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ANTIFASCISM AND FRATERNAL *brothers or sisters* CATHOLIC MODERNISM, 1929–1944

How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers all together!

—PSALMS 133:1

In 1933, German-Jewish philosopher Paul-Ludwig Landsberg fled from Hitler's Germany to Spain, where the Second Spanish Republic promised a more welcoming environment. Soon enough, though, a civil war broke out, and Hitler's forces appeared there, too. This time, he fled to France, where the Popular Front government of Léon Blum promised to hold the line against fascism. He was disappointed yet again: Blum chose not to aid the Spanish republicans, while inside and outside France fascism was looming. In 1940, Hitler invaded France, finding eager support from French anti-Semites. Landsberg and his wife were rounded up with other Jews in 1940, but he escaped and fled by bicycle to the unoccupied zone in the south. Rejecting friends' attempts to help him emigrate, he stayed there under a false name. A "dead lion," he had written the year before, is worth more than a "living dog." Soon enough, he was captured by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp, where he died of starvation and exhaustion in the spring of 1944.¹

Landsberg had one of the border-crossing, ruinously brave, and ultimately tragic experiences shared by so many European Jews. Unlike most of them, he found spiritual and intellectual sustenance in an unlikely place: Catholicism. While he never officially converted, he moved in Catholic circles, engaged with Catholic theology, and published in Catholic journals. Why this attraction to Rome? For most of Landsberg's ill-starred

life, after all, Catholics were among his persecutors. The mainstream Church was pursuing an innovative brand of Catholic modernity that I've called "paternal Catholic modernism." That strategy, which placed family ethics and anti-Communism at the center of the Catholic mission, ended up legitimating collaboration with authoritarian and anti-Semitic regimes—including those in Spain, France, and Germany. It animated Catholic politicians, some of them very powerful, and conquered the commanding heights of the Church, finding voice in bishops' letters, innumerable sermons, and lavish state-sponsored conferences and journals. But it did not conquer Landsberg, the circles he traveled in, or the comparatively grubby and low-circulation journals they wrote for. For him, the faith meant something very different.

Landsberg participated in a transnational network of Catholic antifascists. "Antifascism," he mused in 1937, "is an empty and negative concept. All the same, it acquires a concrete and positive meaning for those forced to defend their freedom and their existence."² It certainly did for Landsberg, just as anti-Communism did for many others. And while antifascism may have been a minority tradition within the Catholic Church, it did embed Landsberg into truly world-historical currents in the Europe of the 1930s. Landsberg's personal itinerary, spanning from Germany, to Spain, to France, to Hitler's camps, closely traces the international shape of antifascism. He joined a diverse network of Europeans, some Communist and some not, under the umbrella of the Popular Front: Josef Stalin's attempt to gather a variety of social forces together in the name of antifascist struggle. While this whole tradition has long been viewed as a Trojan horse for Stalinist influence, more recent research has shown how diverse antifascist culture truly was—and how involved Catholics were in it, in France and elsewhere.³

Just as Catholic anti-Communists were not generally dyed-in-the-wool fascists, Catholic antifascists were not committed Communists. There were some who believed that Catholicism and Marxism could, in some theoretical way, be combined, but this was rare. More commonly, Catholic antifascists maintained an opposition to Marxist metaphysics and Soviet politics while hoping that this would not preclude collaboration with workers' movements on worldly issues in a spirit of brotherhood. Their antifascism was not a pale reflection of a Marxist original but a unique and coherent interpretation of the Church's promise.

Sometimes, antifascist Catholics are lauded for accepting "modernity" or "human rights" against their supposedly backward antagonists. This is

a misunderstanding. Catholic medievalism dwindled in the 1930s, and Catholic intellectuals who defended accommodation with fascists were just as modern as those who opposed them. The debate was not between Catholic modernism and Catholic medievalism but rather between two *forms* of Catholic modernism: two strategies, linked with two moral and political economies, to dictate how the Church should try to shape the modern condition. Landsberg aimed his pen squarely at paternal Catholic modernism. Indeed, much of his writing was concerned with uprooting the symbolic and actual authority of father figures. Every person is “irreducible,” he insisted, and not a creation of their parents. He wrote sympathetically about the anarchist drive for a “fraternal humanity without a father,” leading to a society organized not by paternal hierarchy but by “the equality of brothers.” And in his writings on the philosophy of marriage, he criticized the mainstream Catholic writers who placed fatherhood and reproduction at the center of the family and of society. This understanding turned a community of love, sex, and spirituality into a community of law and reproduction, which in Landsberg’s view “lends itself to nationalist and racist abuse.”⁴

Landsberg helped to forge *fraternal* Catholic modernism, modeled less on the authoritarian role of the father than on the relationships of solidarity and cooperation found between brothers. This did not make them more modern than their foes. Ironically, fraternal Catholicism was in some ways more faithful to the antimodernism of the social Catholic tradition. It is well known that Jacques Maritain, the intellectual leader of Catholic antifascism, had been a reactionary monarchist in the 1920s before emerging as an antifascist in the 1930s. What has not been recognized is that his trajectory was a common one, representing not so much a historical irony as an evolution in the sorts of possibilities offered by the Catholic tradition. Perhaps the single defining feature of social Catholicism had long been its allergy to the centralized state and its demolition of the dense networks of Catholic institutions that, to the Catholic thinker, structured the good and meaningful life. Instead of tempering that commitment in the name of anti-Communism and a focus on the family, fraternal Catholics updated and modernized it, arriving at a pluralist account of political life that made room for, and even celebrated, religious difference.

While Catholic antifascism spread widely in many Catholic circles, it was theorized most profoundly by outsiders to the Church—by converts, especially, and often from Judaism.⁵ For one thing, they were concerned with crafting a form of faith that could plausibly include them; for another,

they were less committed to making compromises to protect the safety of Catholic institutions. This was certainly true for Maritain, a convert married to a Jew. He had not grown up in Catholic institutions and was more concerned with the revolutionary promise of Catholic doctrine than with the protection of a Catholic milieu supposedly under assault.

Maritain's 1936 masterpiece, *Integral Humanism*, is the clearest statement of fraternal Catholicism. Often sanitized as a paean to liberal democracy, it should instead be read as a furiously antifascist, antiracist, and anticapitalist tract. Like Landsberg's work, it is not a call for a modern Catholicism so much as a call for a specific *kind* of modern Catholicism—one modeled around fraternity rather than paternity. In the past, Maritain admitted, Catholics had viewed all power “along the lines of paternal authority”: medieval forms of politics, economics, and the family itself were all derived from this fundamental model. That age, though, had passed, and he was scathing toward the mainstream approach that tried to update that paternalism instead of replacing it. This attempt, he rightly pointed out, played into the hands of fascists and legitimated what he called “totalitarian paternalism.” In its place, he proposed that politics in the modern world should be based on the logic of brotherhood, replacing the paternal state with what he called “civic fraternities.”⁶

Paternal Catholic modernism had three main components: an account of the enemy (Communism), an account of the private sphere (the reproductive family), and a kindred account of the public sphere (the empowerment of the secular state to defend that family). Fraternal Catholics upended each of them. As for the enemy, fraternal Catholics were willing to work with Marxists in order to found a common front against fascism, the greatest enemy of all. “A collaboration between Marxists and Christians,” Landsberg concluded, “is possible” precisely because we have agreed to “a dissociation between the social and the metaphysical.”⁷ This did not mean abandoning Rome for Moscow, but it did mean critically engaging with Marxist organizations and theories both to focus on the fascist threat *and* to learn from their analyses of capitalism. As a German antifascist Catholic named Walter Dirks argued as early as 1931, the Catholic obsession with anti-Communism threatened to put the Church “on the wrong side of the barricades,” allying with Protestants in the name of established authorities instead of with the workers in the name of social justice.⁸

Maritain, while sparing no criticism of Stalinism, was willing to dialogue with socialists and learn from Marx, presuming that a reformed

socialism—not a tempered fascism—was Europe’s path forward. A great deal of *Integral Humanism* is taken up with sensitive readings of Marx’s texts, including his recently discovered early writings. Fascism, which in Maritain’s view had “a greater historic power than the Stalinist evil,” was irredeemable, while Communism, for all of its flaws, at least pointed toward a new Christendom to come (in other texts, he reaffirmed his belief that when it came to a choice between fascism, Communism, and liberalism, fascism was “certainly the worst”).⁹ And while he of course rejected the Marxist account of religion and metaphysics, he thought Marx had a great deal to teach Catholics nonetheless. Communism, Maritain argued, emerged from “decommissioned Christian virtues,” and he urged Catholics to heed “the great lightning-flash of truth” in Marx.¹⁰

Antifascism was conceptually linked to a novel articulation of Catholic modernity. If Catholic modernism accepts the modern split between a private sphere of faith and a public realm of politics, it can be analyzed by exploring its particular understanding of that private sphere, which will dictate the sorts of claims that can be made in public. Paternal Catholics had envisioned the private sphere to be made up of reproductive families. They relaxed or abandoned much of the tradition’s teachings on the economy and the state in order to reaffirm control over sexuality and reproduction. Fraternal Catholic modernists, in contrast, were not especially interested in the reproductive family. In its place, they focused on the marriage as a partnership of equals, structured by desire and sacrament alike. The horizontal and dialogic relationship of marriage, not the hierarchical one of the family, provided the model for a civil society made up of a teeming multiplicity of associations: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and secular. In short, they viewed the private sphere—the space of religion in modern polities—to be made up of civic associations, governed by solidarity.

