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Catholic Action in Twentieth-Century Oregon: The Divergent Political and Social
Philosophies of Hall S. Lusk and Francis J. Murnane

by

Ian Alan Berge

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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in
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Abstract

Catholic Action was an international movement that encouraged active promotion of the Catholic faith by ordinary believers. While the idea gained force at a local level in Italy in the early twentieth century, Pope Pius XI gave the philosophy official Church approval in 1931. Catholic Action served as a major intellectual and religious force among American Catholics from the Great Depression until the transformations in Catholicism caused by the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965. The program encouraged American Catholics both to promote the practice of the faith among fellow Church members and to express Catholic teachings in the public realm in order to influence political and economic policy.

Because the Church's social teaching articulated strong reservations regarding free-market capitalism, Catholic Action proved compelling to progressives and leftists among the faithful. American Catholic leftists during this era continued a long tradition of social justice activism among Catholic immigrant workers and their descendants. Yet Catholic political mobilization could also serve conservative ends, as when believers gathered in rallies against Hollywood movies or communism. Regardless of whether they engaged in progressive or conservative activism, however, Catholics' organized efforts in the mid-twentieth century fortified their already strong sense of religious identity.

This thesis examines two Catholic public figures in Portland, Oregon during the era of Catholic Action: Hall S. Lusk, a lawyer who held many public offices including that of Oregon Supreme Court Justice, and Francis J. Murnane, a leader in the

International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. Biographies of the two men demonstrate that the two served as important spokesmen for Catholic principles in mostly non-Catholic Portland. While Lusk viewed Catholic Action as an opportunity to strengthen American Catholics' devotion to the nation, Murnane's version authorized radical dissent against the nation's social and economic structure. An analytical chapter examines how the same Catholic Action philosophy drove the two men in different directions politically but imbued each with a strong sense of Catholic identity. The Conclusion discusses the continued relevance of the study of the Catholic Action period by pointing to the surprising durability of Catholic cultural cohesion throughout American history and to the powerful force that religious faith possesses to inspire activists on both the left and the right.

To the memory of my grandfather, Dr. Michael S. Mason (1928-2014)

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Introduction

In a 2014 *New Yorker* review of several books on secularization in the modern world, writer Adam Gopnik summarized a widespread perception of the decline of religion: "...the enlargement of well-being in at least the northern half of the planet during the past couple of centuries is discontinuous with all previous times. The daily miseries of the Age of Faith scarcely exist in our Western Age of Fatuity....As incomes go up, steeples come down."¹ This vision of the progress of science, material well-being, and secularism has had its true believers for centuries. In 1793, a colonial lecturer named Nicholas Collin expressed the same basic idea in an address to the American Philosophical Society in which he argued that the "gloomy superstition disseminated by ignorant illiberal preachers" would be "dispelled by the rays of science, and the bright charms of rising civilization."²

Yet soon after Collin gave this address, the Second Great Awakening led to a remarkable increase in Protestant religious observance in the United States. Similarly, the influence of religion in world affairs today shows little sign of weakening, despite the affluence of the Western world and, increasingly, countries like India and China as well. From religiously-based conflict between Sunni and Shi'a in Iraq, to the popularity of the devoutly Hindu Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, to the work of Christian missionary doctors risking their lives amidst the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, religion retains its power both to motivate actions of great cruelty and to inspire works of compassion. For all the empirical evidence of the power of religious ideas in human

history, however, historians creating narratives about the past have at times overlooked the strength of organized faith traditions.

Historian Michael Kazin wrote in his 1995 work *The Populist Persuasion* of “the gap between those who see ordinary Americans primarily in economic terms and those who view the people as belonging to God....”³ In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant schools in the study of American history stood firmly in the first camp. The New History which arose in the first decades of the century looked to tangible, material factors to explain the emergence of a uniquely American character. Charles and Mary Beard viewed economic interests as being most important, while Frederick Jackson Turner pointed to the frontier’s place in American history. After World War II, however, the materialist view of American history came into question as historians like Samuel Eliot Morrison and Richard Hofstadter again emphasized the role of ideas in shaping history.⁴ These scholars were active in an era in which religious observance and interest in the spiritual sphere was on the rise in American culture.

The study of American religious history, therefore, underwent a revival which continues to influence the field into the present day. Sydney E. Ahlstrom’s *A Religious History of the American People* (1972) set a standard for later scholars of religion in American culture. Martin Marty’s prolific studies of American Protestant history emphasized the unique characteristics of American Christianity and the interaction between religious thought and changes in the larger political and cultural realms. Recent historians have acknowledged the powerful role of faith traditions in shaping the course of American history. Mark A. Noll has examined the influence of Christian thought on

the Founders and their successors, while historians of nineteenth-century America document the powerful religious ideas which drove social and political movements from the abolitionists to the Populists.⁵

While these historians focused on the religion of America's Protestant majority, the study of American Catholic history also underwent a transformation and revival in the second half of the twentieth century. Around the time of World War II, Monsignor John Tracy Ellis created the modern study of American Catholic history by grounding it in the same methods of primary source research as other subjects. Ellis's successors focused less on the actions of bishops and more on the experiences and faith lives of ordinary Catholics. Jay Dolan examined local parish records, Catholic newspapers, and oral histories to create accounts of the beliefs, practices, and values of ordinary Catholics in various eras. Robert Orsi expanded on this effort with *The Madonna of 115th Street* (1988), his influential study of the faith lives of Italian immigrant women. Historian John T. McGreevy stressed the role of Catholic ideas and cultural values in twentieth-century American intellectual and political disputes in *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (1996).⁶

The power of religious philosophies as forces in American political discourse has received the attention of a number of historians in recent years. David Reynolds's *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (2008) placed the Second Great Awakening at the center of his story of the development of a unique American culture and politics in the years from 1815 to 1848. Michael Kazin's *A Godly Hero* (2007) recounted the life of William Jennings Bryan and the attraction which his biblically-based message of social

justice held for a wide array of ordinary Americans. Kazin also paid close attention to the religious language of such radicals as the Progressives and the Oklahoma socialists in *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (2011). In *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (2004), David Chappell convincingly portrayed black Southerners' struggle for civil rights as a religious revival which succeeded because it based its ideology and approach on the tradition of the biblical prophets rather than on the thinking of liberal intellectuals.⁷

Historians of American Catholicism have rounded out this picture by examining the wide influence of Catholic political ideology on U.S. history. McGreevy contends that "most historians know less about American Catholic intellectual life... than about a 'republican' tradition already in decline by the late eighteenth century, or a socialism distinguished in the United States by its brevity." In contrast to the failure of American socialists to build the kinds of political parties and associations that their counterparts in Europe did, American Catholics built an enduring network of schools, hospitals, universities, and clubs which strongly influenced the history of many regions of the country. McGreevy's own *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (2003), building on the work of Dolan, Charles Morris, and Philip Gleason, tells the story of American Catholicism acting as a dynamic political and cultural force which has sometimes supported and at other times clashed with the ideas of American liberalism.⁸

Historians working outside of the field of American Catholic history have also come to appreciate the role of Catholicism in shaping American political thought. Kazin's *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* takes Catholic thought seriously

and deals with the way in which the Church and its members shaped the development of American populism in the mid-twentieth century. Alan Brinkley's histories of twentieth-century liberalism and its critics have examined Catholic demagogues like Father Charles Coughlin during the Great Depression.⁹ In short, historians have long recognized Catholicism's influence on both New Deal liberalism and on the conservative backlash against liberalism, two of the defining features of twentieth-century American political history.

Despite a rich historiography on American Catholic life, however, historians have paid insufficient attention to the history of Catholic leftism in the United States. In his introduction to *American Dreamers*, Kazin places Catholic leftists alongside social democrats and pacifists as activists who presented interesting ideas but had little impact on American history. Yet one could argue that Catholic leftists had a greater lasting influence than some of the groups that Kazin examines. Kazin profiles the German socialists who built an array of institutions and political power in early twentieth-century Milwaukee.¹⁰ These activists, however, did not create associations as enduring or influential as those arising from the Catholic working class. In addition to establishing a variety of long-lasting social justice organizations, including the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Catholics served as an important pillar of labor organizations such as the Knights of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations.¹¹ Kazin certainly acknowledges that Catholics served as leaders of these groups, but rarely explores the extent to which Catholic faith and culture impelled these activists towards radicalism.

In some ways, historians' overlooking of Catholic activism resembles their misperceptions about the middle class. In *The Radical Middle Class*, Robert D. Johnston wrote of scholars' blind spot regarding the historical radicalism of ordinary Americans. From Lewis Corey's 1935 analysis of middling Americans as friends of fascism to Barbara Eirenreich's 1989 accusation that they were "indifferent to the nonelite majority," historians have frequently viewed Middle America as conservative and incapable of producing historic change.¹² Johnston argues against this view by presenting a series of middle-class political movements surrounding such issues as the single-tax and the "Oregon System" of direct democracy that promoted radical structural change in early twentieth-century American politics and economics. Johnston discovers a historic middle-class politics which was anti-capitalist precisely because it favored widespread private property in order to reduce large concentrations of wealth.¹³

Johnston presents a political and economic vision strikingly similar to that of Catholic activists in the same period. The political philosophy of Distributism, popular mainly with a small group of British Catholic writers in the first half of the twentieth century, held that wide distribution of private property would create a more just society than either capitalism or socialism. This loose movement was influenced by the economic writings of the early twentieth-century popes, and in turn influenced genuinely radical activists like the Catholic Workers.¹⁴ Distributism exemplified Catholic social teaching which held that the economy should promote stable families and communities. This encouraged Progressive-era Catholic activists like Father Edwin V. O'Hara of Oregon to

seek minimum wage laws for both men and women in order to ensure that parents could financially support their children.¹⁵

Unfortunately, Johnston demonstrates a lack of empathy for the Catholic philosophy so similar to that of the middle-class activists he admiringly profiles. For example, the author expresses disappointment in O'Hara for advocating mere "reform" which "would not have involved overturning the general structure of inequality...."¹⁶ Yet Catholic social reformism, which appeared to be moderate because it avoided doing away with capitalism entirely, actually contained a latent radicalism. During World War II, Irish Catholic labor leader Philip Murray proposed a plan influenced by the economic writings of Pope Pius XI that would have placed important industries under the leadership of councils in which workers and managers were equally represented. The New Deal administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt considered this idea too dangerous and therefore it went nowhere.¹⁷ Yet Murray's plan represents the audacious nature of the Catholic social vision. In contrast to Marxism, in which the state would run industries, the Catholic plan sought to give the representatives of workers a vote in major economic policy decisions.

Like leftist Catholic history, the history of Western American Catholicism suffers from a lack of consideration. Historian Anne Butler points out that historians of American Catholicism have long fixated on the experiences of Irish immigrants in the East. General histories of the American Church such as Morris's and Dolan's focus their search for the sources of American Catholic character in nineteenth-century cities such as New York, Boston, and Baltimore, where Irish immigrants built a dynamic Catholic

culture in the face of hostility from native-born Protestants. As important as the Irish story is, Butler points out that the Catholic history of the United States stretches back to the seventeenth-century Southwest and argues for centering American Catholic history on the dramatic tale of the Spanish migration to New Mexico. This story of conflict and accommodation between the Spanish and numerous Indian cultures offers even more relevant lessons to the modern, multicultural Catholic Church than the story of the Irish immigrants.¹⁸

David Emmons has worked to connect a narrative of the Catholic West with the East by focusing on the history of Irish immigrant workers in the western states. In his studies of Butte, Montana, and other Irish enclaves in the West, Emmons describes urban centers dominated by Catholic immigrants who held on to deep connections with their homeland. These cities were more like the industrial towns of the East than the independent, frontier West of mythology. Emmons portrays the West as the center of American industrialism and radicalism, and also as the region most influenced by the Catholicism of immigrant workers. For Emmons, the modern Catholic history of the West is an important field which has received too little attention from historians of the West, American Catholicism, and the American labor movement.¹⁹

The study of the “Catholic Action” period of American Catholic history can help to fill in some of the gaps in historiography. Catholic Action, which arose in early twentieth-century Italy and was officially recognized by Pope Pius XI in 1931, created profound changes in the American Catholic Church from the Great Depression to the late 1950s. Catholic Action was a movement which mobilized laypeople to promote the

practice of the faith and the spread of Catholic values in the public realm. One aspect of the movement therefore focused on a revival of Catholic devotional practices, including such rituals as the public praying of the rosary.²⁰ However, the Catholic writer Stanislaus Riley noted in 1935 that Catholic Action concerned itself “with all divine and human interests in this world: with morality, economics, social movements, legislation.”²¹ As a result, Catholic Action also involved the efforts of Catholic activists to fight for social justice against the economic status quo.

The study of Catholic Action therefore allows historians to recognize the influence of the Catholic faith on the history of the modern American left. Historians James O’Toole and John McGreevy both identify the Catholic Workers as part of the American Catholic Action effort. The Catholic Workers, founded by the converted journalist Dorothy Day and the French immigrant activist Peter Maurin in 1933, had a public voice in the *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and a local presence in urban Houses of Hospitality spread across the nation. As advocates for the poor, pacifists, and anarchists, the Catholic Workers offered a clear example of a Catholic challenge to the nation’s basic political and economic structure. Though relatively few Catholics joined the movement, Dorothy Day’s popularity among her fellow believers indicates the appeal of activism in the era of Catholic Action.²²

A focus on Catholic Action also allows for the American West to become a major setting for Catholic history. Cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, and Denver served as centers for Catholic Action efforts. Historian William Issel has demonstrated the influence of Catholic Action on San Francisco through his study of lawyer and politician

Sylvester Andriano. Andriano mediated between employers, the city, and workers during San Francisco's 1934 longshoremen's strike. Following Catholic social teaching, he believed that workers had the right to strike in order to obtain family wage jobs. He argued that fellow Catholics needed to fight for economic justice in order to prevent workers from being attracted to Communism. Issel's history illuminates the intense rivalry between Catholics and Communists in San Francisco during the Depression. In fact, some of Andriano's old Communist enemies would later testify against him when Andriano was investigated for suspected loyalty to Fascist Italy during World War II.²³

Issel's research indicates that the study of Catholic Action helps to connect Western American Catholic history with larger events and ideas in modern U.S. and twentieth-century world history. This thesis will examine those fascinating connections through a study of the careers of two Catholic public figures in Portland, Oregon, in the period between the First World War and 1960. Hall Lusk influenced Oregon politics through his work as an attorney, federal judge, Oregon Supreme Court Justice, and U.S. Senator. Francis Murnane affected Portland history as a labor leader with the International Woodworkers of America and with the International Longshormen's and Warehousemen's Union.

Both men also served as important forces in Portland outside their professions. Lusk took part in many civic organizations and was a well-known public speaker, while Murnane enthusiastically pursued a passion for preserving Portland's historic buildings. Each man is important enough to deserve his own thesis-length biography, but this study will focus on one important characteristic which both men shared. Both men were

observant Catholics. Their Catholicism influenced their public careers in mostly non-Catholic Portland, while they served as leaders within their religious communities. They were most active when Catholic Action defined the intellectual climate of American Catholicism, and the two of them helped to represent the diversity of Catholic Action thought in the mid twentieth-century United States.

This thesis presents the biographies of these two figures followed by a third analytical chapter. The first chapter will argue that Hall Lusk served as a significant leader among Oregon Catholics and helped his community gain a more secure legal and social position in the state. The second chapter will detail how Francis Murnane offered a powerful and influential public expression of the ideas of the Catholic Left in Portland. The third chapter will compare and contrast Lusk's and Murnane's versions of Catholic Action. Lusk represented a more centrist wing of Catholic Action focused on the promotion of patriotism and religious devotion, while Murnane offered a dissenting vision of broad economic and political change based on Catholic principles. However, both men shared assumptions and values as Catholic Action thinkers that differentiated them from the mostly Protestant and Jewish liberal intellectuals who set the terms for American political and scholarly debate during the middle of the twentieth century.

The careers and thought of Lusk and Murnane should be of interest to historians of the American West, but also to readers interested in the influence of religious ideas on the political and intellectual history of other regions and countries. Lusk and Murnane were strongly engaged in the important political issues of their day: the world wars; the Great Depression; the struggle between Communists, fascists, and liberals; and the

campaigns for racial justice for black Americans. Yet they thought about these problems from the perspective of the ancient intellectual tradition of Roman Catholicism. Lusk and Murnane provide small examples of the important truth that religious belief continued to play an instrumental role in motivating political activists in the twentieth century as it had in previous centuries. The Conclusion to the thesis will carry this theme forward and examine how Catholicism continued to remain a dynamic political and cultural force in American life to the present day.

Notes:

¹ Adam Gopnik, "Bigger than Phil," *The New Yorker* (February 17, 2014), <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/02/17/bigger-phil>

² Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 577.

³ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 4.

⁴ Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 42-3.

⁵ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972); Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶ Steven M. Avella, "Introduction," *Catholicism in the American West: A Rosary of Hidden Voices*, Roberto R. Trevino and Richard V. Francaviglia, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 3-5.; Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975); Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁷ David S. Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007); Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011); David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

⁸ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 14; Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism*; Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America's Most Powerful Church* (New York: Vintage Books of Random House, 1997); Philip Gleason, *Keeping the Faith: American Catholicism Past and Present* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1987).

