CHRISTIAN ANARCHISM: RADICAL RELIGION, RADICAL POLITICS

by

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(Under the Direction of Carolyn Jones Medine)

ABSTRACT

This thesis articulates a variant of Christianity, as exemplified by the Catholic Worker Movement, that is radical in its submission to God and service to the Other, but anarchic in its orientation toward the State. This anarchic Christianity is grounded in radical interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, and the thesis presents the theory and practice of the Catholic Worker as operating between Catholic social justice tradition, Levinas's Other-oriented ethics, and anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin's formulations of mutual aid.

INDEX WORDS: Christian anarchism, Catholic Worker Movement, Social justice, Sermon on the Mount, Emmanuel Levinas, Peter Kropotkin

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Most Christians would describe Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as a comprehensive summary of the Christian message; in this passage in the book of Matthew, Jesus delivers the Beatitudes, connects his teachings to those of the Law and the Prophets before him, and encourages his followers to be compassionate and forgiving in all their dealings. However, tucked away in this same sermon is a potent political message. As the Sermon on the Mount teaches virtue to individuals, it simultaneously proscribes the vices of violence and judgment. These demands certainly apply at the personal level, but there is little reason to not also carry this message even farther. Taking Jesus' exhortations to their logical conclusions, in fact, would indict not only individual action, but the entire earthly political order, which is a bureaucratic device predicated upon perpetuating the vices inherent in war, structural violence and discrimination, and the judgment and condemnation carried out by the legal system. Put simply, Christians who seek the radical political conclusions of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount can aptly be described as Christian anarchists.

This thesis, *Christian Anarchism: Radical Religion, Radical Politics*, traces the general development of Christian anarchism as a religio-political movement. Anarchism, by its very nature, has always contained radically disparate strands, and Christian anarchism should be understood as yet another manifestation of the anarchist school of thought. However, while Christian anarchism, like its secular counterpart, does provide a radical critique of power and authority (especially in the political sphere), it is by no

means reducible to the secular social and political movement from which it derives part of its name. Significantly, Christian anarchists do not view their project as the fusion of Christian and anarchist thought, but, as Ciaron O'Reilly argues, as the "realisation that the premise of anarchism is inherent in Christianity and the message of the Gospels" (9). The purpose of this thesis is to critically examine Christian anarchism both theoretically and practically. The choice of Christian anarchism is salient because this particular religio-political movement provides a means of building community by radically foregrounding, on a Biblical, ethical, and political level, the message of caring for one's neighbor, which Peter Maurin would call "a first principle" of Christianity (Day, *Long Loneliness* 179). Of course, setting up such an examination of Christian anarchism necessarily requires some introductory explication and delimitations.

First, this thesis, while it does draw on the thought of individual exegetes, is not primarily concerned with the religious belief structure of any given individual. Individuals tend to be highly idiosyncratic and are adept at maintaining seemingly contradictory beliefs without ever resolving the cognitive dissonance such a task creates. Therefore, this thesis will seek a holistic approach to understanding Christian anarchism and will necessarily pull from a variety of philosophical and religious sources in order to syncretize somewhat general Christian anarchist thought and practice. That said, the fourth chapter will examine Christian anarchist thought and practice as it develops through a particular Christian anarchist group, the Catholic Worker Movement.

A second delimitation concerns the extent to which this thesis treats Christian anarchism and liberation theology. Although, like liberation theology, Christian anarchism focuses on identifying and combatting oppression, Christian anarchists view

their project as differing from the work of liberation theology. Chapter Two will provide some brief comparisons between liberation theology and Christian anarchism, but those comparisons reflect the Christian anarchists' perceived differences. Consequently, those comparisons are by no means intended to be an objective analysis nor representative of a robust debate. While such a robust debate would certainly prove instructive, the scope of this thesis does not directly encompass a detailed comparative analysis between Christian anarchism and liberation theology.

Chapter Two of the thesis will primarily explore the New Testament roots of Christian anarchism. It will open with some further introductory remarks, definitions, and examples of Christian anarchists. From there, the chapter will explore Christianity's anarchist premise, responses to the "render to Caesar" passage and Paul's exhortation of submission to the State, and, to a lesser extent, Christian anarchist responses and strategies in dealing with the State.

Chapter Three builds on the exegesis of second chapter and serves as a transition chapter in an attempt to translate the general theoretical understanding of Christian anarchism into practice. The three touchstones for this chapter will be the Catholic Church's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Emmanuel Levinas's *Totality and Infinity*, and several works by the secular anarchist Peter Kropotkin. Beyond their anarchist orientation toward the state, Christian anarchists tend to be dedicated to social justice.[1] Particularly, as Western culture moved into industrialization, social justice work had to address issues of labor and poverty. From a Christian perspective, the Catholic Church addressed these and related social problems. The Catholic Worker

[1] Certainly, some individual Christian anarchists or Christian anarchist communities are complete separatists and want no dealings with the outside world or with the social justice work such involvement may entail. This thesis, however, is focused on non-separatist Christian anarchism.

Movement, of course, draws on the social doctrine of the Church—primarily the papal encyclicals. However, their thought and practice diverges from Catholic social doctrine on a number of significant points. Therefore, grounding their Christian anarchist practice will require reference to the Other-oriented ethics of Emmanuel Levinas and the anarchist arguments of Peter Kropotkin.

Chapter Four will examine the thought and practice of the Catholic Worker Movement in an attempt to describe and explain how an organized group may pursue the radical religio-politics of Christian anarchism. The Catholic Worker Movement is an appropriate choice of group because it is the most widespread non-separatist Christian anarchist network with a continuing physical presence (as opposed to smaller intentional communities or the vast networks of individuals joined together almost exclusively through the medium of the Internet). Putting any theory into practice necessarily produces some contradictions and tensions, and this chapter will examine those tensions and the extent to which they may be resolved or may remain unresolvable.

Chapter Five will provide a brief conclusion to the thesis and will situate Christian anarchism as a prophetic religio-political movement within the wider landscape of contemporary mainstream conservative American Christianity.

Ultimately, like many contemporary social movements, Christian anarchism reveals that the personal is always political and that there are powerful, non-violent means of confronting or subverting oppressive machinations of the pervasive State. Even the very name *Christian anarchism* provocatively interrogates Western predilections for binaries; one must reconsider received notions such as those regarding the separation of Church and State or the interplay of a religion of forgiveness with a political movement

historically maligned for resorting to violence. Ciaron O'Reilly may not view Christian anarchism as a synthesis of two systems of thought, but implications of one system for the other are inescapable, and both secular and religious ideology and practice stand to benefit from a greater understanding of Christian anarchism as a whole.

Problematizing the "Christian Anarchist" Label

While strict adherence to Christian principles from the Sermon on the Mount will, practically speaking, result in a form of anarchism, the moniker *Christian anarchism* is not without its shortcomings. Some of the tensions with this term arise at the etymological level, and some occur at the historical and theoretical levels. Despite these shortcomings, Alexandre Christoyannopoulos, in his monograph on Christian anarchism, insists that the term still best describes the movement the term represents.

A first complication arises around the idea of "the state" or "government," which anarchists oppose. Christian anarchists tend to use the terms interchangeably, and Ruth Kinna states that "all anarchists have been accused of not differentiating clearly enough between terms like 'state,' 'government,' 'power,' and 'authority,' thus making it near impossible to settle on final and universal definitions for these" (Christoyannopoulos 113). Kinna does, nonetheless, trace generic definitions of each term: "By government, anarchists tend to think of a particular system of rule, based on violence. In authority they consider the social relationships sustained by this system, and in power they consider the means by which government secures its authority" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 113). For Christian anarchists, the most important term is "government," which like other anarchists, they view as perpetuating coercion and physical and structural violence.

A further complication emerges regarding "the state," which is a modern term that was hardly in circulation before the Renaissance, and definitely not during the time of Jesus (Christoyannopoulos 114). Nevertheless, while political structures may have altered significantly since the height of the Roman Empire, Christian anarchists feel that the exploitation and violence that political machines are built upon has remained relatively unchanged. Therefore, they still apply Jesus' critiques of the government of his day to the modern nation-state. Interestingly, in recent decades, secular anarchist critiques have shifted away from the singular, or even primary, opposition to the idea of the modern nation-state; instead, bolstered by poststructuralist thought, they tend to conceive of power and authority more complexly. Their critiques are, therefore, appropriately more nuanced, but they still focus on eliminating oppression.

A somewhat different critique of the nomenclature *Christian anarchism* comes from an "etymological quirk" that Eller identifies regarding *anarchism* (Christoyannopoulos 215). He indicates that "anarchy" does in fact suggest a lack of government or of the state; however, "in Colossians 1:18 Paul actually identifies Jesus as 'the beginning,' 'the prime,' 'THE ARKY'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 216). Obviously, Christian anarchists do not reject Jesus as an authority figure. They would definitely not go so far as the anarchic Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in proclaiming, "No gods, no masters." Therefore, it is somewhat inaccurate to affix the label *anarchist* to such a school of thought, although the inclusion of the adjective *Christian* before it is a clear attempt to modify the term in such a way that places primacy upon the religious orientation of such a believer. Chapter Three of this thesis returns to this very question of authority, as addressed by Dorothy Day and Ammon Hennacy in

their discussion with secular anarchists. Christian anarchists are Christians first, and they derive their anarchism from an understanding of their religion's teachings.

Historical events and narratives have also muddled the term *anarchism*. In the late 19th century, especially, revolutionaries claiming the banner of anarchism engaged in violent actions, even including acts of terrorism and regicide. The perennial issues of (non)violence have plagued secular anarchism as much as any other political movement, and a robust debate continues in the tradition today about the role of (non)violence. Despite the fact that anarchism may have a checkered and sometimes violent past, overall, there is a strong nonviolent current within secular anarchism (Christoyannopoulos 168; Chernus 56). Lest *anarchism* seem like the only problematic term in this moniker, it is also worth pointing out that Christianity is yet another tradition that has a rather violent and bloody past. So, there is little reason to outright reject the pairing of the two terms on the basis of complicity with violence alone. Still, to be clear, Christian anarchists are uncompromising regarding their rejection of violence, and they sometimes prefer to distance themselves from the anarchist label due to anarchists' historical use of violence[2] (Christoyannopoulos 114).

What all of this discussion of states, government, authority, and violence amounts to is a debate over the appropriate means and ends of any religio-political practice. Means and ends are, in fact, continual obsessions for Christian and secular anarchists alike. It is exactly here that one can locate a common thread between these two variants of anarchism, and it leads inevitably to a discussion of political activism/intervention of the specifically nonviolent sort. It is true that both Christianity and anarchism are traditions

[2] Even Tolstoy himself was hesitant to accept the label of *Christian anarchist* for a long time, and he only eventually accepted it so long as it was understood as "strictly non-violent and based on the Sermon on the Mount" (Christoyannopoulos 15).

that have grappled with the idea of principled nonviolence, and each has experienced varying degrees of success while also encountering some major setbacks. The general argument from nonviolent activists is that in order to enact social change, activists must behave in a manner that is consistent with their ultimate social vision. Many activists argue that there is no such thing as a perfect society at which humanity can arrive (barring, of course, Christians' notions of divine intervention and the coming kingdom of God). Consequently, it is somewhat pointless to strive for an ultimate goal, some distant utopian society. Such striving, operating as it does in a dialectical fashion, is more characteristic of a Marxist or liberal democratic project; anarchists, on the other hand, insist that people must behave in such a way that manifests a more equitable society in the present. Such a claim does not suggest that anarchists (Christian or secular) are unable to appreciate incremental progress, but they prefer prefigurative politics to a process of dialectical social change. Here, Christian anarchists have established some common ground with the Industrial Workers of the World; Peter Maurin appropriates another of the IWW's slogans and contends that the purpose of the Catholic Worker movement (and of Christian anarchists, in general) is "to build a new civilization within the shell of the old" (qtd. in Chernus 151). For Christian anarchists, this slogan means that people will simply begin complying with Jesus' teachings and living a more Christian lifestyle. Both the secular and the Christian anarchist projects require this immediate and very direct action; they both demand that people exploit the interstitial spaces in culture and politics and find a way to grow a more just society with the resources available at hand.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN ANARCHISM

AND THE PURSUIT OF POLITICAL PRACTICE

Perhaps there is no better way to commence a study on Christian anarchism than the manner in which Alexandre Christoyannopoulos does; page one begins with an interrogative heading: "Introduction—Christian 'Anarchism'?" Questions abound, indeed. A few lines into the text, Christoyannopoulos offers the following: "Ciaron O'Reilly warns...that Christian anarchism 'is not an attempt to synthesise two systems of thought' that are hopelessly incompatible, but rather 'a realisation that the premise of anarchism is inherent in Christianity and the message of the Gospels'" (1). Christoyannopoulos's entire study continues in this vein. He explains that Christian anarchists are, first and foremost, Christians. Their understanding of Jesus' and other biblical teachings is what leads them to anarchist conclusions in their orientation toward the state. As Christoyannopoulos argues, "Christian anarchism, therefore, is not about forcing together two very different systems of thought—it is about pursuing the radical political implications of Christianity to the fullest extent" (1). To accomplish this task, Christoyannopoulos draws on a wide variety of sources, compiling and placing them into conversation with one another. He works through relevant biblical themes and provides various Christian anarchists' interpretations of key passages. In short, he provides a comprehensive text that cobbles together Christian anarchist (and anarchic Christian) voices in an attempt to trace a generic theory of Christian anarchism.

Because Christoyannopoulos's text will be so crucial to this chapter, it is worth exploring the warrant for his argument—namely, that such a phenomenon as Christian anarchism offers a unique and viable perspective on both religion and politics. Christoyannopoulos's location of Christian anarchism is two-fold and includes both political theology and political thought. Regarding political theology and the oft-touted separation of church and state in Western discourse, Christoyannopoulos paraphrases William T. Cavanaugh: "the modern liberal myth of their necessary separation was a far from innocent product of the state's successful outmanoeuvring of the church for power and legitimacy in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe" (2). To provide additional evidence of the state outmaneuvering the church, Christoyannopoulos further borrows from Cavanaugh: "the 'distinction of planes' interpretation of the 'render unto Caesar' passage...was absent 'until at least the late medieval period'" (2). Religion and politics have always been bound up in one another, and the adamant call for the separation of the two is a modern demand. Therefore, from the outset, readers learn that there is no reason to exclude a study of Christian anarchism on the basis of a separation of religious and political spheres; in fact, given the manner in which the state has artificially separated these spheres to promote its own self-interest, there is a compelling case for pairing a study of Christianity with the study of anarchism, which is a radically anti-authoritarian critique of the state.

