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AMERICAN MYTH AND THE GOSPEL: MANIFEST DESTINY AND DOROTHY DAY'S NONVIOLENCE

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Fundamentally, human history is a struggle between myth and gospel.

Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*

The warring nations of the world would not begin to hear a consistently critical voice in opposition to war and the use of force from within American Catholicism until Dorothy Day made pacifism central to life in the Catholic Worker movement. In the crucible of world war members of the Catholic Worker and their faithful followers would come to realize the high price of fidelity to Catholic pacifism and the uncompromising commitment of Dorothy Day to absolute nonviolence. The Catholic Worker was the only group in the history of the American Catholic Church that refused to view the nation's wars as the moral crusade of Christianity against the evil forces of tyranny or Communism. The meek and unquestioning obedience which characterized the devotional Catholicism of the immigrants, on the one hand, left most Catholics in nineteenth and twentieth century America submissive even unto death to a Church hierarchy which instructed them to submit to civil authority. The socially active spirituality of the Americanists, on the other hand, surely was closer to the energetic spirit of the modern papal social encyclicals and the urgent statements of several popes calling for peace and disarmament among the nations. But the influential Americanist leaders in the Church like Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker, Archbishop John Ireland, and Cardinal James Gibbons were also ready to go along with the judgments and policies of the nation's political and military leaders. In response to the government's war policies, the Americanists

converted themselves and their following into models of conformity and compliance. In time of war the progressive social reformers were no different than their conservative peers in the American Catholic Church.

The Catholic Worker's active nonviolence and pacifism was due largely to the spiritual vision of Dorothy Day. From the beginning of the movement in 1933, absolute nonviolence was an essential element of the Catholic Worker vocation to personal and social transformation as Day conceived it. For Day nonviolence was a way of life. While Catholic Worker nonviolence included *pacifism*, or "antiwarism," (Teichman 1986: 2-5) its common exercise, Day emphasized, was through a life of voluntary poverty in community with the poorest members of society and the daily practice of the works of mercy. The radicalizing force of Dorothy Day's spirituality of nonviolence in the Church challenged the blind patriotism and, in some cases, militant nationalism of Catholics in the United States. But Day's resolute stand on nonviolence and pacifism confronted, as well, the entrenched myths that have structured life and social consciousness for most Americans.

THE MYTH OF MANIFEST DESTINY

When Dorothy Day was born in 1897, the United States was the most powerful nation in the Western Hemisphere. The next year the United States became a world power with the Spanish-American War (1898). By Armistice Day 1918, the United States had become the greatest power in the world (Lukacs 1993: 46). America's rise to world power and domination has been considered by many of its citizens as the work of divine Providence. America, in this hallowed view, is the "redeemer nation" chosen by God to govern and guide the millennial war between good and evil in the world and to extend to all nations the benefits of freedom and democracy (Tuveson 1968). At the beginning of a new millennium many Americans still claim as their destiny the anointed leadership of the forces of freedom and civilization throughout the world.

The myth of American exceptionalism dates back to the founding of the nation if not to the time of the first colonists on North American shores (de Tocqueville 1953: v.2, 36-38; Lipset 1996; Tyrell 1991:1031-1055; Weaver 1995: 231-247). In the ideology of English colonialism North America was the Promised Land, the New Israel, and the Puritans were God's new Chosen People. In this sacral

view of history the triumph of English civilization on new soil was ordained and guided by Providence. The conquest of the immense territory of North America, and eventually of its "disordered pagan inhabitants," represented the culmination of the Protestant Reformation (Miller 1957: 12). Since the fiercest phalanx within the Reformation, the Puritans, had failed to realize their spiritual destiny in England, divine Providence directed the creation of a new and uncorrupted humanity in a new land. According to Edward Johnson, writing in 1650, the New England of the New Elect would be the place "where the Lord would create a new heaven and a new earth, new churches and a new commonwealth together." (Niebuhr 1962: 25; Johnson 1650)

The sense of divine mission among the early colonists was regarded as proof of their virtue. Neither the violence of the European settlers against the native Indian populations, nor the southern and western push into Florida, Texas, Mexico, California, and Oregon in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nor the racial domination by whites of the African slaves, nor the American imperialism of the Spanish-American War of 1898 in any way threatened the pretension of American innocence because the sons and daughters of Europe had come to American shores as the divinely appointed bearers of civilization and salvation. Racial chauvinism and righteous violence were justified by religious rationalization.