⁹ Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, Revised ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1983)

¹⁰ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, xix; 118-22.

¹¹ Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 168.

¹² Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4-5.

¹³ Johnston, 28.

¹⁴ Garry Wills, *Why I Am a Catholic* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 40.

¹⁵ Patricia Brandt and Lillian A. Pereyra, *Adapting in Eden: Oregon's Catholic Minority, 1838-1986* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2002), 90.

¹⁶ Johnston, 25.

¹⁷ Dolan, 265.

¹⁸ Anne M. Butler, "The Invisible Flock: Catholicism and the American West," *Catholicism in the American West: A Rosary of Hidden Voices*, Roberto R. Trevino and Richard V. Francaviglia, eds. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 17-19.

¹⁹ David Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845-1910* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 35-39.

²⁰ James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 146-9.

²¹ William Issel, *For Both Cross and Flag: Catholic Action, Anti-Catholicism, and National Security Politics in World War II San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 66.

²² O'Toole, 162-3.

²³ Issel, 49; 124.

Chapter I: A Political Biography of Hall S. Lusk

On January 20, 1961, the Catholic cardinal of Boston, Richard Cushing, led a prayer at the beginning of the presidential inauguration. Most citizens of the United States in the early years of the Republic, whether they were Deists, Congregationalists, or Baptists, would have been nervous at the sight. The fact that Cushing was opening the inauguration of a fellow Catholic as President of the United States would have been even more worrying. Even thirty years before Kennedy's election, many Catholics doubted whether they would ever see one of their own make it to the White House.¹ In 1928, Herbert Hoover's crushing defeat of Al Smith of New York in a campaign marked by religious bigotry implied to many Catholics that, in Smith's words, "the time hasn't come when a man can say his beads in the White House."² The story of these two presidential elections demonstrates that Catholics managed to win a new place in American society between the 1920s and 1960. The end of mass Catholic immigration from Europe in 1924 and a sense of American unity created by World War II and the Cold War played a part in convincing the majority of Protestant Americans to embrace their Catholic neighbors as true American citizens. However, Catholics themselves served as the most important actors in their struggle to gain full acceptance in the United States.

The history of Oregon's Catholic community between 1920 and 1960 serves as an important example of the story of Catholic acculturation to American society. Oregon's Catholics grew from a defensive population beleaguered by discrimination in 1923 to a confident Church whose leadership and members took an active role in public affairs by

1960. Lay Catholic Oregonians from all walks of life played a significant role in the struggle to gain full religious equality in Oregon. Among these lay Catholic activists was Portland lawyer Hall S. Lusk, who held a variety of important offices during his political career, including judge, state Supreme Court Justice, and U.S. Senator. Hall Lusk played a significant role in the legal and social advancement of Oregon's Catholic community through his legal work, political career, and public actions as a prominent Catholic figure.

Lusk's upbringing prepared him to play a key part in the struggle for Catholic rights in Oregon. He was an ideal figure to serve as a spokesman for the Catholic community during a period in which many Protestant Oregonians viewed Catholics as a dangerous foreign element. Unlike most American Catholics, Lusk came from a Scots-Irish family which traced its roots on the continent back to colonial days. Born in Washington, D.C., in 1883, Lusk was the son of a lawyer who worked for the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions. He excelled at Georgetown University, the oldest Catholic university in the nation, earning a Bachelor's degree in 1904 and a Law degree in 1907.³ College attendance remained rare among Catholics in the early twentieth century: historian Garry Wills writes that at this time "...it was almost a boast that no American bishop had a college-educated parent."⁴

Lusk's higher education only deepened his commitment to the faith of his upbringing. He later looked back with gratitude on the distinctively spiritual education which he had received at Georgetown: "Knowledge of the arts and sciences was considered important, but not of supreme importance. The great object was to fit the boy with a set of sound principles and the fixed purpose to apply those principles to the affairs

of life...”⁵ His was one of many recorded expressions of pride that Catholic colleges had maintained their religious identity at a time when the historically Protestant Ivy League schools were becoming increasingly secular.⁶ Believing himself armed with both intellectual and spiritual strength from his education, Lusk set off to make his fortune as a lawyer in Oregon in 1909.

Lusk made some of his earliest public statements in Oregon during the patriotic fervor surrounding World War I. Oregon’s Catholics, like Church members around the United States, played an active role in America’s participation in the First World War. Nationally, approximately one million Catholics volunteered for military service and made up roughly one-fifth of the armed forces during the war.⁷ In Oregon, 178 teachers and students from Columbia University (later the University of Portland) enlisted in the military.⁸ As a married father of five daughters, Lusk supported the war effort from home by giving speeches in support of the sale of Liberty bonds.⁹ In one talk, he warned that Germany was an authoritarian state with “ambitious plans of world conquest” and predicted that “the two divergent principles—militaristic autocracy on the one hand and democracy on the other—[could] not live in the same world together.”¹⁰ Lusk, like many American Catholics, embraced President Woodrow Wilson’s justification for the war as a crusade for democracy.

In response to the transformations in American culture during World War I and its aftermath, the second incarnation of the Ku Klux Klan spread across the country with promises to oppose foreign influences and protect the moral purity of white, Protestant Americans. In Oregon, the repercussions of the state’s increasing connection with the

national capitalist economy worried many middle-class and working-class people. These concerns centered on labor unrest, crime, immigration, race, and ethnicity. After World War I, thousands of men and women in overwhelmingly white, native-born, and Protestant Oregon viewed the Klan as a protector against the corruptions of the modern economy and culture.¹¹ The Klan picked out Oregon's network of Catholic schools as the most dangerous carrier of foreign values in the state. The sisters in these academies taught the Catholic faith, which the Klan viewed as a dogmatic value system incompatible with democracy and individualism. The schools also served as preservers of ethnic and cultural traditions among such groups as the Germans of Mount Angel and the Italians and Croatians of Portland, perceived threats to the Klan ideal of 100% Americanism.¹²

In the early 1920s, the Oregon Klan organized to work against the perceived power and influence of Catholic education in the state. Sometimes, they did this through public protest: years later, Catholic labor activist Francis Murnane could "...recall vividly how I felt when the Klansmen used to impudently station themselves at the door of St. Lawrence Church [in South Portland] and hand out their leaflets."¹³ More importantly, the Klan and allies such as the Scottish Rite Masons threw their newfound organizing and political power behind the Compulsory School Bill ballot initiative in Oregon's 1922 election. This successful measure required that all children between the ages of eight and sixteen attend public schools, effectively outlawing Catholic education in the state. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, who ran many schools in the state, immediately challenged the law as unconstitutional. At the same time, the Hill Military

Academy in Portland, a secular private school, also challenged the law in federal district court; judges decided to join the two cases. The patriotic and devoutly Catholic Lusk joined the legal team for the Sisters led by fellow Portland Catholic attorney J.P.

Kavanaugh. After the Sisters won the case and achieved an injunction against the law at the District Court level, the State of Oregon appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which began hearing arguments on the matter in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* in March 1925.¹⁴

Lusk played an important role in the case that historian and Jesuit priest James Hennesey would later term “the Magna Carta for Catholic education in the United States.”¹⁵ Oregon Historical Society historians interviewed Lusk about the suit in 1982. Unfortunately, Lusk was 99 years old at the time and his memory was not what it had once been. Nevertheless, he still remembered that the Klan had attempted to promote a similar school law in Michigan before succeeding in passing the Oregon initiative.¹⁶ He also could recall some other important details even nearly sixty years after the case. Lusk remembered that Catholic lawyer John P. Kavanaugh had gotten him involved in the case. He also noted that the lawyers for the Sisters worked with John S. Veatch, attorney for the Hill Military Academy. Lusk’s recollections in his old age cannot be used to provide a complete understanding of his role in the *Pierce* case. But his answers do provide some insight. While he remembered that he did not present oral arguments before the Supreme Court because other experienced lawyers on the Sisters’ legal team took this role, he did state that he collaborated with the other lawyers in crafting the team’s arguments.¹⁷

The way in which the lawyers structured their case demonstrated a familiarity with both Catholic and American legal ideas. Historian Catherine Saks observes that the plaintiffs stuck to their successful arguments from the lower court case. While all of the attorneys working for the Sisters were believing Catholics, as professionally-credentialed lawyers they created arguments against the School Bill based in the religiously-neutral language of the Constitution. The lawyers argued that since supporters of the law had spread anti-Catholic literature before the passage of the initiative, the law represented a denial of the religious freedom of Catholics to operate their own schools. They further challenged the School Bill as a violation of the rights of parents to decide the education of their children and as a violation of the property rights of the Sisters as a corporation to maintain private schools.¹⁸

Lusk presented the case for Catholic schools in an article published in the *Georgetown College Journal* called “The Fight for Educational Freedom”, in which he portrayed the law as violating the secular ideal of efficiency. He claimed that the elimination of competition from private academies would lead to a decline in the quality of public schools.¹⁹ In this way Catholics, who were portrayed by the Ku Klux Klan as being narrow-minded sectarians, sought to ground their arguments in an appeal to the universal rights of all American citizens. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Sisters and upheld the District Court’s invalidation of Oregon’s law as unconstitutional. Though he did not argue before the Supreme Court, Lusk had publicized the plaintiffs’ case against the law in addition to helping prepare the Sister’s legal team for the hearing. Lusk

clearly played a role in a legal case of great importance for the survival and growth of Oregon's Catholic community and Catholic communities across the nation.

Lusk's career during the Great Depression, World War II, and the early Cold War demonstrated the newly assertive tone of American Catholic culture during the period which historians refer to as the "Age of Catholic Action" and American Catholicism's "Golden Age."²⁰ Catholic laypeople in the United States formed a large number of organizations between 1930 and 1960 with two major goals: the social and economic reform of society and the spreading of Catholic values to the world outside their churches. Walter Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel movement, with its belief in using biblical values to critique the social and economic structure, influenced the American branch of the movement known as Catholic Action. In the United States, Catholic nuns had been practicing their own form of the Social Gospel by building an extensive network of hospitals, orphanages, and schools in impoverished urban areas and Western mining towns for years before middle-class Protestant reformers entered the slums.²¹ In 1930, Pope Pius XI granted official approval to movements of Catholic laypeople working for reform in Italy and other countries.²² Lay Catholics joined in the building up of Catholic institutions in cities and rural areas throughout the United States as well. In Portland in 1929, a layman named John Lienweber cooperated with the newly-appointed Archbishop Edward Howard to reestablish the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Oregon. This national body, which provided food and money to unemployed families, drew on working-class Catholic laymen for its membership and financial support.²³ For Catholic intellectuals and leaders like Hall Lusk, Catholic Action represented an opportunity to

combine patriotism and religious loyalty by spreading Catholic values in the traditionally Protestant United States.

Lusk aided in the revival of Portland's Catholic community after the trials of the 1920s through his public promotion of Catholic Action organizations. One of the most important of these was the Catholic Youth Organization, which had been founded in 1931 in Chicago as a way to keep Catholic youths out of trouble during the Depression and to keep their Catholic identity strong by providing them with church-sponsored sports and activities. Lay Catholics started a Portland CYO in 1935, and soon teams of boys, and eventually, girls, from parishes around the city were competing in basketball and other sports.²⁴ Lusk expressed his strong enthusiasm for the CYO in a speech to leaders of the organization that maintained that its "purpose is not only to develop athletes; it is to develop men, not only to train bodies, but to direct and organize lives..." He saw support of the movement as "...a duty which no Catholic layman would willingly avoid." According to Lusk, an organization like the CYO "...is Catholic Action—vital, practical, as noble in purpose as fruitful in results."²⁵

Lusk also supported groups which promoted a sense of pride and identity in adult Catholics, such as the Holy Name Society. This organization, popularized by the Midwestern priest Charles Hyacinth McKenna in the late 19th century, aimed to spread religious devotion among immigrant men, whom church leaders recognized possessed less enthusiasm for religion than their wives. Members promised not to use the name of Jesus disrespectfully or to swear. The society spread rapidly, and by 1924 could mass over 100,000 of its members from across the nation for a religious rally in Washington,

D.C.²⁶ Meetings of parish Holy Name Societies typically took place after Mass, and featured fellowship, breakfast, and short speeches by invited guest speakers. Lusk collaborated with a Marylhurst University priest named Father George Thompson in order to prepare an address for a parish Holy Name Society in May of 1941.²⁷ While Lusk existed in a different social world than many of the blue-collar and ethnic Holy Name members, he showed a commitment to their cause of promoting Catholic identity in contemporary society.

Lusk also demonstrated support for the most important of the rallying movements for working-class male Catholics in the mid-twentieth century. Irish-Americans in New Haven, Connecticut, had founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882. The organization chose as its patron not a saint but Christopher Columbus, consciously identifying with one of the nation's few founding figures who was also Catholic.²⁸ Starting out as a mutual aid society, the Knights spread rapidly, despite facing opposition both from Catholic bishops suspicious of laymen organizing themselves and from Protestant nativists convinced that the Knights were plotting to overthrow the American government in their secret meetings.²⁹ The Knights established a Portland Council in 1902, whose members proved their numbers and effectiveness nine years later by lobbying the legislature and Democratic Governor Oswald West to establish Columbus Day as a state holiday.³⁰ Throughout the West, the Knights also served as one of the main forces in opposition to the rise of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan.³¹

The Knights strongly believed that American Catholics could offer firm loyalty both to the Roman Catholic Church and to the United States. In this, they shared much

with the philosophy of Hall Lusk, who believed that a Catholic citizen should be taught to, "... give something of value to the community in which he lived, the country to which he owed allegiance, the Church whose truths he espoused."³² Lusk supported the Portland Knights of Columbus through public lectures, as he did with the CYO and Holy Name Society. In 1950, a doctor named Martin Gilmore wrote to Lusk thanking him for his talk at a K. of C. breakfast, noting that it was "good to hear such sound thinking in this day of much hysteria and emotionalism."³³ By this time, the group had grown beyond its early working-class membership to include professionals such as doctors and lawyers, but retained its core commitment of combining American patriotism with Catholic loyalty.

In addition to supporting organizations within the Catholic community, Lusk sought to participate in groups which built bridges to members of other religious denominations. In particular, he concerned himself with the Catholic Action project of answering the questions of both liberal and conservative Protestants as to whether Catholics could be considered loyal Americans. Concerned by the fascist movements which ruled Catholic Italy and threatened to conquer Catholic Spain in the 1930s, secular intellectuals assumed the lead role in questioning the capacity of Catholics to live in a democracy.³⁴ In Portland, priests such as Father Francis Schaefer and Father Martin Thielen who went out of their way to speak publicly in favor of the Spanish fascists fueled many citizens' suspicions.³⁵ In 1949, as liberals transitioned from fighting fascism to communism, the Ivy League-educated lawyer Paul Blanshard published the best-seller *American Freedom and Catholic Power*. Intellectuals such as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Einstein praised the book's argument that Americans should fight

against the Catholic Church and the Soviet Union as equal dangers to liberal democracy.³⁶

By demonstrating that Catholic laypeople could think for themselves and serve their nation by helping its poor and supporting its military actions, Catholic Action organizations attempted to address the prejudices of many American citizens. In addition, Catholics participated in the growing number of associations designed to bring together Protestants, Jews, and Catholics during the trials the United States faced in both World War II and the Cold War. In 1941, a group called the Commission on American Citizenship based at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., invited Lusk to become a member. The Commission, according to its leader, Bishop Joseph Corrigan of Catholic University, contained a "...membership of more than one hundred leading men and women of the nation..." and attempted to "...serve as a rallying point for right-thinking men, irrespective of creed, who desire to perpetuate our American system of government." Bishop Corrigan stated that the commission chose Lusk for the way his work and faith had "...exemplified in such a distinguished way the best traditions of American democracy..."³⁷ Lusk accepted the offer. His participation in the Commission on American Citizenship demonstrated key leadership of his community during a time in which Catholic Oregonians were seeking to strengthen their relationship with other major religious groups.

Lusk offered further support to the effort of building of ecumenical ties through his support of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The National Conference originated in 1928 at the University of Illinois and reflected both increased religious

fervor and a growth in religious tolerance during the middle twentieth century.³⁸ The building of new churches, an increase in rates of attendance at religious services, and the popularity of religious books, radio, and television pointed to a surge of religious observance in America during the height of the Cold War with Soviet Communism in 1950s.³⁹ The swell of religiosity was particularly notable among Catholics: in a national Gallup poll from 1958, seventy-four percent of Catholics reported that they had gone to Mass in the last week. Even though a number of the respondents probably were not telling the truth, the poll still demonstrates the value which Catholics in the 1950s placed on attendance at Mass.⁴⁰ Protestants and Jews also experienced a growth in observance, and as members of all three faiths increasingly lived near each other in the suburbs, an emphasis on what held the three faiths together became more important than their theological differences.⁴¹

Lusk's records relating to the National Conference of Christians and Jews reflect the amicable atmosphere among many American religious believers of the 1950s. In a letter seeking donations to the National Conference, Catholic business owner Charles Wentworth wrote that "The first line of action [against religious intolerance] is our own neighborhood."⁴² Lusk, who like many professional American Catholics of the era worked and lived near Jews and Protestants as well as Catholics, contributed money to the Conference and attended the annual Brotherhood Banquets which the organization sponsored in Portland and other cities. Speakers at these banquets expressed the belief that religious discrimination against Jews and Catholics weakened the country in its deadly struggle against the Soviet Union. "Brotherhood begins on a man-to-man basis

here at home...” noted Eric Johnston, former president of the Motion Picture Association of America, in a broadcast shown to Brotherhood Banquets across the nation in 1951. “Without that footing,” continued Johnston, “a bridge of brotherhood is idle talk and empty vision. And ours is just as phony in the eyes of Asia as the Communists’.”⁴³ Lusk saved a transcript of this broadcast and evidently agreed that his contribution to understanding between the faiths would strengthen the nation.