Certainly, if being honest, few scholars would argue that religion and politics occupy and manage distinct spheres; this has hardly been the case historically and has definitely not been the case recently, either. As Ted Troxell explains, we are living in a "postsecular" age in which "there is no neutral sphere in which to negotiate the common

good without influence from religious or theological thought forms" and "that the boundary between political theology and political theory is porous" ("Christian Theory" 37-38). This pronouncement is not intended to suggest that, having successfully lived through the age of secularism, we have now arrived in a postsecular world that chronologically proceeds after secularism; rather, *postsecular* suggests that we must abandon the false notion that we ever did live in a secular world in which religion and politics dutifully kept to their respective spheres without ever interfering with one another. Furthermore, drawing on the work of Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*, Troxell contends that "'Postsecularity' also describes the sense in which we are realizing...that what we think of as the secular is not something that was revealed when we finally pulled back the veil of religion; rather, it is a way of thinking that was constructed in response to and on the heels of developments in Christian theology" ("Christian Theory" 40). Providing some specific examples, Christoyannopoulos catalogues the development of Christian theology into the realm of political theology, further underscoring the inability of secular politics to escape the realm of religion: "perhaps the most famous example of recent political engagement by Christians" appeared in the form of "theologies of liberation of Latin America (and beyond), where churches have mobilised to resist oppressive regimes and more recently the perceived oppression inherent in global capitalism" (3). Liberation theology, of course, has spread and taken many forms, while providing impetus to political groups through the power and influence of religion.[3]

[3] Simon Critchley, however, laments the political Left's increasing cessation of religious ground to the political Right—a pervasive trend in American politics, especially (*Infinitely Demanding* 139). His call to action underscores even more the need for a serious consideration of a reinvigorated religio-political Left, and anarchism provides a viable model for critiquing the contemporary Right's religiously-infused neoliberalism.

Significantly, however, while Christian anarchists find these movements "encouraging and in the right direction, none of these trends go far enough" (Christoyannopoulos 3). What Christian anarchists require in the discourse that mediates between religion and politics is a sincere interrogation of "the conventional Christian legitimisation of the state" (Christoyannopoulos 3). For Christian anarchists, it is simply not enough to continue operating through the hegemonic processes favored by the modern state; instead, they want to radically challenge the very statist system that manifests as systemic structural violence that enables further violence toward and subjugation of individuals. In sum, while Christian anarchism concurs with liberation theology's insistence on the real political implications of Christianity, it departs from the latter movement in significant ways. Besides criticizing liberation theology's perceived complicity with the continuance of violent state structures, Christian anarchism is also skeptical of "liberation theology's emphasis on human agency, of its compromise with violence, and of its lack of New Testament references compared to Christian anarchism" (Christoyannopoulos 237).

After establishing the nature of Christian anarchists and how such believers arrive at their political conclusions through biblical interpretation, this chapter will turn to a discussion of Christian anarchist political activism and the nonviolence of such a practice. There are varying degrees of passivity among adherents, of course, but all Christian anarchists "see it as one of the responsibilities of Christians...not to shy away from denouncing as both unchristian and wrong, in word and deed, the political and economic injustices plaguing the modern world" (Christoyannopoulos 240). Therefore,

some form of political activism is necessary, and, for Christian anarchists, the nonviolent method is just as important as (if not more important than) the objective of the practice.

Finally, this chapter will explore some of the limitations of the terminology *Christian anarchism* at both the etymological and conceptual levels. Ultimately, while somewhat flawed, Christian anarchism still offers a unique critique of structural violence that pushes farther than other traditions. There are also some limitations to the idea of nonviolence (or nonresistance) and also some theoretical limitations that Christian anarchism inherits from secular anarchism; as such, the conclusion of this chapter will characterize these shortcomings.

Who are These Christian Anarchists?

To begin identifying some Christian anarchists, the first task is to dispense with any myths regarding the definition of such a practitioner. A Christian anarchist is first and foremost a Christian. Readers may dispel any notions of Christian anarchists praising violent uprising, engaging in bloody conflict, or hurling molotov cocktails at a Starbucks storefront. If one desires such a version of anarchism, then classical anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin or contemporary insurrectionists would prove more instructive. Instead, the Christian anarchist is shaped more by nonviolent direct action in the vein of Leo Tolstoy or the continuum of political resistance/disengagement of some Anabaptist-Mennonite groups. In a broad sense, Christian anarchists recognize God as the *arche*, the progenitor and ultimate authority of Creation; however, regarding fellow humans, Christian anarchists favor a flattening of hierarchies and social relations in general, an anarchic social orientation. The very label of Christian anarchist, however, is quite broad; for the purposes of this discussion, the focus will be on Christian anarchists who directly

insinuate themselves in social/political life (therefore, groups such as the Amish are excluded from the discussion) and those who tend to lean more heavily toward the kind of socialist bent presented in Acts 2:44-45 in which "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." Necessarily, these delimitations exclude a number of groups that might rightly be considered Christian anarchists based on a number of other criteria, but said delimitations also provide a sharper focus for the study.

Before delving into a detailed analysis of Christian anarchism, it is helpful to understand some of the individuals and movements that have shaped this school of thought. Most anarchically-inclined Christians come out of an Anabaptist tradition that was already leery of hierarchical church structures and also rather disengaged from political life. Those attitudes, paired with the Anabaptists' predilection for principled nonviolence inspires an anarchically-oriented Christianity that, while not reducible to nonresistance or pacifism, shares many attributes with those traditions. Indeed, as Ira Chernus reveals, it is the Anabaptists who "were the source of virtually all Christian nonviolence in Europe and the United States since the sixteenth century," which the Quakers later expanded upon and actively politicized (2, 13). This is but a cursory summation of some Christian anarchist tenets, and there are many additional voices involved in the tradition.

Among Christian anarchists, probably the most preeminent figure is Russian author Leo Tolstoy, who Christoyannopoulos explains "converted to his idiosyncratic understanding of Christianity around 1879" (14).[4] Tolstoy took a very rationalistic

[4] Significantly, Tolstoy's conversion was was only three years after the death of Mikhail Bakunin (often credited as one of the original founders of secular anarchism), indicating the contemporaneity of both

approach to the New Testament account of Jesus, and while most Christian anarchists disagree with his dismissal of the supernatural elements in the New Testament, Tolstoy is still "generally acknowledged as the best known Christian anarchist thinker" (Christoyannopoulos 15). His basic argument is very straightforward: "Christianity in its true sense puts an end to the State. It was so understood from its very beginning, and for that Christ was crucified" (Tolstoy 259).

Other influential Christian anarchist thinkers whom Christoyannopoulos credits include Jacques Ellul (author of *Anarchy and Christianity*), Vernard Eller (author of *Christian Anarchy*), Michael C. Elliot (author of *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*), Dave Andrews (author of *Christi-Anarchy*), and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Ellul expands his exegesis beyond the scope of the New Testament and into the Old Testament and describes anarchism as "the only acceptable stance in the modern world" (Christoyannopoulos 16). Eller presents a very submissive and pacifistic form of Christian anarchism that comes out of the Anabaptist tradition (Christoyannopoulos 16). Elliot's book reads "as a call for Christians to embody...Christian 'counter-culture,'" specifically of the communist and anarchist variety (Christoyannopoulos 17). Andrews reflects on Gospel teachings and exhorts Christians to put Jesus' anarchist teachings into practice in their own communities (Christoyannopoulos 17). Finally, William Lloyd Garrison was, for a time, an adamant practicing Christian anarchist until he later recanted his views and began "whipping up support for the Civil War and campaigning for specific Presidential candidates" (Christoyannopoulos 22-23). Such active support of governmental powers and offices represents an obvious break from the anarchist tradition. Nevertheless, Garrison, like the

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secular and Christian variants of anarchism.

above thinkers, offers valuable insight into how a Christian anarchist community might respond to the state.

In addition to these individual thinkers, Christoyannopoulos also draws attention to the anarchist Catholic Worker Movement, which features such activists as Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, Ammon Hennacy, and Ciaron O'Reilly. The *Catholic Worker*, first published in 1933, is a newspaper published by the group and has "multiplied into many local versions" that may "not amount to systematic and scholarly publications on Christian anarchism," but "do nonetheless sometimes touch on more theoretical issues" (Christoyannopoulos 18). Other publications that explicitly engage Christian anarchist ideas include Stephen Hancock's *A Pinch of Salt*, Kenneth C. Hone's *The Digger and Christian Anarchist*, *The Mormon Worker*, Nakeisha and Andy Alexis-Baker's website *Jesus Radicals*, and Bas Moreel's online newsletter *Religious Anarchism*. The Christian anarchist tradition features a diverse array of voices and has a lengthy history; even into the present, the community is still active in both print and in practice. The *Jesus Radicals* website, for example, maintains an online presence but has also hosted an annual conference/retreat for the past decade in order to foster a dialogue between anarchism and Christianity.

The Kernel of Christian Anarchism

Although he pre-dated the modern implementation of the term *anarchism* as a political label and form of critique, as early as the late 1750s, Jean-Jacques Rousseau identified something of an anarchist element in Christianity. While composing *The Social Contract*, he recognized the need for something other than philosophy to bind individuals to the general political will, to make themselves subservient to the good of the people.

What he recommends is a political religion, a civil religion, and he is very clear in stating that Christianity simply will not suffice because "far from attaching the citizens' hearts to the State, it detaches them from it as from all earthly things" (qtd. in Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless* 71). According to Rousseau, Christians are simply too concerned with the hereafter to bother being concerned with the here and now, especially regarding the messy realm of politics. Rousseau touches on an important truth of Christianity but fails to further explore the manner in which essential Christian teachings are downright antithetical to the continuation of the state.

Like most Christian groups, Christian anarchists view Jesus' Sermon on the Mount "as a moving summary of his message to the community of Christian disciples"; however, their exegesis of this sermon leads them in a specifically anarchist direction (Christoyannopoulos 30). The Sermon on the Mount focuses on love, forgiveness, servitude, and humility and has been the primary inspiration for all Christian pacifist movements; Christian anarchist belief is similarly motivated by this message. In fact, Christoyannopoulos writes, "the starting point for most Christian anarchists is not so much a critique of the state as an understanding of Jesus' radical teaching on love and forgiveness which, when *then* contrasted to the state, leads them to their anarchist conclusion" (31, emphasis in original). What follows from here is an interpretation/elaboration on several of Jesus' teachings that effectively undermine the legitimacy of the state piece by piece. Essentially, Jesus provides a number of teachings that inform a Christian lifestyle, and the conclusion Christian anarchists arrive at is that the state is founded on the very principles and forms of action that Jesus specifically forbids. Christian anarchists then take it upon themselves to oppose state authority while

still adhering to Jesus' message in an effort to live out the kind of life that Jesus prescribes.

The simplest summation of Jesus' teachings is, in fact, in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*The New Revised Standard Version*, Matt. 5:48).[5] However, even Jesus recognized that this simple command could be interpreted in radically different ways; hence, he couched it in the context of a greater sermon: specifically, in regard to loving one's enemies. Jesus teaches: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44). In the King James Version (which Simon Critchley and many other practitioners and scholars use), the command is even more blatant: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." When these commands are applied at the personal level (an interpretation common among most Christians), they are difficult to fulfill, at best, and impossible, at worst. When applied to organizations, governments, and systems, these commands become even more problematic due to the complexities inherent in the webs of power and oppression that these systems produce and are produced by. For Christian anarchists, the Christian's duty is to apply to the state the same rules of love and forgiveness as are applied at the individual level, yet this does not imply passivity toward any injustices committed by the state (Christoyannopoulos 167). In fact, it is also in the Sermon on the Mount that Christian anarchists find their call to action against state-sanctioned injustice.

[5] All subsequent references to biblical passages, unless otherwise noted, will be from the New Revised Standard Version.

One of the biblical passages in which Christian anarchists find a call to a subversive form of political action against the state is in Jesus' three examples regarding retaliation:

> 38. You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."
> 39. But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40. and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41. and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. (Matt. 5:38-41)

While Jesus' message of forgiveness and nonresistance is well-known, Christian anarchists offer a unique perspective on it. Michael C. Elliot says that Jesus' non-retaliatory stance is what one's "attacker least expects," which confounds the attacker in such a way that he "is no longer in control of the process he initiated. He is, in a very real sense, disarmed!" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 33). Walter Wink similarly "claims that turning the other cheek 'robs the oppressor of the power to humiliate,' which forces the attacker to regard the victim 'as an equal human being'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 33). Such a tactic subverts and interrogates power relations and, therefore, the systems of dominance that they produce.

Elliot and Wink employ a similar logic in interpreting Jesus' other two examples. They each point out that if an individual were sued in court and gave away both coat and cloak, then the defendant would be left naked. Elliot then provides cultural context and further elaborates "that nakedness in that context would be offensive, and that the community would blame the person who brought this about more than the actual victim" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 33). Wink takes a slightly different approach. Rather than

focusing on Jesus' manipulation of the situation to reveal an individual's violation of cultural mores, he indicts the entire system and, through that indictment, reveals a path to redemption for the plaintiff. Wink argues "that this nakedness would register 'a stunning protest' against the social and legal system that brought this about; that the 'entire system' would thus be 'publicly unmasked;' but that this unmasking 'offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practice causes, and to repent'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 33). Wink's interpretation pushes toward a revelation of the injustice of a state-operated legal system, while simultaneously providing individuals with a means to adjust their behavior and withdraw from one of the very systems that perpetuate oppression.

Regarding "going the extra mile," both Elliot and Wink argue that Jesus is referring to the Roman practice of impressment, "whereby a soldier could force a civilian to carry his pack, but for one mile only" (Christoyannopoulos 33). According to Elliot, by suggesting that followers carry a soldier's pack an extra mile, Jesus is advocating a subversion of authority because "the victim is claiming the power to determine for himself the lengths to which he is prepared to go" (Christoyannopoulos 33). However, the subversive power of this action is even greater; Roman law specifically forbade soldiers from forcing civilians to carry a pack beyond a single mile, and the soldier was subject to punishment should he violate this law (Wink 180). Therefore, Jesus' recommendation simultaneously transfers power from the military to the subjugated civilian while also subverting the Roman legal system into punishing its own appointed ambassadors, and all while the followers of Jesus are able to display an enormous degree of humility and willingness to serve.

Taken together, these three examples nicely indicate the kernel of Christian anarchism. Elliot indicates "that the three illustrations cover the three 'strategies which the enemy is most likely to employ' against followers of Jesus: 'physical intimidation, manipulation of the legal system, and military co-option,' each of which 'involves a form of violence'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 34). For followers of Jesus, this violence is the very thing that must be overcome, and each of Jesus' commands, by advocating an unexpected and nonviolent response, indicates a means of taking the power away from the oppressor and bringing the violent situation to a halt.