Christian imperialism was supported by biblical sanction, in particular, by the Old Testament narratives concerning Israel's conquest of Canaan (Cave 1988: 277-297; Kadir 1992). In the ideology of early English colonialism North America was viewed biblically as England's Canaan and the American Indians as the North American Canaanites. A few examples from the colonial period are illustrative. The Virginia Company (1606-1624) hired preachers to deliver sermons which presented its mercantile enterprise in the New World in the light of a preordained providential design. To this end William Symonds delivered the first official sermon of the Company in 1609 based on Genesis 12:1-3, a text in which Abraham is instructed by the Lord to leave his country to form a new nation, one in which he will have the authority to bless those who support him and curse those who do not (Kadir 1992:126-27). Similarly, in a sermon from 1609 celebrating the founding of Jamestown (1607) the Anglican Robert Gray took as his text Joshua 17:14-18, a passage in which the Lord assures the tribe of Joseph that they will "drive out the

Canaanites." On their departure from England the Puritan founders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were encouraged by the sermon of the Reverend John Cotton based on 2 Samuel 7:10, wherein God assures the Israelites that He has "appointed a place" for them where the "children of wickedness" will no longer "afflict" His chosen ones. Finally, in 1609, Robert Johnson, a prominent entrepreneur in the Jamestown venture, declared that since the Indians were a "wild and savage people" who lived in a "beastly and brutish manner," they were obligated to accept English occupation and allow Christians to make them "tame and civil." The English are justified, Johnson claimed, to subject to "just conquest by the sword" those savages who might behave as "unbridled beasts" and "obstinately refuse to unite themselves with us." (Cited in Cave 1988: 283, 289, 284)

Like the Israel of old, the United States claimed a messianic role at birth of the nation. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States defined this mission. The nation was born "to exemplify the virtues of democracy and to extend the frontiers of the principles of self-government throughout the world." (Niebuhr and Heimert 1963: 123) A recommendation by Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, illustrates the pervasiveness of the idea of the nation as God's American Israel. In 1785 Jefferson proposed that the Great Seal of the United States should depict the children of Israel led by a pillar of light (Chinard 1957: 428).

By the time of the push into Mexican territory during the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848) the notion of America as the new Chosen People with a God-given mission had become the official ideology of the new nation. Violence was permissible as a means to advance the ideals of liberty and civilization. In 1848, Ashbel Smith, an official of Texas, declared that the Mexican War was the beginning of "the destiny allotted to the Anglo-Saxon race . . . to Americanize this continent. . . The sword is the great civilizer, it clears the way for commerce, education, religion and all the harmonizing influences of morality and humanity." (Kohl 1914: 74-75) In 1850 Herman Melville would write: "We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time...the political messiah has come in us." (Weaver 1995: 235) The providential theory of Empire, sanctioned biblically by the saga of Israel's conquest of Canaan, was bolstered by the secular principle of *vacuum domicilium*, which endorsed the right of the civilized to seize underutilized lands from savage natives

(Stephanson 1995: 25; Cave: 279, 283, 289; and Kadir: 100, 102, 127). The Promised Land and Vacant Land motifs, woven into the fabric of American exceptionalism, accorded England's pursuit of economic interests in North America both a divine and legal sanction.¹ Christian messianism was implicit in the idea of Manifest Destiny.² In 1845 the businessman and publisher John O'Sullivan coined the phrase "Manifest Destiny" to signify the divine right of territorial expansion and the missionary task of spreading the forces of order and civilization (Lukacs 1984: 212-214). Writing in defense of President James K. Polk's aggressive policy against Mexico and his termination of the 1818 agreement with Great Britain which provided for the joint occupation of the Oregon territory, O'Sullivan argued that the government's expansionist claims were based on "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of Liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us."³ Manifest Destiny became popular as a slogan during the expansionist U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848. In 1847 O'Sullivan wrote: "The Mexican race now see in the fate of the aborigines of the north their own inevitable destiny." (Kohn: 183) From the mid-nineteenth century, however, the slogan was used to express a sense of national purpose and direction in the United States in a number of increasingly ambitious government initiatives. The phrase which was used by O'Sullivan to defend continental expansion in 1845 was used three years after his death in 1895 in a wider sense to anoint foreign expansionism by the United States into the colonial territories of Spain. Hence, a term used in 1845 to refer to the continental push of democratic nationalism became by the 1890s the slogan for the rise of American imperialism. On the eve of the Spanish-American War, the *Washington Post* gave expression to the renewed sense of Manifest Destiny in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century as the nation prepared to spread its influence overseas.