A more personal example of Lusk’s attempt to build the relationship between Oregon’s Catholics and the state’s other religious communities can be found in an interesting exchange of letters between Lusk, fellow attorney Barnett Goldstein, and the influential Portland priest Thomas Tobin of All Saints Parish. Goldstein, a Jewish lawyer in Portland, and his wife Frieda, a Catholic, were preparing a European vacation during the winter of 1956. Goldstein approached his friend and colleague Lusk to ask if he could help the couple get an audience with the pope while they were in Rome. Lusk then went into action as an ambassador between Portland’s legal community and the Catholic hierarchy. Writing to Monsignor Tobin, who was known as a progressive and influential figure within the Oregon Catholic Church, Lusk asked if he could request a letter of introduction for the Goldsteins from Archbishop Edward Howard of Portland. Tobin agreed to Lusk’s request and obtained the papal introduction.⁴⁴

Lusk’s actions were fitting for a time in which Protestants, Jews, and Catholics were increasingly joining together to create the more tolerant religious culture that commentator and scholar Will Herberg wrote about in his popular work *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1953).⁴⁵ Historians have argued that cities in the West such as Denver and

Portland preceded this ecumenical mood by decades, since in the frontier period clergy of all denominations tended to cooperate to provide needed services.⁴⁶ The other two Catholic figures involved in the exchange, Monsignor Tobin and Archbishop Howard, were also deeply involved in efforts at reaching out to other faiths. The episode clearly demonstrates that Lusk's non-Catholic contemporaries in Portland's business and legal communities recognized the judge as being an influential leader within his faith community.

Lusk's political and professional success and his contributions to understanding among religions had made him a figure esteemed by both Catholic and non-Catholic Oregonians by the 1950s. After Governor Charles Henry Martin appointed Lusk to the Oregon Supreme Court in 1937, voters continually returned him to that position until his retirement in 1968. He served as Chief Justice for the court from 1949 to 1951.⁴⁷ As a mark of respect from fellow Catholics, the organizers of Archbishop Edward Howard's Silver Jubilee celebration in 1949 chose Lusk to be their chairman. He acted as the master of ceremonies at the celebration, which in the spirit of the coming decade honored devotion to both country and faith. The agenda included the singing of the Star Spangled Banner, addresses by Governor Douglas McKay and Portland Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee, Catholic hymns, and a speech by the Bishop of Dubuque, Iowa, on the importance of Catholic education.⁴⁸

Lusk's selection to another ceremonial board ten years later demonstrated that non-Catholics also viewed the Justice as a leader of Oregon's Catholic community. In 1959, the Oregon Centennial Commission created a Religion Committee to decide "...the

manner in which organized religion can most effectively participate in the celebration of Oregon's 100th birthday." The committee was to be made up of "representatives from the major denominations in the state" and included Catholic priests and sisters; Jewish rabbis; Methodist, Episcopal, and Lutheran ministers; and lay men and women from all three major faiths.⁴⁹ Lusk's selection to the committee points to his role as a leader among Oregon's Catholics in their dialogue with members of other religions in the state.

In 1960, Lusk reached a new height in his career when Governor Mark Hatfield appointed him to Oregon's vacant U.S. Senate seat. Senator Richard Neuberger, a popular liberal Democrat, had died of a brain hemorrhage in March. Hatfield felt obligated to appoint a Democrat, and needed to find someone who would be acceptable to members of both parties. Lusk, widely recognized for his competence as a judge as well as for being a conservative Democrat, seemed a perfect choice.⁵⁰ Malcolm Bauer of *The Christian Science Monitor* predicted that "...his colleagues will find that he cannot be categorized by partisan definition."⁵¹ Bauer's article notes few complaints about Lusk's appointment, except from some members of his own party who had been hoping for the appointment of the late senator's widow, Maurine Neuberger. Neuberger herself, who was preparing for a run to fill the seat permanently in November, praised the appointment. At age 76, Lusk had no interest in seeking a permanent seat at the end of the interim term. Bauer's article makes no mention of religion, except to note that Lusk and his wife Catherine were active supporters of Catholic education and charities.⁵² This fact marked how much more accepting of Catholics Oregon had become since the beginning of Lusk's public career. In the early 1920s, when the Ku Klux Klan held

power, Catholic politicians such as Circuit Court Judge John P. Kavanaugh had resigned rather than run for reelection and face religious attacks.⁵³ Oregon seemed to have shed some of the bigotry of its past when the press reported no uproar due to a Protestant governor replacing a Jewish politician with a Catholic judge as the state's representative in the U.S. Senate.

Despite the lack of religious tension at the time of his Senate appointment, Lusk spent much of his energy during his six-month term dealing with a new wave of anti-Catholic propaganda inspired by Democrat John F. Kennedy's 1960 run for the presidency. By the late 1950s, the ecumenical attitude and shared patriotism of the decade had convinced the vast majority of American Protestants that they had nothing to fear from their Catholic neighbors. Yet an odd alliance of Northern secular intellectuals and mostly Southern fundamentalist Protestants continued to worry that Catholics' religious training had denied them the independence of thought necessary to participate in a democracy.⁵⁴ These prejudices came out into the open again as it appeared that a Catholic had a good chance of making a run for the White House for the first time in thirty years. The popular Protestant minister Norman Vincent Peale, famous for his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*, read a statement which said that Americans could not allow a Catholic to become president.⁵⁵ Lusk, like Kennedy himself, expressed doubt that the "religious issue" would make much of a difference in the campaign. In October 1960, he wrote that "...the so-called religious issue is beginning to peter out, and I do not believe that it will have the influence in the campaign that a few weeks ago it was feared that it would."⁵⁶ Despite the confidence which he voiced, Lusk kept a worried eye on the

issue of anti-Kennedy propaganda in Oregon and collected a number of anti-Catholic pamphlets distributed in the state.

As anti-Catholic writings spread in Oregon during the 1960 campaign through a network of fundamentalist Protestant churches, Lusk became convinced of the necessity of speaking out against religious bigotry in his home state. One pamphlet, written by a Mrs. F.M. Standish of San Francisco and distributed at an evangelical Protestant church in Northeast Portland, demonstrated the paranoid and conspiratorial nature of much of the religiously-based opposition to the Kennedy campaign. The pamphlet, titled "Potential Catholic Militia," began with a call for "...all 100 percent Americans to begin planning ways and means to preserve our liberties and safety," echoing the language of the Ku Klux Klan forty years earlier. The author warned that Catholics in the armed forces "would also be available to consolidate into Catholic regiments at the command of their superiors in the church and the consent of the Catholic Commander-in-Chief in the White House." The Catholic militia would then "...fight with religious zeal to overthrow our government by force and violence and 'Make America Catholic.'"⁵⁷

Another anti-Kennedy sermon collected by Lusk, which Rev. Robert Lewis Benefiel delivered at Trinity Methodist Church in Southeast Portland, shows that some mainline Protestant denominations used rhetoric similar to that used by the evangelicals. Benefiel charged that Kennedy's campaign represented "...the awesome aggressiveness in our day of the forces of the Roman Catholic Church as it seeks to jam the neural and spiritual processes of men's minds and actions, seeking to gain power over them and control their every act." Religious opponents of Kennedy in 1960 did not just disagree

with some Catholic beliefs; they insisted that millions of American Catholics were conspiring to take over the country and destroy American civilization. Though Lusk doubted that this heated rhetoric would have much of an effect on the campaign, he did acknowledge that “a considerable amount of anti-Catholic propaganda has been circulating here in Oregon...”⁵⁸

Spurred by the request from an Episcopal priest in Oklahoma for his comments on the religious rhetoric of the campaign, Lusk became involved in the effort to defend Kennedy from attacks on his religion. The Episcopal priest, E. John Dorr, was collecting the thoughts of a variety of Catholic and Protestant public figures regarding relations between the faiths while researching a Ph.D. dissertation.⁵⁹ Lusk wrote a brief statement on the danger which anti-Catholic bigotry brought to the country. He later sent this statement along with a letter to Robert F. Kennedy, stating that he was “...anxious to do whatever I can to neutralize the effect of the anti-Catholic propaganda that is going through the mail and is being spread by word of mouth.” Lusk made clear his distaste at having to address a political question “that a loyal American dislikes to talk about as having any relevancy...” but said that Kennedy was doing the right thing in stating his belief in the separation of church and state whenever the media asked about the nominee’s religion.⁶⁰

A letter received in reply from the candidate’s brother demonstrated that Lusk’s response to the religious issue was in line with the campaign’s strategy. Robert Kennedy thanked the Oregon Democrat for his letter and the address enclosed with it. He assured Lusk that he would give the speech to the Kennedys’ religious adviser Jim Wine so that it

could be used for campaign purposes. Nevertheless, Kennedy expressed confidence that his brother's well-publicized speech to Protestant ministers in Houston would go a long way toward silencing questions about the candidate's faith.⁶¹

Lusk's statement on the Nixon-Kennedy religious issue drew on the unique history of the Catholic Church in Oregon to make an argument for the right of Catholics to run for any office in the nation. Lusk acknowledged that only a "small minority" of Protestant ministers were spreading anti-Kennedy political opinions to their congregations. Despite this and his insistence that "there should not be a religious issue in a political campaign," he had to acknowledge that religion had entered into the picture due to the presence of a Catholic as one of the major candidates. Lusk noted that because of this, old-fashioned bigotry was becoming commonplace in the United States of 1960. "Even the false and long since discredited Knights of Columbus oath," Lusk observed "is being circulated." This rumor held that the Knights of Columbus took an oath to overthrow the American government.⁶² Lusk then drew on personal experiences and on the history of Oregon's Catholic community to demonstrate the damage that religious discrimination could inflict. He recalled that "when the Ku Klux Klan was riding high in Oregon...[Catholics] came to be looked upon with aversion, suspicion, and distrust." It took years, he pointed out, for "Catholics, Protestants, and Jews [to resume] their normal, friendly intercourse."⁶³

Lusk believed that a friendly relationship between the three major faiths strengthened the nation in its struggle against outside foes, especially the Soviet Union. He framed this argument in the same language which he had used in his case for the legal

right of Catholics to operate their own schools. He wrote that that American Catholics were primarily American citizens and entitled to the same constitutional rights as other citizens. Lusk argued that Protestant tolerance for Catholic schools, Catholic organizations, and Catholic politicians would allow Catholics to dedicate their efforts to the strengthening of the community and the nation as a whole. Historian Martin Marty points to Dwight Eisenhower as the symbol of a 1950s religious style which viewed the patriotism and morality of American Protestants, Catholics, and Jews as being more significant than each community's unique theological beliefs.⁶⁴ Lusk, like Eisenhower, insisted on the mid twentieth-century ideal of America as a land of one people with three faiths.

Kennedy's election to the presidency serves as a fitting end point for this study of Lusk as a Catholic intellectual and political leader in twentieth-century America. Although Hall Lusk would not retire from the Oregon Supreme Court and from public life until eight years later, the 1960 campaign marked a turning point not only for him but for all American Catholics. Kennedy did not carry the state of Oregon, though historian Tom Marsh notes that since he won the Democratic primary, anti-Catholic sentiment probably played little role in his defeat. Oregonians' historic connection to the Republican Party more likely motivated their votes.⁶⁵ Historian Robert Donnelly also makes the case that Robert Kennedy's investigation of Portland's organized crime ring as chief counsel for the U.S. Senate's McClellan Committee from 1957 to 1960 may have cost the support of Oregon organized labor in his brother's campaign.⁶⁶ Regardless of why John Kennedy lost the state, his election to the presidency marked a major victory

for Catholics in Oregon and across the country. “Kennedy’s presidency was a triumph for Irish Americans,” writes historian of American Catholicism Jay Dolan, “signaling their final arrival and acceptance in a land where, for so long, their name and their religion were held against them.”⁶⁷

The 1960 election symbolized acceptance not only for Irish Catholics but for Catholics of a variety of ethnic groups: Italians, Germans, Croatians, Poles, Slovaks, and others. In Oregon, the election inspired Catholics to such a degree that the people of Mount Angel named their new Catholic academy John F. Kennedy High School.⁶⁸ 1960 symbolized the end of a long period of immigrant struggle and the beginning of an age in which the descendants of Catholic immigrants achieved new levels of education, affluence, and ease within the wider culture. But 1960 also marked the start of a new period of uncertainty for the Catholic community. Catholic ethnic neighborhoods (and rural enclaves like Mount Angel) weakened as families moved to the suburbs. The Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 inspired excitement among many American Catholics as the Church began to open to influences from the outside world, but also uncertainty as Church leaders deemphasized some traditional rituals and devotions. After Congress passed new immigration laws in 1965, the descendants of European Catholic immigrants often struggled to welcome the next great wave of Catholic immigration from Latin America and East Asia. Most importantly, Catholics struggled like all other Americans to deal with profound cultural changes which overtook the country in the late Sixties.⁶⁹

America's and Oregon's Catholics would never have reached this period of acceptance and uncertainty, however, without the long struggle of their predecessors from 1920 to 1960. Ordinary Catholics who left behind few historical records, such as Catholic women who socialized with their non-Catholic neighbors or Catholic soldiers who served in the military during World War II, surely played a role in convincing American society to accept Catholics as full citizens of the United States. But the Catholic community also needed intellectual and political leaders like Hall S. Lusk to use their education, eloquence, and authority to open up new doors for Catholics of all backgrounds.

From the educational struggle of 1922 to the religious controversies of the 1960 election, Hall Lusk played a crucial role in advancing the interests of Catholics in Oregon. In some instances, as with his behind-the-scenes role in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, his thinking had an influence on Catholics across the nation by protecting their right to operate their own religious schools. His support and public acknowledgement of Catholic Action organizations such as the Knights of Columbus during the Thirties and Forties helped to strengthen Catholic culture in the state. His participation in ecumenical organizations and his personal interest in interreligious dialogue helped to create a different perception of a Church which many of his Protestant and Jewish contemporaries grew up viewing as intolerant and authoritarian. Catholics and non-Catholics alike recognized Lusk as one of the most important lay leaders of his faith in the state. Finally, Lusk's activity during the 1960 election helped to combat one of the last great public

campaigns of organized anti-Catholicism in a state and country with long histories of bigotry towards Catholics.

Scholars could examine Lusk's career from several different angles: for instance, by scrutinizing his legal opinions and views on labor and property or by looking at his and his family's privileged positions in Portland's society. But examining Lusk as a Catholic leader has the advantage of demonstrating the importance of religious identity in American culture during the first half of the twentieth century. It also helps to add detail to the narrative of religious minorities such as Catholics and Jews struggling to overcome social, legal, and cultural disadvantages. Most importantly, it sheds light on the arguments which Catholics used in their intellectual struggle to gain full acceptance in American culture. These ideas helped to create the kind of country that Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence Charles Carroll had hoped for before the Revolution: a land of "unlimited toleration" where "men of all sects were to converse freely with each other."⁷⁰

Notes:

¹ James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 197.

² Jay Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 277.

³ "Hall Stoner Lusk," *Encyclopedia of Northwest Biography*, Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

⁴ Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: A History of Christianity in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 436.

⁵ Hall S. Lusk Papers, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, MSS 2640, "Oregon Supreme Court Appointment Clippings—1937", Box 3.

⁶ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 139.

⁷ James Hennesey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 225.