For Christian anarchists, the nonresistance at the heart of Christian anarchism is a direct response to "the cycle of violence inherent in a non-Christian society's administration of justice, and more specifically in *lex* (or *jus*) *talionis*, the law of retaliation which is respected in the Old Testament" (Christoyannopoulos 35). Archie Penner explains that the original purpose of *lex talionis* was to limit retaliation to an equitable level; however, Dave Andrews, John Howard Yoder, and Ammon Hennacy all agree that Jesus pushed the logic of *lex talionis* even further, exhorting individuals to not only *limit* retaliation, but to *eliminate* it altogether (Christoyannopoulos 35-36).

Drawing on Jesus' other teachings and lived example, Christian anarchists expand the scope of "*lex talionis* to the broader political questions of how to deal with evil and achieve justice in society as a whole" (Christoyannopoulos 37). Additionally, they interpret *evil* in such a way that includes any injustice at the personal level and also in its "social, political and economic" dimensions. Besides pulling from Jesus' teachings, Christoyannopoulos indicates that this expanded definition of evil also "resonates with the long established debate in more conventional Christian theology on the theological

and ontological relation between love and justice" (37). Christian anarchists are far from alone in their pursuit of social justice; however, they take their social critique farther, to the point of interrogating the legitimacy of the very state structures that enable social injustice. What they determine is that each of the three violent strategies Jesus describes are merely machinations of the state. The state is founded on and further enables intimidation, the "legitimate" use of police and military force, and the injustice inherent to the legal system. For Christian anarchists, therefore, liberal democracy's politics of inclusion is ultimately insufficient to solve the problems of inequality and injustice; rather, what is required is a stateless society not based on subjugation or oppression.

A Further Critique of the State

Christian anarchists' critique of the state is not simply a wild extrapolation from the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. Much of their criticism, however, does draw from a rather literal reading of Jesus' exhortations. Ultimately, most Christian anarchist critiques of the state are built upon a rejection of violence, and Christian anarchists view the state as inextricably locked in a perpetual cycle of unending violence, whether it be through legal, military, or economic systems.

The Christian anarchist critique of the legal system is based on Jesus' very simple command: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged" (Matt 7:1). Christian anarchists, then, extend this injunction to the conclusion that judging in any context, including in a court of law, is antithetical to Jesus' teachings. Peter Chelčický, the 15th century Czech spiritual leader, goes so far as to claim that civil law "'encourages a continuing fall of man,' because it 'perpetuates lawsuits, punishments, and revenge: it returns evil for evil'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 44). In short, the legal system does not

abide by Jesus' demand that his followers turn the other cheek; rather, it is a system dedicated to meting out vengeance, or, at best, a very limited form of justice that is informed by fallible human perspectives. This human incapacity to adequately judge is exactly what Jesus is referring to when he discusses "specks" and "logs" in one's eye (Matt. 7:4). According to Tolstoy, Jesus is saying, "You cannot judge, for all men are blind and do not see the truth. [...] And those who judge and punish are like blind men leading the blind" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 48). According to this understanding, it is best for humans to abandon the judicial system "not only because it resists evil, but also because it involves judging—both forbidden by Jesus" (Christoyannopoulos 48).

Beyond not judging others, Jesus, of course, demands even more of his followers when he teaches, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43-44). Tolstoy is not the only scholar to have been troubled by this commandment, both for its seeming idealistic unattainability and also "because unusually, Jesus is not quoting the Old Testament 'with verbal exactness' but using words 'which were never spoken'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 49). Through an analysis of the text, however, Tolstoy recognizes the command's "implied condemnation of patriotism and war" (Christoyannopoulos 49). By comparing parallel passages in the Bible, Tolstoy discovers that "'neighbor' in the Jewish tongue simply meant a Jew," and "'enemy' is seldom used in the Gospels in a private or personal sense, but almost always in a public and national one" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 49). Christoyannopoulos informs readers that both Archie Penner and Adin Ballou agree with Tolstoy and argue that Jesus is "deliberately reinterpreting the Old Testament notions of 'neighbor' and

‘enemy’” (50). Through his analysis, Tolstoy concludes that “Jesus simply tells us to love people of other nations as well as our own countrymen,” and he further contends that Jesus is saying, “If you are attached only to your own countrymen, remember that all men are attached to their own countrymen, and wars result from that” (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 50). According to this logic, if people would only love their enemies and make no distinction between their own people and people of other nations, then the very basis for international conflict would be eliminated. Consequently, Tolstoy interprets Jesus’ teaching as a prohibition against war, of course, but also against the patriotism that elevates estimations of one’s own people over another and thereby inspires war and other conflicts. Christoyannopoulos nicely presents the state’s deviation from Jesus’ commandment of love for enemies:

> [The state] treats its nationals differently to foreigners. It stirs up patriotism, prepares for war and goes to war. It discriminates between good and evil domestically. It institutionalises love of friends and hatred of enemies. It does not even try to pretend to mirror God’s unconditional love for all. For Christian anarchists, therefore, on this account as well, the state is an unchristian institution. (52)

The state is built on exclusion. Its very existence depends on drawing distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, and that promotes enmity. There is no way that Christian anarchists can reconcile this divisive tendency of the state with the message of Jesus.

As Christoyannopoulos points out, there is "another, much simpler way in which the state contravenes one of Jesus' instructions from the Sermon on the Mount. It concerns swearing and oath taking" (Christoyannopoulos 52). In Matt. 5, Jesus declares:

> 33. Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord." 34. But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35. or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or "No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Jesus' command here is very simple. In fact, this particular instruction "troubled [Tolstoy] 'by its clearness, by its simplicity and easiness'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 53). Tolstoy is right. This teaching very clearly articulates that any oath derives from evil and should, therefore, be avoided. The conclusion that Tolstoy eventually reaches is that to bind oneself through an oath to the will of another human (or human institution) is to open oneself to the possibility of being required to carry out an action that directly contradicts the will of God. To bind oneself to another via an oath is to quite literally attempt to serve two masters (Christoyannopoulos 53). The Christian's only true authority must come from God, and when this prohibition against oaths is applied to the state, it "den[ies] the state the basis of its power" (Christoyannopoulos 54). The Christian anarchists' fear, therefore, is that "By swearing an oath of allegiance to the state, one becomes a tool of the state and as the state's tool, one will be forced to betray Christ" (Christoyannopoulos 54). Countless examples of such exploitation abound. The state

constantly demands its citizens' allegiance and even goes so far as to utilize religion as a tool to legitimize its violence. By placing such a demand upon its citizens, Christian anarchists argue that the state is behaving in an unchristian manner and placing itself in a preferential position above God and above Jesus' teachings. So, by following Jesus' instruction and refusing to swear any oaths at all, Christian anarchists remove themselves from the state; they withhold their consent and delegitimize its existence by refusing to cooperate.

Following the predominant pacifist strand of Christian anarchism, Christian anarchists maintain that the state commits what seems to be a rather obvious breach of Jesus' teaching in regard to capital punishment and war. Again in Matt. 5, Jesus appeals to a commonly-known prohibition against murder and then expands it to also include the very anger that precedes murder:

> 21. You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgement." 22. But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister[6], you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool," you will be liable to the hell of fire.

All Christian anarchists agree that Jesus prohibits murder; however, there is some disagreement among Christian anarchists (and pacifists) over the extent to which Jesus prohibits anger (and what forms of anger are prohibited or permitted). This debate has a

[6] In the past, the King James Version (and other translations) have inserted the phrase "without a cause" at this point in the text. This phrase does not appear in the original Greek, and most translations have, therefore, removed it from the text. Christian anarchists contend that the clause was initially appended to the verse by "court translators and theologians" who "manipulated Jesus' teaching to suit their own (unchristian) purposes" (Christoyannopoulos 56). As many scholars have pointed out, the "without a cause" clause effectively negates Jesus' prohibition against anger and murder because one may always find or invent a cause for anger.

similar parallel in non-anarchist Christian circles. Some thinkers, such as John Howard Yoder and Ernest Crosby, posit that Jesus "shift[s] the sin from the actual act of killing to the judgmental attitude that precedes it" (Christoyannopoulos 56). By extension, then, the state is further implicated because it not only kills through war and capital punishment, but it premeditates these killings and "starts rationalising its eventual murder" (Christoyannopoulos 57). It institutionalizes and ritualizes the process of anger that precedes murder.

Jacques Ellul blatantly insists that the state "cannot maintain itself save by and through violence," and he indicts the "violence of the judicial system" and general "administrative violence" (Christoyannopoulos 44). He claims that Jesus' message in Matt. 5:21-26 equates all forms of violence—"physical, economic or psychological" (Christoyannopoulos 57). The state, he asserts, is inextricably tied up in systems that perpetuate inequality and these very kinds of violence.

Taking a more direct route, Adin Ballou focuses on the violence of the state at war. He employs the following scathing rhetoric:

> How many does it take to metamorphose wickedness into righteousness? One man must not kill. If he does it is murder. Two, ten, one hundred men acting on their own responsibility must not kill. If they do it is still murder. But a state or nation may kill as many as it pleases and it is no murder. It is just, necessary, commendable, and right. Only get people enough to agree to it, and the butchery of myriads of human beings is perfectly innocent. But how many men does it take? (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 45)

Christian anarchists rightly note a direct correlation between the patriotic divisiveness that nations incite and the eventual declaration of war and sanction of the deaths of others. Patriotism inscribes difference upon citizen and Other; consequently, anger wells in the manufactured gulf between neighbor and enemy, and the Self/Other binary inevitably builds into unchristian violence.

Other Christian anarchists (and pacifists), while equally as condemnatory toward murder, take differing stances on the permissibility of the emotion of anger itself. Christoyannopoulos describes something akin to the debate over the permissibility of "righteous anger" in which anger might be positively and healthily directed against injustice and/or focused on a cause; however, he also notes that distinction between proper and improper forms of anger is rarely articulated, and the "argument is not rooted in an exegesis" of the verses in the Sermon on the Mount. Consequently, such opinions on permissible forms of anger (among Christians of any persuasion) necessarily rely on exegesis of other scriptural passages—most notably, Jesus' actions in running the money-changers out of the temple.

In the work of Dave Andrews, adherents to the "permissible anger" position find some scriptural exegesis. Andrews accurately points out that Jesus' teaching here is actually "descriptive, not prescriptive, of 'a vicious cycle that we often get stuck in,'" and that Jesus is, therefore, not explicitly prohibiting anger (which Andrews views as an unrealistic demand), but that Jesus is still identifying the danger in anger (Christoyannopoulos 57-58). Rather than "outlawing anger," Andrews interprets Jesus' teaching as "commending reconciliation" (Christoyannopoulos 58). Detractors from this position claim that while it might be true that Jesus only describes a cycle of violence that

begins with anger rather than proscribes anger itself, it seems reasonable to conclude that Jesus implies said proscription; otherwise, such an extended description of anger and violence seems useless, indeed. Christoyannopoulos concludes this discussion by acknowledging the apparent unresolved contradiction in thought and further clarifying that it may reflect some predictable differences in opinion on the matter, but that these differences in opinion hardly unravel "the Christian critique of the state as a violent and thus unchristian institution" (59). At most, in fact, the "permissible anger" arguments only allow some forms of righteous indignation that is directed against the injustices produced by the state. Some notable modern examples of such righteous indignation directed against state-sponsored injustice would include liberation theology, the American Civil Rights Movements under Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mohandas Gandhi's non-cooperation movement.

A Critique of Biblical Support for the State

A discussion of Christian anarchism would not be complete without addressing those biblical passages that teach subjection to the government. There are some significant passages in this regard, such as Paul's instruction to submit to existing authorities (Romans 13:1-7) and Jesus' instruction to "render to Caesar" (Mark 12:17).

By far, Romans 13:1-7 is the most oft-cited biblical passage to which apologists resort to demonstrate a supposed Christian endorsement of the state:

> 1. Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. 2. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. 3. For rulers are not a terror to good

> conduct, but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval; 4. for it is God's servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. 5. Therefore one must be subject, not only because of wrath but also because of conscience. 6. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. 7. Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.

While passages that have been discussed thus far may have some more or less obvious implications regarding the state, these verses in Romans (in conjunction with a few other scattered verses) offer the most explicit reference to the state. The standard interpretation is that, in these verses, Paul presents an argument in favor of government in general. Consequently, many theologians argue that Paul's teaching "legitimise[s] the church's support of the state" (Christoyannopoulos 148). Christian anarchists, however, reject the standard interpretation and offer exegetical remarks undermining Paul's seeming approval of the state.

The most flagrant Christian anarchist response to Romans 13 is to simply dismiss the text. This tactic is more logical than it might at first seem; however, Christoyannopoulos remarks that it can "sound more like justifications to brush the text aside than patient attempts to grapple with it and give it a real chance" (150). That said, both James Redford and Timothy Carter perceive Paul's teaching here to be disingenuous and, therefore, inapplicable to Christians' lives. Carter argues that Paul is writing with an

"ironic edge" as he utilizes the "technique of blaming by apparent praise" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 150). Others, such as Justin Meggitt suggest that "Paul's advice [to the Roman Christians] is largely 'pragmatic rather than philosophical'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 150). This interpretation is not unfounded; after all, Paul was writing to Christians who were living in the heart of the empire that crucified the man whom these believers claimed as their messiah. To say that Roman Christians had a lot at stake would be a bit of an understatement. Furthermore, Paul often failed to follow the very advice he dispenses in Roman 13:1-7, and he was quick to boast about his lack of compliance. Dutiful Christians who follow Paul's teaching in Romans 13 would be hard pressed to argue that Paul, by preaching about Jesus, was engaging in "evil works" that the governing authorities were obliged to suppress (Christoyannopoulos 149). Yet, Paul found himself in prison on more than one occasion for his subversive activity. The basic thrust of these arguments is that historical context matters, and several Christian anarchists find reasons to doubt the veracity of Paul's claims in Romans 13:1-7.

Other scholars, such as John Howard Yoder and Christian anarchists who follow his thinking, take a much more deliberate and textual approach to Paul's teaching in Romans 13. Yoder asserts that Romans 12 and 13 must be interpreted as a coherent whole. In each of these two chapters, "Paul is writing about love and sacrifice, about overcoming evil with good, about willingly offering oneself up for persecution" (Christoyannopoulos 151). Ellul notes that these passages indicate a progression of those Christian attitudes "from friends to strangers and then to enemies…[and that] we must love enemies and therefore we must even respect the authorities" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 151). For Yoder, Christians must understand these passages in

relation to love and sacrifice, or else they entirely miss the message. He interprets it not as an endorsement of the state *per se*, but as a prescription of proper attitude and behavior, even applied to the level of the authorities (Christoyannopoulos 151).