Just as mainstream Catholic politics flowed from its elevation of the family, the minority antifascist tradition derived from this fundamental commitment to free and interfaith organizing in civil society. Regarding the economy, paternal Catholics viewed authoritarian forms of corporatism as the best way to secure family wages and stability. Fraternal Catholics, in contrast, maintained the anticapitalist elements of previous teachings and theorized an economic space made up of freely organized trade unions (interconfessional and socialist alike). And concerning the state, paternal Catholics supported a strong state that would protect families and “Defend the West” from Communism, even if this involved anti-Semitic legislation,

restrictions on civil liberties, or a clampdown on civil society. Fraternal Catholics instead wanted the state to support, protect, and incorporate all of the associational activities of the private sphere, a theory that many 1930s Catholics, including Maritain, referred to as “pluralism.” Pluralism can mean many things, and, like much in Maritain’s work, it can be sanitized into a concern for group autonomy in a liberal society. For Maritain and other Catholic pluralists in the 1930s, though, it presumed the overturning of bourgeois civilization and its apotheosis in the state. The “pluralist city” that he sought would be a diverse and restless one. He did not seek a “minimal common doctrine” (a defense of human rights or the family, for instance) but rather sought to work with non-Catholics, including Jews and atheists, in what he called the “practical common task” of creating a humane, diverse society.¹¹

It might be charged that this strategy was too utopian and dangerous for the 1930s—an era when many Catholics had legitimate fears for the survival of the Catholic institutions they dearly loved, and even for their continued ability to legally receive the sacraments. That might be, but in mobilizing otherwise neglected elements of the tradition, fraternal Catholics were able to conceptualize and protest against kinds of suffering that the mainstream tradition largely ignored. This was most apparent when it came to the Jews. Paternal Catholic modernism was both theoretically and empirically compatible with anti-Semitism. Fraternal Catholic modernism, in contrast, was fundamentally antiracist, and almost every antiracist Catholic in the 1930s traveled in Maritain’s circle. For them, the linkage of “race” with governance was the greatest sin of totalitarianism. In other words, while Maritain’s antitotalitarianism was shared by most Catholics, his analysis of “the racist-totalitarian conception” was the province of Catholic antifascism. Maritain worried about the growth of state power and the attempts to force a racially and religiously diverse society into an “organic unity.”¹² From his pluralist perspective, interfaith collaboration was to be not only tolerated but welcomed as a beneficial component of the new Christendom. Instead of seeing Jews as wayward sons of God the Father, he and his allies viewed them as estranged brothers (this was, after all, the relationship suggested by the biblical story of Jacob and Esau).¹³

While I have used Maritain as an entry point, Catholic antifascism extended far beyond him, far beyond France, and far beyond texts. It was embedded in Catholic institutional life, most notably in some elements of Catholic trade unions and Catholic Action organizations. It certainly found

a home in the place that Anson Rabinbach has called “the capital of anti-fascism”: Paris. The capital cannot exist, however, without the periphery. While Maritain and his city may have been central nodes of Catholic antifascism, Central European Catholics played crucial intellectual roles, too. Maritain had been invested in German-speaking Catholic life since the mid-1920s, and some of his most important intellectual moves were pioneered there. Like antifascism more generally, Catholic antifascism was a European phenomenon.¹⁴

One reason that both paternal and fraternal Catholic modernism were so powerful is that they primarily emerged not from master texts or high theology but from the work of engaged intellectuals, journalists, and politicians facing concrete problems. They were less specific or complex teachings than commonplace vocabularies and strategies, circulating in political discourse and in journals that people actually read. They found purchase in dense monographs, to be sure, but also in the evolving concepts and categories that, usually without fanfare, crept into front-page editorials. Because they were concrete strategies operating in multiple countries at a complicated time, the division between paternal and fraternal Catholicism was sometimes hazy. Certain figures moved from one camp to another, or pursued idiosyncratic projects that don’t seem to fit in either. Nonetheless, as a matter of conceptual history, the two forms of modernism were reasonably distinct, coherent, and cohesive—they circulated in different journals, associated with different projects, and mobilized a distinct set of keywords.

Fraternal Catholic modernism, like its antagonist, can best be explored by tracing the transnational biographies of three engaged intellectuals: one German, one Austrian, and one French, each of them grappling with one of the classic themes of social Catholic thought. All three figures stemmed from the Catholic medievalism of the 1920s and tried to update its anti-statist and anticapitalist elements in the 1930s (they all had some kind of connection to Georg Moenius, the primary medievalist traced in Chapter 1). They did so, however, in a progressive way, following the French revolutionary credo that Marshal Pétain’s “Work, Family, Fatherland” was meant to supplant: “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” The German Dietrich von Hildebrand’s explosive theories of marriage and sexuality undercut the natalist, hierarchical family model of paternal Catholicism (Fraternity). By removing the reproductive family from the core of social Catholic ethics, Hildebrand’s work paved the way for the more activist account of the private sphere theorized by antifascist economists and political thinkers. An

Austrian politician and intellectual named Ernst Karl Winter made the case for free trade unionism, including socialists and even Communists, as a central component of Catholic economic teaching (Equality). Jacques Maritain, for his part, gathered these threads together with a pluralist theory of politics (Liberty). Their intellectual and political dissidence brought them far from the halls of European power but close to one another. They all ended up in wartime exile in New York City, hoping against hope that the conflagration would give way to a postfascist, antiracist, and pluralist Europe.

Fraternity: Sex and the Antifascist Family

Antifascist Catholics tended not to focus a great deal on the reproductive family. “It is possible,” one of them cautiously warned in 1935, “to exaggerate the meaning of the family.”¹⁵ While fraternal modernists did not question fundamental Catholic teachings on divorce, abortion, or contraception, they did focus less on them, and they did seek to dethrone reproduction from its centrality in the Catholic family imagination. As Landsberg pointed out, an obsessive focus on reproduction in practice led Catholics into alliance with fascists, concerned for their own reasons with raising the birthrate. Therefore, in place of reproduction and child-rearing, fraternal modernists focused on the *marriage* as a sacramental community of solidarity, love, and desire. By decentering the reproductive family from Catholic social thought, this account opened a space for a broader and more pluralist rendering of the private sphere.

The central figure was Dietrich von Hildebrand, in whose journal the warning against overemphasized familialism appeared. Like many other fraternal Catholics, Hildebrand was an outsider to the Church. Raised in a secular household, and with Jewish ancestry, he did not convert until 1914, when he was twenty-five years old. Like many converts, he held an exaggerated love of Catholic dogma, and an exaggerated disinterest in what more mainstream Catholics thought of him. Specifically, he was disgusted by the pride that Catholics took in cultural and political power. Like many fraternal modernists, he was fascinated by the lives of the saints, which convinced him that spiritual renewal began with the agonies of the individual soul, not with legislative triumph.¹⁶

Hildebrand’s disdain for swaggering Catholic power made him a controversial figure in the 1920s, when many German Catholics were casting

about for profoundly Catholic forms of social and cultural renewal. Like Georg Moenius, he blamed Germany for World War I—a view that made him unpopular in Nazi circles as early as 1923. Despite his respected writings and his intellectual celebrity in Munich, he was denied the prize he wanted: the chair of his venerated teacher, Max Scheler, in Cologne. Konrad Adenauer himself put an end to this dream, commenting that he had never heard of Hildebrand and he wanted a prestigious Catholic scientist to fill the slot (the future chancellor of West Germany was mayor of Cologne at the time). In the end, it went to Theodor Brauer.¹⁷ Adenauer probably came to regret his choice. While Brauer loudly urged Catholics to support Hitler, Hildebrand emerged as one of the most prolific and insightful anti-Nazi authors in Europe.

Many fraternal Catholics experienced difficult ruptures with their mentors. In Hildebrand's case, he was forced to turn on Scheler, who had been a foundational teacher and philosophical inspiration to the young philosopher. Scheler's Catholic period was brief, however, and he began to question the Church in the years after his pathbreaking *On the Eternal in Man* (1922). Hildebrand was crushed. In the wake of Scheler's 1928 death, Hildebrand published a number of high-profile articles in which he took his former mentor to task. Scheler, he now argued, was a messy, unsystematic thinker, whose intellectual failings derived directly from his chaotic personal life. Hildebrand especially bemoaned "the profound tragedy of [Scheler's] relation to women," which "tore apart and devastated his life and which finally separated him from his knowledge of God." He was convinced that Scheler's unbridled sensuality pointed to a deeper, philosophical problem. Scheler's epistemology, in Hildebrand's telling at least, occluded the possibility of ever truly knowing another person, trapped as we are in our own fleeting impressions and drives. "Scheler," Hildebrand opined, "overlooked the possibility of an objective capturing of the uniqueness of another person in an I-Thou-Relationship."¹⁸

Hildebrand believed that such a relationship *was* possible, and precisely where Scheler refused to look for one: the marriage bond. Hildebrand's anguished witness of Scheler's convoluted love life, alongside his own committed and happy marriage, convinced him to turn his attention to the issues of sexuality and gender that would concern him throughout his career. His first publication on the topic, *In Praise of Purity*, appeared in 1927, while his more holistic interpretation of the marriage bond, simply called *Marriage*, came out two years later. That little book revolutionized

Catholic ethics on marriage and was the standard reference point in Catholic debates for decades.

