discuss the possibility of interreligious cooperation in the face of war and to contemplate the official Christian position in that war and on other international issues.¹⁷ The newly founded World Council of Churches (WCC) consisted of most Orthodox Churches and many Protestant Churches, including the Anglican Communion, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed. It also included some Old Catholic churches, though not the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁸

The WCC's intentions were not to form a super church that allowed room for only one doctrine. Neither was it a goal to negotiate the unification of Christianity. On the contrary, membership of the WCC entailed a possibility for collective action when necessary: "the World Council shall offer counsel and provide opportunity of united action in matters of common interest."¹⁹ Membership, however, did not automatically mean that one had to support all actions. Member churches could decide for

¹⁷ Hugh McLeod eds., *Cambridge History of Christianity. Vol 9 World Christianities c. 1914-c.2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 59, 292.

¹⁸ The Roman Catholic Church was not a member, but it did work closely together with the WCC for over three decades and it sent observers to all major WCC conferences. Wikipedia: World Council of Churches http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Council_of_Churches.

¹⁹ Section IV of the WCC constitution cited in: McLeod, *Cambridge History of Christianity*), 60.

themselves which actions they would and would not support. Once chosen, however, support was binding. The WCC thus became the most inclusive ecumenical movement of the modern day. Today it brings together 349 churches, denominations and fellowship of churches in more than 110 countries.

In response to the foundation of the WCC, America's Christian society decided to breathe new life into the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ (FCCC). Since its foundation in 1908, the FCCC had focused mainly on international political issues. For example, its last call for collective action in 1946 focused on banning the use of atomic weapons. By appealing to President Truman's sense of morality, the FCCC denounced the use of these weapons: "If we, a professedly Christian Nation, feel morally free to use atomic energy in that way, men elsewhere will accept that verdict. Atomic weapons will be looked upon as a normal part of the arsenal of war and the stage will be set for the sudden and final destruction of mankind."²⁰ In 1950, the FCCC was renamed as the National Council of the Churches of Christ, better known as the National Council of Churches (NCC).

Despite the FCCC's views on the use of atomic weapons, the NCC, under its new name, followed the president's position in the Cold War. Because many of the WCC's members were from Eastern European countries they chose not to take an official position in the matter. The NCC, on the other hand, saw (like many American citizens) a demonic evil in the Soviet Union. This common communist threat brought American Catholics, Protestants and Jews together, paving the way for joint efforts of interreligious political action in the decades still to come. The religious groups absorbed the idea of American godliness as opposed to Soviet atheist demons, consequently blinding themselves to the nation's own imperfections. As a result they

²⁰ Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion. Volume 3. Under God, Indivisible, 1914-1960* (Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1996), 126.

preached a more nationalistic religion, possibly influenced by fears of being accused of communism themselves, because the mildest objection against official policy could raise suspicions from both the church and the state department.²¹

In the 1950s the common enemy of U.S. churches resulted in interreligious collaboration, be it on a relatively small scale. Although this collaboration occurred in the context of intense agreement with the governmental position towards the looming Soviet threat, it had nevertheless opened doors. Doors, which led to rooms where American foreign policy could openly be discussed and debated. Doors which also, as we will see, made interreligious collaboration with a more oppositional character possible. The next decade increasingly showed more collaboration among different religious groups. Furthermore, the collaboration increasingly took the shape of a protest movement against the government's choices both at home and abroad.

²¹ Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of their Faith. CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 6.

2 Early Religious Protest Against the Vietnam War

Protest against war and acts of aggression until the 1960s was limited to a handful of relatively small groups. Because of the differences between these groups in terms of goals, methods and ideology, there was no common ground for united action. In similar fashion, large religiously inspired actions against governmental foreign aggression were uncommon in the decades before the 1960s. The Cold War inspired religious leaders in the country and abroad to work together against the communist threat, resulting in the formation of the World Council of Churches and the reuniting of the National Council of Churches (NCC). However, since the NCC had mainly supported governmental policy in the face of a shared enemy, what happened when that shared enemy no longer seemed to play a part in the religious pacifist mind? What were the circumstances that created clerically led interreligious protest against the governmental position in former Indochina? And what did this early protest against the Vietnam War look like?

Conditions for interreligious cooperation

As early as 1967, theologian Harvey G. Cox had signaled an important change amongst clerical America. In *The 'New Breed' in American Churches: Sources of Social Activism in American Religion*, Cox characterized three religious parties. The first group wanted the church to “stay out of politics” and argued that religion should focus on a world beyond this one.²² Closely related to this focus on a ‘spiritual’ life is the eschatology of premillennialism. Premillennialist thought entails the return of

²² Harvey G. Cox, “The ‘New Breed’ in American Churches: Sources of Social Activism in American Religion,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 96 (1967): 135-150, 136-137.

Christ, the Second Coming, after the world has moved into a deep crisis. Christ's return would signal a battle between Him and the Antichrist, after which Christ will rule the earth for a Thousand Years in the Kingdom of God. Political involvement for premillennialists thus seemed irrational, because disorder and chaos are necessary factors for the Second Coming. Any attempt to make the world a better place through a political program would have the opposite effect.²³

A second group wanted the church to act as "the custodian of property rights." They are not necessarily against the church's involvement in political and controversial issues, so long as it upholds the conservative side. Cox described this group as small but wealthy, and therefore disproportionately influential. Because of its link to conservative business interests it "usually maintains an aura of respectability." However, its right wing was closely related to fanatical groups such as the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, run by the conservative Billy James Hargis.²⁴

Cox named the third group the "New Breed", a group of laymen and clergy "who are bent on moving the church toward a more direct role in supporting and inducing social change."²⁵ The main symbol of this group was the socially activist clergyman. According to Cox, this New Breed-clergyman differs from the Old because he participates directly in political and social struggle. Though this group of socially active clergyman was relatively small it did have some impact on American society. The public image of the clergyman had also undergone a metamorphosis during the 1960s:

²³ Clyde Wilcox, Sharon Linzey and Ted G. Jelen, "Reluctant Warriors: Premillennialism and Politics in the Moral Majority," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, no. 3, Vol. 30 (1991): 245-258, 245-246.

²⁴ Cox, "The 'New Breed'," 137.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

A decade ago, he was often depicted in cartoons and stories as a pompous bore, a disagreeable zealot, or a genial incompetent. Although these images still persist in certain areas, the average man is now just as likely to think of nuns, priests, and ministers leading protest marches, standing in picket lines, or organizing debates on Viet-Nam.²⁶

Like the previous mentioned group who wanted to stay out of politics, the New Breed legitimated social actions by stressing two main elements of their belief system. One is the special status assigned to the poor in Christian theology, “the holiness of the poor”. The other is the belief that God calls all men to political participation to ensure equality among mankind. The New Breed thus believed, in contrast to premillennialist thought, that it was possible to establish certain elements of God’s Kingdom on earth, before and despite of the Second Coming.²⁷

Embodying and representing this active New Breed clergymen there were roughly three developments during the 1960s that paved the way for churches and its leaders to openly criticize governmental foreign policy. The first, and arguably the most important development was the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). The leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Martin Luther King jr., would become the face of the CRM. In his fight against racial segregation, King provided an important example not only for many African-American men and women who wanted to fight racism in a nonviolent manner, but, being a Baptist minister, he also inspired fellow Christian Americans to join his efforts in the battle against racism. Embodying Cox’s New Breed flawlessly, members of churches and synagogues all over the

²⁶ Cox, “The ‘New Breed’,” 137.

²⁷ Ibid., 143-146.

country found the legal relegation of African-Americans to an inferior social position plus the violent methods used to enforce such a system so decidedly immoral that they now saw themselves forced by conscience to oppose that very system. King inspired many religious leaders who were sensitive to the injustices that existed in America to ignore predictable accusations of communist affiliations and inspired them to move outside the firm organization of their churches to openly comment on social injustices.²⁸ The support King was able to kindle for his cause does not, of course, mean that religious protest against the Vietnam War was a direct consequence of the religious support for the CRM. However, it did provide an example for the mobilization of many people by using religious motives and following religious paths. Although the SCLC committed many religious leaders to its cause, the problems of expressing oneself without the church's decree, remained. Without being accused of communist or anti-patriotic sentiments, where could these Christians turn to vent their thoughts? A second development in the 1960s provided the answer.