Vernard Eller further develops this line of thinking and insists "that to 'be subject to' does not mean to worship, to 'recognise the legitimacy of' or to 'own allegiance to'" the state (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 151). The Christian's allegiance is to God, of course, and as Paul and other disciples discovered, that allegiance sometimes runs counter to the interests of the governing authorities. When such a conflict arose, Paul dutifully submitted and went to prison, just as Jesus submitted to the authorities when they had him crucified. However, he in no way submitted to the authorities' desire that he cease and desist preaching.

Regarding Romans 13:1, which claims that God "ordained" political powers, Nekeisha Alexis-Baker emphasizes that this "only means that God 'allows' it, not that 'he agrees with it'" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 152). This argument draws on 1 Samuel 8, in which God is disappointed with the Israelites' desire for a king and is reluctant to oblige them; however, he does ultimately allow them to have their way and establishes a monarchy (Christoyannopoulos 152). Yoder pushes this argument still further and argues that *institute* or *ordain* are not the most accurate verbs in regard to God's relationship with the state; rather, Yoder contends that God *orders* (or puts in order) the political powers. Significantly, God may choose to use these ordered powers for good; however, in and of themselves, they are fallen institutions that are indicative of humanity's fallen state because, as Yoder says, "they claimed for themselves an absolute value" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 153). The overriding message, then, is that "if God ordains state

authorities, it is only to maintain order *among those who have refused to follow his commandments*" (Christoyannopoulos 153, emphasis in original). So, the political authorities do not, therefore, have a legitimate claim over Christians who must serve God rather than the state. In fact, Peter Brock, in a claim that echoes Karl Marx more so than anarchists, states that while the state may be a legitimate source of authority for non-Christians, if "all truly followed in Christ's footsteps [the state] would wither away" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 153).[7] So, while God might allow the existence of the state, that does not mean that he established them as paragons of virtue; rather, if humanity followed Jesus' teaching, the state would become a quite useless and redundant entity.

Overall then, Christian anarchist interpretations of Romans 13 dictate that the state may very well be appointed for some purpose, but that purpose is not directed toward Christians because Christians can only recognize the authority of God. Any purpose the state does have is a result of humanity's failure to properly follow the will of God. When the state inevitably does oppose the will of God, Christians are expected to oppose the state and then face whatever consequences the state imposes. Therefore, the Christian anarchist stance is not one of "uncritical passivity"; rather, Christian anarchists must follow Jesus' teachings of love and forgiveness, and if that message runs counter to any state interests, then so be it (Christoyannopoulos 155).

The other passage that conventional exegetes use to justify Christian support of the state is Jesus' advice on taxes in Mark 12:13-17:

[7] Brock's claim here is not completely unproblematic. It parallels Marx and Engels's views on the necessity of a political vanguardist class to bring about the revolution—a view of which secular anarchists have always been deeply suspicious. A significant difference, of course, is that Brock is not suggesting that Christians should seize the means of production in order to overthrow a capitalist order. Nevertheless, Brock's manner of thinking still creates a rift between Christian and non-Christian anarchists and threatens solidarity, which is a common goal of anarchist groups. These and similar tensions will be revisited in the conclusion of this chapter and again in Chapter 3.

> 13. Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. 14. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? 15. Should we pay them, or should we not?" But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it." 16. And they brought one. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." 17. Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

Typical interpretations are that Jesus supported the state's tax system (and, by extension, whatever purposes for which those taxes were levied), or that Jesus advised a separation of material/political and spiritual/religious spheres. Christian anarchists reject both of those interpretations.

First and foremost, Ellul argues that Jesus must have had "a reputation of being hostile to Caesar" for anyone to bring this specific question to him in the first place (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 158). He was already viewed as a threat to state authorities, and had he instructed his listeners to pay taxes, then it would have damaged his politically subversive message; had he outright advised against paying taxes, then he would have likely been arrested.[8] Instead, Jesus successfully maneuvered between polar opposite answers and further subverted the political system.

[8] Christoyannopoulos further points out in a footnote that Eller, Ellul, Penner, and Ched Myers all argued that Jesus' answer further distinguished his nonviolent message from that of the Zealots, who promoted armed rebellion against Rome. The Zealots were active in both Jesus' day and during the time of the composition of the Gospel of Mark (158).

The reason that Jesus' interlocutors "were utterly amazed at him" is because of his politically deft answer that places the burden back upon his antagonists. Eller explains that "in the Roman world an individual mark on an object denoted ownership," and, therefore, whatever bore Caesar's mark should, of course, be returned to him (Christoyannopoulos 158). Anything else not explicitly bearing Caesar's mark, Jesus implies, belongs to God. Penner further suggests that humans, who are made in God's likeness, are God's property, and the state, therefore, has no authority over people (Christoyannopoulos 159).[9] What is really at stake is whether people will choose to serve God by giving him his due or if they will choose to serve the state. This is the challenge that Jesus turns back on his antagonists, and Myers claims, "*This* is what provokes the strong reaction of incredulity...from his opponents—something no neat doctrine of 'obedient citizenship' could possibly have done" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 159, emphasis in original).

The overall thrust of Christian anarchists' interpretation of this passage in Mark is that Jesus establishes a binary between serving God and serving the state. Regarding this passage, then, the proper attitude toward the state, Christian anarchists argue, is one of "subversion by indifference" (Christoyannopoulos 159). Jesus recommends that his followers give back to Caesar his useless images and idols and then ignore the state so that they may better focus on serving God. Eller notes that, throughout the New Testament, Christians are repeatedly informed that they cannot serve two masters, and

[9] Dorothy Day, in quoting St. Hilary, also claims, "The less of Caesar's you have, the less you have to render," indicating that this verse is not necessarily an endorsement of the tax system, while simultaneously advising Christians to withdraw from the state system altogether (Christoyannopoulos 159).

this particular passage is but another example of the incommensurability of such goals (Christoyannopoulos 159).

To be clear, the message that Christian anarchists draw out here is that they should ignore the state, and *ignore* means *ignore*; it does not allow for meddling in the legislative process in an attempt to bend the law to one's conception of what Christian law might look like. Here, Christian anarchists interpret Jesus' teaching as recommending a completely subversive withdrawal from the mechanisms of the state. That attitude characterizes Christian anarchists' approach to the state in general. They craft this belief from their subversive understanding of Romans 13, Mark 12, and the myriad other New Testament critiques of the state that far outnumber passages that have been interpreted as endorsing Christian involvement with the state.

Christian Anarchist Responses to the State

Christian anarchists are in agreement that the state is founded upon the very beliefs and practices that Jesus directly opposes: passing judgment, enacting violence, and demanding that citizens swear allegiance. Consequently, following Yoder, they deem it to be a fallen institution that cannot possibly adhere to Jesus' vision of the kingdom of God. For Christian anarchists, unquestionably obeying the state, therefore, places one into the likely position of violating the will of God. Despite agreement on the basic premise, however, Christian anarchists diverge in regard to the proper Christian response to the state. Political practice, therefore, ranges from seemingly apolitical detachment

(characteristic of traditional Mennonite groups, for example) to direct action, which may be in the form of civil disobedience.[10]

Given Christian anarchists' disregard for the state, perhaps the all-too-tempting advice is to simply do nothing. The problem with such a stance is that it too easily morphs into complicity with, or even tacit approval of, oppression. For liberation theologians, for example, this complicity in idleness is a significant part of the problem. Many Christian anarchists would agree, and their real task is recognizing the interstitial spaces in which their Christian lifestyle may be lived in the here and now. Rather than being an apolitical or a depoliticized activity, this commitment to a Christian anarchist lifestyle is a kind of "stubbornly persistent and hugely imaginative activism" in and of itself (Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless* 241). It is a "manifestation of a dissensus that disturbs the order by which the government wishes to depoliticize society" (Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding* 129). In other words, exploiting the interstitial spaces of state-ordered life is a very direct engagement in politics and political action.

Among Christian anarchists, Eller takes the most pacifistic stance in response to the state. He criticizes the idea of civil disobedience and "deliberately illegal action," cautioning that they do "not call attention to the truth content of the witness and protest but to the offensive behavior of the witness-protester" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 161). Eller further warns against direct resistance because he, like Yoder, believes that God has determined some role for the state. Therefore, governing authorities could be unwittingly performing the will of God, and should the Christian resist those authorities, that Christian might find her/himself "resisting the particular use God has in mind for that

[10] Crucially, Christian anarchists do not commit civil disobedience in an effort to reach a political end; instead, they do so solely to enact what they perceive to be a more Christian lifestyle. This discussion of ends and means will be revisited in the conclusion of the chapter.

empire," or "at the very least, [s/he] definitely [is] trying to take over and do God's work for him" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 152).Consequently, Eller insists that the only proper Christian response to the state is "voluntary self-subordination" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 162). He recognizes that it may not be a politically expedient method, but political expediency is hardly Eller's primary concern.

Other Christian anarchists vehemently oppose Eller's pacifistic subservience. Ellul criticizes Eller's advice in favor of subjugated subservience and writes that "Christian radicalism...cannot counsel the poor and the oppressed to be submissive and accepting...without at the same time constraining the rich to *serve* the poor" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 162). In his book on Peter Chelčický, Enrico Molnár contends that the "arrogant state" must be "confronted, unmasked, and subverted" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 162). As such, many Christian anarchists view Jesus' and Paul's confrontations with authorities as guiding examples for their own political practice. So, while their primary "goal must always remain solely to follow God's commandments," they have no qualms with engaging in direct action and civil disobedience (Christoyannopoulos 163). Besides keeping obedience to God in the forefront of their consciousness, Christian anarchists' only other requirements for disobedience are that activism be nonviolent in nature and that Christians willingly submit to the punishments the state doles out in response.

Regarding tangible practices, there are a few basic tenets on which most Christian anarchists agree. The most common overarching approach is to disentangle oneself from "the organs of the state" (Christoyannopoulos 165). To become entangled with the state introduces the risk of contaminating oneself with the state's ideology and operations.

Specifically, Christian anarchists attempt to avoid being implicated in state violence and oppression. Accomplishing such a task entails several key strategies.

In a modern liberal democracy, Christian anarchists are compelled to not vote or hold public office. They perceive these acts as complicity in the processes of the political machinery, and they are highly suspicious of human agency to accomplish any good through the mechanisms of the state. Ammon Hennacy explains that even participation in democratic elections is ill-advised because "win or lose, you will have consented, by having voted, to accept the winning candidate's judgment as superior to your own" (qtd. in Christoyannopoulos 166). Voting only fuels the machine that judges and commits violence, and Christian anarchists claim that participating in such a system is to presume to know how to direct the course of history, as opposed to submitting to the authority of God.

Christian anarchists, in following Jesus' teachings against violence, are obviously opposed to war. They, therefore, cannot reconcile being a Christian and being a soldier. If the option is legally available, they advocate abstaining from participation in the military. If military conscription is the law of the land, then Christian anarchists oppose complying with the policy (Christoyannopoulos 166). Such noncompliance may result in imprisonment, but Christian anarchists are willing to face that penalty should it be enforced.

Taxes are a bit of a muddled subject among Christian anarchists. Some oppose paying them altogether, viewing the payment of taxes as complicity with whatever purposes the state has for those funds, including war. Others tend to resist paying but will reluctantly pay in the end. They perceive this action as being true to Jesus'

recommendation to render to Caesar that which is his, and they further support their position based on a reading of Matthew 17:24-27, in which Jesus instructs Peter to pay the temple tax so as to avoid offending the authorities. So, while Christian anarchists may resist paying taxes, they ultimately tend to accede. An alternative strategy, and one employed by Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, and others involved in the Catholic Worker movement, was to live in voluntary poverty so as to extricate themselves from the state machinery by avoiding even having an income tax levied against them (Chernus 152-153, 156).

What all of these attitudes culminate in is a revolution by example. Christoyannopoulos explains that "however much they criticise the state, Christian anarchists do not favour any overthrow of government" (167). They do not support violent seizure of power or a toppling of the system. This does not mean that they endorse the system, and in fact, they adamantly oppose it. However, they leave any kind of ultimate reckoning that may be due in the hands of God. Whereas secular anarchists (and other revolutionaries) may actively seek to dismantle existing systems of government, Christian anarchists choose, instead, to withdraw from those systems, thereby draining the power out of them. Most importantly, however, they are seeking to follow lifestyle prescriptions laid out by Jesus, and any kind of revolution is deferred until the eschaton (Troxell, "The Subversive Kernel" 6).

Having established who Christian anarchists are and how their beliefs compare to other Christians and other anarchists, several questions still linger. The basis of a practice of Christian anarchist religio-politics has been established, but now that practice requires detailed examination. Such practice manifests in myriad ways, but in Chapter Four, this

thesis will move to a discussion of the Catholic Worker Movement to examine these Christian anarchist critiques in action. First, however, transitioning from a general Christian anarchist critique to the application of such teachings will require a more fully-developed theoretical framework. Chapter Three will provide that framework.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITION, ETHICS, ANARCHISM

As the previous chapter argued, taken together, a number of anarchic themes emerge from the Sermon on the Mount, but the thrust of that anarchic practice is directed toward submission and service to others. Most Christians recognize the importance of this message, but an anarchic Christianity strives to pursue the Sermon's teachings to their logical and radical conclusions. For more than a century, the modern application of this message has manifested as social justice work. To seek a broad-based application of such Christian precepts, a few theoretical frameworks prove useful: in particular, the Catholic Church's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the Other-oriented ethics of the Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, and the economic and ethical theory of the secular anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin. In using these frameworks as a lens to examine an anarchic Christian social justice, the image of Christianity that emerges is one of sacrifice and service. That image of Christianity is catholic in its efforts to serve and anarchic in its proclivity toward direct action and a willingness to decentralize and diverge from bureaucratic Christian and state institutions. In particular, such a framework is exceedingly helpful in describing and explaining the Catholic Worker Movement.[11]

Given that the fourth chapter will discuss the anarchic and social justice elements of the Catholic Worker Movement (a broad Christian anarchist network), the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, a Christian-based source on social

[11] Specific discussion of the Catholic Worker Movement, its origins, theory, practices, and initiatives, will appear in Chapter Four.

teaching, is an apt text with which to begin. The *Compendium* is a sweeping document by design, but for the purposes of the current discussion, its most salient points concern prefigurative politics, its foundation for the Church's social doctrine, its particular concern for justice in the relation between labor and socio-political systems, and its focus on the whole human person.

