SPIRITUALIZING THE POLITICAL WITHOUT POLITICIZING RELIGION:
R. SARGENT SHRIVER'S LEADERSHIP OF THE "WAR ON POVERTY"

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ABSTRACT

In early 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson declared his administration’s "unconditional war on poverty in America," urging Congress and the American people to join with him in the effort. As part of the War on Poverty, Congress later that year passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA). It created an Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) that would be headed by R. Sargent Shriver.

Shriver had a strong Catholic piety and was an intellectually ardent student of theology and political philosophy. This paper examines how, in leading the OEO, Shriver expressed, used, or reflected various religious or spiritual values, ideals, and concepts, but without "politicizing religion." The analysis draws on biographic information about Shriver and materials pertaining to the history of the EOA. Speeches by Shriver are extensively cited.

Chapter One briefly reviews the EOA. Chapter Two provides a short biography of Shriver, with attention to Shriver's Catholic faith and interest in religious figures and thinkers. With this background, Chapter Three reviews how Shriver involved faith-based organizations in EOA programs. While Shriver acknowledged the "separateness" of Church and State, he claimed that there were common problems of justice that both should address, and on which they could collaborate, without trespassing on the First
Amendment. Chapter Three analyzes Shriver's use of religious sources and themes in enlisting faith-based organizations' participation in EOA programs, in fighting poverty, and in thinking about the poor. Shriver sought to build a moral consensus on the need to alleviate poverty, emphasizing, among other things, the sacredness of individual persons who are poor, the social substance of human existence linking all segments of society, and spiritual values and themes such as love, service, dignity, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and respect. Finally, Chapter Four focuses on how Shriver's work at the OEO implicated and reflected what is known as Catholic Social Teaching. Particular emphasis is placed on the principles of the dignity of each person, the solidarity of all humans, what is known as "the option for the poor and vulnerable," and on the social organizing principle known as "subsidiarity."
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..............................................................................................................ii

INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................1

Chapter

ONE  THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1964.........................  6

   Events Leading to Passage of the Act .................................................6
   Major Features of the Act .................................................................9
   National Emphasis Programs .........................................................14
   The EOA: Some Controversies and Challenges .....................15

TWO  R. SARGENT SHRIVER: GROUNDED CATHOLIC LAYMAN..... 20

   Shriver's Catholic Faith and Sensibility .................................25
   Liberal Democrat, Liberal Catholic ........................................32

THREE  THE WAR ON POVERTY’S SPIRITUAL WEAPONS
       AND VALUES...................................................................................35

       The War on Poverty, Church-Related Institutions,
       and the First Amendment .......................................................37
       Shriver's Use of Religious Themes, Sources, and Values ......48

FOUR  SHRIVER, THE WAR ON POVERTY, AND PRINCIPLES OF
       ROMAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.......................................69

       Dignity of Each Human Person and the Solidarity
       of All Humans ...........................................................................74
       Option for the Poor and Vulnerable .................................78
       Principle of Subsidiarity ......................................................80

CONCLUSION.....................................................................................................90
INTRODUCTION

In his televised January 8, 1964 State of the Union message, Lyndon B. Johnson declared his administration's "unconditional war on poverty in America," urging Congress and the American people to join with him in the effort. "It will not be a short or easy struggle -- no single weapon or strategy will suffice," he added, "but we shall not rest until that war is won." Because poverty was a "national problem," Johnson believed an effective "attack" required organization and support at the national, state, and local levels.¹

At the time of Johnson's address, the Director of the Peace Corps, R. Sargent Shriver, was in the midst of a trip to the Middle East and Asia on Peace Corps and other business. After the 1960 election Shriver -- who was married to John F. Kennedy's sister Eunice -- had been assigned the task of transforming the campaign promise of a Peace Corps into a well-functioning organization. Shriver did so to much acclaim. Idealistic, boyishly exuberant and enthusiastic, extraordinarily capable of motivating others, and fully committed to the task, he clarified the Peace Corps' mission and then led others in achieving it, after successfully wrestling with an assortment of diplomatic and practical challenges.²

On his trip Shriver read the news of Johnson's declaration of a war on poverty, and he thought, "Pity the poor soul who gets charged with running this."³ That "poor


³ Ibid., 345.
soul,” of course, turned out to be Shriver himself, whom Johnson was intent on leading the effort. In the face of various protestations from Shriver (who was more than happy at the Peace Corps), the President refused to take "no" for an answer. Shriver eventually (if reluctantly) agreed to accept the position, but on the condition that he remain Director of the Peace Corps.