Following tradition, the religious press had previously voiced no thoughts on social or foreign political issues. Especially the large denominational periodicals did not address public issues and did not appeal to those outside their own membership. In the 1960s, however, smaller independent magazines began to provide a religious framework for the New Breed to comment on important public issues. *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis* were the most influential and commonly known periodicals in this field. With 40,000 subscribers, *Christian Century* was the better known of the two Protestant periodicals. Size, however, did not matter. *Christianity and Crisis*, with only one-fourth of that circulation, was able to reach a much wider audience. Because it was frequently cited in the secular press, *Christianity and Crisis*

²⁸ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 6, 7.

was able to influence opinion makers who were part of the larger public. Because of the non-denominational outlook of both *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis* they had a moderate liberal orientation and favored social change more than most denominational periodicals, like *Christianity Today*. *Christianity Today* was the chief evangelical magazine and was founded by the famous televangelist Billy Graham. Because of this evangelical nature it was more politically conservative than the previous mentioned magazines. Moreover, *Christianity Today* resisted any kind of change that would lead to the church's social involvement. The growth of ecumenical and non-denominational bureaucracies, for instance, was rejected by the periodical, because it stimulated the church's involvement in social issues. These bureaucracies freed many church executives from direct accountability to local opinion and allowed them to comment on political matters without fear of reprisal. On the local level, however, church leaders were still very much dependent of their own church.²⁹

The non-denominational character of *Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis* thus resulted in a more critical position towards the U.S. government. Reverend John C. Bennett and Reinhold Niebuhr founded *Christianity and Crisis* in 1941. Reinhold Niebuhr was one of the leading theologians of his day and inspired and influenced many religious leaders throughout his life. As a young Protestant minister he had committed himself to nonviolence and socialism in the wake of World War I. During the 1920s he was both a leading figure in the FOR and served as a pastor in a Detroit church. According to theologian Ira Chernus, it was during his services in this church that Niebuhr discovered that principled nonviolence was too ideal for this sinful world.³⁰ More and more people in his congregation were assembly-line workers functioning in the rapidly growing car industry. Niebuhr could see the rich getting

²⁹ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 7.

³⁰ Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 112.

richer and the poor getting poorer. Working as a professor at Union Theological Seminary in the 1930s Niebuhr decided that justice for the workers was the most important goal. Justice had to be achieved, even if force was necessary. Unlike Muste, but like Catholic Worker Dorothy Day, Niebuhr did believe communism, nonviolence and Christianity could co-exist. As Chernus stated, Niebuhr thought that a more realistic approach from his fellow Christians was necessary to obtain his goals:

The commandment to love must be acted out in real history, he [Reinhold Niebuhr] asserted, in organized efforts to seek justice for the oppressed. That means using the political system – pitting power against power – rather than always treating the powerful with perfect love.³¹

Niebuhr and Bennett's magazine was one of the first religious periodicals to openly criticize American policy in former Indochina. It heavily disputed the government's claim that the war had primarily resulted from northern aggression against South Vietnam. Instead, they labeled the conflict a 'civil war'. Bennett, although not a pacifist, questioned the predisposition to view these conflicts in narrow military terms: "We are always tempted to see these struggles in terms of military activity and to assume that there must be a solution, but what if there is no solution in military terms?"³²

The presidential campaign of 1964 was the third development able to kindle more clerical criticism against official governmental policy. The conflict in Vietnam emerged as an important issue for the elections. Numerous religious periodicals, among which the leading *Christianity and Crisis* and *Christian Century*, broke with

³¹ Chernus, *American Nonviolence*, 113.

³² Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 8.

the tradition of supporting the Republican candidate, in this case Barry Goldwater. Goldwater argued strongly in favor of an increase in military pressure, while at the same time, Lyndon B. Johnson successfully presented himself as the peace candidate. The (non-denominational) clerical magazines therefore took the lead and chose to endorse future President Johnson.

Clearly, active religious participation in politics of the New Breed clergyman was growing and taking new forms, but they were by no means a majority. After the presidential elections of 1964, religious involvement gained momentum and the peace candidate had been elected. However, within a couple of months after Johnson's inauguration, U.S. military involvement in Vietnam escalated.

In the early months of 1965 the U.S. government launched a sustained bombing campaign over North Vietnam. The bombing campaign and the landing of American combat troops indicated that the U.S. government had adopted a more aggressive policy in Indochina. Until this adaptation of a more active and aggressive policy towards Vietnam, visible religious opposition to the war was not voiced on a regular basis. After the initiation of the bombing campaign, however, things began to change.

In a letter to the White House, the FOR urged to a cease-fire, withdrawal of American troops and the organization of a peace conference. On April 4, the FOR extended its actions by running a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* opposing the bombings in North Vietnam. Complementing their interdenominational character, the FOR statement was signed by 2,500 ministers, priests and rabbis. The Johnson administration paid no heed to either the letter or to the full-page advertisement. In response to the administration's reluctance, the FOR sent a delegation to South Vietnam on June 29. The delegation hoped they were able to urge

the disputing factions to a cease-fire and bring them together to start a dialogue. However, the well-intended delegates proved unable to accomplish such a task.³³

Within the next months efforts of interreligious protest became publicly visible and slightly fiercer than in the months before. The first significant ecumenical effort emerged in May 1965. The Interreligious Committee on Vietnam called all religiously concerned men and women to a silent vigil at the Pentagon. The goal was to express their wishes in favor of a peaceful solution to the war in Vietnam. The committee included, among others, John C. Bennett and Martin Luther King. In somewhat stronger language they urged the President to a cease-fire and noted that they were “appalled by the human tragedy and suffering involved in the struggle in Vietnam.” King had expressed his opinion and sorrow about American policy in Vietnam for the first time. In the summer of 1965 he told his members of the SCLC that he was “not going to sit by and see the war escalate without saying something about it.”³⁴ Unfortunately, King could not seem to convince his closest advisors of the importance of this message. He was advised not to make public statements like that, because it could jeopardize President Johnson’s support for the civil rights legislation. Moreover, it could possibly lead to a loss of donations for the Civil Rights Movement. The negative responses convinced King to temper his criticisms on the Vietnam War for over a year.³⁵

In the following months the religious press also intensified its opinions on the war. The editorial board of *Christianity and Crisis* took a firm stand against it. They feared that the continued bombing of North Vietnam would “damage the improving relations with the Soviet Union, drive the North Vietnamese into the arms of the Chinese, and risk war with China.” In their opinion, the U.S. government had to

³³ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

³⁵ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 1-3.

reopen the negotiations and, in doing so, recognize the National Liberation Front (NLF) as a worthy partner in these negotiations.³⁶

Despite the increasing public appearance of religious protest, the U.S. government did not seem to listen to the clerical pleads. For Muste it was obvious that it simply was not enough. In October he wrote a letter to Bennett, suggesting that something more had to be done:

It seems to me also that church forces – The National Council [of Churches], the denominational agencies, Christian, especially Protestant, leaders to whom we are in the habit of looking for initiative – are not saying or doing anything of real significance in relation to the problem. I have the feeling they are simply marking time and so contribute to the attitude of “going along” with the Johnson Administration, which is so widespread and, in my view, so dangerous.³⁷

Muste thus anticipated the beginning of what would become an enduring cooperation between widely differing religious groups.

The first ecumenical organization to protest the War in Vietnam

The need was felt to stimulate the growth of interreligious collaboration as the government continued to ignore clerical pleads at the end of 1965. The existing means to accomplish such an extensive cooperation were not sufficient. However, an unexpected force, the U.S. government, further sparked the formation of this

³⁶ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 9, 10.

³⁷ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 149.

enterprise. The government had previously tried to discredit the antiwar movement in a number of ways. The former head of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, in particular made fierce statements claiming that “Anti-Vietnam demonstrators in the U.S. represent a minority for the most part composed of halfway citizens who are neither morally, mentally nor emotionally mature.”³⁸ Even though Hoover was right in stating that the anti-Vietnam movement was a relatively small movement, he could not have been more wrong in his accusations of American protesting clerics as being morally, mentally and emotionally immature. Very well respected and highly educated men like Muste, Bennett and Niebuhr were part of the larger antiwar demonstrations, but by no means fitted Hoover’s profile protesters because of their educational levels and the public respect that they had earned over the years. The immaturity of the opposition was, however, not the government’s main focal point. Demonstrators were most commonly accused of being communist spies or communists who had no particular affiliation with America and were anti-patriotic because of it.