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- ⁸ Patricia Brandt and Lillian A. Pereyra, *Adapting in Eden: Oregon's Catholic Minority, 1838-1986* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2002), 88.
- ⁹ Lusk, "Early Personal Papers—1903-1939," Box 3.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ David A. Horowitz, ed., *Inside the Klavern: The Secret History of a Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 4-9.
- ¹² Brandt and Pereyra, 89-91.
- ¹³ Francis J. Murnane Papers, MSS 1438, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, "Letters by Murnane—1946-1967," Box 6.
- ¹⁴ Catherine Marie Saks, "'Real Americanism': Resistance to the Oregon Compulsory School Bill, 1920-1925," (Master's Thesis, Portland State University, 2010), 88-95.
- ¹⁵ Hennesey, 248. See Saks, "Real Americanism," 113.
- ¹⁶ Oral History Interviews with Hall Stoner Lusk, United States District Court Oral History Project, SR 9467, Tape 1, Side 1, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. For Michigan bill, see Saks, 67.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Saks, 95-96.
- ¹⁹ Saks, 66.
- ²⁰ For "Era of Catholic Action," see O'Toole 145-7. For "Catholicism's Golden Age," see Dolan, 229. Dolan uses the phrase "Irish Catholicism's Golden Age," but he is referring to Irish-Americans between 1920 and 1960.
- ²¹ McGreevy, 129.
- ²² O'Toole, 146.
- ²³ O'Toole, 154.
- ²⁴ Brandt and Pereyra, 29-33
- ²⁵ Lusk, "Oregon Supreme Court Appointment 1937 Clippings," Box 3
- ²⁶ O'Toole, 150-2.
- ²⁷ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—T", Box 3.
- ²⁸ O'Toole, 156. While the modern era views Columbus as a symbol of white exploration, the early 20th century saw him as a symbol of Catholicism. The Ku Klux Klan attempted to eliminate Columbus Day in a series of states in the 1920s. See David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 251.
- ²⁹ Hennesey, 222.
- ³⁰ Brandt and Pereyra, 87-8.
- ³¹ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 74.
- ³² Lusk, "Oregon Supreme Court Appointment 1937 Clippings", Box 3
- ³³ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—G", Box 3.
- ³⁴ McGreevy, 198-9.
- ³⁵ Brandt and Pereyra, 107.
- ³⁶ McGreevy, 166-7.
- ³⁷ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—C", Box 3.
- ³⁸ Szasz, 118.
- ³⁹ Martin Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: The Dial Press, 1970), 250.
- ⁴⁰ O'Toole, 222.
- ⁴¹ O'Toole, 194.
- ⁴² Lusk, "National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1952-1953", Box 4.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—T", Box 3

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- ⁴⁵ Marty, 254.
- ⁴⁶ Szasz, 100.
- ⁴⁷ "Hall Lusk," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ⁴⁸ Lusk, "Howard, Archbishop; Silver Jubilee Celebration 1949," Box 4.
- ⁴⁹ Lusk, "Oregon Centennial—Religion Advisory Committee, 1959," Box 6.
- ⁵⁰ Tom Marsh, *To the Promised Land: A History of Government and Politics in Oregon* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2012), 257-8.
- ⁵¹ "Hall Lusk," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Brandt and Pereyra, 92.
- ⁵⁴ McGreevy, 213.
- ⁵⁵ Dolan, 273.
- ⁵⁶ Lusk, "Nixon/Kennedy Religious Issue, 1960," Box 8.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Lusk, "Democratic Party," Box 8.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Hennesey, 222.
- ⁶³ Lusk, "Nixon/Kennedy Religious Issue, 1960," Box 8.
- ⁶⁴ Marty, 259.
- ⁶⁵ Marsh, 259-60.
- ⁶⁶ Robert Donnelly, *Dark Rose: Organized Crime and Corruption in Portland* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 148.
- ⁶⁷ Dolan, 277.
- ⁶⁸ Brandt and Pereyra, 120.
- ⁶⁹ Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 74-5.
- ⁷⁰ O'Toole, 43.

Chapter II: A Political Biography of Francis J. Murnane

In April 1968, even faraway Portland was tense in the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis, Tennessee. Activists, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens, black and white, struggled over how to carry on the struggle for justice following King's death. In this atmosphere, the president of Portland's local of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Francis Murnane, gave an emotional address to his union on the necessity of ending racism in the labor movement. After completing the speech, Murnane suddenly died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-three.¹ It was a fitting end to a life that had been dedicated to the fight for justice and included a career as a labor activist during the Great Depression, opposition to the excesses of the Cold War-era Red Scare, and advocacy of the cause of civil rights for black Americans in the Sixties.

Murnane would be an interesting figure in any history of the political left in Portland. But as a practicing Roman Catholic of Irish background, he was also part of the fascinating story of Catholic labor and political radicalism in the United States and in the American West. From the late eighteenth century through the golden age of the labor movement in the mid-twentieth century, Irish Catholics played a strong role in American unions. The philosophy of Catholic Action, which encouraged ordinary Catholics to fight for Catholic principles outside of the parish church, strengthened the morale of Catholic labor activists. For the most part, Catholics tended to favor a more cautious union politics that promoted gradual improvements in workers' conditions rather than a radical

restructuring of the economy.² However, there was always a strain within the Catholic labor movement which argued for a deeper economic and political challenge to the status quo, and this strain was particularly strong in the American West. Francis Murnane served as a fervent voice for the Catholic left in the Pacific Northwest through his tireless writing and activism from the Great Depression until 1968.

Murnane's upbringing in the hardscrabble world home to most of Oregon's Catholics in the early twentieth century prepared him for a lifetime of labor activism. Born in Boston in 1914, he came to Portland with his family at an early age. He started working as a blacksmith's apprentice in a logging camp at the age of thirteen. However, Murnane grew up in a family which valued education, a trait common in many Irish Catholics of the period.³ He graduated from St. Lawrence's parochial school in the mostly Italian and Jewish neighborhood of South Portland, and then attended Lincoln High School. Later in life, Murnane studied at the California Labor School and at Columbia University (later renamed the University of Portland) on the G.I. Bill.⁴ After high school, the young idealist thought of studying for the priesthood, but instead decided to live out his values "in the world" as a labor activist. He claimed that he had first become interested in the movement during a marathon reading session while he was recovering from injuries received on a logging job.⁵ The young man's path as a radical was set for life.

Witnessing the struggles of longshoremen during the Great Depression had a profound influence on Murnane and many of his fellow American Catholics. In May 1934, the unemployed twenty-year-old Murnane joined the longshoremen as they began

their legendary West Coast strike.⁶ Longshoremen and Teamsters all along the West Coast walked out for eighty-three days in support of the dock workers of San Francisco. San Francisco workers had risen up in protest against a system which forced them to join company-owned unions and which gave all power of hiring to management through the “shape-up” method. Workers found the process of coming to the docks each day either to be picked for work or sent home humiliating. As the strike intensified in West Coast cities, police and National Guard units attacked the striking workers, and Murnane marched with Portland’s longshoremen as they faced violence.⁷

Twenty years later, Murnane remembered how “police bullets crashed into workers’ bodies at Pier Park in Portland.” He blamed the deaths on “the blustering, gun-happy Joseph K. Carson, then Mayor of Portland,” who ordered police to open fire so that employers could “divide and conquer” the oppressed men of the docks. The strike ended when the federal government, newly sympathetic to labor thanks to the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt, forced longshoremen and owners into negotiations which ended up being favorable to the workers. The 1934 strike was a galvanizing moment for many young activists. Radical journalist Julia Ruuttila remembered the strike as “a sort of mainspring for everyone else that wanted to organize in the industrial type of unions.”⁸

The hardships endured by longshoremen, who were often Catholics of Irish, Italian, and German descent, motivated Catholics across the nation to support the rights of organized labor. For instance, the Jesuit priest John Corridan became so well known for his advocacy of the rights of Depression-era dock laborers in New York that he inspired the character of Father Barry in the 1954 film *On the Waterfront*.⁹ In Portland,

Father Thomas Tobin of All Saints Parish began serving as a mediator in disputes between shipping companies and the longshore union.¹⁰ The struggles of the Great Depression led Catholics, from priests to young lay men and women, into an intensified period of labor activism.

As Murnane came of age in the labor movement during the Great Depression, the historic divide between conservative unionism and radicalism grew more intense. Conservative or gradual unionists, who favored a focus on safer working conditions and better wages rather than on structural change to the capitalist economy, predominated in the national labor movement. The priority given to practical, small-scale reform was especially noteworthy in the most prominent national labor organization, the American Federation of Labor. Activists opposed to the conservative strategy of the AFL formed their own organization, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, in 1935 under the leadership of United Mine Workers' leader John L. Lewis.¹¹ However, Lewis and his CIO seemed to be insufficiently radical to many other leftist workers, who chose to resist both the AFL and the CIO and dedicated themselves to forming independent, revolutionary labor parties. These national struggles between radicals and pragmatists during the Thirties and Forties were mirrored on the West Coast, where the cautious, corrupt, and business-friendly Teamster Dave Beck of Seattle struggled against the Australian-born radical longshoreman Harry Bridges of San Francisco for control of the loyalty of western dockworkers.¹²

Some of the tension between the two poles of American labor thought comes through in the records of Murnane's union, the International Longshoremen Association

(later renamed International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union). In a 1937 letter from San Francisco longshore leader Julius G. White to William Green, national president of the AFL, White complained of CIO organizers attempting to bring West Coast longshoremen under the umbrella of their organization. He distinguished between the "political maneuvering, [and] trickery" of the CIO and the "ideal democratic" activism of the AFL. He accused the CIO of being a "ratty pseudo-communist party" which was plotting "the ruin of the democratic labor movement. . . ." Murnane threw in his lot with the perceived radicalism of the CIO. In a CIO office election pamphlet, Murnane boasted that as a delegate from the longshoremen to Portland's branch of the AFL, he had supported "progressive policies" which "woke the old ladies of the AFL out of their sound sleep."¹³ Murnane would maintain a connection to the more militant and activist faction of the heavily-Catholic labor movement for the rest of his life.

Murnane's choice of radicalism was one with deep historical roots in the Western Catholic experience. Historian Jay Dolan argues that Irish Catholic radicalism, whether in the mines of the American West, the factories of the East Coast, or the coalfields of England and Scotland, emerged out of the Irish experience of oppression and colonization in their homeland at the hands of the British.¹⁴ Irish nationalism developed into a radicalized and international movement as generations of immigrants spread across the globe, with proponents active in Britain, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Murnane identified with the Irish memory of historical injustice. Once during a dispute, he remarked that if he was wrong he would "...wear an orange shamrock on St. Patrick's Day," orange being the color of the Protestant supporters of the British monarchy in

Ireland.¹⁵ Many Irish radicals distrusted capitalism because they saw it as a form of oppression similar to that of British rule in Ireland, which had redistributed the land of Irish Catholic peasants to a small number of Protestant landlords.¹⁶

Irish immigrants and other Catholic immigrants entered the union struggle after making the transition from agricultural work in their home countries to industrial labor in the growing economy of the United States. In the West, they worked largely in accessing raw materials in mines, in logging camps, and on fishing boats. By 1870, Irish immigrants were the largest group of workers in Western mines besides native-born Americans (many of whom were of Irish descent) and the Chinese.¹⁷ After the early 1880s, the mining industry drew heavily on labor from immigrants from southern Italy and the Slavic nations of Eastern Europe.¹⁸ Economic forces and migration thus made the Western working class heavily Catholic. The dangerous nature of work in Western mines and forests pushed many Irish, Italian, Croatian, Czech, and Slovak miners into militant postures. By the early twentieth century, the Western Federation of Miners, founded in the Catholic immigrant city of Butte, Montana, served as one of the most popular and influential leftist associations in the United States.¹⁹

At the same time, the trend toward militancy often conflicted with the conservative nature of Catholic culture, which valued steady wages which could support families and stability so that communities and parishes would not be torn apart. Therefore, many Catholic labor activists were much more cautious than the mostly rootless and single members of other radical organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World.²⁰ The anti-Catholic opinions of many socialists also alienated immigrant

Catholic workers and contributed to the failure of leftists to build a lasting political movement in the United States.²¹ The Catholic labor movement therefore encompassed a broad spectrum of opinion about how to fight most effectively for the rights of workers. Leftist Catholic workers often felt uneasy in their alliance with radicals who could possess strongly anti-Catholic views. This remained as true during Murnane's time as it had been in the 1880s.

Murnane came of age as a spokesman for the labor movement in Portland during the 1930s, as the relationship between Catholics and the left underwent a series of shifts. During the Great Depression, the American Communist Party and its sympathizers in the worlds of art, film, and literature became the dominant voices on the American left. The CP of the United States maintained a firm allegiance to the policies of the Soviet Union. From 1928 until 1935, this meant a dogmatic Communism which cut off all alliances with Socialists and liberals. As strict Marxist atheists, they also weakened a long-time association of religious activists with the left which had existed since the days of the nineteenth-century abolitionists.²²

The situation changed again in 1935. In Moscow that summer, Joseph Stalin's Comintern declared that Communists across the world should work with Socialists, liberals, and social democrats in order to defeat the forces of fascism. American Communists therefore entered into a Popular Front with non-Communist members of the left and with liberal supporters of Franklin Roosevelt. Domestically, the alliance worked for the rights of workers and racial minorities. In foreign affairs, the Popular Front inspired young activists to journey to Spain to fight against Franco's fascists in the

Spanish Civil War. The confederation also allowed Communists to work again in alliance with religious progressives.²³

Meanwhile, Catholic activists were again moving toward the left in the midst of the suffering of the Great Depression. The Catholic Workers, led by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, promoted a radical movement for social change which stood against both capitalism and Soviet-style Marxism.²⁴ While few Catholics ended up joining the Catholic Worker movement, many more joined the CIO. They ended up forming the largest religious group in what was known as the more radical of the two national labor associations. Catholic priests like the ethicist Father Hugh Donohoe and Bishop Bernard Sheil of Chicago often offered addresses and prayers at CIO gatherings. In these speeches, Catholic thinkers emphasized how the program of the labor movement fit in well with the social and economic teaching of the Church.²⁵

In his own work in the West Coast labor movement, Murnane encouraged this respectful relationship between leftists and their religious allies. For instance, while planning a memorial in honor of the twentieth anniversary of the longshoremen's 1934 strike, he wanted to secure a well-known local clergyman to offer the beginning invocation. Accordingly, Murnane contacted Rabbi Julius J. Nodel of Portland's Temple Beth Israel to give the blessing. Acknowledging the rabbi's progressivism on labor issues, Murnane noted that he and his union brothers "like the things you say 'in these times that try men's souls'" He added that "many of us [labor activists] feel special kinship with your people because we know what it is to be persecuted."²⁶ Murnane's reaching out to a leader in Portland's Reformed Jewish community demonstrated a

commitment to working with religious partners of labor which mirrored the position of many in the CIO.

As a Catholic radical, Murnane served as a special ambassador between the labor movement and Portland's Catholic hierarchy. He was fortunate to be active during a time when Catholic bishops and priests across the nation demonstrated a strong commitment to workers' rights. Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which endorsed the right of workers to join labor unions and called for a fairer distribution of property in industrial countries, had a profound influence on the leadership of the American Catholic Church in the first half of the twentieth century.²⁷ Intellectuals within the Catholic clergy such as the economist and philosopher Monsignor John A. Ryan of the Catholic University of America became leading proponents of minimum wage and child labor laws during the Progressive era.²⁸ In Oregon, the influential priest and scholar Fr. Edwin O'Hara and Caroline Gleason, a Catholic laywoman who would later join the Sisters of the Holy Names, advocated for a state minimum wage law for female workers subsequently established in 1913.²⁹

Murnane called on local church leaders to honor the progressive heritage within Catholicism by requesting their support in Portland's labor conflicts. In 1939, while he was Vice President of a Portland local of the International Woodworkers of America, Murnane and 128 other CIO-affiliated coworkers were laid off and replaced by workers associated with the AFL. Murnane protested against the layoff, and managed to arrange a meeting with the management of Portland's Plylock Corporation, specifically requesting that a Catholic priest be present at the meeting to help to mediate the dispute.

Accordingly, he wrote directly to Archbishop Edward Howard of Portland to request an archdiocesan representative at the talks, to which Howard agreed.³⁰ As a result, Murnane succeeded in gaining \$65,000 in unemployment benefits for the laid-off workers.³¹ His actions during this episode demonstrated that he placed a high value on the Catholic clergy as potential allies of the labor movement. In turn, Howard's role points to the strongly pro-labor political actions of the Catholic hierarchy during the mid-twentieth century.

The alliance between Catholic faith and work for social justice during the era of Catholic Action led Murnane to retain a strong sense of Catholic identity throughout his career as a labor activist. American Catholics tended to stick together culturally in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. They demonstrated their unity and cultural uniqueness through events like the 1934 march of 70,000 Catholic school students through the streets of Chicago to protest against Hollywood's release of "indecent" movies.³² Catholics of the 1950s were especially proud of the growth of a distinct Catholic school system which helped to preserve their religious traditions and sense of community. In 1950s San Francisco, historians estimate that one-third of all children in the heavily Catholic city attended parish schools rather than public institutions.³³ Catholics, like Jews and Mormons, maintained a sense of common identity fading in the mainline Protestant churches of the era.

Murnane's roots in a distinctive religious background set him apart from some of his colleagues in the labor movement. He jokingly recognized this fact in a 1961 letter to Howard Bodine, a union comrade who had suffered a heart attack. He told Bodine that,

“You’ll probably laugh at this, you heathen, but there is a votive candle burning for you in St. Michael’s Church.” Through his joking, it is evident that Murnane felt some attraction to a folk Catholicism based on devotion to the saints that spoke to many Catholics of immigrant background.³⁴ Murnane commented in the same letter that he disliked Cathedral Parish, home of Portland’s Catholic upper class, because there were “too many snobs,” and preferred the “little Italian Church” of St. Michael’s.³⁵ This comment points to his identification with an immigrant Catholic culture often looked down upon both by upper-class Catholics and by freethinking, leftist workers.