A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength....Ambition, interest, land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle. It means Imperial policy, the Republic, renascent, taking her place

with the armed nations. (Lukacs 1984: 204; Pletcher 1978: 532-33)

In 1898, one month after the battle of Manila Bay, President William McKinley justified the taking of Hawaii with these words: "We need Hawaii just as much and a great deal more than we did California. It is our manifest destiny." (Weinberg 1958:263) McKinley's successor President Theodore Roosevelt, who had created an American epic on San Juan Ridge with his "Rough Riders" in the capitulation of Santiago, Cuba, in 1898, insisted throughout his life that expansionism represented the advance of civilization over barbarism as well as an imperative of patriotism, and that pacifists and anti-imperialists were in fact devoid of true love for their country. Roosevelt wrote to Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge that the anti-expansionists were "barbarian." (Weinberg: 299) He publicly reviled pacifists as "cravens, cowards, poltroons, and eunuchs," and as "the most undesirable citizens this country contains." (Abrams 1933: 34)

No one, however, expressed the imperialist imperative of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century as well as Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana. Like O'Sullivan before him Beveridge developed a suitable moral narrative for American expansionism through the use of biblical rhetoric. Discussing the conquest of the Philippines, Beveridge declared that since Americans were marked by God as "His chosen people to lead the regeneration of the world" they had a divine mission to "establish system where chaos reigns" and to "administer government among savage and senile peoples." (Tuveson 1968: vii; Burns 1957: 218)

Manifest Destiny, a distinct expression of American exceptionalism, has functioned as a "charter myth" for Americans from the middle of the nineteenth century, and it is not yet "tired."⁴ The central idea of Manifest Destiny, namely, the divine mandate to spread American institutions throughout and beyond the North American continent, has appeared throughout the twentieth century in various forms: the crusade of President Woodrow Wilson to "make the world safe for democracy" in World War I, the anti-fascism and anti-Communism of World War II and of the post-War McCarthy era in the United States, the quasi-religious fervor that Americans attributed to capitalism during the Cold War, the effort to halt Communism in Vietnam, and the shift of the American animus from the Soviet Union to the relatively defenseless nations of the Middle East and Third World,

to name a few obvious examples. What was a catch phrase for the notion of a divinely sanctioned right to continental expansionism in the nineteenth century became, by the time of the presidency of Harry Truman, a warrant for the United States to act as the world hegemon. Truman's assertion that "if history has taught us anything, it is that aggression anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere in the world" still arouses the moral passion of Americans intent on uplifting humanity through the export of free political institutions, even if by force (Stephanson 1995: 125).

Manifest Destiny was damaged but not defeated by the war in Vietnam and the clear evidence of racism in America during the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. For a short time, "the realities of Vietnam and the ghetto turned the messianic shibboleths of cold-war ideology into absurdities." (Stephanson: 126) But American messianism was resuscitated by Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush only a few years later. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 demonstrated the enthusiasm and receptivity in the American public for the ideas of *exceptionalism* and *destiny* (Stephanson: 127-29). As Stephanson notes, in Reagan's view America had temporarily lost the vision of its original faith and mission after the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and the war in Vietnam. Reagan began his political career in 1964, therefore, with a call to courage in the "rendezvous with destiny," and came into the White House in 1981 proclaiming that the nation was "a beacon of hope to the rest of the world" and "the last best hope of man on earth."⁵ Religious and mythic references to "Armageddon" and the "Evil Empire" accompanied Reagan's staggering military buildup and renewed vision of a showdown with the Soviet Union. These apocalyptic references were matched by President George Bush's demonizing rhetoric as the U.S. military won a lopsided victory in 1991 against the "Hitler" of the Middle East, Saddam Hussein. On 4 August 1988, exactly two years before making preparations to send U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf, candidate Bush delivered a campaign speech on foreign affairs in which he seconded the declaration of Manifest Destiny made by President John F. Kennedy in his 1961 Inaugural Address: "We shall bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend or oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." President Bush made good on Kennedy's "anys" in the defense of Kuwait in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.⁶

The myth of *Manifest Destiny* has not been "an idle rhapsody" in the history of the United States but a highly potent "cultural force." (Malinowski 1954: 97) A myth, in general, is a unique fiction which both expresses and creates the reality it describes (Doty 1986: 6). When viewed as a "pragmatic charter" for society, myth provides both a model *of* society, setting forth an ideal mirror image of the culture, and a model *for* society, setting forth the standards which guide the organization of relationships and action within a society.⁷ Charter myths establish social roles and patterns of relationship, and they validate a society by relating the established social structure to divine or mythic prototypes.⁸ With its foundation in a Judeo-Christian "myth of origin," namely, the Exodus and the Promised Land, *Manifest Destiny* became for America a most effective charter issued from on high. It helped to create national unity from a diverse ethnic population, and it supplied Americans with a motive and guide for moral and practical action. Supplemented by the myths of "frontier" and "wilderness,"⁹ the myth of *Manifest Destiny* provided the descendants of the first European visitors to America with a warrant which both guided and justified their settlement and eventual conquest of continental lands and the territories of enemies abroad.