In response to these attacks a group of approximately one hundred Protestants, Catholics and Jews decided to organize an ecumenical forum to discuss American foreign policy in Asia. On October 25, during a news conference held at the United Nations Church Center, the representatives of this group presented a signed declaration which supported and justified the right to criticize and protest the government’s conduct in Vietnam. In response to the government’s attacks, the declaration further emphasized that: “To characterize every act of protest as communist-inspired or traitorous is to subvert the very democracy which loyal Americans seek to protect.”³⁹ This group of one hundred New York clerics would become known as Clergy Concerned About Vietnam (CCAV). The CCAV, which had

³⁸ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 13, 14.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

issued the declaration presented at the United Nations Church Center on October 25, were happily surprised by the support from over one hundred New York clerics. On that note, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, one of the CCAV representatives responded to a reporter's question that they would continue their efforts, a statement that caught the other clerics by surprise. Despite their amazement and because of the amount of support, the initiators of the CCAV formulated a program under the leadership of Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, Reverend John C. Bennett, William Sloan Coffin and Father Daniel Berrigan to mobilize opposition against U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia. In the next few months this group would sponsor rallies, demonstrations, vigils and fasts in New York City.

In the daily activities of the New York based CCAV, William Sloane Coffin, Jr. was the most publicly visible member. Coffin, a Presbyterian, was born into the wealthy elite of New York. When he graduated from high school in 1942, Coffin enrolled in Yale University in the school of music to pursue a career as a pianist. In these years Coffin was already excited by the prospect of fighting to stop fascism and he focused on joining the war effort. In 1943, Coffin left school to enlist in the Army. After the war Coffin went back to Yale. Upon graduating in 1949, Coffin entered Union Theological Seminary, where he remained for a year until the outbreak of the Korean War reignited his interest in fighting communism. He joined the CIA as a case officer in 1950, spending three years in West Germany recruiting anti-Soviet Russian refugees and training them to undermine Stalin's regime. Coffin, however, grew increasingly disillusioned with the role of the CIA and America due to events including the CIA's involvement in overthrowing Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran in 1953. After leaving the CIA, he enrolled in Yale Divinity School and earned his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1956, the same year he was

ordained a Presbyterian minister. In 1958 Coffin accepted the position as Chaplain of Yale University where he remained until 1975. Being a Chaplain at Yale University, Coffin could relatively easily express his opinions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the growth of ecumenical and non-denominational bureaucracies throughout the 1960s had freed church executives from direct accountability to local opinion, allowing Coffin to comment on political matters without direct fear of reprisal. At the Yale Divinity School Coffin became influenced by Reinhold Niebuhr, sparking his active involvement in and support for the Civil Rights Movement. As a political activist in support of the CRM, Coffin, among other things, organized many Freedom Rides to challenge segregation laws in Southern States.⁴⁰

In 1964, Coffin's dismay with the U.S. government grew when he learned of the history of French and American involvement in South Vietnam. Particularly the government's public position, which differed unmistakably from reality (the broken promises to hold a referendum in the south about unification with North Vietnam), sparked this disappointment. As his dismay grew, so did his political activism, this time pointing its arrows on U.S. foreign policy. Coffin's active involvement against social injustices of all kinds made him a logic member and a protagonist of the CCAV.⁴¹

Compared to Coffin, John C. Bennett's contributions to the CCAV were more subtle. In 1902 Bennett was born in Canada. As the son of a Presbyterian minister, Bennett's future would unravel in the expected way. He earned his Masters degree in theology both at the Oxford University in England and at Union Theological Seminary. After graduating, and being ordained in the Congregational Church Bennett accepted a teaching position at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where he

⁴⁰ Wikipedia: William Sloan Coffin. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Sloan_Coffin.

⁴¹ Ibid.

became President a few years later. Like Coffin, this position provided him with a comfortable position to speak out against U.S. policies. Unlike Coffin, who had first tried to pursue a career as a pianist and later became a social and political activist fighting at the front borders, Bennett had from an early stage in his life seen the importance and relevance of the American ecumenical movement. He was active in, for example, both the National and the World Council of Churches. As one of the founders of the non-denominational magazine *Christianity and Crisis*, Bennett had manifested himself even more firmly as a strong supporter of an ecumenical America. But he was also a Christian critic of U.S. politics, which he never saw as a violation of the traditional separation of church and state: “Church-state relations in the United States have never meant that churchmen should separate their Christian ethics from political action.”⁴²

The youngest member of the CCAV was Richard John Neuhaus. In 1950, at the age of fourteen, Neuhaus left Canada for the United States, where he later became a naturalized citizen. Following his father's footsteps, Neuhaus became a Lutheran pastor in 1960, after receiving his Master of Divinity degree from the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. In 1961, Neuhaus was assigned to work at St. John the Evangelist Church in Brooklyn, New York, a church in a largely African-American and Puerto Rican neighborhood.⁴³ Working as a pastor in a racially mixed congregation, Neuhaus became more closely involved with the CRM. He wrote speeches for King and served as a liaison between King's organization in the South and the militant New Left movement in the North, which protested housing discrimination, urban poverty and the Vietnam War. Due to Neuhaus' contributions to

⁴² David Stout, “John C. Bennett, a Theologian of Outspoken Views, Dies at 92,” *New York Times*, 2 May 1995, <http://nytimes.com>.

⁴³ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 19.

the CRM and early protest against the war in Vietnam, he was one of the relatively few activists from the conservative theology of the Lutheran Church.⁴⁴

Probably one of the most influential Jewish board members of the CCAV was Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. This influence was largely, and arguably mainly, due to his eloquent way with words. Heschel was born and raised in Poland. At the age of thirty he earned a Ph. D. from the University of Berlin. In 1938, however, Heschel was forced to flee Germany. After having lived in Warsaw and London, he finally arrived in America in 1940 where he became a naturalized citizen three years later. Sadly, Heschel's mother and three sisters were not as fortunate and did not survive the war. Heschel had lost one sister in a German bombing, two other sisters died in Nazi concentration camps and his mother was murdered by Nazis. He never returned to Germany, Austria or Poland and once wrote: "If I should go to Poland or Germany, every stone, every tree would remind me of contempt, hatred, murder, of children killed, of mothers burned alive, of human beings asphyxiated."⁴⁵ Clearly, Heschel had seen his share of horrifying consequences of war and racial discrimination. It is likely that the experiences of his early life have had a profound impact on his role in the CCAV. Regardless of the influences, however, it remains an indisputable fact that Heschel had one of the most prophetic voices of the organization.⁴⁶

Of the five main founders of the CCAV Daniel Berrigan was the most rebellious persona. During his life Berrigan became known as "the priest who stayed out in the cold" and as "the holy outlaw."⁴⁷ Berrigan was born in Virginia, Minnesota in 1921. His father, a socialist farmer and railroad engineer, raised him and his five brothers on a small farm near Syracuse, New York. From an early age Berrigan had

⁴⁴ Hall, *Because of their Faith*, 19.

⁴⁵ Susannah Heschel, eds., *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity Essays by Abraham Joshua Heschel* (New York : Farrar Strauss, 1996), excerpts on: <http://home.versatel.nl/heschel/Susannah.htm>.

⁴⁶ Wikipedia: Abraham Joshua Heschel http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Joshua_Heschel.

⁴⁷ Encyclopedia of World Biography: Daniel J. Berrigan, on <http://www.bookrags.com/>

already decided that he wanted to dedicate his life to the Christian faith and by the age of 18 he joined the Society of Jesus, where he was ordained a priest in 1952. Soon after his ordination, Berrigan was sent to France where he became captivated by the combination of socialism, priesthood and ideas of civil disobedience. Upon his final return to America in 1964, Berrigan and his brother Philip (also a Catholic Priest, be it from another order) became instantly involved in the protest movement against U.S. policy in Vietnam. Daniel and Philip Berrigan were among the first Catholic priests to speak out against the war and they urged young men to resist the draft. When it became apparent that the power of the voice proved insufficient, the Berrigan brothers fervently applied civil disobedience to meet their goals, resulting in many arrests throughout the Vietnam War and (in Daniel Berrigan's case) even after. A year after their arrival back in America, in 1965, both Berrigans decided to join William Sloane Coffin, Jr. in the New York coalition of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam.⁴⁸

Under the leadership of these New York clergymen, the early actions of the CCAV proved successful. One of the most successful of these early actions was a CCAV sponsored and organized study conference in early November. In calling for the conference, Rabbi Heschel clearly explained the unacceptability and immorality of the war and reasons for the necessity of joint action:

For many years I felt that the Federal government had all the facts and was competent to make the necessary decisions. But in the last few weeks I have changed my mind completely. I have previously thought that we were

⁴⁸ Encyclopedia of World Biography: Daniel J. Berrigan, on <http://www.bookrags.com/>

waging war reluctantly, with sadness at killing so many people. I realize that we are doing it now with pride in our military efficiency.⁴⁹

CCAV invited 5,000 New York-area clerics to attend the conference, to which several hundred attended and passed a resolution, which declared “the conflict in Vietnam, according to our religious convictions, is not a just war.”⁵⁰ The study conference thus seemed successful in terms of attendance and the passing of the resolution.

