ABSTRACT

Ontology, Ecclesiology, Nonviolence: the Witness Against War in the Theologies of
John Howard Yoder, Dorothy Day, and William Stringfellow

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This dissertation argues that nonviolence bears witness to a particular form of

social existence visible in the church. War, I argue, describes a form of social existence

which is a counter social ontology to the existence given by Christ to the church. By

examining the interrelationship of social ontology, ecclesiology, and nonviolence in the

work of John Howard Yoder, Dorothy Day, and William Stringfellow, I argue that a

nonviolence which is thoroughly Christian must account for how nonviolence is related

to the structures and practices of the church, but also how nonviolence bears witness to a

new form of social existence in the church.

Discussion of these three figures occurs broadly within the context of the Vietnam

War, exploring how nonviolence for each was not an abstracted ethic, but an act which

witnessed to a new social reality present in the church. Discussing *how* nonviolence

bears witness to a new social existence made known through the church occurs in

uniquely configured ways for each figure, which I describe in chapters devoted to each

one. The result is an ecumenical dialogue among Yoder (a Mennonite), Day, (a Roman

Catholic), and Stringfellow (an Episcopalian) about how to describe this social existence, how the church structures and practices contribute to the articulation of nonviolence, and how to speak theologically about the normativity of nonviolence for Christian faith and practice.

In the conclusion, I bring the insights from these three together, arguing for a more fulsome way to describe Christian nonviolence. I describe the church's social ontology as "given" in Christ by the Spirit, its ecclesiological practices as under the judgment of Christ, and its nonviolence as dependent upon the humanity of Christ which is the basis for all human existence. In this way, I bring the triune context of Christian nonviolence to the forefront, in that nonviolence is not simply about making an ethical stance, but bearing witness to a way of social existence given by Christ and displayed through the practices and institutions of the church.

Ontology, Ecclesiology, Nonviolence: The Witness Against War in the Theologies of
John Howard Yoder, Dorothy Day, and William Stringfellow

by

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A Dissertation

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Methodology and Justification

Introduction

This dissertation develops an account of nonviolent resistance to war as a witness

to a form of social life made visible through the church, as seen in the theologies of John

Howard Yoder, Dorothy Day, and William Stringfellow. All three were active during the

Vietnam War era, a time containing many well-documented resistance movements to

both the war and the draft.[1] What makes the work of these three unique, I argue, is that

nonviolent opposition to war for them bears witness to a new social existence which is

inextricable from the church. As such, the social existence (or as I will be calling it,

social ontology) which contrasts the social existence presupposed by war is visible

through the institutions and practices of the church.

This dissertation will take place in two parts. In the first part of the dissertation, I

will offer an account of war as presenting an account of human sociality which is counter

to the form of social existence made present through the church. This will take place in

two parts. First, I will briefly survey the literature surrounding the topic of Christian

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[1] For histories of the popular resistance of Vietnam, and analysis of the manifold forms which protest took during this era, see in particular, Joel P. Rhodes, *The Voice of Violence: Performative Violence as Protest in the Vietnam Era* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2001); Stephen A. Kent*, From Slogans to Mantras: Social Protest and Religious Conversion in the Late Vietnam War Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001); Michael S. Foley*, Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003);., *The Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Walter L. Hixson (New York: Garland Publishers, 2000); Robert Buzzanco, Masters *of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993); Charles M. Bedenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Lawrence M. Baskir, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1978).

nonviolence, exploring how this nexus of social ontology, ecclesiology, and nonviolence is understood within contemporary thought on Christian nonviolence. Secondly, I will offer a reading of Augustine's *City of God*, in which war is presented as a parody of the social ontology enabled by God in Christ and present through the church. In *City of God*, war describes and perpetuates a deficient form of social existence which exists as a parody of the life of the church. Because this is the character of war, Christian nonviolent resistance to war cannot be articulated apart from considering what true human sociality consists of, and how this sociality is borne witness to in the world through the church.

Christian theology has offered a variety of responses to war, with nonviolent resistance to war a minority position within the broader theological spectrum.[2] I have chosen to examine nonviolent responses to war, however, for three reasons. First, I personally find Christian nonviolence more consistent with the teachings of the New Testament than alternate approaches. Secondly, I find discussions of Christian nonviolence suffering from a great deal of conceptual clarity. Third, a number of philosophical and political accounts of nonviolence exist which are perfectly coherent apart from Christian faith; the lack of clarity among much contemporary writing on Christian nonviolence is to blame for this state, begging a more full account of what

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[2] For surveys of the various Christian understandings of war and peace, see Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-Evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979). Bainton's survey has been modified and updated by a number of works, including John Howard Yoder, *Christian Attitudes To War, Peace, and Revolution* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Co-op Bookstore, 1983); Lisa S. Cahill, *Love Your Enemies* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994); Arthur F. Holmes, *War and Christian Ethics: Classic and Contemporary Readings on the Morality of War* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

Christian nonviolence is.[3] Specifically, I will be arguing for nonviolence which witnesses to a new social existence made possible by Christ through the church. If, as the Apostle Paul writes, Christ has gathered together people into a body which is reconciled to God and to each other, the practices of those belonging to this body of Christ—in this case, nonviolence—will bear witness to that which God in Christ has accomplished.[4]

The second part of the dissertation will consist of exploring how nonviolence bears witness to a social ontology found in the church, as seen in the work of John Howard Yoder, Dorothy Day, and William Stringfellow. This nexus of ecclesiology, nonviolence, and social ontology will be discussed in the writings of each figure in their own chapter. The writing of all three figures spans over multiple decades; my examination of these three will be centered in the era of the Vietnam War, with reference to works beyond this era as needed to illuminate their thought, in order to provide a

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[3] Dustin Ells Howes' *Toward a Credible Pacifism: Violence and the Possibilities of Politics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009) is an excellent and clear account of pacifism within political life. Howes begins by first establishing the unnecessarily broad range of "violence" which is presupposed in political discourse, isolating the subjectivity of bodily life as what is truly at stake in thinking about the nature of violence (48). Human subjectivity, as the basis of political life demands an elimination of war. Howes ultimately concludes that pacifism "offers a reaffirmation, and a realistic view of human freedom that does not depend upon institutions for its preservation (180)", meaning, that pacifism is something which is ultimately affirmed by thinking clearly about our natural interactions with others, apart from an *a priori* presumption that these natural interactions need force. Howes' argument is not an indefensible one, and does not need an account of humanity as created by God to be coherent. I will argue, by contrast, that for Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, nonviolence does *not* proceed out of our normal interactions, but rather because of an *irruption* within our "normal interactions"; nonviolence bears witness to a social ontology made possible by Christ and witnessed to in the church.

[4] Nonviolent resistance to war is ultimately an act undertaken by individuals for a variety of reasons. What I will be arguing in this dissertation, however, is that the work of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow points toward the inextricability of the church and nonviolence for Christians. War is an act which is derivative of a broken form of social life, with the reconciliation of Christ creating a community in which divisions within humanity are overcome (2 Cor. 5:16-21). It will be my contention that for Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, those whose lives have been joined together in Christ bear witness to this existence through nonviolence, a refusal to participate in an act which is predicated on a deficient form of human sociality. This is not a denial of the individual commitment to these acts, but rather to say that individuals are joined together in Christ and do not experience their life "in Christ" apart from that body which is Christ's body.

comparison of these figures around a common conflict. [5] Each chapter will not attempt to offer a comprehensive reading of each figure, though I take my reading of each figure to be true to the thought of each writer beyond the era of the Vietnam War.

Rationale and Terms

Nonviolent Resistance to War

This dissertation will explore the concept of Christian nonviolent resistance to war. Traditionally, "pacifism" encompasses the concept of war resistance, but I have chosen to not use the term "pacifism" for two reasons. First, "pacifism" refers to a wide range of positions and motivations.[6] I will be using the term "nonviolent resistance" to refer to an opposition to war which is nonviolent in its tactics, and includes active engagement with entities which support war, whereas "pacifism" most often simply refers to a principled objection to war resulting in a withdrawal from war or refusal to participate in war.[7] For the figures under investigation, any statement *against* Christian involvement in war is concerned with also articulating a new social possibility which arises through the church.

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[5] The work of Day spans from the early 1930s until her death in 1980. Similarly, the work of Yoder spans from the late 1940s until his death in 1997. Stringfellow has the most limited corpus, writing from the late 1950s until his death in 1985.

[6] Cf., John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971); Peter Brock, *Liberty and Conscience: A Documentary History of the Experiences of Conscientious Objectors in America Through the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and with Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

[7] There are certainly manifold varieties of pacifism which proceed in other ways than simple withdrawal. Cf., Richard B. Miller, *Interpretations of Conflict: Ethics, Pacifism, and the Just-War Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Secondly, "pacifism", as defined by Richard Miller and others is an absolutist position, refusing involvement in any and all wars.[8] While Christian pacifism may be a proper description of the position of Yoder and Day, this is a problematic description for Stringfellow, who counseled youths to join the army early in his life, and (while embracing nonviolence later in life) would refuse to rule out the possibility of Christian involvement in acts of violence.[9] Similarly, "pacifism" too easily obscures the nuances of Yoder and Day's work by assuming their opposition to war to be an ideological position; I will argue, by contrast, that their opposition to war is linked to their understanding of the church's narration of a new form of social existence to which nonviolence bears witness.[10]

Social Ontology

Examination of these figures' writings on nonviolent resistance to war will account for the manner in which this resistance is related to their visions of what I am calling "social ontology"—the underlying presuppositions of how to best describe the church's social existence, a social existence which is formed, sustained, and ordered by God in Christ.[11] For Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, nonviolence bears witness to a

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[8] Ibid., 12. Miller's own definition of pacifism includes "building harmonious relations, reducing tensions, developing pacifist virtues", but these are built on "the moral prohibition of war".

[9] William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in A Strange Land* (Word Books: Waco, TX, 1973), 130-133.

[10] As this is not a dissertation which seeks to evaluate the merits for or against nonviolence, but rather to offer the logic of nonviolence as seen in the work of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, the absolutist claims associated with pacifism is an important question, but one which is ultimately adjunct to this dissertation.

[11] Adam Kotsko, *The Politics of Redemption: The Social Logic of Salvation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Publishers, 2010) has recently written of a "social-relational" ontology, by which human relationality constitutes human-ness in its continued outworking, with God as "the purpose of the world" (193).

particular form of human community visible in the church. For all three, the church

exists as a new form of humanity created by Christ, a humanity which is a foretaste of

what human life should be like. Because of this, the social ontology of the church is

proleptic of what all humanity has been called to; all of them consequently saw this life

implicating human existence beyond the bounds of ecclesiastical life.[12] While a number

of works have been written in recent years arguing for a renewal of Christian social

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Kotsko's rationale for this argument stems in part for a concern with there not being a relation between humanity and God which is alien to the human experience. My concern, however, is that this creates an ontotheology in which "God" as the world's purpose is ultimately unnecessary to the project: if God is the world's purpose, with the world a product of human agency, it remains to be seen why such a project need to be theo-logical. For Kotsko, articulating "God", and thus, "social ontology" in this manner has to do with a desire to escape what he sees as certain problems associated with divine transcendence's relation to human relationships, namely, that "transcendence" adds nothing to descriptions of human relations. This dissertation will, in part, contend that Christian nonviolence is unthinkable apart from a form of human relations which are in some sense given to us in Christ, not as a movement within immanence, but as a way of participating in God's redemption of the world in Christ.

In describing this social ontology as ordered by Christ, I am doing so in distinction from the participatory Platonist ontology articulated recently by Hans Boersma in *Heavenly Participation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011). For Boersma, there is an assumed "natural" participation of the world in the life of God, stating "creation is a sharing in the being of God…our connection with God is a *participatory*, or real connection—not just an external, or nominal connection" (24). While I agree with his assessment that a "nominal" understanding of humanity's relationship to God is problematic, it does not follow that one need to posit the participatory relation of creation *as such* between God and the world. Rather, as I have suggested, this is an analogy which exists through Christ—a relation which may encompass creation—but which exists and is created through Christological renewal and not because of an *analogia entis.* I have in mind here much along the line of what Keith L. Johnson has described as an "analogy in covenant", in which humanity and God are joined in Christ—in both creation and salvation—but remain distinct from one another such that participation in God remains a distinctly creaturely venture along the lines given by God in Christ. Cf. Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 202-230. Human relations proceed as an *analogia Christi*, created and sustained through Christ, and not as because of the Platonist ontology suggested by Boersma. Cf. Timothy J. Furry, "Analogous Analogies? Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no.3 (2010): 318-330.

[12] Such a description of resistance to war defies the description levied by David A. Martin, for example, in *Pacifism: A Historical and Sociological Study*, (New York: Schoken Books, 1966), 3-45, in which resistance to war is only possible as religious communities participate in "sect" activities, as seen in the typologies of Troeltsch. For Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, nonviolence, in witnessing to a social ontology which speaks of names both the church and not-church, refuses the "sect" distinction precisely because such a designation assumes that "church" operates in universality, whereas "sect" operates in particularity. By contrast, the social ontology attached to nonviolence puts forth a universality *on the basis of* its particularity.

ontology, nonviolence is seldom explored as an act which bears witness to this form of social existence.[13]

Ecclesiology

Ecclesiology, as I will be describing it, consists of the structures and practices which facilitate the gathering of the body of people joined together in Christ—the church. For Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, nonviolent resistance to war is a means of witnessing to the new social life which is expressed in and through the institutions and practices of the Christian church. As I will show, the practices and structures of the church, at times, provide resources for thinking about what nonviolence is; at other times, nonviolence challenges the church's teachings and practices to more fully enable the church's witness to the world. In sum, ecclesiology consists not only of the way the church—through its practices and institutions—negotiates its relationship to the world for the sake of witness, but how the institutions, teachings, and practices of the church make visible the new life

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[13] Cf. Kotsko, *The Politics of Redemption*; Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theology and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, (Oxford: Taylor and Francis Publishers, 2007). These three represent very different kinds of visions of ontology. Boersma envisions ontology as a result of participation in the sacramental logic of the church. Milbank also envisions ontology as a result of participation in Christ, albeit vis-à-vis a recovered Platonism. Kotsko, by contrast, speaks of ontology as "social ontology", an ontology which names the logic of human relations with God by speaking of the human community which emerges rather than the medium of divine-human participation, as in Boersma and Milbank. For Kotsko, who rereads the Christian atonement tradition to highlight the manner in which atonement is less about reconciliation with God than without one another, to speak of "social ontology" is to speak of the only ontology there is. While I agree that we cannot speak of the nature of our communion with God without speaking of the community created by God, this is not to say that the two are collapsed together.

The most prominent example of nonviolence as bearing witness to a particular form of social existence is Stanley Hauerwas' *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). While I agree with Hauerwas that "Christians are distinct from the world…charged to be faithful to God's calling of them as foretaste of the kingdom" (60), with nonviolence as a way to bear witness to this identity, Hauerwas excludes natural law approaches from his argument as "creating distorted moral psychology", and "fail[ing] to provide an adequate account of how theological convications are a morality" (63). This dissertation, in including Dorothy Day, moves beyond Hauerwas' account in assuming that nonviolence, ecclesiology, and a "natural law" account of Day are not incompatible.

in Christ. For the figures of this dissertation, nonviolence (as a witness to the social existence made possible by Christ) works both *in concert with* the practices of the church (being formed by them), and at times, *in tension with* them (calling the practices of the church to a more faithful rendering of the life in Christ).

The connection between nonviolent resistance to war and ecclesiology has been described in histories of both Mennonites and Roman Catholics, but these works most often emphasize the historical emergence of peace movements within these denominations and not the theological rationale for the union between ecclesiology and nonviolent resistance to war.[14] Interestingly, the theological retrieval of this connection between ecclesiology and war have been most frequently made by proponents of the "just war".[15] Oliver O'Donovan's argument concerning Christian approval of war, for example, rests upon his vision of the church's place within the larger economy of God's providence, with political judgments on war the rightful domain of the nation, with the church serving as a witness to the nation's agents of judgment.[16] This ecclesiological

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[14] Ronald G. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986); Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in Modern America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[15] Cf. Daniel M. Bell, *Just War as Christian Discipleship: Recentering the Tradition in the Church Rather than the State* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009); Mark Allman, *Who Would Jesus Kill?: War, Peace, and the Christian Tradition* (Winon, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2008); Daniel C. Maguire, *The Horrors We Bless: Rethinking the Just-War Legacy*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Gary M. Simpson, *War, Peace, and God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2007) Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). Other recent and significant modern analysis of Christians and the "just war theory" or "just war tradition" include James Turner Johnson, *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), and Paul Ramsey, *The Just War* (New York: Scribner's Publishers, 1969).

[16] Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations: Recovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132-144. Cf. Bell, *Just War*, for a more fulsome analysis of the connection between ecclesiology and just war.

renaissance within just war thinking demands a response from Christian nonviolence as well.

Nonviolence and Ecclesiology

If nonviolence bears witness to the church's life together in Christ, then nonviolence must be considered as a facet of ecclesiology; this is, however, a contested connection. A number of recent writings have in fact argued for the *separation* of nonviolence and ecclesiology. Nigel Biggar's recent critique of Richard Hays' defense of nonviolence, for example, argues that a public/private divide in Paul's writings allow for Christian involvement in war without compromising the church's witness.[17] Daniel M. Bell Jr.'s recent work on the just war makes a similar case that early normativity for Christian churches to resist war does not hold today.[18] Others have argued more basically, that because the church is caught in an ambiguity between total rejection and total affirmation of power, Christians must exercise power in ways which are often not commensurate with the Gospel.[19]

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[17] Nigel Biggar, "Specify and Distinguish! Interpreting the New Testament on 'Non-Violence', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 2 (January 2009): 164-184. Hays responded with "Narrate and Embody: A Response to Nigel Biggar 'Specify and Distinguish'", *Studies in Christian Ethics* 22, no. 2 (January 2009): 185-198. Cf. Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 1996).

[18] Daniel M. Bell Jr., *Just War*, 29. Bell seeks to put the onus of reviving the just war back on the churches, but disagrees that nonviolence can be always normative for Christians.

[19] Stephen Sykes, *Power and Christian Theology* (London: Continuum Publishers, 2006): "Christians have a particular way of living in the world of powers, to which the key concept is that of sacrifice. That by no means resolves the ambivalence of power. The ambivalence remains because, on the contrary, the essential resource for speaking of the sacrifice of Christ in the particular collection of narratives we possess in the New Testament…moreover, both the doctrine of sacrifice and ritual of Eucharistic sacrifice lend themselves to abuse; because they participate in the world of power they share its ambivalence." (116-117). Cf. John G. Stackhouse, *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). As Oliver O'Donovan, *The Just War Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 9, has framed it, apart from embracing war as a possibility, Christians abandon the world to chaos.

A related trend has been to articulate the peace of God as intrinsic to ecclesiology *apart from* considering the implications this has for Christian responses to war. In a number of recent works, emphasis has been placed upon the peaceable ontology given to those who belong to the Christian *ecclesia*, focusing on the reconciliation which has been accomplished by God for humanity.[20] For such proposals, the concern is articulating the internal life of the church as a body of peace, without considering what these conclusions means with regards to the church's existence in times of war.

The argument has also been made that Christian nonviolence is an act which does not require a consideration of ecclesiology.[21] In the last twenty years, a great deal of literature has emerged referring to the "spirituality" of nonviolence, arguing, with some variance, that nonviolence is a matter of personal spiritual disposition.[22] The most common approach which attempts to speak of a "spirituality of nonviolence" has sought

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[20] This emphasis has been articulated in a variety of ways. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 178-187, 274-288 emphasizes the role in which difference in Trinitarian life indicates the peace present in our own deification. Matthew Levering, *Sacrifice and Community: Jewish Offering and Christian Eucharist* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 187-8 offers a Roman Catholic exploration of this theme of peaceable ontology, in which Eucharist names the communication of an ontological mediation of Christ's benefits and self. Cf., John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers, 1993). Milbank in particular has been criticized for not drawing the connection between his "original peace" ontology and acts of nonviolence. Cf., Paul G. Doerksen, "For and Against Milbank: A Critical Discussion of John Milbank's Construal of Ontological Peace", *Conrad Grebel Review* 18, no.1 (Winter 2000): 48-59; Gerald W. Schlabach, "Is Milbank Niebuhrian Despite Himself?", *Conrad Grebel Review* 23, no.2 (Spring 2005): 33-40; Chris K. Huebner, "What Should Mennonites and Milbank Learn from Each Other?", *Conrad Grebel Review* 23, no.2 (Spring 2005): 9-18.

[21] Paul Valliere, "The Spirituality of War", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 38 (1983), 5-14; John Macquarrie's *The Concept of Peace* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Daniel Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating the Path to Peace* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007).

[22] Grady Scott Davis, *Warcraft and the Fragility of Virtue* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Press, 1992), 27-51, describes pacifism in this fashion. One of the most promising examples of this approach, Michael Battle's *Blessed are the Peacemakers* (Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 2004), which assumes the framework of ecclesiology for articulating a spirituality of nonviolence, but with different concerns than those of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow. For Battle, cultivating the "spirituality of nonviolence" is that which witnesses to the overflowing abundance of the Trinitarian life, but does not discuss this with regards to nonviolent resistance to war at any great length.

to argue for nonviolence on the basis of the divine life. Such arguments for nonviolence are not dependent upon the existence of the church as such, but rather on God being known as nonviolent. This approach, taken most prominently in the work of Walter Wink and J. Denny Weaver, identifies the inner life of God as nonviolent, but says little about the role of the church in this witness.[23]

Of the proposals seeking to connect ecclesiology and nonviolence, the Just Policing proposal of Gerald Schlabach is among the most promising.[24] For Schlabach, the ecclesially-rooted nonviolent witness of the "historic peace churches" must be brought into conversation with other churches who do not hold this commitment, so that the church—when speaking into the world on war—can speak with a single voice.[25] Schlabach argues, thus, that the ecclesial witness of nonviolence can be maintained if pacifists participate in policing activities alongside other Christians, instead of military

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[23] An extreme version of this argument is found in the work of John Dear, *The God of Peace: Toward a Theology of Nonviolence* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994). J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 56-58 draws a distinction between "satisfaction" atonement theories and the life of Jesus, arguing that the God in Christ is a nonviolent God, and that "satisfaction" versions of atonement are distortions of the biblical witness. Cf. Weaver, "Violence in Christian Theology", *Crosscurrents* 51, no.2 (Summer 2001): 150-176. Weaver has more recently extended his argument for this vision of Christian social ontology in "Forgiveness and (Non)Violence: the Atonement Connections, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83, no.2 (April 2009): 319-347. Walter Wink makes a similar argument for nonviolence on the basis of intra-Trinitarian life in *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 210-265

[24] Schlabach has articulated Just Policing most clearly in "Just Policing: How War could Cease to Be A Church-Dividing Issue", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 41, no.3-4 (Summer-Fall 2004): 409-430, and in his article "Just Policing and the Reevalution of War in a Less Divided Church", in *Just Policing, Not War: An Alternative Response to World Violence*, ed. Gerald Schlabach, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

[25] Cf. Gerald Schlabach, "Breaking Bread: Peace and War*", Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 362-3. The ecumenical impulse central to Just Policing has been expanded by other volumes, particularly. *The Fragmentation of the Church and its Unity in Peacemaking*, ed., Jeffrey Gros and John D. Rempel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001), and Fernando Enns, *The Peace Church and the Ecumenical Community: Ecclesiology and the Ethics of Nonviolence* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2007).

forces.[26] Aside from the problematic distinction between military involvement and policing, Schlabach's proposal suffers from what body could support *both* just war and nonviolent convictions such that the distinct traditions are not subsumed, and still support both just war and nonviolence.[27]

Nonviolence and Social Ontology

Similar to the disjuncture between nonviolence and ecclesiology, certain versions of Christian nonviolence assume that it can be articulated apart from an account of social ontology, viewing "ontology" as either unnecessary to accounts of moral action or as a concern of the ancient world.[28] Such proposals emphasize nonviolence as an ethical act which does not need to consider social existence, or as a tactical measure used for short

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[26] "Just Policing and the Reevaluation of War", 3-19. In the presence of a divided church, which is *not* in fact operating or speaking as a single body, the assumption of Schlabach that a single voice can speak in either one voice, much less give validity to *both* nonviolence and the possibility of violence is reason enough to question it. But the deeper question is that of implementation, namely how such a body would practically operate in the world. Cf., Thomas R. Neufeld Yoder, "Ecclesiology and Policing: Who Calls the Shots?:", *Conrad Grebel Review* 26, no.2, (2008): 91-101.

[27] Just Policing has previously been criticized for creating a false distinction between "military" and "policing". Cf. Andy Alexis-Baker, "The Gospel or a Glock? Mennonites and the Police", *Conrad Grebel Review* 25, no.2 (Spring 2007): 23-49. Alexis-Baker's analysis of police and the common good tends toward the inflammatory, but makes a historic case for the development of police not as emerging from neutral grounds, but as shaped by and beholden to particular material forces of warmaking. Schlabach has distinguished the two in "Just Policing: How War Could Cease": 415-17, emphasizing seven 'psycho-social' criteria which distinguish between war and policing. Tobias Winright has a complimentary list, which focuses on the legal status and structural analogies between war and policing. Cf. Winright's "Just Cause and Preemptive Strikes in the War on Terrorism", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26, no. 2 (Fall-Winter 2006): 157-181.
  In various Catholic documents, most notably the Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes*, and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' *The Challenge of Peace*, nonviolence and just war are described as defensible options for Catholics. This, however, assumes a unified church, whereas Schlabach's ecumenism is rooted in this practice, and not in first attaining ecumenical unity between the church bodies reasoning about war. For the affirming of both nonviolence and just war in these Catholic documents, see Tobias Winright, "The Liturgy as a Basis for Catholic Identity, Just War Theory, and the Presumption Against War", *Catholic Identity and the Laity*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 134-151.

[28] Though not discussing war, Hilary Putnam's *Ethics Without Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) articulates this mode of ethics, focusing on the pragmatic nature of ethical reasoning rather than delving into questions of "being" or "ontology".

term political gains.[29] The most common arguments levied against nonviolence of this variety, however, are that it ultimately depends upon the presence of violence (to make space for nonviolent practice) or that this nonviolence ultimately abandons any consideration of public life, in that sometimes public goods must be defended by violence.[30]

The most prominent Christian version of this form of nonviolence within recent research is that of Just Peacemaking, which emphasizes practices which have been empirically shown to reduce warfare.[31] This approach "bases its ethics instead on what practices are actually proving to decrease the number of wars in real history", and seeks to be "realistic in the sense that it focuses on what in fact works to prevent wars in real

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[29] Classic works in this vein include Richard Gregg's *The Power of Nonviolence* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Publishing Company, 1934), a work which introduced the English-speaking world to the work of Mohandas Gandhi, and was influential for Martin Luther King, Jr., going through over a dozen editions. Also important for this approach are the works of Gene Sharp, including *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1974), and *Nonviolent Action: A Research Guide* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1997). More recent Christian works in this vein emphasize nonviolence as a practice of imitatio Christi, as in John Dear, *Put Your Sword Down: Answering the Gospel Call to Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), and Robert Brimlow's *What About Hitler? Wrestling With Jesus' Call to Nonviolence in an Evil World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006). Recent works in this vein which discuss nonviolence on the basis of its practicability, though not as self-conscious theology include Dustin Elles Howes' *Toward a Credible Pacifism*, and *Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, ed. Vaclav Havel (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985). Because most of the work in this vein operates apart from a self-conscious theology, most of the responses to this vein are also not self-conciously theological, arguing about the practicality of nonviolence for social change.

[30] This is most powerfully argued in Reinhold Niebuhr's essay, "Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist", in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown (New Haven: Yale University, 1986). Cf. Ward Churchill, *Pacifism as Pathology* (Oakland: AK Press, 2007), and Peter Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* (London: South End Press, 2007). Also, Jean Bethke Elshtain*, Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 99-124; Davis, *Warcraft*, 53-61.

[31]*Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998). The subtitle,"Ten Practices for Abolishing War", as Stassen has clarified in subsequent writings, was initially intended to be "a new paradigm" rather than the optimistic title eventually assigned it, in "The Unity, Realism and Obligatoriness of Just Peacemaking", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no.1 (Spring-Summer 2003): 171-194.

history, based on empirical reality".[32] While practical nonviolence has a long history,

rooting the validity of nonviolence in its "effectiveness" raises a number of questions.

Just Peacemaking in particular has been challenged as to whether or not nonviolence and

"effectiveness" are compatible goals, as most often, nonviolence either 1) fails entirely to

end conflict or 2) made possible because others are bearing arms.[33]

 While consideration must be given to the practical aspects of nonviolence, I take

Richard Hays' argument that "the *ekklesia* is a community set apart for a special vocation

in the world" to be fundamentally correct.[34] Nonviolence exists for the Christian, not on

the basis of its probability of success, but because such activity is a means of witness to a

particular configuration of social existence made possible through Christ. Considering

nonviolence as bearing witness to a particular form of social existence lifts the burden of

nonviolence to be first "practical" or "effective", in that the nature of nonviolence is not

first to end conflicts at any cost, but to bear witness to a new social possibility.

 Before proceeding to how this understanding of nonviolence is effected in the

work of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, I will first illustrate this approach through a

reading of Augustine's *City of God* on war, to argue that war is a parody of the social

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[32] *Just Peacemaking*, 11.

[33] Cf. Gelderloos, 124ff. Works such as Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall's *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001) give credence to nonviolence as an alternative to violent revolution, it says little to nothing about resistance to war. In truth, as Joseph Kosek has noted, in *Acts of Conscience: Christian Nonviolence and Modern American Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), nonviolent movements in protest to war, with the exception of the Vietnam Conflict, are small-scale, and in terms of democratic process, have very little impact upon the decision of nations to go to war or not. As Martin L. Cook has argued in "Just Peacemaking: Challenges of Humanitarian Intervention", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 23, no.1 (Spring-Summer 2003): 241-253, the movement would better view itself as operating *after* military acts rather than before if it desires to maintain its commitment to nonviolence.

[34] Richard Hays, "Narrate and Embody", 195. Hays goes on to say that Biggar's distinction between public and private commands for the Christian is rooted in a "moral discernment [which] takes place chiefly with reference to the realm of public political order rather than with reference to the *politeuma* of the people of God (Phil. 3:20)": 198.

existence given to the church. War is not simply a problem affecting the temporal

conditions of life, but effects a sociality which is ordered toward ends other than those of

God. Consequently, consideration of a Christian nonviolent resistance to war must be

connected to the social existence which God gives through the church, and how the

church bears witness to this social existence, in contrast to the social existence created by

war.

War, Social Ontology and the Church: Augustine's City of God

In the *City of God*, I argue, we find an account of war as producing a parody of

the social existence given to the church by God in Christ.[35] The two cities—the city of

God and the city of Man, or 'the city of the world', Augustine argues, are distinguished

by the objects of their love: the love of temporal goods or the love of God.[36] Though

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[35] It should be noted that I am working with Augustine's conception as worked out in *City of God*, and not other texts, such as *Against Faustus*, Book XXII, Ch. 74-5, 78, in Ernest Fortin and Douglas Kries, ed. *Augustine: Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993),222-226, which has been used to articulate a just war concept in Augustine's thought. R. A. Markus has argued that between the authorship of *Faustum* and *City of God*, Augustine had become resolutely more pessimistic about the prospects of war and society, in "St. Augustine's Views on the 'Just War', in *The Church and War: Studies in Church History* 20, ed. W.J. Shields (London: Basil Blackwell, 1983),1-13. Similarly, Markus finds Augustine's view of the *saeculum* to produce good societies in *City of God* commensurate with this shift in Augustine's view of war, in "Two Conceptions of Political Authority: Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, XIX. 14-15, and Some Thirteenth-Century Interpretations", *Journal of Theological Studies* 16, no.1 (1965): 68-100. Markus' argument here is that in *City of God*, Augustine views family relations as a 'natural' and thus, good, ordering, and the state as 'unnatural' and thus, incapable of mediating eternal peace. Whereas in *Contra Faustum*, Augustine is willing to say that a man may kill in the name of the state and incur no guilt, as he acts in the name of an order of creation, Louis J. Swift has argued that Augustine has already linked the guilt of the soldier to the justice achieved by the nation engaging war, in "Augustine on War and Killing; Another View", *Harvard Theological Review* 66 (1973): 369-83. Whereas earlier, Augustine separated out the guilt of the solider from the just cause of the nation, the intertwining of these aspects, combined with the subsequent shift in *City of God* to naming temporal societies as unjust problematizes this earlier caveat of *Contra Faustum.*

[36] Identifying the two cities of Augustine's work is a matter of debate among scholars. Most problematic is that "cities" are not static temporal locales but socialities which are formed by that which is loved corporately, creating 'cities' which are temporally fluid. It is my contention that Augustine points us toward the church as that sociality which can be most clearly, though not absolutely, be identified with the City of God. Cf., William R. Stevenson, Jr., *Christian Love and Just War: Moral Paradox and Political Life in St. Augustine and His Modern Interpreters* (Mercer, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 13. Peter

divided in their objects of love, there are a number of striking similarities between the

two cities. Both cities are characterized as dwelling in time and circumscribed by space[37]

; both cities are characterized by their pursuit of peace[38]; both cities are characterized as

seeking permanent habitation and as social entities on pilgrimage. Among those

practices which distinguish them, however, is war. Though the church—the present sign

of the City of God—is bound up in time and space with the Roman imperium which

benefits from war, the church does not exist as the same kind of sociality as Rome.

    The city of God remains for Augustine secure in the love of God, whereas the city

of Man, loving itself, is characterized by a constant seeking of security, a search which

results in innumerable wars to maintain its existence in time and space.[39] Even before

Augustine begins his narration of the two cities in Book XVIII, Augustine characterized

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S. Hawkins, in "Polemical Counterpoint in *De Civitae Dei*", *Augustinian Studies* 6, no.2 (Spring 1975): 97-106, modifies this interpretation by offering that in distinction from the traditional two cities, there is for Augustine a third city, a *civitas terrena spiritalis* (spiritual earthly city). William Cavanaugh, "From One City to Two: Christian Reimagining of Political Space", *Political Theology* 7, no.3 (July 2006): 299-321 offers a reading which, by contrast, depicts the cities as temporally coherent performances. Cf. Robert Dodaro, "Between the Two Cities: Political Action in Augustine of Hippo", *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth, (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2005), 99-115, which describes Augustine's own political activities. Following Cavanaugh and Dodaro's readings, the temporal loci of the loves seem to be relatively mixed, such that we are (temporally) to identify the City of God with the church, while acknowledging that the church does not fully exhibit the eschatological fullness of the life of the City of God.

[37] Augustine*, City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson, introd. John O'Meara. (London: Penguin Books, 1984), Book XI:6 (436): "there can be no doubt that the world was not created in time but with time." Augustine goes on to say that the Heavenly City participates, by hope, in eternal life, though experiencing 'misery' in temporal existence (XIX:21 (881)).

[38] Ibid., Book XIX:12 (866): "even when men choose war, their only wish is for victory; which shows that their desire in fighting is for peace with glory…and when this is achieved there will be peace. Even wars, then, are waged with peace as their object, even when they are waged by those who are concerned to exercise their warlike prowess, either in command or in the actual fighting. Hence it is an established fact that peace is the desired end of war."

[39] Book XV:4 (599): "The earthly city will not be everlasting; for when it is condemned to the final punishment it will no longer be a city…And since this is not the kind of good that causes no frustrations to those enamoured of it, the earthly city is generally divided against itself by litigation, by wars, by battles, by the pursuit of victories that bring death with them or at best are doomed to death…that city desires an earthly peace, for the sake of the lowest goods; and it is that peace which it longs to attain by making war."

the Roman Empire as this type of sociality, which must rely upon these wars of aggression for her perpetuity.[40] Rome has clearly benefited from the products of war as "the Roman Empire could not have been increased so far and wide, and Roman glory could not have been spread, except by continual wars following one upon another."[41] These wars, Augustine says, are waged for the sake of peace, a peace which consists of "none surviving to resist", a peace founded on annihilation rather than coexistence.[42]

At the root of these two cities, Augustine explains, we find two archetypes: Cain and Abel.[43] Cain, killing his brother "because his power would be more restricted if both wielded the sovereignty", establishes a pattern carried forth by Romulus and Remus and all 'earthly cities' since, destroying those who would seek to share in goods rather than recognizing that goodness "is a possession enjoyed more widely by the united affection of partners in that possession in proportion to the harmony that exists among them."[44] What is intriguing to notice is the pattern by which this violence of Cain's is made to flourish. War is the vehicle by which goods are acquired for the earthly city of Cain,[45] but rather than solving its crisis of scarcity, reaps "fresh misery and an increase of the

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[40] Ibid., "So *if* it was by waging wars that were just, not impious and unjust, that the Romans were able to acquire so vast an empire, surely they should worship the Injustice of others as a kind of goddess? For we observe how much help 'she' has given towards the extension of the Empire by making others wrong-doers, so that the Romans should have enemies to fight in a just cause and so increase Rome's power…With the support of these two Goddeses—'Foreign Injustice' and Victory, the empire grew, even when Jupiter took a holiday. Injustice stirred up the causes of war; Victory brought the war to its happy conclusion": IV.15

[41] Ibid. III.10

[42] Ibid., XV: 4, (600).

[43] Ibid., Book XV: 5 (600).

[44] Ibid. (601).

[45] Ibid., Book XV: 4 (599): "that city desires an earthly peace, for the sake of the lowest goods; and it is that peace which is longs to attain by making war."

wretchedness already there."[46] In other words, war secures temporal space for the earthly

city, but only increases the conditions which it desires to eradicate. In the same way that

Cain's first violence was an effort to overcome a distance between Cain and God's

approval, so war on the social level leads to the perpetuation of war in the attempt to

alleviate its original causes of social disunity.[47]

To sum up thus far, the picture of the earthly city which Augustine has sketched is

founded and perpetuated in acts of war, and populated by those whose lives mirror these

commitments. This city, founded in a primal act of defiance against God by Cain,

maintains its coherence in war and corresponding belligerent activities. But beyond this,

war not only enables the ongoing temporal narrative of the city and stands as the

corporate product of the earthly city, but is characterized as the vehicle by which the

earthly city attempts to attain to the goods of the Heavenly City.

In Nimrod, Cain's descendent, we see the full extent of the relationship between

war and social order in Augustine's narrative.[48] Augustine takes Nimrod's nickname of

'hunter' to be less than innocuous, suggesting that "the word 'hunter' can only suggest a

deceiver, oppressor and destroyer of earth-born creatures", a description fully in line with

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[46] Ibid., 600.

[47] It is not accidental, thus, that Augustine notes that the name of Seth, (Cain's new counterpart in the Genesis story following Abel's death) means 'resurrection'—the hope of the City of God— while Cain's name means 'possession', with Cain's descendents being known for various economic and material skills. The city of Cain, populated by those skilled in temporal *technes*, "has its beginning and end on this earth, where there is no hope of anything beyond what can be seen in this world." Cf., ibid., Book. XV:18, (626-7).

[48] Ibid., Book XVI:3 (652-3). Augustine makes no attempt to explain how the line of Cain reemerges through Noah's line after the flood, choosing to interpret Noah's children as 'prophetic symbolism' of the conditions of the world. Ham's name ('hot') is thus interpreted to stand in for those that are "hot, because they are on fire not with the spirit of wisdom, but with the spirit of impatience; for that is the characteristic fervor in the hearts of heretics; that is what makes them disturb the peace of the saints" (650).

the violence named of the progenitor of his line, Cain.[49] But most interestingly, Nimrod

is named by Augustine as the founder of an empire which began with Cain, whose center

was Babel, a city founded, according to the Book of Genesis, with the ultimate goal of

ascending to God.

The importance of Babel in this story is highlighted by the aspect of the biblical

Cain-Abel story which Augustine passes over: the wandering of Cain. In Augustine's

telling of the story, Cain moves immediately from violence against to Abel to the

founding of another city. In the Genesis account, however, Cain's eventual founding of a

city was predicated on his punishment by God to be without his home.[50] The lineage

following Cain can thus be read, when companioned by Augustine's rendering of

Genesis, as the story of a search for that which has been denied by those committed to a

culture of war: the perpetual rest of home. Babel thus becomes more than simply the

culmination of Cain's genealogy, but that which a war-sustained civilization has been

seeking since Cain: a restoration of Edenic peace with God.

We thus see the city of Babel, founded in war, seeking to bridge the ultimate

divide between God and creation, by means which parody the City of God. Whereas the

City of God is united to God in its love for God, the bellicose city of Babel seeks to

bridge this divide by possession of God and of any opposing social bodies. Nimrod,

building a tower to 'symbolize his impious pride', sees his city thus suffer an appropriate

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[49] Ibid., Book XVI:6 (659).

[50] Genesis 4.12b-16: "You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden."

punishment: division and scattering of the city across the earth, frustrating war's claim to produce social unity.[51] Babel, attempting to restore the original state of creation by subsuming various locations into itself, discloses war as a parody of the social life found in God. I will now show how war functions specifically as this parody.

As Michael Hanby has argued, the church in *City of God*, celebrates a Christ whose death "denies tragedy and death any ontological purchase", in that Christ's death is self-donation of God on behalf of humanity.[52] Those receiving this gift are united to Christ in this generous self-donation of God, and participate in a social existence which transforms its celebrants into those who are able to deny their own power in favor of the one who has overcome the 'necessity' of death with the abundance of divine life. The society created by war stands over against the gathered community of Christ, in the *City of God*, not only as a community seeking to secure human unity out of division by war, contrasting the church which is established through a reconciliation found in God's gift of Christ. War also produces *new* socialities which will, in turn, use war as the means by which social unity is achieved; the co-option of other existing socialities, creates thus an endless mimicking of the human unity given to the world by God in Christ.[53]

But for Augustine, even prior to its renewal in the church, human nature speaks to a unity given by God and not in war. As Augustine argues in *The Good of Marriage*,

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[51] Genesis 11:5-7.

[52] Michael Hanby, "Democracy and its Demons", in *Augustine and Politics*, ed. John Doody, Kevin L. Hughes, and Kim Paffenroth, (Lanham, Lexington Books, 2005), 117-145 (126).

[53] In *City of God*, XV:1-6, Augustine argues that beginning with Abel, there is a division which takes place among humanity, toward damnation or salvation. In Adam, however, there is a fundamental unity of the two cities, such that "the two cities are mingled together from the beginning, down to the end" (XVIII:54). Their division because of their loves does not for Augustine negate their sharing in temporal goods, a vestige of their original unity in Adam.

human social life is a good which speaks of its original Adamic unity, and points toward God,[54] an affirmation which Augustine repeats in *City of God*, saying that the unity of human creation in Adam as the fount of all human unity.[55] Within this vision of creation as good, war is the corporate abandonment of the human vocation of peaceability and a perverse enactment of the human vocation to live in unity before God, attempting to restore unity through violence rather than through Christ's gift of the church.[56]

To sum up thus far, war is, for *The City of God*, the vehicle by which human society apart from God is established, and beyond this, the means by which the cities of humanity are perpetuated, as seen in the narrative stretching from Cain to Nimrod. In and through these socialities, war creates the conditions under which a direct challenge to God is issued. By functioning as the creator of a parody of original human sociality, war takes on a quasi-divine character, perpetuating human unity through social corruption whereas for Augustine, there can be only human unity in the social existence made possible by Christ.[57]

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[54] "Because each man is a part of the human race, and human nature is itself a social thing, he has, as a great and natural good, the power of friendship also. For this reason, God willed to create all men out of one, so that they might be bound together in their society not only by similiarity of race, but also by the bond of kinship" In R. W. Dyson, *The Pilgrim City: Social and Political Ideas in the Writings of St. Augustine of Hippo*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 62.

[55] And therefore God created only one single man, not, certainly, that he might be a solitary, bereft of all society but that by this means the unity of society and the bond of concord might be more effectually commended to him, men being bound together not only by similarity of nature, but by family affection", *Pilgrim City,* 63, (*City of God* XII:22-23).

[56] "But God was not ignorant that man would sin, and that…these mortals would run to such enormities in sin, that even the beasts devoid of rational will…would live more securely and peaceably with their own kind than men, who have been propogated from one individual *for the very purpose of commending concord* (emphasis mine). For not even lions or dragons have ever waged with their kind such wars as men have waged with one another." In *Pilgrim City*, 63, (*City of God* XII: 22-23).

[57] War, as a constituting agent of human sociality, remains an exercise of human agents, but in some sense, creates those human agents, as it provides the conditions under which human citizens emerge in the false commonwealth.

Beyond this parody of the church's social ontology, war functions as a parody of the God who sustains and makes possible social existence. If, according to Augustine, in Adam, people were created as social beings, with true social order directing us toward God, war operates as an imitation of God in two respects. First, war mimics God's constitution of persons as social beings. By perpetuating deficient forms of social existence, as seen in the Cain narrative, war is the power underlying corrupted social life, unifying in the case of Nimrod where they had been social division, and in doing so, functions as an anti-Christ. Secondly, war mimics God's sustaining of social community. The grace of God produces a just order of the City of God; the city founded in war, by contrast, seeks to secure its locus by competition and coercion rather than self-giving.

The distinctions which I have traced here between the church (founded in the peace of Christ) and the city of Man (founded and sustained by war) is not to say that churches have at all times distanced themselves from acts of war; to anticipate one objection, churches have certainly played a role in perpetuating war.[58] But following *The City of God*, I suggest that the visible church and its institutions *as such* are not the source of conflict, but rather one of those material resources which wars mobilize for ends *alien* to the social existence of churches; the conscription of religion toward the ends of war, according to Augustine, is not the same as saying that religion causes war. Rather, it is *because of* the church, I argue, that we are able to see the connection between fallen social existence and war; through the new social existence made available by God in

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[58] Any number of historical examples illustrate the manner in which Christian churches have either supported or directly mobilized its members for engagement in American wars. Cf., Gerald Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism: The American Churches and the Second World War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Christ in and through the church, the church bears witness to true human sociality, and exposes war as a parody of this divinely-given social life.

Religion for Augustine is never the only manner in which social peace can be enacted, in the same way that the City of God for Augustine is not reducible to the visible and gathered community of the church.[59] But neither can the human unity which is made possible by God be articulated for Augustine *apart from* the church. Adopting the analysis which the *City of God* provides regarding war does not mean, therefore, adopting Augustine's solution of tragic participation in war, or participating in war on behalf of one's neighbors.[60] If the church participates in a new social life made possible by Christ—a social existence which is the foretaste of all human social life—bearing witness to this life in times of war entails being open to rejecting the necessity of war in favor of nonviolence. Christians can make use of a variety of tactics in their nonviolence (as my exploration of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow will show); however, nonviolence cannot ultimately be intelligible for these three *apart from* the church.

I am not suggesting, in offering this reading of *City of God*, that the work itself commends nonviolence, or that Augustine is a closeted pacifist; such readings are beyond

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[59] Augustine, even in this work, is no pacifist. Cf. Robert Dodaro, "Augustine's Use of Parallel Dialogues in his Preaching on Nonviolence", *Ministerium Sermonis*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009): 327-344, and Peter Burnell, "Justice in War In and Before Augustine", *Studia Patristica* 49 (2010): 107-110.

[60] For Augustine on war, see J. Warren Smith, "Augustine and the Limits of Preemptive and Preventitive War", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, no.1 (March 2007): 141-162; John Mark Mattox, *Saint Augustine and the Theory of Just War* (London: Continuum, 2006), and John Langan, "The Elements of St. Augustine's Just War Theory", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 12, no.1 (1984): 19-38. Historically, appropriations of Augustine on war have centered on his "just war" reflections, overlooking the manner in which war is intrinsic to the perpetuation of the "other city" within *City of God.* Recent works on Augustine's political thought have explored possibilities of sustainable civic life, such as Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love: An Augustinian Ethic of Democratic Citizenship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Notably, however, in their constructions of social life using Augustine, neither author addresses war directly as a problem for civic existence, whereas in *City of God*, war is intrinsic to the founding of civic life and central to its sustainability.

the scope of my intentions, and are most likely historically untenable.[61] Augustine is

routinely cited as a seminal figure within Christian thinking on how wars can be

conducted within certain just parameters; what I am suggesting in my reading, rather, is

that Augustine's descriptions of the just person who undertakes war (which are peppered

throughout *The City of God*) do not mitigate Augustine's description of war as describing

and perpetuating a social existence which is counter to that given in and through the life

of the church.[62] In reading *City of God* as a text with its own vision of war, the work may

yield other readings than those offered by reading as simply an extension of his treatment

of war in *Against Faustus*, one of the most prominently cited texts for Augustine as a

just-war thinker.[63]

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[61] In *St. Augustine: The Retractions,* ed. Roy J. Defeirari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1968), XVIII, Augustine makes clear that the peace spoken of in the Sermon on the Mount cannot be fully present within life, and accordingly, temporal force cannot exclude the possibility of violent force. This has not prevented promoters of nonviolence from attempting such conversations with Augustine on violence. Cf. Alain Epp Weaver, "Unjust Lies, Just Wars? A Christian Pacifist Conversation with Augustine", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29, no.1 (Spring 2001): 51-78. Weaver's contention is that the absolution prohibition by Augustine on lying begs the question as to whether Augustine has simply been inconsistent in his reflections on war. Cf. James Turner Johnson, "Can a Pacifist Have a Conversation with Augustine? A Response to Alain Epp Weaver", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 29, no.1 (Spring 2001): 87-93.

[62] For Augustine's comments on the just man and war in *City of God*, cf. Book IV.15, where Augustine explains that the wars of Rome have produced such unjust neighbors, that any war against the borders of the Roman empire can only be seen by Rome as "just". But, as Augustine argues, the "just" nature of these wars is the only because of Rome's unjust behavior, such that a "just war" is an answer to the question posed by war, the facilitator of a deprived form of social life. To be sure, God is described as the One who has given Rome its position within the world (V.21), and Augustine allows certain kinds of war for the sake of temporal peace (I.21). But Augustine's description of God's giving of empire does not in and of itself necessitate violence. Rather, Augustine sees violence emerging when God is forgotten as the one giving empire, as in the murder of Julian (V.21). In sum, the presence and participation by the "just man" (judging their war to be just when measured by a privation) does not diminish the distinction Augustine seeks to draw between the two cities, one which is perpetuated in war and one which is witnessed to by the church.

[63] *Against Faustus*, 222-226. In this work, Augustine makes provision for the wars of the Old Testament as instances of God's command, and thus, are just wars. It is this distinction between war as a command of God, and war as a condition of temporal peace which distinguishes *City of God* from this work. As William Cavanaugh has argued in, "Killing in the Name of God," *New Blackfriars* 85 (September 2004): 510-26, divine *command* is perhaps the only caveat for there being a just war.

It will be the burden of this dissertation in the remaining chapters to articulate how nonviolence bears witness to this new form of social existence, made known in and through the church. Using Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow for this task does not result in a univocal stance on what this social existence looks like, what ecclesiological practices are necessary (either for the sake of witness or for the sake of making this existence visible), or how nonviolence can be carried out. But all three affirm the inseparability of a new social existence in Christ (made visible through the church) from nonviolence (an act which bears witness to that life). I will now begin this exploration with the work of John Howard Yoder.

CHAPTER TWO

John Howard Yoder: Peoplehood, Ecclesiology, and Nonviolent Witness to the World

Introduction

In this chapter, I will be exploring John Howard Yoder as one proponent of the framework I have established in Chapter One, examining how nonviolence bears witness to the new sociality established by Christ (described by Yoder as the 'new humanity') made visible through the church. Yoder's work draws together these elements in ways which are both challenging and problematic. For Yoder, the 'new humanity' appears as a result of Christ's nonviolent conquering of the powers, with this new social reality exhibited through the life and practices of the church. The church's practices bear witness to this new social existence created by Christ, by remaining in dialogical relation to the practices of the world which still exists under the sway of the powers. Ecclesial practices help facilitate connections with the world, so that the church might be able to fully bear witness to this new social possibility through analogies and practices which the world can comprehend; this approach to witness is seen most clearly in the church's practice of nonviolence.

While Yoder's dialogical understanding of church life and of how nonviolence can be articulated in dialogical conversation with other approaches to war is a great resource, I will argue that ultimately, both the practices of the church and how this 'new humanity' is described are both subsumed by nonviolence for Yoder. In other words, nonviolence is that practice for Yoder which makes known the character of the social ontology seen in the church as well as the practice which centrally defines the church. As

I will explain, nonviolence is the practice which discloses the eschatological "grain of the universe", and as such, becomes central to naming both true ecclesiology and how one describes the social existence made possible in Christ.

This chapter will proceed in four parts. First, I will briefly locate Yoder within the larger currents of Mennonite thought during the latter half of the 20th century, to illuminate how Yoder's work toward witness to the world is part of a larger shift within Mennonite life. Second, I will sketch out Yoder's social ontology of "the new humanity" made possible by Jesus' conquering of the powers and principalities, powers characterized by violence and disorder. Third, I will explore Yoder's ecclesiology, to examine how the church's processes and internal life facilitate connection to the world for the sake of witness to the new sociality which the church is known to exhibit insofar as it continues in the nonviolent way of Jesus. Finally, I will argue that, because nonviolence is a practice which bears witness to this social ontology, Yoder points us to signs of this social reality beyond the life of the church.

Yoder's Theological Inheritance

The purpose of this section is two-fold: 1) to place Yoder within the larger stream of Mennonite life, and 2) to show how the question of conscription and war called into question the traditional "two-kingdoms" theology used by Mennonites, and lead to a renewed concern for the relationship between the church and world. Yoder's theology in many ways sought to overcome this traditional Mennonite division between church and

world.[1] Prior to the Second World War, most American Mennonites held a position with regards to participation in war known as "nonresistance", which described not simply non-cooperation with war, but a relationship between the church and the world characterized by separation from the world.[2] 'Nonresistance', in other words, implies what has been called a "two-kingdom" theology, demarking two areas of life within temporal existence—one Christocentric and one sinful.[3] The kingdom of Christ is

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[1] Assessments of Yoder's theology and ethics suffer from a surprisingly neglect of historical context. This neglect can be seen most eminently in the introductions to two particular collections of Yoder's essays, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,1994), and *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003). For example, in Michael Cartwright's introduction to *JCSR*, he notes that Yoder took place in Jewish-Christian conversations from "the 1950s until near the end of his life in 1997" (12), providing a careful itinerary of Yoder's dialogues with Rabbi Swarzchild, dialogues which would culminate in the essays comprising *Jewish-Christian Schism.*

 The various essays which comprise the work are arranged, however, out of chronological order. Similarly, Cartwright's introduction to *Royal Priesthood* contains a great deal of valuable historical background, but makes no attempt to show movement in the theology of the various essays of the book, which range from 1959 to 1990. By contrast, in the 1994 preface to the second edition of *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), viii, Yoder acknowledges that "there are of course numerous points where my original statement in the 1972 text would need to be corrected or retracted".

 Recent scholarship on Yoder has begun to remedy this problem through intellectual biographies of Yoder. Cf. Earl Zimmerman, *Practicing the Politics of Jesus: The Origin and Significance of John Howard Yoder's Social Ethics* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2007); Mark Theissen Nation, *John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005). But despite noting the variety of sources with which Yoder interacted over his career, Nation's judgment is that "John Howard Yoder was a remarkably consistent thinker, both over a period of more than four decades and across several sub-disciplines within theology", 189.

[2] The use of "nonresistance" and "non-resistance" will be used interchangeably, depending on the author's use of the term. For pre-First World War Mennonite stance on war, see Gerlof D. Homan's *American Mennonites and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 29-43. The theology is best summed up by Guy Hershberger, *War, Peace, and Nonresistance* (Scottdale, PA: The Herald Press, 1946), 188, in which he states, "The New Testament is concerned with redemption through Jesus and Christ and with the manner of life which Christians should live. All other matters are incidental to this…Jesus and Paul do not suggest what type of state is most desirable, nor how it should be conducted. It is not suggested that Christians should play any role in the affairs of state. The Sermon on the Mount is not a piece of legislation for a secular state in a sinful society; it is a set of principles to govern the conduct of members of the kingdom of God; and Jesus said this kingdom is not of this world, and that its members do not fight." This is dependent in many ways upon the much older Mennonite confession known as the Schleitheim Confession, found in *The Schleitheim Confession*, trans. John Howard Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977).

governed by the teachings of Jesus (particularly the Sermon on the Mount), and

accompanied by practices implied by these teachings, i.e., rejecting government

involvement and the violence which often accompanies involvement in government life.[4]

   During the Second World War, American Mennonite congregations underwent

significant changes with regards to how they related to government structures and war.[5]

As earlier "island communities" of American Mennonite life gave way to less

geographically and socially isolated communities, so Mennonite thinking on involvement

in war began embracing more activist approaches. The traditional "Old Mennonite"

congregations, of which Yoder was a part of as a boy, for example, had begun drawing

increasingly from a more urban and less-isolated population, complicating their ability to

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[3] This is not to be confused with Lutheran "two-kingdoms" thought. In the words of Menno Simons, "If you are rightly baptized according to the Scriptures, then you are incorporated into the holy inviolable body of Christ, which is the church…If you are one of these, why do you live in pride, whoredom, avarice, adultery, hate, envy, treachery, murder, idolatry, and all forms of ungodliness after the fashion of those not born of God and heaven but of a prince of hell? You surely know that Christ Jesus is not a leader nor a prince of unrighteousness, ferocious, and bloody men, and he will not have them in his body, the church, city, and kingdom," in *'Confession' and The New Birth*, trans. and ed. Irvin B. Horst, (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 1996), 47.

[4] There have been no shortages of challenges within Anabaptist historiography to this description of Anabaptists. John Howard Yoder's dissertation, published in English as *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialgoues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder, transl. David Stassen and C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2003), is a challenge to the traditional reading of Mennonites as 'passive' and 'withdrawn' from public debates. Cf., James M. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword*, (Lawrence, KS: Coronado, 1973). My purpose here is not to enter into these debates of Anabaptist historiography, but simply to assert that for pre-Second World War American Mennonites, Hershberger's definition of Mennonite nonresistance is a fair reading. Fred Kniss, among others have argued that the practices of nonconformity among Mennonites produce in turn the beliefs regarding "kingdoms", but by the accounts of Mennonite statements of faith, this is exactly backwards. See Kniss, "Ideas and Symbols as Resources in Intrareligious Conflict: The Case of American Mennonites", *Sociology of Religion* 57 (1996): 12.

[5] Perry Bush, *Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Mennonite Pacifism in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1998), 130, has argued that the shift in Mennonite responses to war from the early 20th century to the latter 20th century are due in large part to the movement from agrarian life to urban life. See also J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic: Identity and Modernization* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), and Albert Keim and Grant Stoltzfus, *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at War*, *1917-1955* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988).

avoid entanglements with the world.[6] Similarly, the General Conference Mennonite

Churches (GCMC) began to divide along generational lines as to how to articulate their

vision for social involvement.

These cultural shifts were accompanied by formative experiences during the First

and Second World War. During the First World War, Mennonites were largely able to

secure conscientious objector status, but only after being drafted into the military.[7] While

active combat was traditionally refused by Mennonites, the acceptance of non-combat

service and payment of national taxes used for war preparations began to complicate the

traditional dual-kingdom model.[8] Mennonites began to divide on how to view issues of

taxation and conscription, issues which were indicative of other divisions emerging

among Mennonites on how to respond to American wars. Older Mennonites were used

to thinking of resistance to war as 'nonresistance' (non-cooperation with the

government), in contrast with emerging language of 'peace' in younger circles, a term

which called for a more active engagement with the world. For the older generation, the

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[6] For Yoder among the "Old Mennonites", see Nation, *Yoder*, 2-9.

[7] Bush, 52-56. Bush, 28-30 details various humanitarian efforts begun between 1920-1927 by the newly founded Mennonite Central Committee, to both give voice to Mennonite missions and centralize these efforts in the international contexts such as the aftermath of war. Between 1903 and 1916, various versions of the Militia Act made provision for conscientious objection to wars, culminating with the 1918 Selective Service Act, which made provision for draftees who could be exempted from combat if they "belonged to a well-organized religious sect". This exemption, however, did not excuse Mennonites from rendering some alternative service in the event that they were drafted; consequently, in the event of the draft, Mennonites had to choose either non-compliance with the government, or to submit to the draft and then receive a non-combat assignment.

[8] Legal provisions did little to shield Mennonites from public insults or attacks. Mennonite churches in places were burned, and by 1918, all German-speaking schools in the jurisdiction of the Mennonite General Conference had been closed, in Homan, 64-80. For further documentary evidence concerning Mennonite experience during the First World War, see Peter Brock's *Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) and *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969). For American military budgets, see Charles Gilbert, *American Financing of World War I* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1970), 75ff.

call to 'peace' seemed to be more reminiscent of early 20th century liberal pacifism than traditional Mennonite teaching.[9]

The experience of conscription in two wars began, in short, to effect a change in the theological vision of Mennonites. In the interwar period of the 1930s, various Mennonite Brethren handbooks began to speak in terms of "condemning war and advocating peace" instead of, or alongside the concept of 'nonresistance'.[10] Within Mennonite ranks, the two distinct positions—the traditional 'nonresistance' and the more modern activist 'peace'—each retained its backers.[11] But as various vehicles for witness to nonviolence[12] emerged alongside various organizations to support this witness, Mennonite thinking began to shift away from passive 'nonresistance' to a more active peace advocacy.[13]

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[9] In the background of the First World War lies Reinhold Niebuhr's accusations that refusal of Christians to engage in war is both sectarian and a Christian heresy. Cf, Reinhold Niebhur's "Why The Christian Church is Not Pacifist" in *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses*, ed. Robert McAfee Brown, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 102-122. Niebuhr's critique is directed primarily at the liberal pacifism of the 20th century, which derives its animus from a belief in the peaceable progress of history, which Niebuhr found lacking a doctrine of human fallenness. However, the charge of 'social irresponsibility' would haunt Mennonites throughout the 20th century, particularly John Howard Yoder, who repeatedly returned to Niebuhr's charge.