At a time when most Catholics were beginning to theorize the reproductive family as the center of social morality, Hildebrand refused to follow suit. This forced him to disagree, at least implicitly, with papal dogma, and one striking feature of his 1930s writing is his willingness to ignore *Casti connubii*, Pope Pius XI's aggressively conservative family encyclical.¹⁹ In both *In Praise of Purity* and *Marriage*, he argued that love and sex, quite distinct from procreation, could provide the kind of intersubjective meaning that Scheler thought impossible. In the process, he rejected out of hand the old Catholic understanding of marriage as an institution structured by canon law and oriented toward children. That model derived neatly from Thomism, which dominated Catholic intellectual production in the early decades of the twentieth century. Thomists argued that human institutions are defined by their end, or *telos*: just as the “telos” of the acorn was the oak tree, the “telos” of the marriage was procreation. Hildebrand instead urged his readers to distinguish the subjective meaning of marriage from its material or social ends. The *end* of marriage might be procreation, but from a phenomenological perspective, there was much more to the story. “Love,” Hildebrand writes, “is the primary *meaning* of marriage just as the birth of new human beings is its primary *end*.”²⁰

Hildebrand wanted marriage to provide meaning, and not only children, to the couple. His account of marital love was only loosely related to our gauzy, everyday notion of it. For him, true love was a mystical process of communion in which husband and wife recognized the image of God, corporally and spiritually, in their partners. Intervening in legal cases that were then roiling the Catholic world, Hildebrand claimed that sex was therefore still valuable, and permissible, in cases where procreation was impossible for medical reasons. He was concerned above all with disassociating marriage, as a sacrament and love community, from any kind of biopolitical calculus. “The social function of marriage and its importance for the State,” he declared, are “secondary and subordinate” to the love bond; the marriage, he emphasized, “glorifies God more” than state, nation, or even the procreative family.²¹

Hildebrand's theories struck at the very core of paternal Catholic modernism and led him to emerge as one of the most notorious anti-Nazi Catholic authors in Europe. He fled Nazi Germany to Austria, where Hitler could not reach him (even though the German ambassador to Austria

complained directly to the Führer about him).²² Together with Klaus Dohrn, another German exile and a distant relative, he began publishing an anti-Nazi journal called *The Christian Corporate State*, the premier site for fraternal Catholicism in Central Europe. It was supported by the Austrian Catholic dictator Engelbert Dollfuss, who wanted to create a rigorously anti-Nazi publishing venue to counter the influence of Joseph Eberle's more Nazi-friendly *More Beautiful Future*.²³ Especially after the murder of Dollfuss in 1934, the journal began to focus less on support for the Austrian state than on furious denunciations of Nazism, which threatened from both inside and outside Austria. Over its six-year run, the journal provided a site for hundreds of Catholic authors across the continent to express antiracist, antifascist Catholic ideas in a widely circulating German-language journal.

Hildebrand's theories of marriage were central to his antifascism. In a 1935 article called "The State and Marriage," he explained the logic. Nazis, and the Catholics who supported them, viewed everything from the standpoint of the social order as a whole. Uninterested in the marriage itself, they only cared about children—that is, they cared only for the contribution the marriage could make to social reproduction. Hildebrand, however, saw the marriage bond as a "complete, unique community" on its own, and one that was higher and more sacramental than the state or even the family. Marriage, he explained elsewhere, is in fact "the highest human community," which is why the "insulting, clueless" restrictions on marriage in the Nuremberg Laws drove Hildebrand to heights of rage: "What an egregious violation of men in their most intimate sphere of life!"²⁴

Hildebrand's attack on Nuremberg shows how his theories of marriage fed his antiracism as well. The Jews, he insisted, were not disobedient sons of God but rather "beloved errant brothers."²⁵ That word "errant" is crucial. Like Maritain and other Catholic antiracists, Hildebrand still believed that Jews would eventually convert. He rejected, though, the political and social derivations that Catholics commonly drew from this mysterious and theological fact. Through his publishing and organizing in Central Europe, he became one of the most important of the early Catholic antiracists. When Father Georg Bichlmair, a well-known Austrian Catholic, delivered an anti-Semitic lecture on the Jewish question, Hildebrand responded in force, devoting an entire issue of his journal to the issue. His own essay savagely criticized Austrian Catholics like Bichlmair for misusing the

Catholic faith to grant a patina of piety to their mundane hatred of the Jews.²⁶

Hildebrand's ideas quickly became popular, if controversial, in Central European Catholic circles. In 1930, Aurel von Kolnai, a Hungarian student of Scheler and another convert from Judaism, published a work called *Sexual Ethics* that used Hildebrand's theory. In the same year, Matthias Laros, a German priest in Scheler's circle, likewise drew on Hildebrand in his widely discussed 1930 article on marriage in *Hochland*. Herbert Doms, a Silesian priest, published *The Meaning of Marriage* in 1935, deriving inspiration from both Hildebrand and Kolnai. Even after Hitler's rise to power, these new theories of love appeared in mainstream German publications. While Karl Thieme's antifascist politics were banned from the German public sphere, he could still publish essays on the new marriage literature.²⁷

Hildebrand's life and work were equally cosmopolitan. He was a polyglot who traveled throughout Europe in the 1930s, leveraging the contacts he had made as president of the foreign commission of Germany's Catholic Academic Union.²⁸ His texts traveled, too, especially after being translated into Italian (1931), English (1935), and French (1936). He was most interested in cultivating ties with the French. Hildebrand and Maritain first met in the late 1920s and stayed in touch for decades. Hildebrand did a great deal to publicize Maritain in German-speaking anti-Nazi circles. He personally reviewed a translation of Maritain's work, while *The Christian Corporate State* published numerous translations of his articles in two special editions devoted solely to French Catholic authors. In his own regular features, too, Hildebrand channeled Maritain in his attacks on the "politicization of religion" that had led to so many disastrous alliances.²⁹

Emmanuel Mounier, one of the most influential French Catholic intellectuals of the 1930s, pursued similar ideals in his own writings and in his editorial decision-making at *Esprit*, the incendiary Catholic journal he edited. His 1936 *Manifesto in the Service of Personalism* was groundbreaking in its contention that the "family" is not necessarily good in itself, as many families "spiritually kill" the human person with their "familial inertias." "To make infants is first of all to make persons, and not primarily, or exclusively, . . . anonymous little fascists or Communists who will perpetuate the established conformism."³⁰ Following Mounier's lead, *Esprit* in the late 1930s focused increasingly on marriage and gender issues, publishing articles by

Paul-Ludwig Landsberg and the Catholic novelist Jacques Perret on marriage (both explained that marriage, properly understood, was an antifascist imperative).³¹

By the later 1930s, as more and more Catholics were beginning to question the aggressive natalism of authoritarian regimes, Hildebrand's ideas began to spread through a number of different venues. Marriage manuals were one of the most important. In 1936, a volume appeared in Germany called *The Secret of Marriage*, written by a Swiss bishop and aimed specifically at women. In it, he argued that conjugal love was a legitimate end of marriage and that even sterile marriages were therefore beneficial in the eyes of God and his church. Drawing clearly on Hildebrand and Doms, the text argued that marriage had both a "meaning" (love) and an "end" (children), and that it was wrong to ignore the former in the interest of the latter. A few years later, Hans Wirtz's marriage manual, *From Eros to Love* (1938), appeared in Austria with the apostolic imprimatur. In it, Wirtz counseled that "eros and sex" were "essential" to God's plan for marriage. Going further than Streng, Wirtz counseled couples to explore their sexuality, instructing the groom not to worry about overwhelming the woman with his desires, and the bride "not to deny, out of ignorance or false modesty, the thousand joys she would like to give her husband." Wirtz also recommended the rhythm method, which could bring "order and discipline" into "sexual life, which is often so chaotic." Both of these manuals were translated into multiple languages and appeared in updated editions for decades; Streng's work sold over one hundred thousand copies, and Wirtz's likely did just as well.³²

In addition to marriage manuals, Catholic presses began to publish marriage memoirs, aimed at a wide audience. Norbert Rocholl, a German Catholic, paved the way with his *Marriage as Holy Life* (1936, translated into French in 1938): "theology for a layman, by a layman," as he put it. From Rocholl's perspective, the sociologists who focused on procreation were entirely missing the point of marriage, which was defined by "the mystery of Christian faith." Against the natalists who argued in terms of the family's social necessity, Rocholl drew heavily on Hildebrand to emphasize "conjugal love," defining the institution not by children but by "love of an entire person for another entire person." His book was soon translated into French, where it was widely reviewed by the Catholic press.³³ In 1938 alone, two Catholic marriage memoirs appeared in France. The first of them, *This Sacrament Is Great: Witness from a Christian Home*, was written by a devout

Catholic couple. While the volume did glorify procreation and was dedicated to the couple's six children, the authors nonetheless drew on Hildebrand's by now canonical work to legitimate long chapters on the phenomenology of blossoming love, both spiritual and physical. Marriage, from their perspective, was between "two persons" and required "conjugal intimacy" as "a true condition of spiritual enrichment." The other memoir, by the editor of a Catholic youth journal, was called *Eternal Companions: The Sacrament of Marriage*. Its author, too, drew explicitly on Hildebrand and focused on the psychological and physical aspects while subtly downplaying the legal, natalist elements of Catholic dogma.³⁴

The new ideas about marriage coursed through lay Catholic organizations, some of which were officially affiliated with Catholic Action. In France, members of the Young Christian Workers (JOC) campaigned to reclaim marriage and the family from the natalists. Their mass-circulation journal, in its account of the "goals" of marriage, listed "the sanctification of conjugal love" first and put procreation in second place. In an article the following month, the journal complained that natalists were denying "the Christian conception of marriage. . . . The most sacred rights of the human person and of morality are sacrificed to the omnipotence of the state." The Catholic Association of French Youth (ACJF) published a special issue dedicated to the family from the same perspective. In Austria, some leaders of the Catholic Women's Organization (KFÖ) began to worry about the oppressive elements of Austrian natalism. In their journal, they questioned the notion that "a woman must be a mother," arguing that this was "in no way compatible with a Catholic outlook." They also passed a resolution opposing the notorious "Two-Income Law," which dismissed married women from government employment. In Germany, organizations such as Heliand and the Catholic German Women's League (KDF) likewise questioned the natalism of church and state, sowing doubt that Nazi calls to "return to the home" had any link with Catholic teachings.³⁵

In some ways, the new Catholic approach to marriage and sexuality was beneficial for women, and it at least rhymed with the new political and economic opportunities that women were claiming.³⁶ It could potentially lead to the denial, as one French family expert put it, of "the idea that a free human being, generally the woman, can be obliged by moral law to suffer the movements of love without feeling the sentiment."³⁷ In other words, forced sex within the marriage was now theologically inadmissible. Hildebrand and his followers were not, however, feminists in the contemporary

sense. Hildebrand's elevation of love and spirituality counseled a renewed, not a relaxed, hostility toward divorce, homosexuality, contraception, and abortion, all of which brought the mysteries of love and marriage into the purview of the calculating, egoist mind.³⁸ The conservative elements of Hildebrand's thought are important because they remind us of the very Catholic nature of Catholic antifascism. Fraternal Catholics were not socialists who happened to go to church but rather Catholics who operated within the broad but definite parameters of the Catholic tradition.

