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Conscription and the Catholic Conscience in World War II

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It was not always easy to be Catholic and American. Throughout the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth, U.S. Catholics faced nativist charges that their religion was inimical to a democratic way of political life. Their allegiance to Rome in doctrinal matters also called into question their allegiance to Washington in matters of war and peace. Catholics often went on the counterattack, seeking to prove their critics wrong with defensive explanations long on rhetoric but short on substance.¹ Catholics also went to war, accepting America's wars as just with little critical reflection. Of the nation's four thousand conscientious objectors to World War I, only four were Catholic.² Most Catholics apparently suspected that for many Americans the litmus test for patriotism lay in whether one answered an uncritical "yes" when the nation called its citizens to arms.³ It was a well-founded suspicion, for the equation of military service during war with patriotism is prominent in the history of not only this nation-state, but most nation-states.⁴

The multifaceted response of the Catholic Worker movement to World War II revealed that Catholicism can nurture and affirm the independent thought and moral judgment that is the lifeblood of the democratic experiment. As war fever heated up and the nation carried on a debate over conscription, some Catholics, most notably those associated with the Catholic Worker movement, invoked a bedrock principle in Catholic moral theology in their opposition to conscription: the primacy of the individual conscience. This principle made it possible for Catholic Workers and Catholic conscientious objectors to step outside the current that swept the rest of the church and the nation into war.

Moreover, many of these Catholics later took the unusual step of using the church's just-war tradition—which empowers and requires the individual to make an independent moral assessment of the war, which is then translated into a

particular political stance—as a basis for their unpopular stand against the war.⁵ Although some no doubt refused to see it this way at the time, such moral reasoning, leading to concrete political options and behaviors, is a decidedly democratic activity.

Throughout the war years, articles in the *Catholic Worker* evinced a theme that was frequently found in Catholic moral theology manuals and preached to the faithful from the pulpit. This was the spiritual principle that penance and suffering freely and willingly undertaken by the individual, and prayerfully "offered up" for the good of others and the world, could effect change beyond the life of the individual doing the penance. The Worker took this to mean that the individual was invited to accept responsibility for the scourge of war.

The *Catholic Worker* regularly called on its readers to bear—in a very personal way—the spiritual burdens of war through prayer, fasting, and other penitential rites. A September 1939 editorial exhorted the faithful by noting that every night in Catholic Worker hospitality houses across the country the rosary was said, not for victory, but for peace. Moreover, Catholic Workers were making the stations of the cross in parishes, and taking daily communion. "We must prepare to suffer," the editorial said, "building up stores of endurance" through prayer and penitential rites.⁶

Acts of penance for the crime of war were seen as a conduit, or occasion of grace, uplifting and strengthening the little band of pacifists in time of war. Already the paper was gamely advising Catholics and other Christians to resign from war-related employment as unbefitting human dignity. When conscription came, Catholics would be encouraged to proclaim conscientious objector status, and to refuse to cooperate with the alternative service program. This was a minority tradition even within the peace movement.⁷ True to form, registration day was proclaimed a day of fasting at the Catholic Worker, a day to contemplate the reach of the State into the confines of the human heart.⁸

But the Catholic Worker blueprint for avoiding war was more complex than spiritual admonishments and a call to popular piety. Many of the articles and editorials that called for resistance to the war invoked class analysis combined with a conviction that this war—much like the First World War—was being advocated by capitalists eager to turn a profit from the armaments business. Readers were consistently reminded that this war was the fruit of an unjust peace.

In a 1939 editorial entitled "We Are To Blame for New War in Europe," blame for the war was placed squarely on the shoulders of all, for "their materialism, their greed, their idolatrous nationalism . . . for their ruthless subjection of another country." As the entirely predictable fruit of capitalism, the *Catholic Worker* considered the war inevitable and imperialistic.⁹ But here was no mere appeasement wrapped in Catholic theology. The *Catholic Worker* was in fact calling for a fundamental transformation of the world economic and social order, refusing to accept the notion that the brutalities then sweeping Europe were an aberration.

The Great Depression had hit the U.S. working class hard, such that the war clouds gathering on the European horizon sent mixed messages. While they indicated suffering and pestilence, they also spelled economic relief in the form of a reinvigorated economy geared up to support the war effort and, eventually, greater U.S. access to overseas markets.¹⁰ In this climate, the paper made a series of desperate, and ultimately futile, pleas for U.S. laborers to unite in a refusal to work for "blood money."¹¹

Playing off of the sacrifice theme, the paper reminded labor that it made its gains in the work-place and marketplace only because of the many overwhelming sacrifices of earlier workers willing to stand, and even die, for principles in the face of daunting odds. The appeal said, "Sacrifice has been labor's lot, it still is. Sacrifice is always the lot of the noble."¹² Not surprisingly given the long years of the depression, the appeal apparently generated little response as the nation's industrial work force continued to expand in number and output in response to the short-term economic benefits of a militarized economy.

The call to resign from war-related jobs was as ignored as it was unique. But that did not faze Dorothy Day and her Catholic Worker movement. On the contrary, as the war years continued, Day upped the ante. Initially her exhortations were based less on theology and more on the class analysis rhetoric she had been steeped in during her years in the radical, secular Left. But when she saw that her appeals fell on deaf ears, Day turned to the pietistic and penitential themes that were the mainstay of her retreat master, John Hugo.