[10] Leo Driedger and Donald Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 68, describe how a 1939 "Handbook on Peace" spoke of a "program of peace", and formal statements issued by the General Conference of Mennonites spoke of the need to "present and interpret our peace principles to others", in contrast to earlier statements which do not treat peace as a "program" or for the need for interpretation of Mennonite teachings.

[11] Ibid., 70.

[12] These vehicles include the 'peace church' moniker—which drew various traditionally pacifist churches together under one umbrella—and the 'Peace Problems' Committee , the forerunner to the Mennonite Central Committee, which operated independently until folded into the Mennonite Central Committee's Peace Section in 1919. Yoder would later be a board member of this committee.

[13] As Dreidger and Kraybill explain, in the 1950 Winona Lake Conference, the first inter-Mennonite gathering around peace in North America, for example, the statements issuing from that meeting use 'nonresistance' twice, while 'lordship of Christ', 'social order', and 'witness' appear nearly twice as many times, emphasizing a Mennonite calling within the "total social order of which we are a part" (85). As early as 1922, the question was being raised at national conventions whether "peacemaker"

As Mennonite thinking moved into the 1950s, when Yoder's own work begins in full, 'nonresistance', rooted in a two-kingdom model, had become increasingly arcane. Understanding the world in terms of the 'Lordship of Christ', by contrast, was becoming more common; the term described a single cosmos under God's providential care, in which Mennonites were called to witness to the unbelieving world. For Yoder and his generation, thus, the witness to nonviolence was not done for humanitarian purposes, but in order to bear witness to the way of Christ to a world which they saw as already being providentially sustained by God.

Social Ontology: New Humanity, Powers, and the Reign of Christ

As I described in the previous section, Yoder's generation was concerned with nonviolence in the service of witness to the 'Lordship of Christ'. For Yoder specifically, nonviolence bears witness to a new way of social existence which he describes in terms of a 'new aeon', or a 'new humanity'. In this section, I will trace the features of "the new humanity" in Yoder's thought.[14] This is a new social existence which exists because of Christ's nonviolent conquering of the "powers and principalities", identified with the church which worships Jesus as the nonviolent conqueror of the powers.

Describing Yoder as having a "social ontology" does not mean that Yoder held to a kind of ontology in a Platonist or "participation" sense; in numerous places, he

should be read as more than 'nonresistance' but involve more active forms of advocacy, in Dreidger and Kraybill, 67ff. Cf., MCC Peace Section founder Orie Miller's articles on "Aggressive Peace Work", *Gospel Herald* 18 (1926): 858-859, and "Our Peace Policy", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 3 (1929): 26-32.

[14] Yoder will use a variety of terms for this social body, such as "new humanity" and "peoplehood". I will use the terms as appropriate to the writings under discussion.

expressed skepticism about such theological language.[15] As I noted in the first chapter, I am using "social ontology" to refer to the presuppositions about how social community is established because of Christ; such a description need not, thus, be sacramental.[16] For Yoder, terms such as 'new humanity' are descriptive of a people's character, a people who follow after Jesus rightly in acts of discipleship.

This section will proceed in four parts. First, I will offer Yoder's description of the relation between church (the visible "new humanity") and the world, a relation which is demarked by participation in violence. Second, because the relation between the church (which is the "new humanity") and the world is a relation created by Christ, who overcomes the powers of violence, I will explore Yoder's thought on the 'powers'; examining what the 'powers' are and how they are resisted gives us insight into how this 'new humanity' is sustained in distinction from the world. Third, I will look at how for Yoder, nonviolence characterizes Jesus' own mode of engagement with the powers, and indicates most clearly how this 'new humanity' is made visible. Finally, I will offer some concluding thoughts on this connection for Yoder between the "new humanity" and nonviolence.

The 'New Humanity' of the Church, and the 'Powers' of the World

Yoder's earliest work exhibited a concern with moving beyond a dualist worldview of some of his forbearers and articulating a single moral universe in which

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[15] Cf. Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Alex Sider, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002), 130ff.

[16] As Travis Kroeker, "Is A Messianic Political Ethic Possible", *Journal for Religious Ethics* 33, no.1 (2005), 149, has suggested (following Gerald Schlabach), Yoder's ontology is not a "static ontology", but rather a "messianic ethic rooted in a providential ordering of history and a theology of creation that is discerned Christologically."

"the Lordship of Christ" has meaning for all creation. Soon after graduation from

Goshen College, Yoder began to question for himself the dichotomous solution of

'church' versus 'world' of his predecessors; in an unpublished essay from his college

years, "Cooking the Anabaptist Goose", Yoder explained that the vision of his mentor

and "Old Mennonite" Harold Bender had "put us in the comfortable position of being

able to talk back to 'compromisers'…accusing them of plain and simple disobedience to

the pure and clear truth."[17]

In his first published scholarly article, "Ceasar and the Meidung", Yoder

examined one of the most pressing problems raised by a dualist worldview: the

"difficulties of relating the state to minority religious groups", or how religious identity

and secular identities could have anything to say to one another.[18] In evaluating the case

of Andrew Yoder, an Amish man seeking to enjoy the benefits of both Amish and

American society, Yoder concluded:

> I am led to agree with the Amish that [Andrew] Yoder was free to be a member of
> the church , and he was free not to be a member of the church, but he cannot
> claim the freedom to be at the same time both a member (economically) and not a
> member (religiously); for *participation in the Christian social fellowship is not
> thus divisible*.[19]

Because Christian identity involves a full range of activities and not simply 'religious'

acts, one could not simply be "Christian" in a sectarian sense, but must be Christian in a

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[17] Yoder, "Anabaptist Goose" document, John Howard Yoder papers, Box 11, Archives of the
Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana. Cited in Zimmerman, 46. This particular document would be the first
of many tense writings between Yoder and Bender, as the pupil began to dissent from the teacher's vision.
See Zimmerman 33-37, 42-50, 102-104 for the relationship between Yoder and his mentor Harold Bender.

[18] Yoder, "Caesar and the Meidung", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 23 (1949): 76. "Meidung"
refers to the Amish practice commonly known as "shunning".

[19] "Caesar", 90, emphasis mine.

full, public sense.[20] But Yoder had not arrived at a means of resolving the conundrum of how to relate the church to the world, and yet not "compromise" with the world.

In the 1954 inaugural issue of *Concern*, a journal started by Yoder and his friends, Yoder explains that any withdrawal from society by Christians, though at times necessary, cannot be absolute. [21] As Yoder explained, there is:

> [R]eal value in God's plan to the 'good heathen'…on the level of conversation, who through honest application of sub-Christian ethics do carry a real responsibility for justice in the social order…The Bible's injunctions to support to the government…all indicate that some morality is better than none. But what the Anabaptist-Mennonite dichotomist challenges is the validity of that *kind* of goodness on the redemptive level of Christian ethics.[22]

The ability to speak to the outside world for Yoder assumes that *some* good within the non-Christian world is possible, that "God works in the world on two separate levels, one through the conscious obedience of Christians, the other by ruling over and balancing against each other men's disobediences".[23]

Yoder's conclusion of there being a single, yet differentiated, moral world depended upon there being a new social order which has begun with the victory of Christ over "the 'authorities, dominions, principalities, powers' which…represent the demonic

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[20] One predominant strand of Yoder interpretation takes Yoder's ethics to be "post-liberal". While not directly entering this debate, I contend that the statement that Yoder is only seeking articulate ethics for Christians is questionable, given his concern with maintaining a strong connection of analogy to that which is not the church. Cf., Doug Harink's *Paul Among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003), 105-151, and Craig Carter, *The Politics of the Cross: The Theology and Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 93-112.

[21] Yoder, "The Anabaptist Dissent: The Logic of the Place of the Disciple in Society", in *The Roots of Concern: Writings on Anabaptist Renewal 1952-1957*, ed. Virgil Vogt (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009): 29-43: "The term as here used should be clearly distinguished from its ecclesiological usage, where it signifies the separation of a church from other churches in order to be pure, as well as from its epistemological sense, where it refers to the claim to be sole possessor of the truth" (30).

[22] Ibid., 35.

[23] Ibid.

cohesions and autonomous structures of the present social order."[24] Both Christians *and* those of the world (under the reign of the powers) are subject to God's work, "distinct entities with distinct functions in God's plan".[25]

The theological basis for this conclusion is seen most clearly in his 1954 "Peace Without Eschatology?"[26] Describing two different "aeons" with two different social manifestations, Yoder argued that human history "outside of Christ" is of "the world", while existence with an eschatological orientation toward "the fullness of the kingdom of God" corresponds to "the church".[27] Jesus founded a "new aeon", characterized not by "government" (a coercive entity of the "old aeon"), but characterized by the possibility of "*agape*; self-giving, nonresistant love".[28] Jesus, whose life exemplifies this nonviolence preeminently, "is not only the Head of the church; He is at the same time Lord of history, reigning at the right hand of God over the principalities and powers".

The difference between old and new aeon—namely, the difference between the church and the world—plays out in history along the lines of violence:

> The essential change which has taken place is not within the realm of the old aeon, *vengeance and the state*, where there really is no change; it is rather that the new aeon revealed in Christ takes primacy over the old, explains the meaning of the old, and will finally vanquish the old. The state did not change with the

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[24] Ibid., 36.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., "The kingdom of God, because its eschatological fulfillment, will efface the present difference between church and world…". Page numbers refer to the version found in *The Royal e*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright, (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998). The essay dates back to a theological study conference in Heerenwegen, Zeist (Netherlands) in May 1954, after which it was reprinted as a part of the *Concern* pamphlet series in 1961, and again in *The Original Revolution: Essays in Christian Pacifism* in 1971.

[27] *Royal Priesthood*, 146

[28] Ibid., 147.

coming of Christ; what changed was the coming of the new aeon which proclaimed doom of the old one.[29]

This clash of aeons—between vengeance and agape, between the state and nonresistant love—will lead up to "the final triumph of God", with nonresistance "anticipat[ing] the triumph of the Lamb that was slain"; those belonging to this new sociality, thus, participate in nonviolence in anticipation of its eschatological validation. Both aeons stand under the reign of Christ, but are divided out along this visible line of fidelity to Christ, described by the loss of vengeance and the lack of violence.[30]

Yoder argued that many entities which worship Jesus had abandoned nonresistance, in favor of a false hope of 'effectiveness' or 'Constantinianism', and were thus within the grips of the 'old aeon' (i.e. the realm of the powers) by participating in the legitimization of violence.[31] Those of the 'new aeon' (i.e. those following in the way of Jesus) are those who practice nonviolence (a nonviolence which is often opposed by bodies calling themselves churches).[32] In sum, the "new aeon" is visible through the

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[29] Ibid., 149, italics added.

[30] This is not to suggest that this all there is to "church" for Yoder. What I am seeking to establish, however, is the dominant role that violence/nonviolence plays in terms of describing where and who the "new humanity" consists of.

[31] Ibid., 153-157. Most damning in Yoder's critique here is that it was those Reformers who colluded with the state who are to blame for a division among the institutional church, whereas "some so-called 'sects', notably the 16th-century Anabaptists, the 17th-century Quakers, the 18th-century Moravians, and the 19th-century Open Brethren" are named as faithful witnesses.

[32] This logic is also central to how Yoder will argue with Reinhold Niebuhr's critique of pacifism a year later. Cf. John Howard Yoder, "Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 29 (1955), 101-117. Yoder argues here for an eschatological approach which, consequently, enables Christians to argue for God's ruling over the entirety of the world "within history": "The acceptance of the cross, i.e. the full cost of utter obedience to the loving nature of God, is the path to the accomplishment in history…of action which can please God and be useful to men….That this triumph over sin is incomplete changes in no way the fact that it is possible, and that if God calls us to deny ourselves, accept suffering, and love our neighbors, that too is possible", 116.

worshipping church, insofar as the church knows Jesus as the one who has overcome the violence of the powers. In these early essays, Yoder has introduced a concept which aided him in articulating the relation between the 'new humanity' present in the church and the social life of the world: the powers and principalities.[33] This concept is one which will help Yoder articulate not only how the "new aeon"/ "new humanity" is established, but also what churches must do, if they are to be known descriptively as this "new aeon", and thus, be known as true churches. Thus, I will now trace this development within Yoder's thought.

Yoder on 'The Powers'

From Yoder's earliest work, we see that the 'new aeon' (a new social reality found in and through the church) is contrasted by the world's violence. Richard Bourne has accurately named this movement in Yoder as a kind theological realism which becomes moral realism, enabling Yoder to view the commitments of Christian discipleship as working "with the grain of the universe"; in other words, if a new social reality is truly present in and through the church, then a commitment to nonviolence is

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[33] Yoder will say in the *Politics of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 152: "We have asked whether the New Testament provides any concept with which it would be possible to interpret the structures and the history of a secular society. In the Pauline understanding of the powers we have discovered a line of thought very apt to deal with this kind of matter." As I will show, Yoder's use of the powers in this sense far precedes 1972. Earl Zimmerman, in his discussion of Yoder's writings on the 'powers', argues that his use of them goes back to 1955 and his participation in the 'Lordship of Christ' conferences. I agree with Zimmerman that this category becomes foundational to his relations of church and state. What I have argued here differs from Zimmerman on two counts. First, Yoder's use of these terms precedes 1955. Secondly, while it is true that powers and principalities becomes a key framework for Yoder, it is Berkhof—whose work is continually cited by Yoder throughout his career—who proves to be the most profound influence for Yoder. Zimmerman gives Berkhof a single paragraph, and writes several pages of Jean Lasserre and Oscar Cullman (118-120). Cullman is cited by Yoder in "Peace Without Eschatology", 150, but it is Berkhof who is cited consistently beyond this point.

possible apart from considering, for example, whether such action is "effective".[34] If

Christ has conquered the powers, then the violence or "effectiveness" seen as intrinsic to

the world need not be operative for the church's ethics and existence. I will now turn to

describe *what* these powers are and their importance for describing then what it means to

exist as the church.

In *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* and *The Christian Witness to the State*,

Yoder's first two books, the category of 'powers and principalities' continued to help

Yoder describe the difference between the social existence of the new aeon (seen in the

church) and the old aeon (the world).[35] In the first paper of *Discipleship* ("The State in

the New Testament"), Yoder continued themes of the 'two kingdoms' of God's reign,

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[34] Richard Bourne, *Seek the Peace of the City: Christian Political Criticism as Public, Realist, and Transformative* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 87-97, 100-102. Bourne gives some discussion to the theme of the 'powers' in Yoder but concludes that Yoder "rarely provided any specific examination of how the language of the powers contributes to the task of Christian political social criticism" (212). It is my contention that by careful excavation of Yoder's use of this theme, the nuances of Yoder's 'theological realism' can be more fully understood.

[35] John Howard Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1964), reprinted by Herald Press, (2000), 15: "Both of the essays in this book originated in 1957. The first concerning the state in the New Testament was presented at the Thomashof Bible Center…the second, concerning following Christ as a form of political responsibility, was delivered in Iserlohn (Germany) on July 29, 1957, as the opening address at a theological conference convened for the sake of dialogue between representatives of the German State church and representatives of the so-called "Historic Peace Churches" (the second Puidoux-Conference). *The Christian Witness to the State,* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1964(2000)), originated slightly earlier, in 1955, and was reworked in 1958-9 into its published form in p. 4. Chronologically, I would be discussing Yoder's 1957 dissertation, published as Part One of *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers*. Discussion of this work will be taken up when we turn to Yoder's ecclesiology.
   In discussing 'powers' and their role in differentiating between church and world, I am not negating the importance of other ways in which Yoder distinguishes between church/world, most specifically the concept of "middle axioms", which appears in *Christian Witness*. These "middle axioms"—terms which could mediate between church and world—are manifold. In highlighting the role of the 'powers' in Yoder's work, I am not only drawing attention to a neglected aspect of Yoder's work, but emphasizing the manner in which Yoder's work is not purely pragmatist, but attempting to articulate a theological vision which attempts to emphasize the centrality of the Christian life as practice, without being pragmatist.

arguing that the "state" (a term which is "the most deeply representative for 'world'")[36] is

"an expression of God's grace aimed at redemption, by keeping God's fallen creation in

existence…with a view toward the God-intended redemption of the fallen creation".[37]

But the state, while accomplishing great deeds for the common good, resorts to violence,

one of the "powers, rulers, principalities, [and] thrones" identified in the New Testament,

to accomplish its ends. These powers:

> responded to Christ with hostility, but Jesus became Lord through his death, resurrection and ascension; his Lordship extends even over these powers, who, as a result will have to bend their knees (Phil. 2:10). Of these Christ made a spectacle, just as a returning victor does in a triumph march (Col. 2:15).[38]

In sum, Christ has conquered the powers (including the state and violence), such that the

church can now live in light of Christ's work as the "new humanity", in distinction from

the violence which characterizes the world. But the church is known as the "new

humanity" not by simply *rejecting* the world and its powers, but by continuing Christ's

conquering of the powers in the world:

> The cross-carrying following which the church practices, that is the continuing life of Jesus through his Spirit in the members of his body, is not an implication, something tacked on; rather it is part of his saving work. That is what the new Testament means when it speaks of following, of the body of Christ, of the Holy Spirit—that God's continuing work is no less valid, no less divine, no less urgent than it was from the start…It is self-evident and never to be forgotten, that the cross of the church has no meaning without Jesus. But we are too reluctant to

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[36] The state remains "a deeply representative segment of the 'world'" because of its organization "by the appeal to force as ultimate authority", is under the same triumph as the church, while not the same as the church. Cf., *Christian Witness*, 12.

[37] Ibid., 18. Yoder distinguishes between the violent practices done by the government, and other acts for the common good. Cf., 40: "Today we make a distinction between a totalitarian and a welfare state. The state is not there only to guard our physical security; the state also builds roads, leads schools, provides medical services, cares for the elderly and delivers everyone's mail…Many of the activities of the modern state are only remotely connected, or not connected at all with the exercise of violence to protect what is right. Still even here we are confronted with a difference only in terms of concepts…"

[38] Ibid.

confess the other side along with the Scriptures, namely, that *without the cross of the church, the cross of Christ would be emptied.*[39]

It is important to note the link here that Yoder has made—the Jesus who conquers the powers of violence, and who empowers the church, is appropriated by the church's discipleship. This is not to say that the church exists as an "imitation" of Jesus' ethic, but that, *in the overcoming of violence*, the church continues Jesus' own work. Yoder's oft-cited statement from this work, that "the mandate of the state is to be found within the mandate of the church" makes sense in this light: *insofar as* bodies which worship Jesus continue their allegiance to Jesus in a rejection of violence, they attest to and bear witness to this way of social existence, and make known true nature of state as a *fallen* entity when it resorts to violence to accomplish its order-keeping functions.[40]

Those who follow in this way of Jesus are to carry this mode of nonviolence into the world, for Christ reigns over even that which appears out of hand:

> It is a basic conviction of the New Testament that not only pagans, but even the demonic powers behind the state have already been brought under the lordship of the resurrected one who sits at God's right hand, even though things do not always look this way on the surface…through their Gospel proclamation, their prayers of supplication, their discipleship in the context of suffering, and their service of loving the neighbor, Christians contribute not less, but far more to *human solidarity* and therefore to the state than the political officials themselves.[41]

In these early works, tangible practices such as nonviolent opposition to war find their justification in that these practices speak of the new aeon. Likewise, the church is known

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[39] Ibid., 22, emphasis mine.

[40] Ibid., 23.

[41] Ibid., 32. Yoder here refers to the "demonic powers", language he rarely will use scarcely beyond this point, dropping the "demonic" aspect of this language.

as being of the "new humanity" as it follows in this way, and not by embracing the violence indicative of 'world'.

In sum, Christ's overcoming the powers makes possible a 'new aeon' characterized by the rejection of violence, a social existence which describes the church as the church engages in this work; the church witnesses to the world through this rejection of violence—a world which has already been conquered by Christ, but which lives in rebellion to the way of Christ. The church witnesses to this victory through conversation with, and not simple rejection of, that which Christ has already conquered— the world, and its most emblematic aspects, violence and the state. These basic suppositions about what Christ has done—the creation of a social body which is the witness to the "new aeon"— will not change. But Yoder's thought on what this engagement with the powers (and what this then meant for the church) continued to develop.

Yoder's definition of the powers developed more fully during his doctoral studies at the University of Basel. In 1955, Hendrik Berkhof's *Christ and the Powers* came to the attention of Karl Barth, with whom Yoder was taking classes.[42] Reading Berkhof's work (which provided the theoretical basis for Yoder's conception of the powers in *Christian Witness to the State*, portions of *The Original Revolution* and of *The Politics of Jesus*) proved to be a turning point for Yoder's understanding of the relationship between

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[42] For Barth and Berkhof, see 'Author's Preface to the Second Edition', Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, trans. John Howard Yoder (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1962), 9. For Yoder's studies with Barth, see Zimmerman, 101-117. By Berkhof's account, "just a few years later", Yoder discovered Berkhof's work, a book which would conceptually clarify what precisely Yoder meant by 'the powers'. Cf., Berkhof, 9.

the church (which bears witness to the 'new humanity'), and the world (which remains subject to and cooperated with 'the powers').[43]

Berkhof argued that in the term 'powers', Paul is summing up a number of terms including not only angels, temporality, and distance (height/depth), but structural entities.[44] The point of the various lists of the 'powers', Berkhof argues, is to name, "realities, which are a part of our earthly existence, and whose role is one of domination…[which] *condition earthly life*."[45] For Yoder, Berkhof's emphasis on the practical effects of the powers on human existence was a ready match for how Yoder was already using the term 'powers'. Already in *Discipleship*, Yoder had described the effects of Jesus' conquering of the powers in terms of the practices in which the church participates in; Berkhof's definition went beyond Yoder's identification of 'powers' with various political machinations or violence, however, by identifying the 'powers' with 'human traditions' and religious observances as well.[46]

Berkhof argued that Paul viewed the 'principalities and powers' as material operations which have positive value in God's economy, "hold[ing] life together…as aids and signposts toward the service of God, …form[ing] the framework within which such

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[43] Yoder's estimation of the work is demonstrated in part by the fact that he learned Dutch in order to translate Berkhof's work into English.

[44] Berkhof, 18.

[45] Ibid., 18-19.

[46] Ibid., 20-21: "The Powers rule over human life outside of Christ. They are manifested in human traditions (Col. 2:8), in public opinion which threatens to entice the Christians in Colossae away from Christ. They are manifested in the cautious and timorous observance of requirements about abstinence from food and drink, or of feast days…the 'world powers' under which mankind languishes…are definite religious and ethical rules, the solid structures within which the pagan and the Jewish societies of the day lived and moved."

service must needs be carried out".[47] As such, Christians are not to battle *against* the

powers, but to battle "for God's *intention* for them, and against their corruption".[48] The

community of Christ continues the work of Christ, bearing witness to the limits of the

powers, until the parousia:

> By [the church's] very presence, she breaks through that unshaken stability of life under the Powers, which we know and marvel at in ancient civilizations. She is made up of men who see through the deception of the Powers, refusing to run after isms. Standing within the community of a people or a culture, their presence is an interrogation, the questioning of the legitimacy of the Powers By her faith and life the church of Christ labels the dominion of the Powers as *un-self-evident*. She is the turnstile which shuts of all return to the unconscious taken-for-grantedness of the former cultures.[49]

In order for the church to do this, Berkhof says, there is a kind of "Christianization"

which must take place in which "the subjection of their resources to serve man as defined

by the divine intention." [50] This is a tenuous place for the church to inhabit, but as

Berkhof notes, it is the only way to be "church".[51]

Yoder's adoption of Berkhof's understanding does not carry through with the

"Christianization" aspects, in that for Yoder, the church *witnesses* to society without

reforming it wholesale; the incorporation of the church and world into a single society is

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[47] Ibid., 23, 29.

[48] Ibid., emphasis mine. Cf. 38, where Christ's "disarming" of the powers consists of his showing the powers to be created for a particularly good purpose.

[49] Ibid., 44.

[50] Ibid., 59.

[51] Ibid., 60: The borderline between the 'Christianized' and the secularized life is so fluid that no one can say where one ends and the other begins. For 'Christianization' is itself a form, indeed the only legitimate form of secularization. In what we call 'secularization' the connection between the Powers and Christ has again been broken and they have regained something of their former position…A situation is only thus 'open' as long as it is held open by Christ Himself, who conquered the Powers…For the exercise of this authority, He does not need the church; yet it is just as true that He repeatedly chooses to use His church to that end."

an eschatological hope for Yoder.[52] But Yoder resonated with Berkhof's formulation in

two ways. First, the true church described as the 'new humanity' will be opposed by

structures (religious and secular), as the very powers which crucified Jesus were both

religious and secular. Secondly, for the church to follow the Jesus who conquered the

powers, the church must abandon its own security and continually engage in practices

which witness to Christ's conquering of the powers.[53]

Yoder's indebtedness to Berkhof's work is demonstrable in several works

following Yoder's 1962 translation of *Christ and the Powers*. In an essay published later

that year, Yoder argues that Christians seeking to read history must recognize that "the

divine purpose in and through the secular power struggle can never be identified with the

defeat or the victory of one particular power". Christians are called to "unmask the

myths which these powers spin to enthrone themselves more firmly", though the tasks the

church is called to is done better by the world than the church at times:[54]

> If socialist planning can industrialize and feed a continent which the churches left
> in feudalism, if rationalism can develop intellectual disciplines which the
> churches smothered under clerical censure, if commercial colonialism can make
> "one world" an experiential reality while the Catholic church still prays in Latin
> and the Protestants thinking in German only…if secular materialism can house
> and feed a world which Christians have left hungry and ill-clad, we have no one

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[52] Cf., *Christian Witness to the State*, 16-17.

[53] The former of these insights will become more pronounced as Yoder moves into his work in the mid-1970s, describing how Jesus overcame the powers of both state and religion in a nonviolent fashion; the insight concerning the need for churches to be engaged in practices of witness will be explored more fully when I describe Yoder's ecclesiology in a later section.

[54] John Howard Yoder, "The Lordship of Christ and the Power Struggle", in *The Lordship of Christ: Proceedings of the Seventh Mennonite World Conference, August 1-7, 1962, Kitchener, Ontario* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Publishing House, 1962), 509.

to blame but ourselves for the fact that our Father's good gifts had to be delivered by someone else.[55]

In his earlier *Discipleship*, Yoder argued that "the state" (the most representative aspect of the world) consists of violence, and that violence finds its way into seemingly nonviolent aspects of the state. Here, however, we find that a rejection of this kind "either/or" thinking, in that the 'new aeon' means that *all* of creation exists because of what is disclosed in the 'new aeon'.[56] Accordingly, all good acts, even if done by pagans, serve the work of Christ which the church understand and participate in explicitly:

> It is not our business to deny that a communist can be unselfish or a Hindu happy, but to gather every fiber of goodness, whatever the source, every insight, every good intention, just as God wove such pagans as the priest Melchizedek and the harlot Rahab into the fabric of the salvation story Jesus' words "apart from me you can do nothing" do not mean that non-Christians can do nothing; if they deal with is subject at all they mean that whatever good any man does, *it is not apart from Christ.* Who, if not the servant we should be, can afford to give the neighbor the benefit of the doubt? Who if not we, can run the risk of believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things?[57]

In light of Christ's conquering of the powers, good deeds in the world which appear analogous to Christian works need not be seen as opposites, but as works woven "into the fabric of the salvation story".[58]

Though the disobedient acts done by 'world' are "woven into the salvation story", a question remains: how does the church *practically* bear witness to the social reality

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[55] Ibid. Yoder goes on to argue that through "prophetic insight, we might be able to call such things analogies to Cyrus or Nebuchadnezzar, whom God called 'my servant'".

[56] Ibid., 511: Yoder points to "the Resurrection, when God took the roof off of Hell itself," meaning "the end of all fatalism and the starting point of all Christian thinking and deciding."

[57] Ibid., emphasis mine. For Yoder, "Christ's Lordship…is an objective fact, [not to be confused] with our confession….which wavers".

[58] Ibid.

characterized by the "new aeon"? In *The Christian Witness to the State*, edited and

published during this period, we find an answer. Because powers are the equivalent of

modern-day "structures", those of the "new aeon" are constantly given opportunity to

communicate with the "old aeon" through these ubiquitous powers and structures which

everyone must deal with.[59] The relation between the church—the "coexistence of two

ages or aeons"—is after all not described in terms of essences, but "*direction*":

> The church points forward as the social manifestation of the ultimately triumphant
> redemptive work of God; the world, however, even though still rebellious, is
> brought into subjection to the kingship of Christ or the kingdom of the Son. The
> kingdom of the Son is thus to be distinguished, insofar as we may be permitted to
> speak systematically, from the kingdom of God.[60]

The engagement between the church (the witness to the "new aeon") and the state takes

place along the lines of those acts and structures which most signify the state's *mis-*

direction: acts of violence, and entities enabling violence.

Because violence and war name the deepest point of rebellion from God, it is in

these areas that the church must engage the state most vigorously. War, an act of national

idolatry, is met by the call to accept "providential workings, to renounce other means of

defense…to accept even captivity…and to learn through these events that stillness in

which there is strength."[61] As the church engages in nonviolence—acts made possible by

virtue of Christ's conquering of the powers—the "new humanity" of the church is made

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[59] *Christian Witness*, 8: "in biblical language *powers* would be roughly the equivalent of the modern term *structures*, by which psychological and sociological analysts refer to the dimensions of cohesiveness and purposefulness which hold together human affairs beyond the strictly personal level, especially in such realms as that of the state or certain areas of culture." This work was prepared in 1955 as a work paper, reworked as part of a study assignment by the Institute of Mennonite Studies from 1958-59, and published in 1964.

[60] Ibid., 10. Yoder prefers the term "kingdom of Christ" because of the specificity the term lends over against a nebulous "Kingdom of God" (9-10).

[61] Ibid. 15-16.

visible. Through these practices, "certain of its aspects may be instructive as stiumuli to the conscience of society".[62] For Yoder, the overlapping acts between church and world are signs that "the church and the reign of Christ will one day be englobed in the same kingdom".[63]

The relation between church (the witness to the 'new humanity') and world is possible because of Yoder's naming of 'world' as a set of *practices*. Yoder's exposition of this in his 1960 *Concern* essay "The Otherness of the Church" makes this point most clearly:

> "World"…signifies…not creation or nature or the universe but rather the fallen form of the same, no longer conformed to the creative intent. The state, which for present purposes may be considered as typical for the world, belongs with the other *exousiai* in this realm. Over against this "world" the church is visible, identified by baptism, discipline, morality, and martyrdom…[64]

The church—defined by its faithful practices—relates to the world—defined as a set of practices which are "creaturely order in the state of rebellion"—by undertaking common human activities of "economy, art, rhetoric" and the like, which the church orients toward God rather than away from God.[65] Moving further into the Vietnam War era (1971-2),

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[62] Ibid., 17.

[63] Ibid. The church, existing as "a society" within the larger economy of Christ's reign functions in hope that anticipates "the victory of the church and the overcoming of the world; as anticipation of that consummation it is possible for the potentially victorious order to testify to that potentially vanquished order concerning the absolute norm which is valid for both and in contradiction to which the world will never succeed in building even a stable temporal order."

[64] "The Otherness of the Church", *Concern* 8 (1960), 19-29, reprinted in *The Royal Priesthood*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright, (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 54-64 (55).

[65] Ibid., 56-57.

this description of state as a nexus of practices with which the church can dialogue will become increasingly common.[66]

Through these practices, witness to the particular form of life (i.e. the "new humanity") which describes the church occurs. That both 'church' and 'world' are defined by Yoder in terms of their discipleship (or lack thereof), thus, enables the church to have a way to speak to the world. The true practice bears witness to deficient practices by way of analogy:

> It follows from the "already, but not yet" nature of Christ's lordship over the powers that there is no one tangible, definable quantity that we can call "world"…The world "as such" has no intrinsic ontological dignity. It is creaturely order in the state of rebellion; rebellion is, however, for the creature estrangement from what it "really is".[67]

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[66] During this period, between 1964-1970, Yoder begins to engage more stringently with just-war arguments in a number of formats, exploring what it means that Vietnam cannot be called rightly a just war. Cf. "Developing a Christian Attitude Toward War", *Journal of the Methodists for Church Renewal*, (April 1966): 8-12; "Vietnam: A Just War?", *His*, April 1968, 1-3; "Vietnam: Another Option", *His*, May 1968, 8-11; "Another Option to a Just War"*, This Day*, July 1968, 4-7, 30; "The Way of the Peacemaker", in *Peacemakers in a Broken World,* ed. John A. Lapp (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969), 111-125. One can include Yoder's *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970) as the most in-depth example of this from this period. Through the late 1970s and 1980s, engagement with just war thinking will be one of the predominant themes of Yoder's writings.

While engagements with just-war thought would seem to be a departure from his advocacy for nonviolence as bearing witness to the social ontology the church is described by, I would argue that engaging with the just war tradition is the natural outgrowth. If, as Yoder argues, wars are made on the basis of calculations and end results, then Christian advocacy against war in a world under Christ's reign cannot be done by advocating that the state—committed to a logic of violence—follow Christians in nonviolence *on principle*, but that the state come to this presumption against violence by means of the practice of calculated risks and benefits. I will explore Yoder's just war arguments briefly in a later section, but for now, I will simply assert that the movement toward practical engagement on peacemaking as seen in his early writings on just war are intelligible in light of the framework I am tracing here: if church and state exist under a single reign of Christ, with the church witnessing to the state's practices in hope that the violent practices constituting "state" will adhere to the "absolute norm which is valid for both", Yoder must proceed by appealing to a common language of practices.

[67] Ibid., 56-57.

Not *all* practices of "the world", even if analogous to those of the church, are approved; as we have seen, Yoder points to war as that corporate practice of violence which is out of bounds for the church, even if done as a matter of maintaining social order. [68]

Thus far, I have argued that 'powers' provides a conceptual framework for Yoder to not only articulate the relation between church and world, but how the church is known as the "new aeon", in two ways. First, both the church and world—with their corresponding modes of sociality—cannot exist apart from each other; the church cannot help but articulate itself in distinction from the powers, as the church exists as a continuation of Christ's conquering of the powers. Second, the church bears witness to its sociality through the *practices* which identify it as continuing the conquering work of Jesus, through its alternate construal of actions which bear a certain resemblance to those of the world, but which have a distinctly different orientation; as Yoder described it, the church witnesses to a world under the powers which has not yet recognized its true "direction".

Up to this point, Yoder has explored how the church and world are related in a fairly conceptual and somewhat abstract fashion. Emphasizing that the church is known as a part of this new aeon as it follows in the way of Christ known in nonviolence, Yoder has described the engagement between the church and the world of the 'powers' as a clash between forms of social existence. What has been left out of this discussion for the most part is how the life of Jesus makes known the nonviolence which Yoder sees as

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[68] This approach continues through the late 1960s. Cf., Yoder, "Why Should We Speak to Government?", *The Mennonite*, January 25, 1966, 58-9, in which Yoder argues "We should speak because Christ is Lord. He is seated at the right hand of God even though His lordship is not acknowledged by the powers of this world. Within that framework, the authorities have their limited place; it is part of the Christian proclamation to remind them what these limits are. Their place in the world is not to make war but to keep peace; to reward and protect the good and to repress evil within the area of their authority".

central to this 'new aeon'. It is to the example of how Jesus overcomes the 'powers'—an

example which is paradigmatic for those of the 'new humanity'—that I now turn.

Yoder and the Powers: Concrete Struggle and the Politics of Jesus

In *The Original Revolution* (1971) and *The Politics of Jesus* (1972), this lacunae

is addressed, showing how the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth—the one who

creates a new body which witnesses to the 'new aeon—overcomes these 'powers'. Such

an analysis is critical for Yoder, in that the church which exists in conversation with the

world cannot bear witness to an idealized or abstracted Christ, but to Christ's way of

dealing with the powers, exemplified by a rejection of violence.[69]

In *The Original Revolution*, Yoder argued that Jesus established a "new

peoplehood, the being-together with one another and the being different in style of life"

in a way which contrasts other violent and coercive methods of revolution.[70] A new

society, "with its own deviant values", is the "judgment of God" upon injustice and

violence; in other words, the alternative society characterized by different practices, *is* the

witness which performs *acts* of witness. This community, which is the "judgment and

promise" of God, is not "a specific gathering of persons assembled for a particular

religious rite", but "God's people gathered as a unit……to find what it means here and

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[69] The church's attachment not to a generalized ethos, but to the concrete person of Jesus is expressed in a number of places. Yoder links the eclipse of the person of Jesus for a quasi-docetic Jesus (described in abstractions rather than in the biblical narrative) to the "fall of the church" in the age of Constantine. Cf. *Politics of Jesus*, 99-101.

[70] *The Original Revolution*, (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 30. For the other options of revolution, cf. 18-27.

now to put into practice this different quality of life which is God's promise to them and

to the world and their promise to God and service to the world."[71]

Central to this community is nonviolence and reconciliation with one's neighbors,

practices intrinsic to Jesus' own life.[72] By these practices, more than others, this

community witnesses to the world:

> What do I communicate to a man about the love of God by being willing to
> consider him an enemy? What do I say about personal responsibility by agreeing
> to consider him my enemy when it is only the hazard of birth that causes us to live
> under different flags? What do I say about forgiveness if I punish him for the sins
> of his rulers?...The idea that human life is intrinsically sacred is not a specifically
> Christian thought. But the gospel itself, the message that Christ died for His
> enemies is *our* reason or being ultimately responsible for the neighbor's…life.[73]

This nonviolence of Jesus is most relevant because the temptation to violence (the

purview of the powers) "especially with regard to the problems of…national egoism", is

ubiquitous.[74] As such, it has become increasingly imperative for the community to bear

witness to an ethic which is rooted in the ultimate logic of creation and the character of

God, *particularly* at the issue where this truth is challenged the most:

> We do not, ultimately, love our neighbor because Jesus told us to. We love our
> neighbor because God is like that. It is not because Jesus told us to that we love

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[71] Ibid., 31. Intriguingly, Yoder does not use the word 'church' to describe this community, reserving discussion of 'church' for the second half of *Original Revolution.* I take it to be for the sake of delineating between 'church' and other groups who may gather in the name of Jesus, but not be bearing witness to the new aeon in Yoder's estimation. For example, the 'religious' authorities are among those whose approach is antithetical to Jesus, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes; Yoder draws analogies to each of these positions within contemporary religious life, pointing to groups for 'Religion in American Life', Catholic and Protestant student groups advocating violence, the Amish, and and those "who feel it is both possible and desirable to distinguish by a clear line the 'spiritual' or the 'moral' issues, to which religion properly speaks, from the 'social' and 'political' issues, which are not the business of religion" (28).

[72] Ibid., 34.

[73] Ibid., 41-42.

[74] Ibid., 45. For nonviolence as the culmination of the Old Testament laws on vengeance, cf., 42-45.

even beyond the limits of reason, even to the point of refusing to kill and being willing to suffer—but because *God is like that too*.[75]

This description of the community's nonviolence as rooted in the characteristic acts of Jesus is deepened in *The Politics of Jesus*.[76] Before describing Jesus' engagements with the powers of his day, Yoder enters into an exploration of the Old Testament war narratives, in what appears to be an unrelated chapter. But it is this chapter which serves to ground nonviolence as the practice which attests to God's own character. Yoder chronicles the manner in which acts such as Moses' disobedient call for war and "Elisha's nonviolent misdirection" point toward Israel's continual call to trust in a God who is never directly implicated in the wars of the Old Testament.[77] In fact, Yoder argues that the pattern of rejection of violence, as seen in Elisha, would have been expected by Jesus' audience as God's mode of deliverance:

> Whatever be the "actual historical shape" of the events lying behind the [Old Testament] story, we can be assured that, in the atmosphere of heightened

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[75] Ibid., 52, emphasis added. One could argue that Yoder is making an argument for the love of God as the focus of this statement, that our actions imitate this love of God. I take this to be incorrect because of how Yoder has previously described the establishment and character of the gathered community, in terms of its practices and not in any any attributes which could be established apart from its ethical acts. As such, the focus of the statement is the ethical act and not the attribute of 'love'; it is the act of neighbor love in nonviolence which expresses the character of God. Cf. Yoder's discussion of Jesus and revelation in terms of Jesus as prophet, which for Yoder refers to Jesus' "communicative character, not only through his words as prophet but in his person", in Yoder, *Preface to Theology*, 332-333. This ascription of Jesus' "person" as revelation, however, does not mean ontological substance, but Jesus' character. Cf. ibid., 306, Yoder's aversion to "substance" language with regards to Christology, stating that "History is the only reality we know; we do not think about essences anymore, about substances or *hypostases,* about realities "out there" having being in themselves. We think of reality as happening in personal relationships in institutional relationships, and in the passage of time."

[76] Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (1994), 2. Yoder's intention in this work is to investigate the relevance of Jesus to contemporary political acts, in keeping with his concern for witness. As Yoder put it, "if…Jesus was not like everyone else a political being, or if he demonstrated no originality or no interest in responding to the questions which his sociopolitical environment put to him, it would be pointless to ask about the meaning of his stance for today" (11).

[77] Yoder, *Politics of Jesus* (1994), 76-82. This is a departure from his argument in *The Original Revolution*, in which Yoder argues that the holy wars of the Old Testament are a means by which the people learn to trust in YHWH. Cf. *Original Revolution*, 103-110.

apocalyptic sensitivity into which Jesus came, it was at least *possible* if not *normal* for those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel" to see in these miraculous deliverances of the Old Testament story a paradigm of the way God would save his people now. [78]

If we assume by the "paradigm" of the Old Testament, Yoder is implying that Jesus' audience were looking for another lawgiver or leader in the mold of Moses or Elisha, we miss the force of his argument here. Yoder is arguing that Jesus' audience would have been looking for a *nonviolent* deliverance of God, commensurate with how they understood God acting in the Old Testament:

> When, therefore, Jesus used the language of liberation and revolution, announcing a restoration of "kingdom" community and a new pattern of life, without predicting or authorizing particular violent techniques for achieving his good ends, he need not have seemed to his listeners to be a dreamer; *he could very easily have been understood as updating the faith of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah*, a faith whereby a believing people would be saved despite their weakness, on condition that they "be still and wait to see the salvation of the Lord."[79]

What we find in Yoder's characterization of nonviolence as truly descriptive of the way of God reframes nonviolence as not simply the church's act of obedience—as in *Discipleship*—but as the very *modus operandi* of the divine life, and that practice by Jesus is known to be the revealer of God's way in the world. As we have seen, nonviolence is not only the practice necessary for commitment to the way of Jesus or to a new social body, but is the marker of God's governance of the powers in history.

With God known in the act of nonviolence—a way which Jesus displays in his own life—Yoder takes up the question of Jesus' engagement with powers, powers which typically manifest themselves in violence. Jesus' death on the cross is not only the act by which Jesus "disarms" the Powers of violence and governance, showing the powers to be

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[78] Yoder, *Politics of Jesus* (1994), 84.

[79] Ibid, emphasis mine.

rebellious; Christ's "act of obedience" in submission to the powers is also "the firstfruits of an authentic restored humanity", the exemplification of a new community known by a rejection of violence, seen in both Old and New Testaments. [80] Nonviolence is thus indicative of the "new humanity", present as the church:

> What can be called the 'otherness of the church' is an attitude rooted in strength and not in weakness. It consists in being a herald of liberation and not a community of slaves. It is not a detour or a waiting period, looking forward to better days which one hopes might come a few centuries later; it was rather a victory when the church rejected the temptations of Zealot and Maccabean patriotism and Herodian collaboration. The church accepted as a gift being the "new humanity" created by the cross and not by the sword. [81]

We must remember that Yoder has linked following Jesus explicitly to the exercise of nonviolence, such that the church's identification as the "new humanity" depends on its continued nonviolence, in that the community carries on the work of Christ, the one who displays God's own nonviolent life. This "new humanity", in its existence, lives *as* the alternative to the "violence which governs society". [82] This community of the "new humanity" engages with the powers to make "a declaration about the nature of the cosmos and the significance of history". [83] As I have shown, "new humanity" does not describe all the bodies which worship Jesus, but those churches which know Jesus as the nonviolent one who overcomes the powers, and enact a nonviolence which is standard for both church and world. [84]

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[80] Ibid., 148.

[81] Ibid., 151-152.

[82] Ibid., 157.

[83] Ibid., 162.

[84] Yoder is involved in a variety of ecumenical discussions throughout his life, but does not believe that all institutions which call themselves "church" live up to his definition of "church" as the "new

Summary Conclusions about Social Ontology

The category of the 'powers' provided Yoder with a way to speak of the relationship between the church, but also how church and world are distinguished. The sociality of the "new aeon" or "new humanity" exists as a consequence of Christ conquering the powers; the church is known as this sociality *insofar as* it follows in this way of nonviolence which is the way in which God has always acted, in the Old Testament and as seen in Jesus' life. Nonviolence, as that practice which identifies the character of God and of Jesus, is the character of a new peoplehood, a peoplehood which is new social possibility counter to the violence-based sociality of 'world' and 'state'. In recent years, Yoder's ethos—that God appears disruptively within time to create a particular ethical possibility—has been called "apocalyptic", a term which I find both accurate and in need of correction.

What is typically meant by the claim that Yoder's work is "apocalyptic" is that for him the possibility for real social alternatives emerges out of the singularity of Jesus' person to take the form of a "new peoplehood", an alternative community which challenges 'the powers' in its very constitution.[85] As I have shown, Yoder's approach indeed warrants this label; the challenge to the powers rests upon the inbreaking initiative of God, in the overcoming of the powers and in the subsequent creation of a new

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humanity" characterized in nonviolence. Cf. Yoder, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1958), 38-42, in which Yoder views ecumenical divisions over war and nonviolence as indicative of the manner in which certain churches have refused an ethic of obedience to Jesus.

[85] This approach was pioneered by David Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo*: *Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 210.

community. Toole's work has been modified and amplified in different ways by Doug

Harink, Daniel C. Barber and Nathan Kerr.[86]

Toole's work on Yoder's "apocalyptic style" argued that Yoder puts forth the

church, formed by this vision of the *parousia* as the telos of history, as "an alternative

society in the midst of an existing social order", capable of resisting the machinations of

power and able to create new social and ethical alternatives not dependent upon existing

paradigms.[87] While Toole was correct to highlight Yoder's "apocalyptic style" (i.e. that

Yoder is trying to replace a mechanistic and "necessary" vision of history with a

Christologically oriented one in which new ethics are possible), Toole neglects an

important aspect of Yoder's work on this point. While Toole was correct to argue that,

for Yoder, the "new humanity" is the immanent continuation of Jesus' work, Toole

underplayed the role nonviolence plays in Yoder's description of "new humanity". For

Yoder, Jesus emerges as the nonviolent one; the "new humanity", following its founder,

emerges along the lines of nonviolence, and not necessarily by any traditional "marks" of

the church.[88] Thus, the church exists as the "new humanity" as it corresponds to the

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[86] Douglas Harink, *Paul Among the Postliberals*; Daniel Colucciello Barber: "Immanence and Creation", *Political Theology* 10 (2009), 131-141; "The Particularity of Jesus and the Time of the Kingdom": Philosophy and Theology in Yoder", *Modern Theology* 23 (2007), 63-90. Nathan R. Kerr: *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009); "Transcendence and Apocalyptic: A Reply to Barber", *Political Theology* 10 (2009): 143-152. For the most part, the followers of Toole's approach have identified the singularity of *Jesus* as apocalyptic, rather than—as Yoder argues—the presence of the *church* as the apocalyptic inbreaking of God. Jesus for Yoder remains at the center of the church to be sure, but it is the community "which *is* the alternative", and thus, the *true* center of Yoder's apocalyptic approach.

[87] Toole, 209-211.

[88] Cf., Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 116-117. This is to suggest that nonviolence is the predominant ethical marker which identifies a church as part of the "new humanity", and not simply a sociological institution. To be sure, Yoder argues for other aspects to a church's internal life, as I will explore in the next section. I will conclude, however, that nonviolence is the preeminent mark which not

nonviolence which is descriptive of both the God who reigns over the powers and the Jesus who accomplishes the historical conquering of the powers.

This definition of the 'new humanity' leaves open a number of questions, namely, the relation between nonviolence and the church. Particularly, the question must be raised if the church is simply a meeting ground for pacifists looking to Jesus as a model for nonviolence. For Yoder, this description of church is insufficient, in that describing the church means accounting for not only its engagement in nonviolence, but for the ways in which the church witnesses to the world to a new social order.

The 'new humanity' is characterized as the true "direction" of the world. Accordingly, Yoder's ecclesiology highlights the ways in which the various practices and institutions of the church exist *in relation to* the world, for the sake of witness to this form of social existence. The practices and structures of the church exist, as I have argued, to make the character of the gathered church as the "new humanity" visible to the world. It is to Yoder's ecclesiology that I will now turn.

Ecclesiology: Practices, Peoplehood and the Dialogical Church

The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive overview of Yoder's ecclesiology, as this work has been undertaken in numerous places.[89] The

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only gives orientation to all other church practices, but which designates whether or not a church is in fact a *true* church.

[89] Joon-Sik Park, *Missional Ecclesiologies in Creative Tension: H. Richard Niebuhr and John Howard Yoder* (Peter Lang Publishers, 2007); Nigel Goring Wright, *Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church, and the Social Order in the Theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007). As Doug Harink notes in *Paul*, 125, ecclesiology-as-such is not the most prominent feature of Yoder's work in the time frame which I am exploring; Yoder develops his "ecclesiology-as-such" in *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984); *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiastical and Ecumenical*

purpose of this section will be to describe the church as it relates to the world, for the sake of making known to the world the nature of the sociality which is its true "direction". I will do this in three ways. First I will describe the centrality of practices for describing the church for Yoder. Second, I will describe how the "new humanity" or "peoplehood" is made visible by these practices. And finally, I will describe how the practices of the church function dialogically with secular analogues, for the sake of witness.

Practices as Constitutive of Church

Yoder's earliest descriptions of what the church is prioritized the practices of discipleship, performed by a people who are a minority within a larger world.[90] Any conception of 'church' must be centered in a concern for living out the ethics of the New Testament; as Yoder states, "our attitude should be to New Testament *practice*, toward the *example* of the New Testament church".[91] 'Church', for Yoder, is thus not the institutions which give "official voice" to the faith, but a people who are brought into being by God's work through these practices of the faith.[92] Though Scripture remains

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(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994) collects a number of essays from the era I am describing, alongside essays from beyond this era.

[90] Cf., Yoder, "Anabaptist Dissent", 29-34.

[91] David A. Shank and John Howard Yoder, "Biblicism and the Church", *Concern* 2 (1955), 67-101, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009) (71), italics original. Yoder's concern with the centrality with Scripture is that, apart from Scripture, Christians have no orientation for their witness to Christ. For Yoder during this period on the relation between Scripture and the practices of the church, cf., "The New Testament View of Ministry", *Gospel Herald*, Feb. 8, 1955: 121-22, 124; "Der Statt im Neuen Testament", *Der Mennonit,* (Dec. 1957): 151; "Capital Punishment and the Bible", *Christianity Today*, February 1960, 3-6.

[92] Institutions of the church, for Yoder, exist for the sake of the facilitating the growth and communal life of the people. Cf. his later essay, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood", in *The Priestly Kingdom*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 15-45. For Yoder, those bodies which call

indispensible to the life of the church, one must participate in the *practices* of the

community before being able to understand or fully conform to the commands of

Scripture.[93]

Defining church in terms of their practices is central to Yoder's work. As we have

seen, Yoder defines the 'state' not in terms of 'timeless essences', but in terms of the

practices of governance which have responded in hostility to Christ.[94] As Yoder argues,

when Paul provides a list of practices which a Christian should do in living with the state

(pay taxes, fear, honor):

> [Paul] is not providing a list of all the things that belong to the state…rather he is
> giving a list of things about which we must make decisions in line with the word
> of Jesus as to whether they belong to Caesar or to God.[95]

What distinguishes the practices of the 'state' from those of the 'church', thus, are not the

practices as-such, however, but their *orientation* toward the community established by

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themselves "church" are not always true "church", i.e. a body which exists as the new community of witness to Christ's way. Cf. *The Faithful Church and the Ecumenical Movement*, and "The Nature of the Unity We Seek", *Religion in Life* 26 (1957): 215-222, reprinted in *Royal Priesthood*, ed. Cartwright, 221-230, in which Yoder states that "it would seem that the only feasible solution to the problem of authority would be to declare inadmissible the attribution of authoritative character to any particular historical development and to recognize, as the only legitimate judge *Christ himself* as he is made known through Scripture to the congregation of those who seek to know him and his will" (225), distinguishing between external structure and the obedient congregation. Yoder will make similar arguments in his later "The Free Church Ecumenical Style", *Quaker Religious Thought* 10/11 (1968): 29-38 .

[93] I do not take this to negate Yoder's concern for the church as a place of free confession, but for Yoder, confession is inextricable from a life of discipleship which conforms to that confession of Christ as Lord. For this reason, it is the pastors of the church—those guiding in the practices of the church— who have priority in the church over teachers. Yoder delineates between the offices of "pastor" and "teacher", arguing that the "pastor" is the one who guides the church in its practical reasoning and congregational issues, while the one speaking to the body on *doctrinal* issues (the "teacher") should have no authority in terms of congregational life. The teacher is to direct the congregation to what Scripture says, but the act of helping a congregation conform to this model is the job of the pastor and elders, in Shank and Yoder, "Biblicism", 85-88.

[94] Yoder, *Christian Witness*, 19-20. Yoder distinguishes between benign practices such as building roads and administering public works and more subversive practices, such as violence.

[95] Ibid., 24.

Christ: the state's wars, for example, are illegitimate in that they demand absolute

allegiance which a person can give only to God, while the wars of YHWH serve the

purpose of inculcating faith among the people of Israel.[96]

Analogous practices of the church, when performed as acts of obedience to Christ,

are superior to analogous activities of the unbelieving state:

> If we believe along with the New Testament that through their Gospel
> proclamation, their prayers of supplication, their discipleship in the context of
> suffering, and their service of loving the neighbor, Christians contribute not less,
> but far more to human solidarity and therefore to the state than the political
> officials themselves.[97]

What visibly separates the two is their obedience to the way of Christ. The state remains

outside this perfection to which the church is privy, not simply by deficient practice, but

because the church practices bear witness to a different kind of understanding of human

sociality. The state-as-practices creates a society which moves away from God in

violence, as opposed to the church which bears witness to the 'new humanity' through

acts of peaceableness.

As we saw in the previous section, the church, described as the 'new humanity',

exists as Christ's presence in the world as the testimony to Christ's victory over the

powers. Consequently, conformity of the church to "what God is like", in the practice of

nonviolence, occurs on the basis of the pattern of life articulated in Jesus' life rather than

the commands of Scripture. As a kind of people constituted by their discipleship, the

church must think itself in terms of this fashion: commands made to Christians are

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[96] Ibid., 27-29. As I noted in discussing Yoder on the 'powers', this argument on YHWH and war changes, to the point of distancing God from the actual wars. I say "literary" purpose in that Yoder, while questioning the historical veracity of the wars, will not deny their purpose in edifying the people of Israel.

[97] Ibid., 32.

normative for only those who belong to the church, and those who are of the church are under binding commands.[98] To be sure, the *commands* of Scripture enable the church to know the significance of the *practices*, but the commands serve to direct the hearer to the practices of obedience, by which the new social reality is made known to the world.[99]

This description of the practices of the church is seen, for example, in a series of short pieces between 1957 and 1961 in which Yoder describes the implications of this vision of the church for ecumenism and missions. In his 1957 "The Nature of the Unity We Seek", for example, Yoder writes that true ecumenism is taken up not on the basis of common structural alignment or doctrinal uniformity, but common discipleship, arguing that "unity in ethical commitment was for the apostolic church no less central than unity in faith and worship."[100]

Yoder's theology of missions relies upon a similar formulation: Christian missions proceed along the lines of contact established by the practices of Christians, practices which the world has analogies for which can be the gateway for the world to enter into a new community:

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[98] This is not for Yoder to distinguish between commands and practices, as if one were more normative than the other, but rather means that it is within the context of the practices that the commands find their normativity. Ibid., 72-73: "We must further recognize the obvious fact, so self-evident we fail to take sufficient account of it, that if the New Testament example is not normative, some other example is. If we do not pattern our life after the early church, we pattern it after some other church. That other church….comes thus to have greater normative authority than the apostolic church. This is difficult to justify Biblically to say the least".

[99] Cf. Yoder, "The Hermeneutics of Peoplehood", 35-36 for a later rendering of this point. Yoder there argues that a people's existence is not punctilliar, but emerges over time. He is specifically rejecting a kind of "decisionist" approach to ethics, but argues that this mode of reasoning is only possible because this is kind of "peoplehood" that the church should be—a people following a narrative laid out in Scripture.

[100] Yoder, *Royal Priesthood*, 228. Here Yoder argues, via the subheadings of the article most explicitly, that what is sought is not a "common denominatior", but "a discipline". Similarly, in *The Ecumenical Movement and the Faithful Church*, 34, Yoder defines Anabaptist ecumenicity as "[practicing] Biblical baptism, communion and discipline in your local congregation, and [accepting] Scripture as the criterion for future discussion."

Education—more specifically education in mechanical, electrical and medical fields—is so strategic and in such short supply that it justifies additional persons entering even an overpopulated region…When persons with these technical capacities are at the same time Christians with peculiarly Christian convictions about family life, honesty, industry, and family relations between neighbors and ethnic groups, this should make their cultural contribution still greater.[101]

While rendering practices done by the church into foreign idioms limits a danger of ecclesial imperialism, this mode of witness risks confusing church practices with those outside the church.[102] Yoder's concerns here are similar to his concerns that the practices of the new community of Christ are parroted and made idolatrous by nations.[103]

But in both international missions and witness to the state, disobedience must be dealt with "on whatever level" it can hear the singular call of Christ:

We would wrongly understand the witness to a person in authority as a sort of second best, as if we had first called him to believe in Jesus Christ, and then, when he had said he would not, we would go on to pleaed, "Well all right then, but will you please at least be decent and honest?" What we ask of him does not cease to be gospel by virtue of the fact that we relate it to his present available options. It is rather the gosel itself in relationship to his present situation, that situation being determined largely by his earlier disobedience.[104]

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[101] Yoder, *As You Go: The Old Mission in a New Day*, Focal Pamphlet 5 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1961), 24. Cf. 28-29, in which Yoder argues, that "throwing one's lot in" with the people who missionaries serve not only reduces the temptation to think in terms of one's homeland, but "indigenizes" ministry in a way such that "the service rendered to others would be the same as the immigrant group is providing for itself". "Convictions" in this sense is to be understood not as abstracted beliefs, but, as we have seen, statements about the kinds of discipleship intrinsic to Christian faith.

[102] Ibid., 18-21. Cf., Yoder, "Discipleship as Missionary Strategy", *Christian Ministry* (January-March) 1955, 26-31.

[103] Cf., Yoder, "When the State is God", *Gospel Herald*, February 16, 1954, 153. Within Yoder's writings on ecumenicity, he consistently views 'institutional' structures as impediments to the command of unity, similar to the manner in which war stands as a form of idolatry in which prefers one nation over another. Cf., "A Historic Free Church View", in *Christian Unity in North America: A Symposium,* ed. J. Robert Neslon, (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1958), 87-97; *Ecumenical Movement* 4-6; "Nature of the Unity", 225 for various versions of the argument against 'institutional' preferences within ecumenical dialogues.

[104] *Christian Witness*, 25.

Witness to the world proceeds on a "level of involvement in which the message finds the man to whom it speaks", whether the speaking to the world is on the issue of war or proper farm practices.[105] As I have argued, the two realms of the creation are "not distinguished by God's having created two realms but by the actual rebelliousness of men"; the church thus brings the *singular* word of Christ into language which corresponds to the world's ability to receive that word.[106] The world-as-disobedient is unable to hear the commands of Christ in their explicit nature, but able to 'hear' the church's practices because of their analogous form to the practices of the world.

This emphasis upon the church practice—not only as the means of witness but as the means for making visible the peoplehood of the church—are not for their own sake, but to make visible the church as the "new humanity". It is my argument that these practices, which find analogy in the practice of the world, are for the sake of inviting world to understand, then, its true "direction". It is to the manner in which the practices of the church function in this way, of making visible the church's social ontology through its practices, which I will now turn to.

Peoplehood and Church Practices

As I have argued, for Yoder, describing a church as the "new humanity" is contingent upon the church's practices, i.e. following in the way of Jesus. In this section, I will continue this argument, describing how Yoder's emphasis on the practices of the church both name how the church is constituted, while simultaneously enabling witness

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[105] Ibid. 22, 25.

[106] Ibid., 31.

to the world's analogous practices. Through these practices, the church makes visible the

character of the "new humanity", and invites the world to find its true "direction".

At least as far back as Yoder's 1957 essay "What Are Our Concerns?" we find

Yoder arguing that the church's practices of discipleship form the church:

> On this basis (and not on any other) discipline is possible within the fellowship:
> i.e., on the basis of the common conviction that the unity of the church is unity *in
> discipleship*. This discipline is…on an individual, local, Spirit-led process of
> growth together. If someone is finally excluded from the fellowship, it is not
> because he broke such and such a rule, but because he shows himself no longer
> desirous of living in the unity of the group's commitment to discipleship.[107]

Representative of the manner in which peoplehood is sustained by practice is Yoder's

1967 *Concern* article "Binding and Loosing".[108] "Binding and loosing", referring to the

interlocking process of communal discernment and forgiveness found in Matthew 18,

prevents any single person from gaining leverage over another, but enables "the group's

standards [to] be challenged, tested and confirmed, or changed as it is found necessary, in

the course of their being applied."[109] The ultimate significance of this binding/loosing

practice is that it, in this creation of a people, the presence of Christ, efficacious prayer,

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[107] Yoder, "What Are Our Concerns?", in *The Roots of Concern*, (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 164-176 (167).