The Catholic Church was undergoing some significant changes between 1962 and 1965 when the Second Vatican Council convened periodically. Amongst other things, Vatican II updated its social program. From the late nineteenth century the Catholic Church supported movements of workers and the poor, as long as they were not Marxists or other secular radicals. The final document of Vatican II concluded that the anxieties and grievances of the followers of Christ would be considered their own. Meaning that the Catholic Church would no longer stand by and watch the struggles of ordinary men, in stead, they would offer support for their Christian followers.⁵¹ In this context increasing Catholic support for the antiwar movement was anticipated. However for Daniel Berrigan the changes had not come soon enough. The ecumenical character of the CCAV was jeopardized heavily by an empty chair that marked Berrigan’s absence. Berrigan, including two other Jesuits (Francis Keating and Daniel Kilfoyle) had become the victims of the influence of the Catholic Church. Berrigan’s religious superiors ordered him to end his associations with groups or individuals involved in discussions of the Vietnam War, consequently he was sent to South America on an assignment. The CCAV risked losing one of their most

⁴⁹ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 14, 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵¹ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided. The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 248.

important members when his name was removed as a co-chair of the organization. In a joint statement following the Berrigan incident, Heschel and Neuhaus declared that they were shocked by Berrigan's sudden reassignment:

We find it difficult to appreciate a form of religious authority that is exercised in a manner offensive to our common Jewish and Christian understanding of human dignity. We are also saddened because an injury has been done to the ecumenical character of the conferences' leadership.⁵²

The ecumenical character indeed had been injured. Daniel Berrigan was one of few Catholic members of the CCAV. His removal from the list as a co-chair thus provided an example of the pressures to which other antiwar clergy could be subjected, thereby discouraging them from joining these types of events.

The reactions to Berrigan's sudden exile did not merely come from CCAV members. A number of students from the Catholic Fordham University in New York picketed Cardinal Spellman's (the Archbishop of New York) residence, demanding Berrigan's return. Other pickets soon followed at St. John's and Fordham universities. The Catholic periodical *Commonweal* also protested the entire incident; they stated that Berrigan's exile was "a shame and a scandal, a disgustingly blind totalitarian act."⁵³ By the end of December several hundred young Jesuits even threatened to leave the order if Berrigan was not recalled, which finally happened in mid-February.

The CRM, the religious press and the presidential campaign of 1964 produced a forum for the New Breed clergymen to comment and discuss U.S. foreign policy. In

⁵² Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 15.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 15.

the course of these developments the first interdenominational efforts to protest the war became noticeable to the public. However, the government was still able to ignore the clerical pleads. Moreover, it attacked the entire antiwar movement, including the highly respectable members of clerical America, and carried on with their aggressive policy in Vietnam. The CCAV clergymen managed to gain support from several denominations in favor of their protests in New York. The authority of the Catholic Church and the initial removal of Berrigan's name from the CCAV list seemed to cause trouble for their interdenominational effort. However, the authoritarian act turned out to be exactly what the New York clerics needed to start planning ecumenical religious protests nationwide. In the next chapter we will see how the New York based CCAV was forced to take matters even further and transformed into a national organization.

3 Religious protest going national

Apart from providing a clear example of the Catholic Church's influence and the difficulties facing interreligious cooperation to halt the War in Vietnam, the Berrigan incident also revealed the large amount of support in favor of an ecumenical movement against the war. Encouraged by this support, the leaders of the CCAV recognized the potential for a nationwide organization. The possibilities of this nationwide expansion were discussed in the apartment of John C. Bennett on January 11, 1966. As of that day, the clerics named themselves the National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam (NEC). During the meeting, the NEC decided to mobilize and organize clergy and their congregations across the country to support an indefinite bombing halt and negotiated settlement. But, how would the NEC mobilize clerical America in the antiwar movement, while at the same time dodging the Church's and government's influence and its harassments? Who were mobilized? And what did this 'mobilization' entail?

The National Emergency Committee

The National Emergency Committee agreed that their first objective should be to augment a national board, preferably one that consisted of at least one cardinal. As the Berrigan incident had shown, the Catholic Church proved too grand an authority for many Catholics to set aside. The committee felt that adding at least one cardinal would give the entire national organization more authority. This, however, proved even more difficult than they had anticipated. The committee came close when the

archbishop of Boston, Richard Cardinal Cushing, agreed to join the organization in January, but he withdrew his name a week later.⁵⁴

Even though the listing of a prominent Catholic member to the NEC proved difficult, by the end of January the committee had successfully constructed a list of forty names of the most prominent religious leaders in America. Taken together, these forty men, who would from that point function as the national board of the NEC, provided an interesting profile. Consisting only of men, these antiwar activists were for the most part theological liberals. Theological liberals placed a great emphasis on divine presence in the world and believed strongly in social as well as individual transformation. Moreover, they concerned themselves with building the kingdom of God and applying liberalism as referred to in the Social Gospel to achieve the Kingdom of God. Theological liberals were overwhelmingly postmillennialist, which meant that the Second Coming would not happen until mankind rids itself from social evils by human effort. The theological liberal was therefore likely to be a political activist, which fits Cox's picture of the politically activist New Breed flawlessly.

Although the national board of the NEC consisted of members from various religious backgrounds, Protestants were most widely represented with a large majority of 28 members. Most Protestants came from the liberal moderate theologies (e.g. Methodist, Episcopal and Presbyterian) and the moderate conservative (Lutheran and Northern Baptist) churches. Methodists and the United Church of Christ held the strongest antiwar views, while the more conservative Southern Baptists and Missouri Synod Lutherans were, by contrast, much more likely to favor military escalation.⁵⁵ The second largest religious group, with a total of seven committee members, was the Jewish community. Like the Protestants, the Jewish members were, for the most part,

⁵⁴ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

members from the most liberal of the American branches of Judaism. The disproportionate number of Jews and Roman Catholics (five) compared to the large majority of Protestants was roughly in line with public opinion. Compared to the broader antiwar movement, Jews were much more likely to oppose the war than were Protestants, who opposed the war slightly more than Catholics. Although the Jewish population seemed underrepresented in the NEC, considering their minority status in the American population, this was not the case.

The same comparisons with public opinion can be made with regard to places of residence within America. Half of the committee members lived in New York City, which was logical considering the CCAV's original location of operation. In total, however, nearly three-fourths of the NEC resided on the eastern seaboard stretching from Boston to Washington. Five members came from Chicago and only one, Martin Luther King, Jr., lived in the south. The differing attitudes towards the war in Vietnam were also reflected in the broader antiwar movement. In the eastern parts of the country, people were consistently less likely to approve of any kind of escalation of the war than Americans from other regions.⁵⁶

These similarities between the national board and the broader antiwar movement were not, infinite. The committee differed from the wider movement in two crucial ways. While African Americans and women were significantly more likely to oppose the war than any other segment of the population, the NEC members were, without exception, all male and nearly all of them were white (again, with Martin Luther King Jr. as the exception). The most important difference between the broader antiwar sentiments and the makeup of the national board, however, was the

⁵⁶ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 16-18.

distinction between active opposition and passive public opinion. As historian Mitchell K. Hall mentioned in *Because of Their Faith*:

Millions of people who opposed the war never acted. What set the men of the National Emergency Committee apart was that, for most of them, Vietnam was an important stage in a lifetime of active concern for making moral choices in the political world.⁵⁷

Made up of only men, mostly white people and for the larger part of Protestants, the politically activist board members now had to lay down the groundwork for the organization of a nationwide religious protest movement against the Vietnam War. This meant that the national board first had to define the goals and objectives of the organization and the means they would use to achieve these goals.