The *Compendium* opens with a letter from Cardinal Angeloa Sodano. Cardinal Sodano explains that the *Compendium* is a compilation of all material on the Church's social doctrine. In this preface, Cardinal Sodano acknowledges that Catholic social doctrine is an instrument of evangelization "because it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel," and the Cardinal affirms that "The principles of the Church's social doctrine...are based on the natural law" (Pontifical Council xvii). Sodano's commentary here reveals two important points regarding Catholic social doctrine that also bear heavily on Christian anarchist thought: first, Christian social justice activity is evangelization by example (and also serves as a form of prefigurative politics), and second, the Cardinal's message indicates that Christian social justice is grounded in an immutable law that governs all human interaction. So, for example, when a Christian anarchist community conducts social justice work, such as providing free health clinics to the homeless, that community is simultaneously enacting a number of principles: treating the homeless individual with the dignity and respect demanded by natural law, prefiguring a direct action form of socio-political activity for society at large, and engaging in evangelization activity by example.

The *Compendium* acknowledges that the Catholic Church's modern approach to social justice begins with the very labor question with which socialists, communists, and

anarchists were also concerned (39). All of these groups at the time were reacting to the reality of changing social and labor relations that had been brought on by the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* inaugurates the Church's modern approach to social doctrine through that discussion of labor. In *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII delineates the obligations of the rich while affirming the dignity of the poor, but the Pope is disinterested in a radical overturning of social structures. Specifically, unlike the socialists at whom he takes aim (and, by extension, communists and anarchists), Pope Leo XIII adamantly affirms the right to the ownership of private property. Although a wide range of beliefs persists among economic-political leftists with regard to ownership of private property, personal property, and/or the means of production, for the purposes of this particular discussion of Christian anarchism, *Rerum Novarum* presents an accurate enough portrait of socialism as the common ownership of property. Over the course of the 20th century, the Church revisited and updated the teachings expounded in *Rerum Novarum*. In 1931, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, which continued the Church's efforts to strike a median position in regards to the relation between labor and the role of the State. On the one hand, *Quadragesimo Anno* argues that salaries should be proportional to the needs of workers and their families; on the other hand, the encyclical follows a more anarchist inclination in asserting that that State ought to follow the "principle of subsidiarity" (the notion of decentralization, or that any political matters should be addressed at the lowest, most local level possible) in its dealings with the private sector (Pontifical Council 41). In 1991, Pope John Paul II published the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, which promotes the concept of solidarity and "demonstrates how the Church's social teaching moves along

the axis of reciprocity between God and man: recognizing God in every person and every person in God is the condition of authentic human development" (Pontifical Council 46-47). These particular social encyclicals define important contours of Christian anarchism. They are all deeply concerned with economic justice, social parity, limited government involvement, and the insoluble connection between social justice and the believer's submission and service to God.

One substantial problem with using the *Compendium* as a means of explaining a Christian anarchist movement, however, is the Catholic Church's insistence upon the moral good of the ownership of private property. On the one hand, the Church recognizes that the rich have a moral obligation to aid the poor, but the Church's outright disavowal of socialism, combined with its promotion of private property, leaves it in the position of supporting what might today be called "ethical capitalism." Certainly, such a system is conceivable, but seemingly nigh impossible in practice; capitalism, by its very nature, encourages the accumulation of wealth, which is quite simply antithetical to giving away one's riches. So, in its hesitancy to disrupt existing economic-political systems, the Church indirectly props up a capitalist system that encourages the continuation of oppression.

While the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, provides a religious explanation for the work of the Catholic Worker Movement, some of the Church's teachings fail to account for all of the Catholic Worker's thought and practice. Particularly, the Catholic Worker Movement, whose adherents willingly live in poverty to be in solidarity with those whom they serve, disagrees with the Church's positions in regard to the ownership of private property and the Church's hesitancy to instruct the rich

to relinquish their worldly wealth and, therefore, their very socioeconomic status. Where the Catholic Worker diverges from the teaching of the Catholic Church, a philosophical approach helps fill in the gaps; specifically, the Other-oriented ethics of Emmanuel Levinas can provide an overriding ethos for Catholic Worker thought and practice. Certainly, neither the Church nor the Catholic Worker outright proclaims a Levinasian ethics; however, given the Catholic Church's concern with the universality of its social/ethical teaching and its shared historical and religious heritage with Judaism, a move to Levinas's Other-oriented ethics is a logical progression in a discussion of Christian ethics. Above all, Levinas is concerned with ethics, which he locates in the face-to-face encounter with the Other.

For Levinas, the Face is preeminent, pre-existing, and is similar to the Church's recognition of "God in every person and every person in God" (Pontifical Council 46-47). In Levinasian ethics, the call to obligation and responsibility produces an imbalanced ethical relationship to the Other in which the self owes an infinite responsibility to the Other. Such an infinite responsibility takes the form of service and, for the Christian anarchist in a modern context, that service is social justice. In dedicating oneself to social justice, the Christian anarchist reaffirms the *arche* of God and the flattening of social hierarchies among humans. The flattening, of course, is intended to be an active process, never a finished product. Most Christian anarchists, like most Christians generally, believe that the perfectly equitable society will only be inaugurated in the eschaton, but social justice enables believers to make personal sacrifices to uplift, or to live in solidarity with, those who are most oppressed by existing socio-political forces. Such

social justice work, animated by that infinite responsibility to the Other, promotes the vision of service that Christian anarchists emphasize from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

In the Levinasian ethical encounter, one's very self is called into question and to responsibility toward the Other (43). Levinas is clear in his indication that this is not a limitation or foreshortening of ipseity; rather, this call to ethical responsibility founds and justifies the freedom of the self (197). So, for the Catholic Worker Movement, while the Church is certainly concerned with the dignity of the whole human person, the Church's predilection for existing social structures fails exactly where Levinas succeeds. Levinas insists on the priority of ethics before even ontology. Consequently, Levinas's philosophy approaches the Other prior to any concerns with existing social structures, ontology, or even traditional understandings of ethics.

Insofar as Levinasian ethics go beyond mere doing good and into the realm of honoring the human person, Levinas's thought resonates deeply with Catholic social doctrine that seeks to help the whole human person. The Catholic Worker specifically follows through on these concepts by directly aiding those whom Jesus would call the "least of these." the dispossessed and oppressed. In Levinasian ethics, though, in this non-totalizable relationship between the self and the Other, the self's infinite ethical responsibility to the Other will necessarily require sacrifice on the part of the self. Logically, fulfilling that infinite responsibility may sometimes require a willingness to depart from conventional modes of social organization (i.e., capitalism) that inherently reproduce the conditions of systemic oppression and injustice. The Church may desire an ethical capitalism, but to completely honor the dignity of the whole human person may very well require the abandonment of a socioeconomic system that, at the very least, is in

constant conflict with ethics (and most certainly is antithetical to the complete fulfillment of a Levinasian ethics). Such an assertion is not intended as a promulgation of a necessarily anarchist economic-political system, but there is an anarchic impulse in such a claim, a willingness to overturn existing social structures and move toward an unconditionally ethical response to the Other.

The real problem with Levinasian ethics is that the fulfillment of one's infinite responsibility to the Other is suicidal, at least in a figurative sense. On the one hand, the Levinasian infinite responsibility to the Other helps explain Catholic Worker dedication to helping the Other to the point of potentially overturning existing structures of social organization; however, on the other hand, such an infinite responsibility, rather than establishing an ethical capitalist system, leads logically to a form of willful enslavement of self to the Other. The logical extreme of ethical capitalism is an oxymoronic system that will still result in exploitation of the poor (i.e., existing economic-political systems), and radical adherence to Levinasisan ethics leads to exploitation of the self. Following Levinas requires always putting the Other above the self, but to seek a more balanced, anarchically equitable approach, means pursuing Jesus' command that one ought to love the neighbor as oneself. The tensions that surface in trying to execute these teachings indicate a breakdown in the translation of theory to practice.

The point at which the Church's social doctrine and Levinasian ethics approach impracticability is the point at which a more practical program of action is required; for the Catholic Worker, that program may be found in anarchism. The Catholic Worker did not arrive at its anarchist conclusions in a vacuum. Christian anarchists' relation with anarchism is, of course rooted in biblical exegesis (as demonstrated in Chapter Two), but

the Christian variant of anarchism also shares a history with modern secular anarchism. Both secular and Christian anarchism developed in the 18th and 19th centuries. Modern secular anarchism often traces its source back to William Godwin's 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, but Christian anarchist roots reach to the same source and also claim elements of the even earlier thought of Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676 CE), of the Diggers movement, and Peter Chelčický (c. 1390-1460 CE), the Czech reformer (Christoyannopoulos 9, 26). Famed Christian anarchist Leo Tolstoy, for example, cites Chelčický among his influences. So the major similarities between secular and Christian anarchists are a suspicion of the State, anti-hierarchical social organization, and a preference for decentralization. The primary difference, of course, is that while secular anarchists tend to ground their socio-political thought in ideologies like humanism or liberalism, Christian anarchists ground their thought in Biblical teaching or religious doctrine.

Although the Catholic Worker Movement is a Christian anarchist organization, the movement's founders found inspiration in the work of the secular anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin. In particular, Peter Kropotkin's anarcho-communism helps frame the Catholic Worker's approach to the relationships between labor and capital, physical and intellectual labor, and direct action and the oppressed. Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, even specifically praises Kropotkin for his abnegation of his claim to Russian nobility in preference of working on behalf of the poor (*The Long Loneliness* 192). Peter Kropotkin was a self-described anarcho-communist. He much preferred reasonable discussion to violent insurrection, but his zeal for establishing an equitable society was just as strong as that of any freedom fighter. His first substantial

contribution to ethical thought appeared in his text *The Conquest of Bread* (1892), in which he argued for expropriation of goods, property, and the means of production. Significantly, Kropotkin did not want to involve government in this project of expropriation because he believed that people could accomplish the task nonviolently on their own. Here, Kropotkin takes a favorable view of human nature, inspired by humanism. Later, in his books *Mutual Aid* (1890-96) and *Ethics* (1921), Kropotkin argued for the evolutionary development of altruism and mutual aid as a countermeasure to the prevailing social Darwinism of his day that insisted on the primacy of violent competition in species' struggles for survival. His overall project was to demonstrate that human beings were inherently equipped to behave in an equitable, ethical manner toward one another and that developments in modern science and social structures had positioned humanity to right the wrongs of economic and social injustice.

The primary utility of Kropotkin's thought for Christian anarchism is that he explores specific and detailed means by which communities can seek equitable socio-economic-political organization in the modern age. He examines the ways in which communities can decentralize, produce their food locally, provide mutual aid, minimize through technological innovation and communal projects the amount of work required for society to function, and eliminate hierarchical political and organizational structures.

In *The Conquest of Bread*, Kropotkin laments, "mankind has not yet found the proper form for combining, on communistic principles, agriculture with a suddenly developed industry and a rapidly growing international trade" (viii). Here, he follows a Marxist dialectical approach and seeks a synthesizing solution to the tensions between labor and capital. In contradistinction to the Catholic Church's position on private

property, Kropotkin argues at length that all developments of science, technology, and culture are always the result of cooperative projects (*Conquest of Bread* 3-9). For example, no one executive, architect, builder, or property owner can lay claim to sole ownership of the finished building. Capital establishes such a system of sole ownership, but it is plain to Kropotkin that no technological development would occur in any context without the time and effort of a large collaborating group; therefore, he argues that the entire community has a legitimate right to the ownership of property.

To begin the process of common ownership of goods and property, Kropotkin calls for expropriation of all goods, and he insists that such an action cannot be accomplished by the State, "but only by taking immediate and effective possession of all that is necessary to ensure the well-being of all" (*Conquest of Bread* 29). In short, Kropotkin calls for a revolution, albeit a nonviolent one organized according to scientific principles (*Conquest of Bread* 23).

Following expropriation, Kropotkin goes even farther to ensure that hierarchical structures do not reemerge: he demands, "abandon all forms of wages" (*Conquest of Bread* 34). Kropotkin explains, "The wage system arises out of the individual ownership of the land and the instruments of labor. It was the necessary condition for the development of capitalist production, and will perish with it, in spite of the attempt to disguise it as 'profit-sharing'" (*Conquest of Bread* 34). If capitalism's exploitation is to be abolished, Kropotkin argues that the wage system, one of capitalism's crucial conditions of possibility, must also be abandoned.

Finally, Kropotkin's anarchist tendency toward decentralization and his predilection for action informing theory both serve as integral frameworks for the

execution of the Catholic Worker's social justice. Kropotkin had faith in the ability of humanity to create "a world in which the bonds which bind the individual are no longer laws, but social habits — the result of the need felt by each one of us to seek the support, the co-operation, the sympathy of his neighbours" (*Conquest of Bread* 42). As for the development of these social habits, Kropotkin insisted that "a system which springs up spontaneously, under stress of immediate need, will be infinitely preferable to anything invented between four walls by hide-bound theorists sitting on any number of committees," and he realized that any such spontaneous systems would likely develop at different paces in different communities, according to the individual needs of those communities (*Conquest of Bread* 80, 88-89). As will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter, the Catholic Worker adamantly adheres to this decentralizing impulse so as to best help respond to the needs and concerns of each local community.

Certainly, Kropotkin's thought is infused with a strand of anarcho-primitivism, a "back to the land" sort of impulse, which also tends to persist among many Christian anarchist groups. Indeed, much of the technology Kropotkin discusses at length pertains in some way to agriculture so as to ensure that local communities can grow enough food to support themselves. He insists that, in contradistinction to capitalism and communism, any economic model ought to begin not with production, but with the needs of the consumers, and an anarchist economy will begin with the premise that everyone has a right to live (with adequate housing and enough food and basic resources) and that everyone who participates in production has a right to well-being (*Conquest of Bread* 231). For example, he suggests the widespread use of greenhouses to grow crops that might otherwise be out of season (*Conquest of Bread* 285). He also discusses at length a

number of experiments to promote crop growth (such as surrounding rows of crops with controlled fires to provide warmth in cold winter climates). Certainly, technology has developed well beyond that which Kropotkin could envision in the late nineteenth century. He recognizes that technology will continue apace, and he even calls for more experiments in agriculture (*Conquest of Bread* 294). Despite his recognition that technology would only make agricultural work easier and more efficient, Kropotkin chose to focus primarily on existing technologies of his day in order to demonstrate that a decentralized anarchist society was already possible and did not need to be delayed. In fact, using calculations by Benjamin Franklin and others, Kropotkin determined that a decentralized society formed according to the manner he described can produce all that it requires if each community member labors for only four or five hours a day. Kropotkin also insisted that this labor need not all be farm work, and that, in fact, many pointless jobs could be eliminated simply by dismantling the bureaucracies required to maintain a large centralized government (*Conquest of Bread* 280, 131). In short, Kropotkin offers a number of detailed methods for organizing an anarchist society, and he is unyieldingly optimistic about humanity's ability to labor in common and to accomplish this project. For the Christian anarchist, then, while Jesus' message provides a call to action, Kropotkin provides plans of action for the modern era.