[108] Yoder, "Binding and Loosing", *Concern* 14 (1967), 2-32, reprinted in *Royal Priesthood*, 323-358. Yoder saw "rule-based" ethics as antithetical to this, in that the church as a "peoplehood" exists as much through the process as it does through the process: "God speaks where his people gather and are free to be led. The marks of the validity of the conclusions are to be sought not alone in the principles applied but in the procedure of the meeting", in "Hermeneutics of Peoplehood", 23.

[109] Yoder, "Binding and Loosing", 328. Forgiveness, indicative of the "interpersonal nature" of this binding/loosing process, produces a people where there were fragmented individuals. Cf., ibid., 329: "Differences of conviction and behavior are unacceptable *when they offend*…If the difference destroys fellowship, it is for that reason a topic for reconciling concern. Any variance not death with, on the grounds that it is unimportant, becomes increasingly important with the passage of time. Unattended, it magnifies the next conflict as well."

and the direction of the Holy Spirit are promised; in and through this new community's

existence, the work of God is visible.[110]

Loss of the practices such as binding/loosing which give visibility to a church's

"peoplehood" have two major costs. First, as we have seen, without the communal

process of binding/loosing, the church is not "the real church in which the Spirit works

shows up in a sense of formality and unreality in the life of the congregation", but rather

an organization which functions according to "sub-Christian" sources of guidance.[111] But

secondly, apart from these practices, the church is ultimately unable to retain its

relationship to the world, i.e. it ceases to be "a missionary church". Because the 'world'/

'state' and 'church' share occasional analogous practices which the church practices in

light of the lordship of Christ, the church is able to exist as a minority model for the

larger society.[112] The practices by which the church lives, after all, are understandable

(i.e. commonly recognizable practices) even if the sociality which underlies these

practices is not readily understood.

The final four chapters of *The Politics of Jesus*(chapters 9-12) are illustrative of

this process, in which Yoder discussed various church practices, showing how each of

them bears witness to a distinctive social vision to their secular counterpart through

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[110] Ibid., 331.

[111] Ibid., 349-350. I take "real" in this sense to not be in the philosophical sense of "connected to an essence", but rather, in the sense of "descriptively" real, in that it conforms to the pattern of Scripture.

[112] *As You Go,* 22: "Likewise an investigation of the possibilities of migration as a possibly more effective way of spreading the Gospel calls for some consideration of the cultural significance of such an undertaking. Would such an approach mean that Christians taking it would thereby lose their chance to make an effective social contribution because they would find themselves a small minority and representative of an unpopular race in other parts of the world? Insofar as we can learn from history in realms such as this, it is clear the most significant social and cultural contributions have usually been made by minority groups."

analogous practices. As I have argued, the "new humanity", visible through the church,

exists as a consequence of Christ's conquering of the powers. Chapters 9-12 of *Politics*,

accordingly, follow Yoder's description of Jesus' conquering of the powers in chapter 8,

in that only Jesus' nonviolent conquering of the powers make possible other practices of

witness. What we find in the chapters on the *haustafeln* (Paul's 'household codes'),

government involvement, social reconciliation, and nonviolence, I suggest, are

descriptions of missionary practices which engage secular analogues with the intention of

calling them away from the deficient version of human sociality implied by these

practices.

Chapter 9 offers a discussion of the *haustafeln* as a code which calls Stoic

morality to a higher standard.[113] Rather than being simply borrowed from Stoicism,

Paul's teaching puts forth "the relationship itself that we are called upon to live up to".

Described in "plural terms", in order to call *all* of human relations to a higher standard,

the *haustafeln* contains:

> the possibility of community discipline, of common insight and standards, around
> which it is possible for a whole group of persons…to develop a shared moral
> commitment.[114]

These codes are reflective of the church's internal life, subverting the powers of the

world.[115] The *haustafeln* thus serves as "testimony" to other configurations of social

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[113] *Politics* (1994), 169.

[114] Ibid., 171-172.

[115] Ibid., 173: "For the apostles to encourage slaves and women to be subordinate, there must have been some specific reason for them to have been tempted to behave otherwise…Only if something in the life or the preaching of the church had given them the idea that their subordinate status had been challenged or changed would there be any temptation to the kind of unruliness to which these texts are addressed."

ordering; far from reifying the practices of "world", the *haustafeln* "relativizes and undercuts this order".[116]

This approach is continued in chapter 10 as Yoder examined the practices of submission to the government, and in chapter 11 in the practice of social reconciliation ("justification by faith"). Yoder's assumption is the same in both chapters: Christian practices, though resembling pagan practices, are practices which bear witness to an entirely different social ontology, challenging not only the pagan practice but the underlying sociality which the pagan practice attests to. With regards to the Christians' life before the government (chapter 10), Yoder discarded the secular options of a "just rebellion" and "government as divine revelation" in favor of "nonresistant attitude toward a tyrannical government".[117] He does so because present governments are "subject to the ordering of God, and Christians are to be subject to them all".[118] Accordingly, "we can judge and measure the extent to which a government is accomplishing its ministry by asking namely whether it persistently…attends to the rewarding of good and evil according to their merits", affirming the government when it lives up to its vocation as created by God, and resisting the government when it fails to live up to that measure.

Chapter 11, "Justification by Grace through Faith" follows the same pattern. Yoder contended that Paul's understanding of salvation was a revisioning of the Jew-Gentile divide, toward reconciliation into "one community". [119] Persons who are

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[116] Ibid., 181.

[117] Ibid., 205-208.

[118] Ibid., 208.

[119] Ibid., 220-223.

transformed by this process of reconciliation serve as witnesses to "social activism" and "pietist" versions of human perfection alike; only through the communal transformation-as-salvation do other social problems cease —most pre-eminently, the division of the world into friend/enemy.[120] Again, the Christian practice of reconciliation bears witness to other 'partial' practices of reconciliation which emphasize either personal piety or social activism, calling them beyond themselves, to Christian perfection.

In Chapter 12, Yoder describes how this process happens with nonviolence—the central practice which illuminates and justifies all other practices by which the peoplehood is known. Discussion of this practice will be taken up in the next section of this chapter, but for now, it is important to note that discussions of the church's practices in the *Politics of Jesus* do not occur without nonviolence as a central consideration. In other words, whether discussing the internal discursive practices (binding/loosing), or how gender relations are articulated in the church (*haustefeln*), nonviolence is never far away for Yoder.

Having established how the practices of the church occur dialogically with other practices for the sake of witness, I will now describe how the church is inconceivable apart from this concept of dialogue. This understanding of the church as a dialogical body, which witnesses to the world about the presence of the 'new humanity' made possible by Christ, has both peril and promise, as I will describe.

'Church' as Dialogical Body

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[120] Ibid., 229-231.

In the previous section, I explored how 'church' for Yoder is named by a series of

practices which make visible the church's 'peoplehood' and facilitate witness to the

world. In this section, I will argue that the church's practices exist dialogically toward

the world. This means that, while the practices of the world might find their perfection in

the church's analogue, 'church' necessarily alters its external practices in order to remain

open to 'world' and to make itself available to the 'world'. I will argue, however, that

this mode of dialogical existence creates an internal tension, between the church's

dialogical relation to the world and its *absolute* call to nonviolence.

For Yoder, the church could engage in dialogue because the church *is* a dialogue,

a position dating back at least to his 1957 dissertation on the Swiss Anabaptists.[121]

Whereas the Zwinglian branch of the Reformation utilized a separation of church and

world which could not conceive of analogues between the unbaptized society and the

church, the Swiss Anabaptists did not know this kind of strict duality.[122] The

Anabaptists, rejecting this claim of two orders, saw the arguments of the Zwinglians

rooted in an "ontological dualism".[123] For the Anabaptists, church and world are related

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[121] Published initially as *Taufertum und Reformation in der Schweiz I. Die Gesprache zwischen Taufern und Reformatoern 1523-1538.* (Karlsruhe: Verlag H. Schnedier, 1962). Translated as Part One of *Anabaptism and Reformation in Switzerland: An Historical and Theological Analysis of the Dialogues Between Anabaptists and Reformers* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2004), ed. C. Arnold Snyder, trans. David Carl Stassen and C. Arnold Snyder. Part Two, translated as Part Two of *Anabaptism and Reformation*, was published initially as *Taufertum und Reformatoern im Gesprach: Dogmengeschichtliche Untersuchung der fruhen Gesprache zwischen Sweizerischen Taufern und Reformatoren.*(Zurich: EVZ-Verlag), 1968.

[122] Ibid., 152: As Yoder explains Zwingli's view, "Existing sinfulness of humanity has, as its consequence, the fact that divine justice cannot be humanity's ultimate standard, for it is ordained for heaven….Sin thus belongs so essentially to humanity that one can never speak of a transfer of divine justice to society."

[123] Ibid., 156.

as the perfection is related to the imperfect.[124] This external dialogue with the world,

however, is predicated on the church's existence *as a dialogue*:

> Was it not necessary to belong to an entity-or better- a series of events that one
> could call either "community" or "dialogue" for the establishing of [biblical]
> knowledge?...Is it not conceivable that the community's functioning would be
> constitutive for a theological epistemology as a *fundamental pre-condition for*
> *valid knowledge of God*, standing, to be sure, under Scripture, but certainly above
> the theologians, not as a restriction but rather *as an essential clarification of the*
> *scriptural principle*?[125]

Yoder concludes that conversations between other Reformers and the Anabaptists

were done not "to escape persecution, but out of a fully-developed theological …

ecclesiology."[126] For the Anabaptists, the true church was an entity characterized by a

dialogical form which assumed the presence of the Spirit because of the process by which

it operated, as much as because of the material which it gathered around (Scripture).[127]

Only by being the church-as-dialogue could the church model its life of the new aeon to

the world.[128] Again, the church's confidence in dialogue, (both as the church's

performative mode and as its mode of witness to the world) is rooted Christ's victory

over the powers, a victory which enables the church to dialogue with the world instead of

violently overpowering the world:

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[124] Ibid., 190-197. This analogy is true also for how the "true church", which exists in the breaking of bread and baptism, relates to other churches, created by birth or lineage. In this latter "imperfect" community, Yoder argues that the Anabaptists included Catholicism, which included children in the community by their parent's actions (198-202).

[125] Ibid., 219, emphasis mine.

[126] Ibid., 223, emphasis mine.

[127] Ibid., 224.

[128] When according to Yoder, this model is transposed into the state, the results were disastrous: "the state church of the Netherlands, the Anabaptists "abandoned the dialogical character of the rule of Christ. This puritanical practice of church discipline must understand discipline as punishment that conformed to transgression in a casuistic manner", 227.

The early church knew that the powers of this world (under which must counted the power of the sword) stood under the lordship of Christ, even though all the statesmen were non-Christian. It knew that the community had to pressure the heathen state to do its duty to be just, in view of the victory Christ had already achieved. *The fact that they abandoned the state to the heathens did not mean that the community abandoned it to the Devil, but rather that they had given it over to the Lordship of Christ*…What truly represent this greater venture of faith, the greater trust in the lordship of Christ over the powers of this world?[129]

As Yoder argues, "if one asks why the community should be visible and capable of action, then one finds this answer: It has to do with the life of Christ in his members", which enabled the community to proceed dialogically rather than in violence or coercion.[130]

Yoder continued this argument in a popular three-part series entitled "The Things That Are Caeasar's".[131] The church calls upon the state to live up to the practices of the Gospel (specifically in the rejection of war) was not for the sake of the church's purity, but "for our brother's welfare".[132] Because there is truly only "one order", Yoder argues, Christians can call upon the state for "limitations of the exercise of…power within the legal system", to operate by the limits of the constitutions and within the state's calling to

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[129] Ibid., 271, emphasis mine.

[130] Ibid., 299.

[131] Yoder, "The Things That Are Caesar's", *Christian Living* (July, 1960), 4, begins with Yoder's now-familiar bracketing of church and world under the lordship of Christ, who reigns over "thrones, dominions, principalities and powers". Cf. "The Things That Are Ceasar's, Pt. 3", *Christian Living* (September, 1960), 18.

[132] Ibid., 5. Witness is given in all social actions, Yoder argues: "Even if it could not be argued absolutely convincingly that it is the Christian's duty to 'speak truth to power', we shall keep on speaking. *Even our silence communicates.* Whether we vote or refuse to vote, we are saying something. Our participation in the economy, in the school system, in the market for newspapers and magazines, already speaks volumes. The difference between a witness to government that is explicit, and one that we give in spite of ourselves by our silence, is not a difference between being involved or not being involved; it is a matter of whether we are conscious and responsibly careful about what we say."

keep order.[133] As 'state', it will act deficiently with regards to Christian justice,

providing all the more reason for Christians to continue challenging state modes of

"selfishness" which climax in war.[134] There exists no place outside of a dialogical mode

for the church to exist, particularly with regards to war:

> On the one hand, the "whole system" argument, whereby the soldier, the
> executive, the legislator, the office worker, and the voting citizen are all morally
> on the same level, is unreasonable when taken seriously. The non-combatant
> soldier is not the same as the combatant soldier. If the Christian conscientious
> objector refuses both kinds of military service, it is because both are
> objectionable, not because one is polluted by the other…to follow this view
> consistently would make of Jesus Himself a sinner, for He, too, was involved in
> sinful society, its economy, its division of labor, and its politics.[135]

Describing dialogue as intrinsic to church life is not without its difficulties, as

church language remains in danger of being conscripted by 'world'. As Yoder remarked

in a 1967 address,[136] while "men are called together to a new social wholeness [that] is

itself the work of God which gives meaning to history", the tendency has become to

thinking of the church as a "religious establishment of secular society", instead of a

foretaste of human society.[137] Between extremes of co-option by society and stark

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[133] Yoder, "The Things That Are Ceasar's, Pt. 2", *Christian Living* (August 1960), 16.

[134] Ibid., 17. Such witness is not equivalent to calling the state to salvation, but a call rather for the state to behave in analogous ways to the "perfection" of church life righteousness mirrored in church life.

[135] Yoder, "Ceasar, Pt. 3", 18. As Yoder will argue in "The Theology of the Church's Mission", for the church to not continue in this witness is for the church effectively to ceases to be "church", in *Mennonite Life* (January 1966), 30-33. "This distinction between church and mission…is inadmissible. A human community which is not constantly both experiencing and proclaiming the transformation of the human situation by the coming of God among me will immediately degenerate into Judaism or paganism" (31).

[136] Yoder, "A People in the World: Theological Interpretation", *Concept of the Believers' Church,* ed. James Leo Garrett (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press), 1969, 250-83. Yoder, 254, remarks that the Anabaptist model of separation and freedom of conscience have become proliferated to the point that these things can hardly be talked about without being misunderstood.

[137] Ibid., 258-259.

institutionalism, Yoder stakes out the church as a model to the world, to be known by its corporate witness, and by meeting secular questions with responses which are beyond "reasonable expectations".[138]

Through the early 1970s, Yoder continued to argue that this dialogical partnership between church and world is facilitated through these dialogical practices.[139] Communal process and renunciation of power manifest themselves externally through the refusal of war and the promotion of reconciliatory initiatives; the 'world' cannot understand the internal process of Mennonites, but *can* comprehend the refusal of war.[140] This communication occurs by "borrowing" idioms familiar to the audience, but in a different sense than the "borrowing" of church practices from pagans which he rejects in *Politics*.[141]

With respect to the *external* replication of Christian faith—as opposed to adopting pagan practices for *internal* church life—borrowing is inevitable and necessary; this pattern, in fact, has characterized missions across Christian history.[142] Such practices of borrowing for the sake of witness helps the church, he argues, to resist the temptation

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[138] Ibid., 266-270. Alain Epp Weaver has named this as a "diasporic" existence, characterized by instability rather than security, in *States of Exile*: *Visions of Diaspora, Witness, and Return* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press), 2008. Cf. A. E. Weaver, "On Exile: Yoder, Said, and A Theology of Return", *Cross Currents* 52 (2003), 439-461. This position of tentativeness is, for Yoder, the freedom of the church. Cf., "People in the World", 276: "It would be possible to argue on either side of the thesis that, if Christians are to be in servitude to the powers and principalities, it at least is better that it be the powers of the future than those of the past. But from the context of the covenant community the argument should rather be that such servitude, whether past or future is part of what we have been freed from by the work of Christ and the gift of his Spirit."

[139] Yoder, "Anabaptist Vision and Mennonite Reality", *Consultation on Anabaptist-Mennonite Theology* (Fresno, CA: Council of Mennonite Seminaries, 1970), 1-46.

[140] Ibid., 4.

[141] Yoder, *Politics* (1994), 169-170.

[142] Yoder, "Anabaptist Vision", 10-14.

to be a cultural enclave, and enables the church to be more committed to Jesus' way and Jesus' reign in the world, even at the expense of denominational distinctives.[143] The church's external expression of its social ontology can only be articulated dialogically; should the church be tempted to "secure" its identity apart from this either witness or internal dialogue, it ceases to function as witness to the "peoplehood". As I have suggested in the conclusion of the first section, nonviolence appears as the practice by which the social ontology made possible by Christ's conquering of the powers is identified. But as Yoder's ecclesiology illustrates, a dialogical existence is a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, for Yoder, the church, in remaining faithful to the Scriptures, cannot abandon nonviolence without sacrificing not only its ethic, but the social ontology made visible through its ethic as well. As we have seen, the 'world' is known most clearly in its involvement in violence. But on the other hand, the church must remain dialogically related to the world in order to be known as part of the "new humanity". If Yoder emphasizes the description of the world as *like* the church too much, the sharpest point of distinction between church and world is lost (violence versus nonviolence). But if Yoder emphasizes the nonviolence of the church too much, he risks losing the dialogical character of the church, and thus, the church's identity with the "new humanity".

In this section, I have shown how Yoder's articulation of church practice has in mind two ends: first, practices make visible the church's identity as the "new humanity", and secondly, practices bear witness through analogies to the world's practices. These

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[143] Ibid., 46.

practices find their culmination, I will suggest, in nonviolence—the "grain of the universe", the practice which reveals what is most true about not only the church's existence, but the world's existence as well. In this way, nonviolence exhibits the central truth about the church, a truth which the world is called to as well.

It is here that Yoder's commitment to the *church* as bearing witness to a particular form of social existence is subjected to the greatest tension. Yoder's commitment to the "new humanity" as being identified through the practice of nonviolence threatens to undermine his commitment to ecclesiology, in that his description of nonviolence as the "grain of the universe" ultimately becomes determinative for not only what the "new humanity" is, but also what the church's practice should be, such that the question must be asked if nonviolence is ultimately the practice which names the ultimate meaning of the world, why does one need the church? It is to Yoder's writings on nonviolence that I will now turn.

Nonviolence: The Grain of the Universe and the Eschatological Truth of Creation

Yoder's writing on nonviolence has been the subject of no little discussion in recent years. Much of the work surrounding Yoder's thought on nonviolence either investigates his nonviolence as kind of epistemology, or as a general practice which is articulated apart from considerations of the social ontology which makes nonviolence a theological necessity for Yoder.[144] It will be my contention, as I noted earlier, that for

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[144] Chris K. Huebner's *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 2006), contains two chapters on Yoder's nonviolence, one which focuses on the epistemic conditions of Yoder's nonviolence (97-114), and the other which makes mention of the dialogue between just war and pacifism in Yoder's work (129), but goes into no real detail on the particular practices of nonviolence. The same is true with Cynthia Hess' *Sites of Violence, Sites of Grace: Christian Nonviolence and the Traumatized Self* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), which describes Yoder's

Yoder, nonviolence is not only the mark by the church's identity as the "new humanity" is made known, but nonviolence is also that practice which undergirds all of the other dialogical practices of the church, in that the church can only operate *dialogically* because it does not need to overpower a world which Christ already reigns over.

This section will proceed in two parts. First, I will describe the various ways in which Yoder's writings on nonviolence function dialogically with a variety of positions on involvement in war. As I have suggested with regards to the practices of *Politics of Jesus*—that various church practices engage with their secular counterparts for the sake of calling them to the church—nonviolence is the capstone of the church's practices, bearing witness most clearly to the nature of the "new humanity" created by Christ. As such, we find Yoder engaging in these conversations more than others. In the second part of this section, through a close reading of the final chapter of *The Politics of Jesus*, this claim will be made most explicit. I will argue that in *Politics*, nonviolence is the practice which bears witness to the eschatological victory of the nonviolent Jesus. This means, I argue, that while nonviolence bears witness to the church's social ontology, the question is raised as to whether ultimately church can be articulated apart from nonviolence, or whether nonviolence overrides all other considerations as to what constitutes "church".

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nonviolence within his discussion of the powers, but does not discuss the practices of nonviolence (11-32). Similarly, the volume *A Mind Patient and Untamed: Assessing John Howard Yoder's Contribution to Theology, Ethics, and Peacemaking*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger and Gayle Gerber Koontz (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2003) contains no examinations on Yoder's actual practices of nonviolence. The *festschrift* for Yoder, *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honor of John Howard Yoder*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas et al (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999) contains discussion by Tobias Winright on Yoder and policing (84-114) and Reinhard Hutter on selective conscientious objection (69-83). While both deal with actual practices of nonviolence in Yoder, both chapters concern Yoder's work in the post-Vietnam era primarily. For an argument on how Yoder's work can be read as nonviolent resistance, see Kenneth Obiekwe's "Why and How Yoder Can Be Read in Terms of 'Nonviolence Resistance'", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83 (2009), 113-130.

Nonviolence in Dialogue

Yoder's writings on nonviolence dates back at least to 1948, to his assignment through the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) to help recover the Anabaptist peace tradition in France, which had recently survived the ravages of the Second World War; for Yoder, this was an eye-opening experience.[145] While Yoder's mentor Harold Bender had argued for the centrality of nonviolence to the Anabaptist tradition in *The Anabaptist Vision*, it was not immediately obvious to the Anabaptist churches Yoder with worked that a commitment to nonviolence was intrinsic to being Anabaptist.[146] As Earl Zimmerman has shown, Yoder's position was that the "peace ethic", as a gift to all the churches, must be fleshed out in the varieties of contexts, and could not be enforced on a church prior to it coming to the conclusion of nonviolence for itself.[147]

This is not to say that Yoder was ambivalent about the relationship between ecclesiology and nonviolence. The initial 1948 meeting with French Mennonites evolved into an ongoing dialogue over the church and war; during a 1962 meeting in this series of conferences, Yoder inquired "what reason there would be for not requiring of every Christian in the church the rejection of war for which the Gospel calls", to which Reformed ethicist Hendrik van Oyen responded that "[the proposal of Yoder's] goes much too far further [in the direction] of legalism and perfection, of thinking that in a

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[145] Zimmerman, 73-74. Zimmerman emphasizes the background of emerging Russian nuclear power as a new specter of war" which confronted the French congregations.

[146] Zimmerman 77.

[147] On Yoder's letters to Bender detailing the difference between American Mennonites and European Mennonites, see Zimmerman 73-74.

church of true believers you are completely out of the old world."[148] As we have seen,

the possibility of nonviolence was not about legalism, but for Yoder was because Christ

had created a new community in the world for which nonviolence is Christologically

indispensible:

> The 'pacifism of the Anabaptists…are explained from this starting point, and not
> from the Sermon on the Mount. The Anabaptists speak remarkably seldom about
> the Sermon on the Mount. ..Their position does not stand or fall with
> considerations regarding the likelihood of a peaceful and brotherly world order,
> but rather, with the conviction that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully human,
> not only in his preaching and in his actions, but also and most particularly in his
> obedience unto death, precisely in order to reveal there the ultimate basic
> orientation of God-willed human obedience: an offence for some, and folly for
> others, but the power and wisdom of God for those who believe.[149]

The church, "the bearer of the meaning of history", is the body which bears forth Jesus'

model, and which makes the logic of nonviolence intelligible as the "power and wisdom

of God".

One of the most significant opportunities in Yoder's career to attest to

nonviolence as Christ's way over the powers of violence came with the issue of

conscientious objection.[150] Yoder argues "our peace testimony, and our conscientious

objection to war, is abundantly grounded in the very heart of the Gospel"; consistent with

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[148] Donald F. Durnbaugh, "John Howard Yoder's role in the "Lordship of Christ over Church and State Conferences'", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77 (2003), 371-386 (378)

[149] Yoder, *Anabaptism and Reformation*, 288-289. Cf. Yoder, "Reinhold Niebuhr and Christian Pacifism". Because the Christian advocacy of nonviolence derives from Christ, "there exists a real Christian responsibility for the social order, but that responsibility is a derivative of Christian love, not a contradictory and self-defining ethical norm" (113), by which Yoder means that because Christ is the measure of ethics, "responsibility" for Christians means a stance of suffering and service rather than survival.

[150] This dates back to at least to Yoder, "The Peace Testimony and Conscientious Objection", *Gospel Herald*, January 21, 1958, 57-58. Scripturally, Yoder argues, the act of conscientious objection with respect to the draft is consistent with Paul's admonition to be "crucified with Christ" and to wrestle "against principalities and powers" (58).

his vision of the connection between church and world, Christian conscientious objection involved solidarity with other conscientious objectors, in keeping with Jesus' "solidarity of men in their sinfulness".[151]

Throughout the 1960s, as a part of the Peace Section of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Yoder was deeply involved with how this "solidarity" happens. Particularly, the question was raised of how the MCC should address the question of draftees with an I-W status, those registered as conscientious objectors during Vietnam.[152] These draftees, having registered as objectors, were still obliged to provide alternative service to the government instead; as part of a group of church bodies seeking to aid these objectors, the MCC sought to provide opportunities for Mennonites to faithfully bear witness to the government. Internal memos of the Peace Section argue that, specifically religious projects such as "church schools" and "church-related agencies" were not options for I-W workers, as these projects did not fulfill the government requirements.[153] But not being able to have specifically religious projects for

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[151] Ibid., 58: "This 'peace testimony' is no 'pacifism', as the term is used in political discussion today. It does not stand or fall with the possibility or the predictability of political peace. It only has value because no political peace is possible or predictable In a world where there are wars and rumors of wars, the church whose citizenship is not of this world calls the believing Christian because of his faith to love for his neighbor which is worthy of a disciple; she also calls the unbelieving state, its unbelief not withstanding, to righteousness and the preservation of peace." Yoder continues this argument in two 1961 articles: "The Place of Peace Witness in Missions", *Gospel Herald*, January 3, 1961, 14-15, 19-20, and "The Way of Peace in a World of War", *Gospel Herald*, July 18, 1961, 25.

[152] "MCC Peace Section Minutes 1963-1968", Box 25 1/b, Mennonite Church USA Archives, John H. Yoder Collection. Among these minutes, there is consistent discussion of the I-W status, the status given to conscientious objectors (CO) during the Second World War. The 1948 Selective Service law was amended in 1951 to read that COs had to contribute "civilian work contributing to the maintenance of the national health, safety, or interest" in lieu of military service, for approximately 24 months.

[153] "MCC Peace Section Minutes 1963-1968", Box 25 1/b, Mennonite Church USA Archives, John H. Yoder Collection. "I-W Project Approval Criteria", appended to "Report to Peace Section Executive Committee on the Washington Witness to Government by John D. Unruh, Jr.", September 6, 1963.

Mennonite conscientious objectors was not a problem; as the committee argued "our understanding of Christian vocation is moving more toward the essential wholeness and indivisibility of 'service' and 'witness' ".[154] This linking of "service" to "witness" is consistent with what we have seen in Yoder's own writing, in his emphasis that witness to the world occurs through common practices which the world can "hear".

The issue of conscientious objection (CO) highlights the pitfalls associated with Yoder's dialogical approach. While the draft offered an occasion for reformulation of what faithful nonviolence meant during the Vietnam War, the draft also dictated the *parameters* in which nonviolence could be practiced, if one wished to offer witness to the state vis-à-vis nonviolence. In other words, the solution of CO was issued by the Selective Service System, the entity which created the conflict between Christian and national commitments in the first place, and was not formulated as an ecclesially-derived response by the Mennonite community. While the National Service Board for Religious Objectors (NSBRO), of which the MCC was a member, remained responsible for initiating the projects for COs, the Selective Service retained veto power over any project.[155] Beyond this, in order to form one united voice against war, the various groups which comprise the NSBRO at some level sacrificed their own particular theological understandings of 'peace' in order to speak to a governmentally-mediated definition of 'peace'.[156]

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[154] Ibid., 4. This criteria is repeated in the minutes on January 16, 1964.

[155] Flynn, *The Draft*, 4.

[156] The NSBRO, founded in response to issues of conscientious objection by the Mennonite Central Committee, American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), and the Brethren Service Committee in 1941, soon came under the direction of a board of directors including the Friends of Reconciliation, the

As we have seen with Yoder, the witness against war takes place in idioms which are appropriate to the witness to the world. But in this instance, responding to a problem articulated by the Selective Service left the NSBRO operating out of a paradigm in which both the problem *and* appropriate mode of "witness" were supplied for it by Selective Service. As such, NSBRO, I argue, replicated a "borrowed" term (borrowed for the sake of mission) in the *internal* processes of the churches and not simply how the churches chose to bear witness. In other words, the Selective Service created the problem to which it supplied the only solution, and in doing so, replicated this solution through both the individual consciences of those confronted by conscription, and, on the intra-church level, by reducing the particular ecclesial and theological understandings of 'peace' toward a singular definition offered by Selective Service. The net result of this is two-fold: not only did the thinking of the church as to what nonviolence can consist of become closer to that of Selective Service (conforming church life to state law), but the mechanisms of Selective Service regulated the ecclesial bodies in their *internal* processes as well, conscripting the church's imagined reality of what "nonviolence" as a witness to the state could consist of.

As I argued in the conclusion of the previous section, the inseparability of church/world for Yoder, while allowing for *penultimate* distinction between the practices of the church and world, precluded *ultimate* distinction between NSBRO and the draft provisions of General Hershey's Selective Service. In the same way that ecclesial

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Comission on World Peace of the Methodist Church, and the Disciples of Christ. In 1964, NSBRO became the National Interreligious Service Board of Conscientious Objectors, and in 2000, became simply the Center on Conscience and War. In its current manifestation, the religious nature of the movement is acknowledged in its statement of founding. Available at http://www.centeronconscience.org/, accessed 1/26/10.

understandings of 'peace' cannot be articulated apart from the ways in which the world can 'hear' that witness, so the language describing this witness operates in terms established by 'world'.[157] In an April 24, 1967 letter to Ivan Kauffman, Yoder argues that conceptually "religious objection" is not "conscientious objection", that people can object to war on any number of grounds.[158] But, Yoder argued, religious objection of multiple persuasions can be recognizable by law as "conscientious", and thus, Christians should object on the basis of conscience (again, in a mode that the world can "hear").[159] This identification of Christians with other objectors is the meaning of the church's internal reflections on the meaning of resistance to war:

> Since 1524 Anabaptists and Mennonites have testified that the liberties they ask for themselves should be given to all. It may be that within the American legal system some may operate on the assumption that each party looks after his own interests, trusting the courts or the "market" to establish justice, but the Christian cannot be satisfied with this level of irresponsibility for the welfare of his neighbor.[160]

Such "identification" with the neighbor vis-à-vis common nonviolent activities was not pragmatism, but rather—as I have argued—a way to engage with alternative practices (in this case, nonviolence) which are in need of theological reorientation.

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[157] It is in this sense that Yoder is able to, in *Christian Witness* (1964), make room for peace witnesses such as just-war theory, but not revolution (49-50): that just war advocates for the elimination of wars in practice, while revolution advocates for the destruction of the order which makes peace on an international level.

[158] Box 25/21: MCC Peace Section: re the draft, 1963-1967, "Letter to Ivan Kauffman", April 24, 1967. By 1967, conscientious objector requirements had been challenged in *United States v. Seeger,* 380 U.S. 163 (1965), which had removed the traditional requirement of "belief in a supreme being", allowing objectors to object on the plural bases.

[159] Ibid., 2: "Certainly the movement of the courts in the Seeger case in questioning the theistic definition of "religion" has moved in the direction of identifying the two definitions. It would likewise be clear that most persons from within historic Christian denominations using the just war theory, as Catholics for instance must do, would be not only conscientious but religious in their selective objection."

[160] Ibid.

Throughout the 1960s, Yoder continued to dialogically argue for nonviolence as the perfection of or the logical conclusion of a variety of other approaches to war as well. I will briefly survey a few of these instances. In a 1963 pamphlet, the basis for his 1970 full-length work *Karl Barth and the Problem of War*, Yoder engaged the thought of his former mentor on the issue of war's justifiability.[161] Barth engaged the question of war in public "by a logical elaboration based upon the concept of the 'just war', without using the term", Yoder argues, though Yoder saw the casuistry which underlay traditional just war thought and the command ethic underlying Barth's thought to be poles apart.[162]

Barth saw the church and state as related in that the church provides the model of a true society for the state.[163] In light of this church/state relation, and because a population must be alive in order to receive the Word of the church, Barth maintained that wars could conceivably be commanded by God in the defense of secular polities; to exclude war would be to exclude God's absolute freedom, and to endanger the world in which discipleship occurs.[164] Yoder argued, however, that Barth's emphasis upon the human Jesus as the center of God's revelation to humanity excludes even the remote possibility of war, such that Barth's "near pacifism" becomes for all practical purposes,

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[161] "The Pacifism of Karl Barth", initially published in French (1963), and later translated for Herald Press (1968). Also, *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970). Both are reprinted in Mark Thiessen Nation, ed., *Karl Barth and the Problem of War and Other Essays on Barth* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Press, 2003). For a different take on Barth and war, see Rowan Williams, "Barth, War, and the State", in Nigel Biggar (ed.), *Reckoning with Barth: Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of Barth's Birth* (Oxford and London: Mowbray, 1988), 170-190.

[162] Yoder, "Pacifism of Karl Barth" in Nation, ed., *Karl Barth*, 117.

[163] Ibid., 116-117. For Barth, this approach meant that while "there will therefore be a Christian message addressed to the State; there will not be a Christian ethic for the State".

[164] Ibid., 122-123.

pacifism.[165] In other words, Barth's view of war, resting upon a freedom of God which is visible in Jesus, is practically pacifist, though Barth would never declare this.

In a series of 1968 articles, Yoder took a similar approach in his conversations with just war arguments. Arguing in the first article, Yoder assumes three possible stances for Christians regarding government undertaking of war: crusade, just war, or "blank check".[166] Rejecting the first and third options out of hand as unbiblical, Yoder then shows that the just war—the median approach between these extremes—does not justify the Vietnam War on either Protestant or Catholic grounds.[167] Yoder's follow-up article, "Vietnam: Another Option", argued then that Christian nonviolence accomplishes the ends of the just war (social involvement), without sacrificing obedience.[168] As Yoder phrased it:

> I believe Jesus doesn't tell his disciples to abstain from the realm of social conflict. Nor does he tell them to worship Him in a corner of their lives and let the government dictate their action in the realm of social conflict. He leads them right into the eye of the storm of social conflict, but tells them to take a different position: to be a reflection of what He was, the incarnation of the cross-bearing love of God who gives His life for His enemies.[169]

This kind of discipleship is not limited to the parameters of any one ecclesial setting, as nonviolence in imitation of Christ is found among Catholic monks, Quakers, and

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[165] Ibid., 125-126. It now seems to me that Yoder misunderstood Barth's understanding of the human Jesus. Cf. Paul Daffyd Jones' *The Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2008), in which Jones contends that Barth's concern with Christ's humanity is, in part, to maintain Jesus as the free locus in which the eternal Word is revealed (26-59). Because Barth's concern is more centrally Jesus as the revelation of God the Son (a topic Yoder rarely addresses), Yoder's concern with the normativity of Jesus' nonviolence seems to be missing the point of Barth's Christology.

[166] Yoder, "Vietnam: A Just War?",1-3. "Blank-check" is Yoder's term which refers to an open-ended approval of war.

[167] Ibid., 3.

[168] "Vietnam: Another Option", 8-11

[169] Ibid., 11.

Mennonites. Jesus is no "tribal deity", i.e. not part of the Western "military and political establishment", but rather, the Lord of all who suffer in Jesus' name on behalf of the Vietnamese.[170]

By 1968, Yoder's work had moved to engaging other forms of nonviolence, finding in their logic other (albeit imperfect) ways which led toward the conclusion of a nonviolence, the practice which for Yoder bears witness to an alternate sociality. Most paradigmatic of this approach is *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*, in which Yoder explores over twenty different constructions of pacifism.[171]

In *Nevertheless*, Yoder outlined a variety of positions of nonviolence adopted by religious adherents, ranging from pragmatic approaches to the pacifism of the messianic community, (assumed to be Yoder's own position).[172] Laying out over twenty varieties of religious nonviolence, the work finishes with a discussion of the "messianic community", a variety of nonviolence which does not depend on pre-ordained rules as much as "the full humanity of a unique and yet complete human being" who opens up a "human community experiencing in its shared life a foretaste of God's kingdom."[173] This "messianic community" is "a necessary reflection of the true meaning of Jesus", with

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[170] Ibid., 10.

[171] *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*, (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971).

[172] While, with the majority of scholarship, I take Yoder's position to be best described by the "messianic community" option, Yoder significantly notes that delineating between various options "does not necessarily mean that the borders between them are airtight" (13). In fact, Yoder does not designate this position as his own position in the chapter. For the assertion of the "Messianic Community" as Yoder's own brand of nonviolence, see Paul Ramsey and Stanley Hauerwas, *Speak Up for Just War or Pacifism: A Critique of the United Methodist Bishops' Pastoral Letter "In Defense of Creation"*, (State College, PA: Penn State Press, 1988)*,* 116ff; Craig Carter, *The Pacifism of the Messianic Community: The Social Ethics of John Howard Yoder*, (PhD diss., St. Michael's College, 1999), and Nation, *Yoder,* 127. Though Yoder never makes this claim in the work, this reading seems to have originated first in a review of *Nevertheless* by Paul Toews in *Direction* 1 (1972): 134-135.

[173] Ibid., 134-135.

only those initiated into "that authentic human existence" able to grasp the logic of this way.[174]

On the one hand, Yoder seems to be drawing a distinction between the nonviolence of the "messianic community" and other forms of nonviolence. But the "messianic" kind of nonviolence, bearing witness to a new kind of humanity, embraces the concerns of seven other types of nonviolence, including their concerns and modes within the messianic form of nonviolence.[175] Significantly, the "messianic community" is able to make sense of the insights of other more limited forms of nonviolence, not only by fulfilling their intentions, but by extending their limited insights alongside other forms of nonviolence which are *contradictory* to one another.

For example, the messianic community approach supersedes the command-based nonviolence of the Old and New Testaments (Types 3 and 8), which is rule-based, and the "believer's church" (Type 9), which suffer (in the case of Type 9) from "a withdrawal from history".[176] In incarnating these commands of Jesus into a historic body, the "messianic community" also completes the "programmatic" views of nonviolence (Type 2), the view of political pragmatism (Type 4), and the view of social change; as he says, messianic pacifism "includes the practical concern of the programmatic views…without

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[174] Ibid., 136. Yoder says that one must undergo "that reorientation of the personality and its expression which Jesus and his first followers called repentance and new birth". As we have seen, these terms have to do with a reorientation of one's life toward incorporation in the "new humanity", with "repentance" and the accompanying signs of "new birth", i.e. the gifts of the spirit furthering this primary anthropology of being part of a humanity.

[175] Ibid., 137. The kinds of pacifism which "pacifism of the messianic community" encompasses include pacifisms of absolute principle (type 3), utopian purism (type 8), the pacifism of the virtuous minority (type 9), the pacifism of cultic law (13), pacifism based in case studies (type 2), the pacifism of political alternatives (type 4), and the pacifism of nonviolent social change (type 5).

[176] Ibid.

placing its hope there."[177] The messianic community—that body which bears witness to

a new social order—incorporates the insights of other approaches, similar to the way that

Yoder's nonviolence completed the insights of Barth and of the just war approaches.

By itself, the claim that "messianic community" nonviolence is the fulfillment of

other varieties of nonviolence is astounding; Yoder additionally claimed, however, that

the messianic variety draws together varieties which otherwise would be *incompatible.*[178]

In other words, a nonviolence which bears witness to a new social order is able to

incorporate the hopes and aspirations of contradictory forms of nonviolence which

emphasize pragmatism or rules, by orienting their common hope through the corporate

witness of a people.[179]

This unity includes a variety of approaches which, by themselves, do not *need*

Yoder's assumed presupposition of a "messianic community" or see social ontology as

intrinsic to nonviolence's logic to be coherent. In the same manner that nonviolent

"solidarity" in times of conscription could be envisioned without the presupposition of a

church to sustain it, so nonviolence need not for Yoder be necessarily eccelsiologically

oriented in order to be coherent, or theologically legitimate. Other forms of nonviolence

may be *incomplete* to be sure, but this is different than saying that they were *illegitimate*

as a response to war, in the way that just war and "blank check" approaches were judged.

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[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid., 143: "These various pacifism are sometimes compatible with one another, sometimes even mutually reinforcing (13-16; or 1-2, 4), and sometimes directly contradictory in their assumptions (4 versus 8-9, 16)."

[179] Ibid., 138: "One cannot avoid either messianism or the claim to chosen peoplehood by setting Jesus or his methods aside."

As we seen in part in *Nevertheless*, I will argue that *Politics* indicates that nonviolence bears witness to the creation of a "new humanity" preeminently. This explains why, then, other forms of nonviolence do not fall under the judgment that other approaches to war do; note that in *Nevertheless*, each form of nonviolence is discussed with a resounding "nevertheless" which sounds Yoder's approval, even if these forms of nonviolence do *not* find their final telos in the nonviolence of the "messianic community" or even require an ecclesiological framework.[180] It will be my contention, thus, that if nonviolence is that practice which 1) bears witness to the Jesus who overcomes the powers, and 2) is the practice by which the "new humanity" is identified, then nonviolence—in its manifold forms—is a proleptic sign for Yoder of the future "englobing" of all creation into the kingdom of Christ.[181]

Nonviolence and the Eschatological Signs of the Kingdom

With 1972's *The Politics of Jesus*, we see why Yoder was able to draw the conclusions in *Nevertheless* that he does; in *Politics*, we find that those who participate in the nonviolence which is seen in Jesus' life are are those whose lives bear witness to the eschatological truth of all created order. Prior to this work, Yoder had linked nonviolence to a social ontology present in the church. But in the discussion of other forms of nonviolence, we find Yoder arguing for nonviolence as bearing witness to a "new humanity" which is attested to, at least proleptically, beyond the "messianic

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[180] As I noted, a variety of the forms of nonviolence discussed in *Nevertheless* culminate in the nonviolence of the "messianic community". There are a variety of positions, however, which do not. After discussing each form, describing both their positive features and their drawbacks, Yoder concludes each chapter with a section entitled "Nevertheless", affirming each form of nonviolence, regardless of their coherence with the "messianic community".

[181] *Christian Witness*, 17.

community" of the church. In affirming these forms of nonviolence "nevertheless", and in affirming their completion in the "messianic community" pacifism, other forms of nonviolence are signs of what has come in fullness in the 'new humanity'.

As Yoder argued, in the final chapter of *Politics*, "The War of the Lamb", the "argument of the entire book" is drawn together. In other words, the practice of nonviolence makes sense of how Christians should think about social involvement and the meaning of Jesus for contemporary ethics are justified; if the nonviolence seen in the life of Jesus of Nazareth is not the "grain of the universe", the whole project of *Politics* is in question.[182] The difficulty with discussing nonviolence as the kind of practice which speaks of God's presence in history, Yoder argues, is that the temptation toward "effectiveness" is ever-present;[183] while there are many ways to resist war and violence without recourse to killing, the kind of nonviolence posited by Yoder as attesting to "the way God is" requires a renunciation of control and a willingness to dialogically approach one's enemy.

As Yoder argued in *Nevertheless*, not all varieties of nonviolence speak *in and of themselves* of God's presence or operate in this mode. But as I have argued, nonviolence is the indispensible prerequisite to naming 1) that which is a part of the "new aeon" is found and for 2) identifying the Jesus who establishes the new aeon and the church which is known as a part of that age. The consequence of this is that, while the church bears *explicit* witness in its nonviolence to the 'new humanity' made actual in Christ through Christ's own nonviolence, the naming of nonviolence as the sign of the true church

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[182] Yoder, *Politics* (1972), 233.

[183] Ibid., 236.

cannot be restricted to the *church*. Rather, nonviolence in its manifold forms is the

marker which reflects the ultimate logic of creation, suggesting a proleptic sign of the

'new humanity' apart from the church. I will now unpack this claim.

In the culminating chapter of *Politics*, Yoder addressed two variations on a

specifically Christian nonviolence, similar to the dialogical mode adopted in the previous

chapters of *Politics*. The first alternative to his form of nonviolence can be summed by

stating that 1) historical suffering can be remedied by appropriate force, meaning that 2)

violence is necessary. The second variation—closer to Yoder's position—is summed up

in stating that 1) historical suffering can be resolved apart from force, and consequently,

2) nonviolence is preferable to violence. Similar to his other dialogues around war,

Yoder offers an account of how Christian nonviolence completes the aspirations of both

positions.

The first assumption of both groups—that violence can "make history turn out

right"—is the most pressing of the objections; if this can be answered, then a

conversation can be had about the merits of nonviolence. [184] For Yoder, this objection is

answered by the eschatological vision of Revelation, which identifies the Lord of History

with the nonviolent Jesus of Nazareth; if the nonviolent God of the eschatological vision

of Revelation is a God who is concerned with our present history, nonviolence is both

normative and desirable, and the practices of chapters 9-11 of *Politics* become

possible.[185] Since the Lord of history is identified with the nonviolent Jesus, the first

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[184] Ibid., 236-237. Cf., 238: "If God is the kind of God-active-in-history of whom the Bible speaks, then concern for the course of history is itself not an illegitimate or an irrelevant concern."

[185] Ibid., "The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification of the use of violence and other kinds of powers in every human

objection is answered: history depends not on the immediate solving of violence, but on the Lord of history who has called for nonviolence.

As we have seen already, the practice of nonviolence is the practice around which Jesus' story retains coherence, and by which Jesus is identified as in the line of the Old Testament prophets. Again, Yoder identified this act as consistent with "divine love":

> The possibility that he might have guaranteed political efficacy and what some call "relevance" by undertaking a political alliance with the forces of the Zealots or with some other power group….The choice that he made in rejecting the crown and accepting the cross was the commitment to such a degree of faithfulness to the character of divine love that he was willing for its sake to sacrifice effectiveness.[186]

In other words, Jesus' *eschatological* victory—as seen in the last chapter of *Politics*—testifies to the validity of the nonviolent actions of Jesus *within* history—seen in the previous chapters of *Politics.* As such, nonviolence is not the last ethical option, but the very meaning of history: the one who was nonviolent in history is the one who rules over the powers of the world. Those who would follow Jesus—the witness to direction of human existence under God—must take up an ethic of nonviolence which finds its meaning as the ultimate truth of history.[187]

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conflict. The triumph of the right, although it is assured, is sure because of the power of the resurrection and not because of any calculation of causes and effects, nor because of the inherently greater strength of the good guys. The relationship between the obedience of God's people and the triumph of God's cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection."

[186] Ibid., 240.

[187] Ibid., 236-37. This is not to say that Yoder has an 'either/or' vision of Christ as either divine or human. But between 240-242, in his exploration of the manner in which Jesus is 'Lord' and 'equal with God', Yoder shies away from the language of 'essences' and 'substances'. As Yoder writes "what Jesus renounced was thus not simply the metaphysical status of sonship but rather the untrammeled sovereign exercise of power in the affairs of that humanity amid which he came to dwell" (242). I take the Christology of Yoder vis-à-vis the Chalcedonian orthodoxy to be an open question, and not the topic of direct exploration here. However, it is in keeping with his vision of Jesus in the earlier eleven chapters of the book to refer to the effects of Jesus' human nature, and not to explore Jesus in terms of subsistence or persons.

Having answered the first objection, Yoder can address the second position—that some nonviolence is better than violence. As we saw indicated in *Nevertheless*, the nonviolence of the "messianic community" draws other forms of nonviolence beyond themselves to their completion.[188] The nonviolence peculiar to Christians witnesses to otherwise equivocal practices of a new orientation which is only accessible in Jesus, the conqueror of history:

> What is usually called "Christian pacifism" is most adequately understood not on the level of means alone, as if the pacifist were making the claim that he can achieve what war promises to achieve, but do it just as well or even better without violence…That Christian pacifism which has a theological basis in the character of God and the work of Jesus Christ is one in which the calculating link between our obedience and ultimate efficacy has been broken, since triumph of God comes through resurrection and not through effective sovereignty or assured survival.[189]

It is at this point that the reader encounters the full meaning of nonviolence within history. As the practice which characterizes the life of God, and that practice which makes Jesus known as the true witness to God, nonviolence is also the capstone practice which renders visible a different way of existence which fulfills and orients the other practices of the church. Nonviolence retains its integrity "if Christ be who Christians claim him to be, the Master".[190]

But as "the revelation in the life of a real man of the very character of God", Jesus' nonviolence is not merely one church practice among others. Yoder wrote often

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[188] Ibid., 244: "Almost every other kind of ethical approach espoused by Christians, pacifist or otherwise, will continue to make sense to the non-Christian as well. Whether Jesus be the Christ or not, whether Jesus the Christ be Lord or not, whether this kind of religious language be meaningful or not, most types of ethical approach will keep on functioning just the same. For their true foundation is in some reading of the human situation or some ethical insight which is claimed to be generally accessible to all people of goodwill."

[189] Ibid., 246.

[190] Ibid., 244.

on the need for "binding/loosing" as central to how the community's own life bears witness to Jesus, but it is the act of nonviolence—the act which enables Jesus to make visible the "new humanity"—which will make possible other church practices, such as "binding/loosing", the *haustefeln*, and social reconciliation; if Jesus does not conquer the powers in a nonviolent fashion (chapter 8 of *Politics*), then discussing how the church lives in Jesus' wake (chapters 9-11 of *Politics*) is of little concern.

This is not to say that all nonviolence is the same; in the church, nonviolence is that practice on which all others ecclesial practices depend. As we saw with *Nevertheless*, not all nonviolence is a nonviolence which speaks of the life of Jesus; other forms of nonviolence must undergo the same kind of perfection that we saw with other practices in *Politics*:

> This [kind of nonviolence] is significantly different from that kind of "pacifism" which would say that it is wrong to kill but that with proper nonviolent techniques you can obtain without killing everything you really want or have a right to ask for. In this context it seems that sometimes the rejection of violence is offered only because it is a cheaper or less dangerous or more shrewd way to impose one's will upon someone else, a kind of coercion which is harder to resist. *Certainly any renunciation of violence is preferable to its acceptance*; but what Jesus renounced is not first of all violence, but rather the compulsiveness of purpose that leads the strong to violate the dignity of others.[191]

But, if the practice of nonviolence is, as I have described it, the practice which 1) narrates the true nature of the world, 2) undergirds the practices of the church, 3) describes of the social ontology made possible by Jesus, and 4) identifies Jesus as the true witness to God, the question must be pressed as to whether nonviolence plays the modest role that Yoder argued here. Looking back to the preface of the 1971 publication of *The*

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[191] Ibid., 243, emphasis added.

Original Revolution, nonviolence appears to be playing the theological governing role

which I am suggesting:

> There is a growing awareness in churches and seminaries that the problem of war
> is at the heart of much of the sickness of modern society, and a growing
> recognition that the traditional Christian approaches to this problem…are
> becoming increasingly inadequate as sources of moral guidance and are beginning
> to look as if they never were adequate…I have accepted the invitation to gather a
> body of essays which seek to restate in various moods and modes the conviction
> that the renunciation of violence is the key to the rest of the problems of Christian
> faithfulness and to the recovery of the evangelical and ecumenical integrity of the
> church in the age of the atom.[192]

In other words, for *Original Revolution*, nonviolence—that act which makes Jesus

known as Messiah—is that which undergirds the proper "moods and modes" of Christian

theology. And as Yoder has argued, the practice of nonviolence is not the exclusive

property of the church, but rather the practice which bears witness to the ultimate

direction of history. Given the strong role that nonviolence plays with regards to

revealing the direction of history, the identity of Jesus, and what churches are properly

identified with the 'new humanity'—coupled with the recognition that nonviolence can

be commendably practiced in other contexts—the question must be raised whether this

"new humanity" to which nonviolence bears witness can be logically restricted to the

church.

I am not suggesting that Yoder has no use for the church with regards to his

nonviolence. Rather, I am suggesting that Yoder's identification of nonviolence in such a

strong *revelatory* sense of both God's nature and the coming kingdom of God raises

questions of whether the church for Yoder can persist *without* nonviolence—or to put it

differently—if nonviolence can indicate the presence of the 'new humanity' apart from

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[192] Yoder, *Original Revolution*, 7-8.

the other church practices. The practices of the church facilitate witness to the world—in

many circumstances other than war, and in many ways and contexts—but without an

ecclesial commitment to nonviolence, can it be said that a church (for Yoder) is truly

witnessing to the presence of the 'new humanity'? Can it not be said, rather, that those

who practice nonviolence *apart from* the church would be witnesses to the churches?

Conclusion

Eschatologically, nonviolent witness stands for Yoder as the practice which

coheres to the "grain of the universe".[193] Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, other

forms of engagement with war are sought out, each of which bear what Yoder takes to be

a common core: nonviolence. As Yoder said in a 1970 sermon:

> The need of the world for…the news of the victory over death of Jesus the servant
> Messiah and the call to new life to which he resurrects those who forsake all to
> follow him in discipleship is greater than ever before. So while we discuss
> whether "nonviolence" or "nonresistance" is the right word for describing our
> reasons for not killing, a Southern Christian Leadership Council had to rise up in
> the 1960s to tell us the meaning of the cross for race relations. While we pacifists
> discussed whether it is our place to tell the government how to do its business,
> campuses had to rise in the 1970s to tell us how wrong was the war in Vietnam.[194]

On one level, this is certainly a practical move, in which Yoder shows the viability of a

nonviolent witness in multiple idioms. Theologically, much more is at stake. Because the

church exists dialogically with the world, as a means for the world under the sway of the

powers to receive orientation to its true end, seeking commonality among forms of

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[193] John Howard Yoder, "Armaments and Eschatology," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 1, no. 1
(1988): 58. This is a much later restatement by Yoder than the other materials under consideration in this
chapter, but expresses the claim well.

[194] "Your Hope is Too Small" (1970), in *He Came Preaching Peace*, (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press,
1985), 123-130 (129).

nonviolence was consistent with how Yoder envisioned the dialogue between Christian modes of practice and practices of "the world".[195]

Because the church exists as a consequence of the powers' nonviolent conquering by Jesus, the church is able to articulate Jesus' nonviolence as a faithful witness to fallen entities, in keeping with its description as a part of the "new humanity". But because a dialogical character is intrinsic to 'church', the distinction of 'church' from 'world' (as both exist in relation to Christ's work) is penultimate. The church can equally not disregard its commonalities with the world, in that through these avenues, the church recognizes that the "grain of the universe" is not simply the grain of the *church*.

This commitment leads Yoder to explore other forms of nonviolence, able to appreciate other forms of war resistance as deficient forms of nonviolence which, nonetheless, have nonviolence—the explicit mode of existence for both Jesus and the church's core practices—underlying them. As such, other forms of nonviolence can be appreciated and supported by the church as examples of God "giving good gifts", or as I suggest, a *sign* of "new humanity" beyond the church. Not all forms of nonviolence are equal for Yoder, and so, it would too much to claim that those who practice nonviolence *are* the 'new humanity. But to construe those engage in nonviolence as *signs* of this 'new humanity' is a fair statement, given the revelatory prominence of nonviolence in Yoder's work.

Are ecclesial and non-ecclesial nonviolence equivocal for Yoder? In one sense, no: Yoder's use of practices as opportunities to offer practices of the world their

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[195] This dialogue explains how Yoder himself is able to move from the traditional position of 'nonresistance', to advocating other forms of nonviolent activity, such as Gandhian forms of nonviolent resistance. References to Gandhi appear in *Nevertheless*, 52-53 (1971), but also appear in *The Original Revolution*, 85.

perfection suggests a flow of nonviolence from world to church, for the purposes of

transformation. But in another sense, yes: if both nonviolence of the world and church

are given their ultimate meaning by Christ—the Christ who rules over all history— then

they exist as a difference of *degree*, not *kind*. Since Yoder's death, much has been made

of how to read Yoder's legacy, with claims to his mantle made by those committed to

nonviolence as the central defining characteristic of the church, as well as by those who

argue that nonviolence remains secondary to a Christologically-ordered polity.[196]

While this debate may go on interminably, I would argue that both those who

view Yoder as advocating nonviolence as determining all other features of Christian

theology, and those who view Yoder as committed to a Christocentric ecclesiology with

nonviolence as its derivative are correct, and yet, both wrong. To the first, Yoder viewed

nonviolence as the center of the church's practice, as a leaven which gives orientation to

other practices of church life, such as communal discernment and binding/loosing. To the

latter, Jesus remains central for Yoder as the founder of "church", but nonviolence is the

means by which both the church is known to be a part of the "new humanity".

The effects of this on Yoder's ecclesiology are profound. Serious questions must

be cast upon the value of the other practices of the church. If nonviolence is that which

undergirds them and completes them, then all other church practices must be rethought in

this light. "Binding/loosing" cannot be simply a dialogical process of the church, but

truly a process of reconciliation; the Eucharist cannot be seen simply as the sacramental

presence of Christ, but as the communication of a *nonviolent* presence of God within

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[196] See J. Denny Weaver, "The John Howard Yoder Legacy: Wither the Second Generation?", *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 77 (2003), 451-471 for one schematic of this controversy.

history; baptism must be rethought as a renunciation of a life of violence and an embrace of a new life of dispossession.

The ecclesiological impacts of such a view of nonviolence extend to issues of church unity as well; ecumenism, the unity of the church, occurs on the basis of their common (if entirely unacknowledged by non-pacifist traditions) root: nonviolence is not only the heart of the church's practices, but the sign of the eschaton. While Yoder gains a conceptual unity among churches rooted in a common opposition to war, this approach alternately risks losing other practices which Yoder sees as facilitating the church's internal life (binding/loosing, confession, etc.).

The question begged in Yoder's account of nonviolence, ultimately, however, is whether nonviolence ultimately determines not only what the practices of the church are, but what the social existence given to the church by Christ consists of. While Yoder is careful to narrate nonviolence as the central witness to the Christian social existence, it is not clear to me that nonviolence does not ultimately render other considerations of ecclesiology superfluous, placing the weight of a church's identity as a community of the 'new humanity' on their ability to engage in nonviolence.

In turning now to Dorothy Day, we find one for whom nonviolence is one practice *among others* which bears witness to the social existence given in the church. Day's life, like Yoder's, is one characterized by dialogue with those outside the church. And yet, for Day, nonviolence—while ultimately consistent with the Mystical Body of Christ—is not the determinate factor for what the church is, or how to describe the church's social ontology. It is to Day's work that I now turn.

CHAPTER THREE

Dorothy Day: The Mystical Body, Nonviolence, and Reasoning within the Church

Introduction

In the work of Yoder, we find a nonviolence which bears witness to the 'new humanity', but which tends to minimize other aspects of the church by identifying nonviolence as "the grain of the universe", the practice which becomes determinant of a number of other theological loci. In the work of Dorothy Day, we find a second voice seeking to argue that nonviolence bears witness to a particular form of social existence located in the church, albeit in a distinctly different manner than Yoder. For Day, the humanity of Christ—which narrates all human existence—directs all humanity toward its fullness, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church; while Day argues that nonviolence is descriptive of the ethics of the "Mystical Body", it is not the *only* practice which bears witness to the church's social ontology.

While Day emphasized many of the same themes as Yoder, she worked within an American Catholic tradition largely ill-equipped to speak to the practice of Christian nonviolence at that time. For many years, the issue of Catholic participation in war in the 20th century was left unaddressed.[1] It is widely acknowledged that, in American Catholic

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[1]Historians such as Ronald Musto and Catholic peace movements such as the Catholic Peace Fellowship have attempted to ascertain an unbroken tradition of Catholic nonviolence. While there have certainly been Catholic witnesses from every generation arguing for Christian non-involvement in war, prior to "Pacem Dei Munus Pulcherrium*"* (1920) by Benedict XV (1914-1921) the question of war is rarely addressed in papal encyclicals in the 20th century.

life, it was the work and life of Dorothy Day which was a fundamental catalyst for making nonviolence a recognized option for Catholics.[2]

This chapter will proceed in three parts. Following the pattern of examination from the previous chapter, I will explore the way for Day that nonviolence bears witness to a particular form of social existence found in the church.[3] First, I will examine the ecclesiology of Day, showing that her participation in the church is the lens through which make her commitments to thinking about war and peace intelligible. Secondly, I will turn to her social ontology of the "Mystical Body of Christ", which speaks of the unity of all humanity in Christ, in contrast to the divisions created by war. For Day, the Mystical Body of Christ—the union of the church with Christ—necessitates nonviolence; if all people are one because of Christ's Body, then war is a rending of Christ's own body. I will then turn to how Day describes nonviolence, examining in particular how Day's articulation of nonviolence is worked out within the bounds of Catholic teaching. [4]

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[2] *The Challenge of Peace*: *God's Promise and Our Response*, A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (May 3, 1983): (117) "In the twentieth century, prescinding from the non-Christian witness of a Mahatma Gandhi and its worldwide impact, the nonviolent witness of such figures as Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King has had profound impact upon the life of the Church in the United States. The witness of numerous Christians who had preceded them over the centuries was affirmed in a remarkable way at the Second Vatican Council." It would seem that Day's witness to the Christian practice of nonviolence, stretching back to the 1930s, was validated at Vatican II, thirty years later. www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/TheChallengeofPeace.pdf, accessed 5/13/2011.