Like the CCAV's main objective, encouragement of the President toward a negotiated settlement continued to be the primary objective for the NEC. The negotiated settlement these clergy envisioned included an indefinite extension in the bombing halt of North Vietnam and official recognition of the National Liberation Front as a partner in the negotiations. Moreover, military spending had to be limited and reassigned to humanitarian aid in Vietnam. Further escalation of the war was, as far as the NEC was concerned, absolutely out of the question. The committee further decided that they would refrain from using any kind of civil disobedience to achieve their goals. The methods, which the NEC did apply to make their arguments heard, were primarily limited to sending letters and telegrams to the White House and newspapers. In prohibiting civil disobedience and thereby expressing a determination

⁵⁷ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 18.

to reach the American political center, the NEC had presented itself as a moderate peace organization. Being a national moderate peace organization would, of course, not have any significance if they would not continue building a national network, which executive secretary William Sloan Coffin set out to do in the next months.

The NCC provided an office for Coffin to start building this network. In the first week Coffin started organizing several local chapters in the major cities across the country. Their chosen strategy was fairly simple; all the committee members provided a list of clergy and veterans of the CRM who might oppose the war. Coffin later explained that several volunteers worked outside the office and outside office hours (because of the major time differences) to locate “by phone two or three clergy in communities in every state, put them in touch with each other, urge them to go to work and ask them to report back in a week what they had done.”⁵⁸ Within the first few days and weeks the NEC had managed to organize 165 local communities in twenty states. Nearly half of those local communities had been active in passing resolutions opposing escalation, holding press conferences and organizing discussion groups.

Although the local communities and local chapters seemed to grow successfully and became actively involved in the antiwar movement, nothing seemed to change politically. On January 31, 1966, it became evident that the clergy had failed to realize their main goals to maintain a bombing halt and prevent further escalation. On that day, President Johnson ordered a new bombing campaign on the North of Vietnam. Furthermore, no real attempt had been made to renew negotiations with the Hanoi government and the NLF. Although the Hanoi government had also seemed reluctant to start negotiations with U.S. officials, the committee was particularly disappointed with the U.S. government because of their misleading claims that the war

⁵⁸ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 21.

was solely a result of northern aggression. As a result of the growing disillusionment with the American government, the NEC redefined their goals and the arguments used to legitimize these goals. In the spring of 1966, the NEC had reached a consensus on its basic position through a series of articles and official statements. Military victory now had been equated with moral and political defeat. If successful, the government would have to resort to indefinite occupation, which, as they saw it, could escalate to the use of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the steering committee argued that an “intensification of the war threatened détente with the Soviet Union, distracted attention from more important domestic and foreign problems, and alienated America’s allies while it presented the world with an image of neocolonialism.”⁵⁹

During the first months of 1966, the national network of the NEC had resulted in the intensification of educating the public on the war in Vietnam, organizing debates, vigils and press conferences and the publication of many official statements and editorials. Unfortunately, the actions did, again, not lead to the desired results. The government still refused to participate in peace negotiations if the NLF was involved and continued their military actions in North Vietnam. The continued governmental ignorance called for another chapter in the religious protests against the war in Vietnam, and a renewal of the national organization. This time, the committee stated, they would stay for the duration of the war.

Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam

In May 1966, the steering committee of the NEC recognized the need for a full-time executive director if they wanted to exert influence nationally and plan nationwide protests. Coffin contacted an old friend, Richard Fernandez, about the job. Fernandez

⁵⁹ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 23.

was a civil rights activist and ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. Coinciding with Fernandez' arrival to the organization, the committee changed their name to Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV) to include laypeople, since most Catholic support for the movement came from the lay public. While Fernandez focused on building a wider national structure, limited actions continued to take place. Especially in New York, where Neuhaus, Heschel and Daniel Berrigan led a two-day fast with about 150 people during the Fourth of July holiday. Even though the action protocols remained the same, for the first time a hint of moral, instead of political argumentation was noticeable in the national committee member's speeches and interviews. During the two-day fast Heschel spoke out this new changing moralistic view and stated that America had been "enticed by her own might" and elaborated on U.S. military arrogance: "there is nothing so vile as the arrogance of the military mind." The growing disgust with the nation's policies proved difficult to accept for many of the national committee members, Fernandez expressed his dismay in terms of a fading trust for their nation's government:

Six months ago, most of us would have said that some very good men in Washington had made some very bad mistakes from which they should try to extricate themselves as soon as possible. Today it seems that this kind of judgment is both out of date and inaccurate.⁶⁰

The growing discontent with the administration led Fernandez to focus on cooperating with the antiwar movement at large. One of his first attempts occurred in July 1966. The University Teach-In Committee of Cleveland had organized a conference uniting

⁶⁰ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 28-30.

fifteen moderate peace organizations, including CALCAV. Their main intent was to coordinate events and protests nationally to improve and duplicate all efforts to stop the Vietnam War.

It wasn't until 1967 that more actions were being organized through an umbrella agency, which was to keep all factions headed in the same direction. With Muste in the driver seat, the Spring Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (Spring Mobe) scheduled national actions in New York and San Francisco. The Spring Mobe demonstrations of April 15 were, however, not officially supported by CALCAV. Although Fernandez continued the mobilization and continued to improve connections to the broader antiwar movement, the members of the steering committee were worried that they would lose their moderate image and their good relations with the U.S. administration, because of the participation of radical groups in the Spring Mobe events. They therefore decided that CALCAV would not officially and publicly support the actions, but they did encourage people to individually and independently participate in the demonstrations to protest U.S. policy in Vietnam.⁶¹

Inspired by the plans for April 15, the steering committee started planning their own national demonstration. Beginning on January 31, American clergymen of all faiths were invited to participate in a two-day demonstration in Washington D.C. During these two days the goals were to meet heads of other social activist groups of various denominations and to present CALCAV, and Clerical America, as a significant protest group against the Vietnam War. CALCAV attempted to attract at least one Roman Catholic bishop or cardinal to their cause. Again, however, without the desired

⁶¹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 172-174.

results. The silence of the churches they so eagerly tried to break thus would remain in tact for, at least, Roman Catholics.⁶²

With or without Catholic support, the two-day demonstration in Washington D.C. seemed to be a success. After two days of vigils, discussion groups and the education of religious leaders to organize local demonstrations, with 2,500 participants from 47 states (and Canada) the religious antiwar movement seemed to matter and might even be able to make a difference. However, one day after CALCAV's national demonstrations, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara met with Bennett, Coffin, Heschel, Neuhaus, the Presbyterian Robert McAfee Brown, Rabbi Jacob Weinstein (President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis) and Catholic layman Michael Novak. After the off-the-record meeting the clerics, as Coffin later stated, agreed "it was a dangerous world when so much evil could be done by a man who was really 'a nice guy.'"⁶³

A further success of this first CALCAV nationwide mobilization was that the representatives of the Catholic Church finally started to speak out against the war. In the first week of March, at a CALCAV-sponsored conference, Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan of Atlanta announced that: "Our conscience and our voice must be raised against the savagery and terror of war."⁶⁴ Moreover, less than two weeks after Hallinan's announcement, Auxiliary Bishop James P. Shannon of St. Paul-Minneapolis, joined ten Roman Catholic college presidents in the endorsement of an open letter to American Catholics. In this open letter the traditional Catholic principal of a 'just war' was briefly touched upon. The principal of a 'just war' consists of two criteria. The first one, *jus in bello*, stresses the acceptable behavioral conduct within war. While the second criterion, *jus ad bellum*, focuses on the right to go to war.

⁶² Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 33.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

In the open letter, Shannon and his colleagues criticized their fellow American Catholics for their uncritical support of the war, and military conduct in that war in particular. The bombing of civilians, napalm attacks, fragmentation bombs and torture of prisoners were heavily discussed and frowned upon by these Catholic men, thus condemning the war by the principles of *jus in bello*. After the open letter was issued, Shannon would become one of the leading Roman Catholic voices within CALCAV.⁶⁵

Another prominent American Catholic, Father John B. Sheerin, editor of *Catholic World*, adopted an even more vigorous tone towards his fellow American Catholics. Sheerin took the principles of a 'just war' a step further and criticized the war in terms of *jus ad bellum*. According to this criterion, a war should only be fought when the direct goal is to protect innocent lives and when it is an absolute last resort and all alternative peaceful solutions have been exhausted. Furthermore, the anticipated benefits and victory must outweigh the expected evils and hardship as a consequence of that war. Applying these principals of *jus ad bellum*, Sheerin heavily questioned American integrity and adherence to national and international law in this war and even doubted whether U.S. victory would outweigh the negative consequences of this particular war.⁶⁶

Despite this growth in Catholic support, Catholics still remained relatively quiet on Vietnam. Even Sheerin, who, like Shannon, had become one of the most important Catholic voices within CALCAV, still remained on the safe side in approaching fellow Catholics. A clear example of this careful approach was Sheerin's continued support for President Johnson and his preference for study groups over

⁶⁵ Wikipedia: Just War, Jus in Bello, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_War.