Manifest Destiny expresses, simultaneously, both moral potential and responsibility and national egoism. There are both virtues and pretensions in the charter. It is the nature of myth to simultaneously reveal and conceal reality. The etymological root of the Greek word for myth, *muthos*, is *mu* which means "to close" or "to keep secret." The myth of *Manifest Destiny*, at best, has disclosed the enlightened humanitarianism of the American spirit in the desire to uplift the human community through the spread of democratic ideals. Such positive interpretations of the myth, like Merk's (1963), have not survived the scrutiny of most scholars, however. They conceal the fact that America's attempts to fulfill a providential destiny, on and off of the American continent, have been fraught with violence, religious arrogance, and racial superiority.

The nationalism represented by *Manifest Destiny* at its best, then, has been a humanitarian nationalism based on the natural rights enshrined in the founding documents of the nation: equality, liberty, and pride in a government based on popular sovereignty. An earlier understanding of nationalism in the United States reflected this humanitarian impulse. Allegiance to the nation in the early history of America required "the submission of the selfish strivings of the indi-

vidual in favor of the collective effort to advance the good of the national community as a whole.” (Weinberg 1958: xi) But the affirmation of equality among diverse peoples and the foundation of the government on the consent of the governed was violated in the years after the founding of the Republic, as it had been in the years preceding nationhood, by the exercise of rule over both native and alien peoples without their consent. The attainment and spread of natural rights developed at the expense of the rights of other people. Dispossession, war, and ethnic slaughter were inserted over time into the overarching myth of Manifest Destiny (Stephanson 1995: 24-25). Accordingly, the historical development of the expansionist arguments from a mere warrant to fill in the empty spaces (*viz. vacuum domicilium*), to annexations, and, finally, to colonization overseas provides a lucid study of the evolution of American nationalism. From an initial pride in *nationality* there developed an aggressive *nationalism* which “regards the nation as the supreme value, the source of all life’s meaning, as an end-in-itself and a law to itself.”¹⁰ National might and glory became for many in the land, including many Christians, their true religion. For a long time in the Roman Catholic Church in America there was no distinction between the Gospel and this nationalist faith.

DAY OPPOSES THE MYTH

The early Anglican and Calvinist ministers in the New World were not the only religious leaders in the country who got caught up in the myths of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny. The providential theory of Empire that Protestants once used in claiming domination over Catholic settlers in North America, (Pletcher 1978: 527-28; Stephanson 1995: 30,49) was used eventually by Catholics to justify their own participation in American expansionism “by the sword.” America’s Roman Catholic prelates and priests, on the whole, enthusiastically embraced the idea of the providential origin and mission of the United States. During the Civil War, Archbishop John Hughes of New York (1797-1864) inflamed the patriotism and martial ardor of Roman Catholics with rousing sermons at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. While opposed to revolutions in principle and the French Revolution in particular, Hughes claimed “the invisible but real agency of a divine Providence” in the American Revolution: “the American revolutionists . . . trusted to heaven for its approving smile on their righteous cause.” (Hughes 1865: 85, 87)

Archbishop John Ireland and James Cardinal Gibbons, even if unwittingly, became Catholic advocates for American destiny by supporting government policies of military preparedness and conscription. The support by Ireland and Gibbons for the nationalist cause of the United States over Catholic Spain in the Spanish-American War fueled the strong response against Americanism, reflected in Leo XIII's *Testem Benevolentiae* (1899), by a European hierarchy fearful of the growing power and reach of the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Francis Cardinal Spellman (1889-1967) of New York represented the epitome of religious nationalism, the worship of the nation. According to his most recent biographer, Spellman was "an ardent nationalist who came to view the aims of his Church and those of his country as being the same." (Cooney 1984: xvi) Six of the seven published works of Cardinal Spellman are on patriotic themes and contain a resolute and uncritical defense of the nation's goals and purposes. Spellman was the leader of the Catholic Church in New York City during 28 of the 47 years which Dorothy Day spent living in the New York Catholic Worker community. Throughout his tenure as the Ordinary of the New York Archdiocese and the Military Vicar of the Armed Forces of the United States, Spellman offered an unashamed benediction on America's destiny.¹¹

While Cardinal Spellman chanted hymns to the nation, Dorothy Day announced her objections to the social order in America and asserted that violence and war could not be reconciled with the spirit of Christ. Though she was unrelenting in her and the Worker's pacifism throughout the Spanish-American War and World War II, Day did not fail to acknowledge the evils committed by the Loyalists in Spain and by Hitler in Germany, and by Stalin and the Russians during the Cold War. She became the perennial sign of contradiction within and outside of the American Catholic community, however, by always drawing attention to evils right at home.