[3] Other studies have evaluated the impact of Day's nonviolence. Cf. Charles Chatfield, "The Catholic Worker in the United States Peace Tradition", in *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts (Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 1-13. For thorough expositions of radical Catholic social witness in the wake of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, see Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), and Patricia McNeal, *Harder than War: Catholic Peacemaking in Twentieth-Century America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

[4] This is not to say that Day learned of nonviolence through only Catholic sources. As Anne Klejment points out, in "The Radical Origins of Catholic Pacifism: Dorothy Day and the Lyrical Left During World War I", in *American Catholic Pacifism*, 15-32, Day's roots in the radical left during the First World War contributed to her initial critique of involvement in war. Additionally, her own appreciation for nonviolence stretched beyond Catholic sources to Marxist, Gandhian, and anarchist forms of nonviolence.

Ecclesiology: The Culmination of Natural Life

I am beginning with Day's ecclesiology for two reasons. First, for Day, any

account of the "Mystical Body" to which all persons are called cannot be articulated apart

from the Church, the Mystical Body made visible. For Day, the social ontology which

Christ creates is located in and through the worship of the Catholic Church. Secondly,

ecclesiastical teaching and disciplines form the way in which Day understands and

articulates nonviolence; to speak of nonviolence as a witness to the social existence found

in the Church means that nonviolence proceeds in the language of the Church. In sum,

apart from understanding how Day approaches the church, neither her social ontology nor

her nonviolence can be understood.

Day's ecclesiology remains an under-studied aspect of her thought, as most

studies focus on her "permanent dissatisfaction" with the institutional church.[5] This

picture is one-sided, neglecting Day's repeated affirmations of obedience to the church,

as well as the central role the institutional church played in the Catholic Worker

movement she co-founded with Peter Maurin.[6] Thomas Frary, naming her ecclesiology

as centered in an "intuitive understanding of the relationship of the Church to the world",

underscores how the institutions of the Church for Day cannot be understood apart from

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I will, however, that Day's appreciation of the limits of these critiques occurs with the limits of Catholic teaching, creating an ecclesial bracket for her thought on the ends and means of nonviolence.

[5] Cf. Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*, (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing House, 1989), 52ff. Day does call her stance one of "permanent dissatisfaction", in *The Long Loneliness*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 150, but Day brackets this protest against various failures of the church by emphasizing her love of the church, and Roman Guardini's statement that "the Church is the cross upon which Christ is crucified". Another way of saying this is that for all the church's failures, it does so as the body of Christ in the world, which cannot be dispensed with.

[6] Debra Campbell's "The Catholic Earth Mother: Dorothy Day and Women's Power in the Church", *Cross Currents* 34 (1984): 270-282 captures some of this dynamic of Day as "deeply traditionalist" and radical, but examines Day's ecclesiology only as it relates to her dealings with church authorities.

the "natural life" about which the Church claims to speak authoritatively.[7] As such, her ecclesiology encompassed not only her reflections on church disciplines and encyclicals, but how the teachings of the church are brought "to the masses", as the key to understanding war and other social problems.

This section will proceed in three parts. First, I will discuss the manner in which Day's conversion to Catholicism was the culmination of her "natural life"; as I will show, Day's developing understanding of involvement in social issues was framed by ecclesial doctrine and language from a very early age. Second, I will show how the Catholic Worker movement brought the concerns of "natural life" together with the institutions of the Church. Third, I will argue that this culmination of "natural life" by the Church provided Day with the resources through which to think theologically about the nature of war. In sum, Day's ecclesiology is an account of how "natural life"—including the desire to offer an alternative to war—culminate in belonging to the Church, the fullness of "natural life", and thus, the parameter within which one must think about war.

Like Yoder, Day is known in large part because of her nonviolence. But as with Yoder, nonviolence is a part of a larger picture; Day is not simply describing the conditions under which nonviolence can be acted, but how nonviolence flows out of a particular understanding of what humanity's telos is, where that telos can be found, and how then people are to live with one another in light of that end. As the telos of human existence is described by Day as the Catholic Church, I am beginning with Day's ecclesiology.

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[7] Thomas Frary, "The Ecclesiology of Dorothy Day", (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1972), 8. For Frary, this means that Day's ecclesiology was characterized by a tension between the spiritual and social dimensions of faith; the institutional church, according to Frary, was concerned primarily with the immaterial (spiritual), while Day longed for social involvement.

Day's involvement and incorporation in Christianity began long before her conversion to Catholicism. While Day was provided with no religious training by her parents and was not baptized as a child, Day came in contact with a Methodist family through whom Day was reintroduced to Scripture, Sunday school, hymns, and the liturgy; because of their influence she became "a regular churchgoer" following the family's move from to Oakland, California.[8] This early ecclesial identity was nurtured in a variety of contexts, with her family moving often; through these journeys, Day was exposed to Catholics and later to Episcopalians.[9] Her family's disinterest in religion, however, did not prevent Day from attending church, or from imbibing Christian teaching through reading Wesley, Thomas a Kempis, and the Scriptures.[10] Day's non-Christian parents allowed her to attend the local Episcopal church, where she was catechized and baptized.[11] For all of this, however, she describes this early exposure to Christianity in

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[8] Ibid., 9-23.

[9] Ibid., 26, 33-38. Neither William Miller's *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), nor Robert Coles' *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion* , make much of these experiences. Miller's 525 page biography devotes a single page to Day's early religious influences, and Coles none.

[10] Ibid., 36.

[11] Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness,* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981 (1952)), 28-29. It was among the Episcopalians that Day was exposed to the Psalms and liturgy, which became formative influences on Day's thinking, in combination with the literature which Frary and others have identified as formative for Day's vision. Cf. Frary 40-47. The most full treatment of the literary and intellectual sources Day refers to as formative for herself and for her vision of the Catholic Worker movement is *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins*, by Mark and Louise Zwick (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005).

ambiguous terms, saying that "in all the first years I remember nothing about God except that routine chapter and prayer in school which I did not feel".[12]

However, Day's early experiences in church life provided her with theological categories to frame her involvement with social issues, prior to her conversion to Catholicism.[13] Prior to her entrance into the university, for example, Day reflected theologically on the social conditions surrounding her. But the theological vision expressed by the lives of the saints and Scripture did not cohere with what she observed in the institutional church:[14]

> On the one hand there were the religious people I had come up against in church, and they were few I must admit…They had enough money so that they did not have to bother about the things of the world. There were also the worldlings, the tycoons, the people I read about who piled up fortunes…I did not know such people myself, but I knew the rich were smiled at and fawned upon by churchgoers. This is all that I could see…I did not see anyone taking off his coat and giving it to the poor. I didn't see anyone having a banquet and calling in the lame, the halt and the blind. And those who were doing it did not appeal to me.[15]

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[12] Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006 (1938)), 21. Day makes this statement despite acknowledging that, in reading Scripture as a child, "a new personality impressed itself on me…I knew almost immediately that I was discovering God" (20).

[13] June O'Connor, "Dorothy Day's Christian Conversion", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18 (1990): 159-180, has argued that Day's conversion to Catholicism was primarily an affective conversion, meaning by this that Day's conversion to Catholicism as documented in Day's *From Union Square to Rome* indicates a conversion of primal affections with which later cognitive content was provided. For O'Connor, Day's early feelings of love and solidarity provided the basis for her subsequent involvement with both the Socialists and later the Catholic Church. If O'Connor's account of Day's conversion were correct—that Day's conversion is an affective account overlaid with cognitive content—we would not find Day referring to Christian categories *prior* to her entrance into the Catholic church as an adult. O'Connor makes no mention of any of Day's early church experiences detailed in *The Long Loneliness*.

[14] *Long Loneliness*, 38-39: "I felt even at fifteen that God meant man to be happy, that He meant to provide him with what he needed to maintain life in order to be happy, and that we did not need to have quite so much destitution and misery as I saw all around…" Day's s turn toward radical social activism on behalf of the poor was due in no small part to the urban and working-class conditions of which Day was a part; this portion of her life has been well-documented, by Day and others. See Sandra Yocum Mize, "Dorothy Day's Apologia for Faith after Marx", *Horizons* 22 (1995), 198-213.

[15] *Long Loneliness*, 39.

What Day longed for was for "every home to be open to the lame, the halt and the blind…Only then did people really live, really love their brothers", though Day was at this point unsure where to find this love.[16] Though several years removed from her earlier years of church attendance and confirmation, her life was still influenced by these early voices of Christian instruction as illustrated by a letter from her teenage years:

> My ideas have changed about Sunday. I have learned that it is rather hypocritical to be so strict on Sunday and not on every other day of the week. Every day belongs to God and every day we are to serve Him doing His pleasure. And "as every good gift is prepared for them that love God", and moving pictures are a good thing…I can see nothing wrong in going to a show…[17]

Though Day, by the time she entered the university at 16, "no longer [felt it] necessary to go to church", having "distrusted all churches after reading the books of London and Sinclair", she found herself unable to escape the effects of her earlier Christian instruction. She remained drawn to the work of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, though her "faith had nothing in common with that of Christians around me." Despite Day's aversion to "religion, as it was practiced by those I encountered", the language of the Church continues to provide the categories by which Day articulated her commitments to the working class:[18]

> Christ no longer walked the streets of this world. He was two thousand years dead and new prophets had risen up in His place. I was in love with the masses. I do not remember that I was articulate or reasoned about this love, but it warmed my heart and filled it. It was those among the poor and the oppressed who were going to rise up, they were collectively the new Messiah, and they would release the captives.[19]

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 33. Robert Coles, in discussing this letter in *Dorothy Day*, 20ff, views this as a burgeoning idealism in Day rather than a continuation of her early catechetical experience.

[18] *Union Square*, 38, 41-42.

[19] Ibid., 51.

On the one side, Day saw a variety of social acts of charity done by Christians and non-Christians, acts which lacked explicit connection to the Church; on the other side lay the institutional aspects of the church (hymns, liturgy, sacraments, doctrine), but which for Day often lacked social outworking or social concern. [20]

This tension continued to vex Day. Following her time at the university, Day became deeply involved in various groups committed to social change.[21] It was during this time that the division between her early religious influences and her activism became the most pronounced; as Day would later reflect, what was exhibited in religion was "pie in the sky" as opposed to the Socialists' work against poverty and war.[22] Day was never a "card-carrying member" of these groups, but engaged in numerous strikes and protests on behalf of socialist causes, out of a belief that the varied groups, despite their conflicting social visions, were all working on behalf of the masses in some respect.[23] Coleman Fannin has helpfully characterized this as Day's "solidarity", that for Day, to be

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[20] The divide between the vibrancy of natural life and the aloof institutions of the Church is illustrated well by the distinction Day draws in her recollections of the loving Catholic, Episcopalian, and Methodist working-class families of her childhood on the one hand, and the anonymous, wealthy churchgoers on the other. Even in her account of her confirmation in the Episcopal church, Day provides no name or personal attributes of the priest, in contrast to the lavish detail given about her Methodist neighbor and family.

[21] The maturing Day spent 1914-1922 much time among Marxist and Socialist groups, first as a student member of a university Socialist club, and later as a staff writer for *The Call*, a Socialist newspaper based in the lower East Side of New York City, and later for *The Masses*, a similar publication. Cf., Miller, 31-86.

[22] Ibid., 35. "There was no attack on religion because people were generally indifferent to religion. They were neither hot nor cold. They were the tepid, the materialistic, who hoped that by Sunday churchgoing they would be taking care of the afterlife, if there were an afterlife. Meanwhile they would get everything they could in this", *Loneliness*, 63.

[23] As Day would describe her commitments, "I wavered between my allegiance to socialism, syndicalism (the I.W.W.s) and anarchism", *Loneliness,* 62. For Day's involvement with these various groups, see Miller, 62-75. Day's involvement with both anarchists and socialists during this period can be described as simply the result of an eager, but philosophically confused young adult. Day describes admiring both the I.W.W. and the anarchists during this time, in *Loneliness*, 67ff.

of the church was to be for the church's poor.[24] But as I have argued, this theological

framing, which Fannin identifies primarily appearing after her conversion, is present

prior to her conversion as well; for example, during a hunger strike which accompanied

Day's 1917 imprisonment—nearly ten years before her 1927 conversion to

Catholicism—Day turned to the Scriptures after only two days.[25] Upon Day's release,

she was "ashamed and again rejected religion that had helped me when I had been

brought to my knees by my suffering."[26]

   When we consider what connected Day's social involvement and her affinity for

Scripture and various Catholic authors, her later conversion to Catholicism becomes

intelligible: for Day, the writings of Christians immersed in the world were bringing

together two halves of the whole, articulating the natural love she felt for "the masses" in

supernatural terms. As she explains in *The Long Loneliness,* the Church was inseparable

from "the masses":

> Without even looking into the claims of the Catholic Church, I was willing to
> admit that for me she was the one true Church. She had come down through the
> centuries since the time of Peter, and far from being dead, she claimed and held
> the allegiance of the masses of people in all cities where I had lived. They poured
> in and out of her doors on Sundays and holy days, for novenas and missions.[27]

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[24] Coleman Fannin, "Solidarity, Compassion, Truth: The Pacifist Witness of Dorothy Day", (M.A. thesis, Baylor University, 2006), 19-21.

[25] *Loneliness*, 80-81. Day read from the Psalms: "The Lord hath done great things for us: we are become joyful. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as a stream in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. 126). Day writes, "I clung to the words of comfort in the Bible and as long as the light held out, I read and pondered."

[26] Ibid., 83. Day has no shortage of reasons for this view of Scripture as socially codifying: "Where were the saints to try to change the social order, not just to minister to the slaves but to do away with slavery? I read in the New Testament—'Servants be subject to your masters with all fear…'…Jesus said 'Blessed are the meek', but I could not be meek at the thought of injustice. I wanted a Lord who would scourge the money-changers out of the temple and I wanted to help all those who raised their hand against oppression" (45-46).

[27] Ibid., 139.

Day had her qualms with the issues of obedience and "an unthinking, unquestioning faith", but the connection between her love of the masses and the church to which those masses held to proved to be an unbreakable bond. Her colleagues and common-law husband could not understand Day's "sudden" conversion, but in one sense, this was a reconciling of the categories presented to Day in her childhood.

Prior to her conversion, Day had begun going to mass and praying on a regular basis.[28] This engagement with the liturgy was not for Day in competition with her social commitments, but was in fact the logical culmination of Day's natural loves. During her early period of social activism, Day had felt that "religion would only impede my work…I felt I must turn from it as from a drug."[29] But in her two subsequent autobiographies, Day remarked that her conversion was preceded by intense personal *happiness*, and her conversion is rather the culmination of that happiness.[30]

Day was not willfully ignoring the divide which baptism would bring. And yet, on the day of her baptism, Day stated that "I was a Catholic at last though at that moment I never felt less the joy and peace and consolation which I know from my own later experiences religion can bring."[31] The same love which drew Day to the poor, and into contact with lay Catholic voices, finds its culmination in the acceptance of institutional

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[28] *Union Square*, 125-127. One could argue *apologias* such *Union Square* or *Loneliness* as post-event nostalgia overlaying the circumstances surrounding her conversion, except that in noting these events, Day is drawing on her diaries from the period and not making retrospectively retelling the story.

[29] Day, *Loneliness,* 43. During these early years, Day wrote her first memoir, a controversial and thinly-veiled autobiographical volume named *The Eleventh Virgin* (New York: Boni Press, 1928). In the work, Day describes in lurid detail her early life, including her youthful affairs and an abortion.

[30]*Union Square*, 132-133. Following the birth of her daughter Therese in 1927, Day chose to have Therese baptized, much to the chagrin of Day's husband Forester.

[31] Ibid., 136: "I knew also the rending [baptism] would cause in human relations around me. I was to be torn and agonized again, I knew and I was all for putting off the hard day."

Christianity. Day put it most clearly in describing the coherence between the love of God

and her love of the masses:

> The problem is, how to love God? We are only too conscious of the hardness of
> our hearts, and in spite of all that religious writers tell us about *feeling* not being
> necessary, we do want to feel and so know that we love God…The final object of
> this love and gratitude was God. No human creature could receive or contain so
> vast a flood of love and joy as I often felt after the birth of my child. With this
> came the need to worship, to adore. I had heard many say that they wanted to
> worship God in their own way and did not need a Church in which to praise Him,
> nor a body of people with whom to associate themselves. But I did not agree to
> this. *My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up led me to want to
> associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God.*[32]

As Day argued, the love intrinsic to any work on behalf of the masses is the love

which finds its culmination in the love of God, spoken of by the liturgy and institutions of

the church. One could view Christianity and Marxism as totalizing and incompatible

visions, but Day saw Catholicism as the ultimate outworking of her earlier love of "the

masses" which was expressed in part through Marxism:

> As for those two other tenets to which the Communists subscribe, I still believe
> that our social order must be changed, that it is not right for property to be
> concentrated in the hands of the few… I still believe that revolution is inevitable,
> leaving out Divine Providence. But with the help of God and by resorting to His
> sacraments and accepting the leadership of Christ, I believe we can overcome
> revolution by a Christian revolution of our own, without the use of force.[33]

This last statement is intriguing, for two reasons. First, her assertion that a

Catholic revolution would be distinguished from a Communist one "without the use of

force" is not an alien one to the Christian tradition, but the description of Christianity as

being "without the use of force" is one which (as I will describe) was not widely held to

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[32] *Loneliness*, 139.

[33] Ibid., 149-150. Throughout her life, Day will view Communism and Catholic social teaching as
having some significant overlap in their visible goals. Cf., Day, "Our Brothers the Communists", *Selected
Writings*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 270-277. This view would put her at
odds with a good number of pacifists and Catholics, particularly when she applied this vision to the 1961
Cuban revolution. Cf., Day, "A Revolution Near Our Shores", *Selected Writings*, 298-311.

in her day. Secondly, this statement highlights that, for Day, the rejection of force is

inseparable from either the sacraments or the "leadership of Christ" found in the Church.

In other words, in the same way that "natural life" finds its culmination in the Church, so

nonviolence retains its most full meaning in light of the Christ of the Church.[34] For Day,

belonging to the institutional church was the "natural" outcome to seeking to be involved

in the world, such that the language and categories of the church were inseparable for her

from understanding of involvement in the world. We now turn to the Catholic Worker

movement Day helped found, in that the Catholic Worker was for Day an extension of

ecclesial life, her version of the "apostolate".[35]

The Catholic Worker and the Apostolate

After her introduction to Peter Maurin in 1932, Day established the first Catholic

Worker house, a setting which drew together the liturgy and institutions of the Church

with "the masses". Through Maurin, Day was introduced to not only the Catholic social

teachings in the papal encyclicals, but to the works of mercy, which reminded Day of acts

she had seen performed by the Communists in order to recruit others to their cause; for

Catholics, however, these acts were an overflow of charity, meant to orient the person's

loves and actions toward God.[36] The overall orientation of life in the first Catholic

Worker house sought to disseminate these works of mercy as a way of life, bringing the

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[34] These claims will be addressed more fully in a later section.

[35] "Apostolate" refers to lay members of the Catholic Church exercising their ministry in cooperation or conjunction with the Catholic Church. Day refers to her work regularly in these terms. Cf. Day, "On Pilgrimage", *The Catholic Worker (CW)*, May 1948. Unless indicated otherwise, all *Catholic Worker* articles were accessed from the Catholic Worker archives, at http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday, between 6/1/2010 and 5/13/2011.

[36] Cf. Day, "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy", *Selected Writings*, 98-99.

teachings of the Church to bear on "natural life". This is best summed up in Peter

Maurin's "easy essay", [37] entitled *Houses of Hospitality*:

> We need Houses of Hospitality/ to give to the rich/ the opportunity to serve the poor.
> We need Houses of Hospitality/ to bring the Bishops to the people/ and the people to the Bishops.
> We need Houses of Hospitality/ to bring back to institutions/ the technique of institutions.
> We need Houses of Hospitality/ to show what idealism looks like when it is practiced.
> We need Houses of Hospitality/ to bring Social Justice/ through Catholic Action/ exercised in Catholic Institutions.[38]

As Day outlined in her book on the structure of the Catholic Worker houses, "houses of

hospitality" were not simply places of practicing works of mercy and voluntary poverty.

Rather, they were to be—as Maurin envisioned them—places where the institutions of

the church and the masses could come together.[39] Instead of simply propagating "good

works", the Worker homes were designed to be a meeting ground between institutional

Catholicism and the world:

> This work of ours toward a new heaven and a new earth shows a correlation between the material and the spiritual, and, of course, recognizes the primacy of the spiritual. Food for the body is not enough. There must be food for the soul.[40]

Although the Catholic Worker houses emphasized Catholic social teaching and the works

of mercy, Day never saw these houses as "churches" but rather a part of the *apostolate*—

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[37] "Easy essays" is the term which Maurin used to describe his epigraphic teachings, which were printed first in the pages of the *Catholic Worker.*

[38] Dorothy Day, *House of Hospitality*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939), xiii.

[39] Ibid., xxxiv-xxxvi.

[40] Ibid.

an extension of the Church's ministry, not under the direct supervision of the Church, but an extension of it.[41]

To say that the Church is the framework within which Day began to articulate life in the world is *not* to say that this was an inhabitation of the liturgy of the Church which constricted Day, but rather one which she saw as allowing her freedom to improvise. This is most clearly by the way Day looked to the saints of the Church, seeing them as guides to help her navigate the institutions of a Church toward which she felt compelled, but with which she often was at odds for stances on poverty and war.

Day's use of Therese of Liseux serves as a poignant example here, a saint whom Day turned to throughout her life.[42] Instead of emphasizing Therese's obedience to her order or theology, for example, Day's description of Therese's life emphasized Therese's disciplined life, desire to aid the poor and clashes with Catholic authorities. Recounting Therese's visit to Pope Leo XIII to plead for her admittance to her order, Day notes that:

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[41] Cf., *House of Hospitality*, 225; Day, "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year", *The Catholic Worker* (CW), May 1947; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *The Catholic Worker*, May 1948. This is in keeping with Maurin's original vision which included, in addition to the works of mercy and the establishment of the houses of hospitality, "building up a lay apostolate through round table discussions for the clarification of thought", in "Letter to Our Readers", 1.

[42] This is most evident in Day's biography of Therese, *Therese: A Life of Therese of Lisieux* (Springfield, IL: Templeton Publishers, 1991 (1960). Day was introduced to Therese of Lisieux following her daughter's birth, and before Day's own conversion to Catholicism. The story of the "Little White Flower" would re-emerge through Day's early years culminating with Day's biography of a "saint for our day". Day notes that Therese of Lisieux came up at her confirmation, through her first confessor, and through two of her first mentors (vii-ix). In many ways, Therese's vision encompassed the personalist approach which Day saw as central for Christian faith and practice, but beyond this, Day found in Therese a theological mentor, one who had lived the life of supernatural recapitulation which Day was seeing as indispensible to any social program. As Day says, "As I understand her, Therese is teaching the necessity of loving God first, and then 'all these things shall be added unto you.' All these happy loves of earth, family, friends, husband children. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God all these things shall be added unto you'. This is blind faith, a naked faith in love"(87). For Day's use of Therese of Lisieux's story, see J. Leon Hooper, "Dorothy Day's Transposition of Therese's 'Little Way'", *Theological Studies* 63, no.1 (2002): 68-86, and Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt in "The Politics of the Little Way: Dorothy Day Reads Therese of Lisieux", in *American Catholic Traditions: Resources for Renewal*, ed. Sandra Yocum Mize and William Portier (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996) have both argued that Day's career can be seen as a recapitulation of Therese. Whether this claim holds or not, the overlap between Day's own autobiographies and her biography of Therese is substantial.

> [S]he had gone against Church and State, one might say, in disregarding the orders of the Vicar General. One might almost say that she had made a scene, that she had clung to the Holy Father, trying to force him to say yes to her request, so that it had taken two guards and Father Reverony himself to disengage her hands and lift her to her feet.[43]

Lest we think that Day's view of Therese is an aberration, her appeals to Francis of Assisi displayed the same tendency, emphasizing in Francis' case not his founding of an order, but his practical poverty and rejection of his military background.[44] As she noted in a 1975 article:

> We point out that one way not to have to pay income tax, so much of which goes to the military, into stockpiling, into sales of weapons to other countries, is to seek more ways of living a life of voluntary poverty, to follow our Lord Jesus and his loveable servant St. Francis.[45]

While Day remained fully committed to the authority of the Church as the culmination of natural life, the description of the Catholic Worker houses as *apostolates* of institutional Catholicism was complicated, in that Day refused to dictate policy for the houses which bore the name "Catholic Worker". Within the houses, instruction and formation took place as more of a round-table "clarification of thought" than strict catechesis, to use Peter Maurin's terminology; open discussions were hosted on various topics such as poverty, war, and Catholic social teaching, with members of the houses

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[43] Ibid., 119.

[44] "Francis and Ignatius", *CW,* Sept. 1956. Cf. "Poverty Is to Care And Not to Care", *The Catholic Worker,* April 1953; "Poverty and Precarity", *The Catholic Worker*, May 1952.

[45] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, October/November 1975. Francis became for Day not only a model of devotion and social action, but the grid through which she understood the enigmatic Peter Maurin. See Day, "The Story of Three Deaths—Peter Maurin, Lawrence Heaney, Willie Lurye", *CW*, June 1949, 1: "Peter was the poor man of his day. He was another St. Francis of modern times." Cf., Day, "Peter the Materialist", *The Catholic Worker*, September 1945. Similar use is made of Benedict of Nursia, for whom which Day praises not his founding of an order, but his communal life. Cf., Day, "Peter's Program", *CW*, May 1955; Day, "Catholic Worker Ideas on Hospitality", *CW*, May 1940; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *The Catholic Worker*, September 1970. Likewise, Catherine of Sienna is acclaimed for her social activities, rather than her well-documented mystical experiences. Cf. *Loaves and Fishes*, chapter 2.

engaging in lively discussion on the meaning of the central commitments of the Catholic Worker movement.

The only exception to this open process was Day's commitment to nonviolence, which she saw as normative for all of the houses.[46] From the start, Day saw the social teachings providing a range of acceptable practice, but nonviolence—the "revolution…without the use of force"—was a non-negotiable. But even on nonviolence, the pages of the *Catholic Worker* newsletter were rife with diverse approaches. The arguments for pacifism wrought by the anarchist Ammon Hennacy and by Day's confessor John Hugo, while both committed pacifists, exemplify widely divergent theological articulations of nonviolence.[47]

In the case of Hennacy, a frequent columnist on the pages of the *Catholic Worker*, this "clarification of thought" led to a departure from the Catholic Church, but for many others, conversion to Catholicism followed these discussions.[48] Day's comments about Hennacy's departure from the Church and the sacraments were characteristic of her thoughts on the mystery of how some were drawn to the Church and others not:

> I am not sure if Ammon knew what the sacraments were, or what they were all about, that they were channels of grace. If they had been explained I am sure he

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[46] Day's stance on nonviolence was normative for all houses, leading to a schism during the Second World War among the Catholic Worker houses. Cf., Francis J. Sicius, "Prophecy Faces Tradition: The Pacifist Debate During World War II", in *American Catholic Pacifism*, 66-76, and Angie O'Gorman and Patrick G. Coy, "Houses of Hospitality: A Pilgrimage into Nonviolence", in *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 239-271.

[47] Ben Peters, "Nature and Grace in the Theology of John Hugo", in *God, Grace, and Creation: College Theology Society Annual Volume* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 59-79, has described Hugo's work as an American example of the *nouvelle-theologie* approach, comparable to Henri de Lubac. Comparing Hugo to Hennacy, who advocated rebellion against the institutional church, highlights the "round-table" format which characterized not only Catholic Worker houses, but the *Catholic Worker* paper.

[48] For Ammon Hennacy's departure, see Day, "Ammon Hennacy: 'Non-Church' Christian", *CW*, February 1970.

would have considered that grace had already been poured out upon him abundantly in the sufferings he had endured in jail. God's ways are not our ways…But I must admit that Ammon was a great one to judge when it came to priests and bishops, and his words were coarse on many an occasion, so that it was hurtful to me to hear him, loving the Church as I do...But we cannot judge him, knowing so well his own strong and courageous will to fight the corruption of the world around him.[49]

Day consistently saw her work and the work of the Catholic Worker as an extension of the church into the world, cultivating the loves which are present in the world toward a perfection spoken of explicitly by Catholic institutional voices. But in Hennacy's departure from those sacraments, Day did not condemn him, but rather applauded his courage; Hennacy—though departing from the physical sign of his love's perfection—is quizzically described as a "non-Church Christian".[50] Given Day's long-professed love for the institutional Church, we now turn to explore the value Day saw in belonging to the institutional Church, in light of her affirmation of Hennacy's departure from it.

Institutional Catholicism: Frameworks and Authorities

One of the most difficult aspects of conversion for Day was her belief in the necessity of joining oneself to the visible, institutional church.[51] Here, I will explore why Day converted to Catholicism rather than taking Hennacy's road of "churchless Christianity". Day's adherence to Catholicism goes far beyond simply needing resources for nonviolence; in keeping with my thesis, however, I will be describing the manner in

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[49] Ibid., 8.

[50] By contrast, Day sees the materialism of the Communists prevented them from recognizing the telos of love beyond material ends. In writing to her "brother" Communist, Day writes, "And if you and I love our faulty fellow-human beings, how much more must God love us all?. . .You may say perhaps: "how do we know he does, if there is a He!" And I can only answer that we know it because He is here present with us today in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, that He never has left us, and that by daily going to Him for the gift of Himself as daily bread, I am convinced of that love", in *Union Square,* 167.

[51] *Union Square,* 159-163.

which belonging to the Church, as "Christ made visible", provides the bounds for her thinking of nonviolence.

For Day, the institutional and visible church normed Day's reflections on nonviolence, which I will describe in two steps. First, I will describe how obedience to the Church and its authorities was an essential first step for Day, insofar as one could only fully participate in Christ's work as one participated in the fullness of Christ made visible; it is only *because of* adherence to the Church that she hoped to bear witness to a different way of thinking about Catholic involvement in war. Secondly, I will describe the way Day engaged the encyclical tradition of the Church on war, which she often interpreted in ways contrasting that of Catholic authorities. This point will be more fully developed in a later section, but will illustrate how Day's adherence to the visible church enabled her to work from within its traditions and resources.

Obedience to the church, dissent in war. Undergirding Day's acts of theological reasoning was a constant connection to the institutions of the Church, particularly Mass and prayers.[52] Similarly, Day saw the need to be under the guidance of a number of confessors, so that the fledgling Catholic could be guided into the fullness of Catholic life.[53] Ultimately, this would lead Day to become a Benedictine oblate in the early 1940s, a commitment which would arguably shape her understanding of the Catholic Worker

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[52] Day, "The Scandal of the Works of Mercy", *Commonweal*, 4 November, 1949, 99-102.

[53] Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 367ff. John Hugo would become the most influential of these confessors, leading several retreats which would help form Dorothy Day's vision of the supernatural culmination of the natural. Day would call this encounter with Hugo's retreats "a second conversion", in William Miller, *All is Grace: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1987), 58ff. I am indebted to Ben Peters for pointing this out to me.

houses.[54] Belonging to the institutional church was for Day not out of love of the

institution as such, but the culmination of the love Day had for God and for the "masses":

> It was all very well to love God in His works, in the beauty of His creation which was crowned for me by the birth of my child…The final object of this love was God…With this came the need to worship, to adore. I had heard many say that they wanted to worship God in their own way and did not need a Church in which to praise Him, nor a body of people with whom to associate themselves. But I did not agree to this. My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God.[55]

Moving in this direction meant for Day accepting the guidance of Christ's visible body—

the Church.[56] To have the Christ who was loved by the masses and by whom Day's

natural loves were completed, Day would have to have the visible body of Christ as well:

> Romano Guardini said the Church is the Cross on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from His Cross, and one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church.[57]

Because of her love of the Christ present in the Mass, Day learned to love Christ's

Church, through the discipline of obedience.[58] In obedience, one's conscience was

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[54] As Brigid O'Shea Merriman has shown, Day's movement toward becoming a Benedictine oblate provides a hermeneutical lens by which to understand Day's commitment to institutional Catholicism in *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 73-74, 100ff. Between Maurin's teaching and Day's exposure to Benedictine publications and priests, the influence on Day's earliest articulations of the Catholic Worker houses as "houses of hospitality" is evident.

[55] *Long Loneliness,* 139.

[56] Ibid., "What if they were compelled to come in by the law of the Church, which said they were guilty of mortal sin if they did not go to Mass every Sunday? They obeyed that law….They accepted the Church. It may have been an unthinking, unquestioning faith, and yet the chance certainly came, again and again, "Do I prefer the Church to my own will"…And the choice was the Church."

[57] Ibid., 150, from Romano Guardini, *The Church and the Catholic*, trans. Ada Lane. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1935), 55.

[58] Day would grow in time to love the Eucharist, knowing it as Christ made visible. Cf., Day, "Bread for the Hungry", *CW*, September 1976.

formed rightly, away from transient desires and toward God, making oneself available to

God as a part of the visible body of Christ:[59]

> Faith is required when we speak of obedience, faith in a God to whom we owe
> obedience for the very reason that we have been endowed with freedom to obey
> or disobey. Love, Beauty, Truth, all the attributes of God which we see reflected
> about us in creatures…fill our hearts with such wonder and gratitude that we
> cannot help but obey and worship.[60]

Such obedience, Day reasoned, has a leavening effect on the Church at large; as the laity

modeled obedience to God, the hierarchy would better understand the Church's true

mission.[61] Taking as her model Pope John XXIII, described as one who "flouted

conventions which had hardened into laws as to what a pope could or could not do", Day

marveled at the way "the whole Church is enkindled", and sought to follow the example

of a Pope who visited prisoners and encouraged clergy to move into the world.[62]

Because obedience belongs ultimately to God in Christ, and derivatively to the

Church, we can see the tension in Day's position: the institutional Church is that place

where Christ is spoken of, and Eucharist—Christ made visible—is celebrated.[63] As such,

Day responded to Christ in faith, by obeying Christ's church. But this is not to say that

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[59] Day, "Holy Obedience", in *Selected Writings*. 168. Originally in *Ave Maria*, 17 December,
1966, 20-23: "I was tired of following the devices and desires of my own heart, of doing what I wanted to
do, what my desires told me I wanted to do, which always seemed to lead me astray….Obedient to my
conscience, I became a Catholic…" As I will describe, however, Day's conscience led her in directions
which—while not directly contradicting the teachings of the Church—certainly stretched the boundaries of
the teaching.

[60] Ibid., 171.

[61] Ibid., 169. Day recounts how the bishop of Kansas City had told Peter Maurin "You lead the
way, and we [the bishops] will follow."

[62] Ibid., 171.

[63] On the coinherence of individual conscience and the teachings of the Catholic Church, cf.
Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes,* 14: "However in forming
their consciences the faithful must pay careful attention to the holy and certain teaching of the church. For
the Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth."

the Church's authority was absolute; as we will see in Day's reading of the encyclical

tradition, the authority of the encyclicals, particularly on the issue of war, are read

dialogically. In contrast with Yoder, whose reading nonviolence as intrinsic to a proper

ecclesiology eliminated certain theological conversation partners, Day—by not stating

that the true Church must be nonviolent—was able to draw from a wide range of

Christian voices to articulate her nonviolence.

One of the best examples for this dialogical dynamic is seen in Day's conflicts

with the hierarchy over the Vietnam War. Day regularly sided with what she perceived as

the true meaning of the papal teachings, over against the bishops, as seen in Day's

conflicts with Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop over New York.[64] Spellman, as the

chaplain to the Armed Forces, visited the military overseas during conflicts in Korea and

Vietnam, and was not in favor of the Catholic Worker's adamant pacifism.[65] Day noted

on several occasions, that she would cease her writings on war, if asked by the Cardinal

to, but never expected him to do so. Nevertheless, Day felt no fear of criticizing

Spellman for his involvement with the military:

> I have often thought it a brave thing to do, these Christmas visits of Cardinal
> Spellman to the American troops all over the world, Europe, Korea, Vietnam. But
> oh, God, what are all these Americans, so-called Christians, doing all over the
> world so far from our own shores? But what words are those he spoke—going
> against even the Pope, calling for victory, total victory? Words are as strong and
> powerful as bombs, as napalm.[66]

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[64] Francis Joseph Cardinal Spellman was the Archbishop of New York from 1939-1967, as well as the chaplain of the military during that time. On Spellman, cf. John Cooney, *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis Cardinal Spellman*, (New York: New York Times Books, 1984).

[65] Spellman, an attendee of Vatican II opposed the inclusion of pacifism in the wording of *Gaudium et Spes*, in Eileen Egan,"The Struggle of Pax", in *American Catholic Pacifism*, 136.

[66] Day, "In Peace is My Bitterness Most Bitter", in *Selected Writings*, 338. Originally in *CW*, January 1967.

Note that, in her criticism of Spellman, Day expressed admiration for Spellman's bravery in visiting the troops. In keeping with her vision of church authorities as being voices among other voices, she was able to express charity for Spellman as one of Christ's body equally subject to Christ's commands:

> [A]s to the Church, where else shall we go, except to the Bride of Christ, one flesh with Christ? Though she is a harlot at times, she is our mother…Since there is no time with God, we are all one, all one body, Chinese Russians, Vietnamese, and He has commanded us to love one another.[67]

Day's ecclesiology is fraught with this tension between natural life which is in need of reformation, and a Church which witnessed to life's telos, but which—in her estimation—failed to grasp the revolutionary meaning of its own teachings. I will now briefly explore how Day's adherence to the Catholic Church—despite its teachings on war—afforded Day the ability to reason within its teachings.

Interpreting the encyclical tradition on war. Peter Maurin famously referred to the Catholic social teachings as the "dynamite within the church", that the teachings would inevitably result in a radically Christian social stance rather than a social stance which was simply a mirror of socialism or nationalist militarism.[68] Beginning in 1934, Day takes the encyclicals as one of her key sources for articulating a Catholic response to war[69]; for the next forty years, she continuously turned to the encyclical tradition for

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[67] Ibid., 339.

[68] Peter Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism* (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1949), 3. Cf. William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 247-249. For Maurin's background prior to moving to New York, see Day, *Peter Maurin*, 1-27. Day's reading of papal encyclicals against the background of Vietnam will be discussed in the section concerning Day's nonviolence.

[69] This is not to say, as I have noted earlier, that other sources and saints do not provide intellectual backing for day's work. Rather, I want to suggest in this section that Day's use of the encyclicals provides a way into understanding her relationship with Catholic authorities. For one of the earliest examples, see "Day With An End", *The Catholic Worker*, April 1934, in which Day recounts a

guidance on war and peace.[70] In a later section, I will explore this process more fully, but

for now, a few early examples of this process in Day's writings are necessary to continue

to show how Day's commitment to the Church enabled her to articulate an alternate

understanding of war.

Day's interpretation of encyclicals from before the Vietnam War did not always

agree with the application of the bishops. During the Second World War, for example,

Day cites Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Nova Impendet* in her article defending nonviolence

during a time of conscription:

> In various issues of the *Catholic Worker*, we have reaffirmed this stand. We have
> quoted the Pope on the "fallacy of an armed peace." We have quoted Pope Pius
> XI, who urged the press and the pulpit to oppose increased armaments (adding
> sadly, "and up to this time our voice has not been heard").[71]

Quoting Pius XI alongside other sources, Day applies the words of Pius XI to justify the

Catholic Worker's continued defense of pacifism. The encyclical which Day cites,

however, does not refer to nonviolence as such, but refers to the "fallacy of an armed

peace" that diverts money from other more immediate public needs. [72] By contrast, the

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discussion of *Quardragesimo Anno* as offering a counter to Franklin D. Roosevelt's state-sponsored National Recovery Act (N.R.A.).

[70] Day's use of the encyclical tradition in thinking about war and nonviolence will be addressed in a subsequent section. For Day's use of the encyclical tradition in reasoning about war and peace, cf. "Wars Are Caused by Man's Loss of Faith in Man", *CW*, September 1940; "Day After Day", *CW*, December 1942; "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year, *CW*, May 1947; "The Pope and Peace", *CW*, February 1954; "The Pope is Dead. Long Live the Pope/Viva John XXIII", *CW*, November 1958; "On Pilgrimage", *CW,* June 1963; "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, June 1966. During the 1960s, Day's use of the encyclical tradition to address war increases dramatically; prior to this time, her use of the encyclicals focus primarily on their teachings on poverty and property, as this was the focus of the papal encyclicals during this time, with a few notable exceptions such as Pius XI's *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio*, (23 December, 1922), and Pius XII's *Optatissima Pax* (18 December, 1947),.*Mirabile Illud* (6 December, 1950), and *Laetamur Admodum* (1 November, 1956).

[71] Day, "Our Stand", *CW*, June 1940. Cf., Day, *House of Hospitality*, 257.

[72] *Nova Impendent* (10 February, 1931), 8, Pope Pius XI: "As an effect of rivalry between peoples there is an insensate competition in armaments which, in its turn, becomes the cause of enormous

National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC), the precursor to the National Council of

Catholic Bishops (NCCB), was particularly active in its opposition to totalitarian

regimes, with wars an occasionally tragic necessity in support of healthy political life. [73]

 Encyclicals such as *Divini Redemptoris* and *Nova Impendet* couched their

approach to armed conflict within this concern for right social order. As *Divini*

Redemptoris states:

> But charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into constant account.
> The Apostle teaches that "he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" and
> he gives the reason: "For, *Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill,*
> *Thou shalt not steal . . .* if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in
> this word: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*[74]

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expenditure, diverting large sums of money from the public welfare; and this makes the present crisis more acute. Therefore, we cannot refrain from renewing and from making Our own the solemn warnings of Our predecessor…which have, alas! not been heeded…". Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_02101931_nova-impendet_en.html, accessed May 27, 2010. During World War II, there were a number of American Catholic conscientious objectors opposed to involvement in wars of any kind, but this position was yet to become an officially recognized one for Catholics. For the Catholic conscientious objection during World War II, see Gordon Zahn, *War, Conscience and Dissent*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967), as well as his *Another Part of the War: The Camp Simon Story* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1979). During the Second World War, neutrality was the preferred position in papal writings, but as Peter C. Kent has argued, this is not to say that the Vatican was without its preference for the democratic Allies, whose politics presented themselves as most conducive to the promotion of religion within public life, in Peter C. Kent, "The War Aims of the Papacy", in *FDR, The Vatican, and The Roman Catholic Church in America , 1933-1945*, ed. David B. Woolner and Richard G. Kurial (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 163-165. On the conflicts Catholics felt between their American and Catholic commitments, see George Q. Flynn, *Roosevelt and Romanism: Catholics and American Diplomacy* 1937-1945 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 189-197, and John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003).

 [73] One of Pius XI's overriding concerns was with the development of strong intermediary associations which would promote natural relations, such as guilds, families, and social associations. On this concern in the American context, cf. Michael Warner, *Changing Witness: Catholic Bishops and Public Policy*, *1917-1994* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 37-46, 52-54. One of Pius XI's overriding concerns was with the development of strong intermediary associations which would promote natural relations, such as guilds, families, and social associations.

 [74] *Divini Redemptoris* (19 March, 1937), 49. Accessed at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19031937_divini-redemptoris_en.html, May 27, 2010.

While *Divini* and *Nova* found application by the American bishops in their economic teachings, the papal encyclicals' words on the horrors of war were tantamount to a *rejection* of war for Day.[75]

Are we to thus take Day's argument for nonviolence from the encyclicals as selective readings of the encyclicals' meaning and authority? Rather, Day used the papal witness as one voice among others within the church. Alongside her citations of Leo XI and Leo XII, Day regularly cited the witness of the saints, Scripture, and other Catholic authorities. In keeping with her commitment to "the masses" and "clarification of thought" as opposed to catechesis, it is not surprising that papal writings are viewed as part of a "larger cloud of witnesses".[76] But while the encyclicals do not have the final word, the encyclicals functioned as theological markers within which Day's reasoning about war operated; her use of the encyclicals never contradicted them, in other words, even while her exegesis of the encyclicals drew out an implicit affirmation of nonviolence where there was not an explicit condemnation of nonviolence.

Two observations concerning Day's ecclesiology must be made before moving forward. First, ecclesiality is not a superstructure built *over against* natural life, but rather, the life of worship is characterized as the direction toward which our natural life is oriented.[77] For Day, the worship of God is not a denial of natural life, but a reorientation

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[75] For Day's use of these encyclicals, cf., "The Church and Work", *CW*, September 1946; "Days With An End", *CW*, April 1934; "On Distributism: Answer to John Cort", *CW*, December 1948. Kent notes that in 1939, *Summi Pontificatus* rearticulated Pius XII's concern for justice, which though coming through "the demons of violence", should ultimately be pursued assuming Divine Law was guiding civil authorities. Kent takes this to assume tactit papal support for the Allied forces during the Second World War (166).

[76] Hebrews 12:1

[77] As Day put it, "The Liturgy, then, is common worship, concorporate worship, worship in one mind and with one heart, and with one mouth. Our common action in the Sacrifice of the Mass, impersonal,

and fulfillment of it. Only by affirming this could Day see adherence to the Church and her desire to resist war as part of the same commitment. Second, the institutions of the Church do not give church authorities authority over against laity; fundamental obedience is to God, and derivatively to the Church. As such, church authorities such as bishops and popes are bearers of the church's traditions, but not the sole interpreters with regards to war.

With this understanding of Day's ecclesiology, we are now in position to examine more fully Day's social ontology, which she describes as the "Mystical Body of Christ". Because all humanity for Day is meant for inclusion in the Mystical Body of Christ, the church is necessarily united to the world, in that Christ's Mystical Body describes the telos of all people prior to their inclusion within the Church. Day's articulation of this Catholic doctrine stretched beyond the encyclical articulation of the doctrine. Specifically, Day's understanding of the "Mystical Body" provides the basis for her thinking about war and nonviolence, and how war is a rending of Christ's body.

Social Ontology: The Mystical Body of Christ, Present and Potential

In this section, I will explore Day's social ontology, the "Mystical Body of Christ", which not only provides the backdrop against which to view her arguments for nonviolence, but is what she understands to be the heart of the Church's relation to the world. The reason that Day is able to articulate ecclesiology as intimately related to "natural life" stems from her understanding of the "Mystical Body of Christ", which encompasses all humanity, either in actuality or potentially; all people have been taken up

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anti-individualistic is the best weapon against the world", in "Liturgy and Sociology", *CW*, December 1935.

by Christ's humanity, and are called to receive their fullness in the visible body of Christ, the Church. This Christological unity among all humanity is also the backbone of Day's nonviolence, such that for Day, to belong to the "Mystical Body" means also to be open toward nonviolence as the telos of one's belonging to Christ.

Discussion of the social ontology of the Mystical Body of Christ in Day's theology will occur in two main parts. First, I will briefly describe the meaning of the "Mystical Body of Christ" in the encyclical tradition of the early 20th century. Secondly, I will describe Day's use of the term in ways which expand beyond the traditional use of the doctrine, commenting on the impact of this doctrine on her ecclesiology and writings on nonviolence.

For Day, the humanity of Christ, which all humanity participates in through the Mystical Body of Christ, draws all people toward the Church and to the Eucharist which communicates Christ's own body. While both Yoder and Day emphasize that the social existence of the church is what all people are called toward, Day does not emphasize that this social ontology is *necessarily* pacifist, as Yoder did. Rather, Day will argue that the "Mystical Body" is known *derivatively* as nonviolent, but primarily as the description of the unity of all people in Christ's humanity.

The Mystical Body of Christ within Twentieth Century Catholic Theology

Before we approach Day's understanding of the Mystical Body, and its centrality for her nonviolence, I must briefly sketch out the doctrine, as promulgated in Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis Christi*, the major 20th century articulation of the doctrine. The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ (*corpus mysticum*) has a long and involved history of interpretation, but in short, refers to how Christ is present in the world today in "bodily

form".[78] In pre-20th century formulations, the Mystical Body of Christ refers to three

interlocking "bodies": the physical body of Christ, the gathered body of the people of the

church, and the Eucharist. The resurrected body of Christ continues in the present day

through its corresponding present-day "bodies": the gathered people of the church

celebrating Christ, and the Eucharist.[79] Pius XII's encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi*

steps into this tradition to articulate how the Mystical Body of Christ "is the Church", a

"society… [which] resembles its divine Founder".[80]

For Pius XII, the union between the gathered body of Christ and the historical

Christ was inconceivable apart from the juridical structures of the Church which facilitate

that union.[81] Mystical Body ecclesiology, revived in part through the writings of

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[78] Day most likely encountered the doctrine in the Baltimore Catechism and through Peter Maurin,
over ten years before the doctrine's most explicit teaching. For overviews of this ecclesiological history,
see Bernard P. Prusak, *The Church Unfinished: Ecclesiology through the Centuries* (Mahaw, NJ: Paulist
Press, 2004), 148-169, 230-242, 279-286. Cf. J.-M.-R. Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the
Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion*, transl. Madeliene Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical
Press, 2001); Robert S. Pelton, ed, *The Church as the Body of Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre
Dame Press, 1963). For major medieval shifts in this doctrine, see Henri Cardinal de Lubac, SJ, *Corpus
Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, transl. Gemma Simmonds CJ with Richard
Prace and Christopher Stephens (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), and Ernest
Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton
University Publishing, 1957).

[79] De Lubac, *Corpus*, 4-7 demonstrates the manner in which these "bodies" are connected
determines in large part what is understood to be the role of the gathered people. The full theological and
political history is complex and beyond the scope of this discussion. Cf., De Lubac, *Corpus*, 34-39, 269-
275, and William Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*, (Malden,
MA:Wiley-Blackwell, 1998), 210-221.

[80] *Mystici Corporis Christi,* (29 June, 1943) 1, 3. Viewed at
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xii/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_29061943_mystici-
corporis-christi_en.html, visited 7/27/10. All citations from *Mystici Corporis Christi* will be from the
Vatican translation. In the wake of the ecclesiology put forth in the First Vatican Council, there was
concern that ecclesiology had been too strictly defined in terms of its hierarchical institutions, neglecting
the laity. Cf. Richard McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: HarperOne
Publishers, 2008), 122-123.

[81] *Mystici*, 9: "For while there still survives a false rationalism, which ridicules anything that
transcends and defies the power of human genius, and which is accompanied by a cognate error, the so-
called popular naturalism, which sees and wills to see in the Church nothing but a juridical and social
union, there is on the other hand a false mysticism creeping in, which, in its attempt to eliminate the

theologian Emile Mersch, had stressed the spiritual aspects of this union between Christ and the members of the church.[82] As Pius argued, "ineffable flow of graces" was willed by Christ to come the Church "only through a visible Church made up of men"[83]; the logic of 'body', however, implies an institutional visibility of that body which visibly orders its parts, with laity and hierarchy functioning together in defined orders.[84] What facilitates any 'mystical' bond between believers is their belonging to the visible body of Christ, namely, the church as seen in its juridical and institutional aspects. In the Second World War, the unity of the visible Church was complicated by divided governments, for though the work of Christ secures the juridical structures of the Church in all places, political divisions among nations in which the Church was located threatened to compromise this unity.[85]

William Cavanaugh has argued that Pius' work, by emphasizing the juridical nature of the Church, traded in a visible, transpolitical unity for an invisible,

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immovable frontier that separates creatures from their Creator, falsifies the Sacred Scriptures." In the wake of the First Vatican Council, there was concern that ecclesiology had been too strictly defined in terms of its hierarchical institutions, neglecting the laity. Cf. Richard McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism*, (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 2008), 122-123.

[82] Cf. Emile Mersch, *The Whole Christ*, transl. John R. Kelly (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1938). The great irony of Mersch's role in the revival of Mystical Body ecclesiology is that *Mystici Corporis Christi* (published three years after Mersch's death) emphasizes the institutional dimensions of ecclesiology which Mersch himself downplays. Cf. Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit-Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 51-54.

[83] *Mystici*, 12.

[84] Ibid., 17. The Eucharist, according to the encyclical, is not the "Mystical Body" proper, but that by which "the faithful are nourished and strengthened…and by a divine, ineffable bond are united with each other and with the Divine Head of the whole Body" (19).

[85] Ibid., 31: "For both the juridical mission of the Church, and the power to govern and administer the Sacraments derive their supernatural efficacy and force for the building up of the Body of Christ from the fact that Jesus Christ…opened up to His Church the fountain of those divine gifts, which prevent her from ever teaching false doctrine and enable her to rule them for the salvation of their souls through divinely enlightened pastors and to bestow on them an abundance of heavenly graces."

supratemporal unity which could be achieved in a world divided by war.[86] Placing Pius

XII in line with Jacques Maritain and others of the "New Christendom" school, who

perceived the spiritual and temporal worlds to be on "two planes", Cavanaugh charges

Pius XII with abandoning a visible stance within the world on political issues by

retreating into a supratemporal plane.[87] In fact, *Mystici* goes to great lengths to argue that

it is *through* the juridical nature of the church that the Church is able to be a visible and

unified political body.[88] The unity of the "social body" of Christ is visible "through their

profession of the same faith and their sharing the same sacred rites, through participation

in the same Sacrifice, and practical observance of the same laws", accompanied by the

faith, hope, and love of its members.[89]

For *Mystici*, the grace of Christ, available through the visible Church, means that

the Mystical Body of Christ is a visible body.[90] This body is made present through the

Sacraments, and through the juridical structures of the Church.[91] Thus, the gathered and

visible community, which is united in the Vicar of Christ, the pope, is the circumscribed

limits of the Mystical Body.[92] But in establishing the "Mystical Body of Christ" as

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[86] Cavanaugh, *Torture*, 211.

[87] Ibid., 191-194.

[88] *Mystici*, 53. Cf. 63-65: "The work of the Church, to "perpetuate on earth the saving work of Redemption", is "far superior all other human societies…surpass[ing] them as grace surpasses nature, as things immortal are above all those that perish"

[89] Ibid., 69-70.

[90] Ibid., 12-14.

[91] Ibid., 17-19. Cf., 31: "For both the juridical mission of the Church, and the power to teach, govern and administer the Sacraments, derive their supernatural efficacy and force for the building up of the Body of Christ from the fact that Jesus Christ, hanging on the Cross, opened up to His Church the fountain of those divine gifts…"

[92] Ibid., 34, 40.

neither completely ephemeral nor merely the juridical features of the Church, *Mystici Corporis* had the dual effect of re-emphasizing the juridical aspects of the Church as necessary to preserving the church's unity and establishing "the body of Christ" as an exclusively Roman Catholic liturgical body. It is my contention that Day's usage of the doctrine of the "Mystical Body" both works within the parameters of *Mystici Corporis Christi*, while at the same time, expands the encyclical's teaching, expansions which will be pivotal for her articulation of the nature of war. It is to Day's use of this doctrine that I now turn.

The Mystical Body and the Unity of Humanity: Day's Usage of "Mystical Body"

Day's introduction to the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ occurred shortly after her 1927 conversion to Catholicism, and as Roger Statnick has rightly observed, became foundational to her theology.[93] Her earliest writings in the *Catholic Worker* contain no overt reference to the "Mystical Body" as such, emphasizing instead Jesus' identification with human suffering instead.[94] But by 1935, the connection between the suffering state of humanity and the Mystical Body of Christ has been made:

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[93] Roger A. Statnick, "Dorothy Day's Religious Conversion: A Study in Biographical Theology", (Ph.D. diss, University of Notre Dame, 1983), 311. The sources for Day's understanding of the doctrine of the Mystical Body are in all likelihood beyond reconstruction; the doctrine appears in the Baltimore Catechism which was a part of Day's formation, and Day recounts being given literature by a number of Catholic mentors during the time leading up to her conversion but prior to her meeting Peter Maurin. We can say with certainty, however, that Day did not know of the doctrine prior to her own conversion. Cf. *Union Square*, 142: "Teresa was baptized, she had become a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. I didn't know anything of the Mystical Body or I might have felt disturbed at being separated from her."

[94] Day, "Co-operative Apartment for Unemployed Women Has Its Start in Parish", *CW*, December 1933: "However, we hug to ourselves the assurance that "all these things" such as blankets "will be added unto us," so we are not dismayed. Come to think of it, there are two rugs on *The Catholic Worker* floor, which, if energetically beaten out, will serve as covers. Christ's first bed was of straw." Cf., Day, "Catholic Worker Program", *CW*, December 1933: "There was social justice in the demands made by the Communists--they were the poor, the unemployed, the homeless. They were among the ones Christ was thinking of when he said, "Feed my Sheep." And the Church had food for them, that I knew."

It is because we forget the Humanity of Christ (present with us today in the Blessed Sacrament just as truly as when He walked with His apostles through the cornfields that Sunday long ago, breakfasting on the ears of corn) -- that we have ignored the material claims of our fellow man during this capitalistic, industrialist era. We have allowed our brothers and sisters, our fellow members in the Mystical Body to be degraded, to endure slavery to a machine, to live in rat-infested holes. This ignoring of the material body of our humanity which Christ ennobled when He took flesh, gives rise to the aversion for religion evidenced by many workers. As a result of this worshipping of the Divinity alone of Christ and ignoring His Sacred Humanity, religious people looked to Heaven for justice and Karl Marx could say --"Religion is the opium of the people."[95]

In this early quote, three points concerning Day's view of the "Mystical Body" are seen which are foundational for Day's understanding of the doctrine. First, in the Eucharist, the "humanity of Christ" is made present to and normative for understanding all humanity. Second, Christ's humanity "ennobles" all persons.[96] Third, these who Christ has "ennobled" are seen as either actual or potential members in the "Mystical Body", a body which is visible and exists prior to its fracturing through people being named by industry as "worker" or by nations as "citizen".

Day's use of the term "Mystical Body" was often ambiguous in its designation of *who* precisely is a part of this body. At times, she seemed to describe all people, regardless of church affiliation, as involved in the Mystical Body:

All the nation, I mean, that is made up of the poor, the worker, the trade unionist—those who felt most keenly the sense of solidarity—that very sense of

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[95] Day, "Wealth, The Humanity of Christ, Class War", *CW*, June 1935.

[96] Day will often speak of "potential members" of the body of Christ, to indicate that while Christ's humanity holds purchase for all people, their visible belonging to this body in time and space is a belonging which is seen in hope. Cf. Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, December 1963: "The entire world has acclaimed Pope John, and he increased the sum total of love in the world and renewed the health of the Mystical Body of which we are all members, or potential members." This terminology is used throughout Day's writings. Cf., Day, "Catholic Worker Celebrates 3rd Birthday; A Restatement of C. W. Aims and Ideals", *CW*, May 1936; Day, "Fall Appeal - November 1957", *CW*, November 1957; Day, "Fall Appeal, October 1963", *CW*, October 1963; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, January 1970 for a few representative instances.

solidarity which made me gradually understand the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ whereby we are the members of one another.[97]

Again, in describing labor strikes, Day made a similar claim:

> Take a factory where fifty per cent of the workers themselves content, do not care about their fellows. It is hard to inspire them with the idea of solidarity…. That is why there is coercion, the beating of scabs and strikebreakers, the threats and the hatreds that grow up. That is why in labor struggles, unless there is a wise and patient leader, there is disunity, a rending of the Mystical Body.[98]

But at other times, she describes the "Mystical Body" as that body to which only the baptized belong. For example, in *The Long Loneliness*, she writes that, after having her daughter baptized that:

> Teresa had become a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. I didn't know anything of the Mystical Body or I might have felt disturbed at being separated from her.[99]

In the same sense, Day describes her own conversion as "[becoming] a member of the Mystical Body of Christ".[100] The divisive nature of "the mystical body" is further emphasized by Day's frequent use of "members and potential members" when describing social movements involving Catholics and non-Catholics.[101] In other words, two senses of the "Mystical Body" seem to be in play for Day: sometimes, she refers to all persons as "the Mystical Body", while at other times, she seems to be drawing distinctions

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[97] *Long Loneliness*, 147. Unless Day is writing her memoir for an explicitly Catholic audience, the "we" here leaves open how Day is using this term.

[98] *Union Square*, 14.

[99] *Long Loneliness*. 144.

[100] Ibid., 10.

[101] Day employed this phrasing as early as 1936, and continues to use it well into the 1970s. Cf., Day, "Catholic Worker Celebrates 3rd Birthday: A Restatement of C.W. Aims and Ideals", *CW*, May 1936; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW,* October-November 1972.

between Catholics and non-Catholics, with the former as "the Mystical Body". What are

we to make of these seemingly incompatible uses of the term by Day?

As I have been arguing, ecclesial existence for Day is the capstone of human

existence, in that all of human life is oriented toward its supernatural fulfillment. Thus, it

is not surprising that Day described the presence of the Mystical Body as within the

church *and* as present within the world, in that Day understood human life to be

ultimately structured by the work of Christ. As she writes in an early article describing

the liturgical life:

> When we pray with Christ…we realize Christ as our Brother. We think of all men
> as our brothers then, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. "We are all
> members, one of another," and, remembering this, we can never be indifferent to
> the social miseries and evils of the day. The dogma of the Mystical Body has
> tremendous social implications.[102]

In other words, while all persons have been "ennobled" by Christ, this ennobling is

understood by Day to be the first step in a process, pointing toward the culminating work

of participation in the Eucharist. The joining of Christ's humanity to ours is not intended

to simply accompany humanity in misery, but intended to direct humanity toward their

true end: the renewed sociality of the Mystical Body, found in the worship of Christ in

the Church:

> But our unity, if it is not unity of thought, in regard to temporal matters, is a unity
> at the altar rail. We are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and so we are
> closer, to each other, by the tie of grace, than any blood brothers are. …. We are
> our brothers' keeper, and all men are our brothers whether they are Catholic or
> not. But of course the tie that binds Catholics is closer, the tie of grace. We
> partake of the same food, Christ. We put off the old man and put on Christ. The
> same blood flows through our veins, Christ's. We are the same flesh, Christ's. But
> all men are members or potential members, as St. Augustine says, and there is no
> time with God, so who are we to know the degree of separation between us and

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[102] "Liturgy and Sociology"

the Communist, the unbaptized, the God-hater, who may tomorrow, like St. Paul, love Christ.[103]

As Day argued, those who are of the Church, who find their unity in the Eucharist and worship, are members of the "Mystical Body". And while all humanity, as "ennobled by Christ", must still "put off the old man", the call of the Church is to solidarity with those who Christ has acted on behalf of, namely, all of humanity. In this, the tension between Day's descriptions of the Mystical Body finds resolution in the belief that while *presently* the Church's neighbors are not of the church, the fact that Christ has come for them refuses Catholics any other option than to love the world *as if* they were of Christ's Mystical Body.