Murnane’s cautious position as the United States prepared for entry into the Second World War resembled the stance of many other thinkers in the Catholic community. His views articulated the pacifist position of the Catholic left, but many conservative Catholics also opposed involvement in another foreign war. Catholics were strong supporters of Franklin Roosevelt in the late 1930s: roughly seventy-five percent voted Democratic in the 1936 campaign. While American Catholics strongly supported FDR’s economic policies, though, many diverged from the president on foreign policy. As Roosevelt attempted to increase America’s military preparedness and aid the Allies against German aggression, a broad spectrum of Catholics opposed him for a variety of reasons. Dorothy Day and her leftist Catholic workers proclaimed the pacifism of early Christianity, while Irish-Americans spoke out against giving military aid to the British. Conservatives opposed strengthening America’s relationship with the Soviet Union, and a number of Catholic newspapers expressed enthusiastic support for the fascist regimes of Mussolini in Italy and Franco in Spain.³⁶

At the same time, a diversity of opinion on the American left existed regarding military preparedness. Communists took a hard line against the spread of fascism in the days of the Popular Front. In 1939, however, liberals and socialists felt deeply betrayed by the Communist Party when Stalin and Hitler signed a non-aggression pact and the Nazis and Soviets worked together to devastate Poland. The American CP's continued allegiance to Stalin led many to leave the Party in disgust. When German armies began their invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, nevertheless, American Communists again could advocate for the destruction of fascism. Once the United States entered the war, the C.P. offered complete support for the nation's military efforts. The American Socialist Party and an array of noninterventionist U.S. senators from both parties expressed a more stable position than the Communists in the run-up to war by opposing any involvement in another foreign conflict.³⁷ Murnane therefore resembled a number of thinkers both in the Church and on the left when he took a stand against Roosevelt's introduction of a peacetime draft in 1940.

Murnane took action by urging John L. Lewis, head of the CIO, to oppose conscription. He wrote similar letters to Democratic Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana and American Labor Party Representative Vito Marcantonio of New York. Wheeler wrote back that "we who are opposed to involvement in foreign war won an important victory in securing adoption of the peace plank by the Democratic convention."³⁸ Historian of the left Michael Kazin identifies Marcantonio as a "reliable supporter of Communist positions," and his opposition to the draft may have been due to the fact that the Nazi-Soviet Pact still held when the letter was written in October of

1940.³⁹ Murnane therefore had an odd assortment of allies in his opposition to the prewar draft: a pro-Communist one-time Republican Congressman, a progressive Democratic noninterventionist senator, and a cautious labor leader. Nevertheless, Murnane's opposition to increased militarization reflected the feelings of an eclectic array of other Catholic thinkers in the years immediately prior to World War II. The liberal Jesuit journal *America* argued that the U.S. could only enter if provoked by an actual attack, while the conservative *Gulidsman* hoped that Germany and its allies would win a great victory against Communism.⁴⁰

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Murnane continued to work for the cause of labor in a vastly changed political landscape. He was drafted into the Army in April 1941, but his union, the International Woodworkers of America, attempted to get him a deferment. Their reasoning was that Murnane would be a key figure in keeping up a good relationship between workers and managers in Portland's massive World War II shipyards. The Army refused and Murnane served as a stateside supply officer until 1944. During this time, military authorities regarded him as a possible troublemaker because of his activist past.⁴¹ Yet Murnane seldom expressed his views on foreign policy. He said after the war that he took pride in a speech given to the National Catholic Welfare Conference in which he "blasted [fascism] with vigor."⁴² His primary focus, however, remained on the American working class. This most likely explains why he wanted to remain in Portland to ensure that defense workers received fair treatment. Meanwhile, the federal government appointed another leader in Portland's Catholic community, the

influential progressive Father Thomas Tobin, to work as a mediator between workers and management in the shipyards.⁴³

Unlike Murnane, the vast majority of Portland's Catholics unreservedly embraced the war effort after America's entry into the conflict. So many students at Central Catholic High School intended to go directly into the military after graduation that the school offered a course on aeronautics.⁴⁴ The attitude of Portland's Catholics reflected a common belief in patriotism and dedication to the country's military mission that most American Catholics publicly expressed after the nation declared war. While Pearl Harbor had silenced and changed the minds of conservative Catholic isolationists, though, a small group on the Catholic left maintained its opposition to war. The Catholic Workers lost much support gained among American Catholics during the Depression by maintaining a pacifist stand against America's involvement in World War II.⁴⁵ Most American leftists, on the other hand, followed the lead of the Communist Party in strongly supporting the war effort.⁴⁶ Murnane's lack of enthusiasm during the war years therefore placed him closer to the philosophy of the Catholic left than mainstream Catholic opinion or dominant leftist thought during the Second World War.

As the Cold War with the Soviet Union took shape in the decade following the war, Murnane emerged as a strong defender of civil liberties at a time when most American Catholics embraced an all-out effort to suppress communism. From Pope Pius XII to Catholic intellectuals in Poland to the Christian Democratic politicians of Italy, Catholics across Europe defined themselves by their anti-communism. In the United States, Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York City declared his intention to speak out

against domestic communist infiltration as early as 1946.⁴⁷ Catholics relished proving their loyalty to a Protestant upper class which now seemed more sympathetic to foreign ideas than the ethnic working class. In 1963, Irish Catholic intellectual and politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan recalled that during F.B.I. investigations into the loyalty of federal officials a decade earlier “Harvard men were...checked; Fordham men [did] the checking.”⁴⁸ In Portland, Catholics formed a local branch of the Mindszenty Society, an anti-communist reading and lecture society named after a Hungarian cardinal imprisoned by his country’s Soviet satellite regime.⁴⁹

Murnane acted against majority Catholic opinion in the 1950s by defending the civil liberties of those accused of Communist sympathies. After the war, Murnane had moved from the International Woodworkers of America to become an officer of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union. One of his early actions in the ILWU was to lead a strike in protest against shipping companies’ attempt to force workers to sign affidavits that they were opposed to the Communist Party.⁵⁰ Furthermore, Murnane took a leading role in the legal fight to prevent the deportation of powerful West Coast longshore labor leader Harry Bridges, an Australian immigrant suspected of Communist Party membership. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies had monitored Bridges for nearly two decades, but the legal case against him reached a high point between 1949 and 1953. During these four years, Murnane served as president of Portland’s branch of the Bridges-Robertson-Schmidt Defense Committee, which gave financial and public relations aid to Bridges and other suspected Communists under investigation. He wrote letters to Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee and published articles

in local papers which protested against the treatment of Bridges.⁵¹ Bridges was acquitted and remained in the country, yet remained a controversial figure. Despite this, Murnane maintained a close alliance with him and invited him to participate in Portland's commemorations of the 1934 dockworkers' strike in 1955, 1956, and 1957.⁵²

Murnane also became involved in a contentious Cold War-era fight over the loyalty of the radical journalist Julia Eaton. Eaton, who would later be known as Julia Ruuttila thanks to her marriage to a Finnish immigrant, was a vocal activist for leftist positions in Portland. She wrote for *The Dispatcher*, the official paper of the ILWU, and like Murnane had participated in the noninterventionist movement before World War II. After the war, she wrote powerfully about the suffering of workers made homeless by the flood which destroyed the shipbuilders' community of Vanport in 1948.⁵³ When accusations of Communist Party membership forced Eaton out of her job with Oregon's Public Welfare Commission that same year, Murnane served on the Julia Eaton Defense Committee.⁵⁴ While Murnane's radical opinions on the labor question may have contributed to his sympathy for those who were persecuted for suspected Communist Party membership, he identified working class unity as the most important motivation for his defense of civil liberties. "Although I have opposed [the Communist Party's] various machinations," the Portland firebrand maintained, "I am not going to embark on a Red-baiting witch-hunt against fellow unionists."⁵⁵

Murnane's defense of the civil liberties of Communists placed him within a small minority of the American Catholic community. The vehemently anti-Communist Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin was a practicing Catholic, and maintained much higher

popularity among Catholics than among Protestants or Jews during his time of national influence in the early 1950s. Historian James Hennesey observes that heavily Catholic Massachusetts was the most pro-McCarthy state in the Union.⁵⁶ However, leftist Catholics such as the Catholic Workers made no secret of their opposition to the anti-Communist crusade. More influentially, liberal Catholics also stood against McCarthy by using the language of universal rights and civil liberties. Liberal Catholic magazines like *Commonweal*, published by laypeople, and *America*, run by the Jesuit order of priests, put out numerous articles which harshly criticized McCarthy's crusade as un-American.⁵⁷ While Murnane based his position during the Red Scare more on the idea of union among workers than on the language of rights, his stand placed him in line with Catholic liberals as well as with the Catholic left.

Murnane's position on racial controversies at the end of his life also situated him among a progressive minority of American Catholics. European ethnic Catholics in Northeastern and Midwestern cities frequently protested against the racial integration of neighborhoods and schools in the 1960s. The defensive and xenophobic attitude of Italian, Irish, and Polish residents of urban parish neighborhoods led to Catholic protests against integration of blacks and whites in cities like Cleveland (1964), Milwaukee (1965), and Boston (1974).⁵⁸ A history of racism also burdened American organized labor. From the Irish-led campaign against Chinese immigration to California in the late-nineteenth century to the AFL's toleration of segregated Southern unions, white working-class activists who often came from Catholic backgrounds had a tradition of ignoring the problems of black and Asian workers.⁵⁹ Contemporaries therefore may have been

surprised to hear a burly Irish Catholic longshoremen like Murnane speak in favor of equality for black Americans in the 1960s.

Harry Bridges reflected on the courage which it took for Murnane to reach this position in a eulogy at the deceased labor leader's burial in 1968, shortly after Bridges returned from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s funeral in Atlanta. Speaking at the service at Portland's Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery, Bridges noted that racial discrimination in the labor movement was the major topic discussed at the final union meeting which Murnane attended. He then called on Murnane's comrades to eliminate the evil of racism from the ILWU and from all Portland unions.⁶⁰ At the end of his life, Murnane's ideas about racial equality were becoming more widespread in Oregon's Catholic community. By then, Latino Catholics had become an increasingly strong presence in the local Church and integrated parishes such as St. Andrew's in Northeast Portland had taken an assertive role in sponsoring programs for social justice and against racial discrimination.⁶¹

Francis Murnane's leadership in progressive causes from his youth during the Great Depression to his sudden death in 1968 allowed the distinctive vision of the Catholic left to influence Portland's politics during his lifetime. His struggles for social justice for longshoremen and other workers, against militarism during wartime, for civil liberties during the McCarthy era, and for racial justice were not always popular or successful. Yet after his death the editors of *The Oregonian* noted that he had "prickled the public conscience" of Portland with both his political activism and his advocacy for the preservation of historic buildings.⁶² In many cases, he had allies in his battles among

the secular liberals and leftists who had become the main face of American radicalism by the mid-twentieth century. Oftentimes, his radical positions put him at odds with the majority of his fellow American Catholics. Throughout his life, however, his affinities and principles showed the influence of a radical interpretation of his Catholic faith and Irish cultural background. If, as *The Oregonian* declared, “his was a moral influence” on the city, then often that moral influence drew from roots in the ancient tradition of Catholic Christianity.⁶³

Notes:

¹ Anne Saker, “Seeking to Restore the Memory of a Portland Labor Leader—Francis J. Murnane,” *The Oregonian*, April 21, 2009, www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/04/seeking_to_restore_the_memory.html.

² Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 179.

³ Dolan, 238.

⁴ “Francis J. Murnane,” Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

⁵ Saker, “Seeking to Restore the Memory.”; Francis J. Murnane Papers, MSS 1438, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, “International Woodworkers of America, 1938-1949,” Box 5

⁶ “Francis J. Murnane,” Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

⁷ Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 490.

⁸ Murnane, “I.L.W.U. ‘Bloody July 5’ Memorial Committee, Box 5; White, 490; Sandy Polishuk, *Sticking to the Union: An Oral History of the Life and Times of Julia Ruuttila* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 51.

⁹ James M. O’Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 165.

¹⁰ Patricia Brandt and Lillian A. Pereyra, *Adapting in Eden: Oregon’s Catholic Minority, 1838-1986* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 2002), 109-110.

¹¹ Dolan, 259-62.

¹² Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 173; White, 489.

¹³ Murnane, “International Longshoremen Association Local ’38-78, CIO Affiliation,” Box 1; Murnane, “International Woodworkers of America, 1938-1949,” Box 5.

¹⁴ Dolan, 167.

¹⁵ Murnane, “Letters by Murnane, 1946-67,” Box 6.

¹⁶ David M. Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845-1910* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 294. Emmons notes this quote by American radical William Z. Foster: “It seemed as natural to hate capitalistic tyranny in the United States as English tyranny in Ireland.”

¹⁷ Emmons, 216.

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- ¹⁸ Matthew Pehl, "Wherever They Mention His Name," from *Catholicism in the American West: A Rosary of Hidden Voices*, ed. Roberto R. Trevino and Richard V. Francaviglia (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 74.
- ¹⁹ White, 291.
- ²⁰ Emmons, 303-5.
- ²¹ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 117.
- ²² Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 164-5; 155-7.
- ²³ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 170-1.
- ²⁴ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W> Norton & Company, 2003), 151.
- ²⁵ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 152-3.
- ²⁶ Murnane, "I.L.W.U. 'Bloody July 5' Memorial Committee," Box 5.
- ²⁷ McGreevy, 130-1.
- ²⁸ McGreevy, 142.
- ²⁹ Brandt and Pereyra, 90.
- ³⁰ Murnane, "International Woodworkers of America, 1938-1949," Box 5.
- ³¹ "Francis J. Murnane," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library
- ³² O'Toole, 170.
- ³³ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 105.
- ³⁴ Matthew Pehl, 84.
- ³⁵ Murnane, "Letters by Murnane, 1946-1967," Box 6.
- ³⁶ James Hennesey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 267-76.
- ³⁷ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 170-175; Glen Jeansonne, *Transformation and Reaction: America, 1921-1945* (New York, Harper Collins College Publishers, 1994), 184.
- ³⁸ Murnane, "Letters to Murnane, 1940-1955," Box 6.
- ³⁹ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 296n
- ⁴⁰ Hennesey, 275.
- ⁴¹ "Francis J. Murnane," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ⁴² Murnane, "Julia Eaton (Kathleen Cronin) Defense Committee, 1/48-1/51," Box 6.
- ⁴³ Brandt and Pereyra, 114.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ O'Toole, 163.
- ⁴⁶ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 176.
- ⁴⁷ Hennesey, 289.
- ⁴⁸ O'Toole, 196.
- ⁴⁹ Brandt and Pereyra, 128.
- ⁵⁰ Murnane, "Letters by Murnane, 1946-1967," Box 6.
- ⁵¹ "Francis J. Murnane," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ⁵² Murnane, "Letters by Murnane, 1946-1967," Box 6.
- ⁵³ Polishuk, 2-3; E. Kimbark MacColl, *The Growth of a City: Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1915-1950* (Portland: The Georgian Press, 1979), 600.
- ⁵⁴ "Francis J. Murnane," Vertical File, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ⁵⁵ Murnane, "Julia Eaton (Kathleen Cronin) Defense Committee, 1/48-1/51," Box 6.
- ⁵⁶ Hennesey, 293-294.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ O'Toole, 259-60.

⁵⁹ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, 96-98.

⁶⁰ "500 Pay Respects at Funeral of Labor Leader Francis Murnane," *The Oregonian*, April 17, 1968. Retrieved from America's Historical Newspapers, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/>.

⁶¹ Brandt and Pereyra, 142-3.

⁶² Editorial, "Uncommon Man," *The Oregonian*, April 12, 1968. Retrieved from America's Historical Newspapers, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/>.

⁶³ Ibid.

Chapter III: Catholic Action in the Lives of Lusk and Murnane

Hall Lusk and Francis Murnane apparently never corresponded. If they had, they would surely have found issues on which to disagree. The two men were different in many ways. They were separated by a generation: Murnane was an infant when the Great War broke out in Europe, while Lusk was already thirty-one years old. Lusk was born into wealth and privilege and received an elite education, while Murnane was a poor boy who was apprenticed to a blacksmith at the age of thirteen. Lusk made his living with his mind and his pen as a lawyer and judge, while Murnane continued to work on the docks even after becoming an influential force in Portland politics. Lusk was a family man who enjoyed being with his wife, five children, and thirteen grandchildren, while Murnane was a lifelong bachelor with no known relatives at the time of his death.

Because of their divergent backgrounds, Lusk and Murnane held far different political beliefs. Lusk was a conservative Democrat who showed little enthusiasm for the New Deal reforms of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Murnane was a supporter of Henry Wallace and ran for local office on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948. Lusk expressed doubts about the constitutionality of labor unions, whereas Murnane dedicated his life to the labor movement. Despite their personal and political differences, however, Lusk and Murnane shared important characteristics in common. Both men had been born on the East Coast but spent most of their lives in Portland. Each expressed a fervent love of the city and served on many commissions for its improvement. Most significantly, the two

men shared a devout Catholic faith. Indeed, both men's funeral masses were held in the same church, St. Mary's Cathedral in Northwest Portland.