I think the Kremlin is just what the cardinal [Spellman] said it was, a center of atheism and of totalitarianism and of hatred and persecution: a center of evil. Of course, we've got plenty of evil here, too. Capitalism and communism—strangely alike in ways: the callousness, the arbitrariness, the militaristic passion, justified by talk of history and of *manifest destiny* [emphasis added]. (Coles 1987: 82)

Through her writings as well as through her actions Day tried to bring about nonviolent social change. Day used the pages of *The*

Catholic Worker to inveigh against capitalism and militant nationalism, twin evils in the American system, in her view, because they mistakenly emphasized individual economic gain and national rights over the rights and needs of the human family. Upon declaring herself and the newspaper pacifist, Day informed her readership that there were alternatives within Roman Catholic teaching to the absolute and unreserved obedience to country called for by the Church hierarchy. Although it was generally believed by most Catholics and their draft boards that Catholics could not refuse a call to arms by the leaders of government, Roman Catholic doctrine had never discarded the belief that there ought to be limits to the use of brute force. Orthodox Catholicism from the time of St. Augustine (d. 430) contained a strong foundation for a religiously based opposition to war in its teaching on the "just war." *The Catholic Worker* became, if not the first, one of the first Catholic publications to counter the common opinion that "good Catholics" never opposed a call to arms by legitimate authority, through the presentation in its pages of an explanation of the just war theory during the 1930s.¹²

Personally, Day went beyond the principles of the just war, however, and recovered the earlier teaching of the Church on war and peace. Day herself could not abide the doctrine of the just war. Killing, so often motivated by hatred and self-interest, was clearly against the life and teachings of Christ, Day believed, and the "just war" was usually a euphemism in the rhetoric of militant nationalism for economic and political gain. A note fragment from the late 1950s reveals Day's mind on the matter of the just war.

Just war theory dead. St. Thomas in trying to quiet consciences of Princes—is ruler justified in laying an ambush. Theologians go to incredible lengths to justify war. Acrobatics. . . . Hierarchy seems determined to follow state. (Miller 1982: 345)

Day held to the absolute pacifism of Jesus and the primitive Christian Church, adding to the nonresistance of the early Christians tactics of nonviolent resistance and direct action that she had learned during her years as a young leftist radical. The pacifist tradition had been the constant, but more silent, partner of the just war tradition in the Church since the time of Augustine, but it had largely disappeared from Catholicism after the Protestant Reformation. Day took it to the streets on picket lines and in jail and to the common man and woman through her writing and public speaking. Readers of *The*

Catholic Worker learned through Day's writing and personal example that along with the just war there was another moral and intellectual tradition within Roman Catholicism which provided solid ground for a religiously based antiwar stance.¹³

Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, Day attempted to render the law of love into countless situations of conflict. When the nation and the Church sanctioned war, Day refused to abandon her deep-seated pacifism. When society and the Church ignored the lynching of black Americans in the South, Day denounced the hangings and racial violence on the front page of her newspaper.¹⁴ When labor demonstrations grew violent, Day called for nonviolent tactics of resistance and fed and housed striking workers. When the secular press neglected to report the hiring by factory owners of scabs to incite violence at strikes, Day reported on the brute tactics used by management in industry.¹⁵ When the nation and Church overlooked the persecution of the Jews by Hitler, Day denounced the German atrocities.¹⁶ When the Church ignored or disowned Catholic conscientious objectors during and after World War II, Day helped them to organize.¹⁷ When the government consigned Japanese-Americans to internment camps during World War II, Day was one of few American newspaper editors to criticize the injustice in print (*CW*6/1942: 1,3). When President Truman delighted in the success of the atomic missions over Japan, Day took him on in *The Catholic Worker* with a caustic commentary: "Mr. Truman was jubilant. President Truman. True Man. What a strange name, come to think of it. *Jubilate Deo*. We have killed 318,000 Japanese." (*CW*9/1945: 1) When the American masses in large cities ran for shelter during the Civil Defense air raid drills of the 1950s and '60s, Day sat down in a New York City park in protest of the government's nuclear war propaganda and awaited arrest for civil disobedience.¹⁸ When the government and the Catholic Church refused to support conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War, Day backed the young Americans who burned their draft cards (Gray 1970: 50). When the government and Church disregarded the misery of non-unionized farm workers, Day left a scheduled speaking engagement in San Francisco in the summer of 1973 to join Cesar Chavez and striking farm workers in a Fresno jail. This was her final jail sentence before her death in 1980.¹⁹ All of these actions were inspired, fundamentally, by the life and teaching of Jesus. When asked to explain her actions, Day quoted the Gospel-based principle which so often was included in the newspaper's listing of