I will describe this dynamic in three ways. First, I will describe how the Mystical Body for Day is centrally "Christ's humanity", communicated in the Eucharist as the narration of all human life. Secondly, I will describe how human life outside the church, though ennobled by Christ, is directed toward the Mystical Body. Finally, I will describe how the unity which Christ's humanity brings creates resistance to war for Day.

Christ's humanity: present in eucharist, present in particularity. As we have seen, for Day, human nature has been "ennobled" by Christ's humanity. While confessing, for example, that "it was human love that helped me to understand divine love", it is because of "Christ in the Negro, in the poor Mexican, the Italian…and the Jew" that Day was ultimately involved with the poor.[104] By seeing people "as Christ", Day argues we are enabled to "endure their trials and their sufferings" to the point of "[taking] upon

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[103] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *Catholic Worker*, May 1, 1948.

[104] *Union Square*, 155, 151-152.

ourselves the penalties due their sins".[105] By viewing humanity's condition to be that

which is taken up by Christ's humanity, Catholics are called to join alongside other

persons in their particular sufferings, as those persons are true teachers of "the love of

God for His creatures".[106] This solidarity between persons is spoken of most fully in the

Eucharist, by which our vision of Christ is clarified and by which the particular character

of Jesus is made known:

> Why did Christ institute this Sacrament of His Body and Blood?...It was because
> He loved us and wished to be with us. "My delights are to be with the children of
> men." He made us and He loves us. His presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the
> great proof of that love…It took me a long time as a convert to realize the
> presence of Christ as Man in the Sacrament. He is the same Jesus Who walked on
> earth, Who slept in the boat as the tempest arose, Who hungered in the desert,
> Who prayed in the garden…Jesus is there as Man. He is there, Flesh and Blood,
> Soul and Divinity. He is our leader Who is always with us.[107]

Understanding the Eucharist as communicating the human life of Christ continues

means affirming aspects of all human existence which correspond to Christ's own life.

At its more controversial moments, this allowed for an inclusion of Mohandas K. Gandhi

and Communist rebels in Cuba as"filling up the sufferings of Christ".[108] But as we have

seen with Day's rejection of Marxism for rejecting a supernatural end to human

existence, viewing of all people as participating in the Christ's humanity did not mean

that all aspects of human existence spoke *without qualification* of Christ. Christ's

humanity is the means by which our own humanity is led toward participation in the life

of God, and not simply an example for socio-political changes. As Day wrote concerning

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[105] Ibid., 155.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., 166-167.

[108] Day, "We Mourn Death of Gandhi Non Violent Revolutionary", *CW*, February 1948; Day, "On Pilgrimage in Cuba: Part III", *CW*, November 1962.

her tentative approval of the Cuban revolution, there is more to "putting on Christ" than imitation of the works of Christ:

> Man is a creature of body and soul, and he must work to live, he must work to be co-creator with God, taking raw materials and producing for man's needs. He becomes God-1ike, he is divinized not only by the sacrament but by his work, in which he intimates his Creator, in which he is truly "putting on Christ and putting off the old man, who is fearful and alienated from his material surrounding.[109]

During the Vietnam War era, Day observed that many of the young protesters no longer saw the connection between the humanity of Christ as spoken of in the Eucharist, and protests on behalf of humanity. It was the Church's fault that the protesters could not see that "God was Father of all, that all men are brothers" which had resulted in Church teaching being pitted against those who sought to recreate human society through violent means.[110]

In a speech to the Eucharistic Congress in 1976, Day explains that "penance comes before the Eucharist", and that the Eucharist is meant to "sustain life".[111] But as she goes on to explain, in her own life, "the material world around me began to speak in my heart of the love of God", and that it was "the physical aspect of the Church that attracted me….all nature cried out to me."[112] The work of Christ, affecting the materiality of the world, culminated in the reception of the Eucharist, which spoke most explicitly of the world's meaning.

But in all existence, she argued, we oppose the "life" of the Eucharist by "world instruments of death", that the universal salvation proclaimed by Christ is opposed by

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[109] "On Pilgrimage in Cuba: Part III".

[110] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, February 1967.

[111] "Bread for the Hungry", *CW*, September 1976.

[112] Ibid., 5.

massacres, wars, and holocausts.[113] As such, any Mass for the military should be a mass

dedicated to *penance*, to recognize that the telos of "natural life" has been turned into a

celebration of death.[114] As Day explained, the Eucharist is the presentation of Christ's

life, a life which the Mystical Body carries into all the world; insofar as the Church

turned the Mass into a celebration of the military, the Church not only misunderstood the

life of Christ, but that the Mystical Body is culmination (and not the rejection of) natural

life.

In the Eucharist, thus, not only does the Church receive the "living presence of

Jesus", but the Church is reminded that the Jesus whose humanity is at work is present in

the whole of humanity as well:

> [Charles de Foucauld] spoke of the living presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and
> in the Gospel, and the discipline of silence, exterior and interior, and the presence
> of Jesus in our fellow men, and in the poor. Our love for Jesus must be outwardly
> shown, we must make charity clearly visible, expressed in everything we say or
> do.[115]

In sum, Day's understanding of the humanity of Christ present in the Eucharist

expands on the articulation of *Mystici Corporis* in one key respect. While both Day and

Mystici see the Eucharist as testifying to the "Mystical Body", connecting Jesus to those

gathered in the present day, *Mystici* sees this connection of Christ's humanity to our

humanity occurring specifically within a liturgical setting whereas for Day, the humanity

of Christ has assumed human life, creating a connection between the humanity of Christ

displayed in the Eucharist, and the life of the masses.

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Day, "Retreat", *CW*, August 1959.

While Day drew a distinction between those who are gathered in the Church in contrast to those for whom Christ's humanity has "ennobled" (but who are not gathered in the Church), this is not to constitute an absolute break between the two groups. Rather, the Eucharist, communicating the humanity of Christ, is the *fulfillment* of Christ's work done on behalf of the world. If Christ's "Mystical Body" is the consequence of Christ's humanity being communicated in the Eucharist of the Church, this is not to the *exclusion* of the world; rather, as Day contends, the Eucharist calls the Church—as participants in the Mystical Body—to recognize the connection between the Eucharist and the humanity of Christ as having assumed all human nature, and to join with Christ in the midst of social struggle and suffering:

> [I]n His humanity, He was the I.W.W. who was tortured and lynched out in Centralia and Everett, and He likewise bore the guilt of the mob who perpetrated the horror on their victim. There was never a Negro fleeing from a maniacal mob whose fear and agony and suffering Christ did not feel. He Himself, in the person of the least of His children, has been hanged, tortured, afflicted to death itself, and He has at the same time been the one who has borne the guilt of the evil done. "Him, that knew no sin, for us He hath been made sin." He has suffered long years of imprisonment in jail, innocent and guilty; He has suffered the woe of a mother bereft of her child, and of a child bereft of all solace. "Who does not suffer and we do not suffer," St. Paul cried, voicing the dogma of the Mystical Body.[116]

Similar to the manner in which "natural life" is completed by the life in the Church, so the humanity of Christ which holds for all people is completed by the receiving of the Eucharist for Day. The Church's participation in the "Mystical Body", thus, is not separate from involvement in the world, in that Christ's humanity is what has

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[116] *House of Hospitality*, 250.

reoriented all humanity toward its fullness, directing the world into the Church, and the Church into solidarity with the world.[117]

The ennobling and mortifying of human nature. As her earliest statements on the Mystical Body show, the unity of Christ's humanity with human nature is one which implicates all humanity, though this, for Day, implied a fulfillment of this work in the life of the Church.[118] In numerous places, she expresses her belief in the visibility and truth of the Church's claim to be "Christ made visible"[119], with the work of Christ's humanity present within all humanity, drawing them toward their true end. On a practical level, this involved, as she says, putting off Adam and putting on Christ through repentance and "mortification" of the self.

Day was committed to the need for human nature to be "mortified", as seen in her relationship to the Lacouture retreat movement, considered by some to be bordering on Jansenism.[120] Day's speaking of human nature as "ennobled" by Christ did not

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[117] This is different than what is found in Gustavo Gutierrez's articulation of the "option for the poor", in "Option for the Poor", in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuria, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1996), 34-35, in which Gutierrez writes that "The Reign of God…is already initiated in the attention bestowed by Jesus—and by his followers—on the poor and oppressed", in that for Gutierrez, the poor are where Christ is identified, such that the poor evangelize the church. For Day, involvement with the poor is the consequence of the Eucharist, not a prerequisite for right participation in the Eucharist.

[118] In many ways, this is line with Henri de Lubac's claim in *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, (San Fransisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 223, that "salvation for this body, for humanity, consists in its receiving the form of Christ, and that is possible only through the Catholic Church. For is she not the only complete authoritative interpreter of Christian revelation? …And, lastly, is she not responsible for realizing the spiritual unity of men insofar as they will lend themselves to it?"

[119] *Long Loneliness*, 149.

[120] Jansenism was a theology condemned by Pope Innocent X in 1655, which emphasized original sin and human depravity. On the Lacouture Movement and its controversies, Merriman 137-169. Cf. Zwick and Zwick, *Catholic Worker Movement*, 235-249; Jean Dolet, "Un Mouvement de Spiritualitie Sacerdotale au Quebec au 20e Siecle (1931-1950): le Lacouturisme", *Societie Canadienne d'Histoire de L'Eglise Catholique* 40 (1974): 55-91.

diminish the need for this nature to be perfected; rather, "ennobling" emphasizes the manner in which humanity, as that which has been already taken up by Christ in crucifixion and resurrection, is that it is the best of human activity which could be a foretaste of Christ's redemptive work; Day often recalled that it was it was in her moments of deepest happiness that she was called to conversion.[121] I will draw from a few of her uses of "Mystical Body" theology in her writings on war resistance during the Vietnam era to illuminate this dynamic, to describe how the Mystical Body overcomes traditional friend/enemy distinctions, while calling all people to their telos in Christ.

Upon the return of her grandson from Vietnam in 1970, Day reflected upon what it would mean to participate in the Vietnam War from the other side, in service to Ho Chi Minh. Stating that "we believe that we are all members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ, members of one another as St. Paul said", Day affirmed Ho's "vision" and defense of his people against danger.[122] As we saw with Day's visits to a post-revolutionary Cuba, there is always something to affirm in the humanity of everyone, as all persons as creations of God bear the marks of the one who has redeemed them, though those marks are sometimes faint.[123]

Day employed a similar approach in discussing "movements to deepen the spiritual life of men of good will", as encouraged by Pope John XXIII.[124] In these cases, Day found these non-Catholic movements which were aiding in the fields of education and agriculture in Central America and among North American migrant populations.

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[121] *Long Loneliness*, 132.

[122] Day, "On Pilgrimage—January 1970", *CW*, January 1970.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Day, "On Pilgrimage—December 1963", *CW*, December 1963.

Day reaffirmed that the material aspects of these works was never the primary work, that "the basic need is for a change of hearts and souls, and when we write of destitution and voluntary poverty as one of the means to combat it, it is to emphasize the primacy of the spiritual."[125] In both this case and the case of Ho Chih Minh, we find an affirmation of those instances in the non-Catholic world which for Day were indicative of the Christ who has redeemed all humanity, and calls to humanity through human acts and virtues:

> A French priest…who died in a concentration camp during the Second World War pointed out how we should be careful not to exert personal influence to win people to ideas -- that their freedom is so sacred a gift that they must not be constrained, or forced in any way. It is the truth which should attract. Or rather Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life, who attracts. More often than not, we ourselves get in the way.[126]

Though both of these instances included discussions of war and nonviolence, it was not necessary, as for Yoder, that these acts of human virtue be nonviolent in order to be strictly identified with the outworking of Christ's humanity. The relationship between "potential members" of the Mystical Body and Jesus' human life means for Day that there was a range of actions which attested to Jesus' assumption of human nature, the telos of human life, and the truth of human unity.

Again, we find Day's understanding of the Mystical Body as consistent with *Mystici Corporis*, but expanding on it. *Mystici* states that the doctrine of the Mystical Body is "acceptable and useful to those who are without the fold of the Church".[127] However, the unity of the Mystical Body is not one which is given to humanity at large for *Mystici*; rather, *Mystici* states that "if [the world] turn their gaze to the church, if they

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[125] Ibid, 6.

[126] Ibid., 6.

[127] *Mystici Corporis*, 5.

contemplate *her* divinely-given unity", that the unity of the Mystical Body is only available to humanity through the institutional Church.[128]

Day and *Mystici* stand together in asserting that war creates an opportunity to see the beauty of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, and that in Christ, there is true unity.[129] But Day goes beyond *Mystici* in arguing that because the humanity of all people is narrated by the humanity of Christ, there is a unity which must be viewed by the church between the church and world *as if* it were actual and not potential. The assumption of *Mystici* is that this is unity is made visible through the institutional Church, whereas for Day, naming Christ's body as the unity of the Church went hand-in-hand with the call for the Church to engage with the humanity which Christ has assumed, which suffers in war and poverty.

As William Cavanaugh has rightly noted, Day's doctrine of the Mystical Body refused separation of the body from the soul, and consequently, refused separation of the political from the spiritual.[130] As such, war is a tragedy for church and world, in that all humanity—drawn together in the Mystical Body through either full or "potential" participation—is affected by war's destruction of human unity. I will now turn to how this doctrine affects Day's understanding of war. For Day, in war, Christ's Mystical

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[128] Ibid. *Mystici* does allow that some "by an unconscious desire and longing…have a certain relationship with the Mystical Body of the Redeemer", this relation is conceived as only longing, and not participation in the gifts of full Catholic communion, which the encyclical sees as controvertible with belonging to the visible body (para. 103).

[129] Ibid., 6.

[130] Cavanaugh, "Dorothy Day and the Mystical Body of Christ in the Second World War", in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement,* 457-464 (463).

Body is torn apart, an event which calls to the Church, as the explicit bearer of Christ's presence, to active witness.

Mystical body: unified against war, directed toward nonviolence. From her earliest writings on the Mystical Body, Day named war as that act which is most visibly the antithesis of the Mystical Body.[131] In the same way that war stands as the "opposite of the works of mercy", so the act of war was for Day a rending of a universal human community unified as Christ's Mystical Body.[132] Parodies of the Mystical Body, though most present in war, are also present in a variety of other social permutations, such as nationalism and class wars, which impose artificial barriers and create false understandings of human unity and unnecessary (and possibly sinful) divisions among humanity.[133]

Naming war as a tearing of the Mystical Body involves two interrelated points. First, the unity present in the Mystical Body exists in opposition to nationalism and war in all its forms; if the humanity of Christ is singular, then social identity located

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[131] *Houses of Hospitality*, 137-149.

[132] Day's defense of nonviolence on the basis of the Mystical Body would nearly lead to the demise of the *Catholic Worker* paper, following articles refusing to support the Catholic pro-Franco party in the Spanish Civil War. Cf. Day, "The Mystical Body and Spain", *CW*, August 1936. A similar crisis emerged for the paper during the Second World War. Cf. "Why Do the Members of Christ Tear One Another?", *CW*, February 1942. It could be argued that any division within human sociality, such as labor disputes or nationalism, could be the primal example. War's explicit connection with the opposition to the works of mercy—as opposed to other forms of social division—places it as the most virulent expression of the Mystical Body's rejection.

[133] This is consistent with what I have argued with regards to Day's ecclesiology: though church liturgical activities are distinct from non-ecclesial protests or rallies, these activities or "spheres" are inseparable. As Michael Baxter has suggested, Day's understanding of the unity between the "public" world and "private" religious activity runs counter to the theologies of the predominant Catholic voices of her day, namely John Ryan and John Courtenay Murray, who provided justification for Catholic involvement in the Second World War, in " 'Blowing the Dynamite of the Church': Catholic Radicalism from a Catholic Radicalist Perspective", *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, ed. William J. Thorn, Phillip M. Runkel, and Susan Mountin, (Marquette: Marquette University Press, 2001),82-83.

elsewhere exists as an idolatrous simulacrum of the Mystical Body.[134] Because of this,

secondly, the unity present in the Mystical Body is made visible in and through various

practices by which the Church witnesses to this unity, in contrast to war and nationalism,

which describe humanity in terms of social disunity.

George Weigel's assessment that Day's contribution to Catholic theology is a

rediscovery of political charity is not without a critical edge on this point.[135] Weigel

criticizes Day for conflating personal and political charity, posing an important question

to Day's work: are political divisions among nation-states *inherently* opposed to a unity

present within the Mystical Body of Christ? The assumption of *Mystici Corporis* is that

the two are not inherently contradictory: the unity between juridically-united churches is

not threatened by the presence of multiple nation states, as the Catholic Church's

visibility is articulated as appropriate to the society.[136] Day would agree with Weigel that

the particularities of various nations make possible the conditions under which the

visibility of the Mystical Body may be known. Where Day disagrees with Weigel is in

her claim that the Mystical Body relativizes considerations of nationality, such that one

cannot have *personal* charity (done by a person) which is not also *political* (that all

people potentially belong to the same polity). In her famous "In Peace is My Bitterness

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[134] As described already, one of the earliest instances of this arguments appears in "Liturgy and Sociology". For later examples of this argument, cf. Day, "Open Letter to Father Curran on Technique" *CW*, May 1937; Day, "Atom Bomb and Conscription Still Issues to Be Faced", *CW*, April 1946; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, May 1967; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, January 1970.

[135] George Weigel, *Tranquillitas Ordinis: The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 150ff.

[136] Oliver O'Donovan, for one, sees the presence of nation states as intrinsic to God's providence by which the church remains in the world, necessitating that particular traditions of nations be defended. in *Desire of Nations*, 73ff.

most Bitter", Day argues that national interests are opposed the practices of the Church in precisely this manner:

> We are the most powerful nation, the most armed, and we are supplying arms and money to the rest of the world where we are not ourselves fighting. We are eating while there is famine in the world….we are not performing the works of mercy but the works of war. We cannot repeat this enough.[137]

Day indeed voiced hope for a unified American response to Vietnam in her writings.[138] But for Day, a Catholic opposition to war did not need to wait for national actions. Looking to the large presence of Catholicism in Vietnam, Day applauded the Christian witness of the Brothers and Sisters of Brother Charles de Foucauld, present in the midst of great suffering.[139] A similar commendation is offered to Americans opposing the production of napalm, there are those who:

> share the life of prisoners, to lighten in some small way the heavy burden of misery…these Catholic Worker prisoners who see in their brothers and sisters the suffering Christ, are helping to lighten the sum-total of anguish in the world. They are reminders; they are news, good news, of another world. They are the gospel in other words, and carrying to its ultimate meaning, they are the Word, they are other Christs.[140]

In other words, witness to the peace found in the Mystical Body is achieved from *within* the misery of war, as a new sociality "within the shell of the old". In her 1954 narration of the Catholic Church's roots in Vietnam, Day does not applaud the Church's "charitable" response to war, but the Church's engrafting itself into a local situation with the *expectation* of undergoing suffering from both the local population and invader alike:

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[137] "In Peace My Bitterness".

[138] Day, "Spring Mobilization", *CW*, May 1967.

[139] Day, "On Pilgrimage-February 1967", *CW*, February 1967: "If peace were declared in Vietnam tomorrow, there would still be world suffering, famine, injustice on a giant scale and the war between the rich and the destitute would go on."

[140] Day, "On Pilgrimage",*CW*, June 1966.

> There is always the tension between Church and State and it is always a three-way conflict for most Christians. The arms follow the cross and with the arms go such means as obliteration…We are going to be forced sooner or later to be facing the ultimate issues: to recognize that it is not Christianity and freedom we are defending but our possessions. And in saving our lives, as we think, we are assuredly going to lose them. [141]

Intrinsic to Day's doctrine of the Mystical Body is a rejection of politics which divide humanity into nationalities, a rejection which takes the form of the works of mercy done by the Church on behalf of all humanity, with the full expectation that this new polity is one of *suffering*, in that a sociality which confesses the unity of humanity will always meet with opposition from those seeking to divide what Christ has brought together.

Day's social ontology of the Mystical Body of Christ emphasizes a kind of theological realism, in which national identifications of human sociality are secondary, and in which the humanity of Christ—the basis of unity in the Eucharist—draws the world toward its fullness in the Church. Positing the Mystical Body against both nationalism and war begs the question what value there can be to national structures. In contrast to Yoder, for whom nations as "powers" had a good (yet fallen) purpose, Day downplays such usage in her thinking; any unity which countermands the unity of Christ is "the opposite of the works of mercy".

It is perhaps this point in Day's thought which presents the most promise and frustration. While she gains a human unity which overcomes a church/world dualism in a more forceful way than Yoder's, she seems compelled to give up to some extent whatever positive aspects there may be to secular governance, whereas Yoder retained a

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[141] Day, "Theophane Venard and Ho Chi Minh", *CW*, May 1954.

positive role for the state (even if it tended toward violence).[142] Because the Mystical

Body supersedes all temporal political arrangements, there is a necessary suffering which

accompanies enacting this kind of unity, as the unity of the Mystical Body will be

opposed by all limited forms of human unity. I do not take such suffering to be *necessary*

for Day, but rather, an acknowledgment that exhibiting this unity made possible by Christ

will result in suffering, not only in its rejection by nation-states, but occasionally (as seen

in the writing of George Weigel) rejection by other Christians as well.

This formulation poses significant questions for Day's ecclesiology, however.

Though the Church is the culmination of the desires of "natural life", I must ask what it

means, then, that the Church often does not exemplify the unity which Day sees as

central to the Mystical Body, both in the Church's involvement in national interests or in

the promotion of war. If war is an offense to the Mystical Body of Christ, then there

must be some need for the Church to repent of its involvement in war. Day does write

about the need for mortification, but often does this in terms of the need for *individual*

repentance rather than corporate repentance. While Day posits that the Church is

controvertible with the Mystical Body, the Church *remains* the Mystical Body regardless

of its stance on war.

This conclusion of nonviolence as a *consequence* of the Mystical Body means that

the relationship between nonviolence and the Mystical Body is not a *necessary*

connection, in that the integrity of the Mystical Body depends on Christ's work for Day,

and not primarily the church's nonviolence. In that Christ's humanity implicates all

humanity—regardless of their stance on nonviolence—Day's doctrine of the Mystical

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[142] Day, while refusing to pay taxes, did on occasion appeal to Congress for a variety of purposes. Cf. "Still Time to Protest the Draft", *CW*, September 1940.

Body does raise the question of what the relation between nonviolence and the Church truly is. While Day reasons about nonviolence from within the resources of the Church toward a conclusion of nonviolence, there seems to be an *implied* conclusion between nonviolence and the Mystical Body, and not a necessary one.[143]

With that, I will now turn to Day's nonviolence. Nonviolence for Day bears witness to this social ontology which provides the telos to all human life; because the Church is both the place where the Mystical Body is proclaimed and that body which always not live up to the social vision of the Mystical Body, nonviolence is also an act which calls to the *Church* to live what Day sees as the Church's true vocation.

Nonviolence: The Witness to the Mystical Body and to the World

This section will argue that for Day, nonviolence is one of the modes of witness to the social ontology to which all humanity is directed: the Mystical Body of Christ. Day first encountered war resistance during pre-conversion days among the Socialists, working for the Anti-Conscription League.[144] Early in her life, opposition to war and nonviolent behavior were not necessary complements.[145] Because the pre-Catholic Day saw war as an extension of an unjust economic system, nonviolent resistance to war was

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[143] As I approach the role of conscience in the formation of nonviolence, this point about nonviolence as a conclusion of the Mystical Body will be important.

[144] Miller, *Dorothy Day,* 75. Miller misnames the group, following Day's lead, which was actually known as the Collegiate Anti-Militarism League. Cf., Anne Klejment, "Radical Origins", 18ff.

[145] As Day recounts in her arrest during a suffrage strike in 1917, "a guard tried to grab me when I was going from one side of the room to another and I resisted. He grabbed me by the arm and started to drag me. I fought back—I wasn't being non-violent—I fought back", in Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 96. Cf., *Long Loneliness,* 58-59.

one possible tactic used in protest, but not to the exclusion of violence.[146] Following her

conversion, Day recognized while Socialism and Catholicism both claimed the allegiance

of the masses, they greatly diverged on what nonviolence is. While Socialism spoke of

temporal human order with nonviolence as a possible means toward that end, Catholicism

provided a way to see nonviolence as one of those acts by which a person is formed in

love and faith.[147]

Day's Catholic nonviolence encompassed a variety of tactics. Tactics such as

non-payment of taxes, non-compliance with civilian air-raid drills, and protest marches

became common. [148] Similarly, Day would often participate in marches and other

demonstrations against war, and if she in good conscience could not participate, would

encourage others to do as led to do so.[149] As the Vietnam War continued to unfold,

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[146] Miller., 22, "As a revolutionary socialist, Day opposed an imperial war without rejecting violence as an instrument of workers in a class war."Those pacifists who went to jail for Socialist causes were seen by Day as extending their protest actively in prison (21), as living embodiments of their cause; this reading of pacifism, though, simply emphasizes the utility of nonviolence in certain instances, though not all. Cf., Day's comments on Trotsky's view of war as necessary to "win the state", in *Long Loneliness*, 65. In retrospect, Day was keenly aware that her utilitarian view of nonviolence was indicative of her inconsistency of action during these early years; in the same way that Day saw nonviolence as instrumental, so had she "lined [herself] up on the side of the 'capitalist-imperialist' press" in her vocation as a journalist "rather than on the side of my poor friend", in *Long Loneliness*, 59.

[147] *Long Loneliness*, 141. Though agreeing that, fundamentally, God's love of the person took logical primacy over sociopolitical order, Day struggled with how to think about Communists who were enacting the "actual works of mercy that the comrades had always made part of their technique in reaching the workers" (165). Again, notice the manner in which nonviolence and other "works of mercy" are for the Communists "technique" rather than activities which form a person's loves.

[148] Day, "Where are the Poor? They are In Prisons, Too", *CW*, July-August 1955; Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, September 1973. For resistance to air-raid drills, Day, "On Pilgrimage—June 1960", *CW*, June 1960. In a 1960 protest of air raid drills, Day and twenty-nine others were arrested for non-compliance, for refusing to seek shelter during the drills. Subsequent actions by Day and others were so well-attended that no arrests were made because of the infeasibility of arresting 1,000 participants.   For Day's involvement in marches against war, cf. "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, July-August 1957; Day's final march and arrest took place in 1973, marching with Cesar Chavez in California, in Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, September 1973.

[149] On occasion, tactics taken by protesters were beyond Day's conscience, as was the case with regards to the burning of draft cards. Cf., Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, March-April 1967.

Day's tactics grew to encompass the question of draft resistance and conscription, refusing to absolutely counsel others to defy the draft as she herself would, but rather encouraging them to seek peace according to the dictates of their consciences.[150] Recognizing the all-encompassing nature of modern war, Day's resistance of war moved into issues of taxation and tax refusal as well.[151] The comprehensive nature of war created a manifold conscription of humanity away from its true end, a conscription which creates both physical and spiritual divisions within humanity. By contrast, through these various forms of nonviolence, witness is borne to a different vision of human sociality, namely the Mystical Body of Christ.

Nonviolence was described by Day as an act of conscience. Because Christ's humanity is the telos of each person, each person must be reformed personally toward this end, through the cultivation of a conscience able to distinguish between the claims of the Church and the claims of the state. Because nonviolence is an act of conscience, Day articulated her nonviolence through the social teachings of the Catholic Church, acknowledging that her understanding of these teachings often ran counter to the interpretations of her own hierarchy. Nonviolence—articulated through the teachings of the Church on the basis of conscience—was thus understood as among the works of mercy, expanding upon the traditional Catholic categories of the "works of mercy" in a

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[150] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, May 1951; "If Conscription Came for Women", January 1943.

[151] Day, "The Pope and Peace", *CW*, February 1954; Day, "On Pilgrimage", June 1972; Day, "Poverty is to Care and Not to Care", *CW*, April 1953: "If one raises food or irrigates to raise food, one may be feeding troops or liberating others to serve as trops. If you ride a bus, you are paying taxes. Whatever you buy is taxed so you are supporting the state in the war which is 'the health of the state'" . On refusing to pay taxes, cf., Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, June 1972; Day, "We Go On Record: CW Refuses Tax Exemption", *CW*, May 1972. In 1972, the Catholic Worker received a letter indicating they owed the federal government nearly $300,000 in back taxes. This could have been easily avoided had the Worker house filed as a non-profit entity. However, Day was adamant that she would neither pay the taxes nor register as a non-profit, as both of these stances would indicate compliance with a war-making government.

way which challenged both pro-war Catholics and anti-war secularists alike. In sum, for

Day nonviolence bears witness to the meaning of the unity of the Mystical Body,

challenging both the world *and* the Church to a higher standard.

Nonviolence, Conscience, and the Restoration of Human Community

As a perversion of human sociality, war parodies the unity of the Church, by

uniting humanity only after deeply dividing humanity first:

> War is deviltry. It calls for sacrifices indeed, but not at the altar of love. "Greater love hath no man than this." A great blasphemy this, to use Christ's words in connection with me going to war. They go because they are drafted, because they are afraid of what their neighbors will say, because the benefits accruing afterward…are great. And they are told by press and pulpit that they are going because they love their fellows, and they are filled with a warm glow of self-love.[152]

Instead of producing human communion in the pursuit of God, war yields new divisions

among humanity; the virtues which affirm a divided humanity are then replicated through

the structures and desires created by war.[153] This connection between internal social

divisions and war, in which war created structures which reinforced war, would continue

for Day well into the Vietnam era.[154]

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[152] Day, "Things Worth Fighting For?", *Commonweal*, 21 May, 1948, 136-7.

[153] To this end, war is described as creating its own economy, creating an inextricable bond between economic injustice and war. Day recalls speaking to a woman who said, "At least war will teach me new trades, which the public school system has failed to do", in *On Pilgrimage*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999 (1948)), 171. Day continued these arguments throughout the contentious years of the Second World War, during which time, subscription to *The Catholic Worker* dropped by half due to Day's continued pacifism. Cf., Day, "Our Country Passes from Undeclared War to Declared War; We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand", *CW*, January 1942; Day, "Why Do the Members of Christ Tear One Another", *CW*, February 1942.

[154] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, February 1967: "It was one thing for [Spellman] to be visiting the soldiers, so far away from home and family during Christmas time, but for him to not love his enemy, the so-called enemy—not to follow the peace-directives of the Holy Father, Pope Paul V…it is heartbreaking to think how often we all dishonor God the Father of *us all*, by not acting as though we believe that God was Father *of all*, that *all men are brothers*", emphasis added.

From very early in her writings, Day described war as symptomatic of larger

problems within society, namely, a wrong social anthropology. In one of her first

Catholic Worker writings on war, Day links together preparations for international war

with class war, that the class warfare of the Communists exhibited the same kind of

corruption as international war:

> We oppose class war and class hatred, even while we stand opposed to injustice
> and greed. Our fight is not "with flesh and blood but principalities and powers."
> We oppose also imperialist war. We oppose, moreover preparedness for war, a
> preparedness which is going on now on an unprecedented scale and which will
> undoubtedly lead to war.[155]

In her opposition to war, Day sidesteps issues of national sovereignty, arguing instead

that both war and war preparations are symptoms of a deeper problem: rivalry among

human social groups. For Day, nationalism (as well as social analysis which relies upon

class divisions) is of the same species as war, in that both encourage a false division of

human society.[156]

Those committed to nonviolent resistance must be exemplars of a different

understanding of how human life is organized and, thus, bearers of a different set of

virtues appropriate to that vision:

> If we are calling upon nations to disarm, we must be brave enough and
> courageous enough to set the example...Do we believe we help any country by
> participating in an evil in which they are engaged? We rather help them by
> maintaining our own peace. It takes a man of heroic stature to be a pacifist and we

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[155]Day, "Pacifism", *CW*, May 1936. Cf., "We Are to Blame for New War in Europe", *CW*,
September 1939. Day goes on to cite *Nova Impendet*, in which the Pope argues that "the unbridled race for
armaments is on the one hand the effect of the rivalry among nations and on the other cause of the
withdrawal of enormous sums from the public wealth…", citing *Nova Impendet*, 8.

[156] "Pacifism". In this article, Day advocated "preparing for peace" by renouncing maritime
borders and banking practices which supported war. While bearing resemblance to certain Marxist
proposals, Day's proposals are derivative of the premise that war follows from the division of humanity—
that which Christ has called into the "Mystical Body—into artificial groups such as "class" or "nation".

urge our readers to consider and study pacifism and disarmament in this light. A pacifist who is willing to endure the scorn of the unthinking mob, the ignominy of jail, the pain of stripes and the threat of death, cannot be lightly dismissed as a coward afraid of physical pain. A pacifist even now must be prepared for the opposition of the next mob who thinks violence is bravery. The pacifist in the next war must be ready for martyrdom.[157]

For Day, opposing war meant developing not simply ideological positions, but loving one's neighbor in ways which does not secure the "common good" by excluding part of humanity.[158]

Central to a nonviolence which could broke out of this cycle was the formation of conscience, in that cultivating a humanity ordered toward God does not simply mean opposing war, but forming people morally to desire a different way of life. Nonviolent opposition to war, thus, had to be focused on reforming the person toward the love of God rather than the nation-state;[159] if the conscience of the individual—the ability to desire and act a manner consistent with the perceived good ends—is neglected in this process, conscription toward ends alien to the person's supernatural orientation is inevitable.[160] As Day wrote:

> One must follow one's own conscience first before all authority, and of course one must inform one's conscience. But one must follow one's conscience still, even if it is an ill-informed one. All those young ones and older ones, who are

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[157] Ibid.

[158] Day, "The Use of Force", *CW*, November 1936: "They knew then that not by force of arms, by the bullet or the ballot, they would conquer. They knew and were ready to suffer defeat--to show that great love which enabled them to lay down their lives for their friends…And now the whole world is turning to "force" to conquer. Fascist and Communist alike believe that only by the shedding of blood can they achieve victory. Catholics, too, believe that suffering and the shedding of blood "must needs be" as Our Lord said to the disciples at Emmaus."

[159] Day, "Fight Conscription", *CW*, September 1939.

[160] Day, "Are Our Leaders Insane?", *CW*, April 1954: "St. Peter was ordered by lawful authority not to preaching ht ename of Jesus, and he said he had to obey God rather than man…Over and over again, man had to disobey lawful authority to follow the voice of their conscience. This obedience to God and disobedience to the State has over and over again happened through history."

committing themselves to violent revolution as the only way to overcome evil government, imperialism, industrial capitalism, exploitation—in other words evil—are not only following their conscience but also following tradition.[161]

Day was not advocating a rejection of authority in favor of a libertine conscience, but arguing that right authority—in church or in government—rests upon the proper formation of the conscience.[162] A rightly formed conscience, thus, is intrinsic to a Christian commitment to nonviolence in keeping with the Scriptural command to not kill one's neighbor; one cannot will to not kill one's neighbor unless one desires this.[163] Similar to the manner in which Day saw the perfection of "natural life" as the life of the Church, so formation of the conscience toward nonviolence was a matter of active reformation of one's whole person toward the life of Christ in the Church.

It should be noted, however, that Day recognized that the conscience would not *necessarily* lead to the nonviolence exemplified in the Catholic Worker:

> Each one of us must make our decisions as to what he should do; each one must examine his conscience and beg God for strength. Should one register for the draft? Should one accept conscientious objector status in the army or out of it, taking advantage of the exceptions allowed, but accepting the fact of the draft? Should one pay tax which supports this gigantic program? I realize how difficult this is to decide…It is not for any one to judge his fellow man on how far he can go in resisting participation in preparation for war.[164]

Day openly acknowledged that the Catholic Worker way could not be everyone's. This is not to say, however, that conscientious adherence to nonviolence was an *entirely* open

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[161] Day, "On Pilgrimage—Our Spring Appeal", *CW*, May 1970.

[162] This for Day was the critical difference between anarchism—the building of a new world, "within the shell of the old", in which people were freed to join together in the love of God—and nihilism—in which order is simply destroyed.

[163] With this freedom comes "the duty of forming his conscience, by studying, listening, being ready to hear his opponents' point of view". Cf., "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, December 1965.

[164] Ibid., 6.

question for Day: if conscience is for the development of a person toward God in Christ, then the fullness of conscience would, for Day, lead in the direction of loving one's enemy by rejecting war.[165]

If Catholics were directed toward nonviolence even by Church authorities *apart from* cultivating the conscience, the result would be analogous to that of the draft: a forcing of the will to alien actions.[166] All the more, thus, the formation of conscience was an *ecclesiological* concern for Day. The Church—as that body where Christ is made visible in the Eucharist—should most of all be held accountable and called to a right formation of the conscience of its members.[167] For Day, it was hopefully not a choice *between* the institutional church and a conscientious nonviolence, but rather a coherence. As she illuminated in a 1951 article on the issue:

> …[W]hen we are being called appeasers, defeatists, we are being deprived of our dearest goods, our reputation, honor, the esteem of men and we are truly on the way to become the despised of the earth. We are beginning perhaps to be truly poor. We are trying to spread the gospel of peace, persuade others, to extend the peace movement, to build up a mighty army of conscientious objectors, such as Archbishop McNicholas called for in the last war, though I do not think he meant it in the same way we do. And in doing this we are accounted fools and it is the folly of the cross in the eyes of an unbelieving world which was scandalized in Him.[168]

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[165] Commenting on Vatican II's statement on conscientious objection, Day wrote, "One must follow one's own conscience first before all authority, and of course one must inform one's conscience. But one must follow one's conscience still, even if it is an ill-informed one", in "On Pilgrimage—Our Spring Appeal", *CW*, May 1970.

[166] To this end, Day frequently disagreed with the silencing of priests who disagreed with the Church at large. Cf., "The Case of Father Duffy", *CW*, December 1949, and "The Case of Cardinal MacIntyre", *CW*, July-August 1964. Both men were censured for their support of the Catholic Worker activities, in the areas of poverty and race relations respectively.

[167] Cf., "Father Duffy".

[168] "Inventory—January 1951", *CW*, January 1951.

The significance of this aspect of Day's nonviolence can be illustrated by way of Yoder's relative *lack* of discussion of the individual conscience. In Yoder's work, "conscience" is discussed not as a moral faculty, but in terms of the moral commitments which express allegiance to a particular cause or group, as seen in the previous chapter. For Yoder, "conscientious objection", thus, refers to one belonging to the church or the world on the issue of involvement in war, not an individual faculty which enables one to belong to the church. But for Day, for a person to be fully a member of the *corporate* body which speaks of an alternative to war's sociality, one must be cultivated in one's *individual* conscience.[169]

Nonviolence is thus for Day an act of conscience which bears witness to *both* church and state. The Church is shown the radical implications of its teaching on conscience, and the full implications of the doctrine of the Mystical Body—that to be a member of the Mystical Body could mean to embrace nonviolence as Christological worship. Likewise, the state finds itself populated by people whose consciences do not immediately coincide with the demands of the state. Because nonviolence is an act of conscience—an act which exhibits a full understanding of the implications of the Mystical Body—nonviolence need not argue *against* the Church, but can more deeply explore the resources of the Church. I will now return to how Day worked within ecclesiastical reasoning on war.[170]

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[169] While Yoder makes no mention that I have found of conscience as an individual faculty, he does speak of the voluntarism necessary to enter the community. In future work, an exploration of the faculty necessary to join a community in Yoder's work vis-à-vis the issue of how one exercises conscientious objection will be instructive.

[170] Day, "Fear in Our Time", *Peace Through Reconciliation*, Proceedings of the Pax Conference, Spode House, October 1963, 14: "We are an example of the tremendous liberty that there is in the Church…We must have the courage to form our conscience and follow it regardless of the point of view of

Nonviolence and Ecclesiastical Reasoning

As seen in the "roundtable" format of the *Catholic Worker* paper and houses,

multiple viewpoints contributed to the formation of the position of nonviolence

articulated by the Worker movement.[171] In order to describe how Day located

nonviolence as the logic of the encyclical tradition's teaching on war, we must briefly

recount the 20th century encyclical tradition on war; in recounting this history, I am not

attempting to offer a comprehensive reading of these documents, but rather sketch an

overall position of the encyclical tradition to contextualize Day's writings. The encyclical

tradition on war in the 20th century dates back to Pius X's *Une Fois Encore*, addressing

impending hostilities against the Church in France in 1907. Arguing that "the war will be

bitter and without respite on the part of those who wage it", Pius argues that

> [C]ommon prudence calls on each of you to prepare for them. And this you will
> do simply, valiantly, and full of confidence, sure that however fiercely the fight
> may rag, victory will in the end remain in your hands.[172]

Pius X was not arguing for aggression on behalf of Catholics, but rather the contrary:

> Founded by Him who came to bring peace to the world and to reconcile man with
> God, a Messenger of peace upon earth, the Church could only seek religious war
> by repudiating her high mission and belying it before the eyes of all… the whole
> world now knows that if peace of conscience is broken in France that is not the
> work of the Church but of her enemies. Fair-minded men, even though not of our

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cardinal or bishop." In 1973, in "Declaration on Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious
Objection", in *Pastoral Letters, vol. 3: 1962-1974*, ed. Rev. Hugh Nolan, (Washington, DC: National
Catholic Council of Bishops), 283-286, the United States Catholic Conference would affirm conscientious
objection.

[171] Day would refuse thinking of the Catholic Worker movement as "her" movement, or even that
there was such a thing as a "Catholic Worker position". However, as noted earlier, nonviolence was one of
the positions which Day was willing to defend, even to the point of breaking with other existing houses,
making nonviolence one of those issues on which it can be said that there is a "Worker position", even if
such a position is only an irreversible commitment to nonviolence via pluriform practices.

[172]Pius X, "Une Fois Encore", (June 1, 1907), 5. Accessed at
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_x/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_06011907_une-fois-
encore_en.html, on June 8, 2010.

faith, recognize that if there is a struggle on the question of religion in your beloved country, it is not because the Church was the first to unfurl the flag, but because war was declared against her.[173]

Pius X's approach is paradigmatic of future writings, in that he emphasizes presumption against violence by Catholics while recognizing that times of violence demand prudential judgment.[174] In other words, while the Church proclaims the peace of Christ, situations may arise which demand a response by Catholics in form of force.[175]

Through the twentieth Century, the encyclical tradition continued to emphasize these two points: 1) Christ calls Christians to peace and charity, but 2) involvement in wars on behalf of the common good is a viable option for Catholics. This approach can be seen clearly in papal writings during the eras of both the First and Second World Wars; in *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*, for example, Benedict XV argues that the twin evils plaguing humanity are war and the "absence of respect for the authority of those who exercise ruling powers", and that the absence of right authority inevitably leads to divisions within society characterized by war and class division.[176] The similarity to Day's arguments is striking, except that Benedict calls for relative deference to the state:

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[173] Ibid., para. 8.

[174] The question as to whether Catholic tradition on war should be best characterized as a presumption against violence or as a presumption for justice is very much a live question. Cf, J. Daryl Charles, "Presumption Against War or Presumption Against Injustice? The Just War Tradition Reconsidered", *Journal of Church and State* 47, no.2 (Spring 2005): 335-369, and Tobias L. Winright, "Two Rival Versions of Just War Theory and the Presumption Against Harm in Policing", *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 18 (1998): 221-239.

[175] Referring to the restrictions placed upon Catholic ministers, Pius X writes "there has been imposed on ministers of religion in the very exercise of their ministry a situation so humiliating and vague that, under such conditions, it was impossible to accept the declaration", ibid., 14.

[176] Benedict XV, *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*, (January 11, 1914), 5, 9. Accessed at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xv/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xv_enc_01111914_ad-beatissimi-apostolorum_en.html, June 8, 2010.

whenever legitimate authority has once given a clear command, let no one transgress that command, because it does not happen to commend itself to him; but let each one subject his own opinion to the authority of him who is his superior, and obey him as a matter of conscience.[177]

The conscience for Benedict XV, as for Pius X before him, must be subject to the "common good" found in the legitimate authority of the state.[178] Accordingly, limited space existed for Catholics to protest involvement in war until after the Second World War. During the Second World War, however, the focus of papal encyclicals began to change, emphasizing care for those affected by wars.[179] Catholics were encouraged to continue their involvement in public life, as without an education "to virtue and right social living", dissention among humanity would persist, causing further wars.[180] Accompanied by the rise of American Catholic conscientious objection during the Second World War, the question of Catholic involvement in war became a more pressing issue.[181]

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[177] Ibid., 22.

[178] Ibid., 10. For charity to be promoted by Catholics within society, deference must be given by the Catholic conscience to the national authority which existed as ordained of God.

[179] In both "Optatissima Pax" (December 18, 1947) and "Auspicia Quaedam" (May 1, 1948), Pius XII makes no mention of either the conscience or involvement by Catholics in war. Rather, he emphasizes "the first and most urgent need...to reconcile the hearts of men, to bring them to fraternal agreement and cooperation" (*Optatissima Pax*, 3).

[180] Cf., Pius XII, "Summi Maeroris" (July 19, 1950), 12.

[181] Zahn, *War, Conscience, Dissent*, 149 notes that while there were only 135 Catholics in Civilian Public Service programs during the Second World War, there was only one during the First World War. The actual figure during the Second War, Zahn notes, was probably much higher, as the135 were from one particular designation (IV-E), which accounted for approximately one-quarter of the 50,000 total objectors. McNeal, *Harder than War*, 55-56 documents the presence of nearly two hundred others imprisoned in the same period for conscientious objection. Unlike the 'peace churches', there was no church-sponsored program for objectors, leaving the burden of support and objection upon the objectors and their families (McNeal, 57-59). Whatever the true numbers, Catholic objectors were outnumbered by Catholic military chaplains alone, who numbered over 3,000, in *Pastoral Letters*, ed. Nolan, 13.

Pius XII's condemnation of the Nagasaki and Dresden bombings toward the end of the Second World War were not echoed by the American bishops, who remained mostly silent on the war atrocities.[182] In contrast to the Pope's measured tones, the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) issued a statement expressing their intention to "transmute the impressive material and spiritual resources of our country *into effective strength*, not for vengeance but for the common good".[183] A year later, citing the "virtues of patriotism, justice and charity", the NCWC lauded Catholic soldiers who deserved "unstinted gratitude for their heroic services to our country and high commendation for the faithful practice of their religion".[184]

Even without explicit papal support for nonviolence, Day made use of Pius XI and Pius XII's writings in support of various Catholic Worker positions, often in contrast to the NCWC's statements. Despite her disagreements in Pius XI's conclusions, Day sees in Pius' basic commitments a presupposition which coheres to her vision of nonviolence: the fundamental unity of humanity under God, with that humanity needing to be directed toward its spiritual telos. It is this common ground which Day built on in her writings during this time.[185]

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[182] "Atomic Bomb", l'Observatore Romano, August 10, 1945, cited in McNeal, 50-51. As Michael Warner, *Changing Witness: Catholic Bishops and Public Policy, 1917-1994*, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 52-55, has observed, the American bishops during this time were more concerned with the threat of emerging totalitarian regimes, a concern which affected their view on the necessity of war.

[183] "Catholic Support in World War II", in Nolan, ed., 36, italics added.

[184] "Victory and Peace", in Nolan, ed., 39.

[185] In 1954, Pius XII, in a statement of confidence concerning the ability of nation states to foster right exercise of Catholic conscience, writes that "The Christian statesman does not serve the cause of national or international peace when he abandons the solid basis of objective experience and clear cut principles…It is perhaps necessary to demonstrate that weakness in authority more than any other weakness undermines the strength of a nation…[imperiling] the general peace". To this, Day argues, "How

Pius' successor Pope John XXIII represented an unknown for Day; in fact, Day objected to his first address, in which he acknowledged the possibility of force in the service of justice.[186] But 1963's *Pacem in Terris* changed Day's opinion, stating that "there was no end to what one could say about the encyclical".[187] The encyclical was, in Day's words "a…radical condemnation of the instruments of modern warfare".[188] The first of these "condemnations" was Pope John's statement that "representatives of the State have no power to bind men in conscience, unless their own authority is tied to God's authority, and is a participation in it", a position Day had held for years, but which had not been articulated that explicitly in papal writings.[189] While *Pacem* still acknowledged the role of government authority as a "postulate of moral order", the conclusion that the state and the good did not necessarily coincide was welcomed by Day.[190] Secondly, *Pacem* links this question of conscience to the questions of disarmament, arguing that "the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust."[191] In other words, continued

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obey the laws of a state when they run counter to man's conscience? …St. Peter disobeyed the law of men and state that he had to obey God rather than man. Wars today involve total destruction, obliteration bombing, killing of the innocent…We are all involved in war these days." Cited in, Day, "The Pope and Peace".

[186] Day, "The Pope is Dead. Long Live the Pope/Viva John XXIII". Day resolved this question in her column stating that, "Heaven must be taken by violence, and working for a better order here in this world means a terrible struggle", reading John's words as referring to spiritual force rather than physical. She mused, however, that "that ambiguous phrase will undoubtedly cause much discussion among pacifists and the opponents of pacifism".

[187] Day, "War Without Weapons", *Selected Writings*, 328.

[188] Day, "On Pilgrimage—June 1963", *CW*, June 1963.

[189] John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, (April 11, 1963), 49. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html, accessed June 9, 2010.

[190] Ibid., 51.

escalation of the international arms race and the unjust subjugation of conscience are interrelated; as a state seeks the common good through force, it will neither respect its own people's consciences nor trust those outside its borders.

It was with Vatican II's statement *Gaudium et Spes* that Day would receive the explicit justification for conscientious objection and nonviolence which she had sought for nearly thirty years. In sections 77-80, not only is nonviolence commended by the council, but countries are encouraged to make provision for conscientious objectors to war. While the document still operates within a broadly just-war framework, the inclusion of conscientious objection and pacifism as institutionally commended was a large victory for Day, who had made pilgrimage to Italy with the "Mothers of Peace" during the council to pray for the peace movement's validation by the council's proceedings.[192]

Interestingly, Day was quite content that the council had not completely rebuked all involvement in war:

> For me, this answers the question as to whether we, at the Catholic Worker, think that a man is in the state of mortal sin for going to war. I have been asked this question so often by students that I feel we must keep on trying to answer… To my mind the answer lies in the realm of the motive, the intention. If a man truly thinks he is combating evil and striving for the good, if he truly thinks he is striving for the common good, he must follow his conscience regardless of others. But he always has the duty of forming his conscience by studying, listening, being ready to hear his opponents' point of view…[193]

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[191] Ibid., 113. This aspect of *Pacem et Terris* has been roundly criticized by Christians, both Catholic and non-Catholic. Cf., Paul Ramsey, *The Just War*, 70-90; George Weigel, *Tranquilitus Ordinis*, 78-92; Ramsey in particular argues that such a blanket deterrence undermines politics, taking deterrence to be an essentially defensive political tactic. This objection, however, for Day was entirely beside the point: humanity is fundamentally a single entity, which 'politics' an addendum—and in the instance of its militarist and nationalist manifestations, a barrier—to natural unity.

[192] Day, "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, October 1965.

[193] Day, "On Pilgrimage—December 1965", *CW*, December 1965.

As we have seen, mandating nonviolence apart from a free conscientious recognition of nonviolence's validity would be to undercut the formation of the conscience, relying instead on mere institutional conformity.[194]

In sum, Day's engagements with the encyclical tradition identified a logic of nonviolence underlying papal writings which would not be fully recognized until Vatican II. As she argued during a retreat with the Pax Peace Fellowship in1963, it is the freedom which is *within* the church that allowed her to make the arguments for nonviolence which she found intrinsic to ecclesiastical writings.[195] By viewing the voices of the hierarchy as some Catholic voices among others on the issue of war, Day was able to articulate the underlying logic of the encyclicals toward what she saw as their supernatural culmination: the calling of the church to beat swords into plowshares.[196] I will now continue this argument by exploring how Day saw nonviolence not only as consistent with the deepest meaning of the Catholic *encyclical* tradition, but as consistent with Catholic *practice* as well.

Nonviolent Resistance and the Works of Mercy

As I have argued, nonviolence appeared for Day not only as a witness to the fundamental unity of humanity but, consequently, as the underlying logic of the

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[194] Ibid., "The primacy of conscience in the life of a Catholic is more and more brought out by the deliberations in the Council and by the very conflicts that take place there…Of course we consider enlightening the ignorant and counseling the doubtful works of mercy, as indeed they are. As for "rebuking the sinner" we are told not to judge, by our dear Lord, and we are only too conscious of our own all too imperfect state. However, our positions seem to imply a judgment, a condemnation, and we get the "holier than thou" accusation often enough."

[195] "Fear in Our Time", 14-15.

[196] Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 78.

encyclical tradition's teaching on war. But for nonviolence to be thoroughly Catholic for

Day, it could not simply be a matter of thinking through it in terms of ecclesiastical

tradition, but connected to a person's spiritual development, moving a person toward the

love of God as a consequence of having received the love of God. Specifically, Day

understood her various nonviolent activities related to war as an outworking of the works

of mercy, works which required no official sanction, but were a part of an ecclesially-

circumscribed existence.[197]

The "works of mercy" are described in various ways by Day through her writings,

but follow the traditional formulation found in the Catholic Catechism of spiritual and

corporeal works.[198] Viewed as acts which minister to tangible needs while, at the same

time reforming the affections of the one practicing them, the works of mercy are a

participation in the work of Christ for the sake of the world:

> In speaking on the works of mercy as direct action, I have often quoted Father
> Jimmy Tompkins, who said that all work should be considered in the light of the
> Lord's command to practice the works of mercy, as expressed in the 25th chapter
> of St. Matthew. Engineers, homebuilders, agronomists, chemists,
> oceanographers—all have to do with feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless,
> in a long-range plan which involves the community, the municipality, the state
> and the nation. It is the individuals who think in terms of pilot projects, and who
> voice the overall problem of man's need to find meaningful work, creative work
> for the common good.[199]

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[197] Day, *Loaves and Fishes: The Story of the Catholic Worker Movement*, (San Fransisco: Harper
and Row, 1963), 87: "Do we get much help from Catholic Charities? We are often asked this question. I
can say only that it is not the Church or the state to which we turn when we ask for help in these appearls.
Cardinal Spellman did not ask us to undertake this work, nor did the May or New York. It just happened. It
is the living from day to day, taking no thought for the morrow…"

[198] Baltimore Catechism, Q. 223: "What are the chief corporal works of mercy?". The formulation
of Catholic works of mercy originate from Jesus' words in Matthew 25. According to Aquinas, mercy is the
spontaneous product of charity, though distinguishable from charity (*Summa Theologica* II-II.30). It is not
likely that Day has Aquinas' formulation in mind, but it is significant that for Day, love precedes her
articulation of the necessity of the works of mercy.

[199] "On Pilgrimage", *CW*, April 1967.

Nonviolence, which may "lead to martyrdom" was fully in line with the sacrifice

necessary for the works of mercy, Day argued, and can be acted in line with each one's

vocation.[200] The works of mercy, attesting to a "new social order", Day argued, "are the

opposite of the works of war".[201] In other words, one who participates in the Mystical

Body, and enacts the works of mercy as a consequence cannot but desire to see the social

existence of the Mystical Body permeate the world. As Day argued in *Loaves and Fishes*:

> We…spoke of the works of mercy and called attention to the fact that war is
> inevitably the opposite of them. Laying waste the fields, it brings famine;
> destroying homes instead of sheltering the harborless, it drives people even out of
> their own country.[202]

Done in a spirit of charity, nonviolence was a means by which to show the love of God to

one's enemy, though these actions would always cause one to "be in sympathy with the

great mass of the poor, the men in revolt, those in jail, the men of color throughout the

world, than…with imperialists, the colonials, the industrial capitalist, the monopolists".[203]

   Viewing nonviolence as one of the "works of mercy" involved a kind of spiritual

exegesis. The traditional Catholic "works of mercy" incorporate more practices than

simply what appears in Matthew 25; the list was amplified and expanded by Augustine

and later by Aquinas.[204] Similarly, Day and Maurin understood their work on the

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[200] Ibid.

[201] "Penance", in *Selected Writings*, 180. Cf., Rosalie G. Riegle, *Dorothy Day: Portraits By Those Who Knew Her*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 44. This connection dates back as early as the 1930s, as articulated in Day's *Houses of Hospitality*, 138ff.

[202] *Loaves and Fishes*, 210.

[203] "On Pilgrimage", *Catholic Worker*, April 1957.

[204] Gilmore Guyot, *Scriptural References for the Baltimore Catechism: The Biblical Basis for Catholic Belief* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1946), 56-58. The list is amplified in Augustine's *Enchiridion*, and then later in Aquinas' *Summa Theologicae.* Cf. James Keenan, SJ, *The Works of Mercy:*

Catholic Worker paper as "correcting the sinner", one of the spiritual works of mercy.[205] By naming non-biblical acts such as the publication of a paper and engaging in nonviolent protest as among the "works of mercy", Day is in effect engaging in a kind of spiritual exegesis, reading Scripture as a continuing narration of the modern world.[206]

Spiritual and corporeal works of mercy were integral to Peter Maurin's initial formulation of the Catholic Worker movement, as through these works, people are directed toward their true spiritual end.[207] Early on, Day found it necessary to emphasize the corporeal works of mercy over the spiritual ones "to arouse…those indifferent Catholics to the crying need of a return to the spirit of Franciscan poverty and charity", though the ultimate goal was to incorporate both kinds of works into a person's life, as participation in the Mystical Body was a matter of both body and soul.[208]

Describing nonviolence among the works of mercy is significant for two reasons. First, the works of mercy fulfilled practical needs, such as feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless, but beyond this, the works reaffirmed the unity of humanity between adversaries.[209] The works of mercy were not only a radical spiritual act, in that they conform the one performing them more fully to the love of God, but are radical

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The Heart of Catholicism, (Lanham, MD: Sheed and Ward, 2008), for a history of the various specific works and the interpretative history of the various works.

[205] Day, "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of our Fifteenth Year", *CW*, May 1947.

[206] For the loss of this form of exegesis in modernity, see Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

[207] "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year", *CW*, May 1947, 1,3.

[208] "Why Write About Strife and Violence", in Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings*, , 63. Originally in *CW*, June 1934.

[209] Ibid., 3: "If your enemy hunger, give him to eat. There is always a solution in the practice of the works of mercy, at a personal sacrifice."

political acts, in that they speak of a polity of human unity which transcends national differences. The placement of nonviolence among the works of mercy reinforces the insight that, for Day, nonviolence was not first and foremost about social change. Rather, as Harry Murray has argued, the works of mercy are for Day first about moving a person toward spiritual communion with God and with one another.[210]

Secondly, viewing nonviolence *among* the "works of mercy" means that nonviolence alone can never be the sole measure of a person's growth into the fullness of the Mystical Body, or of what it means to belong to the Mystical Body. For Day, nonviolence manifested itself alongside other equally important practices, such as "correcting the sinner", hospitality, prayer, and sheltering the homeless. Day's nonviolence was thus one of a nexus of practices which address a person's need for personal transformation in a *comprehensive* fashion, and acknowledge that ultimately, societal transformation occurs only through personal transformation.

As the Vietnam War wore on into the late 1960s and early 1970s, other Catholics developed more radical tactics for opposing war. Roger Laporte, a Catholic Worker, immolated himself in protest.[211] Catholic Workers were among the first to burn their draft cards.[212] In 1968, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, Catholic priests and friends of Day, participated in the destruction of draft records using homemade napalm. Mel Piehl has identified these as part of the emergence of a "Catholic Left", breaking with Day's form

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[210] Harry Murray, *Neglect Not Hospitality: The Catholic Worker and the Homeless* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 74-77.

[211] McNeal, 122.

[212] Ibid., 146-48.

of witness in favor of more aggressive forms of protest.[213] Day's reticence to fully

condone these kinds of actions could seen as a generational divide between Catholics, but

Day's vision of nonviolence suggests a concern with the kinds of actions embodied by

the Berrigans were shifting away from nonviolence as a work of mercy, and toward

nonviolence as a means to advocate certain kinds of public policy, apart from directing

Christians toward the liturgy of the Church.[214]

Viewing nonviolence as a kind of spiritual pedagogy, Day did not separate

nonviolence from the sociality (the Mystical Body of Christ) toward which nonviolence

directed the practitioner. Accordingly, Day's nonviolence has in mind first the reforming

of its participants toward a new kind of spiritual communion. As participants engage in

actions which witness to an *alternate* social arrangement which transcends state

apparatuses, what emerges is, as Day described it, is a kind of "anarchy" which called the

Church to a deeper understanding of itself as the "Mystical Body of Christ", and to the

world to recognize that its true unity could be found only in this body of Christ.

The question which remains in this formulation can be posed as such: if

nonviolence is an act of conscience, but one's own conscience does not *necessarily*

cohere with the explicit teaching of the church on war, what role does ecclesiology play

in articulating a Christian nonviolence? For Day, this is answered in two ways. First, in

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[213] Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 235-237.