⁶⁶ Wikipedia: Just War, Jus ad Bellum, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_War, and Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 40.

active involvement, since “most peace demonstrations seem to attract bearded beatniks whose presence does a disservice to the cause.”⁶⁷

Setting these problems aside, CALCAV and other antiwar organizations continued their joined efforts against U.S. policy in Vietnam. On April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. finally dismissed his advisors’ opinions and fervently spoke out against the war at the Riverside Church in New York City, sponsored by CALCAV. This speech took place only a few days before his address to the American public at the United Nation’s Building during the April 15 demonstrations, organized by the Spring Mobe. King was asked to act as a keynote speaker at this event, which he decided to attend. However, because of their more radical character, he first contacted Fernandez about speaking at Riverside Church in advance of that demonstration, to ensure his independence from the far left. King’s decision to dismiss his advisors and dismiss possible accusations of communism seemed irrational, since it jeopardized the Civil Rights legislation (which would be signed by President Johnson seven days after King’s assassination in 1968). However, as he expressed in the Riverside speech: “I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghetto’s without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today – my own government.”⁶⁸ A few days later King became a co-chair of CALCAV.

The first half of 1967 proved to be relatively successful months in terms of American religious protest against the war. The NCC had set the tone for many churches to follow, though not necessarily by disregarding governmental decisions as wrong and unjust, but through a call for greater candor from their government and independence

⁶⁷ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 40.

⁶⁸ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 172.

for South Vietnam. Like CALCAV, the NCC recommended bombing halts, a general cease-fire and negotiations with the NLF. CALCAV in particular had booked marvelous results in the first half of 1967. It had grown into a national organization with 78 local chapters and could add 12,000 people to their mailing list.⁶⁹ CALCAV thus had located itself firmly in the broader antiwar movement and successfully tied many religious groups, though mainly Protestant and Jewish and only some Catholic, to its cause. Furthermore, in tying Martin Luther King, Jr. to their cause they gained more credibility nationwide. The religious antiwar movement thus seemed to flourish in these first few months of 1967. However, beneath the surface frustration with the government did not cease to grow. Some policymakers continued to ignore CALCAV arguments for a moral solution to this decidedly immoral and unjust war. In the next few months the frustrations grew even further, which led some prominent members of CALCAV, to adopt a new approach and a new method to end the war.

Religious Obedience

The first marker of this new approach appeared in October 1967. On the 25th of that month CALCAV released a new statement, which claimed that vocal support for the antiwar movement would no longer suffice and, more importantly, urged supporters of nonviolent resistance to adopt a more active role. The *Statement on Conscience and Conscriptio*n accepted and legitimized civil disobedience as a form of religious obedience. This religious obedience took shape throughout the remainder of that year and the beginning of the next year in a number of ways.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 47.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

An early act of this religious obedience was the growing support for the draft resisters and deserters. On January 5, 1968, the federal grand jury in Boston indicted five prominent members of the antiwar movement, including William Sloan Coffin on count of conspiracy to “counsel, aid and abet young men to violate the draft laws.” Coffin and the other four of the so-called ‘Boston Five’ were released on January 29, on \$1,000 bond each.⁷¹ Another example of CALCAV’s growing support for the antidraft movement were the Catonsville Nine. The two brothers, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, were both part of these nine Catholic men and women who walked into the office of Local Draft Board 33 in Catonsville, Maryland on the May 17, 1968. Once inside they got hold of the draft files, which they emptied in wire trash baskets. They calmly moved outside to a nearby parking lot and doused the trash baskets and their contents with homemade napalm and set fire to it. The event was carefully planned and press and cameramen were alerted to witness the Catonsville Nine’s actions. After their arrests Daniel and Philip Berrigan were sentenced to two years. To escape this jail time and keep protesting, the Berrigan brothers both dropped from sight directly after the court’s decision. Philip was captured only 11 days later, but Daniel remained at liberty for several months. Before his captivation, however, Daniel managed to make several appearances in public, protesting the war.⁷²

Another move away from CALCAV’s earlier approaches directed at educating public opinion and lobbying government leaders to change the nation’s foreign policy, was their attack on a defense contractor, Dow Chemical Company, a producer of napalm. Several letters were sent throughout 1968 and numerous demonstrations were held at the gates. Five CALCAV representatives participated in the annual stockholder’s meeting and informed the stockholders of the devastating effects of

⁷¹ Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*, 149.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 229.

napalm and urged Dow to terminate their contract with the Defense Department. In March 1969 demonstrations continued when six Catholic priests raided Dow's Washington office by throwing files out the windows, placing pictures of victims of napalm attacks and by pouring blood on furniture. Dow kept denying all accusations made by CALCAV and the antiwar movement for nearly four years of enduring demonstrations at their offices. Although the priests of the March 1969 demonstrations were arrested and found guilty during trial, Dow Chemical Company obviously felt the heat underneath its feet for fear of ruining their public image and allowed its contract to expire. Chairman Carl Gerstacker stated that they had been hurt by the demonstrations, and wished he had never heard of napalm.⁷³ Convinced that the company had intentionally overbid the contract, Fernandez wrote a letter of thanks to its president.⁷⁴

The teach-in at Dow Chemical Company and the growing active support for the antidraft movement were clear examples of CALCAV's newly adopted acceptance of civil disobedience. Not all CALCAV members were fond of this new method, therefore, CALCAV continued planning their 'normal' activities. These activities consisted, amongst other things, of supporting a new peace candidate for the Presidential elections and the careful planning of a second national mobilization. After Robert Kennedy was assassinated on June 5, the hope of a new President who would be sympathetic to the aims of the antiwar movement was eliminated. Hubert Humphrey was the only Democratic Presidential candidate opposing the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon. Humphrey seemed to be the lesser of evils, which resulted in CALCAV public support for Humphrey.

⁷³ David R. Farber, *The Sixties. From Memory to History* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 181.

⁷⁴ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 88.

In the prelude to the elections CALCAV organized a second national mobilization early in 1968. On February 5, over 2,000 people gathered in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church for the opening speeches. The next morning the participants were able to chose between two separate conferences. Neuhaus chaired the session on “The Religious Community and Politics 1968”, which approximately 400 people attended. Underlining changing attitudes and the actuality of the subject, the second session on “The Religious Community and the Draft”, led by, amongst others Coffin, drew a crowd of over 1,200 people.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that a consensus ruled at this conference, many participants were still not keen on the idea of civil disobedience. CALCAV had even succeeded in attracting a right-wing fundamentalist counter protest group to the national mobilization in Washington. The American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) opposed CALCAV and expressed their support for U.S. policy in Vietnam. The ACCC were not the only ones breathing down the necks of CALCAV members. This second national mobilization also caught the eye of the FBI. The FBI could, however, even with the full cooperation from CALCAV members, not find a single clue of any existing communist affiliations or violent tendencies.

Despite another rather successful national mobilization and CALCAV’s continued growth – by March the mailing list consisted of 20,000 names and ninety active local chapters – and public support for Hubert Humphrey, Nixon was elected President of the United States in November 1968. Setting aside their disappointment over Nixon’s election CALCAV quickly turned to the issue of amnesty and urged their

⁷⁵ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 63.

members to visit imprisoned draft violators, evaders and deserters as a way of supporting their commitment against the war.⁷⁶

Coinciding with the beginning of the planned national mobilization, CALCAV released a new book, which served as its most blatant condemnation of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Five students helped Professor Seymour Melman, of Columbia University, to construct a study of American military conduct in Vietnam, which resulted in the book *In the Name of America*. The book started by stating that:

The news dispatches that follow do not make pleasant reading. Their cumulative effect is overpowering, for they do not merely confirm what we all know, that the war in Vietnam is dirty and inhumane, but they also establish something few of us have known, that American conduct in Vietnam has been characterized by consistent violation of almost every international agreement relating to rules of warfare.⁷⁷

It further appealed to the reader's ethical and moral sense by questioning what it does to a nation's soul "when it trains its young men to engage in what becomes the indiscriminate slaughter of women, children, the aged and defenseless, when it teaches its soldiers to destroy crops and thereby hasten the malnutrition of already feeble children?" and, so it continued, "What scars are left on the lives of those who are told that it is fitting and proper for them to do such things?"⁷⁸

The researchers thoroughly studied The Hague and Geneva Conventions related to the conduct of war and concluded that several laws had been broken. Torture

⁷⁶ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 75.