Johnson announced on February 1 Shriver's appointment as head of what would ultimately become the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). Johnson told Shriver that he would have a budget of $1 billion, and sixty days, to conceive, design, administratively structure, and get a program approved by Congress.\(^4\) Shriver promptly assembled a team that worked day and night to meet that deadline.\(^5\) In August 1964, after much political wrangling, Congress enacted the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA) as a component\(^6\) of the "War on Poverty." This far-reaching initiative embraced a number of programs that for the first time in the nation's history, as Shriver put it, "focused exclusively on poor people."\(^7\) Highly controversial from its inception, it

\(^4\) Ibid., 355.


\(^6\) Dylan Matthews, "Everything you need to know about the war on poverty," Washington Post, January 8, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/01/08/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-war-on-poverty/ (accessed January 16, 2015). More broadly speaking, the War on Poverty included, in addition to the EOA, the Social Security Amendments of 1965, which created Medicare and Medicaid; the Food Stamp Act of 1964, which made the food stamps program a permanent one; and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which, among other things, established a program subsidizing school districts with a large share of impoverished students.

was, he later said, "the most discussed and most criticized domestic program in the United States."\(^8\)

Faced with daunting challenges, including the political risk of a negative reaction from the lower middle class,\(^9\) Shriver and his OEO team considered strategies for building and sustaining public support for War on Poverty programs. They included enlisting the assistance of faith-based organizations (and other non-governmental organizations) in implementing various EOA initiatives, and, more generally, in securing their support for this controversial legislation. Shriver was uniquely qualified to implement this strategy. He had a strong Catholic piety,\(^10\) and while not a professional theologian, he was an intellectually curious and ardent student of theology and political philosophy. Indeed, as early as the 1950s, an intimate spoke of him as "the best-grounded Catholic layman I have ever known."\(^11\)

This paper examines how, in leading the OEO, this "grounded Catholic layman" expressed and used various religious or spiritual values, ideals, and concepts. To provide a context for this analysis, Chapter One briefly reviews the legislation most associated with the War on Poverty, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. It is

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\(^9\) Stossel, Sarge, 341-42.


followed in Chapter Two by a short biography of Shriver, with attention to Shriver's Catholic faith and interest in religious authors and thinkers.

With this background, Chapter Three reviews how Shriver involved faith-based organizations in War on Poverty programs. It further analyzes Shriver's use of religious sources and themes in enlisting these organizations' participation in those programs, in fighting poverty, and in thinking about the poor. While Shriver acknowledged the "separateness" of Church and State, he posited that there were common problems of justice that both should address, and on which they should and could collaborate without trespassing on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Through powerful story-telling and imaginative use of religious imagery and quotations from religious figures, Shriver sought to build a societal moral consensus on the need to alleviate poverty, emphasizing, among other things, the sacredness of individual persons who are poor, and the social substance of human existence that links all segments of society. Spiritual values and themes such as love, service, dignity, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and respect imbued his presentations.

Chapter Four focuses on the extent to which Shriver's work at the OEO implicated, reflected, and was consistent with the still-developing principles of what is now known as Catholic Social Teaching, with emphasis on the dignity of each person, the solidarity of all humans, what is known "the option for the poor and vulnerable," and the social organizing principle known as "subsidiarity." The provocative and critical edge to Shriver's outreach to both faith-based and secular audiences embraced themes (e.g., the option for the poor, solidarity through personal experience and
learning from the poor, and a distaste for privatized religion) that would become more clearly identified with later developments in theology.

The Conclusion reviews the picture emerging from the paper: of a remarkable senior government official, grounded in a multi-dimensional Catholic faith, who sought to instill spiritual values in a societal response to the problem of poverty, but without "politicizing religion."  

The paper's analysis includes extensive references to speeches and addresses presented by Shriver to various audiences. They are collected in the Appendix.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT OF 1964

Although this paper is neither a history nor evaluation of the administration and effectiveness of the controversial War on Poverty (many of whose programs continue to this day), some background information is necessary for contextualizing Shriver's use of spiritual values and concepts when he led the War on Poverty. We begin by briefly summarizing events leading to passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which is followed by a summary of the Act's major provisions, and then by a review of post-enactment developments particularly pertinent to this paper.

Events Leading to Passage of the Act

The idea of an assault on poverty had been germinating in the Kennedy Administration for some time before Johnson's January 1964 declaration of war on it. John Kennedy's exposure to conditions of hardship in West Virginia during the 1960 presidential campaign "moved the problem of poverty toward the center of his consciousness." At his urging, Robert Kennedy (the Attorney-General) established a President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (PCJD); out of it emerged staff sentiment for experimenting with an initiative that would later be known as "community action," i.e., a "bottom-up" approach to urban problems, with residents "empowered" by making their own decisions on how to spend federal funds provided to them.1

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1 Stossel, Sarge, 335,336.
President Kennedy's interest in poverty intensified after the publication of Michael Harrington's *The Other America* and articles on the poverty issue. He assigned responsibility to his chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, Walter Heller, for studying the problem more deeply and then proposing programs for addressing it. After obtaining considerable input, Heller's position was that community action should be "the 'organizing principle' for a more full-blown antipoverty program." Shortly before his trip to Dallas, Kennedy told Heller that he was intent on his domestic program including some attack on poverty, although what he specifically had in mind is unclear.