Hildebrand's ideas about marriage and sexuality, for all of their conservatism, certainly clashed with the priorities of fascism. Hildebrand had, in fact, one of the most sterling anti-Nazi records of any European intellectual, having grappled with Nazis since their origins in early 1920s Munich. When Hitler finally invaded in 1938, Austria was no longer safe for Hildebrand either. He fled to Czechoslovakia, saved only by the Swiss passport he retained from his grandfather (the Gestapo arrived at his apartment a few hours later). He made his way to southern France, where he taught in Toulouse until France, too, succumbed. Jacques Maritain secured his passage to America by ensuring that he was one of two Catholics to be included on a list of Jewish German intellectuals to be brought to America under the care of the Rockefeller Foundation.³⁹ Hildebrand's story might be unique in European history: attacked for his Catholicism and saved by his Jewishness.

Hildebrand showed 1930s Catholics that they could be modern *without* placing the reproductive family at the center of their social and political vision. This was a crucial lesson because paternal Catholic modernists were doing just that—a move that, while defensible from within the social Catholic tradition, was a novelty that was legitimating all manner of alliances with authoritarian states. The social ethos of the faith, Hildebrand suggested, could be found in lateral relations between consenting adults, not in vertical relations of obedience. While he left little record of his thoughts on concrete issues of social welfare, he likely balked at the Austrian regime's perpetual paeans to motherhood. After all, they legitimated a robust and interventionist welfare apparatus designed more to secure births than to cultivate spiritually sound marriages. Fraternal Catholic modernists were not opposed to the welfare state, as such, but they did not believe that it was the primary pathway to social justice because they did not believe that the child-rich family was the primary agent of social jus-

tice. They looked, instead, to another agent, one to which the childless Christ had actually belonged: the working class.

Equality: Trade Unions and the Fraternal Economy

The 1930s were a time of economic calamity, in which it was clear that the traditional Catholic zeal for paternalist employers and placid workers' clubs was out of date. There was debate, though, about how the tradition might be updated. Most Catholic economic thinkers defended some form of authoritarian corporatism, which empowered the state to create employers' and workers' syndicates that would work together to organize the economy in the interest of the common good. This solution maintained some elements of the tradition, notably, its commitment to private property, anti-Communism, and class collaboration. It had its problems, however. For one thing, it didn't work very well, leading in practice more to state meddling than to class collaboration. For another, it jettisoned what some saw as the most important elements of the Catholic tradition, namely, its antistatism and its commitment to free labor organizing. Catholic antifascists picked up and modernized those themes, arguing that Catholics should work together with Jews and socialists in the name of economic justice. The vehicle with which they would do so was the trade union.

Catholic trade unions had a long history, of course, and in Pittsburgh and Paris alike Catholic workers were organizing with enthusiasm in the 1930s (sometimes even collaborating with non-Catholics). This activism found conceptual resonance, too, as vigorous trade unionism was incorporated into the pluralism of Catholic antifascism. This innovation could be traced in many figures, but perhaps most interestingly in the life and writing of Ernst Karl Winter. Like many Austrian Catholics, he had been an uncompromising anti-Semite and antimodernist in the 1920s. As with Hildebrand and Maritain, it was precisely his intransigence and unwillingness to compromise that led him in innovative and antifascist directions in the 1930s. Over the course of that tumultuous decade, this recovering anti-Semite became an apostle for an interconfessional socialism in which Catholics, Jews, and even Communists would work together to wrest control of the economy away from capitalists and fascists alike.

Winter remained convinced that Catholicism had to offer a ruthless critique of capitalism, but he began to believe in the late 1920s that staunch

conservatism, his own included, had become an apologia for that very system. We must, Winter implored, “have the courage to stand on the right and think on the left.”⁴⁰ In other words, Winter sought a kind of Catholic conservatism that would intellectually appropriate the most trenchant insights of the Marxist tradition. This required an embrace of what he called “methodological dualism,” distinguishing rigorously between scholasticism and sociology. Natural law could provide certain general principles about social justice and social order, but when it came to concrete issues like the gold standard or trade union policy, Catholics would have to speak the language of social science, and specifically the language of Marxism.⁴¹

This sensibility grew increasingly common in the Catholicism of the late 1920s, when Catholic paens to class collaboration and charity rang hollow. Winter found a welcome intellectual home at the *Red Newsletter for Catholic Socialists*, a German publication with significant Austrian involvement (including on its editorial staff). His methodological dualism was a central element of the journal’s policy. As Heinrich Mertens, a German Catholic socialist, put it, “The time is over when theologians, who concern themselves with social science for pastoral reasons, can represent Catholic social teaching.” Winter’s contributions focused on the economy, arguing that paternalist corporatism did no more than entrench capitalism even more deeply. Ernst Michel, a German Catholic socialist, agreed, complaining that Catholics neglected the “dynamic, historical approach” toward the economy in the name of a “static, natural law” conception. This blindness allowed social Catholicism to become a smokescreen for the interests of the ruling class instead of a ringing call for social justice. Catholics at the *Red Newsletter* were especially incensed by the authoritarian corporatism that was quickly becoming mainstream economic doctrine, and that seemed to prove Michel’s point (they took special aim at Theodor Brauer, whose authoritarian leanings were evident even before he made the transition to Nazism).⁴²

Catholic socialism had considerable intellectual appeal in both Germany and Austria around 1930, as the horrors of the Great Depression sent Catholics casting for novel solutions. Catholic newspapers adopted quasi-Marxist language in their attacks on private employers and coal concerns, joining their socialist brethren in calls to nationalize major sectors of the economy.⁴³ On the intellectual front, to take one example, Carl Muth published a blockbuster essay on “The Hour of the Middle Class” in 1930. In it, the influential editor of *Hochland* worried that the masses had diagnosed a con-

nection between the Catholic Church, bourgeois liberalism, and the Great Depression. While he thought the masses were basically right, he also worried that the gathering counteroffensive would sweep away everything that was valuable about the Church and the middle classes alike. Only some kind of Catholic socialism, Muth mused, could reverse the tide.⁴⁴ Winter immediately wrote Muth a fawning letter expressing gratitude that Muth had turned to socialism and not toward the authoritarian corporatism that was gaining ground in many Catholic circles. He explained to Muth his notion, familiar to Marxists but still novel to Catholics, that fascism was the logical outgrowth of modern capitalism. “What could corporatist thought be,” he wondered, “except fascism, which is nothing other than the contemporary adaptation of capitalism”? In the same letter, Winter explained that he had abandoned the antimodernism of his past thought. “I, who have been writing for and believing in the surviving political vocation of the nobility, realize today the absolute sterility of this class. . . . The spirit of the social aristocratic principle, embodied by [Karl von] Vogelsang, appears to finally be dead.”⁴⁵

In the early 1930s, it seemed, as Marx might have predicted, that Germany provided the best hope for a socialist renaissance. With the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933, however, German socialism was destroyed—and its Catholic variant, too. Winter devoted himself to ensuring that the same thing would not happen in Austria. In Winter’s view, the wretched relationship between Catholics and socialists would have to be healed if Austria were to put up any kind of resistance to Hitler. This was an unpopular take. For most Austrian Catholics, as for most Germans, Nazi rule was preferable to Communist dictatorship: at least Nazis claimed to support the Church. Winter chalked this up to a “lack of character amongst Catholics.” He called forthrightly for a Popular Front strategy, viewing fascism as a much greater threat than Communism.⁴⁶

When Dollfuss came to power in 1934, Winter agreed to participate in his government, serving as vice-mayor of Vienna.⁴⁷ Winter was an old war comrade of the new dictator’s, but this was not primarily why he was chosen. While Dollfuss had little time for Winter’s philo-Marxism, he did recognize that his friend was right about one thing: unless the new state could win the workers to its side, it would fail. Dollfuss gave Winter the nearly hopeless task of bringing the nation’s disgruntled socialists into the warm embrace of the Fatherland Front. His valiant and doomed attempt to do so was known, simply enough, as the “Winter Action.” The

uniqueness of his project comes alive through comparison. Richard Schmitz, Winter's corporatist superior as mayor of Vienna, gave stump speeches to Austrian workers and privately was thrilled that they seemed to be excited by his authoritarian corporatist ideas. Winter's approach was different, and more democratic. He did go on lecture tours, specifically aiming at the taverns that attracted socialist workers, but he listened, too. He organized study circles with workers, both Catholic and socialist, who were encouraged to express their true opinions about the new state of affairs in Austria. His journal, called simply *Action*, published the results, even, and especially, when they were critical of the corporatists in power.