Somewhat paradoxically, however, she then put forward increasingly radical invitations to a readership that was now dwindling. On the employment issue, for example, she raised the stakes considerably. She suggested that Catholics whose jobs did not contribute to the common good, or that did not directly have to do with the works of mercy, ought to consider giving them up. The basis for this astounding exhortation was the theological doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, where Christ is understood as the head of the Christian community and the faithful make up the rest of the body. Day interpreted this concretely: one could not go to war against others, for to do so was to tear at one's own body. Likewise, while it was possible to benefit materially from the exploitation of others, it was doomed to be short-lived material gain and would in the end result in grave spiritual danger. She eventually suggested, for example, that this meant jobs in advertising, insurance, and banking were all suspect, not just those in the armaments industry.¹³

During the late thirties until the end of the war, when the Catholic Worker joined with other organizations to resist peacetime conscription and then universal military training, no issue so galvanized the Worker as conscription. "Fight Conscription," yelled the heavy, block headline on the lead story in the September 1939 issue of the paper. The first sentence reveals how seriously the Worker took the conscription issue: "To fight war we must fight conscription . . . To this fight *The Catholic Worker* pledges itself as long as we are permitted to exist."¹⁴

The sentence is telling. The Worker movement embraced a philosophy of personalism that situated the locus of social change and revolution not in institutions, but in the heart of the individual.¹⁵ So it was with war. The way to stop the impending war was for individuals to refuse to fight in it. The way to arrest the steady march toward madness was to make it clear that large numbers of citizens would refuse to comply with conscription orders. "To fight war we must fight conscription," and this the Worker did with gusto.

As early as April 1938, the paper featured a pastoral statement by Cincinnati Archbishop James McNicholas, one of the most influential churchmen of his time. He called for Christians to form a "mighty league of conscientious objectors" that would help stem the rising tides of war.¹⁶

Over the next few years, the paper frequently referred to Archbishop McNicholas's call for a "mighty league" of objectors, just as it frequently highlighted passages from Pope Pius XII having to do with the rights of conscience vis-à-vis the modern nation-state.¹⁷ The September 1940 issue was emblematic. An article entitled "Catholic Heads Point Out Tragic Consequences of Militarizing a Nation" consisted entirely of excerpts from the recent words of various priests, bishops, and cardinals critical of conscription and related issues. The battle for respect and legitimacy that the Worker and its sister organization, Pax, were fighting was so lopsided that it openly exploited the regard in which men like Archbishop McNicholas were held.¹⁸ Referring to his call for conscientious objectors, one writer reminded readers, "This statement, remember, is not made by any wild-eyed street corner orator, but by a man whose thought carries weight and deserves our serious regard."¹⁹

The paper also retrieved the teachings and writings of the church fathers and medieval and Renaissance theologians and philosophers on the question of military service. And the *Catholic Worker* featured the words and actions of saints both famous and obscure on issues of military service and the Christian's civic rights and duties. Readers were introduced to saints of whom they knew little, such as Telemachus, who interposed himself between two gladiators in Rome's arena in 404. Telemachus was killed in the process, but the outrage over his death was credited with helping to bring that barbaric spectacle to an end in Rome.²⁰ Readers were also reminded of some of the obscure actions against war by more familiar saints, like Francis of Assisi and Martin of Tours. What the stories about these and other saints had in common was a principled refusal to take up arms or to do the bidding of the state.²¹ This clever bit of revisionist history was an attempt to ground the Catholic Worker's unpopular objection to military service and war in the popular and hallowed traditions of the church.

Influential church leaders were doing all they could to undercut the legitimacy of the Catholic Worker and the conscientious objection claims of Catholics. John A. Ryan, chairman of the ethics committee of the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP), and a leading churchman throughout the first half of the century, stated in the *Washington Post* that he had examined

the published statements of a number of conscientious objectors and found "it difficult to reconcile their position with the . . . Church's traditional doctrine on war and on the relation of the individual to the state."²²

There was no better source for legitimacy than the pope himself, and to him the editors of the *Catholic Worker* turned. The September 1942 issue pointed out that the words of the pope on war and peace would be featured in succeeding issues "by placing them as in this issue on the front page with pictures, begging our readers to use them for meditation."²³ The search for respect took other forms, too. Dorothy Day invited G. Barry O'Toole, a philosophy professor at Catholic University, a pronounced anticommunist, and a vocal opponent of conscription, to write for the paper. O'Toole responded in earnest. In 1940 he contributed a series of eight lengthy articles exploring conscription and the conditions of a just war. The editorial stands of the paper, and its attempt to grant conscientious objection theological legitimacy, made it a magnet for Catholics concerned with the morality of conscription and the war. According to Arthur Sheehan, over nine hundred letters flowed into the Worker offices during a two-month period in late 1940, requesting information on Catholic pacifism.²⁴ To meet the demand, the *Catholic Worker* collected O'Toole's pieces and published them in pamphlet form (90 pages).²⁵

Day also asked John Hugo to write on these matters. Hugo was a controversial retreat master who was popular with Dorothy Day and a few others in the Worker movement for his rigorous, uncompromising approach to the spiritual life.²⁶ Between O'Toole and Hugo, the foundations for a theology of peace for the U.S. Catholic church in the last half of the twentieth century were about to be laid in the pages of the *Catholic Worker*.