⁷⁷ Seymour Melman, *In the Name of America* (Virginia: The Turnpike Press, Inc., 1968), 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

of war prisoners, random destroying of villages, gas attacks and many other war crimes on civilians as well as prisoners of war were researched and heavily condemned. It further concluded that every person who knew of all the wrongdoings, was responsible:

The citizen who knows of wrongs committed in the name of his country, and remains silent, is thereby implicated in the perpetuation of those wrongs. In a free society, if some men are guilty, all men are responsible. And it is because we feel a sense of responsibility for actions committed in the name of our nation that we release this report.⁷⁹

The release of the book was an overwhelming success. It received front-page coverage in twenty-four newspapers and, within a year and a half CALCAV sold nearly 30,000 copies of the book.

After Nixon's inauguration early in 1969, the antiwar movement at large did not have the hope and confidence that he was going to end the war quickly. Nixon's announced troop withdrawal did not change the fact that 1969 became the high peak in national antiwar demonstrations. Likewise, CALCAV experienced a high peak in the number of demonstrations and in the amount of support for their movement.

⁷⁹ Seymour Melman, *In the Name of America*, 11.

The Rise and Fall

Although the war in Vietnam – and American participation in that war – continued between 1968 and 1971, President Nixon had succeeded in winning the majority of the public opinion. In the spring of 1969 Nixon announced the withdrawal of American troops as part of his Vietnamization plan. His plan was to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese and bring more and more American troops home. Although he had invested extensively in strengthening South Vietnam so they could fight on their own, he nevertheless wanted to show the North their strength. Therefore, in April 1970 he announced the invasion of the neutral Cambodia. The invasion was anticipated by the antiwar movement and infuriated the American public,beit briefly. The protests against American presence in Vietnam continued and created a high peak in antiwar demonstrations from the fall of 1969.⁸⁰

As part of this high peak and responding to the announced invasion of Cambodia in April 1970, CALCAV planned its third Washington Mobilization in February and, coinciding the mobilization, released a new position paper at a press conference. *The Reconciliation we Seek* dealt with the same issues that the previous statements and the book had addressed, however, the 1969 paper was even more critical and focused on the war's conclusion and devoted some of its attention to other social and political issues. Some of the paper's most extreme proposals were “amnesty for all draft resisters and deserters, aid for the reconstruction of postwar Vietnam, financial restitution to black citizens for past injustices and the elimination of the draft.”⁸¹ On the final day of the mobilization Neuhaus exemplified this more radical

⁸⁰ John Morton Blum, *Years of Discord. American Politics and Society, 1961-1974* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1991), 349-351.

⁸¹ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 79.

and strident rhetoric in his sermon where he referred to the Vietnamese as “God’s instrument for bringing the American empire to its knees.”⁸²

As mentioned, *Reconciliation We Seek* focused on putting a total stop to the war, but it differed from its predecessors in its increasingly radical tone. CALCAV had become more and more active in supporting and helping draft resisters and deserters, which, consequently, raised suspicions with the FBI. Especially after the appearance of a CALCAV newsletter *Issues and Actions* of May 1969, J. Edgar Hoover ordered an investigation. In this newsletter CALCAV asked for more people willing to help future deserters, providing them with a home and a place to work so they would not be detected. The FBI was, however, unsuccessful in finding any evidence against CALCAV.⁸³

As support for draft resisters intensified, so did other antiwar activities. The New Mobilization Committee (New Mobe) organized the so-called March Against Death on Thursday, November 13. With the help of, amongst others, CALCAV and the WCC, the New Mobe had managed to mobilize no less than forty-five thousand people to walk in the March Against Death. Each participant represented an American serviceman that was killed in Vietnam or a Vietnamese village that was destroyed by the ongoing war. In groups of twelve hundred at a time, a four-mile walk took them from Arlington Memorial Bridge to the White House. At the White House, each person carrying a placard of the name of the fallen soldier or village, spoke that name out loud and continued marching to Pennsylvania Avenue and finally placing their placards in forty waiting caskets at the west front of the Capitol. On Saturday morning

⁸² Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 81.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 92.

all caskets filled with the placards were then carried, at the head of the mass march to the Washington Monument.⁸⁴

The national office of CALCAV urged its members to participate in this event. Richard Fernandez even took precedence in the New Mobe's steering committee. CALCAV's active support for the New Mobe event shows a remarkable difference from the support for the April 15, 1967 Spring Mobe demonstrations. Whereas in 1967 CALCAV was more careful to associate its name to the more left-of-center demonstrations, two years later they seemed more eager to stop the war by any means necessary, even if this meant associating itself to a more radical organization.

For nearly two years Nixon's Vietnamization process was in full sway. Nevertheless, the war continued and promises were not being kept, however, America at large did not seem to notice and became increasingly convinced that all American troops would be coming home soon. The antiwar movement thus had to deal with an increasingly apathetic public. And soon after its high peak in 1969 the demonstrations increasingly lost their members and, therefore, had to pay in terms of effecting public opinion. Moreover, the antiwar coalition began to splinter. The left wing of the national antiwar movement split into people who were willing to give Nixon a chance and those who were not. The Students for a Democratic Society split into several rival factions of which the most well known were the so-called Weathermen. Corresponding with the state of mind of the increasing grimness of citizens who were still convinced the war had to end immediately, the Weathermen were a very radical militant group who organized street demonstrations in which vandalism and violence

⁸⁴ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 262, 263.

were not uncommon.⁸⁵ Other organizations either strictly focused on the war, like the National Peace Action Coalition, or preferred to become a broader multi-issue organization, hoping the war would end soon.

In similar fashion the national CALCAV underwent several changes during this period and dropped two letters from its name. CALC (Clergy and Laity Concerned) too had started to focus on more issues than just ending the war. CALC also experienced changes in terms of their membership. Most likely as a consequence of the previously mentioned Vatican II, Catholics were increasingly supportive of the interreligious antiwar movement. By contrast, the Jewish membership decreased, partially because Nixon was a strong supporter of Israel, whom they therefore did not want to upset.⁸⁶

The losses in terms of effective demonstrations became apparent for CALC early in 1971. In February of that year Nixon had ordered the invasion of Laos. Although these renewed hostilities were almost immediately met with an answer from the larger antiwar movement consisting of 50,000 people gathering to demonstrate in Washington, this was a temporary revival of the antiwar demonstrations. CALC presented its own answer to these renewed hostilities on February 16 when CALC called for a Washington mobilization. During this mobilization a strikingly different approach towards the government revealed itself. Effectiveness was no longer explained in terms of changing U.S. policy, in stead "... [effectiveness is] whether or not we are going to be individually and corporately incapacitated by this new military adventurism of the Nixon administration."⁸⁷ This meant that individuals, the American corporate body as well as the government were held equally responsible for the body count and war crimes in Vietnam.

⁸⁵ Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 266, 267

⁸⁶ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 316.

⁸⁷ CALC records quoted in Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 110.

An example of the shift in responsibility had previously been touched upon in 1968 by CALCAV. In this year CALCAV had successfully pressured Dow Chemical to terminate their contract with the Defense Department. By 1971, CALC pointed its arrows on corporations supporting the air war by producing war materials. In December 1971, CALC bought four shares of stock in four corporations: International Telephone & Telegraph, General Electric, Standard Oil and Honeywell, of which the last one would become their main focus. The next step was to attend the annual stockholders meeting in April 1972. Before this annual meeting several awareness demonstrations were organized by local CALC chapters at Honeywell offices in 25 cities. In each of these demonstrations CALC emphasized the responsibility of individual citizens to shape and change U.S. policy. Issues raised by CALC dominated the meeting itself, but it did not stir other stockholders' individual responsibility and could therefore not qualify as an immediate success. It was the small local demonstrations preceding the meeting, which were attended by no more than twenty to fifty people, which pressured Honeywell to respond publicly. A week before the annual meeting Honeywell advertised in local newspapers defending their own position and stating that military requirements and military decisions rested primarily with the Defense Department. Skillfully turning CALC's argument around, Honeywell argued that it was precisely their responsibility and duty as a corporation to carry out the policy created by the nation's elected leaders.⁸⁸

The Honeywell campaign was never as successful as the 1968 campaign on Dow Chemical. Nevertheless, it did reveal a shift in the attitude of the religious protest movement not only towards their own government but also towards their

⁸⁸ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 137.

fellow American citizens who increasingly felt the war was going to end on a short term despite Nixon's renewed aggression.