"Catholic Worker Positions": "We believe that Christ went beyond natural ethics and the Old Dispensation in this matter of force and war and taught non-violence as a way of life." (CW 11/1968: 6)

GOSPEL CHALLENGES MYTH

Prophetic and saintly people do for society what the Gospel does: *they reveal a truth which makes it impossible for us to keep forgetting what myth exists to help us forget* (Baillie 1995: 34). It was in the face of the powerful national myths of American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, supported by prominent Roman Catholic leaders, that Day made her nonviolent stand. Day's position on nonviolence and pacifism was grossly unpopular in the nation and among Catholics in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Her uncompromising stand against the use of force confronted Americans with the possibility of a dark side to the national character. Detractors accused her of claiming moral superiority or simply dismissed her as a Communist.

Still, Day, armed with the biblical witness of a nonviolent Christ and the words of the Sermon on the Mount, continued to speak out against the violence, racial supremacy, will-to-power, and self-interest which were written in between the lines of the nation's charter myths. Day was willing to be a *signum cui contradicetur*, a sign of contradiction, to those who believed in war as "a useful and justifiable engine of national purpose."²⁰ In her declaration of absolute nonviolence and pacifism Day stood in opposition to the moral narratives Americans had constructed to justify their periodic bloodlettings. These narratives, enshrined in the national myths of exceptionalism and destiny and supported by both political and ecclesiastical leaders, were based, in good part, on religious claims and biblical rhetoric. When Day quoted the Bible it was not to lay claim to a unique status conferred by God or to put God on one side or the other in the battle over rights and possessions. When Day used the Bible to address America it was to condemn the nation's violence and wars. In confronting those in the country who would take up arms, Day simply quoted Jesus: "You know not of what spirit you are." (Lk. 9:55)

NOTES

¹ The expansionists in America also drew upon Darwin's study of evolution published in 1859. The theory of natural selection provided the expansionists

with a scientific rationale for the predestined nature of racial and cultural expansion in North America. Thus, "the survival of the fittest" seemed to be not only the law of nature but also the law of nations. On Social Darwinism and Manifest Destiny, see Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1935, 1958), 212; and Edward McNall Burns, *The American Ideal of Mission: Concepts of National Purpose and Destiny* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 241.

² On the concept of Manifest Destiny, in addition to the works of Tuveson, Stephanson, and Weinberg cited above, see David M. Pletcher, "Manifest Destiny," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander DeConde (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 526-34; Julius W. Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936); Julius W. Pratt, "The Ideology of American Expansion," in *Essays in Honor of William E. Dodd*, ed. Avery Craven (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 335-353; and Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

³ This quotation from an 1845 article by John L. O'Sullivan provides the original definition of "Manifest Destiny." See Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: An Interpretative Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 183; and Pletcher, p. 526. Also, see Julius W. Pratt, "John L. O'Sullivan and Manifest Destiny," *New York History* 14 (July 1933): 213-34. On the flamboyant nationalism of O'Sullivan's periodical *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, see Kohn, 107, 152f., and 182f. On the relationship of the term "Manifest Destiny" to the rich complex of millennial and religious ideas in early America, see Tuveson, 91-136.