The series of long articles in the paper mapping the intersection of conscription and the Christian calling were heavy on philosophical speculation and relatively weak on biblical exegesis. Unlike their Protestant counterparts who opposed war and conscription largely on scriptural grounds, Catholics grounded their opposition as much in the philosophical categories of neo-scholasticism as they did in the Gospels.²⁷ It was a juridical and at times somewhat mechanistic approach. Much of the Thomistic language and categories in the many articles by Hugo and O'Toole probably seemed foreign to the paper's relatively few non-Catholic readers. For educated Catholics, however, Thomism was more than familiar as it was the main school of philosophical thought taught in Catholic seminaries, colleges, and universities. It was the main school of thought because it was mandated so by the magisterium. Pope Leo XIII stipulated Thomism as the official philosophy of the Catholic church in his 1878 encyclical, *Aeterni Patris*. It took some time for Thomism to take hold, however, especially in the United States, where many Catholic scholars joined their colleagues in exploring modern systems of thought.²⁸ A number of factors eventually coalesced in the early twentieth century to insure that Thomism would soon achieve a near-hegemonic presence in most American Catholic institutions of higher learning.²⁹

O'Toole and Hugo rigorously applied the Thomistic system to the thorny issues of conscription and just-war ethics. The Thomistic penchant for highlighting the primacy of individual conscience, and for placing the freedom and dignity of the human person at the center of ethical issues, was well represented in their *Catholic Worker* articles.

The conscription issue was viewed through the Thomist lens of individual freedom. Hugo and O'Toole did not, of course, mean freedom to do as one pleased. Far from it. They meant freedom to follow the natural law as revealed by God and to answer one's vocational call unrestricted by the demands of the State.³⁰ The issue was not simply whether one's vocational call precluded military service. That one's vocation might actually be disrupted by military service was also at issue. It was seen as no mere inconvenience. A disruption of one's vocation that entailed the waging of war and the concomitant grave moral dangers associated with war and killing invoked serious spiritual consequences for the individual Catholic.

For O'Toole and Hugo—as for most Catholic moralists of the time—the individual must be free to respond to her or his vocational call. The individual's right to voluntarily choose his or her state of life must be jealously guarded, especially from the long reach of the State.³¹

O'Toole's argument against conscription rested on the presumption that it was impossible, given the state of modern weaponry, for an aggressive war to meet all the conditions of a just war.³² Moreover, when modern weapons were combined with the propensity of modern nation-states to conscript and field huge armies, the negative effects of war were seen to far outweigh any possible positive effects.³³ He further argued that in the case of defensive wars, the populace of the nation would freely rally to the defense of their homeland; therefore, no conscription would be needed in such cases. Since conscription had to do with aggressive wars, and since aggressive wars waged with the indiscriminate weapons and conscripted armies of the modern age could not fulfill all of the criteria of a just war, O'Toole argued that Catholics—and, indeed, all citizens—ought to oppose conscription as a violation of the conscript's human freedom. He further suggested that such an initial violation was likely to lead to even greater violations on the battlefield given the methods employed in modern war.³⁴

O'Toole's opposition to conscription was spirited. He characterized it as nothing less than "military slavery" since the conscience of the conscript—like that of the slave—was not recognized, much less honored.³⁵ But he also cloaked his vigorous opposition to conscription in the rationalistic rhetoric of Thomism, where reason was understood as the highest and most distinctive attribute of human nature.

In his article exploring the just-war tradition's criteria of "no alternative" (last resort), O'Toole summed up his argument on behalf of mutual discussion, third-party mediation, and arbitration by saying that these are rational means of resolving conflicts and are, therefore, befitting human beings. War, on the

other hand, he saw as irrational because it does not establish on which side right and reason stand, only which side is more powerful militarily. War is consequently not a means of resolving conflict that is befitting those endowed by God with the supreme moral faculty of reason. In O'Toole's Thomistic framework, war involves rejection of the greatest gift God granted to humankind.³⁶

The just-war theory lends itself, by its very nature, to a casuistic approach to morality. One takes the theory, comprehensively designed and stipulated in an attempt to account for all the exigencies of human experience, and applies it to the situation in question. Moral casuistry was, of course, long at the center of Catholic moral theology, especially with respect to the issue of warfare and the participation of Catholics in it. So it is not surprising that O'Toole, when constructing his case against modern war and conscription, supplemented the just-war theory with material from the various manuals on moral theology.

The manuals were used by priests in the confessional and in the training of seminarians. Unique about O'Toole's use of the manuals was that he quoted so directly and so heavily from them with reference to issues of contemporary social import while writing for a lay publication.³⁷ As in so much of the material in the *Catholic Worker* on conscription and the just-war tradition, O'Toole endeavored to ground and legitimate the movement's controversial stand on war in the safe and secure traditions of the church.

The stated goal of O'Toole's series of articles was to "convince the American citizen of his imperative duty to strive for the abolition of the abuse of governmental power involved in conscripting civilians for presumably unjustified wars on foreign soil."³⁸ But like the good casuist he was, his analysis extended beyond the conscription issue.