Winter's hostility to Nazism pushed him toward bold conceptual innovations, necessary if Catholic-Communist antifascism was to be defended. His writings in 1934 and 1935 represent an attempt to craft a Thomist-Marxist synthesis, and a kind of Catholic modernism that made room for a pluralist account of the private sphere. Like Aquinas, and unlike Marx, he was certain that "the state is something eternal": it is one of the divinely appointed communities that structure the natural social order. However, Winter also adopted a Marxist perspective on the state. "State constitutions," he continued, "are dependent on economic conditions." The "old democracy of the 19th century," he believed, was responsible for an epidemic of overproduction. This in turn led to a "profound economic crisis" that could only be met by an anticapitalist movement that brought Catholics and socialists together, both practically and intellectually. "It is not at all the case," he concluded, "that Christian workers are right, and socialists wrong, about all questions!" At least some socialists took the bait: one wrote in to praise Winter's organization as "the only legal path to secure workers' influence on politics."⁴⁸

Whatever errors Communists may have made, Winter reasoned, they at least had deep roots in Austria and represented one facet of a noble European heritage (this was essentially Maritain's approach to the question, too).⁴⁹ While he believed that the economy must be investigated using modern methods and that Marxism was the best one available, he was allergic to Stalinist violence and the command economy. His version of Marx was not that of the Third International but that of the young, "humanist" Marx, whose writings Winter encountered through the pioneering edition of Siegfried Landshut and Jakob Peter Mayer.⁵⁰ This idiosyncratic Catholic Marxism yielded an unsurprisingly idiosyncratic and even utopian political program. He hoped for some kind of socialist monarchism—

essentially a constitutional monarchy—to excite patriotism and secure political legitimacy, alongside an economic order made up of freely organized trade unions and a social order enlivened by an active and organized citizenry.⁵¹

Winter's desire for a modern Catholic social ethics capable of staving off fascism led him to support the modern and secular nation-state: one that would enshrine "eternal human rights" and reject anti-Semitism.⁵² While most Austrians thought that their national destiny lay with Germany, Winter believed that the tiny Austrian state had a mission and an identity of its own. Like Hildebrand, he thought that Austria could be a light unto the world by showing how a modern state could survive without national or racial chauvinism (there was no Austrian "nation," after all).

Winter's new conception of politics, and his new hopes for Austria, explains his antiracist turn. Anti-Semitism had been central to his writing in the 1920s, but in the 1930s, in the name of antifascism, he evolved on this front. Some of his allies did, too. "There is, properly speaking, no Jewish question in Austria," his old friend Alfred Missong argued. "There is only anti-Semitism," the dark shadow of pagan forms of nationalism.⁵³ Winter went even further, arguing for "a union of Christians and Jews against Nazism."⁵⁴ He became, with Hildebrand, one of the most important anti-racist publicists in 1930s Europe. He founded a publishing house, Gsur Verlag, dedicated entirely to anti-Nazism. Under its imprint, he published what one historian has called "the first systematic Christian critique of racism," Walter Berger's *What Is Race?*, alongside another pioneering work of scientific antiracism, Peter Drucker's *The Jewish Question in Germany* (both Berger and Drucker were Jewish, and the former was a convert to Catholicism).⁵⁵

However cogent Winter's theories may have been, they clashed with the priorities of a regime that never intended to allow economic power to pass into the hands of unruly trade unions. By the spring of 1935, after only about six months of feverish activity, he announced that he had "essentially changed [his] mind" about Austria's corporatist experiment: "I now believe in an expansion of parliamentary democracy through corporatist democracy, not in the replacement of the former by the latter."⁵⁶ He was not alone. Many Catholic workers, nostalgic for their union and recognizing the false promises of the system, turned on authoritarian corporatism, too.⁵⁷

The turning point for Winter was the 1935 trial of former social democratic party leaders, condemned for inciting violence during Austria's civil

war. From Winter's perspective, the trial was the perfect opportunity to win back the workers: the leaders could be set free in the name of a new understanding, and with the recognition that many conservatives had acted criminally as well (Maritain criticized their imprisonment, too). However, the trial went on and the socialists were convicted in proceedings that were roundly, and internationally, condemned as a show trial. Winter could not contain his disbelief and rage, which spilled into the columns of his newsletter. While in the past he had mainly attempted to assuage socialist doubts, he now attacked the regime head-on, advocating constitutional reform, trade union liberties, and even the return of free elections. Schuschnigg, the Austrian leader who took over after Dollfuss's assassination, wrote a blistering letter to Winter, hinting that he was an enemy of the state. His journal began to appear with significant portions censored. Increasingly hysterical counterattacks began to appear from the regime's strident right wing. "That's Enough, Mr. Winter!" exclaimed one writer in the newspaper of the Heimatschutz, the paramilitary wing of the government. Eventually, Winter was relieved of both his post and his journal.⁵⁸

Despite his political failure, Winter showed that the Catholic tradition could generate an antifascist economic strategy, and one that wrested free of the anti-Semitism that had long dogged Catholic economic theory. He likely could not have arrived at such a position from within the conservative intellectual culture of Catholic Austria. Like Hildebrand, his trajectory was a European one. His turn against corporatism, for instance, came soon after a trip to Paris, and it is possible that his experience of the vibrant Catholic unions there impacted his hostility to state corporatism in Austria.⁵⁹

In France, too, Catholic intellectuals moved rapidly toward a Catholic modernism that would emphasize free and interconfessional trade unionism. Auguste Cornu's pathbreaking dissertation on the young Karl Marx was discussed in a series of articles in *Esprit* in the early 1930s. These essays, in turn, were drawn on by Maritain in the lectures that eventually became *Integral Humanism*.⁶⁰ While a genuine Catholic Communism did exist, it was quite small; the union-supporting democratic socialism of Winter's imagination was more widespread. Étienne Borne's theology of labor rejected Marxist materialism, while accepting the basic socialist insight that meaningful labor was central to the good life and that dramatic social reforms would be necessary to make it possible.⁶¹ *Esprit* published a

dossier on trade unions in 1936, prefacing it all with the proud declaration that they despised corporatism and had always been “ferocious defenders of a free worker’s movement.” The “official” syndicates of the corporatists might adequately represent workers’ concrete interests, but they could never foment the kind of working-class consciousness and organization that could transform capitalism as a whole. This sensibility was especially prevalent in Catholic Action organizations. The JOC emphasized “the right of workers to align themselves *with the syndicate of their choice*,” and its older brother—the League of Christian Workers—agreed. In the *Annals of Catholic Youth*, a series of articles criticized authoritarian corporatism in the name of trade unionism. And when Marshal Pétain announced the Labor Charter, a number of Church leaders signaled their disappointment and their preference for the maintenance of syndical liberty.⁶²

As in Austria, the democratic socialism of these Catholic intellectuals had a practical corollary. After the end of the Winter Action, France’s CFTC (French Confederation of Christian Workers, a Catholic trade union) became the most exciting experiment in antifascist Catholic labor activity on the continent. When the Popular Front came to power in 1936 and a wave of strikes tore across France, many CFTC members collaborated with the non-Catholic unions. This was a public relations coup. Cleansed of its reputation as a white-collar, boss-coddling union, the CFTC’s membership numbers skyrocketed (collaboration between the CFTC and non-Catholic unions was sporadic, to be sure, but it did exist).⁶³ These progressive elements came to light in the 1936 “CFTC Plan,” which laid out the union’s guiding philosophy. The right to freely associate, the Plan declared, was an inviolable natural right. While the Plan did envision an important role for the state, it avoided the magic word “corporatism” and focused instead on labor participation in management of the individual firm. The “organization of the profession,” a valuable goal, could only be achieved through “complete liberty of constitution and recruitment” for the unions.⁶⁴

The International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CISC) was stridently opposed to authoritarian corporatism, too. At its 1934 congress, Jos Serrarens, a Dutch trade unionist and secretary-general of the organization, drew explicitly on Maritain’s writings in his case against corporatism, expressing outrage that a regime like Austria’s could claim to act in the name of *Quadragesimo anno* (Pope Pius XI’s 1931 social encyclical). Like Maritain, he was critical of Italy, Germany, and Austria for dismantling the free unions, in flat contradiction to the “theories defended over long years

by Christian sociologists.” While these nations wanted to construct the new economic order “one fine day, by a handful of decrees,” Serrarens counseled a more bottom-up approach that would protect Catholic unions while still aiming at industry-level dialogue and regulation.⁶⁵ Serrarens spoke with some knowledge. He had recently visited Austria and reported, somewhat gloomily, that the Austrian regime was a travesty of true Catholic principles and that Catholic leaders were being dominated by more radical and “totalitarian” elements. The tension between the CISC and the Austrian experiment came up somewhat awkwardly at the 1934 meeting. Representatives from the new unified syndicate, led after all by Catholic unionists, showed up in Utrecht demanding a seat at the Congress, only to be told by the president that liberty of association was so important that this could not be allowed (the year before, the CISC had reached a similar decision about the German Labor Front [DAF], again despite the presence of Catholic unionists among its leadership).⁶⁶