The dominant philosophy within the Church at the time when Lusk and Murnane were at the heights of their careers was known as Catholic Action. Catholic Action held that ordinary lay Catholics should take action to evangelize for Catholic cultural values in the world. This movement proved compelling for Catholics on many points of the political spectrum. Catholic Action inspired Francis Murnane to dissent against the economic and political structure of his day and to assert independence of thought from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In contrast, for Hall Lusk the movement was primarily a means for improving Catholics' loyalty to their faith and their country. At the same time, the ideas of Catholic Action that pushed Murnane and Lusk in different political directions also led the two figures to share values which marked them off from the non-Catholic intellectual world of the mid-twentieth century.

Catholic Action created a dramatic shift in the culture of American Catholicism. From the late 1880s to 1931, when a Papal encyclical gave official approval to organizational activities among laypeople, Catholic immigrants and their children had largely focused on economic survival and on building a remarkable network of parish churches across the country. But after 1931, an increasingly acculturated Catholic community could devote more time to using the institutions which they had built, from schools to hospitals to mutual aid societies, to promote social justice and spread Catholic values.¹ New associations under the leadership of an emerging class of Catholic professionals also took form. For instance, San Francisco lawyer Sylvester Andriano

created the Academy of San Francisco in 1933. The academy's mission was to educate both blue-collar and white-collar workers in the Catholic Church's teachings on economic issues.² The period from 1931 to 1960 became characterized by a willingness among believers to express such Catholic social teachings to the broader culture.

Francis Murnane certainly breathed in the atmosphere of religious economic populism, a hallmark of the Catholic Action era. The longshoreman kept in his records a copy of an invocation given by a priest named Reverend Michael Mulcaire at a gathering of CIO representatives in Oregon during the Great Depression. Mulcaire had expressed confidence to the delegates that "God's blessing will be upon your work, because no more noble task, more noble job can any man do than devote his heart and mind and efforts to benefitting his labor organization...." Mulcaire anticipated that some would "shake their heads in disgust when they [learned] that a Catholic priest appeared at a CIO convention to invoke God's blessing upon that organization," because either ignorance or malice led some to identify the CIO as a Communist organization.³

Catholic social justice activists like Mulcaire defended themselves from charges of Communist sympathies by arguing that the ideas of the labor movement had deep roots in both American and Catholic tradition. Reverend Mulcaire argued that workers had organized the CIO to protect their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He not only rooted the American workers' movement in the ideas of Jefferson, but he also identified the cause with the mission of another world-historical figure: Jesus of Nazareth. Mulcaire spoke of how Jesus "went amongst the poor, the un-organized, the helpless...." The priest told the story of the gospel in modern-day language, saying that

Jesus had “preached that every man, whether he be a laborer or a millionaire, a taxi driver or a longshoreman or a great industrialist...is a man and possessed with an eternal soul....” He reminded the gathered workers that the forces of “intrenched wealth and intrenched [*sic.*] greed” had caused the crucifixion of Jesus.⁴ Working-class American Catholics like Francis Murnane heard such fiery language from their priests frequently during the era of Catholic Action.

An episode in which a foreign policy dispute grew unexpectedly close to home illustrates that Murnane shared both Mulcaire’s progressive politics and his fondness for religious language. In 1947, Murnane found himself in a dispute with Father Thomas Tobin of All Saints parish, a well-known and powerful priest in the Archdiocese of Portland. The two disagreed over the fate of refugees from Francisco Franco’s Spain who had stowed away in a ship which ended up in Portland. The fate of the Spaniards became a popular topic of discussion in the city as immigration officials considered whether or not to grant them asylum as political refugees.⁵ Tobin, like a vocal majority in the American Catholic clergy, viewed the opposition to the Franco regime as made up largely of Communists who had slaughtered priests and nuns during the Spanish Civil War.⁶ He therefore hesitated when Murnane attempted to enlist him in a union-led publicity campaign in support of the refugees. The longshoreman wrote a letter to Tobin employing biblical language to criticize the priest’s uncertainty.⁷

Acknowledging that efforts to keep the Spaniards in America would probably be unsuccessful, Murnane nevertheless insisted that “Christ’s whole life” proved that there was value in struggling for unlikely causes. In Murnane’s eyes, both Tobin and his

superior Archbishop Edward Howard were “[sitting] in the shade while progressive humanity passes....” The longshoreman may have meant this phrase to remind Tobin of the priest and Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, who refuse to involve themselves in helping a man in need.⁸ Like other Catholic activists, Murnane viewed his causes through the lens of traditional Christian stories. The depth of connection which social justice advocates perceived between their own work and that of Jesus can also be seen in the words of a contemporary of Murnane’s, an Irish religious brother named Mathias Barrett, who offered services to the poor of Albuquerque, New Mexico in the 1950s. Barrett explained the work of his religious order, the Order of Saint John of God, by observing that “Our vow of hospitality commands us to see in the poor, the sick, the homeless and the needy, the suffering Christ.”⁹

Though Catholic advocates of reform like Murnane often used traditional religious language, they sometimes found themselves at odds with the power structure of the Church. Pope Pius XI, who had written approvingly of Catholic Action in 1931, envisioned the movement as providing a role for lay Catholics in the Church’s work. In theory, laypeople were to participate in campaigns for a more just and moral society under the leadership of the Church’s hierarchy of priests and bishops.¹⁰ Catholic Action in practice, however, often marked a radical break with the centuries’ old habit of lay people deferring to the leadership of the hierarchy. An important example of this process is Dorothy Day, the New York journalist who served as the spiritual leader of the Catholic Worker movement. The Catholic Workers, founded during the Great Depression, believed that the Catholic Church had to be a radical witness for compassion

for the poor in the contemporary world. Day had a zeal for Catholic moral values and a commitment to inspiring a new level of devotion among laypeople, marking her as a follower of Catholic Action. Yet her passion for social justice sometimes led her into conflict with Church leadership: in 1949, she led protests outside the residence of Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York to voice support for the unionization of gravediggers who worked at Catholic cemeteries.¹¹

Like Day, Murnane did not hesitate to criticize priests or bishops whom he saw as lacking a commitment to social justice. In 1948, Murnane exchanged a series of confrontational letters with Father George G. Higgins, the assistant director of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. With the blessing of powerful American bishops and cardinals, lay activists had founded the NCWC in 1917 to coordinate the efforts of Catholic charities during World War I. After the war, the umbrella organization focused on social and economic justice at home rather than assistance for troops abroad.¹² Father Higgins, therefore, presided over a progressive organization which brought together bishops, priests, and lay men and women to serve the cause of social justice. However, he drew the ire of progressive Catholic Francis Murnane due to his actions during and after NCWC's annual meeting in 1948.

Murnane believed that Higgins had betrayed his commitment to the working class by defending the words of a business owner named Dick Foisie during and after the conference. Foisie gave a speech which led a series of hostile labor activists, including Murnane, to denounce his right to speak at a meeting of progressive activists. Higgins spoke up for Foisie's right to present an opposing view. After the conference, radical

Portland journalist Julia Ruuttila wrote an article harshly critical of both Foisie's and Higgins's addresses in the ILWU newspaper, *The Dispatcher*. In response, Father Higgins sent a letter to the paper that questioned Ruuttila's credibility by pointing to her work for the Communist Party journal, the *Daily Worker*. In addition, Higgins criticized Murnane for bringing a "political line" into what he viewed as a nonpartisan and inclusive meeting dedicated to advancing Catholic interests in the public realm.¹³

Murnane showed little compunction in speaking harshly to a priest in his response to Higgins's letter to *The Dispatcher*. He referred to Higgins's style of speaking at the conference as "supercilious" and portrayed the priest's use of the phrase "political line" as an attempt to imply that the longshoreman was a Communist. Although he acknowledged that, in his eyes, Higgins was "a member of a most Holy calling," he declared that the priest had misused his position of authority by attacking those who disagreed with him and defending an employer against workers. As the letters continued, the two men used even more damaging insults against each other. Higgins wrote to Murnane that his letters did "more credit to [his] emotions than it [did] to [his] sense of modesty and humility." In his final reply, Murnane claimed that Higgins had demonstrated "a lack of fundamental Christian ethics in [his] vicious and ungentlemanly denunciation" of Ruuttila. He further denounced Higgins's writings as "psychopathic tirades" which "prostitute[ed] liberal Catholic dogma." Clearly, Murnane believed that Catholic laypeople had the authority to interpret the teachings of the Church and criticize priests whom they believed were not presenting the true teachings of the Gospel.¹⁴

Murnane shared this belief in the authority of laypeople with the most important voice on the left of the Catholic Action movement. Dorothy Day expressed dissatisfaction with the leadership of the Church not only on issues of economic justice but also on matters of war and peace. Day wrote an article in the July-August 1953 issue of *The Catholic Worker* entitled “Meditation on the Death of the Rosenbergs.” Reflecting on the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg following their conviction for atomic espionage on behalf of the Soviets, Day noted that Catholic leaders including Cardinal Spellman had publicly condemned the Rosenbergs as guilty. For Day, this and the fact that the Cardinal did not oppose the execution made him complicit in the spies’ deaths. Day went on to imply that Spellman’s attitude violated the command of the Gospel to love one’s neighbor as oneself. This acceptance of state violence on the part of a leader in the Church was not a surprise for the radical Catholic journalist. She noted her sadness at the “confusion we have gotten into when Christian prelates sprinkle holy water on scrap metal, to be used for obliteration bombing....” Day’s article exemplified the combination of Catholic devotion with dissent from the hierarchy marking the left wing of the Catholic Action movement.¹⁵

In addition to sharing a fearlessness when speaking with priests, Murnane held unique political loyalties in common with Catholic Action leftists like Dorothy Day. In the exchange of letters with Father Higgins, the labor leader expressed his support in 1948 for the Progressive third party presidential campaign of former vice president Henry A. Wallace. Most Catholics, like most Americans, opposed Wallace because of his conciliatory position towards the Soviet Union. Murnane, however, referred to him as

“one of the last great American liberals of Presidential stature.”¹⁶ Though Murnane rarely used the term liberal and more frequently referred to himself as “progressive” or “pro-labor,” he identified Wallace with what he viewed as an American tradition of defending freedom. Murnane’s support was rare not only among Catholics but among all Americans: nearly fifty percent of Wallace’s mere one million popular votes nationwide came from the state of New York.¹⁷ However, Murnane’s words illustrate that some Catholic leftists were vocal in their support.

Related to Murnane’s support for Wallace was his lack of preoccupation with the Soviet Union. When Father Higgins challenged Murnane’s patriotism by asking him to denounce Stalin, Murnane replied that he considered foreign policy to be a distraction from the fight for American workers’ rights. This statement was somewhat disingenuous, given Murnane’s public statements in favor of opponents of Franco in Spain. When it came to the question of dictatorship in Eastern Europe, however, Murnane declared himself neutral, telling Higgins that, “I shall leave the opposition to Stalin to you...and the able [journalist] Walter Winchell. By the same token, as far as I am concerned, [Soviet foreign ministers] Molotov and Vishinsky [*sic.*] can take up the defense of Stalin.”¹⁸ Unlike other Irish Catholic labor leaders like CIO president Philip Murray, who viewed the struggle for workers’ rights as part of a global fight against both unregulated capitalism and communism, Murnane viewed the issue of foreign communism as beyond the interest of the American working class.¹⁹

Murnane shared such an attitude with other Catholic leftists before and immediately after World War II. In a May 1936 essay called “Why I Like the

Communist,” *Catholic Worker* contributor Donald Powell dismissed fellow believers’ concern over Stalin’s regime by arguing that the Soviet dictator possessed more compassion and sense of responsibility than the average American political boss.²⁰ Such heated rhetoric demonstrated that like their counterparts on the secular left of the Thirties, many in the Catholic left had no comprehension of the crimes occurring within the Soviet Union during the period. Powell’s comments also show the single-minded focus which American Catholic leftists had on the experience of the American poor and oppressed at the expense of engagement with issues in world politics.

While Murnane and his fellow activists viewed Catholic Action principles as a source for dissent against the leadership of the Church and against the dominant economic and political priorities of the nation, Hall Lusk believed that the movement provided Catholics with an opportunity to strengthen ties with both country and faith. In this regard, the upper-class judge was closer to the opinion of the Catholic masses than was the proletarian Francis Murnane. Throughout American history, Catholic immigrants and their descendants had been insistent in proving their loyalty to the nation. These efforts intensified in the period from 1924, when large-scale immigration from Europe ended, and 1960, when a Catholic won election to the presidency. The oath of the Knights of Columbus, one of the quintessential Catholic Action organizations, reflected the connection between patriotism and faith: “The proudest boast of all time is ours to make, I am an American Catholic citizen.”²¹

From the time of his first public pronouncements, Lusk took advantage of opportunities to express both patriotism and devotion to faith. In an address given during

World War I to promote the sale of liberty bonds, Lusk praised the natural beauty of “the broad prairies and the mighty rivers of this our common country....” More significantly, he extolled the government of the United States as demonstrating “...in its highest and best form the principle of democracy in government.” However, in addition to voicing his concern that German aggression threatened democracy, he also lamented reports that “Prussian guns laid low the beautiful cathedrals of France.”²² Lusk implied an identification between the causes of Catholicism and the United States, and shared his enthusiasm for the nation’s mission in the Great War with many fellow believers. In 1918, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, the most powerful Catholic leader in the country, blessed America’s victory in the war by declaring, “We have conquered because we believe that righteousness exalteth a nation.”²³

A ceremony in which Lusk participated in 1930 revealed a continuing dedication to the idea that Catholics need not divide their loyalty between faith and country. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary selected Lusk to give an address at the laying of the cornerstone of their new institution of higher learning, Marylhurst College. The nuns most likely selected the Portland attorney in honor of a relationship which had been built during the legal fight against the Compulsory Schools Law. Appropriately, *The Oregonian* reported that one thousand students from schools run by the sisters sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” to begin the ritual.²⁴ The ceremony itself featured the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a distinctively Catholic devotional practice which priests often performed on public occasions in the pre-Vatican II Church.²⁵ In turn, Lusk’s address told the story of how the Holy Names Sisters had journeyed from Quebec to Oregon in

1859, thus painting them as both missionaries and pioneers. The entire event encapsulated the proud and patriotic culture of American Catholicism during the time of Catholic Action.²⁶

The ceremony at Marylhurst, whether or not the organizers consciously planned it as such, was part of an effort to answer long-standing questions about the loyalty of Catholics to a nation based upon liberal ideals. Historian John McGreevy has detailed how a search for the sources of democratic culture defined American intellectual life from the Great Depression until the beginning of the Cold War. The cultural values of ordinary Americans became a major area of focus for many writers and academics. For instance, in *Patterns of Culture* (1934), anthropologist Ruth Benedict examined the customs and beliefs of Americans in a way similar to that of anthropologists studying traditional cultures. Scholars considered this quest urgent in order to defend democracy from totalitarian threats.²⁷

For most American scholars, whether they were Protestant, Jewish, or agnostic, American freedom and individualism grew out of the colonial heritage of questioning political and religious authority. This was believed to be a habit of thinking which emerged out of the Reformation and Scientific Revolution. Because the Roman Catholic Church had, in the eyes of intellectuals, opposed these two developments and continued to teach its faith in an authoritarian way, Catholic culture could prove to be a major threat to America's continued existence as a democratic nation.²⁸ Talcott Parsons, whose 1930 translation of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* introduced the great German sociologist's ideas to American audiences, worried that the

“authoritarian element in the basic structure of the Catholic church....may weaken individual self-reliance and valuation of freedom.”²⁹ As late as 1953, the influential theologian and political theorist Reinhold Niebuhr warned Catholics that “every discussion of the Catholic Church, at least in America, is bound to begin with the issue of the relation of the Church to a ‘free society.’”³⁰

American Catholic intellectuals began their counterattack against these arguments during the era of Catholic Action. Led by the French immigrant philosopher Jacques Maritain and the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, Catholic scholars attempted to prove that the Church could adapt to liberal politics and culture. These scholars argued that the ancient tradition of the Church contained thinkers who were friendlier toward democracy than the conservative nineteenth-century popes whom anti-Catholic scholars quoted.³¹ Catholic legal scholars and philosophers maintained that the medieval Catholic concept of “natural law” provided the basis for the idea of fundamental rights which had inspired the American revolutionaries.³² Hall Lusk showed an interest in this scholarly debate, indicating that he felt especially drawn to this aspect of the Catholic Action project. In 1943, Lusk wrote to Father George Thompson, a friend associated with Marylhurst College, to thank the priest for lending him a book by Jacques Maritain. In a subsequent letter to Father Thomas Tobin, Lusk noticed with interest how Justice Felix Frankfurter had referred to “natural law” in the decision which he had written in the Supreme Court case *Adamson vs. California*, which ruled that California had not violated a defendant’s Fifth Amendment rights by allowing a jury to discuss the accused man’s use of the amendment in reaching their decision.³³

The Second World War provided Catholic Action activists with a chance to prove that their commitment to a democratic society was firm, and Lusk embraced the war effort with the fervor of most of his fellow believers. Even before Pearl Harbor, some Catholic Action leaders such as Monsignor John Ryan, longtime advocate of Catholic social justice teachings, and Bishop Bernard Sheil of Chicago, founder of the Catholic Youth Organization, spoke out publicly in favor of President Roosevelt's policy of military preparedness. After the United States declared war, the American bishops released a statement expressing hope that the war would lead to "the establishment of an international order in which the spirit of Christ shall rule the hearts of men and of nations."³⁴ The centrist wing of the Catholic Action movement viewed the war not as a betrayal of Christian principles, as did the Catholic Workers, but rather as an opportunity to fight for the principles of democracy and human rights which they had been promoting in debates within the Church. Lusk followed the war from a distance, but wrote anxiously to his brother Rufus for news of how his nephew Rufus, Jr., was doing as a G.I. in Europe.³⁵ He also contributed along with other Portland Catholics to a fund which supported a priest who served as a Navy chaplain.³⁶ As with the First World War, Lusk believed it an American Catholic's patriotic duty to support the nation at war.