He included a series of judgments on particular aspects of the war already raging in Europe and China, and on tactics common to modern war. For example, on the basis of the proportionate means criteria of the just-war theory, O'Toole argued that the British blockade of Germany was unjust because of the damage done to neutral commerce. He judged the German tactical response of floating mines in shipping lines immoral for the same reason.³⁹ Moreover, he determined that the modern practice of subjecting civilian populations to air raids and bombing with poison gas was proscribed by the church's mandate against using evil means to obtain just ends, as well as by the "right way" criterion of the just-war tradition.⁴⁰

O'Toole's case against conscription and for conscience was supplemented by the editors of the paper. In late 1941 they ran a four-part series on conscience, excerpted from Bede Jarrett's *Meditations for Layfolk*. When originally published in 1915, the book marked a departure in spiritual literature as it was designed for the daily meditation of the laity on the whole range of Catholic teaching. Jarrett was a well-known English Dominican friar, for many years the provincial of his order, and the founder of the Dominicans' Blackfriars Hall at Oxford. A historian whose expertise lay in the social and political

theories of the Middle Ages, Jarrett was working on the contributions of the Catholic Church and the great Catholic thinkers to the cause of international peace when he died. Jarrett turned a good phrase and wrote in a descriptive, accessible manner.⁴¹

In the excerpts the *Catholic Worker* ran, Jarrett distinguished conscience from mere moral principles, the former being dynamic and changing, the latter static and unchanging. Conscience thus conceived is always more than a collection of principles to be predictably applied. Jarrett compared conscience to a faculty, like "a musical faculty, which must first of all be inherent before it can be cultivated, but which assuredly requires cultivation."⁴² That conscience was in need of training, of being nurtured and developed in order to be able to make informed applications of such moral principles as those contained in the just-war theory, for example, was the central motif of the series.⁴³ Judging by the sheer amount of material in the paper during this time on the issues of conscription and a justified war, the paper apparently took the challenge to help inform the consciences of the U.S. Catholic laity quite seriously.

The significance of this attempt must not be understated. In the pre-Vatican II church, initiatives that empowered the laity to come to independent judgments on social issues of grave moral import were relatively rare. Moreover, lay initiatives like the Worker's that sought to help the laity inform their conscience, and that honored the wisdom of lived experience as well as the wisdom of the moral manuals, were also not common. This was especially so when it came to issues like conscription and war, which touched at least peripherally on the sensitive and thorny question of church-state relations and the responsibilities of the individual to the State. What is important here is that Dorothy Day chose to stake the future of her Catholic Worker movement on a position that ran absolutely contrary to this historical pattern.

The important role the paper played in the formation of individual consciences is demonstrated by the many letters the paper carried from Catholic young men struggling with conscription and just-war questions. Not surprisingly, the influence and role of the *Catholic Worker* and its many articles on conscription are cited frequently in the U.S. Catholic conscientious objectors' applications for CO status.⁴⁴

The movement was honoring what Dorothy Day saw as one of the central points of the Catholic Worker: "That you don't need permission to perform the works of mercy. You don't need permission to form your conscience. . . . We must have the courage to form our conscience and follow it regardless of the point of view of cardinal or bishop. I mean we go ahead. That's all."⁴⁵ It was a good thing, too, that the movement went ahead, for if the Catholic Worker had not devoted itself to the conscience formation of the laity on the issue of conscription, there would have been precious little information available to most Catholics. As we shall see shortly, the hierarchy did not do it. It was certainly not done from the pulpit. Indeed, most parish priests were unsupport-

tive of the conscientious objector claims of their parishioners, and many priests actually testified against them.⁴⁶ Even the Catholic press, with the notable exception of the *Catholic Worker*, did not take up the challenge.⁴⁷

During World War II, the U.S. Catholic bishops issued five official statements on issues of war and peace. Using the just-war framework, they nevertheless managed not to condemn any aspect of the Allied obliteration and fire bombing campaigns. Likewise, the five statements were strangely, yet tellingly silent on the one issue most relevant for the laity: conscientious objection. It simply received no mention whatsoever.⁴⁸ To the extent that the bishops were concerned at all about the role of Catholics in the military, it was only for their clerical family: priests, brothers, and seminarians. Even though congressional draft legislation was discussed at the bishops' annual meetings, it was only in reference to how the draft would affect clergy and seminarians.⁴⁹ Into this void stepped the *Catholic Worker* with its focus on conscience formation of the laity on war and peace.

Still, the paper never stopped holding out hope that the church's clerics would rise to the pastoral occasion. The September 1944 issue contained no less than three front-page articles detailing the antiwar stand of three different clerics. Each headline took note of the fact that a priest had gone on record against some aspect of the war. One told the story of Pittsburgh priest Joseph Meenan, who handed in his registration card to his local draft board in protest of conscription. At the close of the Meenan article, the lay editors offered a simple but pointed invitation to other clerics: "We believe that many priests are coming to see that silence means consent. . . . We invite further letters from our spiritual leaders."⁵⁰

During the height of the war and with most of the nation mobilized and militarized in one form or fashion, the *Catholic Worker* ran yet another series on conscription, John Hugo's "Immorality of Conscription."⁵¹ This one took the form of an extended, seven-page supplement to the November 1944 issue. But it was so popular and the demand for it ran so high, that less than six months later the paper included it again, this time as a supplement to the April 1945 issue.

Letters printed in the December issue extolled the significance and the educational usefulness of Hugo's writing. Orders for extra copies poured in. The paper explained that they had intended to reprint it as a pamphlet but due to the urgency of immediate bulk orders they printed more supplements instead. To spur distribution, the supplements sold for one cent each. Ten thousand copies were distributed beyond the initial mailing, and ten thousand extra copies of the April 1945 issue of the paper—with Hugo's article in it—were printed as well. Rev. Felix O'Neill in Newark asked for one thousand, while Rev. John Wright in Pittsburgh ordered four hundred. Others suggested that every bishop in the country ought to read it. George Lloyd of New York wrote to say that he thought the supplement and the accompanying editorial made the November issue the "finest issue ever published."⁵² Hugo's article apparently wore well,

too. In April 1948 it was reprinted in the paper a third time, along with seventy-five thousand extra copies for handout distribution.⁵³

Hugo's "Immorality of Conscription" arrived at a time when the nation was confronted with the possibility of universal military service becoming a permanent reality in the United States, in peace as well as in war. Lobbying to that effect was already strong in Washington, D.C., even though no bill had yet been submitted to Congress.⁵⁴ Into this highly charged political marketplace, Hugo inserted a conception of the human person, and the rights and duties of the State that were both firmly grounded in Thomistic philosophy.