[214] The divergence between Day and the Berrigans would be played out on a meta-level in the split between the Catholic Peace Fellowship, which focused on Day's combination of spiritual practices and protest, and Pax Christi, which focuses primarily on institutional advocacy. Cf., McNeal, 230-235. This is not to say that there was a strict divide between Day and the Berrigans. Day spoke at a 1963 rally which involved, among other things, some of the first instances of draft card burnings. During this time, Day reiterated her own vision of nonviolence, stating "[Jesus] spoke of the instruments of peace, to be practiced by all nations; feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, not destroying crops…", in William Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (New York: Liveright Publishers, 1973), 320.

that Day saw nonviolence as the culmination of the encyclical tradition on war, a conscientious adherence to nonviolence is not excluded, but rather encouraged, even if not spoken of explicitly within the encyclical tradition.[215] Insofar as the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the judgments of the Church are, for Day, authoritative, but not exhaustive. Nonviolence was never specifically ruled out, but neither was it specifically commended, leaving Day's witness as a kind of leaven within the Church to a more full way of understanding the Body of Christ. Secondly, insofar as Christ is witnessed to within the Church, belonging to the Church is indispensible in order to articulate and enact this nonviolence, in that it is the peace and unity of Christ *in the Church* which is the basis for any act of Christian nonviolence.

That the majority of the Church does not understand nonviolence as the outgrowth of this, however, leaves this question ultimately unresolved. The Church, while having the resources for Christian nonviolence, does not recognize them; arriving at nonviolence, as an act of conscience, likewise for Day, was often without an explicitly authoritative voice within the Church to appeal to as justification for her position. For Day, thus, nonviolence persists not as an absolute necessity for the Church, but as a persistent witness to what the Church *should* be.

Conclusion

The interrelationship between Day's nonviolence, ecclesiology, and social ontology relies upon her understanding of the "Mystical Body", a body which speaks to

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[215] Cf. Constitution on the Church in the World, 16: "Through loyalty to conscience, Christians are joined to others in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships." This assumes, however, that the individual conscience and the revealed teachings of the Church are not competitive choices, if (as I have argued) the Mystical Body speaks to the person of Christ, who for Day is the basis of nonviolence.

humanity's telos. The Mystical Body, present as the visible Church, is connected to the whole of natural life, in that Christ's humanity (which "ennobles" human life) orients human life toward its fulfillment in the Church. That being said, it was not always the case that church teachings drew the connection between the unity of the Mystical Body and the divisions caused by war.

In contrast to Yoder, however, nonviolence does not appear for Day as the only practice which bears witness to this sociality. We should not read this as a lesser commitment to the validity of nonviolence on Day's part, but rather, recognition that nonviolence is a part of a larger picture of the works of mercy, works which find purchase within human life at different points, but works which orient all people toward the Christ whose humanity has redeemed the world.

A variety of questions should be posed to Day's work at this juncture. First, Day's social ontology of the Mystical Body seems to smooth out temporal differences between human communities in ways which commentators such as Weigel have found problematic. Because all people are called into communion through the Mystical Body, national identities are relavitized; if all divisions of social existence into "nation" or "class" are antithetical to the human unity spoken of by the Mystical Body, it becomes unclear what resources are available to those who are *not yet* of the Church to cooperate with Christians in the opposition to war. Day does not appear to want to cede ground for other analyses of human life, particularly those whose analysis of war emphasizes economic factors.

It is at this point that Yoder's work on the powers may be a helpful supplement to Day's own thinking. In her work on conscience in particular, Day sought to peel apart

natural human conscience from the government as the telos of conscience. In distinguishing so strongly between the unity of the Mystical Body and the divisions created by governments, however, she struggles to articulate in what ways national socialities may be seen as not *necessarily* antithetical to her work, but as a created good which is in need of "witness" as well. Day is concerned with articulating the nature of true human community, and thus, in my view, overextends her critique, doing away with what value there might be in national sociality, as provisional and deficient as it might be in her eyes. For Yoder, national social groups and governmental structures can be an *ad hoc* kind of ally to the church, or in Day's parlance, a preparation for the reception of the Gospel.

Similarly, questions should be put to Day's articulation of nonviolence. Nonviolence, for Day, is an act which speaks of the unity of the Mystical Body, a work of mercy which is intrinsic to an ecclesially-circumscribed existence. But as we saw, this commitment to nonviolence is secondary to her vision of the Mystical Body, in that people can belong to Mystical Body whether or not they are committed to nonviolence. Rather, nonviolence is an act which witnesses to the fullness of the Mystical Body of Christ, directing the world to the Church and the Church to a deeper understanding of what it means to be the "Mystical Body of Christ".

For Day and the Catholic Worker movement, nonviolence was an unalterable absolute. But out of a commitment to the human conscience, she does not argue for its necessity for *all* people in order to participate in the Mystical Body. By contrast, Yoder views the "new humanity" as tied up with a description of nonviolence, that to be fully of the "new humanity", nonviolence is a non-negotiable. While I have already shown how I

see this as problematic, where Yoder challenges Day is to make more clear how much value should be ascribed to the formation of conscience, particularly if that conscience leads one to participate in war.[216] For Day, conscience is a non-negotiable aspect of performing nonviolence, in that without conscience, one kind of conscription is replaced by another kind. If nonviolence has to do with the full reformation of the human character as a result of Christ's love, then conscience is an indispensible part of this process. But I would suggest that Day's ambivalence at times toward institutional authorities causes her to trust perhaps *too* much in conscience's capacity to arrive at a conclusion of nonviolence in the absence of explicit church teaching on the matter.

For Day, the social ontology of the Mystical Body of Christ does not demand nonviolence as such; one belongs to the Mystical Body of Christ not by enacting nonviolence, but because of the work of Christ. Nonviolence, for Day, does not demark who belongs to this Mystical Body, but is rather a practice which bears witness to the true *orientation* of the body to which all people are called. Because people grow into true personhood through the exercise of conscience, nonviolence is not the only way by which one is known to be a part of the Mystical Body of Christ, but rather one of a nexus of practices by which one's natural loves are transformed by supernatural grace, practices which bear witness to the distinctive sociality of the Church.

This formulation of nonviolence seems to be attempting to articulate a "both/and" approach to nonviolence, similar to the way Day affirms goods and activities of "natural

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[216] Interestingly, Day was often accused of elevating nonviolence into the counsels of perfection, rather than leaving it as a matter of conscience. Cf. "Day after Day", *Catholic Worker*, May 1942. Her response was that while the "precept is the end, the counsels the means to that end", with nonviolence one of the means by which one loves one's neighbor—a clear "counsel" of Christ. Her willingness to claim nonviolence in this way, but yet, allow that not everyone will travel this path toward their true end demonstrates the point I have been making here.

life" and the Mystical Body's culmination of natural life; while wanting to affirm the indispensability of nonviolence both to the life of the Catholic Worker and to the Catholic encyclical tradition, she wants to also affirm the role of conscience that may very well direct one *away* from nonviolence.

In contrast to Yoder who affirms nonviolence on the basis of it being "the way God is", Day's assertions of nonviolence are rooted more in her belief that nonviolence underlies the church's teachings on war, and is consistent with the unity given to the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. This practice must ultimately cohere with one's individual conscience, however, given that the Mystical Body is comprised of individuals made into a unity through Christ. In the end, however, both Yoder and Day place a remarkable amount of trust in the identification between nonviolence and the true "grain of the universe". For Yoder, this trust in nonviolence winning out is rooted in the witness of the Christ of Scripture; for Day, Christ's Mystical Body, as the (potential) telos for all humanity, implies a nonviolence which is ultimately the grain of humanity's true nature.

In the work of William Stringfellow, by contrast, we find one who comes to hold nonviolence as consistent with the renewal of life by the Word of God, but who comes to this conclusion in a much more consequential fashion, and with a far greater number of caveats than Day or Yoder. While professing with Yoder and Day that nonviolence is for the sake of all humanity—a humanity over which Christ has claims—Stringfellow retains a greater skepticism than Day or Yoder as to the limits and conditions under which nonviolence can be exercised, and even greater skepticism as to whether or not the church is capable of participating in nonviolence. As we shall see, this identification of nonviolence as bearing witness to the Word's work in humanity—in distinction from the

institutional church—yields a challenging contrast to the identification between

nonviolence and the church present in Yoder and Day. It is to Stringfellow's work that

we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

William Stringfellow: Resistance to Death, Provisional Nonviolence, Church of the
World

Introduction

In this chapter, I will continue this exploration of social ontology, ecclesiology,

and nonviolence by turning to one of the most enigmatic theologians of his generation,

William Stringfellow, whose career bears numerous similarities to both Yoder and Day.

Like Yoder and Day, Stringfellow maintained a deep suspicion of political arrangements

which brought churches into close alignment with military and political institutions. And

like Yoder and Day, Stringfellow saw the work of Christ, witnessed to in the church, as

the indispensible basis for thinking about the possibility of nonviolent resistance to war.

Stringfellow, however, differed from Yoder and Day in two important respects.

First, Stringfellow was not the spokesperson for any movement, either formally or

informally. Whereas Day became identified as the leader of the Catholic Worker

movement, and Yoder functioned in a number of official capacities within Mennonite

life, Stringfellow had neither of these platforms. Like Day and Yoder, Stringfellow wrote

extensively on both nonviolence as a Christologically-authorized act, and on how to

understand the value of the church; but a combination of clashes with ecclesiastical

authority and a suspicion that church institutions were more preoccupied with preserving

the institution of church than providing a credible social witness resulted in Stringfellow

making his arguments for nonviolence often *in spite of* ecclesiastical resources available to him.[1]

But perhaps more important is the second difference: Stringfellow had an abiding suspicion about the motives and tactics of many who held to nonviolence. His concession of nonviolence as an ethical possibility came with a far greater number of caveats than Yoder or Day, for whom nonviolence was central to any witness to Christ's body in the world. For Stringfellow, nonviolence was not an act which one could (like Yoder) be assumed *a priori* as intrinsic to the Christian faith, or which could (like Day) be assumed as the true direction of the social existence into which humanity was called. Rather, nonviolence was for Stringfellow an act which was in keeping with the witness to the Word of God, in that day.

This chapter will proceed in three parts. First, I will discuss Stringfellow's social ontology, which Stringfellow described as a humanity resisting death, in Christ. For Stringfellow, humanity is united in its experience of death, a state which can only be overcome by dying in Christ and "listening to the Word", a process which creates a "community of the resurrection" characterized by its renewal out of death. Second, I will discuss Stringfellow's nonviolence, an act which witnesses to the presence of this new community and to the overcoming of death by the Word of God in the world. Nonviolence, as an act by which resisted death, could never be commended absolutely,

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[1] While holding a number of posts within Episcopal life in his early years, Stringfellow wrote and worked largely in isolation from a larger body of influence. Andrew W. McThenia, "Introduction: How This Celebration Began", in *Radical Christian and Exemplary Christian*, ed. Andrew W. McThenia (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 14. Prior to being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1950, Stringfellow was an Anglican delegate to a variety of international ecumenical organizations such as the World Conference of Christian Youth and the Anglican World Youth Conference. These activities ended for the most part during Stringfellow's university years. In 1959, while living in Harlem, Stringfellow was approached to be a delegate for the Episcopalians to the World Council of Churches, but declined.

but rather, only as a consequence of the Word's activity in the world. Finally, I will discuss Stringfellow's ecclesiology. The church is described by Stringfellow as that people who make visible, in their worship and proclamation of the Scriptures, what is invisible within the world, i.e., the redemptive activity of the Word Who moves creation from death to new life. The church and Christian nonviolence are marked in similar ways for Stringfellow, namely, that both bear common witness to the Word as the only basis a truly human existence, and both remain contingent upon the Word of God and no other source of being.

Social Ontology: Death, The Powers, and Resistance to Death in Christ

For Stringfellow (as with Yoder and Day), any account of a social ontology is ultimately the truth of all creation and not simply the truth of the church. But his descriptions of how humanity is redeemed do *not* (in contrast to Yoder and Day) assume a strictly ecclesial setting for discussions of Christian social ontology. While both Yoder and Day will argue that social ontology describes first the social existence of the people of the church, Stringfellow rejects such an ecclesio-centric formulation. For him, rather, the redemption and formation of true human community occurs in a polymorphous setting, as people encounter the Word of God (Stringfellow's favored name for God) both inside *and* outside the church. Stringfellow described the church as *involved in* the redemption of the world by God, but argued that this redemption by the Word takes place ubiquitously in both ecclesial and extra-ecclesial settings.[2]

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[2] As I will argue, the church is ultimately indispensible from his understanding of how the Word redeems humanity. However, at this point, I wish to distinguish Stringfellow from Yoder and Day, in that for Stringfellow, there is not a *movement* from world to church as in Yoder and Day.

His description of the way humanity is redeemed occurs in conjunction with a

voluminous description of what humanity has been redeemed *from*: the power of death.

Put simply, death was perhaps life's most foundational aspect, coloring his descriptions

of his own life and of the world around him.[3] After receiving his law degree from

Harvard University, he chose to take a position as counsel for the East Harlem Protestant

Parish, describing this vocational choice later in life as a kind of "mortification", an

intentional renunciation of careerism.[4] Viewing the poverty of Harlem's residents as a

form of death, Stringfellow wrote a series of autobiographical expositions and critiques

of contemporary society which view all of human existence (existing in the Fall) as under

the specter and power of death.[5] Stringfellow's own lifelong health problems were a

constant reminder of this; in 1950, Stringfellow contracted hepatitis while travelling with

the World Student Christian Federation, a condition which led ultimately to the loss of

his pancreas in 1968 and to his early death in 1985.[6]

Describing the creation of a humanity redeemed *from* death, thus, involved

describing how this redemption encompassed the full range of human existence, both

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[3] For a full biography of Stringfellow, see Marshall Ron Johnston, "Bombast, Blasphemy, and the Bastard Gospel: William Stringfellow and American Exceptionalism," (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2007), 33-93.

[4] Stringfellow, *A Simplicity of Faith: My Experience in Mourning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 125: "I died to the idea of career and to the whole typical array of mundane calculations, grandiose goals and appropriate schemes to reach them." Stringfellow practiced law on his own, and then in the firm of Ellis, Patton, and Stringfellow until 1952 (Johnston 45).

[5] Stringfellow, *My People is the Enemy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), 29-30: "The awful and the ubiquitous claim of death is not different for the poor than for other men….but among the poor there are no grounds to rationalize this claim, no way to conceal the claim…no place to escape or evade it."

[6] Johnston, 72-73. Stringfellow details his own health issues and recovery from the 1968 surgery his autobiographical work *A Second Birthday* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970). Similarly, the impingements of physical death prompted the authoring of *A Simplicity of Faith*, detailing the death of Stringfellow's long-time partner, Anthony Towne.

personally and socially. The ubiquitous effects of death in one's own body, as well as the effects of death on human social life, were both encompassed by describing how a new kind of humanity comes to be. In this respect, Stringfellow stands close to Day, who also attended to the way the individual is redeemed. But whereas for Day, the redemption of the individual is oriented toward their participation in the visible sociality of the Mystical Body of Christ which is the Church, Stringfellow's description of the redeemed sociality is less clear. For him, a person's redemption from death finds resonance with other individuals, in that both of them have the same redeemer: the Word of God; this sociality is not, however, limited to the visible church, as with Day. The "community of the resurrection" happens in much more *ad hoc* rather than formal and structural ways for Stringfellow, an issue I will address shortly.

Discussion of Stringfellow's social ontology will proceed in three parts. First, I will articulate his understanding the "powers and principalities" which function as the "acolytes of death", entities which exalt death and usher people toward death. Death confronts humanity *in and through* the powers and principalities, drawing humanity toward their destruction. Secondly, I will describe "death" as the state encompassing all humanity; death impinges on the individual body as well as corporate bodies, creating not only individuals defined by death, but institutions and political systems governed by death. Finally, I will explain how resistance to death is made possible according to Stringfellow by the four-fold "Word of God", who makes possible a new form of humanity in the midst of death. In the same way that death attacks human life in both individual and corporate form, so the Word of God redeems humanity individually and corporately; the result is the creation of a "community of resistance" which is counter to

the politic which death creates. It is to this community—present in both liturgy and the world—which nonviolence bears witness to.

The Procession Toward Death: Principalities

The biblical category of the "powers and principalities" best explained for Stringfellow the existence in which humanity lives. In distinction from Yoder's use of "powers", which most frequently named a certain range of structures which Christians were called to oppose or reform, Stringfellow's use of "powers" was far more comprehensive, naming everything from attitudes to structures to immaterial ideologies. As the "acolytes of death", the powers were entities within creation which encompass all areas of human life. Because death exists as a result of humanity's rejection of the God who creates and sustains the world, the principalities of death function in two respects: 1) encouraging people to *undervalue* humanity's status as created and contingent beings (ideology), or 2) encouraging people to *overvalue* created life (idolatry), thereby forgetting that the world exists because of and for God. In both modes, the powers drive people away seeing the world, created by God, as the proper place of human redemption.

Death for Stringfellow never confronts humans directly; even physical decay is described by Stringfellow as a "principality".[7] Rather, death—an existential state in which humanity persists—approaches and corrupts humanity via an endless series of "powers and principalities" which encompass human existence:

> The separation from life, the bondage to death, the alienation from God which the fall designates is not simply to be accounted for by human sin. The fall is not just the estate in which men reject God and exalt themselves….The fall is also the awareness of men of their estrangement from God, themselves, each other, and all

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[7] Stringfellow, *A Second Birthday* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1970), 53, in which pain is described as a "demigod representing death." More than others, pain is "literally a symptom of the advent of death", but still testifies to death in a representative fashion.

things, and their pathetic search for God or some substitute for God within and outside themselves and each other in the principalities and in the rest of creation.[8]

The principalities, which are "consigned to death just as much as the men who worship them", serve as conduits for humanity to be delivered unto their ultimate destruction.[9] The irony of this arrangement, is that while the powers promise freedom from temporality and death, they are structured both to inculcate death within their servants, and to succumb to death themselves.[10] Taking ubiquitous forms in human society—ranging from the Pentagon to the Olympics to white supremacy—the principalities and powers are creatures with their own personalities and modes of life, meaning that though they involve humanity, they are perpetuated and can exist independent of human intentions for them.[11]

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[8] Stringfellow, *Free in Obedience* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), 62. In contrast to Yoder, Stringfellow does not limit "powers" to that which is outside the church, but understands the "powers" to be ubiquitous in both church and the world. As I will explain shortly, churches frequently operate as principalities and powers.

[9] *Free in Obedience*, 63.

[10] Ibid., 65. In contrast to Walter Wink, the principalities do not appear for Stringfellow as "inner aspect of material or tangible manifestations of power", but rather than as emissaries of that which is essentially a *moral* and immaterial power: death. Cf. Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 104ff.

[11] Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in A Strange Land* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1973), 78-79. Whereas Yoder viewed the "powers" in terms of created structures which Christians can engage and seek to reform in a limited fashion, Stringfellow viewed the powers as corrupted entities which ultimately supercede and encompass human intentions for them. Mark T. Nation has criticized Stringfellow's stance at this point as too totalizing of human existence, providing no room to distinguish "between greater and lesser evils, greater and lesser approximations to what God desires from us", in "The Vocation of the Church of Jesus the Criminal", 123-124, in *William Stringfellow in Anglo-American Perspective*, ed. Anthony Dancer, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2005).   What Nation's critique neglects is that Stringfellow is not doing away with moral discernment entirely, but radicalizing the *locus* of moral discernment, that it cannot be done from *a priori* position, a position which is a denial of ourselves as created, contingent beings.

Throughout his writings, innumerable entities are labeled as among the "powers and principalities;[12] Stringfellow most often describes the operations of the powers narratively rather than systematically in his work, detailing their destruction in terms of what he observed rather than in abstract categories. This approach to describing the powers, again, is due to the fact that the powers present themselves within all contours of human existence, moving humanity toward death; as such, they can only be described as we encounter them within life.[13] In his description of the poor, for example, we find that:

> The poor experience death more straightforwardly among men in this world….the awful and the ubiquitous claim of death is not different for the poor than for other men…but among the poor there are no grounds to rationalize the claim….no man avoids alienation from other men; no man evades the Fall.[14]

The powers, thus, are those things which threaten to destroy that "common life of the world", rather than being idealized concepts which could not be seen in the events of history.[15]

As I stated earlier, the powers operate in two primary ways for Stringfellow. The first way is through detachment from creaturely life, in the form of *ideology*—the denial of life and ourselves as created, and thus, contingent upon God.[16] Both ideologies which speak about what is good for humanity, in abstraction from history, and theologies which de-emphasize bodily life, are corrupted in the same way for Stringfellow, i.e. a rejection

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[12] Ibid., 52. The powers and principalities are "living [realities], distinguishable from human and other organic life…not made or instituted by men, but, as with men and all creation, made by God for his own pleasure".

[13] *Instead of Death* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963): 15: "The experience in which the fear of a man of his own personal death coincides with his fright of the death of everyone and everything else."

[14] *My People*, 29, 38.

[15] Ibid. Cf., ibid., 79: "What is being described and designated is a form of life, a creatureliness, which is potent and mobile and diverse, not static or neat or simply defined by what it may now or then be called."

[16] *An Ethic for Christians*, 67.

of the world in which people exist and are created by God. Ideology, as an authoritative judgment on human goods and life in abstraction from actual events, is a denial of our creaturely limits, and is as such, a denial of ourselves as bodily and created.[17] Ideologies, ranging from ecclesiastical morality to racism, all communicate a static view of human life which refuses the fluctuations of "empirical" conditions, in a refusal to acknowledge the contingency of all existence upon God.[18]

One of the most frequently discussed "ideologies" in Stringfellow's early writings was that of nonviolence, typically called "ideological pacifism". Pacifists, in their *a priori* rejection of violence, presume universal divine favor upon their act, and in doing so, oppose one principality (war) by participating in another (ideological pacifism):[19]

> The ethics typically concocted from religion or ideology …repudiate time and common history as the sphere of ethical concern and political action in multifarious ways. They may focus upon asserted prospects beyond history, outside of familiar time…They may deny the moral significance of time as the era of the Fall and diminish history as the story of the Fall. [20]

As Stringfellow argues, "in this world, the judgment of God remains God's own secret. No creature is privy to it, and the task of social ethics is not to second guess the judgment of God."[21] In sum, ideology, as in "ideological pacifism" tempts humanity to deny its

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[17] *Instead of Death*, 36. Cf., *Imposters of God: Inquiries into Favorite Idols* (Washington, DC: Witness Books, 1969), 45: "ideology is inherent in every institution, while institutional forms are implied in every ideology". For religion and race as ideology, cf. 80-87, 106-109.

[18] "Empirical" observation became a key term for Stringfellow, in that one could only speak of God's activity as it played out in the life of the world. To retreat from the events of the world in describing God's work was, for Stringfellow to fall into ideology. Cf., Stringfellow's description of himself as an "empirical theologian" in *Second Birthday,* 40.

[19] *Ethic for Christians*, 132: "…what is deficient in traditional pacifism [is]…the attempt to ascertain idealistically whether a projected action approximates the will of God….It is a query seeks assurance beforehand of how God will judge a decision or an act."

[20] *Ethic for Christians*, 55.

[21] Ibid., 56. Cf. *A Second Birthday,* 88-91.

creaturehood, by retreating from the contingencies of life, assuming a moral response as

knowable apart from the movement of God in history.[22]

The second way in which principalities usher humanity toward death is through

idolatry. Whereas ideology *undervalues* created contingency, and tempts humanity to

totalizing and abstraction, idolatry tempts humanity to *overvalue* created contingencies,

denying the God who creates the world.[23] Appearing not only through the activities of

human relationships, but also through institutions (such as the Pentagon) and social

activities (such as war), the powers appear as penultimate goods masquerading as

ultimate ends.[24]

The principalities, offering a release from the contingencies of creation (and thus,

a secure place to hide from death), produce in their adherents a mode of existence which

characterizes the principalities themselves: "survival".[25] Rather than imbuing their

adherents with "life" (the embrace of our creaturely existence as given to us for the

worship of God), the principalities inscribe their own flight from death on the bodies of

the ones worshipping them. One of the most explicit examples of this idolatry for

Stringfellow was the Vietnam War, in which Stringfellow saw dramatized "this insatiable

appetite for human sacrifice typical of ideological and institutional powers", as men

sought to overcome the threat of Communism (an ideology) by destroying one another in

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[22] Whether in the form of racism, which asks humanity to judge persons in abstraction from their actual existence, or in certain forms of theological judgment which seek to judge a situation *a priori*, the principalities tempt humanity away from their created state toward an atemporal place outside the world.

[23] *Ethic for Christians*, 82-84.

[24] Ibid., 80-83.

[25] *An Ethic*, 90: "…the only morality governing each principality is it own survival as over against every other principality, as well as over against human beings and, indeed, the rest of Creation."

war (an idolatry).[26] In describing the Vietnam War as an idolatry, and (early on his

career) nonviolence as an ideology, Stringfellow illustrates the manner in which the

various manifestations of death may conflict with one another at times (i.e. Communism

and the war *against* Communism); this difference between the powers, however, is *only*

apparent.[27]

As the powers persistently tempt people to deny themselves as created, *human*

lives become the primary site of conflict between death and the Christ who overcomes

death. The end result of the principalities and powers' operations in the world, in either

form, is a proliferation of death *through* human bodies.[28] As death proliferates in various

forms, and through various activities and institutions, death creates its own kind of

sociality: a fully corrupted *politic*. Having described the various ways in which the

powers (present both in war *and* in certain forms of resistance to war) inscribe death upon

humanity, I will now describe how death, through the powers, creates a sociality counter

to that of the body of Christ.

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[26] Ibid., 92. Through the principality of the media, war spreads a public and demonic claim of "safety, prosperity, virtue, even immortality."

[27] Instead of creating a *single* path toward death, the principalities often appear as rival entities. For example, in *Public and Private Faith*, 72, Stringfellow recalled counseling an East Harlem youth named Ramon to join the Marines to avoid jail, an option which would teach Ramon a trade; Stringfellow contended that this counsel was advocacy in the midst of a concrete situation, and thus, Christian action. In *Ethic for Christians*, 89-90, written ten years later, none of this optimism is visible, as Stringfellow sees both the police *and* the military as implicated in the powers. On occasion, there is collusion between powers, but Stringfellow argues this is not because there is coherence or common good shared between the powers, but rather an *ad hoc* opportunity for cooperation.

[28] *Free in Obedience*, 63: "Idolatry of the demonic powers by men turns out always to be a worship of death."

Death: The Counter Social Ontology to Life in Christ

Having described the various ways that humanity is corrupted by means of the powers, we are now in position to see what is ultimately being worked out through the powers: death. The proliferation of the powers in Stringfellow's writings—which indeed encompasses a wide range, from financial institutions and sexual attitudes to war and ecclesiastical institutions—has led some to conclude that the powers are in fact "arguably the centerpiece of Stringfellow's theology."[29] This is a reversal of Stringfellow's thinking, granting primal importance to what he took to be "the acolytes" of a prior entity: death. Death permeates Stringfellow's work as the ground of all existence in a fallen world and as that state which gives rise to the powers.[30]

It is my contention that what death produces is, in sum, an alternate polity to the sociality which is created by Christ. Stringfellow describes this process in two ways. First, because death permeates human existence, death is made known in and through *human autobiographies*. Secondly, this corruption of human existence culminates in a corruption of *human sociality and politics*. In other words, the powers and principalities—whether through "ideological pacifism" or through the idolatry of war— are enabling the creation of a humanity fully united in death. The Word of God, by

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[29] Johnston, 95. Cf. Walter Wink, "William Stringfellow: Theologian of the Next Millennium, A Review Essay", *Cross Currents* 45, no.2 (Summer 1995): 205-216. Wink begins his discussion of Stringfellow's contributions by beginning with "powers and principalities". Wink cites Stringfellow as his inspiration for Wink's own "powers trilogy", arguing that "[Stringfellow]'s treatement of the powers cried out for systematic reflection, especially at the level of the New Testament language for power, and I tried to provide that in the first volume of my trilogy…" (206-207). Likewise, Johnston's dissertation has no discussion of "death" as a category within Stringfellow's thought, focusing on "powers instead. Because for Stringfellow, we only encounter death *through* the principalities, I have waited until after discussing the principalities before discussing death-as-such.

[30] Robert Boak Slocum,"William Stringfellow and the Christian Witness Against Death", in *Prophet of Justice, Prophet of Life*, ed. Robert Boak Slocum (New York: Church Publishing, 1997), 19, argues that that the context of Stringfellow's opposition to death comes into focus in 1968 following Stringfellow's visit to Vietnam. While I will suggest that this visit does bring certain themes to the forefront in Stringfellow's writings, I will argue that the primacy of death persists long before 1968.

contrast, seeks to create a fully redeemed humanity, a counter polity to what exists because of death. I will describe how this happens for Stringfellow in the third and final portion of this section.

Death as ground of existence. As I have described previously, creation, i.e. the created world, "is the medium through which men may love God"; as such, the powers' activity intimately affect our ability to live rightly within creation.[31] Through the Fall, humanity confused creation with the God who has created it; people thus exist in a world which has been created and sustained by God, but in denial of God's work in the world. This state of denial is what Stringfellow names as "death":[32]

> Men's existence in fallen creation is existence in sin. ..By giving Himself to men in Creation, God gave men to each other; God gave men community in Creation, and this is shattered when men sever themselves from Him…*In Creation, God gives men life; in sin men die."[33]*

Death is exalted when humanity denies God's continued and living movement in the world, in favor of "natural" explanations of the world. But if creation is "the medium through which men may love God", people are only redeemed *in and through* their participation in the created world, a world which is immersed in death.

In Stringfellow's early writings, we find him working out this paradox. The Gospel "means that the very life of God is evident in this world, in this life, because Jesus

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[31] Stringfellow, *The Life of Worship and the Legal Profession* (New York: New York National Council, 1955), 5.

[32] Ibid., 5-6: "Men do not receive and accept God's love. Men do not love God. Men do not affirm the One who creates them and makes all things, indeed they pretend that they themselves make and give meaning to that over which He has given them dominion…..Men ruin Creation. Men manipulate God's gifts to try to glorify themselves."

[33] Ibid., 5-6, emphasis mine.

Christ once participated in the common life of men in the history of our world."[34]

Salvation in Christ, thus, involves Christ's overcoming of the processes of death *in one's own life*, and in the created world overtaken by death:

> [The Christian] looks like [a sucker] to other men because he is engaged in the wholesale expenditure of his life. He looks like that because he is without caution or prudence in preserving his own life. He looks like that because he is not threatened *by the power of death either over his own life or over the rest of the world.* He looks like that because he is free to give his life—*to die*—imminently, today, for the sake of anyone or anything at all, even for those or that which seem unworthy of his death, thereby celebrating the One who died for all though none be worthy…"[35]

The presence of God and the powers of death thus coexist within creation, disclosed through the experiences of humanity.[36]

Stringfellow composed a number of autobiographical works throughout his life which explore this thesis: Christ's redemption—and thus, any theological reflection upon Christ's work—is done first from within the parameters of our autobiographies, in that 1) all aspects of creation are impinged upon by death, and 2) Christ has come for us in our

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[34] Stringfellow, *A Public and Private Faith* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 14-15.

[35] Ibid., 42-43, emphasis mine.

[36] "….no man confronts and struggle with and surrenders to any of the powers of death—any anxieties—any crisis—without beholding the power and the truth of the Resurrection: the presence of God in history which is greater than any of deaths' threats or temptations and more potent and which endures forever", ibid., 64. This is in part because of Stringfellow understands the "Word of God" as God's agency made manifest in Scripture, but at work in creation as well, such that creation, in its movement toward death, is not something separate from creation sustained by God. Though not worked out in these early works explicitly, Stringfellow's articulation of the Word as the key to resisting death is not constrained by death. Cf., *The Life of Worship*, 7: "The Christian view of God as Creator is not simply, nor primarily, that of some Originator of things. Christians know God as One who makes and sustains them and all things in this very moment. Men have life…only because God wishes to give it to men. Even fallen creation, even cursed life, even existence in sin….[is] sustained by Him." For the total lostness of our existence, cf. Stringfellow, *Instead of Death* ,12: "death is the contemporaneous power abrasively addressing every man in his own existence with the word that he is not only eventually and finally, but even now and already….lost in his relationships with, at once, everybody and everything…" Apart from Christ, we actively receive death in our activities, such that death does not simply corrupt creaturely activities, but that death is multiplied through our various activities, such as sex and relationships (35-38).

creaturely existence.[37] His work *Free in Obedience* most clearly highlights the

Christological backing for this thesis. The culmination of earlier works which

emphasized the general human experience of death in all existence, *Free* describes the

operations of death in contrast to *Christ's* own life. Stringfellow argues that Christ's

crucifixion is "a witness to the end of death's power over the world",[38] and that Christ's

conquering of death stands as "pre-eminently the event which brings all of the ordinary

issues of existence in this world within the province of the gospel".[39]

While death exists as the animus for any number of powers and principalities

(cities, loneliness, bodily decay, etc.), the conflict between Christ and death is decidedly

more acute. In earlier writings, Stringfellow detailed how various aspects of creaturely

life (urbanization, industrialization, industry) are indications of the various *emissaries* of

death (powers and principalities); in the conflict with Christ, death itself come to the

forefront. Death is behind the temptations of Palm Sunday and the wilderness, but

ultimately it is death *itself* which must confront Christ.[40] While in life, Christ is

confronted with various principalities, ranging from religious authority to political

machinations:[41]

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[37] In his follow-up volume to *Instead of Death*, *My People is My Enemy*, (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1964), Stringfellow narrated his years in Harlem in terms of death's intimacy, examining the ways in which death impinged upon the daily existence of Harlem's residents. For example, in writing that "poverty is vulnerability to death in its crudest forms" (6). Stringfellow is not naming poverty *as* death, but a material condition which exemplifies that "all men, in short, live in a history in which every action and omission and abstention is consequentially related to all else that happens everywhere. That is the theology of Adam's Fall and with him, the fall of all men. In history, men live at each other's expense" (29).

[38] Ibid., 16.

[39] Ibid., 16-17.

[40] Ibid., 34-36.

[41] Ibid., 70-71

[T]he resurrection encompasses and represents all of these particular historic encounters in a single, consummate, and indeed cosmic disclosure of the triumph of Christ over death. The resurrection is impregnated with all that has gone before; these encounters of Christ with death and its powers in history mean that his triumph over death there shown is offered for men and for the whole world.[42]

This death which Christ encounters:

[I]s greater than any of the principalities and powers, and none of them prevail against it. The whole of creation exists under the reign of death. Men die….The reality which survives them all is death itself. Death, it seems is the decisive, ultimate and dominant truth in history.[43]

Through death's clash with Christ—the one whom enables a new human existence—the true and naked power of death is revealed. Death and Christological salvation, consequently, play out this struggle in and through bodies of humanity, moving people toward or away from death.

Discerning *how* this redemption of our lives is occurring takes place as one reflects upon one's life in creation. For example, as Stringfellow's own health and the health of his longtime partner Anthony Towne began to deteriorate, Stringfellow's writings began to emphasize these aspects of bodily decay as an example of this conflict between death and Christ. In keeping with his description of the Christian conflict in ways which emphasize the bodily terrain of the conflict, Stringfellow calls the clash of Christ and death to be paradigmatic of every person's conflict with death, whether personally or corporately. Stringfellow describes the significance of this bodily theology in this way, reflecting on his own near-death experience during a 1968 surgical procedure to control his diabetes:

There is nothing whatever in the experience in history of men or nations that is not essentially theological, and the discipline of academics is not to speculate or

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[42] Ibid., 72.

[43] Ibid., 64-65.

innovate from some…stance outside on the outside of common experience but to expound and enlighten empirical reality, relating inheritance, memory and the happenings of the past to the contemporary scene, alert for portents of that which is to come in this world.[44]

It is in the arena of physical "empirical" life that do we find not only Christ's redemption, but the ultimate conflict with death as a militant and moral power, with physical pain and death signs of this conflict:

> Apart from God Himself, death is a *living* power greater—because death survives them all—than any other moral power int his world of whatever sort…One speaks…most precisely of the power of death militant in history after the same manner in which one refers to other moral powers or indeed after the manner in which one makes mention of God. And then since pain partakes of the reality of death, it is meet as well as accurate to think of pain personified: to regard pain as an acolyte of the power of death.[45]

Rather than physical death being an occasion for dread, (one of the ways in which death is worshipped) Stringfellow notes that our mortality can lead either to a worship of God or to dread of our impending death, a "succumbing to the idolatry of death *in one's own being*."[46] These encounters with the foretastes and emissaries of death—whether in poverty, pain, or isolation—are all thus occasions for either succumbing to the power of death, or for receiving the work of Christ in one's autobiography. In describing the death of his partner Anthony Towne, thus, Stringfellow is able to argue that "having already died in Christ, *his selfhood had been rescued*….so that his death, while poignant, was not waste or tragedy or demonic triumph or incentive to despair."[47] In the weeks following

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[44] Stringfellow, *A Second Birthday*,40-41. Stringfellow's account of Towne's sudden death and burial is *A Simplicity of Faith.*

[45] Ibid., 53-54. Cf., *A Simplicity of Faith*, 39: "[Anthony] was reconciled within himself and with the rest of Creation in the Word of God. Paradoxically, it is when a human being can be said to be most authentically alive that that person becomes free to die imminently or at any moment. I can testify that Anthony knew and enjoyed that freedom."

[46] *Simplicity of Faith*, 50, emphasis mine.

Towne's death, Stringfellow's own health improved, which he also described as part of this process of salvation, "the redemption of fallen Creation, the restoration of the created order, the return to …*the natural.*"[48]

The Word's presence, in the midst of death, means that "the power and reality of death at work concretely in the world is never so ascendant or successful that resurrection—*the transcendence of death and the restoration of life*—is either irrelevant or precluded."[49] In other words, alongside the emissaries of death in our autobiographies, we find a real recreation of our existence, in Christ. Humanity knows this restoration not in an abstracted way, but (following the example of Christ) in and through our bodies.

As I suggested earlier, however, death is not simply after *individuals*, but after a fully corrupted social body, a corrupted *humanity.* If creation is the area in which "God gave men community", then death's corruption of creation is ultimately the creation of a counter-community, achieved by human participation in various ideologies (such as "ideological pacifism") or idolatries (such as war). It is to this corporate aspect of death's work that we now turn.

Death and the body politic. The anthropological locus of the clash between Christ and death, while playing out in individual lives, culminates in humanity's corporate life: political life.[50] Because of death's threat to corporate human existence, politics became

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[47] Ibid., 39, emphasis mine.

[48] Ibid., 125.

[49] Ibid., 121, emphasis mine. Cf., *A Simplicity of Faith*, 39: "We much aware of how the efficacy of the resurrection for living here and now impinges, among many other ways, upon dying."

[50] Ibid., 133. As Stringfellow said during the trial of Philip and Daniel Berrigan, "the State has only one power it can use against human beings: death. The State can persecute you, prosecute you, imprison you, exile you, execute you. All of these mean the same thing. The State can consign you to

the paramount issue for Stringfellow, in that this issue of human social organization was

the ultimate site of both human redemption and death's aggrandizement.[51] In describing

the "credo" of democratic discourse, Stringfellow noted that the 1964 presidential

debates:

> [S]et forth quite specifically a doctrine of man—one, by the way, which it behooves heretics, as well as the true believers, to understand, since those who are not dedicated to it are guilty not of 'merely political differences or mere political mistakes' but of 'a fundamentally and absolutely wrong view of man, his nature and his destiny.'[52]

Politics for Stringfellow was fundamentally a way of describing human social ontology;

as with our individual biographies, so corporate social life (politics) can be construed as

either an account of humanity as created for God, or as existing for self-

aggrandizement.[53] As he would later write:

> The biblical topic *is* politics. The Bible is about the politics of fallen creation and the politics of redemption…The Bible expounds with extraordinary versatility…the singular issue of salvation—which is to say, the preemptive political issue. It bespeaks the reality of human life consummated in society within time in this world, now and here, as the promise of renewal and fulfillment vouchsafed for all humans and for every nation—for the whole of creation— throughout time.[54]

While Stringfellow wrote extensively on proper democratic procedure, his concern was

ultimately for how human social relations fostered either the work of God or the work of

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death", in William Stringfellow, *A Keeper of the Word*: *Selected Writings of William Stringfellow*, ed. Bill Wylie-Kellerman (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 69.

[51] Stringfellow, *Dissenter in A Great Society* (Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1966), 59.

[52] Ibid., 59-60. Cf., "God, Guilt and Goldwater", *The Christian Century*, September 2, 1964, 1079-1083.

[53] Ibid., 60-61. Cf., "Watergate and Romans 13", *Christianity and Crisis*, June 11, 1973, 110-112.

[54] Stringfellow, *An Ethic*, 14-15.

death. If death approaches us in our humanity, then politics—as humanity's corporate life—is of the utmost importance.

Beginning with 1966's *Dissenter in a Great Society*, his concern for a redeemed sociality turned more explicitly toward politics.[55] Framed as a critique of President Lyndon Johnson's administration policies called the "Great Society", *Dissenter* argued that social forms of death, such as poverty and racism, are not ultimately perpetuated by laws, but primarily through the political processes which creates law; political process—as the creator of laws—reify the conditions of poverty and disorder through the rule of law.[56]

This kind of fallen political process, seen as harnessing real social need for self-aggrandizement and personal gain, perpetuates social corruption by misusing public goods, but more problematically divorces the political *process* from the conditions of human life. Consequently, the result of fallen politics is not only that people are enslaved by the political process, the consciences of citizens become dulled, such that citizens no longer realize "that every [political] action…is consequentially related to the lives of all other human beings on the face of the earth."[57] Stringfellow's critiques of politics continued throughout most of his books, occupying portions of most of them following 1966.

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[55] Stringfellow, *Conscience and Obedience* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 38, notes that his mature thinking on politics arose as a consequence of Vietnam and Watergate, which "exposed incumbent political authority…as illegitimate."

[56] Ibid., 14-15. For example, Stringfellow argues that Johnson "prosecutes the war on poverty by repackaging existing programs and obsolete ideas…and requesting meager appropriations", which do not effect real change, but rather simply entrench politicians in their power.

[57] Ibid., 30. Part of the simulacra which politics produces is its appearance of objectivity. Stringfellow, *Imposters of God*, 98, critiques most clearly political life's claim to objectivity. By exalting certain kinds of violence and dismissing others, as in the exaltation of Patrick Henry and the denigration of Stokley Carmichael, the U.S. government perpetuates its moral authority through selective means (95).

This rising interest in national politics brought with it with a trip to Vietnam en route to a speaking engagement in Australia, during which he saw first-hand the devastation made possible by unredeemed politics: wars undertaken by one polity against another.[58] The Vietnam War exhibited what Stringfellow had earlier described as social norms masquerading as justice, as Vietnam became the site of a conflict of ideologies.[59] Fallen political procedure, thought intended as a means to maintain social life and to humanely harness technological advances has, through law, turned these advances against human existence:[60]

> There is unleashed in this society a kind of relentless, self-proliferating, all-consuming institutional process—institutional life, really—that assaults, dispirits, defeats and destroys human life. It does this even among…those men in positions of institutional leadership. They are left with titles but without authority, with the condiments of power but without control over the institutions they head.[61]

Rather than existing to facilitate human flourishing, fallen politics and the governments and wars created by them "destroy the witness of human resistance by preemption, by the fabrication of opposition, by a kind of absorption."[62] Politics, as the "biblical topic", has to do with the creation of a united polity which worships God through their individual redemption; fallen politics, by contrast, creates unity through the manipulation of human desires and through subsuming any and all opposition.[63]

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[58] Cf., "An American Tragedy", *Christian Living*, January 1967, 32. Stringfellow's itinerary of this year is found from Slocum, *Prophet of Justice*, xii.

[59] Stringfellow, "The Demonic in American Society", *Christianity and Crisis*, September 29, 1969: 246.

[60] Ibid., 247. Because law exists under the Fall, the best laws can do is to proliferate moral chaos.

[61] Ibid.

[62] "Must The Stones Cry Out?", *Christianity and Crisis*, October 30, 1972: 237.

[63] "Does America Need a Barmen Declaration? ", *Christianity and Crisis*, December 24, 1973, 275: "…political authority in America has little need to launch indoctrination or practice much ideological

Resistance to Death by the Word of God

We now turn to the means by which resistance to death is possible, and how a

sociality centered in the activity of the Word of God is made possible: "listening to the

Word of God". If creaturely life is given by God as 1) the conditions of human

discipleship, but is also 2) that which is under assault by the powers, then considering the

resistance to death and the restoration of human life must consider the ways in which the

Word of God operates in and through creaturely life.[64] Stringfellow's work is

characterized by consistent reference to the "Word of God", which for Stringfellow

designates the person and activity of God in a four-fold manner.[65]

As we have seen, because death assaults humanity in bodily ways, so our

redemption takes place in the contours of the individual biography. [66] For Stringfellow,

the Word impacts "any and every biography", meaning that all persons, as subjects of the

Word's operations in history, are "parables of the incarnation", creating pluriform sites of

resistance of death appropriate to each individual life. Christianity is distinguished

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manipulation because the available means, furnished by technology, of transmitting information have transfixing capabilities to paralyze human comprehension."   Cf. "Watergate and Romans 13", *Christianity and Crisis,* June 11, 1973, 110-112; "Technocracy and the Human Witness", *Sojourners* , November 1976, 14-18; "Open Letter to Jimmy Carter", *Sojourners*, October 1976, 7-8. Late in life, Stringfellow would enter the political realm on Block Island, where he and Towne moved in 1967, running for second warden of the island in 1978. Describing his vision of politics as centering around the "self-respect, dignity and scope of the town council and the integrity…of the town meeting", it becomes more clear how Stringfellow saw most large-scale politics as essentially dehumanizing, which is to say, leading toward death. Cf. Stringfellow, "Politics on Block Island", *Sojourners* 7 (January 1978): 17-18.

[64] *The Life of Worship and the Legal Profession*, 5: "Creation is God giving Himself to men, and the only way men may receive Him is in love, by giving themselves to Him. All that men have by which to love God is the life which He has given them and the dominion which He has offered them over the rest of Creation. Creation is the medium through which men may love God."

[65]Though fully articulated in 1982, Stringfellow's articulation of "Word of God" during the Vietnam War era is consistent with this later formulation.

[66] *A Simplicity of Faith*, 20: "any biography and every biography, is inherently theological, in the sense that it contains already—literally by virtue of the Incarnation—the news of the gospel whether or not anyone discerns that. We are each one of us parables."

singularly, according to Stringfellow, by the Incarnation, "the presence and vitality of the Word of God in common history, [which is] becomes most conscientious, comprehensible, and intentional in the event of Jesus Christ."[67]

Because of the Incarnation, the "historic, incarnate activity of the Word of God", the Word of God is known in its "militancy…both in cosmic dimensions of space and time and in each and every item of created life, including *your* personhood and *your* biography or mine."[68] Stringfellow's designation of the Word, thus, encompasses both personal and corporate aspects in a four-fold locus of the "Word of God": 1) "militant" in the world, 2) Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, 3) present in Scripture, and 4) present in liturgy.[69]

Before describing "the Word of God" as it relates to the resistance to death and as the creator of a renewed sociality, it is significant to note that for Stringfellow, these loci are *interlocking* loci of the "Word of God"; to "listen to the Word of God" is to listen to the Word in the various arenas in which the Word is present. For example, Scripture and liturgy are described as loci for this "listening", with the Word's presence in human existence and as Jesus Christ (the incarnation of the Word which enables human existence to be "parables of the Word") also described as loci for "listening" to the

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 21: "We are each one of us parables. …This world is the scene where the Word of God is; fallen creation—in all its scope, detail, and diversity—is the milieu in which the Word of God is disclosed and apprehended; Jesus Christ verifies how the Word of God may be beheld by those who have sight and hearing to notice and give heed to the Word of God." On the Word's presence in liturgy, see *Dissenter in a Great Society*, 154: "The liturgy, therefore, wherever it has substance in the Gospel, is a living, political event. The very example of salvation, it is the festival of life which foretells the fulfillment and maturity of all of life for all of time in *this* time. The liturgy *is* social action because it is the characteristic style of life for human beings in this world." Cf., "Liturgy as Political Action", in *A Keeper of the Word*, 123-126.

"Word of God".[70] Scripture, contrary to some Protestant articulations, does not fully

encompass the "Word of God", but rather attests *to* the living Word of God.[71]

In other words, the act of "listening to the Word of God"—the root activity of

the resistance to death—takes place in polymorphous circumstances; the Word which

Scripture speaks of "is free and active in this world and Christians can *only* comprehend

the Word out of their involvement in this world, as the Bible so redundantly testifies."[72]

In other words, the Word "militant" in the world, in the depths of our experience, and the

Word witnessed to in Scripture and liturgy, are one and the same, meaning that our

"listening" in these settings is mutually interpreting and inextricably linked, in a kind of

feedback loop between the church and the world.

Because the same Word heard in Scripture is at work in the world and in human

autobiographies, "the Word cannot be threatened by anything whatever given to men to

discover", and that "all these are welcome to Christians as enhancements of the

knowledge of the fullness of the Word of God and of the grandeur of men's access to the

Word."[73] "Uses of the Bible are subject to the discipline of God's own living Word as

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[70] In many ways, Stringfellow's formulation overcomes a traditional divide in Episcopalian life between commitments to a Social Gospel form of ecclesiology and a liturgical ecclesiology. Cf., David Hein and Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., *The Episcopalians*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004). From their earliest days, Episcopalians have vacillated between a highly liturgical form, divorced from extra-ecclesial concerns (exemplified by John Henry Hobart), and the transformation of society through ecclesial auspices (as exemplified by Vida Scudder). Cf. *The Episcopalians*, 64-72, 96-99.

[71] *Dissenter*, 21: "Jesus Christ verifies how the Word of God may be beheld by those who have sight and hearing to notice and give heed to the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-14)". It is these kinds of designations of Scripture that have led some to draw connections between Stringfellow and Karl Barth's work, who described Scriptures in similar terms. Cf. Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 21: "These men are the *biblical witnesses of the Word*, the prophetic men of the Old Testament and the apostolic men of the New." For how Stringfellow understood his own relationship to Barth's theology, see *A Second Birthday*, 151-152.

[72] *Count it All Joy*, 16, emphasis mine.

[73] Ibid. Scripture, according to Stringfellow, "reports the news of the Word of God manifest and militant in the events of this history" (17).

such and *not* the other way around…" Stringfellow argued, disabusing his readers of the notion that we control the Word in any sense, and reinforcing that this restoration of humanity is a work of the Word.[74] As Stringfellow argued:

> When a man is so naked, so helpless, so transparent, when a man so utterly ceases to try to justify himself or anyone or anything else, he first becomes vulnerable to the Word of God, which … saves men from manipulation, arrogance and folly in confront the Word of God in the Bible. When a man becomes that mature as a human being he is freed to listen and at last to welcome the Word in the Bible, and he is enlightened to discern the same Word of God at work now in the world, in (of all places!) his own existence as well as in (thank God!) all other life.[75]

The Word of God in this four-fold loci creates resistance to death, not by directing us away from the creation and the death which permeates it, but further *into* death—in Christ. Because death's primary effect is upon creaturely existence, resistance to death is not a matter of retreating *from* death; for Stringfellow, death is the constant state of human existence. But while death is ubiquitous, it is overcome by Jesus Christ—the Word incarnate—who "exercises power even over death in this world."[76] Through listening to the Word, "a man may be set free from bondage to death in this life here and now".

The renewing work of the Word of God, thus does not offer release *from* the conditions of creaturely life, i.e. a release from death as such; rather "death" in Christ means a renewed embrace of creaturely existence, both individual and collectively. In Jesus Christ, "there is a radical and integral relationship of all men and of all things", meaning in part that those in Christ are privy not to an escape from creation, but to a *renewed* creation, a creation which is not characterized by "separation of a person from

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[74] Ibid, 17.

[75] Ibid., 20.

[76] *Instead of Death*, 13.

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God" and "loss of identity and the forfeiture of his relationship with other persons and…with the whole rest of creation."[77] If in death, our existence is characterized by moral fragments and a loss of relations with ourselves and with creation, then existence in Christ is a reconstitution of that lost world, receiving "in the very midst of death…a new life free from the claim of death".[78]

This reconstitution of human sociality occurs as we engage the multiple senses of the Word. Viewing worship as "the celebration of life in its totality", and the "festival of creation" as an anticipation of history's eschatological consummation, Stringfellow configures the worship of the Word as "incessantly calling for the overturning—or, more literally, the transfiguring—of the incumbent order in society".[79] Resistance to death is enabled by one's "death in Christ", such that one becomes a participant in the renewed humanity, characterized by a renewed individual life, and a renewed participation in corporate life:

> The Holy Spirit denotes the living, acting presence and power of the Word of God in the history of this world: the presence and power which lives and acts now in unity and integrity with the works of the Word of God in creation, redemption and judgment, as well as in solidarity and identification with the advent, birth …..of Jesus Christ in this world.[80]

Resistance to death is thus appropriately named "the only *human* way to live". If the Word of God does not deliver *from* the circumstances of death, but delivers people *within* the world, then the Word-centered sociality is at its heart, a renewal of

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[77] Ibid., 36.

[78] Ibid., 38.

[79] *A Second Birthday*, 101. Cf. *Instead of Death*, 37-38, in which Stringfellow argues that those who die in Christ, i.e. those whose lives conform to the Word operative in Christ and the world (as confirmed by the witness of Scripture and liturgy) are those who undergo this "transfiguring" which frees human life from the loss of self produced by death.

[80] *Free in Obedience*, 100.

anthropology. Through fully engaging the Word of God in all of its senses, true

creaturely existence is restored in such a way that what is narrated in one's own

autobiographical overcoming of death coheres with Scripture's description of those

engaging in the work of the Word of God.[81] The interweaving aspects of "Word of God"

create, thus, a body of resistance to death which is centered neither in the church *nor* the

world, but which is found in *both* liturgical activity and "worldly" activity, as both the

creaturely existence of overcoming death and Scripture are aspects of the single Word of

God.

Stringfellow's social ontology, thus, is similar to that of Dorothy Day, in that both

envision humanity at large as the context for Christ's renewing action.[82] But in contrast

to Day, Stringfellow does not presume a liturgical orientation to this "community of

resistance"; for Stringfellow, because the "Word of God" is active in both the explicit

activity of the church and in the world, one cannot circumscribe *where* this new people is

being formed. Rather than envisioning (as with Yoder) a movement toward participating

in the binding/loosing community, or (with Day) a movement toward participation in the

Eucharist which speaks of Christ's humanity, Stringfellow views the individual

autobiography as disclosing the parameters of the Word's movement and direction.[83]

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[81] For example, as the Christian resistance to the Nazis engaged the "Word in creation" (Stringfellow's frequent name for the Holy Spirit), their lives were joined to the Word witnessed by Scripture: "In Bible study within the anti-Nazi Resistance there was an edification of the new, or renewed, life to which human beings are incessantly called by God—or, if you wish it put differently, by the event of their own humanity in this world—and there was, thus, a witness which is veritably incorporated into the original biblical witness", in *An Ethic*, 120.

[82] Stringfellow speaks explicitly of this as Christian redemption, but because the Word is operative in human autobiography, he understands this—I contend—to be dependent upon the activity of the Word and not primarily the consequence of the church's proclamation.

[83] *A Simplicity of Faith*, 20: "any biography and every biography, is inherently theological, in the sense that it contains already—literally by virtue of the Incarnation—the news of the gospel whether or not

This full "creaturehood", restored to people by the Word of God, proceeds along autobiographical lines, particular to the person's existence, overcoming death in the particular parameters of their existence. Because death is a ubiquitous reality, there is not a *locale*—church or world—which is free from death and the powers; accordingly, there is not a locale—church or world—in which one can singularly identify this "community of resistance". The problems of this will be discussed in the section on ecclesiology, but for now, two observations should be made with regards to the nature of this renewed humanity which is created by the Word.

First, because the activity of the Word occurs in and through human autobiography, the shape of this humanity is an ongoing act of discernment, changing as the person changes. As Stringfellow located the activity of the Word in the various stages of his own illness and the death of Anthony Towne, for example, there is always the presumption that naming the manner of the Word's redemption is not something which is "captured", but an identity which must be received constantly. This is not, as has been suggested, a kind of "situation ethics" in which moral choices are made appropriate to the existential moment;[84] rather, Stringfellow's description of the Word's renewal of humanity sociality is a reorientation of what the *moment* is, now the occasion of moving the person from death to life rather than an occasion for their further decay.

Secondly, this description of a renewed sociality means that naming the limits of this sociality are not entirely knowable. Whereas for Day, the "Mystical Body" describes a particular location within the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church, such

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anyone discerns that. We are each one of us parables." Cf. Dancer, 74-86, on Stringfellow's understanding of his own biography as a theological disclosure of the Word in his life.

[84] Gregory Bezilla,. "William Stringfellow's Theology and Ethics of Eschatological Existence" (M.Div thesis, Emory University, 1998), 63ff.

definition is not possible for Stringfellow. Because the Word who renews human existence is present as the Word within the world, but also within the liturgy and in the Scripture, there is a unified movement to the Word in all aspects of existence. Because for Stringfellow, the restoration of human creaturehood is Christological, the "incarnational" renewal of humanity occurs in all aspects of a person's life—in their autobiography, their incorporation into the church, and in daily life.

Stringfellow is at times cagey as to whether or not, for example, this renewal of sociality requires a confession of faith.[85] Because this renewal of humanity is the act of a free Word of God, in the contours of "all human biography", the question must be begged as to whether Stringfellow is simply articulating a political version of Rahner's "anonymous Christian". Where I take this concern to be in some ways beside the point for Stringfellow is that for him, the renewal of human existence is only operative because of the free Word attested to in Scripture and seen in Jesus Christ. As such, while this new humanity is not circumscribed by the liturgy of the church, this new humanity is not possible *apart from* the Christ witnessed to in the Scriptures of the church, creating a necessary connection between the redemption understood within an individual's life and the redemption proclaimed in the liturgy and Scripture.

As I have suggested, the immediate problem with Stringfellow's social ontology is that there seems to be no way to circumscribe this kind of sociality; at its extreme, "sociality" could be read as simply an aggregate of individual narratives. What prevents such a reading is that "sociality" for Stringfellow, I argue, is that renewal of human

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[85] It would appear that, given the confessional nature of this redemption, i.e. by Christ, that such a renewal would require confession. And yet, Stringfellow designates the work of Christ at work in "every" biography.

sociality is first a foremost a work of the Word; as such, the unity of the disparate

individuals rests not in their *visible* identity with one another as much as in their being

redeemed by the same Word alongside one another.[86] What Stringfellow is concerned

with articulating is not primarily our ability to circumscribe the movement of the Word,

but rather the way in which the Word's activity is for the sake of all humanity, of which

the church is an integral (but not exclusive) portion.

We now turn to Stringfellow's writings on nonviolence, to understand one aspect

of "listening to the Word" which for Stringfellow is part of the "resistance to death".

Insofar as a renewed "politic" or "community of resistance" only occurs as one actively

listens and responds to the Word in the world, activities which bear witness to the

renewing work of the Word against the principalities of death (such as war and the draft)

are intrinsic to "listening to the Word". Though ambivalent about certain forms of

nonviolence, Stringfellow came to see that, in his world and his day, nonviolent

opposition to war was one of these acts which bore witness to the presence of a renewed

humanity by the Word, militant within the world.

Nonviolence: Living Humanly in the World

One of the consequences of Stringfellow's vision of resistance to death is that

how this happens must be negotiated *as* one "listens to the Word" in its four-fold sense,

and not *a priori* (as "ideologies" do). Because of this presupposition, Stringfellow turned

toward commending nonviolence as a consequence of "listening to the Word" in America

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[86] For a critique of this kind of divorce between Christ's assumption of humanity and the form which humanity takes, cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, DBWE 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 217-218: "The body of Jesus Christ is identical with the new humanity which he has assumed. The body of Christ is his church-community. Jesus Christ at the same time is himself and his church community."

during the Vietnam War Era, despite his critiques early in his writings of "ideological pacifism".

Nonviolence for Stringfellow, in contrast to Day and Yoder, was not a practice which was able to be univocally commended as bearing witness to the "new humanity" which Christ was creating. In contrast to Yoder, Stringfellow was perfectly willing to concede that the presence of the Word in creation could involve a *rejection* of nonviolence at times, and was not intrinsically tied to the presence of the Word's "community of resistance".[87] And though Stringfellow, like Day, sees Christ's incarnation as implicating all of human existence, he does not view the nonviolence of Christ as normative for all humanity. Rather, nonviolent resistance to war was viewed as the appropriate means of bearing witness to Christ's renewal of human life *during that time*.

In this section, I will trace how he arrived at a qualified form of nonviolence, in two steps. First, I will outline his early comments regarding absolute nonviolence, establishing what nonviolence *cannot* mean. Specifically, nonviolence cannot oppose the emergence of a truly human politic; if the Word is operative among humanity as a response to the Word's renewal of human life, then nonviolence must contribute to the genuine promotion of politics, and cannot detach itself from an ongoing discernment as to whether nonviolence is appropriate to this task *today*. Secondly, I will describe Stringfellow's approval of nonviolence. Through his visit to Vietnam in 1966 and, more dramatically, through his friendship with Daniel Berrigan, Stringfellow found a way to

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[87] As we shall see, one of Stringfellow's favored counter-examples to absolute pacifism was that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I have argued elsewhere that in Bonhoeffer's *Ethics*, war is a problem for creation, much akin to what Stringfellow will articulate. Cf. Myles Werntz, "War in Christ's World: Bonhoeffer and Just Peacemaking on War and Christology", *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 50, no.1 (2011): 90-96.

articulate nonviolence as a practice which is the consequence of "listening to the Word".