Very shortly after the assassination, Heller briefed Johnson on research involving a poverty program, an idea to which Johnson responded with apparent enthusiasm ("That's my kind of program"). A substantial portion of the January 1964

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3 Stossel, *Sarge*, 337-39. Analysis convinced Heller of "a drastic slowdown in the rate at which the economy is taking people out of poverty," and that "chronically poor people" (as distinguished from middle-class workers) would not be prepared to benefit from the jobs Heller and others believed would be created by the administration's proposed tax cut. Ibid., 338-39.

4 Ibid., 340.

5 Ibid., 340-41. That meeting also contained, however, the seeds of "a competition" between Johnson and associates of the late President Kennedy "to claim the 'more liberal' mantle" on fighting poverty -- a competition that would manifest itself, in various ways, in debates over the drafting of legislation and then implementation of it. At their meeting Johnson asked Heller to tell Kennedy's advisers that he was not a conservative "who is likely to go back to the Eisenhower ways or give in to the economy block in Congress". He told Heller that he was "a Roosevelt New Dealer"; and that "[a]s a matter of fact," John Kennedy "was a little too conservative to suit my taste." As discussion of a poverty program progressed, Kennedy advisers "began trumpeting their late boss's support for a 'national assault on poverty,'" in effect challenging Johnson's claim that he was more liberal than Kennedy, and stoking Johnson's fear that if Johnson "appeared to waver in his support for an aggressive antipoverty program, he would bring down on himself 'another hail of sophisticated liberal contempt.'" Ibid., 341. See also Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York, Vintage Books, 1991), 142.
Economic Report of the President was devoted to explaining the nature of the poverty problem and suggesting a number of initiatives for attacking it. A central role was accorded to "[c]oncerted community action, with Federal assistance," that could break a "cycle of poverty" that was "breeding more poverty." As noted earlier, following enormous pressure from Johnson, Shriver could not resist accepting the appointment to head the War on Poverty. The president admired Shriver's leadership of the Peace Corps and his ability, when getting it off the ground and successfully ramping it up, to work effectively with Congress; both achievements evidenced highly desirable leadership qualities for what Johnson foresaw would be challenges to this major component of his domestic program. Immediately after agreeing to head the War on Poverty, Shriver energetically tackled the president's daunting assignment to draft a bill and then quickly obtain congressional approval. The task force of advisers and experts he assembled moved

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6 The report asserted that nearly 20% of the population "often live without hope, below minimum standards of decency"; and that the country "cannot and need not wait for the gradual growth of the economy to lift this forgotten fifth of our Nation above the poverty line." Lyndon B. Johnson, "Economic Report of the President, January 1964, together with the Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisors (January 1964), 14, 15. https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=economic+report+of+the+president+1964 (accessed December 7, 2014).

7 Ibid., 16. Other initiatives described for attacking poverty included the tax cut, civil rights legislation, improvements in health care, area development plans, adult education, and Medicare. Ibid., 15-17.

8 Details of Johnson's pressure on Shriver are described in Stossel, Sarge, 344-54.

9 Ibid., 353. Moreover, with Shriver in charge, it would be difficult for Robert Kennedy, Shriver's brother-in-law, to "criticize [the program] publicly."

10 He assembled a task force of brilliant advisers to assist him in framing a bill, encouraging them to generate "ideas on how to broaden the assault on poverty" through spirited brainstorming and debate. The task force's make-up and operation are described in Stossel, Sarge, 355-63.
quickly in pondering specific initiatives for the Administration bill, which was drafted in March 1964. Navigating the bill through Congress fully absorbed Shriver's attention, since it faced "as many built-in enemies as any piece of legislation of the 1960s." After skillful political maneuvering, and changes in the bill to meet objections of various members of Congress, Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (the "EOA"), Public Law 88-452, 78 Stat. 508, which was signed by President Johnson on August 20, 1964. Congress subsequently funded EOA programs with $800 million for fiscal year 1965, 15 percent less than the $947.5 million authorized.