Hugo granted the proponents of conscription their argument that the State was within its rights to conscript the wealth and services of its citizens, but only within certain, important limits. If its conscription of wealth amounted to a denial of the right to private property, or an absorption of the total wealth of the nation, then Hugo maintained the State had crossed over the boundary of its rights. Similarly, if the conscription of human services were so broad that it resulted in the subordination of persons in their essential being to the wishes of the State, this, too, must be rejected.⁵⁵

Following Thomas Aquinas, Hugo maintained that the person was both a part of the State and at the same time above the State, since the human person contained within himself or herself the image of God, a reflection of the whole. In the highly ordered world of Thomism, human personality was understood as spiritual, and therefore above the solely material interests of the State. Moreover, Hugo reminded his readers that the person has a supernatural end, while the State has merely a temporal end. The State thus conceived also has duties toward the person; State and society are bound to help the person obtain his or her supernatural destiny, not violate it.⁵⁶

Once Hugo established the primacy of the person's spiritual nature over the State's material nature, he went on to argue that while the State may require that which is material of the person—including the body and life itself—the person may never be forced to relinquish to the State his or her spiritual and supernatural rights. And Hugo insisted that that is precisely what conscription requires.

Like O'Toole before him, Hugo centered his argument on the notion that conscription violates the spiritual rights and destiny of the person since it infringes on the right to vocation. He denied that fundamental rights emanate from the State to the person, claiming instead that human rights are ineradicably located in human personality itself. The State, therefore, cannot revoke these rights; they have to do with the final end of the human person and are, in that sense, supernatural.⁵⁷ Military training, moreover, suppresses that which is good in the human personality while arousing that which is bad, thereby corrupting the soul of the conscript. Hugo argued that the nature of war requires hate and the celebration of death, not the affirmation of love that he saw as the end of the person.⁵⁸

While the foregoing tries to render the heart of Hugo's argument plainly, his entire argument against conscription included the following planks: it forces

people to postpone marriage, which creates an increased occasion of sin; it corrupts youth at an impressionable age; it destroys spiritual values and impulses; it has deleterious effects on the family; it is inimical to democracy; and it is not supported in either the Bible or in the teachings of the church.⁵⁹

Hugo's critique of conscription was so thoroughgoing, he posited so much evil in it, that he even argued that conscription alone was enough to make a war unjust. Since the criteria of the just-war tradition and Catholic moral theology forbids the use of evil means to achieve good ends, Hugo claimed that it did not matter how just the cause was. If the war was waged with conscription, it could not be justified given the evils of conscription. And since he argued that modern war was always waged with conscripts, he essentially disallowed the possibility of a just war in the modern age.⁶⁰

This line of reasoning—where the sanctity and dignity of the human person is placed at the center of ethical discourse, becoming the ledger against which to measure proposals such as conscription—dovetailed nicely with the larger philosophy of the Catholic Worker movement.⁶¹ The critique that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin offered of modern industrial society included a conviction that the spiritual and the human were subordinated to the material. They believed that the forces of industrial capitalism had violently and tragically restricted people's vocational choices, making it difficult, as Maurin so often said, "for people to be good." Unable to respond to the "still, small voice" of conscience within themselves, people could easily deny their own calling.⁶² Indeed, when it came to war and conscription, they could be forced to deny their very being.

This is why the work of hospitality, and resistance to war and conscription, were of a piece for the Catholic Worker. They were cut from the same bolt of cloth. The works of war were seen as antithetical to the works of mercy, that formed the backbone of Catholic Worker spirituality. Moreover, conscription and industrial capitalism (and state socialism, for that matter) were understood to violate fundamentally the integrity of the human person. So Day could stake the future of her movement on the issues of war and conscription because those issues cut to the heart of the movement's fundamental values.

In their introduction to Hugo's study on conscription published in 1944, the *Catholic Worker* editors reminded their readers of the pledge the paper took in 1940 to fight conscription for as long as the Catholic Worker movement was permitted to exist. The editors renewed that pledge in their introduction to Hugo's piece, once again inviting their readers to join them in the upcoming fight against universal military training.

In his study of Camp Simon, one of the Civilian Public Service camps housing primarily Catholic conscientious objectors, Gordon Zahn has shown that if it were not for the Catholic Worker movement, there "would have been no viable Catholic witness against American participation in World War II."⁶³ By nurturing Catholic consciences during the war years, the Worker movement and its paper fulfilled a gaping hole in the mission of the church.

In their 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, the U.S. Catholic bishops argued that one of the roles of the church in society is to help "create a community of conscience in the wider civil community."⁶⁴ The bishops suggested in the pastoral letter that the church creates this "community of conscience" in two ways. First, by teaching clearly *within* the church the moral principles that inform a Catholic conscience. But they also insist that the church has a role to play in the larger society, which includes sharing the moral wisdom of the Catholic moral tradition with the larger culture.⁶⁵

Based on the public process the U.S. bishops used to formulate and disseminate their pastoral letters on peace and the economy in the eighties, a credible argument could be made that the bishops are living up to the standards they set for themselves. Perhaps they have learned from past mistakes and failures, like the one outlined in this chapter. In any event, the bishops largely failed to accomplish either task during the World War II period: They neither nurtured Catholic consciences in a manner befitting their clear pastoral responsibilities within the church, nor did they use whatever "moral wisdom" there is in the just-war tradition to help the whole nation examine the ethics of the war it was waging. They even ignored opportunities created by the *Catholic Worker* to influence policy makers, including the following one.