Lusk's strongly anti-Communist views also demonstrated the influence of Catholic Action. Catholic Action traced its earliest roots to the profusion of non-Marxist populist groups in southern Europe in the early twentieth century. Pope Leo XIII, who oversaw the beginnings of the movement that would eventually receive its name and official approval from Pope Pius XI, had promoted a Catholic perspective on social

justice in part to lessen the appeal of communism to Catholic workers.³⁷ The competition between Catholics and Marxists for the loyalty of the working class and poor became a major theme of twentieth century history in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. After the Second World War, Catholic-dominated Christian Democratic Parties became the major opponents of Marxist factions in Western Europe.³⁸

Catholic politicians had a distinct political ideology which directly challenged both communism and unregulated capitalism in the mid-twentieth century. Historian Tony Judt writes that European Christian Democracy “insisted on the importance of the *family*, a properly Christian theme with significant policy implications at a time when the needs of single-parent, homeless, and destitute families had never been greater.”³⁹ This focus on the welfare of families and communities led to a belief in gradual economic reform as opposed to either protection of the economic status-quo or promotion of revolution. The archdiocesan newspaper of Depression-era San Francisco echoed European thinking when it warned against the influence of Communists in labor unions because their radicalism threatened the stable, family-wage jobs of Catholic workers.⁴⁰

Lusk was not a reform-minded Catholic economic thinker, yet he did possess a strong suspicion of communism. Though Lusk was a Democrat, he faced opposition from more progressive Democrats in Oregon because of his conservative economic views. For instance, in 1936, when President Roosevelt was considering whom to appoint as a Federal District Judge for Oregon, representatives of the Oregon State Federation of Labor wrote to the president that Lusk, while intellectually qualified, did not have a “social and economic philosophy...in harmony with that expressed by yourself...”⁴¹

Lusk himself indicated that his political views put him out of step with the mainstream of Catholic thought in a 1938 letter. In concluding a brief autobiography for the dean of the University of Washington Law School, where he was to give an upcoming speech, the judge clarified that he was "...a Catholic and a Democrat—but not a New Dealer."⁴²

Yet Lusk did show a strong connection with American Catholic thought when he referred to the Soviet Union in 1951 as "the Russian menace."⁴³ Midcentury Catholic political conservatives like William F. Buckley and Catholic labor activists like Philip Murray could come together in opposition to communism. Boston Catholics demonstrated ordinary believers' enthusiasm for this aspect of foreign affairs when 20,000 gathered to pray the rosary in prayerful protest against a 1959 visit to the United States by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.⁴⁴ During his interim service as U.S. Senator, Lusk received a letter from a woman asking him to investigate the arrest of a Catholic priest by Communist authorities in Poland. Lusk expressed his concern but noted that due to his short term, it was a problem that his successor would have to address. Nevertheless, Lusk showed himself to be sympathetic to the cause of Eastern European Catholics in Communist countries, a cause which was always a concern for the Catholic Action movement.⁴⁵

While Hall Lusk and Francis Murnane both received an inspiration from the philosophy of Catholic Action, they applied that inspiration in different political commitments. Yet the two shared a personal devotion to Catholicism, and their devotion reflected some of the features distinctive to American Catholic history in the period between 1924 and 1960. Both men demonstrated a commitment to Catholic religious

practices, had a personal relationship with many of the same Catholic priests, and shared an interest in the writings of the popes. Even their personal lives reflected the powerful influence of the period's Catholic culture. This culture and its values helped to set them apart from the worldview of the majority of Americans of Protestant background.

Lusk and Murnane demonstrated a private devotion to many of the rituals of midcentury Catholicism. The 1950s were a high point for Catholic belief and practice in the United States: Catholic writer Garry Wills remembered that he had over sixty classmates, most straight out of high school, in his first year at a Jesuit seminary in 1951.⁴⁶ Lusk and his family were certainly active in practicing their faith. When his daughter Jeanne travelled to Europe for a summer, her itinerary included several days at the religious shrine of Lourdes in France.⁴⁷ Many Catholics believed that the Virgin Mary had appeared to a French peasant girl there in 1858, and Catholics who could afford to travel saw pilgrimage to holy sites in Europe as a route to gaining a deeper connection with God and a clearer understanding of the history of the Church.⁴⁸

Murnane also took pride in his Catholic identity and connection with the institutional Church. He once wrote an angry letter to the head of Portland's council of the Knights of Columbus, who had publicly stated that he thought that Murnane had left the Church. Murnane's indignation was evident in his reply that he and several comrades in the labor movement were "practicing Catholics."⁴⁹ Both Murnane and Lusk felt an abiding connection with the faith of their ancestors. This connection was noteworthy during an era in which sociologists and other academics focused on the need for citizens of a democratic society to possess a culture grounded in Protestant or secular values.

Given that a good number of intellectuals agreed with a 1928 *New Republic* editorial that Catholic culture was “based on absolutism...uniformity, and intellectual subservience,” many in academia and politics would have viewed Lusk’s and Murnane’s faith as making them outsiders in the country’s intellectual discussion.⁵⁰

In their family lives, Lusk and Murnane also reflected the mores of contemporary Catholicism. Lusk married his wife Catherine in 1911 and the two remained married for seventy-two years until the judge’s death. The couple had five daughters in keeping with the Catholic tradition of large families. Social approval of large families was rooted in the Church’s prohibition of birth control, and religious leaders viewed the parents of many children as making heroic sacrifices for the faith.⁵¹ The most famous Catholic family of the period serves as an instructive example: Joseph and Rose Kennedy had nine children, and Robert and Ethel Kennedy had eleven. Francis Murnane’s personal life reflects another aspect of Catholic custom. Many American Catholic men who had stopped studying for the priesthood maintained a belief in the holiness of the single life. Historian Jay Dolan notes that older bachelors were a common feature of Irish-American neighborhoods in the first half of the twentieth century. Like Martin Lomasney, the Irish political boss of 1920s Boston, Murnane was a Catholic layman who devoted himself to faith and politics rather than to a family.⁵²

Lusk and Murnane also developed friendly relationships with priests, a practice more common in the era of Catholic Action than during earlier periods of American Catholic history. Many lay Catholics in the nineteenth century assumed that a wide gulf existed between them and their superiors in the priesthood. The structure of worship, in

which priests said the Mass in Latin while ordinary parishioners prayed privately in their own language, underscored this spiritual class structure.⁵³ From the 1930s to the 1950s, however, as lay Catholics organized associations and promoted devotional activities alongside priests, individual relationships between clergy and laity often became more collaborative. A publication of the Catholic Family Movement, which encouraged neighboring families to gather for faith discussions, stated in 1957 that “Laymen are not second class members of the Body of Christ.”⁵⁴ The correspondence of both Murnane and Lusk with priests reveals that they rarely considered themselves to be religious second-class citizens.

While Murnane showed no hesitation in arguing forcefully with priests when he felt them to be wrong, his confrontational nature with some rooted itself partially in friendship. Father Thomas Tobin, whom Murnane severely criticized during the episode with the Spanish refugees, wrote after Murnane’s mother’s death to offer sympathy and with a promise to “make frequent remembrance of her soul at Mass.” Father George Higgins, Murnane’s enemy in 1948, received a Christmas card from the longshoreman in 1951. Five years later, Murnane sent a pamphlet about the ILWU to Edward Howard as a gift in honor of his thirtieth year as archbishop of Portland.⁵⁵ Murnane clearly felt some sort of comradeship with these priests when his anger at their shortcomings subsided.

The less combative Lusk also kept up a steady correspondence with several priests, including Father Tobin. The judge’s best friend in the clergy was Father George Thompson, who had married the Lusks in 1911. Lusk and Thompson wrote to each other frequently about political and legal affairs, and Thompson’s loan of the Maritain book

suggests that the two discussed contemporary challenges facing the Catholic Church. Lusk's and Murnane's collegial interactions with priests point to the way Catholic Action's philosophy had changed the once-rigid protocol between laity and clergy.⁵⁶ Their friendships also may have raised the suspicions of many other Americans in the mid-twentieth century. Despite the popularity of Bing Crosby's portrayal of priests in the movies, conservative Protestants like Norman Vincent Peale and secular intellectuals like John Dewey still worried that priests possessed too much power over the intellects of American Catholic citizens.⁵⁷

Lusk and Murnane also shared a common Catholic devotion to the leadership of the popes. The pope had not always been such a familiar figure for American Catholics. In the days before mass media and modern communications, Catholics in the United States would have rarely had the opportunity to hear about or read a papal pronouncement. For instance, in 1843 when the Vatican appointed Father Francois Blanchet to serve as bishop for the Oregon Country, Blanchet and his fellow Catholic Oregonians did not hear the news for a year.⁵⁸ In 1931, however, a new era began when radio waves carried a message by Pope Pius XI across the United States.⁵⁹ The popes' speeches and writings became a much more important component of American Catholic thought after the 1930s. Garry Wills recalled "...what a cult was made of...papal letters in the 1950s," even by "Catholic liberals."⁶⁰ As Wills remembered, both conservatives like Lusk and radicals like Murnane could find a distinctly Catholic source of inspiration in the writings of the popes.

Lusk and Murnane felt a special connection with the popes of the first half of the twentieth century. Leo XIII (1878-1903), who addressed industrial problems in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, and Pius XI (1922-1939), who wrote about justice for workers in *Quadragesimo Anno*, remained key figures for Catholics in the American labor movement into the 1950s. Philip Murray of the CIO drew on the ideas of papal writings in setting up a plan for industrial councils which would represent workers in war industries during World War II.⁶¹ True to form, Murnane used quotes from both Leo and Pius in the 1951 Christmas card which he sent to Father Higgins, indicating that the longshoreman valued the popes' interest in workers' rights.⁶²

Lusk felt drawn to a pope more admired by conservative Catholics, Pius X, who had reigned from 1903 to 1914. The world remembered Pius as a firm defender of traditionalism in the face of late nineteenth-century changes in science, theology, and culture. Yet Lusk wrote in a letter to Father Tobin that he was enthusiastically reading a biography of Pius X. He even remembered having written a poem about Pius's election while a student at Georgetown. That both Lusk and Murnane drew encouragement from the words and lives of the popes suggests the pull which Catholic culture exerted on believers of all ideological and social backgrounds in the period before the Second Vatican Council.⁶³

This study of Lusk and Murnane has not shown that there was such a thing as a typical Catholic thinker in the years between 1920 and 1960. The broad philosophy of Catholic Action could inspire all types of political activists and intellectuals. The movement led Francis Murnane to seek radical political and economic changes. He also

believed that his faith gave him a warrant to speak out against his religious leaders when he thought they were standing in the way of the fight for justice. In contrast, Hall Lusk viewed Catholic Action as a method for binding his fellow believers more closely to their Church and nation. However, the diversity of Catholic thought during this period does not mean that some Catholics had assimilated to American values while others remained true to their traditions. Both Lusk and Murnane existed inside a vibrant and truly distinctive Catholic culture. Their language, values, interests, and friendships all demonstrate the strength of the Catholic worldview in the mid-twentieth century. The differences of opinion between Catholics like Lusk and Murnane were not mere reflections of disputes in the secular world but were evidence of the richness and diversity of thought within a unique American religious and cultural community.

Notes:

¹ James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 148.

² William Issel, *For Both Cross and Flag: Catholic Action, Anti-Catholicism, and National Security Politics in World War II San Francisco* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 44.

³ Francis J. Murnane Papers, MSS 1438, Oregon Historical Society Research Library, "Affiliation with CIO, 1937-38," Box 1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Six Refugee Spaniards Hope for Leniency From U.S., Fear Jail, Death if Returned," *The Oregonian*, October 14, 1947." Retrieved from America's Historical Newspapers, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive/>

⁶ James Hennesey, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 272-3.

⁷ Murnane, "Letters by Murnane, 1946-1967," Box 6.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 117.

¹⁰ O'Toole, 146.

¹¹ O'Toole, 146; 163.

¹² Hennesey, 228-9.

¹³ Murnane, "Julia Eaton (Kathleen Cronin) Defense Committee, 1/48-1/51," Box 6.

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- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Thomas C. Cornell and James H. Forest, eds., *A Penny a Copy: Readings from The Catholic Worker* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 160-2.
- ¹⁶ Murnane, "Julia Eaton (Kathleen Cronin) Defense Committee, 1/48-1/51," Box 6.
- ¹⁷ Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 203.
- ¹⁸ Murnane, "Julia Eaton (Kathleen Cronin) Defense Committee, 1/48-1/51," Box 6.
- ¹⁹ Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 264.
- ²⁰ Cornell and Forest, 29-31.
- ²¹ Dolan, 220.
- ²² Hall Stoner Lusk Papers, MSS 2640, "Early Personal Papers, 1903-1939," Box 3, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.
- ²³ Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 365.
- ²⁴ "Marylhurst School Scene of Ceremony," *The Oregonian* (May 11, 1930), <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.lib.pdx.edu/iw-search/we/HistArchive>.
- ²⁵ O'Toole, 149.
- ²⁶ "Marylhurst School Scene of Ceremony."
- ²⁷ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 168-9
- ²⁸ McGreevy, 175-7.
- ²⁹ McGreevy, 178.
- ³⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Protestant Looks at Catholics," *Commonweal* (May 8, 1953), <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org>.
- ³¹ McGreevy, 195.
- ³² McGreevy, 192-3.
- ³³ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—T," Box 3; "Adamson v. California," Legal Information Institute, Cornell University Law School, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/332/46>.
- ³⁴ Hennessee, 278.
- ³⁵ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—Rufus Lusk," Box 3.
- ³⁶ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—B," Box 3.
- ³⁷ Issel, 35.
- ³⁸ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 80.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Issel, 49.
- ⁴¹ Lusk, "Possibility of Appointments," Box 4.
- ⁴² Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—F," Box 3.
- ⁴³ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—G," Box 3.
- ⁴⁴ O'Toole, 187.
- ⁴⁵ Lusk, "Foreign Affairs," Box 8.
- ⁴⁶ Garry Wills, *Why I Am a Catholic*, (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 21.
- ⁴⁷ Lusk, "Jeanne Lusk Fox," Box 3.
- ⁴⁸ O'Toole, 192.
- ⁴⁹ Murnane, "Letters by Murnane, 1946-1967," Box 6.
- ⁵⁰ McGreevy, 170.
- ⁵¹ McGreevy, 161.
- ⁵² Dolan, 124; 151.
- ⁵³ O'Toole, 118-9.
- ⁵⁴ O'Toole, 175.

⁵⁵ Murnane, "Letters to Murnane, 1940-1955," Box 6.

⁵⁶ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—T," Box 3.

⁵⁷ Dolan, 273; McGreevy, 169.

⁵⁸ Wilfred P. Schoenberg, *A History of the Catholic Church in the Pacific Northwest: 1743-1983* (Washington, D.C.: The Pastoral Press, 1987), 81.

⁵⁹ O'Toole, 191.

⁶⁰ Wills, 44.

⁶¹ Dolan, 263.

⁶² Murnane, "Letters to Murnane, 1940-1955," Box 6.

⁶³ Lusk, "Personal Correspondence—T," Box 3.

Conclusion

Hall S. Lusk and Francis J. Murnane both had funeral Masses celebrated at St. Mary's Cathedral, and both were laid to rest in Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery overlooking the city. The cathedral and the cemetery are two well-known landmarks among Portland's Catholic community. Yet it is likely that few Catholic Oregonians know much about these men whose political influence was at its height over fifty years ago. The careers of Hall S. Lusk and Francis J. Murnane were deeply involved in the pressing questions of their time period. Yet their lives offer some lessons which are still relevant to American politics and culture today. These lessons might be especially relevant to American Catholics and to all those who have an interest in the Catholic Church in America.

First, Lusk and Murnane offer insight into the enduring strength of Catholic identity in American history. During the nineteenth century, some critics of the Church hoped, and supporters feared, that Catholicism could not survive in a modern, democratic culture like the United States. These hopes and fears may sound familiar to modern Catholics who live at a time when many suspect that secularization is creating an irreversible decline for organized religion. Secondly, the lives of Lusk and Murnane demonstrate the degree to which aims that are seen as liberal and conservative coexist in Catholic political activism. Throughout American history, progressives and traditionalists have made use of religious language to further their respective political and cultural agendas. Yet Lusk and Murnane did not merely use Catholic terminology to advocate for

completely separate sets of goals. Rather, their varying ages, classes, and life experiences led them to emphasize different, but compatible, components of the Catholic Action message.