In Winter’s journals, at the CISC, and in Catholic Action organizations, the vaguely worded *Quadragesimo anno* received a different interpretation from the one offered by authoritarian corporatists. This received physical form in a version of the encyclical published, in an edition of tens of thousands of copies and with copious annotations, by an association of French Catholic social scientists. The annotator glossed over the troubling passages in which Mussolini’s Italy was praised, commenting only that they were “particularly delicate,” thereby suggesting that Pius XI was playing a political game in those paragraphs, and one that need not interest the French. Sections that could conceivably relate to trade unions, on the other hand, were enlivened by many footnotes, reminding readers about the Church’s long-standing commitment to the cause. The JOC, for its part, published a fascinating pedagogical text called *While Listening to the Pope: Interviews about Quadragesimo Anno* (1932), which broke the encyclical into chunks and tried to educate Catholic workers about its contents in colloquial terms. This interpretation, too, emphasized the pope’s traditional support of trade unionism, despite the suspiciously small role of that commitment in the encyclical’s text.⁶⁷

Winter’s hope that Catholic-socialist collaboration, nourished by a revived Catholic commitment to trade unionism, might hold Nazism at bay proved fruitless. By 1940, Hitler held sway over France, Germany, and Austria alike. All the same, Winter’s ideas survived in various forms and venues. Many were clandestine and have left few traces. In concentration

camps, for instance, Catholics and socialists found themselves in closer quarters than usual and found common cause in opposition to fascism (this became known as the “Spirit of Dachau”).⁶⁸ In the German resistance, antifascist Catholic labor activists such as Jakob Kaiser and Wilhelm Elfes cultivated ties with socialists such as Wilhelm Leuschner and Carl Severing.⁶⁹

Winter’s ideas also survived in more public forums. Reprising the editorial activities of Austrian workers in the mid-1930s, Catholic workers and intellectuals in Pétain’s France criticized authoritarian corporatism as a denial of CFTC and social Catholic tradition. Jeunesse de l’Eglise (Youth of the Church) was a living experiment and think tank that began publishing pamphlets on Catholic-Marxist collaboration from Lyon in 1942. The Young Christian Students (JEC) published an article by Catholic trade unionist Paul Bacon decrying the Labor Charter, Gaston Tessier attacked the charter in the name of trade unionism on the front page of *La Croix*, and the League of Christian Workers (LOC) published a series of articles in 1942 making the same points. The great text of Catholic-socialist collaboration was the “Manifesto of the Twelve,” signed by Communist, socialist, and Catholic trade unionists. Unions, the joint manifesto states, must not be “absorbed by the state” but should rather follow the principle of “professional organization.” The joint manifesto adopted the very slogan of the CFTC: “the free union in the organized industry.”⁷⁰

Even in Germany and Austria, while Christian trade unions had of course been destroyed, Catholics in Winter’s vein continued to organize and publish. They had at least two print organs. One was the Paris-based, German-language resistance journal called *The Future*, which began publishing in 1938. While Catholics were well represented, *The Future* was not, as one Communist complained, “the organ of the conservative-Catholic emigration.” Instead, it provided a space in which fraternal Catholics could appear alongside socialists such as Willi Münzenberg.⁷¹ The other was the journal of Germany’s Catholic Workers’ Movement (KAB), which survived through much of the 1930s (the boundary between clandestine and public was porous: the KAB also provided a site for illicit, interconfessional discussions of Catholic social teaching).⁷² The journal’s implicit antifascism can be found primarily in its reporting on Catholic developments outside Germany. France’s JOC was determined to be “very remarkable,” a brave claim to make in a country where no such organization was possible. In 1935, a long front-page article appeared about the French Social Week on

corporatism, which had been quite critical of Nazism. While those critiques were of course not reprinted, the article did report the meeting's focus on "the personality, which has duties and rights," as well as the danger of "the arbitrary power of the collective." Catholics could support "not just any corporatist order, but rather one whose spirit is that of *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*." The distinguishing feature of that order, the author explained, was that all members of the profession, including workers, would be consulted about questions of production and social insurance.⁷³ Any reader of the newspaper would have known that German workers enjoyed no such rights, and thus that the journal (eventually shut down) was using European Catholic developments to implicitly criticize Nazi policy.

While many Catholic labor leaders and economists in the 1930s opted for authoritarian corporatism in the name of anti-Communism, Ernst Karl Winter and his circles reminded Catholic workers that the social Catholic tradition had bountiful resources for free trade unionism, too. Essentially, he did little more than revive the traditional Catholic zeal for associational life, and the traditional Catholic suspicion of the overactive state. He did so, though, in a new and more modern key: less anti-Semitic, and more in dialogue with Marx. In Winter's view, freely constituted trade unions, rather than the state or the marketplace, should populate the economic sphere and bend it toward justice. His ideas, alongside Hildebrand's, help us to see the outlines of Catholic antifascism, its allergy to the state, and its commitment to a robust civil society. For a broader view of this new pluralist commonweal, we can turn to the most famous and influential Catholic intellectual of the era: Jacques Maritain.

Liberty: Pluralism and Fraternal Politics

In the 1930s, mainstream Catholic intellectuals and leaders made their peace with the secular nation-state like never before. Viewing it as the only antidote to Communism, they were willing to grant immense authoritarian power to the state apparatus, so long as the state signaled its commitment to protect religious liberty and the family while joining the cultural and legal community of "the West." To Maritain and other antifascist Catholics, this gave up too much that was distinctive about the Catholic tradition—namely, its persistent suspicion of the state, and its desire to imagine a social order defined by civil society organizations free of state domination.

Maritain's pluralist political theory of the 1930s was designed primarily to update this tradition for the modern age, salvaging and updating the most emancipatory elements of his past monarchism.

Maritain always rejected the linkage of the universal Church with the specific political and legal heritage of "the West." Unlike mainstream Catholics, in other words, he refused to salvage a Catholic politics by equating the values of the Church with those left behind by the Roman empire. In a letter to a missionary in China, he argued that "Christ's supernatural revelation puts down roots in the most native and natural way, in every nation on Earth." Therefore, he continued, "there can be no question of imposing the universal primacy of Greco-Latin culture."⁷⁴ Maritain honed his critique of the new Western consciousness on his former friend Henri Massis's bellwether volume, *Defense of the West* (1927). Even before it came out, Maritain was writing pained letters to Massis, begging him either to abandon or radically revise the project. One cannot possibly speak of "the Orient" or "German philosophy" as though they were stable entities, he wrote, adding that a book aimed at these twin targets would do more than inflame passions around the world. "Our culture is Greco-Latin," he concluded. "Our religion is not."⁷⁵

In place of an interconfessional *Defense of the West*, Maritain pursued what he called a "pluralist" or "fraternal" politics—in explicit contrast to the "paternal" vision that, in his opinion, salvaged the least Catholic elements of the Middle Ages. For Maritain, the central elements to be retained were antistatism and federalism, not the zeal for authority and hierarchy. He envisioned the state giving way to an "organized political fraternity" in which "civic fraternities" enjoying their own laws and legitimacy would constitute the main institutional mediation between the citizen and the political sphere.⁷⁶ Like many contemporary thinkers, notably Georges Gurvitch and Harold Laski, Maritain rejected the sovereign state's claim to represent the political community itself. Just as he had done in his monarchist days, Maritain insisted that the sources of legitimacy and law were plural, arising from within civil society instead of being imposed from above. The novelty was that Maritain no longer believed in the necessity of installing an authoritarian or monarchist state to ratify that pluralism. The institutions of the pluralist society would arise organically, he taught, from an interfaith society of engaged laymen, working toward the common good as they understood it. As he told one authoritarian corporatist in a letter, he rejected the narrowly "technical and professional" version of

corporatism offered by mainstream Catholics in favor of a “properly political” version rooted in “the political thoughts of those persons who are members of civil society.”⁷⁷

Maritain’s view of civil society, however much it might have in common with secular versions, was nonetheless religious. This is most apparent in his commitment to the saints, who played a central role for him in fomenting moral transformation amongst the laity. This notion of moral elevation had always been central to social Catholic teachings but was suspiciously absent from the doctrines of paternal Catholic modernism, which was more interested in authoritarian security than in ethical cultivation of the self. “A properly Christian social renovation,” he argued, “will be the work of sanctity, or it will not be.” He called this “the purification of the means,” a phrase that was meant as a sharp rebuke to the cynical compromises that were guiding Catholic politics at the time (Maritain wrote a great deal about Machiavelli and the baleful consequences of an instrumental notion of politics). What he meant was that Christians should concern themselves first and foremost with “thinking, living, acting politically in the Christian style” rather than attempting “to obtain from the world machinery that is only Christian in an external and illusory way.” As critics pointed out, this veers close to political quietism, but Maritain didn’t see it that way. He sketched out instead a political vision in which a new generation of heroic saints would conspire, through their own sacrifices and pure actions, to create a “new man” dedicated to transcendent values. He found his model with the early Christians, fleeing the authorities in the catacombs and laying the groundwork for an ethical revolution.⁷⁸

Maritain called, in short, for a new generation of spiritual elites to lead Catholics *and others* toward a new Christendom: a pluralist commonwealth structured by interfaith civil society organizations. He was not, in the 1930s, an apostle of Christian Democracy, if that refers to a kind of Catholic or interconfessional parliamentarism. This confused many readers, then and since, especially as Maritain praised “personalist democracy” in his writings. The reasoning should be clear by now, however, and Maritain spelled it out in a public letter to Paul Archambault, a Christian Democrat who tried to enlist Maritain’s prestige behind his own partisan political project. Maritain had no particular affection for parliamentary democracy, which granted in his mind a patina of democratic legitimacy to a state apparatus that served primarily to suppress the civic fraternities that were the true essence of the political. The problem with Christian Democracy, from

his perspective, was that it corralled the spirit of Christ, which should inflame all of society from below, into a parliamentary party aiming to conquer the sovereign power of the state.⁷⁹