The material covered and the positions occupied by the *Catholic Worker* during World War II were upsetting to many Catholics. Letters complaining about the positions of the Worker movement were common at the chancery office of the New York archdiocese. Some said the paper was anti-American; others thought that Day and the movement were sacrilegious, even enemies of the church.⁶⁶

J. Francis McIntyre was a bishop in New York during the war period. He would later become cardinal archbishop of Los Angeles and make a name for himself as an ardent conservative voice at the Second Vatican Council. One of his tasks in New York included answering letters from disgruntled Catholics regarding the radical politics of the Worker.⁶⁷ When the Hugo and O'Toole articles began to appear in the paper, Bishop McIntyre called in Dorothy Day. She recounted the meeting, "He spread the *Worker* out in front of him and looked at me and said, 'We never studied these things in the seminary.' But he made no objections to our bringing them out in the paper."⁶⁸

In 1943 the U.S. Justice Department asked the bishop's National Catholic Welfare Conference to clarify the church's position on pacifism. Bishop McIntyre had a ready response. Since he had not "studied these things in the seminary," and since the *Catholic Worker's* positions had resulted in numerous complaints, a year earlier he had asked the Jesuit theologian Joseph O'Connor for an evaluation of the theological worthiness of Day's pacifism and the critiques of the war regularly appearing in the *Catholic Worker*. O'Connor had nothing but praise for Day and the paper, arguing that they stood on solid theological grounds. He also noted that the clergy ought to go slowly in

criticizing the pacifism or conscientious objection of the laity since the Catholic clergy received exemption from military service.⁶⁹

The message that went back to the Justice Department through the National Catholic Welfare Conference focused on the fact that the *Catholic Worker* paper did not speak for the church, nor was it approved by the diocese.⁷⁰ This is unfortunate because McIntyre and the bishop's conference ignored an unusual opportunity—created by the criticisms published in the paper—to pass judgment on the way the U.S. government was conducting the war.

The conference might have echoed at least some of the just-war-based critiques of Allied methods like obliteration bombing and the bombing of the Ruhr dam that appeared in the *Catholic Worker*. In doing so, the bishops' conference would have privately engaged the government in discussion of the morality of its battlefield choices, and they could have opened up a broader public dialogue as well.

There is evidence that the Roosevelt administration was especially concerned with the positions taken by individual Catholic clerical leaders and with their collective attitudes toward government policy as reflected by the National Catholic Welfare Conference.⁷¹ A critical word from the bishops at this time would likely have been taken differently than the stream of criticisms that appeared in the *Catholic Worker* over the years. One can also wonder whether the absence of any criticism from the bishops of the war effort in general, and of the obliteration bombing policies in particular, made it easier for Truman to drop the atom bombs at the close of the war.⁷²

The task of Catholic moral judgment and dissent in a time of great ethical import for the nation was left to a lay movement—not just any lay movement—but one that embraced an ethic of voluntary poverty and depended on individual donations for its precarious existence. To the extent that any "community of conscience" was created—and the public mission of the church therefore served—was largely due to the untiring efforts of Dorothy Day and her *Catholic Worker* newspaper.

NOTES

1. William M. Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence: Catholicism in an Era of Disillusionment, 1920-1940* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1980), 70.

2. James Hennessey, S. J., *American Catholics: A History of the American Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, 1981), 225. A notable exception to this pattern were Irish-American Catholics, many of whom protested the Mexican War, and even the Civil War.

3. Dorothy Dohen, *Nationalism and American Catholicism* (New York, 1967). Budde has recently argued that, contrary to some conservative fears and radical hopes, U.S. Catholic nationalism remains a potent ideological force to this day, and one that is largely subservient to the capitalist agenda and ethos. See Michael L. Budde, "The Changing Face of American Catholic Nationalism," *Sociological Analysis* 53 (1992): 145-255.