When Nixon announced continued peace negotiations with North Vietnam in Paris early in 1972, Fernandez was still skeptic the war would indeed end any time soon and feared America was going to believe and stick by Nixon: "I think Nixon's speech last night again peeled off another layer of the anti-war movement into a state of delusion that the war will somehow end."⁸⁹ The "delusion" Fernandez spoke of was a problem to the anti-war movement because it had already peaked, despite ongoing American attacks on North Vietnam. The religious protest movement continued organizing demonstrations, but the attendance of only a couple hundred people could not convince Nixon to halt the war indefinitely. Quite the contrary, on May 8, 1972 Nixon increased attacks on North Vietnam once again. CALC responded by organizing a demonstration in Washington and by appealing to individual responsibility. By focusing on the Presidential elections and their faith in democracy, CALC sponsored the production of several advertisements of which most focused on ordinary citizens with a voice-over explaining the situation, for example:

Charlie Sutton is the foreman of a packing plant in Wilkesville, Ohio, belongs to the All-City Bowling League, and likes to walk his dog on Sunday morning. He contributes regularly to the United Crusade, the Salvation Army, and the Seventh Street Congregational Church. He also contributes regularly to the new war in Southeast Asia: the air war. Just last week, Charlie helped pay for the bombing of about seven villages,

⁸⁹ CALC records quoted in Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 153.

about 200 farms, about 3,000 men, women, and children. What can he do about it? Well, this is sill democracy, isn't it?⁹⁰

Upon winning his second term and broken down peace negotiations, Nixon ordered the most concentrated air raid yet. The so-called "Christmas Bombing" started halfway December and shortly paused for thirty-six hours during Christmas. Approximately twenty-two thousand civilians were killed although the twelve-day air strike was intended to hit only military and industrial targets.⁹¹ Despite the criticisms Nixon received, he succeeded in opening the peace negotiations with Hanoi. On January 27, 1973 the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris Accords that ended America's presence in Vietnam. American troops were being brought home in exchange for the return of U.S. prisoners. Although the war continued until Saigon was occupied in 1975 and the U.S. government kept aiding and supplying South Vietnam until the fall of Saigon, to America and its citizens the war was finally over. The antiwar movement, religious and non-religious, could now focus on providing amnesty for draft resisters and care for their veterans.

The clergymen of the National Emergency Committee succeeded in establishing a national interreligious protest movement against the Vietnam War. Because CALCAV was a clerically led, liberal peace organization it was, although sometimes reluctantly in the case of Hoover, respected among citizens and state officials alike. By aligning themselves with various representatives and religious leaders of several denominations, accusations of anti-patriotism and communism did not stick. As this chapter reveals, as the mobilization of Vietnam either increased or decreased, so did

⁹⁰ Hall, *Because of Their Faith*, 156, 157

⁹¹ DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 343.

the antiwar movement at large as well as the interreligious collaboration. What set the clerical mobilization apart was not the effect they might have had, neither was it that their membership was larger. In stead, what set them apart was how carefully they choose to participate in certain demonstrations or choose to organize their own demonstration in order not to anger the government. However, as clerical pleads were still being ignored and President Nixon publicly announced troop withdrawals followed by another invasion again and again, some clergymen caved and started aligning themselves with more radical organizations. By this point however, it all seemed futile. America was not listening, and the President continued following his own plans and the antiwar movement had to wait until 1973 when peace finally came for America.

Conclusion

There were a number of triggers that sparked the interreligious protests against the Vietnam War. As mentioned the Civil Rights Movement, the development of the religious press and ecumenical bureaucracies and prospects of a new President influenced the debate among the religious community. These factors provided the circumstances, which could then lead to the organization of the vehicle for interreligious protest against the Vietnam War. As the struggles at home and abroad continued, a part of the American religious community felt that they could no longer betray their faith and their God, and had to speak up in His name.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what the results of the religious antiwar movement were in terms of changing U.S. foreign policy. Of course, as the war continued, so did antiwar protests. And as the number of troops in Vietnam grew, so did the number of antiwar demonstrators. As revealed, this also goes for the religious part of the antiwar movement. However, considering years of lobbying and demonstrating without any sign of a stop to the war in Vietnam, it remains uncertain, if not unlikely that the religious protest movement was ever forceful enough to make a difference.

What can be stated with a definite degree of certainty is that American religious cooperation between different denominations was triggered by the growing mishaps in Indochina and mistakes in governmental decisions. As shown above, the interreligious collaboration was given a jolt in times of a shared and common enemy. After World War II the National Council of the Churches of Christ was revived and functioned as a forum for Protestants, Jews and Catholics alike. The advantages to join the NCC were their independence from governmental decisions. Furthermore, after

joining the NCC, one was not obliged to follow and support official statements, leaving all groups with an option, and their independence.

Nevertheless, the NCC was never able to jolt the necessary joint action against governmental decisions in Vietnam. Neither were the already existing Fellowship of Reconciliation, Catholic Worker Movement, War Resisters League and the American Friends Service Committee. Because of the major differences between these organizations (one was either too radical and the other too secular) they were unable to join hands and organize the national religious community to face the government. Not even the individual and deadly actions of LaPorte and Morrison could bring the disputing factions together. The primarily New York based CCAV provided a temporary answer. It had already become apparent that the religious community was eager to speak up, be it through the independent media or through CCAV sponsored rallies and vigils in New York. But the ongoing war called for nationally planned actions. As soon as Abraham Heschel had announced the ongoing actions and nationalization of the New York based religious protest movement, CALCAV provided the answer for laity as well as clergy who did not approve of American governmental decisions.

Through its careful planning and moderate tone, CALCAV served as a bridge between the more cautious and the more radical. Because of this moderate tone and the high degree of respectability of the clergymen involved, it had always maintained good relationships with both the major factions within the antiwar movement, but also with government officials. Although the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover seemed to have a personal dislike of the organization, CALCAV had successfully added Martin Luther King's name to their list, as well as some prominent members of the Catholic community. This resulted in an ever-higher degree of respectability and a stronger

interdenominational character. Because of their image American political leaders such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger were willing to discuss the issue with the well-educated and widely respected men.

Nonetheless, even at the height of protests against the ongoing war CALCAV remained officially on the safe side, careful not to alienate their members. Although individually some of its leaders did turn to civil disobedience, these remained independent actions, which had become officially accepted methods by CALCAV, yet were never officially sponsored by CALCAV as an organization.

CALCAV proved able to both mobilize religious antiwar sentiments and to bridge the gap between the passive observer and the political activist, a gap, which the NCC and smaller religious antiwar groups were never able to close. Even though the Vietnam War continued for many years, and even though it remains undecided if the antiwar movement at large was able to change foreign policy, CALCAV had successfully established a large national ecumenical movement, which was willing to stand up for human rights and willing to challenge U.S. foreign policy for its cause. Through their moderate, yet decisive tone, its clerical backing and their extraordinary achievements to unite Jews, Protestants, and Catholics of all kinds, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam and the interreligious antiwar movement against the Vietnam War have unequivocally earned a unique spot in American religious history.

List of abbreviations

ACCC:	American Council of Christian Churches
AFSC:	American Friends Service Committee
CALCAV:	Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam
CCAV:	Clergy Concerned About Vietnam
CRM:	Civil Rights Movement
CWM:	Catholic Worker Movement
FCCC:	Federal Council of the Churches of Christ
FOR:	Fellowship of Reconciliation
NCC:	National Council of the Churches of Christ (or National Council of Churches)
NEC:	National Emergency Committee of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam
NLF:	National Liberation Front
SCLC:	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
WCC:	World Council of Churches
WRL:	War Resisters League

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