⁴ Sidney E. Mead maintains that "destiny under God," the religious root of American national identity, has become "a part of the common consciousness" among Americans and has passed into the realm of "motivational myths." See Sidney E. Mead, *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 74-75. Bronislaw Malinowski argues that myth arises not only in the realms of magic and religion but in relationship "to any form of social power or social claim." See Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Art of Magic and the Power of Faith," in *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948, 1954), 84. On the notion of myths as charters for social orders, see Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," *ibid.*, 93-148. On "charter myths" in contemporary culture, see Raphael Patai, *Myth and Modern Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Herbert I. London and Albert L. Weeks, *Myths That Rule America* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981). On the sociofunctional approach to myth, see William G. Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (University, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 41-71. Doty also raises the issue of the "functional vitality" of myths and provides a developmental model (viz. "levels of operational vitality") for myths through different periods of a society's evolution. See Doty, 8, 37, 49-51. When a myth no longer serves to shape and inform a culture, Waardenburg claims that it has become "tired." See Jacques Waardenburg, "Symbolic Aspects of Myth," in *Myth, Symbol, and Reality*, ed. Alan M. Olson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 56.

- ⁵The phrase “the last, best hope of earth” as an expression of America’s destiny and mission has a long pedigree in American history. Ronald Reagan borrowed it from Abraham Lincoln’s “Annual Message to Congress, December 1, 1862.” See Abraham Lincoln, *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Philip Van Doren Stern (New York: Random House, 1940), 745. Lincoln’s thought, in turn, reflects the words of Thomas Jefferson from 1801. Jefferson considered America “the world’s best hope.” See James D. Richardson, ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: United States Congress, 1896), 322. Sidney E. Mead treats Lincoln’s phrase as an expression of American destiny and uses it to explain and evaluate critically the essential “religious roots and heart of America.” See Mead, 72-89.
- ⁶Nevertheless, many critics and historians share Michael Kramer’s skeptical view of Kennedy’s ringing declaration of America’s messianic mission as a standard for American foreign policy at the end of the twentieth century: “After nearly three decades of convulsive history, that single Kennedy paragraph, with its repetitive ‘anys,’ is one that many historians identify as representing a misplaced sense of Manifest Destiny.” See Michael Kramer, “Read My Ships,” *Time* 136 (20 August 1990): 20.
- ⁷Quotation from Malinowski, “Myth in Primitive Psychology,” 101. Malinowski comments: “[M]yth is not only looked upon as a commentary of additional information, but it is a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide to the activities with which it is connected.” *Ibid.*, pp. 107-08. On myths as models of and for society, see Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, 93, 118; and Doty, 44-45.
- ⁸On the function of myth to validate the social order by relating the human realm to divine forces and powers, see W. Richard Comstock, *The Study of Religion and Primitive Religions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 38-39. See, also, Malinowski, “Myth in Primitive Psychology,” 107-108: “The myth comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity. . . . [Myths are] a statement of a primeval, greater, and more relevant reality, by which the present life, fates, and activities of mankind are determined.”
- ⁹See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1973, 1996); and Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). Slotkin and Jennings have drawn attention to historical realities overlooked in the standard presentations of the frontier and wilderness myths. Slotkin emphasizes the racism and violence used in the conquest of the West, while Jennings argues that there was no “wilderness” when the Europeans arrived on the shores of North America. The European settlers, rather, created a wilderness through the diseases and demoralization they brought to the Indians. Also, see Stephanson, 25-27, and Weinberg, 85-89, who discuss the problem for the expansionists posed by Indians who were basically farmers. In the standard frontier and wilderness narratives the Indians are typically presented as landless nomads, as hunters and gatherers, so that it appears that no land was taken unjustly from them. Landed and literate agriculturalists, like the members of the Cherokee nation, therefore,

posed a real problem for the expansionists. Their subjugation and relocation could not be justified by the myths of the Europeans. Also, see Weaver, 236-239. Weaver challenges Reinhold Niebuhr's "ironic" view of American history on the basis of Niebuhr's virtual neglect of the history of the subjugation and slaughter of America's original inhabitants.

¹⁰ See H. Richard Niebuhr, "Toward the Independence of the Church," in H. Richard Niebuhr, Wilhelm Pauck, and Francis P. Miller, *The Church Against the World* (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1935), 133. Similarly, see Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 6. Hayes defines nationalism as "a condition of mind in which loyalty to the ideal or to the fact of one's national state is superior to all other loyalties." Hayes notes further: "Syncretism of nationalism and religion is strikingly noticeable in the United States." See Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 180.

¹¹ See, for example, Spellman's speech calling America to leadership in the fight against the spread of Communism by the Soviet Union after World War II. Francis Cardinal Spellman, "Address of His Eminence Cardinal Spellman at Dinner of the Society, March 17, 1948," *In Memoriam: Francis Cardinal Spellman* (New York: The Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the City of New York, 1968), 44-52. Also, see Spellman's poems and prayers in Francis Cardinal Spellman, *What America Means to Me* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).