Final Thoughts on the Theoretical Framework

Despite the utility of these three sources (the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Emmanuel Levinas's Other-oriented ethics, and Peter Kropotkin's ethics and political thought), none of them are devoid of difficulties as frameworks for Christian anarchist thought. The hope is that a combination of the three provides a synthesis that is

more helpful than detrimental to a framing of Christian anarchist thought and practice. While the Church's social doctrine is an expansive resource for grounding Christian social teaching, particularly with its constant emphasis on respecting the dignity of the whole human person, the Church nevertheless presents some challenges for Christian anarchist thought. Besides its endorsement of the ownership of private property and the consequent support of existing economic-political structures, the Church itself is quite the hierarchical structure, which is antithetical to the decentralizing impulse in Christian anarchism. Most modern and contemporary Christian anarchist groups, in fact, tend to be Protestant, with the Catholic Worker Movement serving as a notable exception. For Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, co-founders of the Catholic Worker, the Church provided a stable base within which they could build and expand their anarchist organization, and the papal encyclicals were a favorite source on social teaching for Peter Maurin. Furthermore, the Church necessarily violates the secular anarchist motto "No gods, no masters" by its profession of a monotheistic, omnipotent, omniscient God. Christian anarchists typically respond that by accepting God as the ultimate master, believers are then free to pursue an anarchic leveling of human social relations in which people mutually serve one another; this response, in particular, deserves greater explication.

Tripp York relates an anecdote in which Dorothy Day and Ammon Hennacy directly faced the tension between divine authority and adherence to anarchist principles with a group of atheist Italian anarchists. Hennacy very vocally accepted and proclaimed his status as a Christian anarchist, and the atheists insisted that Day and Hennacy "drop the language of anarchism" because of their belief in God and their submission to church authority (York 11). Hennacy and Day refused to relent. They contended that "it was

their submission to the authority of Christ that made it possible for them to be anarchical in relation to the powers of the world" and that they were only as faithful to church authorities as the atheist anarchists were to the theorists and activists they so revered—namely, Mikhail Bakunin, Alexander Berkman, and Emma Goldman (York 11). Day and Hennacy's assertion reveals a crucial reality about the human condition in regard to authority: on some level, everyone submits. Whether that submission is to a deity, to a code of ethics, to philosophical discourse, to primal urges of the id, or to a principle of radically autonomous anarchic subjectivity, everyone must submit to some authority beyond oneself. So, ultimately, while the hierarchical nature of the Church may present some irreconcilable tensions with anarchist thought, submission to a higher power is not necessarily antithetical to anarchism.

The discussion above has already indicated both opportunities and challenges that Emmanuel Levinas's ethics present. In his insistence on the preeminence of the Face of the Other and the individual's responsibility to the Other, Levinas is unmatched in the realm of philosophical ethics. He argues that ethics precedes even ontology. Placing primacy on ethics, on the face-to-face encounter with the Other, completely reorients the argumentation of ontologically-obsessed philosophy. So, for example, Levinas could provide a slight corrective to the Church's teaching regarding private property. In Levinas's ethics, the relationship with and obligation to the Other is primary, and everything else, including existing economic-political systems, must be secondary. Using this emphasis on ethics helps ground Christian anarchist service-oriented thought and practice. The infinite ethical responsibility to the Other, to Jesus' "least of these," orients

thought and action toward the ethical social relation before even addressing questions of self, identity, or existence.

The Levinasian ethical problem, of course, is the potential for exploitation of the self in service of the infinite responsibility to the Other. From a Christian point of view, the only way for a believer to attempt to adhere to Levinasian ethics while maintaining one's own sanity in the process is to acknowledge the influence of original sin on human imperfection. From a less religiously-oriented perspective, an appeal to simple human imperfection will suffice.

Lastly, while Kropotkin offers a way to bridge the theory and practice of social justice, the paradox of Kropotkin's usefulness in a discussion of Christian anarchism lies in his promotion of a mutual aid-based ethics grounded scientifically in human biology, rather than in the teachings of the Church. This statement in no way implies that Christian anarchists would necessarily take issue with Kropotkin's arguments in favor of evolution; however, Christian critics might argue that because, as a secular anarchist, Kropotkin does not recognize the impact of original sin or of divine action in the world, he, therefore, paints too positive of a picture of human nature. Kropotkin certainly was not completely naive regarding human nature (he did, for example, recognize Darwin's accuracy with regard to the nature of competition between and among species for survival), but he sought to provide a corrective that would also address the evolutionary adaptability of traits like altruism or self-sacrifice. Christian anarchists would then simply further correct Kropotkin's view by insisting on human sinfulness but then recognizing the ability for humanity to serve others through God's grace and by following the teachings and examples set by Jesus. A further problem is that Kropotkin's secular

anarchism led him to act outside of not only State institutions, but also the Church. Ultimately, while Kropotkin's optimism toward humanity's ability to self-organize an equitable society is refreshing, it can also tend toward naiveté. At this juncture, the *Christian* part of Christian anarchism becomes significant; by recognizing God as the only *arche*, Christians then have a preeminent, metaphysical basis for direct action and anarchist social justice work.

Adhering to a social justice-oriented anarchic Christianity is a delicate balancing act. Without a strong, centralized base from which to mobilize, social justice work is difficult to accomplish on a large scale, and the work is even more difficult to sustain. Consequently, most successful social justice movements do not organize anarchically. Meanwhile, anarchism offers a number of advantages for the execution of social justice work; as an ideology, it is, after all, obsessively fixated on toppling social, political, and economic hierarchies. To accomplish this lofty religio-anarchic engagement requires a robust theoretical framework. By examining the Catholic Worker through the lens of these theoretical frames, the image of Christianity that emerges is one of sacrifice and service that is animated by, but not necessarily beholden to, Catholic social teaching; the anarchist proclivities of the Catholic Worker create seams through which the Movement may function within, throughout, and if necessary, outside of the bounds of any existing Church or governmental bureaucracy.

Taken alone, any of the three key theoretical frameworks have some deficiencies. Together, they hopefully supplement one another for a framing of modern Christian anarchism. The Church can tend toward authoritarian hierarchy, but it can also provide a strong base of doctrine and resources from which to build a social justice movement.

Meanwhile, Kropotkin explains means by which communities can establish equity without towering hierarchical structures. His optimism is encouraging, but is probably too naive in regard to human nature. World War I, which occurred in the latter days of Kropotkin's life, tempered his optimism some; one can only speculate what effect World War II may have had on his ethical thought. Here, Levinas, writing in the wake of the Holocaust, proves helpful. He insists on the primacy of the responsibility to the Other, without subsuming either individual into a metaphysical totality. His ethics precede ontology, and ontologically-obsessed rationalism, founded as it is on the autonomy of the self, is the philosophical trend that can even create the conditions of possibility for war and violence. Each of these theoretical frameworks, from different directions, approach the problem of responding ethically to the whole human person and of engaging in an equitable social justice. From here, Christian anarchist thought may be grounded, and social justice may be not only performed, but lived.

CHAPTER 4

ANARCHIST POLITICS

OF THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT

Christian anarchists, as a heterogeneous group of believers, broadly agree with the basic premise that the teachings of Jesus propound a radical anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics. While terms such as *the state*, *anarchism*, and *capitalism* may be somewhat anachronistic or conceptually inadequate descriptors in relation to Jesus' world and worldview, nevertheless, they are appropriate for any Christian anarchist critique of pervasive and interlocking webs of oppression. As Alexandre Christoyannopoulos notes, "the starting point for most Christian anarchists is not so much a critique of the state as an understanding of Jesus' radical teaching on love and forgiveness which, when *then* contrasted to the state, leads them to their anarchist conclusion" (31, emphasis in original). According to Christian anarchists' understanding of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and in other passages, the state is founded on the very principles and actions that Jesus specifically forbids (such as perpetuating violence through war, demanding that citizens swear oaths of allegiance, and judging and condemning individuals to death through the judicial system). In light of this realization, Christian anarchists assume responsibility for opposing the oppressive machinations of the state.

Like their secular counterparts, Christian anarchists are also staunchly opposed to the oppressive forces inherent in capitalism. However, whereas secular anarchists trace their anti-capitalist bent back to European thinkers like Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin,

Christian anarchists trace their anti-capitalist sentiment back even further: to the teachings of Jesus. Therefore, while capitalism is founded upon the principle of the accumulation of wealth, Jesus instead commands, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Matt. 19:21).[12] Christian anarchists do not interpret Jesus' instructions on how to be perfect as mere rhetoric. Instead, they take it as a call to action. One such group with Christian anarchist leanings that lives this commandment to unfailingly help the poor is the Catholic Worker Movement. To explore the Christian anarchist politics of the Catholic Worker, this chapter, with some reference to the theoretical frames discussed in the previous chapter, will examine the group's emphases on autonomy, direct action, decentralization, and co-development of theory and practice as those characteristics manifest through the structure and actions of the movement as a whole. These characteristics are integral to the operation of co-founder Peter Maurin's three-part program, which includes round-table discussions, houses of hospitality, and agronomic universities. Additionally, those same characteristics are key to understanding the day-to-day operations of the Atlanta-based Open Door Community, which is a Catholic Worker-inspired house.

The Catholic Worker Movement makes for an apt case study of Christian anarchism because of the group's origins in both Christian and secular political thought. Indeed, Professor Mary C. Segers argues that anarchism "help[s] to explain the coherence and consistency of Catholic Worker ideology," particularly regarding economic and social doctrine (197). The founding figures of the movement were Dorothy Day (1897—1980) and Peter Maurin (1877—1949), both Catholic and both well-versed in a wide

[12] Unless otherwise noted, all Bible verses are from the New Revised Standard Version.

range of anti-capitalist and anti-statist discourse, including that of Russian anarcho-communist Peter Kropotkin, for whom Day "emphasizes [the title of] 'Prince'...precisely because he gave up titles and estates to be with the poor" (*The Long Loneliness* [*LL*] 192). In pursuit of this goal to "be with the poor" in solidarity, Day, with her experience with social movements, and Maurin, with his program of Christian personalism and knowledge of papal encyclicals, fused their unique thought and experience into what became first a newspaper publication and then an entire social movement of its own.

Dorothy Day was a convert to Catholicism. In her college days, long before her conversion, Day admits that she "rejected religion" because of the hypocrisy she perceived among believers who were complacent with the many oppressions of the world. She admits that she was "acutely conscious of the class war," although she had yet to heed or digest the ramifications of physical warfare (Day, *LL* 41). She became a journalist, writing for socialist papers that were imbued with communist and anarchist ideology, and she covered stories of "strike meetings, picket lines, [and] peace meetings" (Day, *LL* 53-54, 57). Throughout her journalism career (including her many years writing for the *Catholic Worker*), Day's concern remained with the plight of the laborers and their unions' constant quest for justice under a capitalist system.

Peter Maurin, prior to meeting Dorothy Day, followed a much more solitary route in life. He was an unskilled worker and never joined a union because he "did not wish to work to perpetuate the proletariat" (Day, *LL* 177). Maurin was born in a rural, peasant village in France and immigrated into the United States by way of Canada, after a stint of homesteading. He "vehemently opposed...the wage system," supported of a gift economy, and advocated personal charity in place of any kind of government assistance (Day, *LL*

178-179). Maurin's brand of Christian personalism emphasized "that we are our brother's keeper, and the unit of society is the family; that we must have a sense of personal responsibility to take care of our own, and our neighbor, at a personal sacrifice" (Day, *LL* 179). This kind of charity at one's personal expense is the driving principle of Catholic Workers as they live in voluntary poverty and tirelessly work to alleviate the suffering of the poor.

Peter Maurin's Program for the Catholic Worker

When Dorothy Day met Peter Maurin (she literally found him waiting for her at her apartment upon her return from a journalistic venture in Washington, D.C.), she realized that he "spoke in terms of ideas...and he stressed the importance of theory" (Day, *LL* 169). He wanted to articulate the terms of a Catholic Christian movement. Maurin declared, "Lenin said, 'There can be no revolution without a theory of revolution,' so I am trying to give the theory of a green revolution" (Day, *LL* 170). His appeal to a Marxist authority and insistence on the vanguardist role of theory certainly problematize labeling the Catholic Worker Movement as solely anarchist in nature, and, indeed, it would be inaccurate to characterize them as exclusively anarchist. In fact, both Marxist and anarchist ideas infused the Catholic Worker from its inception. Sometimes, Maurin sounded more like the anarchist of the pair, wanting originally to entitle their publication *The Catholic Radical* (a name that Day vetoed in favor of the more communist-sounding *Catholic Worker*), and sometimes Day expressed more anarchist ideas, such as not strictly insisting on a party line between all Catholic Worker houses (Day, *LL* 175, 272). Although Maurin's strategy of presenting a theory to lead a successful revolution may smack of Leninist intellectual vanguardism, the specific tactics that Maurin proposed are

distinctly anarchist and seek to achieve what Christoyannopoulos would call a Christian anarchist revolution by example (Christoyannopoulos 167). So, while it is true that Marxist and other leftist thought may have greatly shaped the Catholic Worker Movement, the binding ideology that motivates their practice is most accurately described as anarchist. These anarchist leanings are evident in each part of Maurin's program: round-table discussions, houses of hospitality, and agronomic universities.

Round-table Discussions

For Maurin, the purpose of round-table discussions was "for the clarification of thought," and his intention was "to bring the workers and scholars together" (Day, *LL* 173). As Segers notes, this is an idea Maurin derived from Kropotkin to foster a more fruitful relationship between intellectuals and manual laborers, roles that Maurin interwove into his own life (205). Indeed, Claire Bolton, a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Georgia's Geography Department, reports a similar activity among residents and volunteers at the Open Door Community, an Atlanta-based, Catholic Worker-inspired house.[13] The Open Door Community holds teaching sessions twice weekly in which discussion leaders "direct participants' attention to the lived experiences of service work and encourage them to draw theo-political analyses out of their reflections" (Bolton 120). These participants then reflect on these teachings during their service work (typically, work in a soup kitchen) and congregate afterward to further analyze how service work might inform what Bolton calls the group's "liberationist theo-politics" (120). For the Open Door Community, the emphasis on manual labor has

[13] On their webpage, the group even describes itself as "Protestant Catholic Workers" ("The Open Door Community"). At the time of this writing, the Open Door Community is in the process of relocating from Atlanta, GA, to Baltimore, MD.

evolved, instead, into service work, which was also a critical component of Maurin's original program.

