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I. Responses to Howard Schomer's Questions

1. How did your c.o. convictions (or those of someone close to you) relate to nurture received in the Congregational Christian Churches of the pre-war period?

I was brought up in the Milton Church, which was my grandfather's last pastorate before he retired in 1923, when I was 6 years old. My parents were both active in the Church. I went every Sunday, to Sunday School, church and Christian Endeavor in the evening. I remember that in every quarter there was a Sunday School lesson on peace. I also have a vivid memory of seeing, at a YMCA conference, an anti-war booklet with a picture of a soldier whose face had been shot away. I don't recall any mention of c.o.'s or pacifism; but there was a general feeling, which I absorbed, that there wouldn't and couldn't be another world war: the nations had learned their lesson, and the League of Nations had been formed. I don't remember any of the sermons, but the minister was not known as either a pacifist or a militant.

At age 18 (1935) I entered Oberlin College, founded by Congregationalists. The most prominent church in town was the First (Congregational) Church. For almost all the 4 years I attended it, singing in the large choir, ably directed by one of the Conservatory faculty. The sermons were much more intellectual, well delivered and occasionally provocative; probably some had a peace theme, though I don't well recall them. But I came to know the minister, James A. Richards, rather well by attending (about half the time) a Sunday evening discussion for college students at his home. I remember one evening he talked about Harry Emerson Fosdick's positions during, then after WWI, and also about his own. It appears that H.E.F. (or Richards himself -- I'm confused about which) practically sold war bonds from his pulpit -- as many preachers did during WWI; but later he deeply regretted this and said he would never do it again. [Both H.E.F. and J.A.R. did, in fact, keep that pledge, becoming strong pacifists.] That evening gave me a further nudge toward pacifism, though I was not yet ready to commit myself to it. In fact, I took President Wilkins' chapel talk on resisting pledges not to go to war very seriously: I never made such a pledge during the time when such were being circulated among young people.

My first job, 9/39-6/40, was an internship at Westtown School in PA, a Quaker boarding school. This was my first contact with Quakers. By this time WWII had started in Europe, and, though the U.S. was not at war, a draft law was proposed and later passed. I knew I should be faced with a decision about how a Christian should react to military service. But I deliberately postponed considering it until I should be away from the heavily pacifist atmosphere of Westtown, to which I would not be returning in the fall.

That summer, while working at a boy's camp, I did much studying, reading the Bible, praying and taking solitary walks, wrestling with the problem. It was easy to conclude that I was either going to accept military service fully or reject it completely: the 1-A-0 position was out. But I had great difficulty in deciding between 1-A and IV-E (now I-0). My parents knew I was pondering this. Though they did not press me, they suggested I read Mein Kampf and talk with a Quaker professor of philosophy who was not a pacifist. I did both. Just before returning home at the end of the camp season I wrote my parents that I had decided to take the c.o. position. I knew they would be disappointed, and they were; but it did not break up the family. They supported me in my stand, never doubting my sincerity, and served as references on my Form 47 (later Form 150).

The next fall I had a teaching position in Georgia. I registered with all the rest on 10/16/40, though I made no mention of being a c.o. When my classification questionnaire arrived, I signed as a c.o. and filled out Form 47. In June, 1941, I traveled to Oberlin to check it over with Dr. Richards, the Congregational minister I knew well.

Since I had little opportunity to attend the Milton church during and after college years, and the minister was new and knew little about me, I had very little contact with him, and neither of us took any initiative in maintaining any association, though I was still a member. I did not expect or receive any financial support from the Church; I tried not to depend on my parents; and I paid out \$35 a month from my savings account for the first 13 months in CPS, until the account ran dry. The only official connection, beyond membership, that I can document now is that two of my supporting affidavits for Form 47 were from the then current and the former pastors of the Milton Church. Dr. Richards of Oberlin also wrote an affidavit, as did both of my parents.

2. How did the Congregational fellowship look upon your declaration of conscientious objection?

Since I was seldom able to attend the Milton Church, I don't recall or know of any reaction from it. I visited the Congregational Church in Peacham, VT, a little, as I had attended it regularly for many summers. In the summer of 1946, after release from CPS, I spent a little time in Peacham and received an invitation to speak on CPS from a neighboring church (Congregational, I think) in Danville, VT; so I did that. Regarding the national office of the Congregational Church, I don't recall any contacts, except that I may have utilized some official statement which

might have recognized the c.o. position as a valid one for a Christian. In my Form 47 I referred to the fact that I registered with the General Council of Congregational and Christian Churches in NYC as a c.o. on 10/14/40.