**Major Features of the Act**

The EOA's findings and declaration of purpose (section 2) declared a national policy "to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty". Announcement of a bold national policy of eliminating poverty may seem, with the benefit of fifty-years of historical hindsight, to have been hopelessly unrealistic. But in 1964 many liberals believed the prospects for making progress toward eliminating poverty were greater than they had been for many years, especially in light of a generally strong economy
making such a program more affordable than in the past. Moreover, there was faith among liberals that the federal government -- which they credited with ending the Depression, defeating fascism in World War II, and contributing to the growth of American prosperity -- "could solve big social problems."\textsuperscript{15}

The Act further stated that the means to the end of eliminating poverty were "opening to everyone the opportunity for training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity." The reference to "opening opportunities" reflected a philosophy, embedded in the statute's name, that the Economic Opportunity Act was not an income-transfer program (Johnson told Shriver, "No doles!"), but "a comprehensive, targeted strategy designed to insure that all Americans had access to economic opportunity."\textsuperscript{16} Shriver often said that in the War on Poverty, "we give no hand-outs -- only a hand-up."\textsuperscript{17} On one occasion, he elaborated in more detail:

Helping the poor help themselves is the keystone of the President's poverty program. It does not offer handouts; it offers opportunities. It is concerned with creating the conditions under which the child born into poverty can have the chance to help himself, to compete on equal terms with those lucky enough to be born into affluence.\textsuperscript{18}

After its findings and declaration of purpose, the EOA set forth its substantive provisions in six sections or "titles" that established an Office of Economic Opportunity

\textsuperscript{15} Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 359-60.


\textsuperscript{17} Sargent Shriver, Commencement Address at Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IL, June 5, 1966, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/commencement-address-at-illinois-wesleyan-university (accessed December 9, 2014).

in the Executive Office of the President and provided for eleven new programs that OEO would operate or supervise.

Shriver was convinced that antipoverty legislation must have a jobs component, regardless of the merits of Community Action's promise of empowering the poor. Title I ("Youth Programs) provided for three types of work programs: (a) the Job Corps, providing work, basic education, and training in separate residential centers for young men and women, ages sixteen to twenty-one; (b) the Neighborhood Youth Corps, providing work and training for young men and women who came from impoverished families and communities, but not including a board component; and (c) Work Study, providing grants to colleges and universities for part-time employment of students from low-income families.

Community Action was a central feature of the legislation, growing out of the work of Robert Kennedy's PCJD and later endorsed by Heller. Title II ("Urban and Rural Community Action Programs") provided financial and technical assistance to public and private nonprofit agencies for community action programs that offer "promise of progress toward elimination of poverty" and that are developed with "maximum feasible participation" of the poor.

There had been consensus in Shriver's task force that the current excessively bureaucratic welfare system was ineffective; that Community Action could circumvent that system by providing money to locally-based organizations for fighting poverty; and that the activities of these organizations would, in turn, cause the established welfare-

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19 Stossel, Sarge, 358-59.
services operations to reform themselves. Nonetheless, the concept of Community Action "seemed to mean different things to different people" on the task force, and the statutory language ultimately defining it was problematically vague and subject to a variety of interpretations.20 As one commentator frames the ambiguity: "[W]as the intent of [Title II of] the legislation to improve, through coordination, the delivery of social services for the poor; or was it to mandate the involvement of the poor in the funding, hence the political process? Which had greater priority?"

Task force members also differed on how much input should be made by the poor into a Community Action Agency's (CAA's) planning activities, and how much they should be involved in and control its administration, "in order for the assault on the old-line bureaucracy to work."22 The bill coming out of the task force, and then the EOA, required that a Community Action Agency (CAA) be developed and conducted with the *maximum feasible participation* of the residents where the organization was based, but that phrase was not further fleshed out in the Act.

Title II also provided for an Adult Basic Education program, offering to state educational agencies grants for programs aimed at adults whose inability to read and write English substantially impeded their employment. Title II further established an information and coordination center to encourage voluntary assistance for deserving and needy children.

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20 Ibid., 364.


Title III ("Special Programs to Combat Poverty in Rural Areas") provided for financing of micro-loans to low income rural families, to assist them in permanently increasing their income. It also included a program for Assistance for Migrant Agricultural Employees, by providing for funds to state and local governments (and private nonprofit organizations or individuals), in support of their operating programs assisting migrant workers and their families with securing housing, sanitation, education and day care for children.

Title IV ("Employment and Investment Incentives") established a program, to be administered by the Small Business Administration, of small-business loans and guarantees for very small enterprises.

Title V ("Work Experience Programs") provided payments for experimental, pilot, and demonstration projects to expand opportunities for work experience and training of persons unable to support or care for themselves or their families, including persons receiving public assistance. The program was administered by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Title VI provided for recruiting and training of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a program recruiting, selecting, and training volunteers to perform "duties in furtherance of programs combating poverty at a State or local level," upon request of State or local agencies or nonprofit organizations.

Recognizing the existence of numerous programs addressing problems of the poor, Title VI of the statute also empowered the OEO Director to coordinate the antipoverty efforts of all federal agencies. Those agencies were directed to cooperate with the Director, and an Economic Opportunity Council (chaired by the Director and
composed of the members of the president's Cabinet) was established to consult with him in carrying out his functions, including coordination of all antipoverty efforts.