4. Brian Martin, *Uprooting War* (London, 1984), 112-34; and Richard J. Barnett, *Roots of War* (Baltimore, 1973).
5. It was unusual because although the just-war tradition and criteria were centuries old, they were seldom used as a basis to critique public policy, even by Catholics. See John Courtney Murray, "Theology and Modern War," *Theological Studies* 20 (1959): 40-61, cited in John H. Yoder, "The Credibility and Political Uses of the Just War Tradition," Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Conference Paper Series, University of Notre Dame, October 1990, 1.
6. "Fight Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, September 1939, 1.
7. Lawrence Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983* (Philadelphia, 1984), 62-96.
8. "The Draft Reaches Us on Mott Street," *Catholic Worker*, February 1941, 5.
9. "We Are To Blame for New War in Europe," *Catholic Worker*, September 1939, 1, 4.
10. William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago, 1966), 451-69.
11. See for example, "To the Workers: An Appeal to Workers to Sacrifice for Peace," *Catholic Worker*, October 1939, 1, 3.
12. Ibid.
13. See for example, Dorothy Day, "Poverty and Pacifism," *Catholic Worker*, December 1944, 1, 7. On the importance of the Mystical Body of Christ doctrine for Dorothy Day, see Patrick G. Coy, "The Incarnational Spirituality of Dorothy Day," *Spirituality Today*, 39 (1987): 114-25. For a popular and influential early work on the doctrine, see Fulton Sheen, *The Mystical Body of Christ* (New York, 1935).
14. "Fight Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, September 1939, 1, emphasis in original.
15. For a thorough treatment of personalism, see John Hellman, *Emmanuel Mounier and the New Catholic Left, 1930-1950* (Toronto, 1981). For an interpretation of personalist politics at work in the United States during the 1980s, see Robert D. Holsworth, *Let Your Life Speak: A Study of Politics, Religion, and Antinuclear Weapons Activism* (Madison, Wis., 1989).
16. "A Mighty League," *Catholic Worker*, April 1938, 1.
17. See for example, "Lay Apostolate," *Catholic Worker*, November 1939, 2.
18. Pax was a Catholic peace organization, originally founded in England by Eric Gill and others. An American chapter of Pax was formed within the Catholic Worker by William Callahan and Joseph Zarrella in February 1937. Members pledged not to carry weapons or to assist in war, and the organization supported the right of Catholics to pursue conscientious objection. See Eileen Egan, "Dorothy Day: Pilgrim of Peace," in Patrick G. Coy, ed., *Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, (Philadelphia, 1992), 76.
19. Raymond W. Friem, "Lauds 'Pax' at Pittsburgh Rally," *Catholic Worker*, May 1938, 2, 4.
20. G. Barry O'Toole, *St. Telemachus—Martyr*, *Catholic Worker*, March 1940, 7.
21. See for example, "Conscientious Objectors in St. Francis' Time," *Catholic Worker*, July-August 1941, 1; and "On the Use of Force by St. John Chrysostom," *Catholic Worker*, July-August 1941, 1. See also "Patristics and Peace," *Catholic Worker*, June 1943, 2, 3, cited in Eileen Egan, "Dorothy Day: Pilgrim of Peace," in Coy, ed., *Revolution of the Heart*, 83-84.

22. Quoted in Francis Sicius, "Catholic Conscientious Objectors During World War II," M.A. thesis, Florida State University, 1973, 43.
23. "Our Dear Sweet Christ on Earth," *Catholic Worker*, September 1942, 1.
24. Sicius, "Catholic Conscientious Objectors," 45.
25. George Barry O'Toole, *War and Conscription at the Bar of Christian Morals* (New York: Catholic Worker Press, 1941).
26. For Hugo's own account of the retreat material, see John J. Hugo, *Your Ways Are Not My Ways: The Radical Christianity of the Gospel*, 2 vols. (Pittsburgh, 1986). See also a collection of his articles from the *Catholic Worker* under the same title: *Weapons of the Spirit* (New York, 1943). Secondary sources on Hugo include William Miller, *All Is Grace: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day* (New York, 1987), which includes excerpts from Day's notes on the retreat, and Brigid O'Shea Merriman, O.S.F., *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1994). For a critical interpretation of Hugo and the effects of his retreats on Day's spirituality, see James Terence Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989).
27. The best overall treatment of conscientious objection during World War II is probably Mulford Sibley and Philip Jacob, *Conscription of Conscience: The American State and the Conscientious Objector, 1940-1947* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1952). For a survey of the Catholic perspective on war and conscription, see Ronald G. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (Maryknoll, N.Y., 1986), especially 168-86. For the Protestant peace church perspective, see Albert N. Keim and Grant M. Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War, 1917-1955* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1988). For the wider Protestant perspective, see Leyton Richards, *Christian Pacifism After Two World Wars* (London, 1948). An oral history with valuable analysis of the moral reasoning of World War II conscientious objectors can be found in Cynthia Eller, *Conscientious Objectors and the Second World War* (New York, 1991). And for a comparative listing of official statements from a variety of religious traditions, see Beth Ellen Boyle, *Words of Conscience: Religious Statements on Conscientious Objection* (Washington, D.C., 1983).
28. Three useful surveys of the role of Thomistic thought in American Catholicism are Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1987), 166-77; Patrick W. Carey, ed., *American Catholic Religious Thought* (New York, 1987), 36-57; and Halsey, *The Survival of American Innocence*, 138-69. For an especially influential expression of Thomism from an American Catholic, see John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York, 1960). On the general lack of knowledge and acceptance of Neo-Thomism outside Catholic circles, Gleason cites Charles A. Hart, "Twenty-five Years of Thomism," *New Scholasticism* 25 (1951): 41-44. There were exceptions to this pattern, including at the University of Chicago in the thirties.
29. Gleason, *Keeping Faith*, 168.
30. John J. Hugo, "The Immorality of Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, November 1944, 6.
31. G. Barry O'Toole, "Against Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, December 1939, 1, 3; and G. Barry O'Toole, "A Council—Not a Commandment," *Catholic Worker*, November 1940, 1, 3, 4. See also Hugo, "The Immorality of Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, November 1944, 4, 5. On the role of vocation in Catholic moral theology, see Josef Fuchs, S.J., *Human Values and Christian Morality* (Dublin, 1970), especially 8-25.