In this second step, I will describe how nonviolence is one practice which bears witness

to an appropriate mode of Christian "resistance to death" and to the kind of human

sociality which is redeemed by the Word.

Nonviolence: Caveats and Suspicions

Regarding Stringfellow's thought on the possibility of nonviolence, three

tendencies must be avoided. First, we must not approach him as if he were not open

toward nonviolence. Stanley Hauerwas at times exhibits this tendency, writing:

> no pacifist himself, Stringfellow saw the worship of war through the power of the
> modern nation-state clearly as one of the most determinative signs of the
> perversion of the powers, yet he identified the violence of war as but one of the
> "strategems of the demonic power that aim at "the dehumanization of human
> life".[88]

While true that Stringfellow saw war as one of the means by which the powers operate

determinately upon human life, the claim that Stringfellow was "no pacifist" can be a

misleading description. Stringfellow wrote at length about his understanding of

nonviolence as one of those means by which the powers of death were resisted, while

remaining vigilant in arguing that not *every* form of nonviolence bears witness to the

Word's redemption of humanity. [89]

Secondly, Stringfellow cannot be cast as a pacifist of the absolutist persuasion,

despite his constant writings against war and the ways in which war is a consequence of a

corrupted form of political life. Whatever changes occurred within his thinking on the

possibility of nonviolence later in his life, his position on nonviolence never approaches

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[88] Stanley Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front*: *Theological Engagements with the Secular*
(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 111.

[89] Cf., Stringfellow, *Ethic for Christians*, 145-148.

anything akin to absolutist nonviolence. Walter Wink suggests, on the basis of

conversations with Stringfellow prior to his death in 1985 that:

> [Stringfellow] had moved to a more principled embrace of nonviolence, not as an
> abstract moral absolute, but as the unavoidable logic of his own understanding of
> the dominion and ubiquity of death. And that is, in fact, the logic of his entire
> enterprise.[90]

On the one hand, Wink is correct to assert that Stringfellow's late-in-life embrace of

nonviolence was commensurate with his opposition to death. However, it was not on the

basis of the "unavoidable logic" that Stringfellow made this move, but on the basis of

"listening to the Word"; to say that Stringfellow's logic moved him to nonviolence would

appear to Stringfellow to make an idol of one's own reasoning.

Finally, we must not argue that his nonviolence was the result of failed just war

thinking, that nonviolence was the runner-up to the vanishing possibility of a just war.[91]

Stringfellow's writings follow certain just-war trajectories, particularly in his concern for

proper authority and legitimacy of governments. But for Stringfellow, violence initiated

by national entities was indicative of the *failure* of a political entity.[92] Any claim by a

government to be "just" in its warmaking is a capitulation to the "necessary" logic of

death.[93]

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[90] Walter Wink, "Stringfellow on the Powers", in *Radical Christian, Exemplary Lawyer: Honoring William* Stringfellow, ed. Andrew W. McThenia (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 111.

[91] "[Stringfellow's] perspective gave much sharper focus and urgency to their efforts to speak about the Vietnam War in the usual categories of the just war theory, which calls for the balancing of the various evils that are inherent in military violence", in Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., "The Challenge of Peace in an Age of Desert Storm Troopers", in *Radical Christian*, 148.

[92] Cf., *Conscience and Obedience*, 38: "the opposition (notably that of confessing Christians) to the war and to the war enterprise in Southeast Asia during the late nineteen sixties upheld the position that the criminal policy and unconstitutional conduct of the war exposed incumbent political authority…as illegitimate."

[93] Ibid., 40-41.

As I have previously indicated, Stringfellow's early critiques of nonviolence stemmed from his understanding of the way in which death proliferates itself through ethical judgment as a kind of "ideology".[94] For Stringfellow, ethical judgment which is not rooted in the "empirical" world in which the Word of God is operative is unable to reason truthfully; any form of foundationalist reasoning which determines *a priori* the validity of nonviolence is named by Stringfellow as "*ideological* pacifism", a nonviolence which was functioning as a principality. Nonviolence which preemptively (or "ideologically") judges that violence *cannot* be a resistance to the powers of death has, in other words, itself become one of the powers.

Stringfellow's statements that he was not "an ideological pacifist" have been taken by Marshall Johnston takes to be a statement against pacifism, in that pacifism places limits on the Word's movement within history.[95] To reiterate Stringfellow's position from a 1966 essay:

> I am not an ideological pacifist, nor do I believe that a Christian may never be involved in war. I affirm the Christians who fought in the anti-Nazi underground, among many other instances that might be cited. I am only saying that how a particular war is regarded is a matter only disclosed in God's own judgment and Christians are not called upon to second guess that judgment."[96]

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[94] As Robert Boak Slocum, "William Stringfellow and the Christian Witness Against Death", *Anglican Theological Review* 77, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 173-186 has described it, "The powers of death threaten the person with loss of identity and the seductive undermining of moral and rational faculties" (177).

[95] Johnston, 292-294. Johnston asserts this on the basis of an unpublished manuscript of Stringfellow's entitled "The Military Chaplaincy", in which Stringfellow argues that the reign of death through governments is so pronounced that the conditions of legitimate governance required by the just war tradition are undermined. Cf., Stringfellow, *An Ethic*, 131: "The common implication of all human beings in all violence…refutes the intricate sophistry, still practiced in the name of the Church, concerning "just wars" or any other resort to violent means for assertedly good ends."

[96] Stringfellow, "The Case Against Christendom and The Case Against Pierre Berton", in *The Restless Church: A Response to the Comfortable Pew*, ed. William Kilbourn (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1966), 15. Cf., "Harlem, Rebellion, and Resurrection, *Christian Century*, December 11, 1970, 1348.

This being said, Stringfellow acknowledged that those engaging in nonviolence against war efforts were, at times, emblematic of what the church at large should be doing—rendering its allegiance to God rather than to the nation; Stringfellow did not go so far as to commend this course absolutely, however.[97] Because Christians remain beholden to the Word of God, called to listen to the Word in each and every situation, participation in war cannot be ruled out. In commenting on Bonhoeffer's involvement with the *Abwehr*, Stringfellow argued that:

> Bonhoeffer's witness has helped to expose the simplicity of ideological pacifism as an answer to the question of whether there can ever been Christian involvement in explicit violence. Just as there were among the first century confessing Christians those who identified with the Jewish zealots in the advocacy of violent tactics against the Roman State, so Bonhoeffer's ethics undo the hypothetical imperatives of doctrinaire or pietistic pacifism.[98]

What is to be avoided in other words is an *ideological* nonviolence which is not contingent upon the Word who moves and sustains the world, determining nonviolence as an *a priori* mode of social engagement.

His writings on nonviolence during the Civil Rights movement will serve to illustrate what nonviolence *cannot* mean for Stringfellow. Seeing the Civil Rights movement as "an authentic revolution", i.e., the opportunity for a reordering of the American social system, the question for Stringfellow was not *whether* a new social order should be established, but *how*—violently or peaceably; when the opportunity arises within our existence for a new order, the question about means cannot be the first

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[97] *Free in Obedience*, 86.

[98] *An Ethic*, 132. I would argue that this is in some ways a misreading of Bonhoeffer's pacifism. On the one hand, Stringfellow is correct to assert that nonviolence for Bonhoeffer always had to take a concrete form. On the other hand, however, Bonhoeffer's stance could hardly be equated with that of the "zealots" of Jesus' day. Rather, Bonhoeffer saw his own involvement in the *Abwehr* plot to assassinate Hitler as part of the church's call to be a suffering presence in the world, to the point of taking on guilt on behalf of others. Cf. Larry Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 170-173.

consideration.[99] Whites, according to Stringfellow, should "[suffer] the hostility and rejection" of the African-American community if they desired actual reconciliation.[100] The advocacy of nonviolence by whites was in his view pre-empting an emerging Black political voice, and pre-determining how reconciliation could happen rather than letting reconciliation take its course. Calling Martin Luther King Jr. "the best friend white Americans have ever had",[101] Stringfellow saw nonviolent resistance in the Civil Rights struggle distracting the movement from tactics which might empirically lead to a new order, such as economic boycotts and sanctions.[102]

Stringfellow continued to write approvingly of the role of violence in social change in a number of writings prior to 1967. Stringfellow, for example, did not condemn spontaneous riots in Selma, Alabama, calling the riots a "violence of despair", one of the only ways to confront ethics of acquisition.[103] A similar position is seen in Stringfellow's view of the violence in the "undisciplined, chaotic"1966 Watts Riots, describing the violence of the riots as the mirror image to others' apathetic withdrawal from the Watts neighborhood.[104] Likewise, the self-immolations of Vietnam protesters met with his approval. Similar to way that the violence of the riots were approved because it expressed the frustrations of an oppressed people, the immolations were

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[99] *My People is the Enemy*, 128.

[100] Ibid., 129.

[101] Ibid., 141.

[102] Ibid., 140.

[103] Stringfellow, "The Violence of Despair", *Notre Dame Lawyer* 40 (1965): 528.

[104] Stringfellow, "The Ethics of Violence", *Cross Beat*, March 1966: 3-6.

approved because of their political intention and in their mode of bodily resistance to the powers.[105]

As Stringfellow explained, the "martyrdoms" of the protesters were a "surrender to death in adherence to a cause thought to be of greater moral significance than the life sacrificed", testifying to "the absolution of men from the worship of death, which is precisely the meaning for men of the Resurrection of Christ."[106] In the same way that the riots were a response to oppressive politics, so the immolations stood as a sign of judgment upon a national political system which *required* immolation for protests to be noticed; a society which was "engaged in self-immolation" by valuing property over people and idolatry over God cannot help but *produce* immolations.[107]

In sum, while violence was affirmed as meaningful protest option for Stringfellow, violent protest always described an intrinsically *negative* act, expressing either despair, or as the condemnation of an existing politic, but nothing more.[108] Envisioned only a first step, as that which would "emancipate whites from the prison of their own complacency and paternalism" or move society toward a "demythologizing of the Great Society", violence is not described by Stringfellow as an act which can sustain

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[105] *Dissenter in a Great Society*, 81-82.

[106] Ibid., 86.

[107] Ibid., 86-87. One could say that their resistance conformed to the ways the prophetic judgment of God is rendered in Scripture, in that prophetic utterances of judgment in the Old Testament were bodily performances. Cf. Thomas W. Overholt, "Seeing is Believing: The Social Setting of Prophetic Acts of Power", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 23 (1982), 3-31. For an analysis of the performative nature of violence during Vietnam, see Joel Rhodes, *The Voice of Violence: Performative Violence as Protest in the Vietnam Era* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 2001).

[108] "The Great Society as a Myth", *Dialog* 5, no.4 (Autumn 1966): 252-257. At best, violence directed against a great "blasphemy" of poverty can hope to be "absolved" by social programs such as President Johnson's "Great Society" (257).

or generate humane politics.[109] In fact, whenever violence is used for the *construction* of

political life, Stringfellow argued, it perpetuates an unbiblical mythology:

> If America goes to war, it is in the name of securing peace, and not for conquest
> or aggrandizement. If the U.S. Marines occupy a Latin American capital, it is for
> the sake of safeguarding the self-determination of the Latin Americans…It is an
> ambiguous universe that this mythology propounds, in which God rules with the
> United States as His favorite surrogate, and in which what is right always
> triumphs and therefore, what does in fact triumph must be right. Theologically, of
> course, such a crude view is ridiculously unbiblical…[110]

Though the use of *violence* for constructive politics was ruled out, it remained to

be seen for Stringfellow that *nonviolence* could serve a true creaturely politic, because of

the objections I have already described. As the Vietnam War became more problematic

for American political life, Stringfellow's analysis turned toward examining war as a

threat to human sociality. This led Stringfellow to reconsider nonviolence as consistent

with the shape of a renewed human politic and with "listening to the Word". It is to these

writings which we will now turn.

Nonviolence: the Witness to the Word's Renewal of Humanity

In *Dissenter in a Great Society*, written in early 1966, Stringfellow had broached

the question of whether nonviolent protest could be affirmed as a witness to a renewed

politic. Despite his qualms about nonviolence, he saw the peace movement against

Vietnam as a stark contrast to "the militarization of the police", designed to quash dissent

to the government; whereas the United States government sought to equate unified

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[109] "Great Society", 257. Cf., *Dissenter in a Great Society*, 121-123, in which Stringfellow
remarks that a "day of wrath" may be coming in which blacks come after whites. In that day, Stringfellow
remarks that it will be incumbent upon white Christians to not resist violence, that "the Cross means the gift
of love even to one's own enemy—even to the one who would take one's life." (122).

[110] Ibid., 254.

political life with a lack of dissent, nonviolent protest witnessed to the possibility of a

politics characterized by dissent and diversity of opinion.[111]

The Vietnam War was quickly becoming the predominant context into which the

church, as the people witnessing to the "community of resistance to death", must

speak.[112] The reconciliation communicated in Christian worship, Stringfellow wrote, was

not "private and personal so much as it is public and political, because reconciliation is a

new estate in which all relationships without exception or excuse are transfigured",

meaning that the reconciliation spoken of in worship is matched in the world; if the Word

is present in all of existence, as "the event of Jesus Christ", then this means embracing

reconciling activity in politics and public life.[113] As such, the Vietnam War could not be

ignored by Christians seeking to be faithful to the Word in today's world.

As the Vietnam War escalated in the mid-1960s, war and its mechanisms became

a more prominent an example of death for Stringfellow, and thus a greater opportunity to

make known in public what Christian worship spoke of explicitly.[114] Through

conscription and through the expansion of the "military-industrial-scientific principality",

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[111] On this contrast, cf., *Dissenter in a Great Society*, 76-77. As Stringfellow noted, "That is why I am grateful for *every* movement of protest which has a serious purpose, whether I happen to concur with a particular protest or not", ibid., 79. It was with Stringfellow's *The Bishop Pike Affair*—his first book after his trip to Vietnam—that he begins to suggest nonviolent protest as an act which witnesses of the Word's activity in the world. William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, *The Bishop Pike Affair: Scandals of Conscience and Heresy, Relevance and Solemnity in the Contemporary Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) reflects this transition from issues of racism to issues of war. The book, which chronicles the heresy trials of Episcopal bishop James Pike, focuses largely on the relationship between social action and faith, asserting in short that Pike's trial was occasioned by Pike's desire to engage the issues of his day, seeing orthodoxy as related to social involvement rather than simply creedal affirmations. The majority of the book deals with Pike's stand on racial issues, suggesting that the immanent issue of the Vietnam War as the next issue which will engulf the Episcopal Church (194).

[112] *Bishop Pike*., 125.

[113] Ibid., 131-132.

[114] "The Demonic in American Society", *Christianity and Crisis*, September 29, 1969, 244-247 (245).

the Vietnam War had begun to permeate society.[115] Using a multi-pronged approach, the

United States government was moving citizens to either directly contribute to the war—

through conscription and punishment of draft protesters—or indirectly contribute to the

war—through educational facilities supporting war efforts and entertainment events

which distracted from the government's actions. Society was, in other words, becoming

"militarized", in the sense that all human society was now being oriented toward military

productions which "assaults, dispirits, defeats, and destroys human life."[116]

Again, what was central to Stringfellow's opposition to war was that war, as a

principality of death, conforms and conscripts people's bodily life, one of the sites of the

Word's redemption.[117] This assault upon humanity was a theological problem, in that

through war, "the surrogates of death" are enabling the "moral power" of death to

become even more ascendant in the life of the nation.[118] War, in Stringfellow's words,

enables a society in which "death becomes the dominant social purpose".[119] Violence, in

such a society, becomes the epitome of political activity rather than the exception; rather

than being a tool to open a space for political change, violence has become that which

political institutions now monopolize for sustaining the status quo.[120]

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[115] Ibid., 246.

[116] Ibid., 247.

[117] Whether a war can be prosecuted which *does not* violate this central criteria for Stringfellow remains to be seen, but in any event, Stringfellow remained open to Christian involvement in war. Cf., *An Ethic for Aliens*, 131-133, authored in 1973, after Stringfellow's turn against the Vietnam Conflict. Comparison with the work of Michel Foucault's work on the ways in which disciplinary power forms bodily actions, behaviors, and mindsets, would be instructive here. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Suveiller et Punir*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), trans. Alan Sheridan and reprinted as *Discipline and Punish*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

[118] "Why is Novak So Uptight?", *Christianity and Crisis* 30, November 30, 1970, 259.

[119] Ibid.

In 1966, Stringfellow took a trip to Vietnam, the first of two turning points in his thinking about the nature of war and nonviolence. The trip, undertaken "to observe, to listen and hopefully, to learn", unexpectedly "converted [Stringfellow] to radical opposition to the American war there".[121] Through observing troop movements and the Vietnamese people first-hand, Stringfellow came to the conclusion that the war in Vietnam was operating in the manner in which he had initially critiqued nonviolence, namely, by presuming divine favor:

> It is, for Americans, gruesomely dramatized in Vietnam, where the initial involvement and the subsequent escalations were so vainglorious, so certain of the commendation of God's judgment upon the nation, so assertedly righteous that, now, to extricate the country's troops and wealth from the misadventure not only taxes the credibility of the nation but also ridicules the probity of God.[122]

The nonviolent opposition to the war which Stringfellow had observed prior to his trip to Vietnam, however, often lacked an explicitly Christian base. While "the Christian pacifist movement has been reactivated through the protests against the war", he noted that the churches as a whole "have been timid, tardy and vacuous in their reactions to this most gruesome war".[123] This distance between nonviolence (which participated in the resistance to death) and Christian practitioners would soon close for Stringfellow.

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[120] "The Law, the Church, and the Needs of Society", *Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual convention of the Canon Law Society of America* (1970), 50: "It is a measure of the illegitimacy of the States' action in America today that official violence would seek to capture and confine the very citizens who have an influence to deter or mitigate the unofficial violence in this land."

[121] *A Second Birthday*, 37, 40. As one who described his approach as "empirical", observing what the Word was doing in the world, such first-hand observation of the war provided a basis for opposition which ideology could not.

[122] Ibid., 87.

[123] "An American Tragedy", *Christian Living* , January 1967, 32. Stringfellow's assessment of a lack of Christian nonviolent responses to war most likely reflects an ignorance of what movements were actually underway at that time. It was not until 1965 that a national organization of clergy opposed to Vietnam emerged, known as CALCAV (Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam), and headed by Robert McAfee Brown. For a history of CALCAV, see Mitchell Hall, *Because of the Their Faith:*

The second turning point in Stringfellow's thinking nonviolence during this time

was his friendship with Daniel and Philip Berrigan. Stringfellow's association began

prior to the Berrigans' rise to national prominence in 1968, when the Berrigans were

involved in the burning of draft files with homemade napalm, in Catonsville,

Maryland.[124] Following this event, the Berrigans were tried on the charges of destruction

of government property and interference with the Selective Service Act, and convicted;[125]

rather than go to prison, however, Daniel Berrigan went underground, visiting

Stringfellow and Towne's home on Block Island on numerous occasions prior to his

arrest there on August 11, 1970.[126]

In many ways, Berrigan's approach anticipated many of the objections

Stringfellow had posed in the past to nonviolence. First, as I have argued, resistance to

death for Stringfellow is not escaping the world, but fully *embracing* the world as the

location in which one dies in Christ and "listens to the Word"; accordingly, Stringfellow

had chastised the moral presumption of many forms of nonviolence for their ideological

stances, and refusal to think "empirically" about violence. Berrigan, however, articulated

nonviolent resistance to war as "a kind of life outside the law of Death itself" which

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CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). But as we have seen with Yoder and Day already, American Christianity had a long history of nonviolence prior to Stringfellow. For a critical history of four of the most prominent national organizations in this respect (all of which date back to before the First World War), see Guenter Lewy, *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1988).

[124] In his elegy to Stringfellow, Daniel Berrigan provides no date for their initial meeting in "To Celebrate the Death and Life of William Stringfellow", *Religion and Intellectual Life* 2, no. 4(Summer 1985): 71-74, simply saying that his friendship "dates notoriously from 1970". However, in 1965, Stringfellow wrote the introduction to Daniel Berrigan, *They Call Us Dead Men: Reflections on Life and Conscience* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1965), 11-13.

[125] *Suspect Tenderness: The Ethics of the Berrigan Witness* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1971), 118.

[126] Ibid. Stringfellow and Towne, subsequent to Daniel Berrigan's re-arrest, were charged with harboring a fugitive, though the charges were later dropped.

participates in Jesus' own life, describing nonviolence as a consequential kind of act which negates death and witnesses to new life.[127] In contrast to "death as a kind of universal military service", which corrupts God's intention for life, Berrigan argued that the nonviolent way of Jesus "preferred to suffer violence…rather than to inflict it on others."[128] Secondly, as Stringfellow had earlier questioned if nonviolence was an appropriate means of articulating a new human social possibility, so Berrigan was less concerned with the "conventional ethics" in planning the Catonsville action, but rather with "how he and the others could most effectively perpetuate their witness against the war, their ministry for peace."[129] Third, whereas Stringfellow had complained that much nonviolence had been non-Christian in its adoption of Gandhian strategems, Daniel Berrigan had plotted to appeal to the Pope in the wake of the action, in order to draw the Church universal more directly into the struggle against the war.[130]

For Stringfellow, the conflict between the death embodied by a militarized society—a deformed society in which death had become a prominent national value—and the activity of the Word of God in the world was displayed no place more clearly than in the clash between Daniel and Philip Berrigan and the United States government. The treatment of the "peaceful and non-violent" Berrigan brothers by the authorities was

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[127] Ibid., 5. Cf., 51, Stringfellow's description of Berrigan's position: "The power of death is powerless in the face of the nonviolent intransigence of Christ."

[128] Ibid., 6.

[129] Ibid., 21.

[130] Ibid., 22. Cf., ibid., 50: "Dan had met often with groups concerned to gather. These gatherings had been loosely in the form of what Christians like to call retreats. But the ingathering had been more ambitious than is customary within the caution of Christian tradition. The Body of Christ had been defined so exhaustively as to lack exclusions. Whoever breathed was welcome."

for Stringfellow exemplary of the government's attitude toward anyone who would

attempt to mitigate the exercise of violence and death:

> The public action of the Berrigans starts as a protracted, patient, peaceful, reasoned, conscientious, verbal protest against illegitimate policies of successive presidential administrations that have entrapped the nation in the most vainglorious war of all…Everyone must be shown by the way these priests are prosecuted and punished that the only allowable responses to illegitimate authority is acquiescence or silence or obeisance.[131]

The Berrigans' nonviolent witness was emblematic of the approach which the Church

should embody in such times: confronting emissaries of death which endangered

creaturely life through tactics which specifically counter the ability of the principality to

perpetuate death.[132] Despite Stringfellow's qualms with other pacifist groups, he wrote

favorably of the nonviolence exhibited by the Berrigans' witness:

> I am persuaded as a Christian that resort to violence to topple the idol of death in the state and in society invariably results in idolatry of death in some refurbished form. This is, in truth, the central theological issue of our time. It is the point at which ethics and eschatology meet, for if the practice of violence, even in the name of revolution, is hopeless, the practice of nonviolence, even where it seems unavailing, represents a most extraordinary hope.[133]

This is not to say that one must be committed to nonviolence in order to be Christian, but

rather that the nonviolence of the Berrigans witnesses to a Christian existence which is

directly counter to the power of death. What makes one a Christian, as we have seen, is

identification with Jesus in death, the "reconciliation of his own life with the world", in

contrast to the violent and unreconciled way of Barabbas which breeds division among

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[131] Ibid., 49-50.

[132] Ibid., 51. Stringfellow specifically looks to the Berrigans' burning of draft cards as this kind of effective counter to the draft, one of the principalities of death. While the Church need not emulate the specific tactics of the Berrigans, Stringfellow thought that it should follow their lead in confronting the "illegitimacy in the State".

[133] Stringfellow, "Harlem, Rebellion and Resurrection", *Christian Century* 87, no. 45 (November 11, 1970):1348.

humanity.[134] While violence at one point retained an instrumental function for

Stringfellow, by the late 1960s, nonviolence more closely cohered with Stringfellow's

vision of "living humanly" and "resisting death".

Stringfellow's description of the Berrigans' act as "nonviolent" requires

remembering that, for Stringfellow, violence is that which speaks of death (as in the case

of the "violence of despair"), or that which moves people toward death (as in the case of

the draft and the militarization of society). In other words, the involvement of Christians

in resistance to death in ways which promote humanization in opposition to death, is, by

definition, not violent. As Stringfellow would put it, "violence is the undoing of

Creation", the clashing between the work of God and the work of fallen humanity.[135]

Whereas for Dorothy Day, the Catonsville action diverged from traditional nonviolence,

in that nonviolence for her was part of a personalist vision leading to the formation of

persons of conscience, for Stringfellow, the Catonsville action was the exemplification of

nonviolence because of its negation of death's ability to extend into more corners of

human life, by resisting the draft and destroying draft mechanisms.

In a 1970 sermon, following the Berrigan's arrest, Stringfellow continued this

argument, naming the nonviolent witness of the Berrigans as descriptive of "the

resurrection in a political context", in contrast to the violence of the state, whose only

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[134] Stringfellow, "Jesus the Criminal", *Chritianity and Crisis*, June 8, 1970: 121.

[135] Stringfellow, "Must the Stones Cry Out?", *Christianity and Crisis*, October 30, 1972: 234. Stringfellow is able to name Daniel Berrigan's arson as a "nonviolent" act, in that the destruction of draft cards involved both the freedom of potential draftees away from death, and in doing so, did not destroy persons. Cf. William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, *Suspect Tenderness*, 75: …"the Berrigan brothers…[had taken] effective precautions against their action causing violence or any harm to human beings…" Cf. "The Acts of the Apostles (Continued)", *Christian Century* 98, no. 11 (April 1, 1981): 341-342, and "The State, The Church and the Reality of Conscience", *IDOC Internazionale* 31, (September 11, 1971): 19-26.

sanction is death.[136] Speaking of the resurrection and the resurrection community is an

affront to the war-making State, in that "the resurrection exposes the subservience of the

State to death as the moral purpose of the society which the State purports to rule." The

Catonsville action, having taking care that their action not cause "violence or any harm to

human beings", was done in opposition to the death exemplified by war; those

participating in the action were subsequently persecuted by death.[137] Such opposition is

inevitable for those whose actions conform to the resurrection of Christ:

> To fail or refuse to act against [the power of death incarnate in the State] amounts
> to an abdication of one's humanness, a renunciation of the gift of one's own life, as
> well as a rejection of the lives of other human beings…In the face of that the only
> way no matter how the State judges or what the State does—is to live in the
> authority over death which the resurrection is.[138]

Thus, nonviolence is that form of resistance to war was clearly displayed the Christian

witness against death, and of the Christian hope for the renewal of human sociality:

> Revolutionary violence which overthrows the violence of the State can itself only
> become a regime of violence. Tactics cannot be severe from ethics, and imitation
> of the enemy is the most common way in which ideology has been confounded,
> idealism corrupted, and revolutions rendered futile. The Christian perseveres in
> nonviolent actions of protest and resistance—shunning whatever increases the
> work of death—in the hope of thereby calling into being new forms of life in
> society.[139]

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[136] *Suspect Tenderness*, 73. Cf., 61-64 for Stringfellow's sermon on Jesus as criminal, in October 1969, with the recently convicted Daniel Berrigan serving as the liturgist at the service. Linking Barabbas with violent revolutionaries such as the Weathermen, Stringfellow called the violent form of revolt "unrevolutionary", in that it generates death rather than resisting it. By contrast, the revolution of Christ "is constantly welcoming the gift of human life, for himself and for all men, by exposing, opposing and overturning all that betrays, entraps, or attempts to kill human life", with militarization of national life as the occasion by which the truly Christian revolution can be named.

[137] Ibid., 75.

[138] Ibid., 76.

[139] Ibid., 83-84.

Again, these "new forms of life in society" were the undergirding justification for nonviolence, in that nonviolence bears witness to a sociality which is opposed to death, speaking in hope of a new way of humanity emerging in the midst of violence:

> [W]e persevere, as Christians, and, simply as human beings, in nonviolence. We do so whether or not the witness is understood or distinguished as such by the political authorities, and whether or not any revolutionaries advocating violence it effective. We do so because nonviolence has become the *only* way in America, today, to express hope for human life in society, and transcending that, to anticipate an eschatological hope.[140]

Humanity under the power of death makes well-intended moral judgments which only perpetuated death, whereas those who "listen to the Word" are able to engage reason and follow conscience as an outworking of the Spirit. Nonviolence is accordingly exercised as the response of today which witnesses to the work of the Word of God in the world, a Word creating a new humanity free from death, in hope for the day when what is happening in part will be consummated in full.[141]

For Stringfellow, viewing nonviolence as an act of hope is possible only if history is read through the lens of Christ's creation of new life within the world. Christopher Rowland has described this hermeneutic as an "apocalyptic hermeneutic", in which "faith breaks out of the linear conceptions of time and confounds sequential doctrine of history…[encompassing] all things as in a single moment."[142] As Stringfellow argued:

> [I]n the timely coincidence of the apocalyptic and eschatological, biblical people live in vigilance and consolation. Biblical living means watching for and hoping for the next advent of Jesus Christ. Biblical ethics, when all is said and done, concerns his dominion on behalf of human life over time and history…biblical politics has to do with acting now in anticipation of the vindication of Christ as

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[140] Ibid., 111.

[141] Ibid.

[142] Christopher Rowland, "William Stringfellow's Apocalpytic Hermeneutics", in *William Stringfellow in Anglo-American Perspective*, 140. Cf., Stringfellow, *An Ethic*, 152.

judge of the nations…So here and now biblical people live and act, discern and speak, decide and do, in expectancy of Christ's promptness.[143]

Similar to Yoder's "apocalpyticism", Stringfellow views the movement of God as a kind of "in-breaking" of God, for the sake of the judgment and renewal of the world in the form of nonviolence. Unlike Yoder, however, Stringfellow did not see *other* forms of nonviolence as *necessarily* signs of the resistance to death. While approving of "any form of protest" which negates death, Stringfellow distinguished between the form of nonviolence which spoke of Christ's redemption, and nonviolence which pre-empted God's judgment ideologically.

Through the nonviolent witness of the Berrigans, "an astonishing ecumenical community" had apocalyptically emerged as a witness to Christ's judgment of the world, though unnoticed by many church authorities. The Berrigans, through their nonviolent witness, Stringfellow argued, had been "in our midst improvising the Church."[144] In bearing witness to Christ's overcoming of death, the Berrigans' nonviolence bore witness to a new community—"a community of resurrection"—founded in resistance to a "common jeopardy…in order to live in a common hope as human beings."[145]

In sum, Stringfellow's nonviolence—as a witness to the renewed humanity made possible by the Word of God—provides some further (though not absolute) definition to his social ontology. This statement by Stringfellow—that the Church is improvised in the form of this "community of resurrection" committed to the opposition of Death—requires that we turn finally to Stringfellow's ecclesiology, as we continue to tease out the

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[143] *An Ethic*, 152-153.

[144] *Suspect Tenderness*, 113.

[145] Ibid.

questions posed by Stringfellow's social ontology. For Stringfellow, the gathering of those being renewed by the work of Word was not simply an invisible event, but involves a visible liturgical event. For nonviolence to be fully Christian, it must not simply bear witness to individual narratives, but to the creation of a new sociality which visible, in part, through the worship of the gathered church.

I will turn now to Stringfellow's ecclesiology, examining the ways in which Stringfellow argued for the practices and institutions of the church as articulating a visible alternative to the "powers", as a "renewed principality" which gives visible expression to the "community of the resurrection". Such a community for Stringfellow was, in many ways, a hope for Stringfellow and not a present reality in his day. But his vision of how the church may, in its practices and institutions, bear witness to a counter-sociality to death, requires exploring if we are to understand how nonviolence and ecclesiology come together in Stringfellow's thought.

Ecclesiology: Existing By the Word for the Sake of the World

As I have argued already, "listening to the Word" for Stringfellow occurs both inside and outside the church. The church gathered for liturgy and worship, as one of the loci of the Word's presence in the world, is that gathering which makes explicit what is already true about the Word's activity in the world. For the institutions of the church to not fall into "idolatry", i.e. to behave as one of the powers, thus, they must be described in terms of its contingency upon the free movement of the Word, who freely sustains the "community of the resurrection". As seen in his arguments in support of nonviolence and social ontology, human activities and institutions are not in and of themselves problematic; to "escape" the powers is to abandon the very context in which we "listen to

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the Word". Rather, institutions and acts which sustain the witness against death—

including our worship as the church and our facilitating of ecclesial life—are described in

ways analogous to Stringfellow's social ontology: dependent upon the free Word of God

who upholds this new existence.

My discussion of ecclesiology in Stringfellow's thought will proceed in three

parts. First, I will discuss the foundation of the church for Stringfellow, namely, its

relation to the Word of God. As a body created as an "event" of the Word, any

institutions of the church which facilitate the church's gathering cannot see themselves

except as existing by the Word's movement. Secondly, I will describe the church

institutions as they are contingent upon this Word in various aspects, such as liturgical

acts and institutions of authority. In exhibiting this contingency upon the Word, the

institutions of the church make the church known as the visible body of the Word's

resistance to death. Finally, I will suggest how this description of the church connects to

Stringfellow's nonviolence, in that Stringfellow's description of ecclesiology and

nonviolence bear similar contours, contours which Stringfellow seems to go unmined in

his own writings.

In these three aspects of his ecclesiology, I am exploring what I identified as one

of the problematic tensions in Stringfellow's work: how to identify where the community

of the "resistance to death" appears, and through this, to connect Stringfellow's

understanding of the church with Stringfellow's writings on nonviolence. In describing

how the church's practices and institutions bear witness to the free Word, I will be

exploring how the institutions of the church exist in the same *mode* that nonviolent

resistance to war is articulated for Stringfellow.

In the same way that nonviolence is a practice of witness to a new social body created by Christ, so the institutions of the church exhibit contingency upon the Word, attesting to the nature of this new sociality which is the "community of the resurrection". Unlike Yoder and Day, Stringfellow does not draw upon the rich tradition within Episcopalian life for thinking about war, viewing the hierarchy with suspicion.[146] Thus, for Stringfellow, the church does not so much offer resources for thinking about war, as it does exhibit the same *mode of existence* than we find in nonviolence: contingency upon the free Word of God.

Church in Relation to the "Word of God"

Early in his career, Stringfellow defined "church" as encompassing more than procedural or structural aspects:

> Wherever and whenever men know Christ as the One who restores Creation, there is the Church. If we recall that in giving Himself to men, God gives men to each other, gives men community in Creation, then we can see that the gift of Christ is the restoration of community. In history, on earth, that community is the Church.[147]

The "wherever and whenever" aspect of this description can be read in two senses, designating the church as 1) *not restricted to* liturgical gatherings or 2) existing in places *in exclusion from* liturgical gatherings. I would argue for the first sense, in light of what I have traced this the unity of the Word's presence in both liturgy and history.

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[146] On the writings of the Episcopal General Convention and House of Bishops on war, cf. Allan M. Parrant, "On War, Peace, and the Use of Force", in *The Crisis in Moral Teaching in the Episcopal Church*, ed. Timothy Sedgwick and Philip Turner, 94-118 (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1992), as well as in the history of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship in Nathaniel W. Pierce and Paul L. Ward, *The Voice of Conscience: A Loud and Unusual Noise?* (Charlestown, MA: Charles River Publishing, 1989).

[147] *Life of Worship*, 8-9.

Such a definition does not negate liturgical activity, but rather, reorients what constitutes "church", in terms of its specific vocation to witness to the Word in the totality of creation. As I have argued, "the community of the resurrection" cannot be known simply in terms of what occurs in the liturgy, but as this body which is called together in Christ discerns the activity of the Word in both liturgy and world. This gathered body of the Church, a free act by the Word, is thus best described for Stringfellow as "event", a concrete existence in the totality of life sustained only by the Word of God. As he remarked as early as 1957 in his article, "The Church as Event":

> The church evident as the congregation is named *event* to show a difference between a definition of 'the idea of church' and an affirmation of that which actually takes place whenever the church is constituted. This attempt is not to discuss an abstraction but to describe a happening; not to speak theoretically but existentially. The church as event is always now and new. The church comes into being in response to the summons of God in the present moment and place. The response of our ancestors is not surety for us. [148]

Naming the body of the church as "event" and "new" denies that there can anything assumed as "church" apart from Christ's ongoing presence in the world, that what has happened in the past is not "now"; this construal of "church", rooted in the living Word, thus, demands a persistent "listening" rather than the "surety" of the church's tradition. In the same way that a Christian exists *qua* Christian in their contingency upon the Word, so the gathered body of the church exists *qua* church in this mode.[149]

This understanding of the gathered body of the church as an "event" conditions, then, how Stringfellow understands the way in which the institutions and structures of the

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[148] Stringfellow, "The Church as Event", *Christian Scholar* 40 (1957), 212.

[149] As Stringfellow puts it in *A Second Birthday*, 42-43, this "assumes that God was only empirically active a very long time ago, but that now editors have to elaborately transpose the biblical saga in order to make sense of it in terms of present circumstances. This approach holds that God is an absentee from the modern scene; it envisions God as alive but truant. It is hard to decide which of these perversions is more scandalous."

church makes this visible. Viewing the liturgical acts of the church as *containing* God's

activity in radical distinction from the rest of creation is ultimately a way of reinstituting

feudalism, rather than seeing the church as part of God's larger economy.[150] Worship,

thus, is "the way restoration and reconciliation are shown forth…a description of the

event of restoration."[151] For example, while Stringfellow describes the presence of God

in the liturgical acts of the Lord's Supper, baptism, and preaching, the church's full

existence is not limited to these aspects, as Christians live "scattered in the world",

continuing their worship in their daily lives.[152] Rather, 'church' persists in the individual

acts of a Christian's creaturely life which continue to fully live into the central confession

of worship: that God has restored creation.[153]

Because the truths of the liturgy and creaturely acts of work are related as the

explicit is related to the implicit, "wherever there is a Christian, *there* is the Church in

representation."[154] The liturgical activities of worship are not superior in this divine

economy; rather liturgy states explicitly what is implicit within other acts done in public

by Christians, making liturgy "revelatory" of what is the case within the world. Whereas

Day viewed the liturgy as the context in which the unity of the Christian body was

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[150] Stringfellow, "The Mission of the Church in the Decadent Society", *The Episcopal Theological School Journal* 8 (1962): 3-8. Anthony Dancer, in his recent biography of Stringfellow, *An Alien in a Strange Land*: *Theology in the Life of William Stringfellow* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Publishers, 2010), 137, frames Stringfellow's ecclesiology in this inside/outside manner which I suggest is precisely *not* Stringfellow's concern, arguing that "the focus of his ecclesiology…is here concerned to balance the internal life of the church with its external life in the world—the gathered church and the church in dispersal, with the emphasis upon its dispersed life."

[151] *Life of Worship*, 11-12. Cf., "The Church as Event", 211-213.

[152] *Life of Worshp*, 13.

[153] Ibid., 14. In this way, the celebration of Communion "is the real dimension of the Christian experience of work", unintelligible apart from labor in the world.

[154] Ibid., 14-15.

communicated, Stringfellow speaks of liturgy as that which makes visible the "restoration and reconciliation" which is being wrought by the Word in autobiography and history, but not *establishing* that reconciliation. Recalling Stringfellow's writing on the Berrigans, we must recall how Stringfellow explicitly links together the nonviolence of the Berrigans with the criminal acts of Jesus, that the Berrigans' work conforms to the Scriptures, illuminating how "the resistance to death" which Scripture makes explicit is seen by faith in the acts of the Berrigans; whereas writers such as Michael Novak criticized the Berrigans' actions, Stringfellow saw in their acts the implicit aspect of the explicit Scriptural witness.[155]

Mark D. Chapman has described Stringfellow's theology as a kind of "politics of liturgy", similar to the British Socialist reformers of Anglican life. Casting Stringfellow in the line of F.D. Maurice, Chapman writes that "sacramental activity in the world is thus a witness of the renewal of creation which flows beyond the sanctuary and the narrowly religious life into life in the wider world."[156] While this comparison is useful, this view supposes that there is a priority of liturgical activity which precedes the life of the world, whereas for Stringfellow, the Word appears both in liturgical life and "worldly" life, without the clear priority of direction as Chapman supposes; Chapman, by Stringfellow's reasoning, assumes that in the extra-liturgical world, "God is yet to be discovered".[157]

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[155] For Novak's critique of the Berrigans, see Stringfellow, "The Oranging of the Berrigans", *Christian Century* 91 (April 17, 1974): 417-422.

[156] Mark D. Chapman, "William Stringfellow and the Politics of Liturgy", in *William Stringfellow in Anglo-American Perspective*, 156.

[157] *Public and Private Faith,* 17.

As I suggested earlier, following Christopher Rowland's interpretation, Stringfellow's theology is an *apocalyptic* one, appearing in history as a renewing judgment upon both the ecclesial *and* non-ecclesial, unconstrained by either church or world, and effecting the renewal of humanity in both. This is not meant to create a kind of relativism for Stringfellow, but rather to confess that, if creaturely life is what is redeemed by Christ's life, this redemption has both ecclesial and non-ecclesial contours, both of which contribute equally in Stringfellow's estimation to the Christian's understanding of "the Word". For Stringfellow, the singular Word—present through Scripture, liturgy, autobiographies, and militant in the world in Christ—cannot be separated without fracturing God's divine life into discrete—and divided—units.[158]

Whereas "religion" speaks of an unworldly existence, "Christ bespeaks the care of God for everything to do with actual life, with life as it is lived by anybody and everybody day in and day out."[159] It is this "anti-religious" nature of the Gospel which constitutes the church. The church, in being "anti-religious", asserts that God "is hidden in or behind creed or ceremony—even those which are decent and which God gladly receives and blesses". Institutional churches are a "vulgar imitation of mere religion" when they assume that God is not involved in the "on-going life of the world."[160] Because the knowledge of God "begins in and is sustained in and consummated in the fidelity of God to His own creation", the Church speaks of the Word only as the explicit

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[158] Ibid., 15: "This Gospel means that the very life of God is evident in this world, in this life, because Jesus Christ once participated in the common life of men in the history of our world. The Christian faith is distinguished, diametrically, from mere religion, in that religion begins with the proposition that some god exists; Christianity, meanwhile is rejoicing in God's manifest presence among us."

[159] Ibid., 16.

[160] Ibid., 17.

word of what the Word is already doing.[161] It is in this sense that the activism of the Berrigans and others engaging in nonviolence are witnessing to the creation of a new community by the Word, Stringfellow argues, the same Word who is witnessed to in the liturgy.

Stringfellow's repeated refrain that the church exists only by the action of the Word does *not* mean that Stringfellow is unconcerned with activities which happen as the church gathers for specific purposes of articulating its confessions and worship; apart from these acts of liturgical confession, the church remains simply an *idea*. His concern, far from abstracting the church into abstraction, is that the church must understand itself as an institution *in contradiction to* the manner the powers and principalities function.

But for the church to exist institutionally, it must do so as contingent upon the movement of the Word, and not as a self-defined totality, as the various institutions of the "powers" do. I will now turn to Stringfellow's concern for the specifically liturgical and institutional aspects of the church's existence, arguing that Stringfellow's concern for issues such as liturgy, ecumenism, and church polity are for the sake of articulating ecclesiastical institutions as a kind of *redeemed* principality which can make visible what often goes hidden in the life of the world.

Church as Redeemed Principality

The purpose of this section is ultimately to argue that Stringfellow's social ontology is not without *some* visible contours. As I suggested in discussing his social

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[161] Ibid., 17-18. Cf., *Free in Obedience*, 107-108: "If the Church or those within the churches do not see and honor the freedom of God…then God as has been the case before, in his terrible and magnificent generosity with himself in the world, will simply find his own way of working his will and do without the churchly institutions and those who profess to be Christians and, so to speak, take over wholly himself the ministry of the Church."

ontology, Stringfellow locates the work of the Word in the liturgical setting as well as within individual lives, such that naming *where* this sociality is of no small concern. His concern with articulating a renewed human sociality, however, necessitates an articulation of the institutional church as the entity which is the explicit "principality" which is a foretaste of other institutions.[162] I will discuss how the church constitutes a visible, corporate marker for the social ontology Stringfellow has in mind by examining his writings on ecumenism and church polity, concluding that Stringfellow is concerned with the church as a different kind of visible institution, one which witnessed to the unity of the Word's activity in both church and world, consistent with how he understands a renewed social ontology taking shape.

Ecumenism as contingent upon the Word. Stringfellow's writing on ecumenism and ecclesiastical structures dates back at least to Stringfellow's visit to Oslo in 1947, as an American representative to the World Conference of Christian Youth, while still an undergraduate at Bates College.[163] In following years, Stringfellow continued working overseas, learning about European Christianity while speaking for the World Student Christian Federation.[164] As Anthony Dancer observes, in these early works, Stringfellow is not interested in ecumenism for the sake of ecumenism; rather, "the unity of which [ecumenism] is an expression is the basis for faith; all faith is necessarily political…and

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[162] Stringfellow's work on ecclesiology does not fundamentally change over the course of his life; throughout his writings, his work on the various aspects of the church's institutional life remains fundamentally oriented toward the church's contingency upon the Word of God. Dancer, *An Alien*, identifies a shift in Stringfellow's work such that Stringfellow becomes more *optimistic* about the institutional church in his later life by comparison. Cf., Dancer, 137-138n. 14.

[163] Ibid., 44-48. During 1949-1950, Stringfellow attended the London School of Economics (LSE), writing on the work of William Temple, an Anglican theologian best known for his work on the relation between church and civil society.

[164] A number of unpublished papers point to not simply an interest in ecumenism among churches, but particularly the relation of these ecumenical groups to political life, in Dancer, *An Alien*, 51.

the primary context for faith is in the world…"[165] In other words, the church's unity is a

vehicle by which it makes explicit the social existence toward which the world is called

in Christ.

Like Mark Chapman, Dancer takes the movement to be *from* liturgy *to* extra-

ecclesial life, in that the prior ecumenicity of the church lays the groundwork for

involvement in politics. As I have been arguing, however, if the Word is present both in

liturgy *and* militant in the world, Stringfellow's 1954 statement that "politics is the

ordering of life by men in society…the gospel is politics" is not one of *movement* from

the liturgy to the world, but of simultaneous identification;[166] what underlies both liturgy

and world is the presence of the self-same Word. Ecumenism, thus, becomes the

church's means of articulating the presence of the Word in all of creation, making visible

in the church's unity that which remains invisible in the divided world.

For Stringfellow, ecumenism is inextricable from a profession of the unity of the

Gospel and of the church as "the place, in the midst of ruined creation where God is

glorified".[167] Describing the secret of "Christian unity" as one which exists "in *this*

world, where Christ lives", Stringfellow argued that church unity exists as the churches

"live in this world for which Christ died". In other words, church unity is contingent

upon the Word, with unity existing as churches join together with the activity of the

Word in the world:

> [The Christian] must live in this world not for his own sake, and not for the sake
> of the churches, and not for God's sake, but for the sake of the world. That is to

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[165] Ibid., 52.

[166] February 9, 1954. "Theology and Strategy in Christian Action". In *the William Stringfellow Archives, No. 4438.* Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. Box 2. Cited in Dancer, 53.

[167] "Life of Worship", 11.

say, he must live in this world, where Christ lives: he must live in this world *in* Christ.[168]

Instead of cooperating in "internal maintenance, in constructing and preserving a cumbersome, self-serving, officious, self-indulgent ecclesiology", Stringfellow calls for the Protestant churches to find their unity and being in Christ, in the world.[169]

Given his experiences with church bureaucracy, such description of church institutions are understandable, but should not be taken to mean that Stringfellow saw *no* value in institutions; rather, institutions should facilitate the gathered community's ability to "listen to the Word". The churches are "to a great extent separated from the world, afraid of the world", which is to say that in their division from the world and from each other, they are estranged from *Christ* "because the Word of God is present in the world anyway and already".[170] What is significant about ecclesiastical activity is not that ecumenism *in itself* is a manifestation of the singularity of Christ, but that it is "a recall and a representation…of that actual given unity with God and the world".[171] Arguing that the "rudiment of mission is knowledge of the city because the truth and grace of the Incarnation encompass in God's care all that is the city", he saw involvement in the world and ecumenism are dependent upon each other, in that both of are dependent upon the Word.[172]

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[168] Stringfellow, "The Secret of Christian Unity", *The Christian Century*, September 13, 1961: 1074.

[169] Ibid., 1074.

[170] Ibid., 1074-1075.

[171] Ibid., 1076. Cf., *Private and Public Faith*, 74: The church is one only insofar as it exists in the world, for in the Word of God "the world was made, and in all the world his Word resides".

[172] Stringfellow, "The Church in the City", *Theology Today* 20, no.2 (July 1963): 146. Cf., Stringfellow's review of Paul Ramsey's *Christian Ethics and the Sit-In*, in "Too Little, Too Late, and too Lily-White", *The Christian Scholar* 45, no.1 (Spring 1962): 78-80. Seeing the work of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches as largely "redundant", he glimpsed hope in proposals

The unity of the church for Stringfellow was known as a gift of the church in its constitution at Pentecost, a gift which reflects the reconciliation of Christ to the world:

> The unity of the Church of Christ which is the gift of God is the same unity revealed in the world in Christ Himself, that is, man reconciled to God and, within that unity, reconciled within Himself, with all men and with all things in the whole of creation. This is the unity which the Church is given and which the Church embodies on behalf of the world which has no unity at all.[173]

Though the witness to the reconciliation God has accomplished is compromised when the churches fail to act in unity, "God's love for the world is not dependent upon the unity of the Church, and His action in the world is not mitigated when the Church does not witness to Him".[174] Because of the diversity of churches, the desire for a "super church" is a secondary desire compared to an "organic union of all who are baptized professing the same Biblical and Apostolic faith", namely that "the church is and is called to be the image of the world in reconciliation".[175] True "organic union" will involve the loss of certain institutional trappings such as property, but these were for Stringfellow a part of the church's recognition that the church in full consists of its union *for the world*.[176]

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which would "confront the technological sciences…and at the same time explore the works of the demonic powers in the world", in Stringfellow, "Ecumenicity and Entomology: New Church Problem", *The Christian Century* 81, no. 41 (October 7, 1964): 1240.

[173] Stringfellow, "The Unity of the Church as the Witness of the Church", *Anglican Theological Review* 46, no. 4 (October 1964): 395.

[174] Ibid. Cf., *Free in Obedience*, 104: "How shall the nation….know what it means to be a society under God, a true community of reconciliation, if there is no visible witness in the existence and life of the Church as the exemplary holy nation to behold?"

[175] Ibid., 396. This is the converse of Ephraim Radner's argument that the present division of the church is emblematic of the crucified Christ, a church which awaits its resurrection, in *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 338ff. For Stringfellow, the church is broken insofar as it lacks common commitments to the world, not certain material agreements with regards to confessions or structures.

[176] Ibid., 398.

Liturgy and polity as contingent upon the word. This grounding of the church in the Word's activity in church and world underlay Stringfellow's vision of the sacraments and social arrangements. [177] In the setting of gathered worship—the reading of Scripture and the celebration of the Eucharist—the worshippers look for "the discernment of the same Word of God in the common life of the world", with the life in the world and the life of worship confirming one another.[178] The very Word of God, worshipped through and disclosed in the liturgy, "is hidden in the ordinary life of these boys in gang society and in the violence of the streets which part of their everyday existence."[179] The identification of this Word in the world as the one who is spoken of in the liturgy as having been resurrected after descending into Hell is what the liturgical life offers to the world, a hermeneutic by which the world might understand the Word hidden within it.[180]

Because salvation is "the event in which a man utterly and unequivocally confronts the presence and power of death in and over his own existence", the sacraments

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[177] James F. Griffiss, "A Reluctant Anglican Griffiss", in Slocum, ed. *Prophet of Justice, Prophet of Life*, 40-57, has helpfully located Stringfellow within his Episcopalian heritage, as one drawing upon a tradition beginning with Thomas Hooker. Beginning with Hooker, Griffiss identifies a theological lineage in which the Incarnation of Christ is the foundation of both ecclesial and political order. Anglican theologians of the 19th century, such as F.D. Maurice, held that the Incarnation reveals the social order of all human beings, in a kind of "hallowing" of human society such that divine justice was to be advocated by the church on behalf of the church. For the history of Anglican socialists, see Bernard Kent Markwell, *The Anglican Life: Radical Social Reformers in the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1846-1954* (Brooklyn, NW: Carlson Publishing, 1991). Stringfellow certainly follows in this vein, seeing the presence of the Word as foundational for any ecclesiastical or civil order, but differs from the liturgical theologies of Anglican reformers such as James O.S. Huntington. Rather than flowing from church to world, as in the case of Maurice and Huntington, the liturgy of the church was grounded not in an ecclesial "center", but in the presence of the Word in *both* church and world.

[178] *Private and Public Faith*, 57.

[179] Ibid., 61.

[180] Ibid., 63.

are for the sake of uniting the church to the world, where people find their salvation.[181]

Likewise, baptism is not "a ceremony for naming a child", but "the public proclamation

to the world by the Church…in the power of God to raise the dead and of the care of God

that this child…be saved from death."[182] In other words, baptism is the opportunity for

the gathered church to reconsecrate itself to the common task which is incumbent on it as

those called to Christ.[183] The acts of baptism and Eucharist speak in one voice of Christ's

work both in the presently gathered community and in "the total involvement of the

people of the church in the life of the world", creating an offering "of *all* this existence to

God."[184]

While affirming that "the liturgy is both the precedent and the consummation of

that service which the church of Christ and its members render to the world",

Stringfellow affirms that "all of life is liturgical", denying that the particularly "religious"

nature of church gathering gives it a priority in the Christian's naming of God's

salvation.[185] The liturgy internal to the church's life "is a theatrical form of the ethical

witness of Christians in this world". As such, preaching is judged insufficient if it does

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[181] Stringfellow, "Evangelism and Conversion", *International Journal of Religious Education* 40, no. 3 (November 1963): 7.

[182] *Private and Public Faith*., 67.

[183] *Private and Public Faith,* 66; Cf., *Instead of Death*, 110: "Baptism is the assurance—accepted, enacted, verified, and represented by Christians—of the unity of *all humanity* in Christ. The baptized are the people in history consecrated to the unity humans receive in the worship of God".

[184] "Liturgy as Political Event," *The Christian Century* 82, no. 51 (December 22, 1965): 1575. Cf., *Free in Obedience*, 120 in which Stringfellow describes the Eucharist as identifying the congregation "not only with the whole Chruch throughout the ages, but with the whole of creation." Stringfellow wrote similarly on various church practices, including discernment within the church body politic, in *An Ethic for Christians*, 138-140.

[185] "Liturgy as Political Event", 1575.

recall the earthy history of God's action, and the enactment of the liturgy is insufficient if it does not speak of "radical ethical commitment" of life in today's world.[186]

The sacraments of the church are, likewise, not for the church's self-possession of the presence of God, but signs of the church's vocation in the world and of the agency of the Word in the world. "The Word…delivered in various ways and in diverse times in the history of the world" is the same Word in which the church is established by the resurrection of Christ.[187] The conditions of the disclosure of the gift of Christ in both church and world —the gift which is the grounds of existence in both—is for both a refusal to "admire the trustee of the gift rather than the Giver."[188] The churches, if they are to be the *explicit* witnesses to God's work, illuminating the hidden witness in the world, must reject the temptation to "seek first the preservation of the Church or the conservation of the possessions, reputation, and power of the institutions of the Church", but rather "leave all such things to God's disposal, and thus, free from this most worldly anxiety…to celebrate the presence of the Word of God in the world."[189]

This understanding of the liturgy and sacraments—as facilitating and making explicit the work of the Word in the world—underscores Stringfellow's engagements with ecclesiastical authorities as well.[190] Notably, Stringfellow defended bishops James

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[186] Ibid., 1574.

[187] *Instead of Death*, 108-109.

[188] Ibid., 110-111.

[189] Ibid., 116.

[190] Stringfellow's first job with the East Harlem Protestant Parish lasted only fifteen months. Claiming that his "loyalty to Christ" was in conflict with "participation in the group ministry and it is conceived and constituted", Stringfellow saw the institutional aspects of the EHPP to be characterized less by ministry and listening to the Word than internal politics. Cf., Dancer, 80-81.

A. Pike and William Wendt against charges of heresy.[191] In their narration of the heresy

trials of Pike, Stringfellow and Towne say little on the charges of heresy Pike faced;

instead, they raise the suspicion that Pike was not truly on trial for his theological views,

but for his involvement in the Civil Rights movement and Vietnam.[192] The council

proceedings contain no mention of Pike's involvement in social activism, but for Towne

and Stringfellow, the censuring of Pike was an "obvious, ominous portent" of the

Episcopalian church's rejection of involvement in social issues.[193]

    Concluding that there was, amidst the council of bishops, an intimate connection

between heresy charges and progressive social witness, Pike's censuring was taken by

Stringfellow to be the result of an act of conscience by Pike, pointing the church toward

its vocation in the world.[194] What is at stake here is more than simply how Episcopalians

were to be involved with social issues; for Stringfellow, the heresy trials of Bishop Pike

and others were over how to understand faithfulness to the Word: is the Word operative

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[191] Pike was brought up on heresy charges by House of Bishops in Wheeling, West Virginia in 1966, ostensibly for denials of the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation of Christ as irrelevant and "nonessential doctrinal statements". Stringfellow's involvement with Bishop Pike is recorded in two volumes, *The Bishop Pike Affair*, William Stringfellow and Anthony Towne, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), and *The Death and Life of Bishop Pike*, Stringfellow and Towne, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976). For Stringfellow's involvement in defending William Wendt, see Johnston, 86-89, and "The Bishops at O'Hare: Mischief and a Mighty Curse," *Christianity and Crisis* 34, no. 15, September 16, 1974, 195-196.

[192] *Bishop Pike*, 3, 25, 186-194.

[193] Ibid., 194.

[194] Ibid., 193-194. Similarly, in Stringfellow's defense of Bishop William Wendt, we find Stringfellow more concerned with the church's witness to the Word in the world, than in proper polity. Cf., "Bishops at O'Hare", 195. As he had observed in the Bishop Pike trial, polity in and of itself is not an assurance of the church's fidelity, but actually had the potential to perpetuate the church's *infidelity.* Wendt had ordained 11 women to the priesthood in July 1974, prompting a meeting of the Episcopal House of Bishops to bring up heresy charges against Wendt. The House of Bishops, ruling against the ordination, according to Stringfellow, acted in a paternalistic fashion, excluding the women in question from the proceedings, in a "poignant and terrible defamation" (196). Stringfellow continues his comments in "An Open Letter to the Presiding Bishop," *The Witness* 63, (January 1980): 10-11. I do not take this to mean that Stringfellow is unconcerned with Chalcedonian orthodoxy, but rather, that orthodox faith— characterized by faithful response to the Word—cannot be measured by verbal assent to traditional formulae.

both inside and outside the church, or is the Word constrained by the received traditions and liturgy of the church?

The institutional church for Stringfellow is not sustained by its keeping of traditional language or customs, but by its internal life keeping step with the activity of the Word in the world. It is this attention to the Word that defined the institutional church for him as a *redeemed* principality. As I have shown, Stringfellow saw the principalities as an irreducible aspect of creation; wanting to escape the powers was tantamount to wanting to escape one's own creaturely existence. And at times, Stringfellow identified the church *as* a "principality", when as it concerned itself with the "survival of the institution".[195] But Stringfellow's vision of the church was of a church which, as a *redeemed* principality, could make use of structure and order for ends suitable to the church's calling to listen to the Word.[196]

When existing as a "principality", ecclesial institutions affected people in the same manner as non-ecclesial principalities: diverting them from creaturely life, and preventing the people of God from freely listening to the Word.[197] When the church accepts, however, that it is called into existence by the Holy Spirit, it is freed from being among the "powers", and is able to exist as a holy nation, enabled to live "in solidarity and identification with the advent, birth, ministry, death, descent, resurrection, and Lordship of Jesus Christ in this world."[198] By adhering to this calling, the church is able

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[195] Ibid., 95.

[196] Cf., *Free in Obedience*, 78-88, for Stringfellow's critique of the church as slow to act and witness on issues of race and nationalism, previously identified as two of the preeminent powers. Throughout his career, Stringfellow wrote of the manner in which the church, despite the fundamental witness of the Word given to it, had given itself over to the principalities.

[197] Ibid., 98.

to recognize obedience to God as that given to a *free* God, and not a God who is bound to particular liturgies.[199]

Though the church is created and upheld by the Spirit's activity, Stringfellow was *not* advocating that "Christians should be loath to work in churchly institutions", but rather that those working for church institutions be aware of what church institutions in fact are: means by which to facilitate witness, and not for the creation of the church as an idol.[200] Stringfellow's own history embodied this struggle with the powers within the institutions of the church, legally representing those who had found themselves in opposition to the various structures with Episcopal life. In 1970, having retreated to Block Island, Stringfellow saw himself as having been "rejected by the ecclesiastical establishment of the Episcopal Church", with various Episcopal seminaries withdrawing their invitations for him to speak in the wake of his defense of Bishop Pike, as well as being removed as a representative to the Faith and Order Commission.[201]

For all the institutional church's tendency to become a principality, to reject the church's nature as an institution was to err in *under*determining the church in in the same manner that zealous fidelity to church institutions *over*determined the church in its institutionality.[202] The church's capacity to be an institution was not in question for Stringfellow, but rather what *kind* of institution:

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[198] Ibid., 100.

[199] Ibid., 113.

[200] Ibid., 99.

[201] *Second Birthday*, 145-147.