Maritain's hopes for an interfaith, pluralist renaissance militated against the prevailing culture of Catholic anti-Semitism. In a number of publications and lectures in the late 1930s, he criticized anti-Semitism as a pagan misunderstanding of the proper role of politics. The Jewish question was a matter of theology and mystery, he insisted, not one of clumsy state repression. In the here and now, the task is to work with Jews in pursuit of social justice, recognizing them as allies and brothers. As with Hildebrand and Winter, his antiracism was entwined with his anticapitalism and antifascism. Catholic anti-Semites, Maritain argued, blamed Jews for problems that were actually rooted in the logic of capitalism itself. One of those problems was the emergence of Communism. By blaming this on the Jews, Catholics were overlooking the contradictions in capitalism that Marx had diagnosed and that inevitably led to Communist insurgency unless those emancipatory energies could be harnessed by the Church. As with his account of civil society, his antiracism was profoundly Catholic. He still expected the Jews to convert, eventually, and he even argued that they were partially responsible for the waves of repression and intolerance that confronted them (they had erred, he reasoned, in accepting the bankrupt promises of bourgeois modernity instead of sticking to their authentic faith).⁸⁰

Indifferent toward the sputtering promise of Catholic parliamentarism and the anti-Semitic celebrations of the West common in conservative circles, Maritain instead found hope in the general spirit of lay organization that traversed the 1930s global Church. While he was certainly impressed by official Catholic Action organizations, he warned that such clerical and top-down styles of activism could not replace the volcanic energy bubbling up from the laity themselves. To be sure, the organizations in practice were less clerical than they were in theory, which Maritain surely appreciated. The tables at the new organizations' meetings were often circular, eschewing the pew-and-pulpit model of the Church. "They are their own masters, aren't they?" worried one Catholic professor about the JOC.⁸¹ He was more enchanted, though, by lay organizations that did not require direct clerical guidance, some of which he found across the ocean. Maritain began visiting the United States in the mid-1930s and was enamored, like Alexis de Tocqueville before him, with its civic life. He was most impressed,

perhaps, by an organization that he frequented called the Catholic Worker. The movement was founded by Dorothy Day and a French Catholic named Peter Maurin, both of whom were devoted to bringing Catholic principles of sanctity and justice to America's cities. Like Maritain, who influenced Day and Maurin alike, they believed that Catholic principles, properly understood, mandated a robust and even revolutionary form of lay activism.

Beyond Catholic Action, Maritain found inspiration in three specific institutional settings. The first two were the same as those celebrated by Hildebrand and Winter. *Integral Humanism* celebrated the marriage as a site of moral education, intimacy, and solidarity. Maritain was conspicuously silent about the hierarchical family unit, focusing instead on the egalitarian marriage bond: "The Christian family," he insisted, is founded on "the primarily spiritual and sacramental union of two persons." He was not a feminist in the liberal sense, believing as he did that women should not have "the same economic functions as man." At the same time, he did argue for "full juridical recognition" of women, including property rights, given that housework has an economic value of its own.⁸² In his own person, he enshrined similar ideals. He was inseparable from his wife, Raïssa, a considerable intellectual in her own right (whose work he cited in *Integral Humanism*). His marriage, not his family, was at the center of his family life. He and Raïssa had no children, and he never appeared at the family congresses that were such important events for more mainstream figures.

The second institution that, in Maritain's view, contained the seeds of the pluralist commonweal was the trade union. *Integral Humanism* contained quite a detailed vision of a revamped economy in which workers, organized in trade unions, would assist in managing and owning enterprises, which would in turn be administered by a national body that was "entirely different from the statist corporations of totalitarianism."⁸³ And while he was absent from familialist events, he was present at trade union congresses, delivering a keynote to the 1937 CISC congress mentioned earlier. In it, he declared to the assembled delegates his "sincere sympathy for the Christian union movement" and explained why neither Bolshevism nor "the anti-Communist and anti-individualistic movements of authoritarianism and dictatorship" fully protected the worker. He lambasted the authoritarian regimes for cherishing "state sovereignty" instead of "the freedom of collective men." A few years later, in the preface to a volume by a CFTC leader named Paul Vignaux, Maritain wrote that Catholic labor, unlike

those who “linked [corporatism] to fascism,” had devised “an entirely opposed conception, which saves what is just in the idea of the community of work and the organized profession.”⁸⁴

The third institution that fascinated Maritain was the press, an issue that he wrote about with surprising regularity. He believed in a vibrant, free press in which Catholics could afford to be independent and participate in the non-Catholic public sphere, too. Maritain himself caused enormous controversy by participating in secular or socialist publishing ventures, while his spirit inflamed the diverse and pathbreaking Catholic press environment of 1930s France. Journals such as *La vie intellectuelle* and *Sept*, often with bylines from Maritain himself, were fearlessly willing to challenge established orthodoxy, sometimes leading them to be shut down altogether (as in the case of *Sept*). In a widely cited series of articles called “Is God on the Right?,” published in *La vie intellectuelle*, the anonymous author answered with a resounding “No.” In place of the conservative vision offered by Massis, authors in these journals dreamed of a deep pluralism along Maritain’s lines—one that would be built from the bottom up and would follow the logic of fraternal cooperation rather than patriarchal law. In Maritain’s view, these journals “planted in French soil the seeds of reconciliation between two ancient opposing traditions—the France of religious faithfulness and spirituality, and the France of human emancipation.”⁸⁵

However much Maritain celebrated France’s unique heritage, he was a truly European thinker, convinced that the “new Christendom,” like the one before it, would be supernational. While his transatlantic connections are well known, his European itinerary was just as important. He visited Germany (multiple times), Spain, Italy, and Poland, and his works were widely translated into the languages of all of those countries. German Catholics were especially drawn to him because he provided the resources to critique the West-defending “theology of the Reich” that was legitimating so much Nazi collaboration. His most devoted German follower was Waldemar Gurian, one of the intellectual leaders of Catholic anti-Nazism. Like Maritain, Gurian was particularly scathing toward the widespread notion that Catholicism was imbricated with the West. Maritain gave Gurian the language he needed to contest the “imperial theology” that he saw as “the plague of German spiritual life.” Maritain agreed, and *Integral Humanism* was scathing in its judgment of that tradition. He was

perfectly aware how provocative the book would be in a German context: “If my conception of the *Reich* shocks the German public,” he wrote to Gurian, “I regret it but I will change nothing.”⁸⁶

Even after Germany fell to Hitler, Maritain’s star continued to rise in Central Europe. From exile in Switzerland, Gurian published an important anti-Nazi journal called *German Letters*, in which he brought Maritain’s ideas to a new audience. Several of Maritain’s works were translated into German, too, where they began to circulate among anti-Nazi Catholic intellectuals. Aside from Hildebrand and Gurian, Erik Peterson, Karl Thieme, and Eberhard Welty were probably the three most important anti-Nazi Catholic writers in the 1930s, and all of them were in dialogue with Maritain. Welty’s *Society and the Individual Man* (1935), one of only a handful of works in the Catholic sociological tradition to appear in Germany after Hitler came to power, drew widely on both Maritain and Hildebrand (Welty soon entered the Resistance).⁸⁷ Peterson, a personal friend of Maritain’s, was, like him, a convert from Protestantism (they had first met in Bonn in the late 1920s, and Maritain paid Peterson a visit in 1931, too). He described his magisterial *Monotheism as a Political Problem* (1935) to Maritain as a proof of “the impossibility of an ‘imperial theology’” through “the development of theological concepts.”⁸⁸ The logic of Peterson’s text was of a piece with fraternal modernism. A book-length critique of Carl Schmitt, the book patiently showed how political theology could flow from monotheistic traditions, linking God the Father with the paternalist state. The Christian conception of God, however, was not monotheistic but instead pluralist—a trinity—and so the Christian state should be pluralist, too. Thieme, yet another Protestant convert, agreed with Maritain that the authority of the Church can “in no way be institutionalized, as its kingdom is not of this world.” From exile in Switzerland, he closely followed Maritain’s developments, writing him long letters about how transformative Maritain’s work had been for him and how he, too, sought to provide “a post-totalitarian Christian political ideology on the ruins of those of the past.”⁸⁹

Even in authoritarian Austria, Maritain’s thought made significant inroads in the 1930s. In Hildebrand’s journal, for instance, Maritain was published and discussed regularly, and Maritain’s main German translator at the time was living in Austria, too. The Austrian case shows that Catholic antifascism didn’t simply flow from Paris outward. Austria was, in fact, the primary site of antiracist Catholic thinking on the continent. The leader

here was a Jewish convert and follower of Maritain, Johannes Oesterreicher. Maritain and Oesterreicher met in Vienna in the mid-1930s, and they remained in close contact for decades. Oesterreicher proclaimed the German translation of *Integral Humanism* “the most valuable innovation of the year” and published an excerpt from it in his journal, *The Fulfillment (Die Erfüllung)*.⁹⁰ That journal, which featured many Catholic antifascists from across Europe, was, next to Hildebrand’s own magazine, the central site of fraternal modernism in the German language.