32. For O'Toole's position on the immorality of aggressive war, see especially his "Further Conditions of Just War," *Catholic Worker*, May 1940, 6. See also O'Toole, "St. Thomas and Aggressive War," *Catholic Worker*, February 1940, 1, 3, 6, where he addresses issues of lawful authority, just cause, and right intention. Beyond the aforementioned Thomistic conditions for a just war, O'Toole also addressed the three conditions added to the theory after Aquinas: right way, due proportion, and no alternative. Unlike some other theorists, O'Toole maintained that unless *all* of the criteria were met, a war could not be considered just. See O'Toole, "Further Conditions of Just Wars," *Catholic Worker*, June 1940, 2, 6. For a different and more recent perspective on the criteria and modern war, see James Turner Johnson, *Can Modern War Be Just?* (New Haven, Conn.), 1984.

33. O'Toole, "Against Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, November 1939, 1, 3.
 34. G. Barry O'Toole, "Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, October 1939, 1, 3.
 35. O'Toole, "Against Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, December 1939, 1, 3.
 36. O'Toole, "Further Conditions," *Catholic Worker*, June 1940, 2, 6.
 37. Ibid. Although material from the moral manuals is sprinkled through most of O'Toole's writing for the *Catholic Worker*, this article is especially illustrative of the practice.

38. G. Barry O'Toole, "Thou Shalt Not Kill," *Catholic Worker*, January 1940, 3.
 39. O'Toole, "Further Conditions of Just War," *Catholic Worker*, May 1940, 4.
 40. O'Toole, "Further Conditions of Just War," *Catholic Worker*, March 1940, 6.
 41. See for example Bede Jarrett, O.P., *The Emperor Charles IV* (New York, 1935), and *Social Theories of the Middle Ages* (London, 1926).

42. Bede Jarrett, "Conscience," *Catholic Worker*, October 1940, 4.
 43. See Bede Jarrett, "Infallibility of Conscience," *Catholic Worker*, November 1941, 4.

44. Some examples include: "Letters from Conscientious Objectors Strive to Give Their Basis of Belief," *Catholic Worker*, January 1941, 2, 3; "Catholic Inductee States His Indictment of Force," *Catholic Worker*, April 1941, 4; X. Y., "We Are Not Alone," *Catholic Worker*, February 1941, 1, 6; Mary A. Dougherty, "Rochester Letter Discusses C.O.'s in War and Peace," *Catholic Worker*, May 1942, 3; and "English Court Tests Conscience," *Catholic Worker*, March 1940, 1, 2.

45. Dorothy Day, "Fear In Our Time," in *Peace Through Reconciliation*, Proceedings of Pax Conference at Spoede House, Rugeley, England, 18 October 1963, p. 14 (mimeo).

46. For examples of this sort of clerical behavior, see Gordon C. Zahn, *War, Conscience and Dissent* (New York, 1967), 147-48; and Gordon C. Zahn, *Another Part of the War: The Camp Simon Story* (Amherst, Mass., 1979), 26-27.

47. Charles E. Curran, *American Catholic Social Ethics: Twentieth-Century Approaches* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1982), 157.

48. McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 51-52.

49. Earl Boyea, "The National Catholic Welfare Conference: An Experience in Episcopal Leadership, 1935-1945, Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 1987, 179, as quoted in McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 53.

50. "Pittsburgh Priest Repudiates Draft," *Catholic Worker*, September 1944, 1. The two accompanying articles on the front page were entitled "Catholic U. Priest on Bombings" and "St. Paul Priest Goes on Record." In the former, a talk in Boston by Paul Hanly Purvey was reported, in which he denounced the obliteration bombing of

Hamburg and the bombing of the Ruhr dam. In the latter article, Harvey Egan called the war unjust and in violation of the ethical demands of the gospels, and he encouraged the *Catholic Worker* in its stand.

51. John J. Hugo, "The Immorality of Conscription," *Catholic Worker*, November 1944, 3-10.

52. "About the Special Supplement," *Catholic Worker*, December 1944, 3.

53. McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 78.

54. The real battle on universal military training took place after the war, from 1946 to 1947, when the Truman administration proposed a bill to that effect to replace the Selective Service Act, which was to expire in March 1947. An uncommon coalition of pacifist and non-pacifist organizations defeated it, led by John Swomley. For an account of the campaign, see John M. Swomley, Jr., *The Military Establishment* (Boston, 1964).

55. Hugo, "Conscription," 4, 5.

56. Ibid., 5.

57. Ibid., 7.

58. Ibid., 6, 7.

59. Ibid., 4-10.

60. Ibid., 6; and John J. Hugo, "Catholics Can be Conscientious Objectors," *Catholic Worker*, May 1943, 6.

61. For Maurin's thought see Marc H. Ellis, *Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1981), especially 45-72, and Geoffrey B. Gneuchs, "Peter Maurin's Personalist Democracy," in Coy, ed., *A Revolution of the Heart*, 47-68.

62. This characterization of conscience is from the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*.

63. Zahn, *Another Part of the War*, 33.

64. *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, para. 328.

65. For a useful discussion of this two-track approach to the church's role in society, see Garry Wills, *Under God: Religion and American Politics* (New York, 1990), 305-17.

66. Thomas A. Lynch, "Dorothy Day and Cardinal McIntyre: Not Poles Apart," *Church* (Summer 1992): 10-15.

67. Ibid.

68. Interview with Dorothy Day in James Finn, *Protest: Pacifism and Politics* (New York, 1967), 376.

69. Lynch, "Dorothy Day and Cardinal McIntyre," 13-14.

70. Ibid., 14.

71. Leo V. Kanawada, Jr., *Franklin Roosevelt's Diplomacy on American Catholics, Italians, and Jews* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980).

72. McNeal, *Harder Than War*, 67.