The effect of these round-table discussions and teaching sessions is that they break down the dichotomy between intellectual and manual labor, which "call[s] into question the lines between all too easy distinctions between theory and practice" (York 45). Additionally, these discussions disintegrate hierarchies that might privilege one form of knowledge or knowledge producer over the other. In other words, this particular program, rather than encouraging a Leninist intellectual vanguardism, promotes a more anarchist, networked internal structure. As Bolton is careful to note, this is not to suggest that hierarchy does not exist within the Open Door Community (and it is also characteristic of the more traditional Catholic Worker houses, as well), but the community does make an active effort to produce "a utopian community wherein all guests, residents and volunteers share equal privilege and authority" (127).

Houses of Hospitality

The most successful part of Maurin's program, and indeed the hub around which much of the group's work is done, is the house of hospitality. Segers explains that the purpose of these houses is "to feed the poor and shelter the homeless," and that the idea "stemmed from the medieval practice of Catholic bishops in establishing hospices for the sick and the poor in each diocese" (203). This was Maurin's way of executing what he called "a first principle": to care for one's neighbor (Day, *LL* 179). Maurin's "first principle" here resonates with the first principle discussed in Levinasian ethics from Chapter Three: a call to responsibility to the Other.

Like *The Catholic Worker* paper, the houses of hospitality were designed to do whatever good they could within their own communities; they favor an anarchist kind of direct action regarding charity. Maurin went so far as to proclaim, "It is not the function of the state to enter into these realms," and Dorothy Day recounts that despite the crisis of the Great Depression, Maurin refused to accept state relief funds from the National Recovery Administration; she reports, "he would have no part in co-operating with the state" (Day, *LL* 179-180). Initially, Maurin did appeal to American Catholic bishops to establish houses of hospitality, but when they were slow to respond, the Catholic Worker simply established its own house, and by the end of the 1930s, twenty-five such houses existed across the United States (Segers 203). Essentially, the Catholic Worker did not require state aid or even the support of its own Church hierarchy in order to start its house of hospitality. In keeping with Christian anarchist beliefs, they simply did what they could with the means at their disposal in order to live out Jesus' instruction to help the poor.

The decentralized, networked structure of the many Catholic Worker houses is an even further indication of the group's anarchist nature. In quoting Marshall Schatz's study, Segers writes that anarchism advocates "A communal organization welling up from below, in direct response to the true needs of its members" (qtd. in Segers 214). More contemporary anarchist scholars, such as Todd May, however, question even this notion of "bottom-up" versus "top-down" organization, arguing that adhering to the same metaphor only privileges existing conceptions of hierarchical structure (14). Peter Maurin was similarly skeptical of existing hierarchical structures, even eschewing the very label of "organization" and, instead, insisting that the Catholic Worker Movement was "an

organism" that "grew organically" in response to the needs of the people involved (Day, *LL* 182).

This organic quality manifests itself, for example, in the work of the Open Door Community, the "Protestant Catholic Worker House." Claire Bolton writes, "the particularities of their social welfare work for homeless people directly emerges from a close understanding of the realities of those people's lives; their weekly foot care clinic, for example, emerged from homeless people's testimonies of the ravages of street life upon their bodies" (113). The foot care clinic arose in direct response to the material needs of the people the community serves. The emergence of this clinic is an excellent example of the movement growing organically in exactly the way Peter Maurin envisioned, and it echoes an anarchist exchange between theory and practice in which each mutually constructs and redefines the other. As the Mennonite scholar Tripp York explains, "One's practice would lead to theories while one's theories would lead to different practices. Which precedes the other is neither clear, nor necessary epistemological knowledge. Practice is embodied theory and theory is the explication of practice" (45). In the case of the Open Door Community, the call to serve the homeless in a house of hospitality leads to the necessity of the foot care clinic, and the practice of the foot care clinic elaborates on the theory of how to best serve said homeless population.

The organic development of autonomous houses of hospitality further intensifies the decentralized structure of the movement and leads to even more diversity of thought and practice among the different houses. For example, the house that Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin established has always been staunchly pacifist, which has often led to tension between the movement and society as a whole, particularly during the Spanish

Civil War and World War II. Meanwhile, although pacifism is such a central tenet of Day and Maurin's house, other houses do not necessarily share in this belief (Segers 226). Dorothy Day expresses, "It is a matter of grief to me that most of those who are Catholic Workers are not pacifists, but I can see too how good it is that we always have this attitude represented among us. We are not living in an ivory tower" (*LL* 272). While Day may not agree with those Workers who do not share her commitment to pacifism, the structure of the movement promotes an anarchist diversity of thought.

Agronomic Universities

Before Maurin and Day established the Catholic Worker, Leo Tolstoy had already blazed a Christian anarchist trail, and in many ways, the Catholic Worker emulated Tolstoy's work. As he aged, the Russian author became increasingly radical, preferring to live in solidarity with the poor and submitting to voluntary poverty. Part of his efforts to live as a peasant and give back to the poor included turning his estate into a farming commune on which people came to work and partake of the fruits of their labor. Peter Maurin then adapted this idea into what he called the "agronomic university," which was his erudite moniker for "farming commune."

Maurin's choice of words, however, is significant insofar as it further illustrates his desire to eliminate binaries and hierarchies between scholars and laborers. Besides integrating intellectual work with manual labor, the primary purpose of the agronomic universities was to combat urbanization and to get people back to living and working on the land. At this juncture, Kropotkin's anarcho-primitivist influence becomes apparent insofar as both he and Maurin argued for small, local communities that produced their own food. Maurin's program for a "green revolution" is a contribution to green anarchist

thought, specifically of the Christian anarchist variety. In fact, Maurin's program for the development of agronomic universities coincides with Christian anarchist Jacques Ellul's green anarchist critique of technology and the logic of efficiency that governs technological societies[14] (Ellul 5). Therefore, rather than reducing humans to efficient machines of production, Maurin chose to combat the societal ills introduced by factory work by removing people from those environments and restoring dignity to manual labor and to the humans who engage in it.

Ellul identifies several shortcomings of the technological society, which include reduction of the individual to the task, human subservience to technology, and the subordination of nature (5, 79, 85-86). To this list of problems caused by technology, Maurin would also add mounting unemployment and poverty (Day, *LL* 185). In response to these perceived societal ills, Maurin would proclaim, "There is no unemployment on the land" (Day, *LL* 195). He encouraged an exodus from the technological society and a move toward work in farming communes. This suggestion also tied into Maurin's opposition to the wage system and his refusal to support it, even withholding support from union strikes in which Day and other Catholic Workers were deeply involved. According to Day, Maurin was known for saying, "Strikes don't strike me" (*LL* 181). He perceived them to be complicit with the wage system and believed they locked people into the oppressive work of technological urban centers (Day, *LL* 177; Segers 207). Again, Maurin's thought resonates with Kropotkin's; here, Maurin echoes Kropotkin's call to abandon all wages (*Conquest of Bread* 34). Instead of a wage system, Maurin

[14] Ellul critiques what he refers to as *technique*, which is not limited merely to technology, procedures, or particular machines. Rather, Ellul defines *technique* as "the *totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency* (for a given stage of development) in *every* field of human activity" (xxv, emphasis in original). In contrast to the multitactical, multivocal diversity characteristic of anarchism, *technique* is a totalizing metanarrative.

preferred a gift economy in which labor was voluntarily given in return for the gift of "enough food and clothing" and other basic material needs (Day, *LL* 178). As Segers notes, Maurin "believed strongly in the dignity of labor" and viewed work as "a means of expressing oneself and contributing to the common good" (207). In this belief, he simultaneously rejected capitalism's emphasis on "selfish, acquisitive, and competitive" labor and also Marxism's struggle of the proletariat (Segers 207; Day, *LL* 179).

Maurin's green anarchist leanings become even more apparent in his response to criticisms directed against his agronomic universities. When he claimed that there was no unemployment on the land, he "would be met by jeers": "What about the migrants, the tenant farmers. They either work like slaves for the bosses, or they rot like the men in Tobacco Road" (Day, *LL* 195). Maurin's simple solution: "Fire the bosses" (Day, *LL* 195). In Peter Maurin's ideal conception, modern social and economic arrangements would not exist. What he was really asking people to do was to collapse social hierarchies, to live in community with one another, and to forsake material luxuries so as to more adequately provide for basic human needs. His vision was for a more anarchically-ordered social system based on subsistence agriculture.

As the world increasingly urbanizes, it is easy to dismiss Maurin's agronomic university program as a failure. Certainly, it has enjoyed by far the least success of all his ideas (Segers 203). From the beginning, there was a tension in this matter even between the founders of the Catholic Worker Movement. Dorothy Day characterizes the divide between Maurin and herself as such: "He knew the soil; I the city" (*LL* 175). While the city may have won this debate, in that it became and continues to be the nexus of most Catholic Worker activity, Maurin's efforts at establishing his agronomic universities are

still a success when viewed through a Christian anarchist lens. As the historian of anarchism George Woodcock asserts, “the anarchist sees progress not in terms of steady increase in material wealth and complexity of living, but rather in terms of the moralizing of society by the abolition of coercive authority, inequality, and economic exploitation” (qtd. in Segers 216). Maurin’s attempt to move people back to the land at farming communes seeks and, to some small degree, accomplishes exactly that moral end.

Politics of the Catholic Worker Movement

The decentralized structure of the Catholic Worker Movement provides any given house of hospitality with a great degree of autonomy, although all of the houses share the core principle of aiding “the poor, the dispossessed, the exploited” (Day, *LL* 204). By design, the houses have no rigid party line, and they exist in a loosely-connected network. Such a structure, while making any given house more responsive to the direct needs of its own community, also presents a unique set of challenges regarding funding and methods of engaging social issues.

Funding

From its inception, the Catholic Worker Movement relied on charity for its funding (Segers 203). Maurin refused to accept funds from the state, even during the Great Depression (Day, *LL* 179-180). He disliked the impersonal nature of government aid and remained skeptical of its ability to assist people without developing objectives of its own (Segers 215). This is a common anarchist critique of government bureaucracy that insists the political machine serves the only ultimate function of its own proliferation, which is an idea that can be traced all the way back to Bakunin and his insistence that all forms of government would eventually lead to oppression (Woodcock 171).

Remaining true to Maurin's insistence that "Charity is personal," the Catholic Worker receives its funds purely on a donation basis (Day, *LL* 179). Gladys Rustay, one of the leaders at the Open Door Community, reports this same source of funding, indicating that "sixty percent of [their] donors were small donors" (Bolton 22). On their homepage, in fact, the Open Door Community provides a link to a list of items they are in need of to serve the homeless people of Atlanta. Individuals may access this list and contribute as they are able. The roots of the Catholic Worker houses really are in the communities they serve. They depend on those communities for support, and they give back within those same communities.

Giving to the Poor

One of the most obvious functions of the Catholic Worker is their charitable work to assist the homeless and the poor. Tom Sullivan, the editor for Dorothy Day's version of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, declared, "Nothing is too good for the poor," and he insisted on providing them with "good coffee and the finest of bread" (Day, *LL* 235). While not all houses may be financially able to offer such high quality goods and services, they do all offer a place of shelter for the homeless, various services (such as the Open Door Community's foot care clinic), and soup kitchens.

As Claire Bolton observes, even the direct service work of houses of hospitality serves a political purpose. The leaders of the Open Door Community, for example, directly incorporate service work into their dialogue with participants, "challeng[ing them] to actively put forth alternatives to the ideologically informed narratives that shape neoliberal practices" (Bolton 68). She defines neoliberalism as a set of political and economic practices "that further disadvantages the most economically marginalized

people in already unequal capitalist systems" (Bolton 6). While neoliberal logic blames some supposed deficiency of the homeless for their plight, the service work and discussions at the Open Door Community interrogate those claims, preserving the dignity and worth of the individual while indicting the capitalist system that would so abuse the people living under it.

Protests and Direct Action

Like the decentralized Catholic Worker Movement itself, the organization's political involvement has been wide and varied, but always broadly leftist. For example, after combating Anti-Semitism in print, the Catholic Workers found themselves "picketing the German consulate at the Battery" alongside the communists in 1935. During the Great Depression, they joined in the workers' strike against the Ohrbach Department Store, and they often found reason to protest on behalf of others who faced unfair treatment by their employers (Day, *LL* 206-207). In more recent history, they have established connections with the Occupy movements that cropped up in late 2011 in protest of the glaring income inequality ever-present in postindustrial societies. On the official website for the Catholic Worker, there are still links to the websites of Occupy Together and Occupy Wall Street, and the Open Door Community even began a physical encampment next to the Occupy Atlanta group (Bolton 29). An even more radically direct action occurred in 1990 when the Open Door Community staged an occupation of the abandoned Imperial Hotel in downtown Atlanta (Bolton 32-33). According to Bolton, Open Door Community residents cut the chains on the building, installed new locks on the doors, and set up a temporary home that lasted for several weeks and had its own governing council (27). While specific protest actions may be more or less dramatic or

direct, as the Catholic Worker homepage states, all of their "communities remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and foresaken [sic]. Catholic Workers continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms." The only rule that houses consistently apply in their protests is that they not violate any of those principles.

Publications

While the Catholic Worker Movement is dedicated to directly helping the poor, the homeless, and the oppressed, they also chronicle their projects and social and economic agendas in their newspaper *The Catholic Worker*. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin started the first paper in New York, and many other variants have appeared since; however, Day never insisted that any other house "hold to the distributist or anarchist or pacifist positions that are taken editorially in *The Catholic Worker*" newspaper of New York (Day, *LL* 220). To insist on such a hard party line would be downright antithetical to the anarchist principle of autonomy. Instead, papers in different regions and countries focus on issues relevant to their own communities. For example, Mark and Louise Zwick, who run the Houston Catholic Worker, publish "a bilingual newspaper which spreads the word about the mission as well as inspirational and educational stories about the faith" (Connolly). Because their house assists a large immigrant population and is deeply involved in issues concerning immigrants and immigration, publishing a bilingual paper is an essential step for the equitable exchange of information.