Oesterreicher also helped to organize the most important text in transnational Catholic antiracism in the 1930s: a manifesto called “The Church of Christ on the Jewish Question,” written primarily by Maritain’s acolytes Gurian and Thieme. It appeared in French, German, and English, with the signatures of Maritain, Hildebrand, and a number of other prominent German, Austrian, Belgian, Czech, Italian, French, and Polish Catholic intellectuals. The manifesto emphasized throughout that the Jewish question is a purely religious affair, and only a pagan confusion of religion and politics could lead to any other conclusion. Targeting those defenders of the West who glorified the anti-Jewish legislation of the Middle Ages, it specifically cited *Integral Humanism* to argue that “the Christian order of the Middle Ages, from which canonistic Jewish laws were derived, no longer exists.”⁹¹

While the ideas were not all his alone, Maritain’s life and work provide the clearest distillation of a transnational Catholic antifascism. In a series of indelible works, notably *Integral Humanism*, Maritain wove together ideas on the family, the economy, and race that were circulating across Catholic Europe. In response to the rise of totalitarianism and the collapse of traditional Catholic politics, he urged a form of Catholic modernism that would salvage the revolutionary, antistatist elements of the tradition for a new age, rather than its hierarchical and racist ones. This would involve, he insisted, a radical rethinking of the Church’s mission in the world. “Instead of a fortified castle,” Maritain urged, “we should think of an army of stars thrown across the sky.”⁹² He was under no illusions that this would happen quickly, or without bloodshed. An army of stars was no match for the Wehrmacht.

THE PRIMARY INSTITUTIONS of fraternal Catholic modernism—Catholic trade unions, Catholic Action organizations, freely circulating periodicals,

study circles, and more—were shattered by the war. “There is nothing left but the catacombs,” Maritain wrote to a friend a few days after France surrendered to Germany.⁹³ The foxholes of the Resistance allowed fraternal Catholicism to survive, but not flourish, on the continent. As an intellectual project, it found a happier home in exile in the United States—most notably in New York City, where Jacques Maritain, Ernst Karl Winter, and Dietrich von Hildebrand all weathered the war years.

New York was an exciting place to be an intellectual, an exile, and a Catholic during wartime. The city was home to vibrant immigrant communities of Catholic believers and to exciting, radical experiments in Catholic activism such as the *Catholic Worker*. It was also home to *Commonweal*, a lay Catholic journal that pursued recognizably fraternal themes (its editor, Europhile George Shuster, had warned American Catholics against Franco). New York was not the only site of the Catholic exile community, of course. Canada played host to a group of French personalists, while Waldemar Gurian found a home at Notre Dame. While he bristled at the conservative Catholic culture there, he traveled frequently to Chicago and founded the *Review of Politics*, a (still-existing) journal that put Catholic ideas into conversation with secular and socialist ones.⁹⁴

Back in New York, Winter and Hildebrand continued to fight fascism in their own ways. Winter taught at the New School and published hand-wringing essays in *Social Research* about the many mistakes Austria had made in its handling of the labor question.⁹⁵ Hildebrand argued tirelessly, in lectures and radio addresses, that Nazism and fascism were antithetical to Christianity. In a country where Franco was still quite popular among Catholics, he claimed that Franco’s (neutral) Spain represented “one of the forms of Fascism which we have been fighting.” He published articles on “Fascism and Catholicism” in which he condemned Catholic racism in the name of democracy, personalism, human rights, and dignity. He even retained his good cheer, and a profile in the *New York Post* reported on his disastrous efforts to cook Italian food in his adopted home.⁹⁶

Maritain threw himself into antifascist organizing with his characteristic energy. The Resistance represented to him some of the central elements of his pluralist commonweal, insofar as it brought together Communists, Catholics, and more in defiance of the common fascist enemy. Georges Bidault, one of the titanic leaders of the Resistance, was a left-leaning Catholic who had been in Maritain’s orbit for years. Gaston Fessard, the intellectual leader of the Catholic resistance on the ground, was likewise a

longtime friend of both Hildebrand and Maritain. Fessard had taken part in a roundtable on *Integral Humanism*, sharing with Maritain a zeal for a “new Christendom” and a rejection of the Catholic and fascist search for ersatz father figures.⁹⁷ During the war, he founded and edited *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien* (*Notebooks of Christian Witness*), the premier Catholic publication of the Resistance—and one in which Maritain published a crusading assault on Catholic racism.⁹⁸

Maritain wrote feverishly during the war and became something of an intellectual celebrity. Most notably, he penned a pathbreaking text called “Christianity and Democracy,” in which he called for a “more human world oriented toward an historic ideal of human brotherhood.”⁹⁹ The pamphlet was airdropped behind enemy lines by the American military (two American officials, in their proposal to use his writings, called him the “foremost living French philosopher”).¹⁰⁰ He also delivered radio addresses that were beamed into occupied France, and here, too, he gave voice to fraternal Catholicism: “Christians are renouncing the old paternalist conceptions, such as the temptation of a state corporatism that turns fatally towards Fascism, in the name of a sane organization of the profession founded on syndical liberties.” “Although I am not saying that Christians are becoming socialists or socialists Christians,” he continued, “they are perceiving that they can work together to reconstruct the nation.”¹⁰¹

Maritain and other fraternal Catholics believed that the war might clear the way for a new, more pluralist, and more federalist Europe. Maritain had been urging political federalism for years, viewing it as the geopolitical translation of his pluralism. He started to emphasize it even more during the war, writing as he was in a New York City abuzz with federalist plans for the postwar world (he was friendly with Hannah Arendt, who was imagining a federalist solution for Palestine just as Maritain was doing for Europe).¹⁰² In lectures that were circulated throughout France as resistance tracts and reported in the *New York Herald Tribune*, he proposed a federal Germany in a federal Europe; in *Commonweal*, he even began arguing for a “federal European army or police force.”¹⁰³

For all of the energy behind Maritain’s various projects, it remains the case that his positions, and fraternal Catholicism in general, remained in the minority—even among exiles and even among supporters of the American war effort. The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 could plausibly have led to a new hegemony for Maritain’s form of antifascist Catholicism, at least among the Allies. After all, it was the Communists

who were suffering and dying most atrociously. Surprisingly, it did not. “War,” Maritain judged in 1943, “does not have transformative power on its own.”¹⁰⁴ The mere fact of the war, in other words, did not necessarily alter ideas or aspirations—nor, specifically, did it necessarily privilege fraternal Catholicism over its opponent.

The continuing hegemony of paternal Catholic modernism was apparent in the pope’s Christmas messages as well as in the exile community itself. The most important intellectual text of the wartime Catholic Church was probably a 1942 “Manifesto on the War,” signed by about forty “European Catholics sojourning in America.” Maritain eventually signed, but unhappily. The manifesto, drafted largely by exiles in Quebec, ably repeated the new lingua franca of the Catholic 1930s, making the case for religious liberty, human dignity, and human rights. This much was not surprising. The true drama concerned whether it would represent paternal or fraternal Catholic modernism. And after some behind-the-scenes wrangling, it clearly espoused the former.

Even though it urged support of an American-led war effort against fascism, which included the Soviet Union as an ally, the 1942 manifesto was more of an anti-Communist text than an antifascist one. It mentioned anti-Communism as a principle *before* anti-Nazism, and it perversely argued that the Soviet sacrifice would give the “Western world” the “freedom of action” it needed to oppose “the development within its own body of the Communist ferment by any fitting action.” The manifesto presumed the survival of the nation-state in a basically unaltered form, repeating Catholic bromides about substate institutions but clearly designating them as “inferior” to the state, which was suggested as a solution to the problems of the 1930s (the text even suggested that “a particularly vigorous political authority” might be necessary). The manifesto stated explicitly, too, that capitalism was not at issue in the war.¹⁰⁵

The 1942 manifesto, therefore, essentially argued that anti-Communism, corporatism, and the nation-state were solutions to wartime chaos—not, as Maritain had long believed, *causes* of it. It is surprising, then, that Maritain signed the manifesto at all, and there are indications that he was reluctant to do so. He was privately critical of it, pointing out to a friend that it was “unconsciously tending towards a corporatist state.” He had, behind the scenes, forced some alterations (apparently, the first version of the text had explicitly distinguished Nazism from the “authoritarian regimes” that “Christian nations” had pursued from time to time). Nonetheless, his

archives are replete with letters from antifascists complaining about the text's severe limitations. Luigi Sturzo, one of Italy's premier antifascist intellectuals, wrote to protest, reasonably enough, that the manifesto was too obviously a product of the authoritarian, antidemocratic Catholicism he had long been fighting. Yves Simon, one of Maritain's closest friends and intellectual compatriots, complained about the "idiot manifesto" that Maritain had been forced to salvage before eventually signing. Waldemar Gurian griped that the manifesto trafficked in the old "ideology of the West." "I'll give my signature out of respect for you," Gurian decided, since Maritain had "lost so much time improving the manifesto."¹⁰⁶

And yet Maritain, who a few years earlier had been organizing ideologically pristine antifascist manifestos of his own, signed anyway, as did many of his comrades. During the war, and especially in the postwar era, fraternal Catholics were forced to abandon their ideological purity and make a series of compromises. The very survival of the Church was at stake, and even Maritain was not going to let his principles disrupt the formation of alliances during the greatest armed conflict the world has ever known. These compromises, which continued into the postwar era, have distracted attention from the monumental intellectual achievement of Hildebrand, Winter, Gurian, Maritain, and the other Catholic writers who forged a Catholic antifascism in the 1930s. It was not a liberalism or socialism in disguise, nor did it represent Christian Democracy *avant la lettre*. Catholic antifascism was genuinely Catholic, rooted in the antistatist and pluralist traditions of social Catholic thinking, updated in a modern and interfaith key to confront modern and interfaith problems. Then and since, some have argued that the Church's compromises with fascism and anti-Semitism reveal the secret truth of a hierarchical, obtuse, and outdated institution. Maritain and the Catholic antifascists remind us that another story is possible. They agreed with the great English Catholic writer G. K. Chesterton, who judged that "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."¹⁰⁷