3. How did the local Congregational churches and the national agencies of the denomination actually treat you during your period of alternative service or your prison term?

I had very little contact with Congregational churches or the headquarters after 1939 (college graduation). In particular, I had no correspondence with the Milton Church during or after CPS. I don't know whether the Church kept in touch with its members who were in military service. In 1943-45 I attended a Congregational Church in Philadelphia no more than twice; I also attended a Unitarian church there and taught a Sunday School class for a year; I went to Friends Meetings occasionally. In short, Congregationalism and I mostly ignored each other.

4. How did the Congregational community receive you when you returned to normal civilian life?

After CPS I had no contact with Congregationalism, with two exceptions: (1) When I had brief summer visits to Peacham, VT, I attended the Congregational Church there; earlier, I had attended it regularly during summers from 1926 to 1935: this church received me after CPS on the same basis as before, as a member of a family active in the church. (2) While teaching in Memphis, TN, at a black college (LeMoyne College) sponsored by the American Missionary Association (Congregational), I attended the Second (black) Congregational Church a few times and served for a few weeks as organist; but mostly I attended a nearby white Episcopal church, whose rector was working hard to improve race relations. I would have gone to a Friends Meeting; but Memphis had none at that time. Because of my Westtown teaching experience and, even more, the support, including financial, which Friends gave me in CPS, I was eager to try Friends meetings. Moreover, I did not especially want to return to the Congregational Church, which was not then a peace church and had not seemed interested in the c.o. position I had taken. As soon as I moved to Syracuse, NY, to begin doctoral studies, our family started going to the Friends Meeting, a small, but active one. All the family joined it in 1952. My wife and I are now active in the Albany (NY) Meeting, to which we have transferred.

5. What was the impact of your c.o. history and views on your subsequent service in church and in society, its acceptance or rejection?

The five months (1 - 5/43) in the Cheltenham (MD) CPS unit changed the direction of my life. Cheltenham School was a state juvenile delinquency institution for blacks. Most of the boys came from the Baltimore slums. Several times I used furlough to visit in their home environments boys who had been released -- though many soon came back! This was my first experience with black society -- mainly its seamy side -- and it hit me hard. In addition, the cottage master job I held was very difficult for me: I felt I did not have the quasi-parenting/recreational leadership skills. So I voluntarily transferred back to a base camp. When I later went to CPS Byberry (Philadelphia) (9/43-1/46), I became quite active with Fellowship House, which had an extensive interracial program. When discharged from CPS, I looked for a job combining teaching (which I already enjoyed) and work in race relations. The opening that came was a teaching position in a black college (LeMoyne College), where I remained for 4 years (1946-50). Thus I shifted from high school to college teaching, where I remained until I retired in 1982.

My subsequent service has been mostly through Friends and pacifist organizations, with some continuing contacts with minorities. In these environments I was, of course, accepted. While I have not gone out of my way to be confrontational, my pacifist views and c.o. service have become known among my high school and college classmates, faculty colleagues and students. I have felt generally accepted as a person by these different groups, even though they may not have agreed with my views, and most did not participate with me in such events as peace vigils, demonstrations or marches on Washington. (I'm not sure I understand the last phrase of the question, "its acceptance or rejection".)

6. What other questions do you think important in this effort to discern the meaning of the WWII pacifist witness for the Congregationalists of that era?

It would be interesting to find out which measures, if any, the local Congregational churches and the denominational headquarters took to keep in touch with members (including 1-A-0's) in the armed forces in WWII, and with civilian c.o.'s (in CPS), AND in which ways and why the measures differed. The same questions are relevant today, for there are already a few c.o.'s emerging from our armed forces, and regulations for a draft are already in place, in case a new draft law were enacted. Moreover, the time constraints on applying for c.o. status are severe: only those who prepare c.o. claims months in advance have any chance of success. As Clerk of Albany Meeting I have already had one request for information from a c.o. college student who is worried about a draft. Of whom would a similar Congregational (= United Church) c.o. inquire at a local UCC church or headquarters?