[202] Ibid., 147.

I do not denigrate institutionalism as such in the Church. I see, specifically in the account of Pentecost, that the Church's peculiar vocation is as an institution—as the exemplary principality—as the holy nation. So ideas of a non-institutional church or a deinstitutionalized church or underinstitutionalized church seem to me to be as nebulous as the Greek philosophy from which such ideas come and contrary to the biblical precedent. That does not temper my critique of the inherited churchly institutions…The Church is called into being in freedom from that ethic of survival and where renewal or reformation in the Church happens for real, that very freedom is being exercised, and the Church is viable and faithful.[203]

Far from negating the significance of liturgy and the sacraments, Stringfellow argued that it was "from this hidden company within the churches that [renewal of the Church] will come".[204] The church, in its consistent communication of a Gospel, passed down through the Scriptures, liturgy, and traditions, cannot cease as an institution without losing the very means by which it makes known the explicit nature of the Word's activity. Insofar as "principalities" facilitate human organization, it is not possible be rid of them, either with regards to the fallen powers or the church as a kind of "principality". The church, as a renewed form of human organization—ordered toward worship and witness, leading people to death in Christ instead of the chaos of Death—functions as a redeemed principality when recognizing its existence as "event" sustained by the Word.

The Contingent Church and Nonviolence

Thus far, little has been said in this section of the explicit connection Stringfellow draws between nonviolence and the church, in part because in his own work, Stringfellow never draws together his later-in-life conclusion of nonviolence with his writings on ecclesiology. Following his move to Block Island from Harlem with Anthony Towne in

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[203] Ibid., 147-148.

[204] Ibid., 153-154.

1967, Stringfellow writes little about either ecclesiology or his own churchgoing.[205] In what follows, I will articulate what I take to be the relation of nonviolent resistance to war to ecclesiology, based on Stringfellow's own logic of the relation between the church and the world, acknowledging fully that for Stringfellow, this connection could never simply be one done in abstraction from the church-in-the-world, once and for all, but must be negotiated as one "listens to the Word" in both church and world.

With regards to the church as a body of Christians, I have made clear the inextricable relationship, for Stringfellow, between Christian nonviolence and being a member of the "community of the resurrection", in that nonviolence bears witness to the renewal of human sociality by the Word of God. The relation between the act of nonviolence and the *institutions* of the church, however, requires more extrapolation from Stringfellow's writings. Terming the relation between liturgical activity and social action as the "orthodoxy of radical involvement", he understood the reconciliation spoken of clearly in the liturgy as of the same kind worked out by the Word outside the liturgy.[206] In this way, the institutions and practices which sustain "church" were not simply the event of liturgy, but those acts and entities which witnessed to the Word's renewal of humanity.

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[205] *A Simplicity of Faith*, 101-103. Stringfellow describes going on occasion to St. Ann's Church on the island, which was revived by Stringfellow and others but, much to Stringfellow's dismay, became associated with the diocese of Rhode Island as soon as it had been revived. As Stringfellow notes, "We do not do Bible study any more; we do not seriously consider the mission of the Church in the world, including block Island….We are into raising money, which we will likely spend to embellish the social life of Episcopalians and their kindred in the summer colony" (102).

[206] Cf. William Stringfellow, transcript from "A Conversation with William Stringfellow on the Ethics of Resistance", an interview for KEED, Portland, Oregon, interviewer Father Edgar M. Tainton , taped October 18, 1968, 2. Box 35, William Stringfellow Papers, #4438, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University Library. Cited in Johnston, 251.

As such, conceiving of a relationship *between* ecclesiology and nonviolence is perhaps less appropriate for Stringfellow than conceiving of the manner in which both ecclesiology and nonviolence are both made possible by the four-fold Word of God, which enables *both* the church and the act of nonviolence. This raises the question, however: why is church *always* a necessity for Stringfellow (in that without the liturgy, there is no explicit naming of Christ and the reconciliation of the world), while nonviolence is a *possibility* but not absolutely necessary?

It would appear that his concerns for both nonviolence (as a form of resistance to death), and the church (gathered in celebration of the Word's triumph over death) possess a number of similar features. Both are described as contingent upon the movement of the Word, such that ideological nonviolence and ritualistic religion are equally presumptions of the Word of God's free movement and free judgment. Both church and nonviolence are enabled *through* various means (rituals and tactics), but the meaning of both church and nonviolence are not strictly identified with these means. And finally, both church and nonviolence are celebrations of the resistance to death. I contend that Stringfellow simply did not think through the implications of his own thought, viewing the existence of the church as a necessary and nonviolence as unnecessary, though both are described in formally similar ways. To be sure, the church for Stringfellow is a people called to be a witness to the Word, while nonviolence is one of those means of witness; what I am suggesting, however, is that the possibility of both "church" as a body gathered for listening to the Word, and "nonviolence" as an ethical act, are both dependent upon the movement of the Word in the world.

As the bulk of his writing on the nature of the church is chronologically separate from his writing on nonviolence, Stringfellow appears to be simply inconsistent. While the institutions of the church are always necessary, a similar position is not held for nonviolence; as Stringfellow affirms, even after his turn toward nonviolence, there are times in which Christian participation in violence may be appropriate. While the Berrigan witness is resolutely applauded as the possibility for being human in a violent world, Stringfellow does not go so far as to necessitate a formal or institutional form of this nonviolent witness within all societies.[207] If, however, both are 1) enabled by the Word within society, and 2) named as means by which resistance to death is articulated clearly within liturgy and the world, however, then it follows that some form of institutional witness to nonviolence would have been approved by Stringfellow. In the same manner as the institutional church needs visible form as a redeemed principality, so the witness to nonviolence, it would seem, would require some visible form to continue to facilitate an explicitly Christian base for such a witness.

In fact, Stringfellow gave time and energy to many of these institutions, such as the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, speaking at their 1979 meeting.[208] Soon after, in 1980, Daniel and Philip Berrigan founded the Plowshares Movement following an action similar to the 1972 Catonsville incident.[209] One can only speculate as to whether this kind of loose institutional structure would be the kind of "institution" that Stringfellow would approve of as an appropriate analogy to the institutionalism of the church.

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[207] *An Ethic for Christians*, 131-133.

[208] "The Witness of a Remnant", delivered before the Episcopal Peace Fellowship in 1979, but only published in, *The Witness* 72 (1989), 21, 23.

[209] For a history of the Plowshares Movement, see Arthur J. Laffin and Daniel Berrigan, *Swords into Plowshares: A Chronology of Plowshares Disarmament Actions 1980-2003*, (New York: Rose Hill Books, 2003).

Stringfellow's reticence to univocally advocate nonviolence as consistent with the Word's presence in the world are due, as we have seen, to the manner in which nonviolence becomes "ideological", a critique which he levied against particular *aspects* of the church-as-institution. I would argue, however, that loose institutions, such as Plowshares, devoted to a nonviolent witness within the world, would create the same kind of space for a persistent witness to the Word analogous to the space created for witness to the Word by liturgical institutions.

Because entities such as Plowshares, in its resistance to death in the form of war, speaks of the same Word as the liturgy, any institution devoted to nonviolence *must*, then, retain a connection to the liturgical life of the church. In other words, Plowshares cannot—following Stringfellow's logic—see themselves as *independent* or *against* the liturgical life of the church, in that in and through the liturgy, the explicit rationale for groups such as Plowshares is made known. This is not to say that Stringfellow would disapprove of nonviolence as such if it ceased to have a connection to the liturgy; what I am suggesting, however, is that an entity bearing witness in this kind of institutional structure would be *recognizably* Christian for Stringfellow, bearing witness to a sustained, institutionalized nonviolent advocacy as a mirror to the "redeemed principality" of the institutional church.

Conclusion

Stringfellow's careful acceptance of nonviolence—enabled by the self-same Word as churchly existence—exposes certain biases of our understanding of the liturgy. In the same way that nonviolence is not absolute, but a consequence of listening to the Word within the world, so for Stringfellow the liturgy exists to facilitate the Christian's

listening to the Word. In Stringfellow's relentless critiques of church institutions, we find a continual argument that the work of the Word of God is identified only *in part* in its liturgy. In contrast to certain "communion" models of the church, Stringfellow finds that the church is only faithful in its vocation to usher persons into full personhood and redemption *insofar* as the church urges people to listen to the full range of the Word, present in and out of the sanctuary.[210]

Nonviolence, thus, while not an absolute mandate for the church—in that no ethical position can be absolutely commanded without presuming God's judgment—is neither a *optional* act for the church which is a "community of the resurrection" in times of war. To be church is to be open to the possibility of nonviolence, insofar as nonviolent resistance to war is the result of listening to the Word who speaks through Scripture and the liturgy, an act which resists death in creation. Such nonviolence must always be aware that resistance is not for its own sake (which would constitute idolatry), but is a means by which the participant and those witnessing the actions be called to a deeper communion with the Word, to die more fully in Christ that they might live more humanly.

Stringfellow's intention is to direct our "listening to the Word" toward what the Word is created: a full and renewed humanity, or as I have been describing it, social ontology. The four-fold Word, creating a resistance to death within all of creation, creates the conditions for being "truly human", i.e. what is proper to a humanity which has undergone death in Christ, and found its true self in Christ. For Stringfellow, as I

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[210]As Nicholas Healy has argued, in "Ecclesiology and Communion", *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 273-290, envisioning the liturgy as conferring personhood neglects our ability to name what the church is when it is unfaithful. Stringfellow's mode of naming the church as that which is inside and outside the liturgy relieves liturgical activity of needing to be person-forming in and of itself.

have argued, the church is that space which explicitly names what is the truth of the world's resistance to death.

But what shape does this "humanness" bear? On this question, Stringfellow is silent. It cannot simply bear the shape of the institutional church, in that the Word is present in the world as well as the church. But neither can it be formed apart from the liturgy, since it is in Scripture and the liturgy that we know explicitly of Jesus. The new humanity which nonviolence bears witness to, I suggest, is a humanity which is made possible by the Word of God, known by its 1) resistance to death, 2) its "listening to the Word", in the plurality of its senses, and 3) attending to the bodily and corporeal nature of the life-out-of-death made possible by the Word, looking to the autobiographical contours of each life not as reducible to a larger typology, but as intrinsic to describing the "new humanity" made possible by Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Toward a Theandric Nonviolence

Introduction

Having concluded my initial investigation of these three figures, I will now be drawing together their insights on nonviolence, ecclesiology, and social ontology as elements of a theological account of what resistance to war looks like. In each case, I will offer my suggestions in conversation with what I take to be the strongest points emerging from this comparison. On each point, I will not simply adopt the whole position of any one figure, but take their work as a starting point, supplementing their weaknesses by way of the other two figures and by way of other interlocutors as needed. Finally, I will describe how these aspects cohere, concluding with what I take to be the shape of a Christian nonviolence which bears witness to what God in Christ has begun through the church.

The question which has driven this dissertation can be stated as "If nonviolence bears witness to a particular social existence given in Christ through the church, what does this look like?" Having explored how this is answered by Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow, I will conduct this conclusion by looking in particular at how this witness relates to the Trinitarian context within which the church dwells. If nonviolence bears witness to a social body created by Christ, and if war presents itself as a parody of the life given in Christ to the church, then an ecclesial witness against war is impoverished without considering how this existence of the church is conducted within a Trinitarian context.

Despite their divergence on how to describe the three aspects of Christian nonviolent resistance to war I have identified, there is some overlapping consensus among their positions. I have assumed from the start that there is something to be gained from such an ecumenical dialogue which may illuminate contemporary attempts to articulate a Christian nonviolence. This is to say that a distinctly Catholic approach such as Day's is not *entirely* incompatible with a free church approach such as Yoder's, which lacks the sacramental underpinnings of Day's theology, in that all three are looking to the Jesus of Scripture, professed by the church universal, as central to their nonviolence at some level.[1] Because they all assume that this Jesus—whose work provides the norm for nonviolence—is witnessed to through the gathered church, there is among these three a common framework to articulate not only their commonality, but to hold together their distinctive differences as well. It is to their common conclusions which require further clarification that I will now turn.

Common Grounds for Further Clarification

First, all three conclude that the church is characterized as the body of Christ—a new corporate work in the world. They differed on how exactly to conceive this sociality, whether in terms of a sociality which exists dialogically with the world (Yoder), a sociality which implicates all humanity, but which culminates in the Roman Catholic Church (Day), or an apocalyptic sociality which appears in both church and world (Stringfellow). My own sympathies lie with Yoder in this respect, in that I suggest that the social ontology which describes the church is best understood in terms of mission and

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[1] Stringfellow's approach is the most subtle in this approach, in that he views the incarnation's validation of human existence as central to articulating how and why nonviolence can be normative. Day and Yoder, by contrast, emphasize the personal witness and the teachings of Jesus as central to nonviolence.

witness to the world, bearing witness to the new humanity made possible in Christ. I have my own questions for Yoder's identification of this sociality with nonviolence, which I see as putting too much weight on this sociality as nonviolent, as this provokes the question of what happens if the church *fails* in its nonviolence.

Secondly, all three conclude witness to this social existence is inextricable from the church's practices and institutions. The practices and teachings of the church are not only make this existence visible to the world for the sake of witness, but also condition how nonviolence is practiced. The church's practices and institutions fulfill this dual role in various ways, discussed in terms of how these practices are emblematic for the world's own practices (Yoder), how the traditions and teachings provide parameters within which to articulate nonviolence (Day), or in terms of how Scripture and liturgy proclaim what is true about the Word's activity in the world, in that nonviolence and church institutions are both sustained by the Spirit (Stringfellow).

These three disagree most sharply, however, on whether or not the practices and traditions of the church can sustain nonviolence. For Yoder and Day, because the church is either intrinsically nonviolent (Yoder) or because the logic of the church's teachings lead it toward nonviolence (Day), the structures and traditions of the church body are up to the task of making visible and sustaining a way of life which denies war's basic presuppositions. Stringfellow, however, bears little of this optimism, viewing the traditions and structures of the church as able to become part of the "powers" as easily as they can sustain a witness to Christ. On this point, I side most with Stringfellow's articulation of the church's institutions, in that for him, the gathered church is an "event", facilitated by liturgy and by the Word present in Scripture, with the institutions of the

church as *necessary* for the church's witness, but not sufficient in describing the church. This view of the church, as dependent upon the free movement of God, brings up the question of how certain traditions or teachings facilitate this visibility of the "new humanity", or can help shape a Christian nonviolent witness. Such an understanding of church traditions and practices, I suggest, acknowledges that the church can indeed fail in the collective task of refusing to participate in war, and as such, fail in its witness to the presence of a Christ-created community which is not founded in and through war.

Finally, all three concluded that nonviolence is a mode of witness to this form of social ontology made possible by Christ, but diverge greatly on how nonviolence is practiced in this way, whether as an eschatalogically-justified absolute (Yoder), an act which must rely upon the formation of conscience as part of a larger body of practices (Day), or as an absolute, but only within a certain historical context (Stringfellow). In this aspect, I find Day's assessment to be the most compelling, in that nonviolence is *not* a strictly deontological act, but an act which is predicated upon a certain kind of social existence, requiring the formation of conscience. Viewing nonviolence in this manner emphasizes not only 1) that nonviolence is a part of a more comprehensive Christian witness, but 2) that Christian nonviolence must be predicated upon a person first becoming a part of the body of Christ—that nonviolence is ultimately a spiritual discipline by which we are made members of one another. But, as I indicated in my discussion of Day, the role of conscience in Day's work tends toward undermining nonviolence as a normative Christian practice.

In sum, all three agree that 1) there is a new social form made possible by Christ, 2) the church is the social body bearing witness to a new way of existence, and 3)

nonviolence bears witness to the presence of this new existence in the church. I will not

attempt a synthesis of these positions, as these are not interchangeable parts. Rather, I

will place these three in juxtaposition, and allow their positions to critique and be

supplemented by the articulations of the other two, relying upon additional voices to

bring to the surface what I see to be the way toward a nonviolence which is fully

ecclesiological and which can fully bear witness to a new way of social existence.

Social Ontology: The Life of the Church, the First Fruit of Creation

Yoder's social ontology, as I have described it, was the "new humanity", a

description of the church's social existence which displays the "first fruits" of what all

humanity is to be. The missional character of this sociality is seen in the variety of ways

that Yoder dialogically relates the church to the world. In many ways, this is similar to

Day's social ontology, which likewise assumes that the life of the church is normative for

all creation, but unlike Yoder, assumed a supernatural culmination to natural life; Yoder,

by contrast, assumed that the missional nature of the church stems from the church being,

in many ways, *unlike* the world. Similarly, Yoder stands with Stringfellow in this

affirmation that what is displayed in the community gathered in Christ is what all human

existence should be like. However, Stringfellow's social ontology—in emphasizing the

"new creation" which occurs in human autobiography—is at times ambiguous at times

about "where" this sociality can be located.

By arguing that the "new humanity" describes the church insofar as the church

follows the way of Jesus, Yoder highlighted the missionary character of this sociality; as

the church follows in the way of Jesus, it bears witness to what the world should be,

seeking to display this to the world. Though Yoder emphasized a variety of practices

which model the way of Jesus "before the watching world",[2] the predominant act which

designates the church's participation in this "new humanity" is the rejection of violence.

Nonviolence for Yoder was not simply one practice among others, but the very practice

which identified Jesus as consistent with the Old Testament, and which spoke most

clearly of the eschatological victory of Jesus. If the church is to know its participation in

the "new humanity", and to make this "new humanity" known in the world, it does so

preeminently through the act of nonviolence.

While Day and Stringfellow's work remained sympathetic to this identification of

the "new humanity" with nonviolence, neither one identify the presence of the social

ontology of the church with nonviolence exclusively or primarily. Day, viewing the

Mystical Body as a unity of persons, saw nonviolence as *one* practice which bore witness

to the unity of humanity made visible in the Eucharist; because the humanity of Christ

displayed in the Eucharist is the same humanity of Christ which "ennobled" all human

life, war was rejected by Day as tearing Christ's own body. But the Mystical Body's

presence does not depend on the practice of nonviolence; the Mystical Body, as the

joining of Christ with the gathered people, occurs primarily in and through the Eucharist.

Similarly, Stringfellow saw the social ontology of the "community of the resurrection"

calling for nonviolence *in that time*; the "community" for Stringfellow is established by

Christ's work, known in our autobiographies, Scripture, and the liturgy, with nonviolence

a temporally appropriate means to witness to this renewed sociality.

I take the work of Day and Stringfellow to be correct in their distancing

nonviolence from such a strict identification with the social ontology of the church, for

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[2] This is the subtitle of Yoder's *Body Politics*: *Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992).

two reasons. First, one must either make the claim that there have been historical periods in which this work of Christ *has not* been visible, or one must be willing to sideline a large number of other theological considerations, in order to draw together an unbroken historical witness through the history of the church to this "new humanity"; Yoder's own writing was disposed on a number of occasions to this latter tendency.[3] Secondly, if nonviolence is that which makes known where the "new humanity" is, there is no reason for one to argue for this "new humanity" as specifically Christian.[4]

   While Yoder's equation of "new humanity" and nonviolence may be problematic, his vision of this sociality as oriented toward witness in the world was, I argue, superior to the proposals of Day or Stringfellow. Like Day, Yoder agreed that the social ontology of the church is the story of humanity-at-large; unlike Day, however, Yoder assumed that because the "new humanity" present in the church is *unlike* the world, there is an active need for the church to make this sociality known to the world.[5] As the church lives as the "new humanity", in its continuance of Christ's work, it continues in its mission to make the "new humanity" known. Stringfellow's emphasis upon the "community of resurrection" as those who resist death is similar to Yoder in positing a distinction between the renewed "community of the resurrection" and the world under the sway of

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[3] Cf. *Nonviolence: A Brief History*, ed. Paul Martens, Matthew Porter, and Myles Werntz (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010). Yoder often drew together odd pairings, such as the Waldensians, the Quakers, the Mennonites, and certain varieties of Catholics into a single heritage of nonviolence throughout church history. Linking these groups along the line of nonviolence, however, ignores many other significant theological differences, sublating issues of Christology, ecclesiology, and sacraments to the issue of nonviolence.

[4] Yoder was concerned for not making the ethic of Jesus reducible to a vague "neighbor love", which can then be transposed into a variety of acts, i.e. making war for the sake of peace. Despite this caveats, if this act is what renders visible the "new humanity", Jesus becomes one instance within a larger universality of nonviolence.

[5] This is not to say that this need for proclamation is *not* present in Day's case, but the assumption that the movement of the world into the church occurs as a culmination of the world by the church downplays the *difference* between church and world in a way that Yoder emphasizes.

death; however, Stringfellow struggled, as I have argued, by over-emphasizing the *decentralized* nature of this social ontology, such that one could almost question how indeed this is "social".

In sum, I take Yoder's social ontology to be superior to the accounts of Day and Stringfellow for two reasons. First, the social ontology of the church, which exists in "connection to" but not "in continuance with" the world, emphasizes that the social ontology of the church does not exist as the culmination of natural loves, but as a radical re-ordering of natural loves which (nonetheless) have analogy those of the world. Both church and world exist within a single economy, made possible by Christ who has conquered the powers; as such, the church exists as that body which bears witness to the world on the basis of the *distinction* between church and world from within a common divine economy, a distinction-in-unity which Yoder describes in terms of analogous practices which exist for distinctly different ends.[6] Secondly, the social ontology of the church is one which fully articulates that Christ has created a social *body*. Radically downplaying the autobiographical aspects of this which are central to Stringfellow's account, Yoder's account located individuals as members first of a renewed social body. This latter point, like the first, was Christological for Yoder: Christ's conquering of the powers creates a new sociality in which words like "reconciliation" and "peace" are not indicative of the individual-God relation as they are qualities of the community which lives in the way of God.[7]

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[6] Day would not disagree in principle with either point I am making here with regards to Yoder. Where she and Yoder diverge, I suggest, is on Yoder's assertion that this "new humanity" must be witnessed to, in that for Yoder, the church is *unlike* the world. Both Yoder and Day, however, would concur that the mediation of Christ is irreducibly social; as Day put it, "we are members of one another."

[7] It could be argued that Yoder in fact *under*plays individual vocation, as I mentioned with regards to how Day articulates nonviolence vis-à-vis conscience. I plan on taking this point up in future work.

Yoder's description of the social ontology of the church as "nonviolent", however, creates difficulties. I submit that the social ontology given by Christ—though involving nonviolence—is better primarily described by its *givenness*. In other words, this social existence exists and is sustained because of the God who calls it forth, a community which then lives this calling out in part through a nonviolent witness against war. For Yoder, the community—as a continuation of the character of God—is *necessarily* nonviolent. My concern with this is that this unnecessarily conflates intra-divine attributes with temporal actions (or to use other terms) the "immanent trinity" with the "economic trinity". While I agree with Robert Jenson in arguing that these are not competitive options of describing God—that the actions of Jesus Christ reveal the life and character of God—this does *not* mean that the community need exhibit the complete character of this God at every contour of its existence in order to be known as the community which Christ has created.[8]

The conflation of an ethical act (nonviolence) and a state of existence (new humanity), I contend, tends to over-voluntarize the existence of the church. While Yoder's ecclesiology is a matter of free confession, the linking together of particular social modes of witness with the church's existence does not account for the church's capacity to fail. Is the church's existence, in other words, dependent upon its faithfulness, or is the church sustained by God even if the church supports war? Yoder's own work tended toward the former position, though he would never absolutely affirm the latter. And yet, if the church is the body of Christ, made possible by Christ, I argue that the

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[8] Cf. Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology: Vol 1: The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 144ff.

church's existence is rooted in the fidelity of Christ to the church, though the churches may not always be faithful to Christ.

As a corrective, I will now propose something which is consistent with Yoder's social ontology—in its orientation toward the world, and in its emphasis upon the work of Christ as the center of its corporate life— but goes beyond it. Describing the social ontology of the church as a *consequence* of Christ's own work, I argue, means in part that the church exists in analogy to Christ, but *distinct* from Christ's person; only a distinction between the sociality of the church and the person of Christ is able to account for the church's characterization by way of this social existence *when it fails* in this witness, in contrast to what we find in Yoder. In other words, because the social existence of the church exists as a work of Christ—established and rooted in Christ—the church remains a *witness* to the work of Christ both in its success (persistence in nonviolent resistance) and in its failure (support of war/failure to participate in nonviolent resistance), albeit in different modes. The church—in its faithfulness—serves as a witness to the new social existence made possible in Christ; in its unfaithfulness, the church exists as a body under judgment by its Head.[9]

This uncoupling of nonviolence from social ontology as the demarking of the church's participation in the "new humanity" may initial yield a less *necessary* commitment to nonviolence. But it does, I argue, yield a stronger affirmation of what Yoder sought: a community which bears witness to the work of Christ, both in its nonviolence and in its failure to in this regard. This would perhaps be viewed by Yoder as "selling out", in that for him, the church is known as the "new humanity" only insofar as it is embodies these practices of nonviolence and reconciliation. But I contend that

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[9] Scriptural examples of this abound. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5 and Revelation 3.

even a church's *failure* in discipleship is a form of witness; in its faithfulness, the church is a sign of the new humanity, and in its failure, it is a proleptic sign of judgment upon the world's refusal of this "new humanity" as the true calling of all human life.[10] In short, if the social existence of the church depends—as Yoder contests—upon Christ, then I argue that this social existence is one which continues even in disobedience. As Hans Frei argued, the presence of Christ involves not only upon the characterization given to Jesus by the disciples, but the unbelieving crowds as well.[11] A denial of the practices intrinsic to the social existence given in Christ is, to use Frei's language, to describe oneself as part of the crowd instead of the disciples; this is, however, simply to witness to Christ as those under *judgment* rather than as a celebrant of and participant in a new life.

Similarly, this uncoupling of nonviolence from social ontology *extends* Yoder's insight that the church's description as the "new humanity" is one which compels it toward the world. By describing the social ontology of the church in terms of a church's participation in nonviolence, the conclusion could be drawn that if a church is participating in nonviolent resistance—even in *withdrawal* from the world rather than in the forms of witness Yoder envisions—that a church is characterized as this "new humanity". By describing the church's social ontology as a gift of Christ—a Christ who has overcome the powers of the world—the gathered church receives this way of existence as it follows Christ into the world, in a form given to it by Christ.[12] As Yoder

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[10] Cf. 1 Peter 4:17.

[11] Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975): 160-162.

[12] Here, I have in mind Barth's image of the church as following the sending of the Son into the world. Cf. *Church Dogmatics*, IV.3.2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010), 79-81, 85-86.

suggests, nonviolence, in times of war, is inherent to the church's witness to its existence. But nonviolence is not a *precondition* to being known as the "new humanity", but as a consequence of belonging to Christ, such that even the church's *failure* to exhibit nonviolence bears witness, such that the church in Christ in times of war and times of peace, in faithfulness and failure.[13]

William Cavanaugh has recently characterized this inattention to the church's potential to be visible in its failures as a kind of "ecclesiological monophytism", in that binding God's presence to the faithful practices of the church's history is "in effect to banish the Holy Spirit from much of that history".[14] While Cavanaugh argues for the practices of a church as "embodying" the church's relation to Christ, his emphasis of Christ as "becoming sin" enables him to describe how the church belongs to Christ not as a presently perfect witness, but as a body undergoing transformation.[15] Cavanaugh argues that if a church's being proceeds from Christology, "we are able to say that the holiness of the church is visible in its very repentance for its sin"; this, I suggest, provides a way for the missional aspects of Yoder's social ontology to be preserved, in that the church exhibits its true nature even in times of failure.

What is gained in what I have proposed is disconnecting nonviolence and social ontology is a *stronger* connection between the church and the "new humanity", such that

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[13] I take Michel Foucault's word seriously when he writes that "Law is not pacification, for beneath the law…In the smallest of its cogs, peace is waging a secret war. To put it another way, we have to interpret the war that is going on beneath peace; peace itself is a coded war", in *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador Press, 1997), 57. As such, some form of nonviolent witness by the church may very well always be required.

[14] William Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 147-150. Cavanaugh's account echoes earlier critiques lodged by Nicholas M. Healy in "Practices and the New Ecclesiology: Misplaced Concreteness?", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5 (2003): 287-308.

[15] Cavanaugh, *Migrations*, 155-58.

even its failures, the church does not cease to be described as the "new humanity", in that this is a sociality established by Christ. Where my formulation is challenged, however, is how to articulate nonviolence as a norm for Christians if nonviolence is not, as Yoder renders it, the primary mark of the church's social ontology. I will address this in turn, but first, I will tease out the ecclesiological implications of this study.

Ecclesiology: The Event of the Word and Practices of the Church

For both Yoder and Day, the practices of the church establish the parameters enacting and articulating nonviolence; if the work of Christ creates a new social existence through the church, then nonviolence (as a witness to this new social reality) must be articulated in terms of how the church enacts and describes nonviolence. For Yoder, the nonviolence intrinsic to the "new humanity" is the capstone of other church practices; for Day, nonviolence is described as among the "works of mercy".

For both, the processes and institutions of the church are intrinsically related to carrying out a Christian nonviolence. For Day, because the "cross on which Christ is crucified" and "the body of Christ made visible", the institutions of the church are intrinsically necessary to describing "church", in that through these institutions, the traditions of the church are carried forward, the sacraments are rightly administered, and the unity of the church is maintained; it is through the Mystical Body—communicated in the Eucharist and attested to in the Church's teaching—that nonviolence becomes Day's inevitable conclusion. For Yoder, the practices of the church make visible the church's relation to the world; as Christ rules over both church and world, so the church makes the new life in Christ known to the world, through its practices. In a stronger sense than with Day, nonviolence underlies the church's practices and teaching.

In the work of Stringfellow, however, the structures and practices maintaining the church are much more tenuous, particularly in their ability to maintain a faithful witness to the "community of the resurrection" or to sustain Christian nonviolence. As I described, Stringfellow was decidedly pessimistic about "tradition" or institutions as intrinsic bearers of Christian fidelity, seeing them as often antithetical to "listening to the Word" in the world. The Episcopal Church, though having a decided less robust tradition of teaching on the issue of war, does have the resources to answer such questions, in ways analogous to what we find in the Mennonite Church and Catholic Church.[16] Stringfellow's own experiences with church institutions, it would appear, drove him from these resources, depriving him of resources which could have enriched his writings and thinking about the nature of war and peace.

However, the deeper reason for Stringfellow's view of church institutions, as I described, has to do with his understanding of how one "listens to the Word". Because the Word's presence in the world and church were two aspects of the "four-fold" Word, ecclesial practices and offices could not in and of themselves guarantee faithful attention to the Word. Rather, "tradition" could be counted among the "powers" if it neglected its own contingency upon the movement of the free Word of God. As such, Stringfellow saw the institutional structures of his own church as either on the wrong side (as in the case of Bishops Wendt and Pike), or without a voice (as it would appear with regards to war).

I take this view of the church to be a more challenging position and more fruitful than that of Day and Yoder, primarily because of Stringfellow's emphasis upon the church's contingency upon the freedom of God. That being said, Stringfellow's

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[16] For a survey of these writings, see *Cross Before Flag: Episcopal Statements on War and Peace*, (Washington DC: Episcopal Peace Fellowship, 1986).

ecclesiology does tend to potentially destabilize the church's witness over time, or offer

the possibility of the church contradicting its own positions over time. By viewing the

institutions and practices of the church as *creaturely*, and as such, not immune from the

failures of other created beings, Stringfellow emphasized the need for the *mode* of

ecclesiology to match the *witness* of the church. In other words, if nonviolence exists

because of the Word's freedom in the world, the institutions of the church—if they are to

fully participate in the Word's movement—can do nothing less than exhibit the same

contingency. As seen in my exposition of Stringfellow, while his understanding of

nonviolence is formed by Scripture, his nonviolence does not account for ecclesiastical

structures' potential in facilitating nonviolence except as a marginal hope. After

explaining Stringfellow's position in contrast to Day and Yoder, I will articulate what I

take to be a corrective to some of the problematic edges of this ecclesiology, which at

times tends to *under*play how church institutions and practices may facilitate Christian

witness rather than inhibit it.

First, Stringfellow emphasizes what goes under-articulated in Day's ecclesiology:

that the Church exists and is normed across time first because of the act of a free God. I

do not think Day would deny that the Church exists because of the act of Christ, but her

descriptions of the Church emphasize the Church as the completion of the "natural"

structure of humanity; for Stringfellow, the "natural"/ "supernatural" conversation is a

non-starter, in that the work of Christ does not build upon human life, but calls it to an

apocalyptic transformation; this is not to say, in other words, that "grace destroys nature",

so much as "grace recreates nature". As such, the church and its traditions are not meant

as the culmination of human love for Stringfellow, but a community whose practices bear

witness to its contingency upon a God who has undermined our "natural" assumptions, creating a new community of the Word by the Spirit.

Though Stringfellow's work demonstrates a deep suspicion for church structures (particularly hierarchical structures), he maintained an appreciation (like Day) for the way in which these structures render visible the church's life, albeit as a "redeemed principality". But this was primarily through his respect for the tradition of witnesses who help the church understand its ongoing life in the world, those who he understands as bearing witness to the Word's freedom in times of war, such as Daniel Berrigan and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It is in through these faithful witnesses (with the aid of structures) thus, that continuity of the church's witness is established. To look to church teaching *apart from* embodied witness would be for Stringfellow an instance of "ideology"; to look to Christian doctrine in connection with its concrete displays, however, seems to be approved, in that the individual existence is both what is impinged upon by death *and* that which is redeemed by Christ. Day's use of the saints as authority coheres to Stringfellow's approach; to view Therese of Liseux or Pius XII as authoritative in any other way than as an exemplar of "listening to the Word" would be for Stringfellow to misunderstand not only who they were, but to misunderstand how the Word of God is operative: in human autobiography and *through* liturgical and ecclesiastical entities in contingent ways.

Secondly, Stringfellow's ecclesiology stands in stark distinction to Yoder's, in that for Yoder, the assumption is that the practices of the church are imbued by the Spirit, seen most prominently in Yoder's writing on the process of "binding/loosing" and in the practice of nonviolence. Yoder's trust in the church's practices is akin to Day's trust in

the normativity of Tradition, both of which tend to downplay Stringfellow's distinction

between the church's call to be a *redeemed* principality and its tendency to simply behave

as a principality.[17] Yoder would agree with Stringfellow, that the church exists because

of the act of Christ, but would stop short of Stringfellow's emphasis on contingency of

even the faithful church's practices and institutions; for Yoder, the church's practices

have authorization in the historical person of Jesus, whereas Stringfellow's emphasis on

the contingency of the church on the Word of God emphasizes the Word's continued

acting, such that the church's practices do not bind God to the church's institutions and

practices, but rather facilitate our following of the Word of God into the world.

What I want to affirm in Stringfellow's ecclesiology is his emphasis upon the

contingency of church upon God's free movement, as the foundation of the church.

Stringfellow's church, as I have argued, is a "redeemed" principality, which is to say that

it has institutions, but that these institutions are not what constitute or sustain the church

or the church's witness, but are entities which facilitate the mission of the church into the

world by the Spirit, a mission which includes (but is not limited to) nonviolent resistance

to war. God's freedom meant for Stringfellow that the liturgy is not where the people

exclusively encounter the Word of God; rather, the liturgy is where the mission of the

church and the person of Christ are explicitly proclaimed, and that space where the

church's confession of its unity with the world is made, on the basis of Christ's work in

both church and world. In other words, the church's acts of nonviolence can only be

understood fully *as* the church engages the Christ of Scripture and liturgy, while

remaining open to what nonviolence means in today's world.

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[17] This is not to say that neither Yoder nor Day are critical of their respective ecclesiastical institutions. Both Yoder and Day had strong words for the failures of their institutions. But neither offer the possibility that the church's practices or institutions could do other than exhibit the work of the Spirit.

This account of ecclesiology bears within it a contradiction of sorts with regards to the question of structures and institutions. On the one hand, Stringfellow described the church as a "redeemed principality"—a body which is made visible across time and space—while on the other hand, he challenged the validity and judgment of a variety of bishops and members of the hierarchy. Similarly, while he revered the reading of Scripture, he did not emphasize proclamation-as-such as being intrinsically equal to "listening to the Word".[18] In other words, while Stringfellow emphasized the basis of the church as the free "event" of God, he did not articulate fully how the church maintains a contiguous witness across time, such that that "listening to the Word" does not become an arbitrary exercise which could effectively make God contradict God's self in different times; in terms of Stringfellow's writings on nonviolence, the question is begged how it is justifiable for Bonhoeffer to be involved in war, but not Daniel Berrigan. I will discuss this problem by recourse to two proposals, that of Gerald Schlabach and that of Karl Barth.

One possible solution to Stringfellow's problem is to offer a stronger account for the necessity for institutions, as necessary in order to offer a proper parameter for reasoning about the morality of nonviolence. Gerald Schlabach's recent work offers such a proposal about church institutions. In his recent *Unlearning Protestantism*, he identifies what he calls a contradictory "tradition of dissent" within Protestant life.[19] In contrast to a tradition formed around dissention, Schlabach calls for what he terms "the practice of

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[18] Preaching for Stringfellow could be the occasion for "institutional housekeeping" as much as it could be the proclamation of the Word of God. Cf. Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians*, 13ff.

[19] Gerald Schlabach, *Unlearning Protestantism*: *Sustaining Christian Community in an Unstable Age*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 47. Schlabach in this phrase is interacting with John Howard Yoder and Mennonite history, but his criticisms are applicable to a position such as Stringfellow's as well, which seeks to articulate both a need for liturgy and consistent criticism of the celebrants and teachers of that liturgy.

stability", writ large into a church body, which can enable, in turn, "loyal dissent"; the difference between these two is that in the former model, "dissent" paradoxically becomes the act which unifies the group against the world, while in the latter, "dissent" against the church or the world is enabled *because* one retains a prior commitment to the group. Turning to the Second Vatican Council, he argues that the Council effected a "participatory hierarchy" which go hand in hand with "the practice of stability".[20] Reading the participatory hierarchy as both enabling stability and allowing for dissent, Schlabach points to how these institutions enable a tradition of moral reasoning, emphasizing that traditions can maintain the narrative structure of existence necessary such deliberation. To this end, Schlabach's call for "structures of stability" is in line with Stringfellow's vision of the church as a "renewed principality"—to a point.

Schlabach's argument for the cultivation of stability through institutions rests upon two key moves. First, Schlabach takes the "Protestant Principle" as articulated by Tillich to be descriptively accurate not simply of how Protestants understand the church's constitution as a "permanent and self-critical posing of the question of fidelity to Jesus Christ".[21] Secondly, his argument then contrasts the self-critical posture of "the Protestant Principle" with a "participatory hierarchy", arguing that adherence to a participatory form of polity can guard against a corrosive effect of the "Protestant Principle", a principle which –if left as the central aspect of ecclesiology—unifies people

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[20]Schlabach, while arguing that "…no procedural clarity can substitute for charity, patience, and courage, as well as the community virtue that holds these together through difficult times: fidelity to one another engendered through the practice of stability" (121), spends the bulk of the book discussing precisely the procedural considerations necessary for this stability.

[21] Ibid., 29. The "Protestant Principle" is articulated by Paul Tillich as a continual self-criticism enacted by ecclesial bodies to guard against idolatry, and against the equation of temporal manifestations of fidelity with fidelity *itself*. For Schlabach, this is not restricted to Tillich's liberal Protestantism, but to all forms of Protestantism. Cf. ibid., 34.

only in a common suspicion or criticism and not in a common confession or a common belonging. [22]

Schlabach's assessment of Protestant life finds much resonance with Stringfellow's work, particularly in that Stringfellow saw the Christian life characterized by "resistance to death", consistent with Schlabach's assessment of Protestantism as united in dissent. I agree with Schlabach that certain forms of institutions are necessary for ecclesial life; on this much, Stringfellow agreed: while institutions can certainly behave as powers, we cannot do away with them, as institutionality is an aspect of creaturely life. While I am in agreement with Schlabach that God "has deemed imperfect human ways good enough to carry revelation forward"[23], I (with Stringfellow) disagree with Schlabach is in his assessment of the means God has given for this end.

Schlabach's depiction of the "human ways" appropriate to bearing continuous witness to the revelation of Christ are "those social relationships we call institutions."[24] For Stringfellow, by contrast, the continuity of the church is not dependent upon institutions, but rather the Word of God, witnessed in Scripture and the liturgy; in contrast to Schlabach, Stringfellow asserted that institutions *at best* were still a principality, even if a "redeemed" principality. In other words, while institutions facilitate the visibility of the church to a degree, they are not for Stringfellow the way that the church is maintained over time nor the way that revelation "is carried forward" in Schlabach's words. The church, as an "event", is aided by institutions as not *intrinsic* to

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[22] Schlabach, 24-32.

[23] Ibid., 37.

[24] Ibid., 38.

the church, but *appropriate* to the church as a creaturely body seeking to listen to the Word in a particular time and place.

In that the Word of God is free for Stringfellow, and compels us into a precarious life of witness in the world, it is not up to the institutions of the church to maintain a contiguous witness, but the very Spirit who creates the church. I will now turn briefly to Karl Barth's work to more fully tease out—and modify—the more problematic edges of Stringfellow's proposal, arguing that some form of institutionalism is *appropriate* for the church, but the *kind* of institutionalism does not need to fit the form that Schlabach assumes in order for the church to retain continuity over time. In resorting to Barth, I will attempt to fill out Stringfellow's insight that the church, though constituted by the Spirit, maintains some institutional form.

Though Stringfellow claimed to have read little of Karl Barth's own work, his account here bears a great deal of affinity to that of Karl Barth's account of the church.[25] Barth's account of the church, as Kimlyn Bender has argued, bears a thoroughly Christological pattern, emphasizing the constitution of the church for the sake of mission and witness to the event of Christ.[26] Stringfellow has drawn comparisons to Barth's work on occasion on this point that the church exists in witness to Christ, in de-emphasis of certain kind of structures or institutions as intrinsically definitive for the church. Like Barth, Stringfellow's account of the church, thus, describes the Word in Scripture as not needing other structures *intrinsically*, but rather, institutions are appropriate to seeing the church as a "renewed principality", i.e. a fully creaturely community before God.

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[25] On not reading Barth, cf. Stringfellow, A *Second Birthday*, 150-1.

[26] Kimlyn Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology*, (Aldershot, UK:: Ashgate Publishers, 2005), 13ff. Bender, citing Barth from *Church Dogmatics* III.4, 488: "We assume that by the Christian community Church is not meant an establishment or institution organized along specific lines, but the living people awakened and assembled by Jesus Christ as the Lord for the fulfillment of specific task."

Accordingly, Stringfellow shares with Barth a susceptibility to the charge of "occasionalism", that talking about church as "event" means that the church does not *always* present, in the way that church is always present through institutional and apostolic continuity.[27]

Where Barth's account is able to move beyond this charge (in ways that Stringfellow struggles with) is in Barth's assumption that the Holy Spirit, as the witness to Jesus Christ, guarantees the church's preservation as the vehicle by which God enables witness to Christ, a church which takes institutional form for the sake of mission.[28] As I have argued, Stringfellow would agree that the Spirit is the grounding of the church, but stopped short of granting institutions the blessing of the Spirit. But it would seem that Stringfellow *would* agree that church institutions, while not *intrinsically* necessary (i.e. that there is not one reified form of institution which guarantees fidelity or stability) institutions are in some sense *appropriate and fitting* to this witness, so long as these structures are qualified as *redeemed* structures, institutions which exhibit the "listening" that is appropriate to both individuals and the collective church, subject to the Spirit.

Stringfellow, while speaking of the persistent role of the Spirit *in the world*, does not speak of the Spirit's role as preserver of church institutions in this way.[29] But by emphasizing a more full account of the Spirit in and through the institutions of the church

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[27] Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001), 39ff.

[28] For analysis on this point, cf. Nicholas Healy, "Karl Barth's Ecclesiology Reconsidered", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 (2004): 287-299.

[29] On this point, cf. particularly, Jürgen Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, trans. Margaret Kohl, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993): 163-182. Moltmann's account is deeply indebted to a Hegelian account of God's coinherence in the world, a view which is radically unlike Stringfellow's account, which relies upon divine transcendence. However, their common assertion that the Spirit works in the world to call the church into the world draws them together on this point.

as well, Stringfellow's account of the unity of church and world in the economy of the Word is not compromised, but rather *strengthened*. If the Spirit is constantly and consistently at work in the world, why not speak of the Holy Spirit—the one constantly at work in the world—as constantly at work in the church?

Such a view does not necessarily entail arguing for the Spirit-inspired or Spirit-necessitated participatory hierarchy, as assumed by Schlabach, and more explicitly articulated by Yves Congar.[30] Rather, speaking of the Spirit as Barth does—the one bearing witness to Christ through the preservation of the church—we can more fully fill out Stringfellow's project. Emphasizing that the Spirit who presents Christ in the Scriptures is the same Spirit at work in the world grants continuity to the church while simultaneously denying that structures are *intrinsic* to (but at the same time, in a limited sense, necessary for) this continuity.

The teachings, wisdom, and institutions of the church, thus, are not antithetical to the Scriptures but should—if Scripture is the narrative of the church—be seen as reflections on Scripture by those who have been called of Christ, and who have loved God's people, with both *reification* of the teachings of these witnesses and *neglect* of their teachings as extremes to be avoided.[31] Institutions, in this account, remain essential, but—like the body of the church—are not beyond being confronted and judged by the Word.[32]

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[30] For Yves Congar on the role of the Spirit as the animus of church structures, cf., *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith (New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 2000).

[31] I take this to be in line with Stringfellow's concern to not *under*determine or *over*determine the church institutionally.

[32] Another way of putting this is akin to what Dietrich Bonhoeffer articulates in *Sanctorum Communio*: *A Theolocial Study of the Sociology of the Church,* trans. and ed. Joachim von Soosten et al, DBWE 1, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 118-120, *in* that the corporate social life of a group is

The question that remains, even after this recourse to Barth to supplement Stringfellow, however, is that of how such a view of the institutionality of the church does not descend into chaos, into completely *arbitrary* adoption of traditions: what reason can be given for listening to the witness of Bonhoeffer on war, while rejecting the speeches of Urban II encouraging Christians to take up arms in Jerusalem? On this point, Stringfellow gives us little guidance. While outlining the ways in which institutions *cannot* function if they are to truly facilitate the church's existence in the world, Stringfellow is often silent as to how institutions can help guide the church's reasoning.

It is on this point that Stringfellow needs Yoder to flesh out this view of the radical contingency of the church's institutions. In *The Politics of Jesus*, I argued, Yoder teases out how a variety of the church's practices facilitate witness to the world, practices which are normative because of Christ's conquering of the powers. These practices— including the mutual subjection of one member of the body of Christ to another in discernment—proceed in a way Stringfellow would approve of, in that they are practices of communal formation and discernment which derive from Christ's own person, speaking of a *renewed* way of living in the world.

In Stringfellow's terms, Yoder's practices of communal discernment and witness describes not only the *kinds* of institutions, traditions, and witnesses find their norm in the Word, but the parameters and limits by which the institutions operate as well. This, of course, does not resolve every hermeneutical dispute or institutional struggle, but by naming Christ as the criteria of what constitutes faithful institutional discourse or tradition, Yoder provides a way to articulate ecclesial continuity and tradition in the spirit

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confronted by God. This, I suggest, includes the institutions and practices of the group, such that a structure or institution can never be thought of as *intrinsically* necessary to the preservation of the church, but rather *fitting*, in that people as creatures always operate with them.

of Stringfellow, in that both the form and content of theological witness and tradition are rooted in the person of Jesus witnessed to in Scripture, the same Word who continually animates the church.

Returning to the question of nonviolence, Schlabach's proposal certainly provides a way for the church to vigorously disagree about the question of war.[33] But it equally, I would argue, provides a way for nonviolence to be muted as a minority (and even silent) voice within a larger tradition, as seen in the 20th century encyclical tradition. What I have suggested provides a way for the church to overcome the gravity of institutions and tradition without *doing away* with the institutions and traditions. Churches require structures and traditions, as appropriate to its creaturely state; Stringfellow (with aid from Barth and Yoder) provides a way to allow a nonviolence latent with church tradition and teaching to be brought to the surface as an act of the Spirit. The same Spirit who witnesses to the person and practices of Christ is the same Spirit who gives enables and sustains the church over time; as such, a nonviolence dependent upon the person of Christ can be facilitated by church traditions, teachings, and institutions *insofar as* these traditions, teachings, and institutions understand themselves to be subject to the Spirit, and not structures which *enable* the Spirit's work.

In my description of the church's social ontology, I argued that we must first talk about how the church witnesses to Christ, both in its nonviolence and in its failures. In this section, I have added to that description, arguing that the institutions of the church facilitate this witness by giving visible form to this contingency upon the activity of the Spirit. As I turn toward nonviolence, these terms will come together. Describing the

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[33] As described in the chapter on Dorothy Day, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World affirms both involvement in war and pacifism as legitimate options for Catholics.

church as dependent upon Christ and the Spirit—enabling the church to *remain* the church even in its failures—means that nonviolence as such is not the exclusive marker of the true church. Such a formulation begs the question of how nonviolence can be normative for the church if this practice is not presently part of its practice.

Nonviolence: Necessary as Contingent upon Christ's Humanity

As I indicated in the introduction of this chapter, I will be defending Day's understanding of nonviolent resistance to war over against the proposals of Yoder and Stringfellow. Day situated nonviolent resistance to war within a nexus of practices which bore witness together to the reality of the Mystical Body. These sacramental "works of mercy" were envisioned as acts which, as an overflow of divine charity, bear witness to the Mystical Body while they address practical needs in the world. Within the one practicing the act, however, these works contribute toward the practitioner's participation in the grace of God, conforming the person's character to the love of God.

Day's formulation of nonviolence as among the works of mercy overcomes certain difficulties in Yoder's formulation, in two ways. Yoder's nonviolence, resting upon Jesus' overcoming of the powers, struggled with how to keep nonviolence from overdetermining both the church's social existence and ecclesiological form. Yoder's work creates a strong connection between the telos of human existence (the "new humanity") and nonviolence, difficulties I have addressed previously. For Day, nonviolence was a normative Christian response to war, but recognizes that the means which testify to the Mystical Body—the "new world inside of the old"—extend beyond nonviolence, in that a proper description of the life of the church extends beyond simply nonviolence.

Day's formulation also addresses a shortcoming within Stringfellow's nonviolence. By emphasizing an "empirical" mode of theological reflection, i.e. not separating the movement of the Word in history from the Word of Scripture, Stringfellow sought to articulate how Christian nonviolence could not be "ideological", but must be grounded in the Word's present activity in the world. As we have seen with regards to Stringfellow's ecclesiology, however, this approach to nonviolence can lead to a kind of "occasionalism", in which nonviolence could be sometimes present and sometimes dismissed. Because nonviolence for Day did not depend on the historical "empirical" situation, but rather, on the eternality of Christ's Mystical Body, nonviolence remains normative in any historical era, as evidenced by her absolute opposition to war in both American and European contexts, and in multiple decades.

What I wish to affirm most directly in Day's nonviolence is its operation in conjunction with a variety of other acts of witness, with the recognition that the goal of nonviolence is not simply to not participate in war, but to offer a fulsome and constructive witness against war by pointing toward the new sociality that is the church of Christ. Day's articulation, in other words, is able to hold to a normativity of nonviolence at all times (in contrast to Stringfellow), while at the same time, describing nonviolence as part of a broader cloth of witness (in contrast to Yoder at times). It is the placement of nonviolence within a broader context of practices that I will now discuss.

Day's formulation stands between the eschatologically-necessitated position of Yoder and the contingent position of Stringfellow, in that for Day, nonviolence was a practice by which the Christian participates in the love of God, bearing witness to Christ and aiding one's neighbor at the same time. The strength of this formulation is that if

nonviolence is a work of mercy—an overflow of the Christian receiving the love of God—nonviolence is part of a comprehensive social vision; the works of mercy—emphasizing the coinherence of prayer and feeding the hungry, of education and forgiveness of sins—witness to the comprehensive reformation of both human desires and materiality which is involved in articulating a new sociality.

This strength aside, Day sees nonviolence as an act of conscience, begging the question of whether or not the reliance of nonviolence upon conscience does not lead to the same kind of "occasionalist" position as Stringfellow's with regards to nonviolence; while nonviolence is not contingent due to the historical *situation* (as with Stringfellow), it does depend on the temporal *conscience* of the participant. The question remains, thus, as to whether or not nonviolence is *necessarily* a part of this comprehensive witness to the life of the church, given nonviolence's contingency upon the formation of the individual conscience.

The formation of the conscience for Day, as I have argued, meant that the individual, as an instance of the humanity which has been assumed by Christ's humanity, must follow the dictates of conscience.[34] To coerce that conscience—even toward nonviolence—in any sense would be to violate human dignity, and to undermine the gains of the Second Vatican Council. Day valued obedience to the church, trusting that "God will right all mistakes"; in other words, though her conscience persisted in nonviolence, nonviolence is not an act which could a) be coerced and b) bore witness to

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[34] As Day argued in "On Pilgrimage", *Catholic Worker* May 1965, "For me, this answers the question as to whether we, at the Catholic Worker, think that a man is in the state of mortal sin for going to war….To my mind the answer lies in the realm of the motive, the intention. If a man truly thinks he is combating evil and striving for the good, if he truly thinks he is striving for the common good, he must follow his conscience regardless of others. But he always has the duty of forming his conscience by studying, listening, being ready to hear his opponents' point of view, by establishing what Martin Buber called an I-Thou relationship."

the life of a Church which would not speak of nonviolence as normatively as Day. If nonviolence cannot be coerced, and can be sublated to ecclesiastical obedience, it would appear that Day's nonviolence cannot be named as universally normative for Christians, lacking both the weight of tradition and relying upon the formation of the individual conscience.

The solution to this conundrum within Day's work lies, I suggest, within a more radical reading of Day's own work. Within Day's work, as I have shown, the humanity of Jesus—present in the Eucharist and operative in the world—is the basis for Day's seeing the Mystical Body's peace as normative for all human relations. For Yoder, the humanity of Jesus provides a more directly ethical basis for nonviolence, in that those who would be called Christians follow the ethic of Jesus; for Day, however, the life of Jesus provides the basis upon which *all* human society is to be viewed, and the telos toward which all human life is directed.

Day does not, however, capitalize on this insight fully. Rather than drawing the connection (as Yoder does) between the humanity of Christ and the normative nonviolent ethic of Christ, Day focuses on Christ's humanity as the basis for each human personality to be moved toward the Mystical Body, a journey which may or may not *necessarily* involve nonviolence.[35] As I have argued, Day understood inclusion within the Mystical Body to be a matter of communication of peace of Christ. Accordingly, unity in Christ for Day did not mean unity in nonviolent activity, but in Christ's humanity. But, if all people are narrated according to Christ's humanity, there seems to be no reason then to

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[35] In some ways, Day's approach is similar to Stringfellow, in that Stringfellow makes great use of "the incarnation" to talk about the value of human autobiography, but does not ever (that I have read) discuss the normativity of the teachings of Jesus with regards to violence in connection to the significance of Christ's incarnation for all human lives.

follow Yoder's line of reasoning, viewing the *activity* of Christ as intrinsically bound up with Christ's humanity, such that nonviolent resistance against war becomes a practice intrinsic to the church, while not constitutive of it.

Day's fundamental claim about nonviolence—that it attends to both the material and spiritual aspects of both the practitioner and the one to whom witnesses it—is correct. But in keeping with her claim concerning the universal telos of humanity, it would seem that she need not back away from nonviolence as the calling of the church. If nonviolence derives its justification from the humanity of Christ, then Day's work would do well to be supplemented by Yoder's insight—that the humanity of Christ involves a normative range of teaching and behavior which are *also* constitutive for all humanity. If conscience's perfection occurs within the bounds established by Christ's assumption of human nature—an assumption of human nature which envisions participation in the body of Christ as its telos—it would seem then that nonviolence is the conclusion toward which the conscience is drawn, as a matter of its perfection within the body of Christ.

This way of arguing for nonviolence's normativity—as rooted in Christ's humanity which is the norm of all humanity—relates back to the basis for the church as I have being arguing, i.e. the continual presence of the Spirit who makes known the person of Christ. If "apostolicity" means, in one sense, not simply a commitment to a particular liturgical form, but commitment to the normativity of Christ's life for the church and for all humanity, then the Christ who is presented by the Spirit—the Spirit who creates the church across time—communicates the Christ whose life makes possible a sociality marked by nonviolence.

In other words, the church, which is granted continuity by the Spirit, is able to describe nonviolence as an indispensable aspect of moral formation, in that to participate in Christ's body (the church) is inseparable from being assumed by Christ's humanity (the norm of nonviolence). The Spirit which presents Christ's life to us in the fellowship of the church is the same Spirit who constitutes the church, meaning then that a commitment to Christ, a commitment to the church, and a commitment to Christian nonviolence are all a result of the same Spirit—the Spirit who sustains the church as Christ's body, and who forms us into the image of Christ's own life.

If this nonviolence is intrinsic to Christ's body, then, can this nonviolence be coerced? Day's formulation—that nonviolence depends upon a free conscience—excludes this possibility. If the operation of conscience toward its fullness in Christ is a work of the Spirit, then the church must be willing to bear with the wounds of its own violence, bearing witness to Christ as the one who has assumed human existence and authored a new life into which we are invited, and trusting in the Spirit to move all those gathered in Christ into the fullness of Christ's person. To do otherwise would be, in the words of Stringfellow, for the church to operate as one of the powers.

A Way Forward

To sum up my comments here, I have proposed 1) a missionally-characterized social ontology characterized first as given by Christ, such that even the church's failures bear witness to this social reality of the church through nonviolence, 2) an ecclesial continuity of this nonviolent witness over time, whose teachings and structures which are enabled (and judged) by the Spirit, and 3) a nonviolence, dependent upon Christ's assumption of humanity, which is the normative telos for all human existence and

conscience. What I have tried to emphasize in these points is that nonviolence's ability to bear witness to a new social reality in the church depends *first* upon viewing the church as that body who finds themselves called together in Christ, upheld and sustained by the Spirit, and narrated by Christ's humanity.

Insofar as the church exists within a divine economy, called into being by God and sustained by the work of the Spirit, the practices of the church make known the church's life and mission both in its faithfulness and under divine judgment, in its nonviolent witness and in its failure. Nonviolence is not for the church's own sake, but for the sake of attesting to the new social existence made possible by God in Christ in the church; as such, the *practice* of nonviolence is not the singularly descriptive practice of witness against war. As I argued in the case of *City of God*, war describes a sociality which parodies that given to the church. In as much as the "city of God" describes a people whose corporate existence is ordered around a common love, such existence manifests itself in contrast to war not simply by nonviolence, but by a comprehensive set of practices (the "works of mercy") which are a response to the love of the triune God: forgiving the sinner, prayer, instruction of the ignorant, and counsel of the doubtful. To follow Day's lead in amplifying the list of the works, we could also include mediating between enemies, suffering with those who suffer, and prayers for countries at war.

If the human career of Jesus Christ—the one whose humanity assumed all humanity—is normative for all human life, then there is within the existence of the church not only a corporate movement toward nonviolence (in keeping with viewing the church as the body of Christ), but a personal aspect to nonviolence (formation of the individual toward their end in Christ). These practices cohere, I argued, in the Scriptures

as the living Word of God, Who creates the church in all times and places (with the aid of institutions whose own existence mirrors the church's mode of witness) creates continuity across time and discursive room for disagreements about the proper mode of nonviolence.

What I have ruled out in this formulation is a *univocal* implementation of nonviolent resistance to war. As should be evident through this study, the suppositions of Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow in many ways seem to be describing very *different* versions of the church, meaning that in a sense, there are multiple social ontologies toward which nonviolent resistance against war bears witness. I do not think that simply resorting to a common witness against war is sufficient for overcoming these significant differences among these three, in that the vast chasm between Yoder's voluntarist church and Day's sacramental church still stands, even if there is a common resistance to war. But by the same token, Yoder, Day, and Stringfellow all looked to the Christ of Scripture as the norm who necessitates their conclusions about the nature of war and about Christian resistance to war.

As such, in the presently divided church, an ecclesially-rooted call to nonviolent resistance depends upon Christ, whose body is the church in diverse contexts, means that a singular understanding of nonviolent resistance to war—be it characteristic of the "Catholic Left" or Mennonite "nonresistance"—is not sufficient; Christ's own life manifests nonviolence in both a willing submission to the authorities unto death and in a clearing of the temple with cords.[36] Insofar as the church is called into being by Christ, and empowered by the Spirit who creates one body which presently persists in division,

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[36] Cf. Philippians 2:1-11; John 2:12-20

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there will be disagreements over modes and tactics, as well as over issues of prudential timing and the ends toward which nonviolence can be used. In that these churches are founded in the same Christ, toward the same new social existence, such disagreements are not impossible, so long as the Christ who is the impetus for nonviolent resistance to war is understood to be the same Christ whose life founds the church, a church whose life appears as the alternative to death and sin, and as an alternate existence to a world broken by war.[37]

I fully acknowledge that such an existence requires a great deal of trust, but viewing nonviolence as a witness to a new sociality present in Christ, has never been anything but an act of faith in a world at war. It is great comfort to Christians to know that the church is of use to God in this form of witness both in its faithfulness, and in its hopefully fewer failures. It is in that hope that I conclude this dissertation, in a prayer for churches to find their own humanity caught up in Christ's work, and compelled to live accordingly.

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[37] In this way, I am contrasting Oliver O'Donovan's Christological claim that Christ's role as priest is given to the church, and as king is given over the state, such that nonviolence can be a witness of the church to the state, but that the state must always exercise judgment in ways which involve force. The discussion of state force, I contend, must be chastened by the claim that *all* humanity is caught up in Christ's humanity. Cf. O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations*, 195ff.

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