**National Emphasis Programs**

A number of notable "National Emphasis Programs" -- not specifically mentioned in the original EOA -- were designed under Shriver at OEO. The first and probably most popular was Head Start, whose objective is to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children of low-income families with a comprehensive program meeting their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs. Designed by a group of child development experts, Head Start was initiated as a summer program in 1965, greeted with much enthusiasm and favorable publicity, and subsequently expanded.  

However, Shriver faced the issue of how to fund Head Start under the EOA, since most of the Act's funding was marked for Community Action, and the "head start" idea had not emanated from any local CAA. Shriver's solution was to designate Head Start as a National Emphasis Program: CAAs were encouraged to "adopt the basic concept but adapt it to their local conditions."  

The Head Start experience made Shriver receptive to other ideas for National Emphasis Programs, and OEO

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23 For a review of how Head Start was created and implemented, see Stossel, *Sarge*, 416-30.

24 Earl Johnson, Jr., "Johnson's Choice of Shriver to Head the War on Poverty," National Equal Justice Library, Georgetown Law Website, https://blogs.commons.georgetown.edu/righton/2014/04/03/johnsons-choice-of-shriver-to-head-the-war-on-poverty/ (accessed December 9, 2014). Scott Stossel likens the relationship between OEO and local community leaders to that "between a national restaurant company and local owners of its franchise outlets," where the "basic rules and administration are established at national headquarters, but the individual restaurants can tailor the design and structure to the needs of the particular neighborhood." Stossel, *Sarge*, 431.

25 Johnson, "Johnson's Choice of Shriver to Head the War on Poverty." According to Earl Johnson, Shriver's use of National Emphasis Programs "put him at odds with community action purists,
inaugurated three others in 1965: Upward Bound, to prepare talented poverty-stricken youths for college; Legal Services, to provide free legal counsel for the poor in civil matters; and Foster Grandparents, to train unemployed elderly poor to care for neglected children and bedridden sick persons. Others were later developed.

**The EOA: Some Controversies and Challenges**

The OEO "was under assault from the moment it began spending money in November 1964," with two of the EOA's major components, the Job Corps and Community Action, bearing the brunt of the attacks.²⁶

Shriver had hoped that the Job Corps would have a quick and observable beneficial impact on poor communities by reducing their unemployment. But in the early stages Job Corps urban residential centers and rural campsites were often inadequately staffed, lacked necessary equipment and materials for training, and experienced a large percentage of program drop-outs. There were also disturbing incidents of crime and other troublemaking at centers, enraging local citizens and their elected representatives. Highly publicized in newspapers and magazines, these problems generated enormous public relations troubles for Shriver. He responded by replacing contractors (usually universities) at poorly run centers with corporate

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²⁶ Stossel, *Sarge*, 396.
contractors more capable of efficiently operating the facilities. By 1966, as the number of Job Corps enrollees grew to a number (30,000) three times more than the number the year before, there were no significant incidents at Job Corps centers.\textsuperscript{27}

The polemics involving Community Action were even more impassioned. Funded by the federal government and subject to some OEO guidelines, the EOA contemplated that a CAA, rather than a state or local government entity, would decide how to spend the money on activities designed to fight poverty (\textit{e.g.}, education, housing, job training, health care, child care). The Act's direct funding of CAAs (thereby by-passing state and local governments), and its requirement that the poor have "maximum feasible participation" in CAA program planning, ignited political controversies whose intensity surprised OEO.\textsuperscript{28} In many communities, elected leaders (including mayors of large cities) were incensed that the federal government was funding a CAA whose employees included activists battling with the established political power bases -- of which they were a part. The opposite view was held by various civil rights groups, other community organizations, and community leaders: the intended beneficiaries of CAAs, they complained, were being "sold out" by the OEO in Washington, because OEO was recognizing and funding CAAs controlled by the very public officials historically ignoring their legitimate needs.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 395-98. Nonetheless, the Job Corps was still "on shaky ground" when Congress took up OEO's reauthorization in 1966. Ibid., 401.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 402.
\item \textsuperscript{29} The problems confronting Community Action are discussed in length in Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 402-15. They are vividly described in a 1965 memorandum by an OEO staff member (quoted at Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 410-11), who recalled as follows:
\begin{itemize}
\item [every] mayor had a gripe [about Community Action]; congressmen were plagued by visiting delegations from two, three, even four local factions; governors were irritated at mayors; social
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Continuing criticism of state and local politicians resulted in legislative amendments to the EOA. They changed the rules for formation of CAAs in communities and also more specifically defined what constituted "maximum feasible participation" by the poor. By 1968, there were 1,600 CAAs covering 2,300 of the nation's 3,300 counties.