¹² See, for example, "Not Pacifism" *The Catholic Worker* [hereafter, *CW*] 2 (November 1934): 4; William M. Callahan, "Ethics of Modern War Discussed in Brooklyn," *CW* 3 (December 1935): 3, 7; Paul Hanly Furfey, "Maximum—Minimum" *CW* 3 (May 1935): 5; and "For the New Reader," *CW* 6 (December 1936): 6.

¹³ For examples of Day's thinking on Catholic pacifism, see Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 253-273; [Dorothy Day and Editors], "Pacifism," *CW* 4 (May 1936): 8; Day, "The Use of Force," *CW* 4 (November 1936): 4; Day, "Explains *CW* Stand on Use of Force," *CW* 6 (September 1938): 1, 4, 7; Day, "Fight Conscription," *CW* 7 (September 1939): 1; and [Day], "Our Stand—An Editorial," *CW* 7 (June 1940): 1.

¹⁴ For example, see "Lynching is Scored at Big Meeting of the Layman's Union," *CW* 1 (November 1933): 1; "Anti-Lynch Bill Up Before Senate," *CW* 1 (March 1934): 1; "Poverty in South Leads to Negro Lynching Orgy," *CW* 2 (December 1934): 1, and 8; and "Lynchings Increase," *CW* 3 (January 1936): 8.

¹⁵ See [Dorothy Day], "Strikes and Violence Two Separate Things," *CW* 1 (September 1933): 6-7; "N.Y. Milk Strikers Ask for Greater Share of Profits," *CW* 1 (September 1933): 1, 4; "Ohrbach and Klein Violate NRA Codes and Jail Pickets," *CW* 2 (February 1935): 1, 6; and "Nabisco Strike Enters Fifteenth Orderly Week With Victory Close Ahead," *CW* 3 (May 1935): 1, 6.

¹⁶ See "Germany," *CW* 1 (November 1933): 1; also, the comment on the persecution of Jews and Negroes in "Anti-Lynch Bill Up Before Senate," *CW* 1 (March 1934): 1; and "Catholic Pickets Protest German Fascist Terror" and "Campion Propaganda Committee," *CW* 3 (September 1935): 1 and 6, respectively.

¹⁷ See [Dorothy Day], "C.W.'s Position" and "C.W. Fights Draft at Senate Hearing," *CW* 7 (July-August 1940): 1, 4; and 1-2, respectively. Also, see Arthur

Sheehan, "Work Camp Offered to Catholic C.O.'s," *CW* 8 (April 1941): 1, 3; Dwight Larrowe, "The Association of Catholic Conscientious Objectors," *CW*, 8 (September 1941): 2; and Gordon Zahn, "Leaven of Love and Justice," *America* 127 (11 November 1972): 383-385.

¹⁸ See Day 1963: 160-78; "Where Are the Poor? They Are in Prisons, Too," *CW* 22 (July-August 1955): 1, 8; Day, "Dorothy Writes From Jail," *CW* 24 (July-August 1957): 3; and Day, "Vocation From Prison," *CW* 24 (August 1957): 1, 2, 6.

¹⁹ In late July 1973 Day traveled to California where she had been invited to participate at both the 50th anniversary conference of the War Resisters League and the Institute for the Study of Non-Violence founded by folk-singer and peace activist Joan Baez. When Day learned of the mass arrests of farm workers who were defying an injunction against picketing in the vineyards and lettuce fields of California's central valley, she left the conferences to join the workers. Day reported: "Cesar Chavez' union of Farm Workers has everything that belongs to a new social order, so my path was clear. I had come to picket where an injunction was prohibiting picketing, and I would spend my weeks in California in jail not at conferences." See Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *CW* 39 (September 1973): 1-2, 6; and Eileen Egan, "50 Years of Non-Violent Resistance," *ibid.*, 1, 8. The now famous photograph by Bob Fitch of Day sitting on her folding chair-cane prior to her 1973 arrest with the Farm Workers is included in Robert Cooney and Helen Michalowski, eds., *The Power of the People: Active Nonviolence in the United States* (Philadelphia: New Society Press, 1987), 180.

²⁰ See Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1909, 1965), 255. Croly's book, a critical assessment and elaboration on Theodore Roosevelt's presidency (1901-1909), relied on Alexander Hamilton's idea of an energetic and intelligent use of national power. Croly argued for an America which would take the lead in the emerging democratic world order through the exercise of a strong nationalism and a government committed to a clear and rational national purpose. Roosevelt was so impressed with Croly's book that it became a primary resource when he returned to political life after 1910. Also, Burns, "War as an Instrument of National Mission," 1957, 234-258.