The portrayal of the Roman Catholic Church as a relic unable to survive in the modern age has existed in the United States since the time of the Revolution. As historian John McGreevy recounts, Alexander Hamilton considered anti-Catholic legislation promoted by New York politicians in 1787 a waste of time because the Church seemed to be rapidly losing power due to the political influence of nation-states and the intellectual challenges of the Enlightenment. The outbreak of the French Revolution appeared to confirm Hamilton's feeling. Napoleon's rough treatment of Pope Pius VI and his successor, Pius VII, offered further support to the thesis that future rulers would need to pay little attention to the opinions of the Church. This attitude continued into the nineteenth century, as British and American writers predicted that the future belonged to the Protestant nations then leading the world in politics, industrialism, and science. A *New York Times* editorial from 1861 reflected this belief when it called the Catholic faith a "fast-vanishing quality" across the world.¹

Several books published near the height of the scandal over the Church's failure to address child abuse by priests posed similar questions to those asked over a century before. Even devout Catholic writers worried that the future of the Catholic Church in the modern world was in danger. In *Breaking Faith: Can the Catholic Church Save Itself?* (2001), English Catholic journalist John Cornwell worried that "the general fragmentation and decline of the Church as an organic whole" would lead to an

“accelerated retreat” of Catholic faith in America and Europe.² In 2003, the careful and fair-minded religion reporter Peter Steinfels published *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America*, which argued that “Today the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is on the verge of either an irreversible decline or a thoroughgoing transformation.”³ The Church’s terrible failings, combined with the increasing secularism of American culture, appeared to signal a dark future for the institution.

Critics of the Church echoed these worries with their own hopes that Catholics would leave the faith in large numbers. Journalist E.J. Dionne reported in 2012 about a publicity campaign paid for by an organization known as the Freedom from Religion Foundation. The group’s advertisement called for believers to “Quit the Catholic Church.” It went on to argue that “By remaining a ‘good Catholic,’ you are doing ‘bad’ to women’s rights. You are an enabler.”⁴ The Foundation clearly hoped that liberal Catholics who strongly disagreed with bishops and the Vatican over sexual ethics were on the verge of abandoning their religious community. Yet religious believers do not usually place their disagreements with a faith’s leadership over their emotional attachment to the tradition. A glimpse at American Catholic history can help prove the staying power of religious identities.

Francis Murnane and Hall Lusk took their Catholic identities with utter seriousness despite frequently coming into conflict with the teachings of Church. Murnane demonstrated a strong willingness to criticize his superiors in the Church hierarchy, including Father Thomas Tobin, Archbishop Edward Howard, and Father

George Higgins. He expressed his disagreement with the Church's teaching that Catholics should not participate in labor unions with Communists. He was outraged by the clergy's defense of Franco's regime in Spain. Yet Murnane bristled when he found out that the Knights of Columbus accused him of not practicing his faith. He continued to go to Mass and use religiously-inspired language, and proudly declared to atheist comrades that he lit candles at his parish church in prayer.

Hall Lusk would appear to have a less conflicted relationship with the Church than Murnane. With his opposition to communism and respect for the priests and bishops, Lusk seems the embodiment of the loyal, pre-Vatican II Catholic. Yet the patriotism which made Lusk so respectable in American society would have marked him as somewhat unorthodox within the intellectual climate of the Church in the 1950s. Before the Second Vatican Council, the pope and bishops still officially taught that separation of church and state was wrong and that the Catholic Church should be an established state religion in any nation in which Catholics resided. The American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, who had long worked to develop a Catholic theology of religious liberty, received a prohibition from writing on the topic from his superiors in 1955.⁵ While most American Catholics did not know it, therefore, their enthusiasm for religiously free democracy placed them in opposition to the official teaching of the Vatican. Yet Lusk always thought of himself as a strong Catholic, as his interest in religious issues, admiration for the popes, and participation in local Catholic events indicate.

Catholic culture in the mid-twentieth century clearly exerted a strong pull on both Lusk and Murnane. They viewed life through a distinctly Catholic worldview at a time

when even many opponents of the Church granted that Catholics shared a cohesive culture. Brand Blanshard, a philosopher whose brother Paul gained fame for his anti-Catholic writings, wrote after studying an urban Polish Catholic community that “It is a world which is simply not our world...a world which still abounds with the primitive concepts and fancies of the middle ages.”⁶ During the same period, the sociologist Will Herberg offered another view by arguing that religious differences between Catholics, Protestants, and Jews were becoming less and less defining in an increasingly homogeneous American culture. Although religious identities were certainly becoming less contentious than they had once been, later researchers have argued that the three distinct worldviews remained intact even through the widely-perceived growth of secularism from the 1960s until today.

Catholics remain marked by what sociologist Andrew Greeley identifies as “the Catholic imagination.” Greeley insists that there is “no evidence” to support the theory that “Catholics are rapidly becoming like everyone else.”⁷ He points to a series of polls which demonstrate that Catholics continue to see the world differently from Protestants. In politics, Catholics as a whole view government action in economic matters more positively and police activity more negatively than Protestants. Culturally, surveys of students indicate that Catholic college students communicate with their families back home more frequently than do Protestant students.⁸ Greeley argues that these differences are ultimately rooted in the religious imagination of Catholicism, in which the idea of a compassionate community of saints plays a strong role. The idea of the communion of saints leads Catholics to value mercy and ties between family and neighbors highly.

These values are related to Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary, which shows no sign of decline among young, educated Catholics.⁹ Francis Murnane, who lit candles in prayer to the saints, and Hall Lusk, whose daughter Jeanne went on pilgrimage to a site associated with the Virgin Mary, certainly knew the power of these spiritual ideas.

While Lusk and Murnane help prove the strength of Catholic cultural identity in underwriting political action, their story also complicates common notions about Catholic political activism. Historian Michael Kazin argues that true progressivism, as opposed to liberal reformism or populism, only appealed to a majority of white, working-class Christians at one time in American history, during the Populist and Progressive eras. Historian of the interwar United States Glen Jeansonne presents both Catholic and Protestant laypeople as naturally conservative and generally unwilling to follow their pastors in support of more activist social reform. Writer Jonathan Rieder attributes the popularity of Joseph McCarthy to “a ferocious conservatism among many Catholic Democrats.”¹⁰ Clearly, historians have often viewed Christian churches, and especially the Catholic Church, as reactionary forces. Yet American Catholic history offers important examples of the ideas of the left appealing to large numbers of white working-class Christians.

Throughout its history, the American left has used religious language in order to argue for its vision of a more egalitarian society. Leftists in the United States have differed from the country’s liberal majority by emphasizing cooperation and economic equality rather than individual rights and free competition. Dissenters have had success, when, like the Populists and Progressives, they were able to present communal principles

as a more Christian philosophy than laissez-faire economics. Traditional religious symbolism allowed radicals to defend themselves from charges of being influenced by foreign ideas such as Marxism. Yet for activists in such important movements as abolitionism and civil rights, the use of religious language was not opportunistic but instead was based in deep convictions. Thanks to the American Catholic Church's long support for workers' rights, Catholic activists have also been able to turn to their religious tradition both for rhetoric and inspiration.¹¹

While Catholicism led some workers to support a more cautious form of unionism, radical labor associations have always had an important Catholic component. An estimated fifty percent of the Knights of Labor were Irish, and not all of these cradle Catholics had left their religion behind. The leader of the Knights, Terence Powderly, remained a member of the Church and found common cause with priests in both his fight for labor and in his support for temperance among workers.¹² The founder of the leftist Western Federation of Miners, Ed Boyce, remained a devout Catholic and an Irish nationalist. The fact that many of the union's officers were Irish Catholics indicates that a large number of miners were able to reconcile their faith with their rebellious political and economic opinions. The leftist populism of the CIO in the 1930s attracted large numbers of Catholics, including people of "new immigrant" descent like Italians, Slovaks, and Poles.¹³

The career of Francis Murnane provides additional evidence that Catholic leftist activism served as a vital force in local politics from the Great Depression until the Sixties. Murnane viewed Catholic principles as his guide in labor activism. The

longshoreman used religious language and cited Catholic heroes in writings that promoted the rights of workers. He frequently attempted to enlist the help of priests in mediating with employers. Murnane certainly engaged in several heated exchanges with priests, but his papers also offer evidence that priests and even bishops were willing to help him in his work. The speech which Murnane saved by Father Michael Mulcaire expresses the Catholic populism of the period in vivid language, picturing Jesus in contemporary terms as a labor activist speaking out for the dignity of the ordinary people. Murnane's papers suggest not that he was an anomaly, but that he was a fairly typical inhabitant of the Catholic working-class world of the mid-twentieth century.

It is true that Catholic activism of the period also took more conservative directions. In the 1930s, tens of thousands of believers marched through the streets of Chicago in a demonstration against movies they considered indecent.¹⁴ In the 1950s, Catholics proudly claimed that they outdid mainline Protestants and Jews in their patriotism and opposition to communism. Patrick Scanlan's extremely popular newspaper the *Brooklyn Tablet* called on ordinary Americans—usually portrayed as ethnic Catholics—to defend the United States from suspected Communists in high circles of power.¹⁵ Hall Lusk appeared to view the potential of Catholic activism from this angle. He praised organizations like the CYO which sought to instill morality and patriotism in youth, and his writings bear witness to his love of country, distrust of radicalism, and opposition to communism. He is a symbol of the many politically active Catholics, in both the middle class and working class, who viewed Catholic moral values as supporting the political and economic status quo.

Catholic Action appealed to Lusk and Murnane in strikingly different ways. Does this mean that “Catholic Action” was merely the cover which two men with very different opinions used to put a cloak of religion on their political ideologies? Certainly, Lusk’s and Murnane’s backgrounds led them to interpret Catholicism in dissimilar ways. Lusk grew to adulthood in the Church of the late nineteenth century. The Church of this era viewed itself as a fortress under the spiritual command of the pope that was set apart from the outside world. Catholic Action, in this context, meant the effort to promote a flourishing traditional faith in an era dominated by what Pope Pius IX considered to be the false idols of technology, progress, and science.¹⁶ Lusk also came of age at a time when Catholicism still seemed to many Americans an exotic foreign faith. As a member of an upper-class family with deep American roots, Lusk viewed with urgency the task of ensuring that Catholics’ spiritual distinctiveness did not make them political and cultural outsiders in the United States.

Murnane learned his Catholicism in the very different atmosphere of the 1920s. The Church in this period, symbolized by the career of the Progressive priest John A. Ryan, concerned itself with working for political and economic justice. Both Catholic moral theology and the Church’s concern with staying relevant in the lives of its increasingly working-class parishioners motivated this effort. Catholic Action in this context meant the fight to bring the principles of Catholic social teaching to bear on questions of economic justice.¹⁷ Blue-collar families like Murnane’s viewed the Church not so much as a refuge but as an ally for an attack on the socioeconomic status quo. The defining experience of Murnane’s life, the 1934 longshoremen’s strike, cemented his

view of the world as a battleground between employers and workers. He viewed the Church, at its best, as one of the few advocates for workers and the poor in a hostile world.

Yet while Lusk and Murnane each focused on those aspects of Catholic Action which spoke to their life experiences, in the end a shared belief in Catholicism remained the source for their principles. From its origins, Catholic Action was meant both to preserve Catholic teaching in the modern world and to disrupt some aspects of modern economics and politics.¹⁸ In this, it reflected the history of the Catholic Church as a whole. While the Church has changed its structure and many teachings over the course of history, it has attempted to preserve the most ancient teachings of the early Christian movement contained in the Gospels and creeds. Yet these early teachings, protected by a conservative instinct, have inspired radicals and dissenters from St. Francis of Assisi to Cesar Chavez.¹⁹ Therefore, the very history of the Church was the source for the dichotomy which emerged in the lives of Lusk and Murnane. Their life experiences caused Lusk to gravitate toward the traditional elements of Catholicism and Murnane to its radical heritage. Contrary to seeing class position as the key determinant of political action, this study demonstrates how Catholic worldviews can frame social perspectives.

American Catholic activists after the careers of Lusk and Murnane had ended remained inspired by both the traditional and disruptive aspects of the Catholic message. Catholics from the late Sixties until the present continued to write, organize, and march for both liberal and conservative causes. During the Vietnam War, antiwar priests and nuns like the Berrigan brothers gained a great deal of publicity for religious pacifism.²⁰ In

the 1970s, however, Catholic activism seemed to be turning in a more conservative direction. In the early years of the decade, a grassroots Catholic campaign organized against the efforts of state legislatures to loosen restrictions on abortions. These efforts, along with the campaign to reinstate restrictions after the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision declared obtaining an abortion to be a constitutional right, have been characterized as a Catholic turn to conservatism. Nevertheless, careful observer John McGreevy noticed that anti-abortion movements used terms common to the Catholic left, like "solidarity," and succeeded in a series of referendum victories prior to 1973 by appealing to working-class Catholic Democrats.²¹

Catholic leftism, moreover, remained strong in the next several decades. In the 1980s, the American Catholic bishops spoke out strongly against nuclear weapons and economic inequality, while Catholic parishes were among those that provided sanctuary to Central American refugees fleeing from right-wing dictatorships in their home countries.²² More recently, Catholic activists have placed themselves to the left of the current Democratic Party by voicing opposition to continued American military efforts in the Middle East and support for the rights of undocumented workers. The popularity of the "Nuns on the Bus" tour in the summer of 2012, designed by a group of progressive religious sisters to promote awareness of the Church's positions on poverty, workers' rights, and immigration, proved that the Catholic social justice movement remained meaningful to many ordinary Catholics.²³

This thesis points to the fact that the character of Catholic activism was both differentiated by class and unified by Catholic values that do not adhere simply to the

parameters of liberalism and conservatism. In the 1950s, the extremely popular television show host Bishop Fulton Sheen could state that “Communism is related to our materialistic Western civilization as putrefaction is to disease... what the Western world has subscribed to in isolated and uncorrelated tidbits, communism has integrated into a complete philosophy of life.”²⁴ For a Fifties television show host to identify the consumerist lifestyle of Western capitalism as a lesser form of the evil of communism was unusual. But from the perspective of Catholic social teaching, which had long taught that both Marxism and laissez-faire capitalism violated justice, Sheen’s statement would not have been considered out of the ordinary.

Catholic social teaching deserves to be acknowledged as a powerful political and cultural force. Historians have challenged conventional political historiography by examining the power of ideologies which do not line up conveniently with either left or right. Michael Kazin has written of populism, Robert Johnston of middle-class radicalism, and David Chappell of the prophetic tradition in illuminating ways. John McGreevy identifies communalism as the defining mark of Catholic political thought separating it from the ideologies of both left and right. He writes that the modern challenge of Catholic thought is that it argues that “associations and ties with the strangers in our midst satisfy our deepest, most common aspirations.”²⁵ According to Catholic social teaching, the “strangers in our midst” include migrant workers, mothers on welfare, death-row inmates, the unborn, and innocent victims of airstrikes in the Middle East. These political priorities will tie Catholics to neither a right concerned with maintaining absolute free-market competition nor a left which proposes unlimited

freedom in personal choices. In a nation founded on the ideal of individualism, Catholic values based on community continue to offer a profound, and profoundly challenging, way of looking at the world.

Notes:

¹ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 11-14; James M. O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 87.

² John Cornwell, *Breaking Faith: Can the Catholic Church Save Itself?* (New York: Penguin Compass, 2001), 13-14.

³ Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift: The Crisis of the Roman Catholic Church in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 1.

⁴ E.J. Dionne, "Caught Between Secularists and Conservatives, I'm Not Quitting the Church," (May 14, 2012), http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2012/05/caught_between_secularists_and.html.

⁵ McGreevy, 206-8.

⁶ McGreevy, 169.

⁷ Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 173.

⁸ Greeley, 129.

⁹ Greeley, 101.

¹⁰ Michael Kazin, *American Dreamers: How the Left Changed a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), xv; Glen Jeansonne, *Transformation and Reaction: America, 1921 to 1945* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994), 170-1; Jonathan Rieder, "The Rise of the 'Silent Majority,'" *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 247.

¹¹ Kazin, *American Dreamers*, xvi-xvii; Steinfels, 76.

¹² Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish-Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 168-70.

¹³ Emmons, 305; Dolan, 176; Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 152.

¹⁴ O'Toole, 170.

¹⁵ Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 175-7.

¹⁶ O'Toole, 131.

¹⁷ Steinfels, 77.

¹⁸ O'Toole, 146

¹⁹ Garry Wills, *Why I Am a Catholic* (New York: Mariner Books, 2003), 295-7.

²⁰ Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 180.

²¹ McGreevy, 271-7.

²² Szasz, 180.

²³ Laurie Goodstein, "Nuns, Rebuked by Rome, Plan Road Trip to Spotlight Social Issues," *The New York Times* (June 5, 2012), http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/06/us/us-nuns-bus-tour-to-spotlight-social-issues.html?_r=0.

²⁴ Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*, 174.

²⁵ Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion*; Robert D. Johnston, *The Radical Middle Class: Populist Democracy and the Question of Capitalism in Progressive Era Portland, Oregon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); McGreevy, 295; David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); McGreevy, 295. See also David Horowitz, *Beyond Left and Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

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