Larger historical forces whose significance was not anticipated at EOA enactment in summer 1964 also beset the now highly visible and controversial poverty program. In 1965, the Johnson Administration initiated the first of its escalations of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. That same summer was marred by rioting in the Watts section of Los Angeles; civil disturbances in other cities followed in subsequent years. They exacerbated the political rhetoric surrounding the EOA. To many conservatives (who were consistently and increasingly critical of the antipoverty enterprise), they demonstrated that the poor did not deserve the War on Poverty's largesse, while to many liberals (and those farther left) they revealed the need for much larger funding for workers and many other professionals resented intrusions both from the politicians and from the poor; liberals who wanted local programs to shake up the established politicians were upset at the amount of accommodation the OEO required; and established politicians wished they could run their own anti-poverty programs, with their own trusted friends among the poor, rather than negotiations compromises with more vocal and militant local groups and individuals.

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30 James Masters, "A History of Community Action Agencies," a paper published for the National Association of Community Action Agencies in 1989. Fulmont Community Action Agency, Inc. Website, http://www.fulmont.org/history04.shtml (accessed February 4, 2015). In 1967, Congress passed the Green Amendment, pursuant to which a CAA had to be designated as the official CAA for that area by local elected officials before recognition and funding. In several large cities, the mayor took over the CAA, turning it into a public agency. It also passed the Qui Amendment requiring that CAA boards of directors be composed of one-third elected officials (appointed by them), at least one-third low income representatives, with the balance from the private sector. See also Stossel, Sarge, 458-59.

31 Masters, "A History of Community Action Agencies."
antipoverty efforts. The costs of fighting the Vietnam War, the squabbles over Community Action and the Job Corps, ongoing conservative Republican and Southern conservative Democratic dissatisfaction with the OEO, and Johnson's declining interest in the program, were among the factors squeezing OEO budgets to levels well below what Shriver thought were necessary for successfully fighting poverty.

When Congress considered the OEO's 1968 authorization bill, its continuing existence was seriously in doubt. However, after changes in the Community Action program, and an "outpouring of public support for the War on Poverty," Congress passed (by larger margins than any previous OEO bill) legislation authorizing OEO for two years, and at a budget of $1.78 billion. While this was the absolute minimum amount Shriver believed necessary for OEO operations, it did represent an increase over the prior year. This legislative achievement was applauded in the press.

Nonetheless, Shriver believed that for various reasons, including funding well below what he believed necessary to meet program commitments, he "could not profitably stay much longer at the OEO." He left in March 1968 to become Ambassador to France. Although the OEO was eventually dismantled, a number of

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33 Stossel, *Sarge*, 459. "The OEO's 1967 budget would be less than one-tenth of what it optimally would have been, nearly one-third smaller than what Shriver had formally requested from the president -- and $138 million smaller than what the OEO administrators had deemed the 'irreducible minimum' to keep the agency functioning."

34 Ibid., 479-80.

35 Ibid., 481-82.
EOA-related programs, including Head Start, Job Corps, Legal Services, community health centers, VISTA, and CAAs still are in operation.

Throughout the highly-charged atmosphere and controversies swirling about it, the OEO was led by an idealist with an indefatigable capacity to act and demand action. He was, one senior co-worker was convinced, "one of the real geniuses of America," with a unique ability to analyze critically all proposed courses of action and to continually innovate and push for development.\textsuperscript{36} We now turn to learn more about his life and the forces shaping his values.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 427.
CHAPTER TWO

R. SARGENT SHRIVER: GROUNDED CATHOLIC LAYMAN

The man said by George McGovern to be "the kindest, most cheerful, the most optimistic person" he had met in fifty years of public life,¹ was born to Robert and Hilda Shriver on November 9, 1915 in Westminster, Maryland.² He attended parochial schools in Baltimore. In 1929 his family moved to New York city where his father helped found a new investment bank, but the failure of that enterprise led to the family fortune's being largely lost during the Depression. On a full scholarship, Shriver attended Canterbury, a Connecticut Catholic prep school.

In fall 1934, Shriver entered Yale University, where despite his family's financial situation, he was an honor student, athlete, and editor-in-chief of the Yale Daily News. After graduating in 1938, Shriver enrolled in Yale Law School, with assistance from scholarships, family and friends. While there, he became actively engaged in the America First movement opposing American involvement in the war that had commenced in Europe in 1939. At the same time he enlisted in the Naval Reserve.³

³ "[S]impleminded isolationism was not what motivated Shriver and the other Yale law students who launched America First. Rather it was the conviction that America's interests -- namely, not sending its boys to be killed in another of Europe's endless wars -- were not to be served by involvement." Stossel, Sarge, 57.
Following law school graduation in 1941, Shriver reported to duty in the Navy and was assigned to a new battleship, the *South Dakota*. He served as a gunner in two large battles during 1942: the Battle of Santa Cruz and the Battle of Guadalcanal (where he received shrapnel wounds, for which he was awarded a Purple Heart). Shriver next trained as a submariner, and in March 1945 he was given the assignment of gunnery and torpedo officer on the USS *Sandlance*.