The paper was never intended to be a money-making venture. Day set the price at a penny per issue so that anyone could afford it and sent young people about town to sell the paper; she reports that "when they could not sell it even at one cent a copy, they gave

free copies and left them in streetcar, bus, barber shop and dentist's and doctor's office" (Day, *LL* 182). According to the FAQ page on the Catholic Worker's website, the price remains a penny per issue even to this day, and it is distributed in print, not online.[15] Given the anarchist inclinations of the Catholic Worker Movement, these tactics surrounding the paper are significant. The paper is not intended only for those who can afford to purchase it or those who can afford internet access. Instead, it is meant to be accessible to all local community members, and it is intended to focus on the local and global issues affecting any given community in which it is published.

The Catholic Worker as an Anarchic Amalgam

The Catholic Worker provides a model, albeit an imperfect one, for understanding the theory and practice of a socially-engaged Christian anarchism. For his social program, Peter Maurin relied heavily upon Papal encyclicals, rather than focusing directly on scripture. That said, Maurin and Day both exercised a model of Christianity that resonates with an anarchic reading of the Gospels, particularly of the Sermon on the Mount as it was discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Ultimately, the Catholic Worker strikes a balanced position between a radical anarchic understanding of Jesus' teachings and the tradition represented by the Catholic Church.

Anarchist Tendencies

Mary Segers is correct in asserting that anarchism provides "an internal consistency to the intellectual and social vision of the Catholic Worker movement" (197). By Day's own admission, the Catholic Worker Movement "is indeed an unpopular front," criticizing and judging the political left often just as harshly as it does the right (Day, *LL* 222). For example, Day confesses that "Labor leaders...felt that in our judgment of war,

[15] However, the Catholic Worker website does archive issues of the paper edited by Dorothy Day.

we judged them also for working in the gigantic arms race, as indeed we did" (*LL* 222). In the article "Days with an End," Day picks even more fights: "The Catholic Worker stands opposed to Communism, Socialism, and Fascism." Of course, the list does not end there, as Catholic Workers often add capitalism and American rugged individualism right alongside the list of *-isms* they oppose. In their strict adherence to Christian personalism and in their efforts to faithfully live out a Christian social Gospel, they make enemies as often as (if not more often than) friends.

Despite their opposition to many social and political groups, the Catholic Workers also tend to draw on those very same groups for ideas. For example, although their staunch pacifism may have led them to judge labor leaders in industries tied to the military-industrial complex, Catholic Workers still did often support laborers and their unions. They commonly stood on picket lines with communists, and their social vision is very obviously influenced by socialism, in which everyone works and shares material goods in common. Still, this socialism should not be confused with a Marxist or communist variant. Dedicated as Maurin was to theory, Maurin's vision for the Catholic Worker leaves little room for a Marxist vanguardist class of intellectuals, and he was adamant that their communities not turn to the state for funding. He declared, "He who is a pensioner of the state is a slave of the state" (Day, *LL* 225). Rather, Maurin envisioned a federalist or social anarchist brand of socialism in which communities of families live together on farming communes, hold a combination of private and communal property, and establish "mutual-aid credit unions" to finance their agronomic universities (Day, *LL* 224-225). Alternatively, Maurin would have preferred for those who had capital to donate it to the cause, and for those who could provide labor to donate that (Day, *LL* 225). The

emphasis is on anarchist autonomy from rigid systems such as capitalism or government. Instead, people are directly dependent upon themselves and responsible for assisting one another within their communities.

Finally, the very structure of the Catholic Worker Movement is indispensable to its anarchist philosophy. Activism, strikes, and professed political positions are merely outgrowths from the lived experience of Catholic Workers and the communities they serve. The Catholic Workers constantly emphasize living out the kind of life that is conducive to producing a more anarchist society, even if they will not phrase it in exactly that manner. Dorothy Day argues, "To help organizers, to give what you have for relief, to pledge yourself to voluntary poverty for life so that you can share with your brothers is not enough. One must live with them, share with them their suffering too. Give up one's privacy, and mental and spiritual comforts as well as physical" (*LL* 214). Solidarity is key. Catholic Worker houses are built upon the premise of living in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed. They make no effort to ever escape from or ignore the plight of the poor. To accomplish this, the Catholic Workers require their own unique, autonomous houses of hospitality that are best suited to help the poor within any given community. The Catholic Workers do not approach social and economic problems with the kind of totalizing vision characteristic of neoliberalism or even Marxism. There is no singular problem to solve that will fix everything for everyone. This commitment to an anarchist, multitactical approach is what makes them versatile, persistent, and continually in touch with how to address the many challenges they face.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING REMARKS: COMMUNITY, CONSCIENCE, AND THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

Clearly, Christian anarchism concerns itself with service to God and service to the Other. The movement is a radical critique of authority and oppression, and the Catholic Worker, dedicated as it is to solidarity with the poor and the dispossessed, puts a face to that movement. Potentially, Christian anarchism provides a basis for community beyond the quasi-spiritual bonds of an American civil religion. As it stands, American civil religion produces citizen subjects who dutifully proclaim their faith in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, political martyrs like Abraham Lincoln, or even the idea of America itself. Supposedly, the public recognition and reverence for such symbols and concepts provides a common core of American values; however, in reality, such symbols have supported divergent interpretations and applications since the ratification of the Constitution. Tolstoy would have had no trouble identifying the profession of faith in such civil religion as anything other than nationalism. The history of American civil religion reveals that while it has operated well enough to sustain the State as a political entity, it has done little to unify Americans as a community, but it has performed exceptionally well at marginalizing the Other.

What the church, and the American Christian church in particular, needs is a prophetic call to action. No such large-scale call to action has existed in the United States

since the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. However, due to the ambivalent historical developments of King's legacy, pleas to continue his phenomenal work often feel feckless. There persists in the American mind versions of Martin Luther King, Jr., and those versions are constantly reconfigured until any given version of King and his work is palatable to any variety of preconceptions, values, and priorities. As such, given the contemporary shift toward the politicization of religion, Christian anarchism supplies an opportunity to radically cut to the core of the church's complicity with the State and the myriad oppressions perpetuated in the name of both religion and the State.

Of course, conceiving of Christian anarchism as a large-scale and sustainable community is, admittedly, difficult at best. For example, in early 2017, Atlanta's Open Door Community had to shut its doors, succumbing to the mounting difficulties of an aging population of community workers, the gentrification of the Ponce de Leon Avenue area, and the high costs of maintenance for their old building (Davis et al.). Some members of the Open Door Community did, however, relocate to the Baltimore area, where their work continues in a similar vein as before. Meanwhile, the Catholic Worker as a heterogeneous network persists, owing its continuation in no small part to the overarching structure of the Catholic Church. These difficulties of sustaining a movement aside, Christian anarchism can serve as a prophetic voice calling for community and service to the Other, and the movement can and must operate not from the fringes of society, but rhizomatically throughout its very fabric.

A Community, a Conscience

In his monograph on Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Christian church, Lewis V. Baldwin characterizes the American church in the post-King years as a reactionary and

isolating institution. Baldwin argues that King "critiqued the powerful and entrenched models of the church as bureaucracy and institution while fully embracing the idea of church as movement" (52). In King's estimation, the mission of the church was to serve as a conscience and a model to society. The church provided a means of uplifting the human person and working toward social justice. By no means was King complicit with the status quo or the oppressive projects of the State. King mobilized the church to combat the three great evils of racism, poverty, and war. Unfortunately, Baldwin admits that King's legacy has been co-opted. Baldwin laments that throughout the 1970s and beyond, "Jerry Falwell, Wallie A. Criswell, and other conservative clergy, who had once castigated King for his involvement in social and political activities, now turned to activities of this nature themselves, focusing mostly on selective moral issues such as abortion, pornography, and homosexuality" (220). The marriage of the Christian and political Right produced a mainstream, conservative variant of Christianity so entangled with American civil religion as to become a quasi-spiritual cultural enforcer of the status quo.

Baldwin details a number of specific problems that have arisen within the church in the decades following King's assassination. He explains that King's legacy has had an ambivalent reception. For example:

> Conservatives suggest that King was a harmless, gentle preacher who viewed the status quo church, or the church that serves the interests of the state, as the ideal, and liberals contend that King was an uncompromising voice of the prophetic church, or that body that consistently proclaims God's judgment upon America

> owing to its idolatry, racism, militarism, and mistreatment of the poor. (Baldwin 221).

Meanwhile, the mega churches, which "mirror the corporate structure in their organization, management, and outreach," have exploded in popularity, particularly in Southern urban centers (Baldwin 222). Baldwin explains that "mega churches constitute a mix of politics and spirituality that King would undoubtedly find strange and counterproductive, and these churches are preoccupied with prosperity, praise, and personal enrichment themes" (222). Baldwin also explains how the "rise of the mega-church phenomenon is contemporaneous with…the increasing decline of the neighborhood church," which disintegrates the sense of community established in smaller churches as church members become lost in an oversized mass (224). Such themes and trends comingle with American values associated with individualism and the capitalist accumulation of wealth. In summation, Baldwin declares, "The mega-church phenomenon is elitist, capitalistic, and materialistic, whereas King offered a powerful alternative model for envisioning what constitutes the prophetic church" (237), and he laments that "In King's estimation, misguided extremism in support of the status quo essentially made the church the servant of the state, not its conscience or chief moral guardian" (231). The result of the mega-church phenomenon and contemporary mainstream conservative Christianity is an individualistic, privatized religion that pairs well with political rhetoric praising the values of self-reliance and capitalist privatization of services ostensibly dedicated to the public good. Such an approach to the church and to Christianity primarily serves the interests of the middle- and upper-class, and with its

emphasis upon individual enrichment, that religion is ill-equipped to address the plights of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

Baldwin's most damning remarks of contemporary mainstream conservative Christianity indicate why a revaluation of King is certainly needed, but a more expedient method at this juncture may very well be to take seriously the Christian anarchist movement as a prophetic voice. Certainly, any message can be co-opted, and the sociopathic strand of American anarcho-capitalism may attempt to do exactly that with Christian anarchism; however, Christian anarchism still offers a powerful prophetic voice against injustice, whether that source be political, economic, or cultural. The Catholic Worker model, in particular, stresses the need to live in solidarity with the poor and is completely unambiguous regarding the ills of capitalism and the accumulation of wealth. To build community, to unyieldingly serve the Other, to interrogate the very grounds upon which power and authority are founded: these represent the Christian anarchist horizon of possibilities.

Catholic Worker Tensions with Anarchist Thought and Future Work

Although anarchism may be the most appropriate socio-political philosophy for characterizing the Catholic Worker Movement, the relationship of one to the other is by no means uncomplicated. Some tensions, and even downright incompatibilities, plague the relationship between anarchism and the Catholic Worker Movement, namely in regard to issues of authority, representation, and balance of power.

Despite the movement's decentralized structure and emphasis on autonomy, individual houses tend to adhere to a hierarchical power structure in dealing with their own affairs. To some extent, this authority structure may be reconcilable with anarchist

thought by viewing it through a Bakunian lens of legitimate authority. According to this model, authority is legitimate so long as adherents submit to it voluntarily (Bakunin 5). However, Catholic Worker hierarchy is hardly as anarchist as a more distributive model of leadership and authority would be.

Some other tensions, such as Catholic Workers' obvious theistic beliefs, can be explained by the peculiar nature of Christian anarchism (as opposed to secular anarchism), and some tensions require a more robust analysis of power and privilege than classical anarchism can offer; still other incompatibilities, such as the movement's position under the bureaucratic hierarchy of the Catholic Church, appear to be on some level irreconcilable with either secular or Christian anarchist theory. Each of these tensions/incompatibilities deserves more attention and will require an examination with respect to classical and contemporary anarchist theory and also poststructural understandings of the rhizomatic nature of power relations.

Most importantly, however, these tensions with anarchism do not necessarily represent problems with the Catholic Worker Movement itself. To the extent that they reflect and reproduce oppressive conditions inherent to American/Western culture, these problems ought to be addressed within the movement, but beyond that, of course, the Catholic Worker bears no particular responsibility to act more anarchically. As always, the only real objective of any Christian organization, anarchist or otherwise, is to carry out Christ's commands and serve as a faithful witness, regardless of what sociopolitical philosophy that may align such a group with now or at any time in the future.

The Catholic Worker Movement takes a unique approach to Christian anarchism that has allowed it to persist for nearly a century. Most Christian anarchists follow a

completely separatist, intentional community model, and most of those communities dissolve within a generation after the passing of a charismatic and visionary leader. One of the great advantages of the Catholic Worker is its ties to the longstanding Catholic Church. This affiliation provides a stable ground from which the organization can pursue its social justice work, and the Catholic Church's social doctrine, particularly the papal encyclicals, gives direction and focus on helping the whole human person. The Catholic Worker's anarchism arises, however, in the organization's willingness to go farther than the social doctrine of the Church. While the Church preserves tradition, the Catholic Worker will violate tradition, particularly regarding social organization or the issue of ownership of private property. Here, Levinas's ethics, with its obsessive focus on the infinite responsibility to the Other, helps to theoretically frame Catholic Worker social justice, and Peter Kropotkin's brand of anarcho-communism presents some specific plans of action that aid in establishing a decentralized, equitable, anarchist society. Each of these three theoretical frames help to explain how the Catholic Worker situates its thought, action, and adaptability in serving the exploited and dispossessed.

Having recognized the extent to which the Catholic Worker Movement represents a lived experience of Christian anarchism and the tensions it possesses in relation to anarchist thought, there yet remains more work to be done. Given that the modern nation-state and capitalism are clearly not the only (or perhaps even the best) targets for contemporary Christian anarchism, future work must turn to an even more robust theory of ethics that could motivate the Catholic Worker Movement and other Christian anarchists in their social and political activity. That theory will necessarily have to recognize the interplay of power between politics, culture, religion, and the economy.

Beyond Levinas's insistence on the face-to-face ethical encounter, a more contemporary and explicitly anarchist ethics may prove helpful. For example, the anarchist ethical theorist Simon Critchley may be useful because he builds upon Levinas's thought, but moves that thought in the direction of post-structuralism and that movement's complex analysis of the shifting relations of power and the underlying assumptions of humanism at the core of most secular anarchist theory. Like Dorothy Day, Critchley's ultimate reference point for ethics is Christ's command that his followers "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 6:48). For Critchley, this is an unfulfillable, one-sided command to which the subject willingly binds him/herself; here, again, the issue of authority looms. For Day, of course, this command carries with it certain theological imperatives, as well. This code of ethics that both Day and Critchley examine stretches back all the way to the teachings of Jesus and the apostle Paul, and Day rightly recognizes that Christian ethics are based in both Jesus' command for perfection and in "the folly of the cross" (Day, *LL* 246-247). Therefore, future work must examine the intersection of Christian and secular anarchist ethics in relation to how to be perfect and how to perfectly submit.

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