After the war, Shriver briefly practiced law with a New York law firm, before becoming an assistant editor at *Newsweek*. A member of the American Newspaper Guild, he also joined the New York chapter of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU), whose activities included, in Shriver's words, "trying to break the grip of communist-controlled unions on newspapers in New York at the laboring level," which "we did." During this period, he first met Eunice Kennedy, an active social worker who had developed interests in juvenile delinquency and other areas affecting the welfare of children. He also began working for her father, Joseph P. Kennedy, at JPK Enterprises in Manhattan.

Soon afterward, Shriver moved to Chicago to become, for Kennedy, the assistant general manager of the Merchandise Mart (then the world's largest private office building). In 1947 he moved to Washington, D.C. to help Eunice on the National Conference on Prevention and Control of Juvenile Delinquency -- at which both of

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4 Quoted in Arthur Jones, "R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.: Biographical Portrait," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 45. Philip Taft, "The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 2, no. 2 (January 1949): 211-12. The ACTU supported "workers seeking to organize themselves into trade unions" and "those struggling for reforms within their unions." Chapters were required to abide by Catholic teachings and practices, including those "expressed by the social encyclicals of Leo XIII, Pius XI, and Pius XII" and "to oppose Fascists, Nazis, Communists, and racketeers..."
them aired "[k]ernels of ideas that animated the War on Poverty two decades later,"
including that juvenile delinquency should be attacked "by the people themselves, in
their own communities, striking at their own local problems."\(^5\)

After nearly a year in Washington, Shriver returned to Chicago to resume work
at the Merchandise Mart. After a long courtship, he married Eunice in 1953.\(^6\) Shriver
emerged as a public figure in Chicago, actively involving himself as a board director,
fund-raiser, or volunteer in more than two dozen civic and charitable organizations. He
was executive director of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, which has worked to
improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their families and to
prevent the causes of such disabilities. He joined the Saint Vincent de Paul Society
volunteers in his local Catholic parish; they offered person-to-person service to the
needy and suffering in its area.

In 1955, Shriver was elected president of the board of Chicago's Catholic
Interracial Council (CIC), whose goal was to foster improved race relations in and
outside the Catholic Church. Under his leadership, CIC "effectively integrated many of
Chicago's Catholic high schools" and energetically pursued other efforts aimed at
interracial cooperation.\(^7\) It "played a key role in incubating future civil rights activists


\(^6\) The Shrivers would have five children: Robert III, Maria, Timothy, Mark, and Anthony.

\(^7\) John Bouman, "The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law Salutes Sargent Shriver,"
and in priming the black and Catholic populations of Chicago for the social upheavals that were to come.”

Shriver was also a trustee of DePaul University and St. Xavier College.

Appointed to the Chicago Board of Education in 1954, Shriver was elected President the next year by the Board, a position he held until retiring from it in 1960. During his well-regarded term, the better part of a number of goals he set for the Board were met (including giving special attention to the development of vocational and special education programs, initiatives that prefigured War on Poverty programs such as the Job Corps and Head Start). The Board ended the practice of permitting white students to transfer from integrated schools to all-white schools outside their districts.

Shriver coordinated the Wisconsin and West Virginia primaries for his brother-in-law’s 1960 presidential campaign. After the Kennedy-Johnson victory, he very ably directed a Talent Hunt committee, whose efforts informed Kennedy’s appointment of top administrative and ambassadorial positions.

President Kennedy also asked Shriver to analyze the feasibility of a volunteer corps that would work on projects in other countries, an idea that Kennedy aired on the 1960 campaign trail. After receiving Shriver's report, which included a plan for immediate launch of the program, the President signed the executive order establishing the Peace Corps. Its mission has been to promote world peace and friendship by helping the people of interested countries, at the grassroots level, meet their needs for

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8 Stossel, Sarge, 128.

trained men and women. Shriver was Director of the Peace Corps from 1961 to 1966, simultaneously heading it and the OEO for two years. To considerable acclaim, Shriver successfully brought the Peace Corps to life and put it into the field, after wrestling with an assortment of diplomatic and practical challenges.\textsuperscript{11} Shriver later observed that the EOA's Community Action program closely resembled the "community development" program practiced for a number of years by the Peace Corps in certain countries.\textsuperscript{12}

As noted earlier, after Shriver left the OEO in 1968, he was Ambassador to France until 1970. Despite an "increasingly strained relationship" that had developed between the U.S. and France at the time his job commenced, Shriver and President Charles De Gaulle "established a working relationship and Franco-American relations began to thaw."\textsuperscript{13} Upon his return to the United States in 1970, Shriver founded and served as chairman of the Congressional Leadership for the Future (CLF), which campaigned on behalf of Democratic candidates throughout the country for the 1970 Congressional races. In 1972, he unsuccessfully ran for vice president on the Democratic ticket with presidential candidate George McGovern.\textsuperscript{14} He also ran a brief campaign for President in 1976.

\textsuperscript{10} John Bouman, "The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law Salutes Sargent Shriver."

\textsuperscript{11} For a review of Shriver's role in the Peace Corps, see Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 187-296.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 336, 357.


\textsuperscript{14} Missouri Senator Thomas Eagleton was nominated as McGovern's running mate at the 1972 Democratic Party convention, but McGovern decided to run with Shriver after it was disclosed that Eagleton had undergone shock treatment to treat depression. McGovern and Shriver lost the general election to Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew.
Shriver subsequently was a partner with a large law firm, at the same time working closely with Eunice in championing the Special Olympics program she founded. He also paid increasing attention to peace issues, working with others to improve Soviet-American relations and promote U.S. government strategies to reduce nuclear arms arsenals and the risks of a nuclear holocaust.

In recognition of his lifetime of service and accomplishments, Shriver received many awards including, in 1994, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. He died in 2011 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's Disease.

**Shriver's Catholic Faith and Sensibility**

As Shriver's biographer Scott Stossel puts it: "Almost everything about Shriver -- his politics, his moral values, the decisions he made or failed to make, the way he thinks -- can be better understood in the context of his powerful and abiding faith" that was "a mobilizing vision for action here on earth."\(^{15}\) As many others, Professor John Raines (who had worked with Shriver) confirms Stossel's assessment, noting that Shriver's Catholicism was "a deep and key part of his personality and of his orientation to . . . and his activism in the world."\(^{16}\) Shriver's Catholic faith was shaped by, among other things, his parents' faith life and example, his primary and secondary education in Catholic schools, his daily acts of piety, and ongoing interest in theology and philosophy.

On his mother Hilda's side, Shriver was a descendant of a three-hundred-year-old Maryland Catholic family that came over with the first Lord Baltimore to settle

\(^{15}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 675, 674.

Maryland. His father was a convert. Shriver's godfather, James Cardinal Gibbons, was a close friend of Hilda's father and a leading member of the American Catholic hierarchy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with "progressive" views on many subjects. Gibbons inspired Shriver, who said that Gibbons stood for separation of Church and State, social democracy, the rights of labor, racial equality, and integration of immigrant Catholics into the larger society.

As noted above, Shriver attended Catholic primary and secondary schools. At Yale, Shriver was active in the Catholic club, the St. Thomas More Society, participating in a recruitment drive that doubled its membership. Together with the priest who started the club, he "established an annual ecumenical congress at Yale that would bring Catholics and Protestants (along with the few Jews around) to discuss religious issues and to make common cause against what they perceived as the spread of secularism on campus and in the world at large."  

In 1938 the More Society invited Shriver's "heroine," Dorothy Day, the great Catholic social activist, with whom Shriver had become acquainted, for a Communion breakfast at the Catholic students' center, and he subsequently "kept up with the Catholic Worker people".  

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19 Stossell, Sarge, 44.  
Movement in 1933, which has been described by American Catholic history scholar David O'Brien as an example of "an evangelical style in American Catholicism":

Practicing voluntary poverty, experimenting with alternative communities, and, later, offering a witness of Christian nonviolence to war and the arms race, the Catholic Worker represented the appearance of an evangelical style in American Catholicism. Relegated to the margins of a church organized in the interest-group style . . . evangelical Catholicism would begin to spread in the wake of Vatican II, the race crisis, the war in Vietnam, and the deepening specter of nuclear annihilation.21

Day's "passion for social justice helped inspire much of the political, social, and religious work Shriver would do in the 1950s and 1960s."22 She had been introduced to French Catholic thinkers -- such as Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, Henri de Lubac, and Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard -- with whom Shriver also became familiar.23

Shriver did not join the Catholic Worker (or movements springing up around it), and his views on many political and economic issues did not track those of the Catholic Worker Movement.24 Nonetheless, as many other persons, he "responded to a spirituality that called for fundamental commitment to the gospel and witness of Jesus. . . ."25 Shriver's Catholicism is "in some ways analogous to Day's: rooted in the ethics of the Christian Gospels; dedicated to working toward peace, social justice, and

22 Stossel, Sarge, 44.
24 Ibid., 65. Moss writes that Day, with her own type of "anarchism," was "against the whole trend toward a stronger and more encompassing federal government that she witnessed from FDR's New Deal to her death". In 1949, Day "referred to an anarchist society as one 'made up of associations, guilds, unions, communes, parishes -- voluntary associations of men, on regional or national lines, where there is a possibility of liberty and responsibility for all men.'"
25 Ibid.
redemption of suffering *here on earth,*" and "concerned especially with easing the plight of the poor and disabled."26  "Holiness" was, as Shriver viewed it, giving all that you are and all that you have," and "your whole personality to others."27

Shriver's deep faith was "apparent in genuine acts of piety: daily Mass, devotion to the Rosary and willingness to share his faith with others -- both in his professional work and charities."28  His son Mark believes that Shriver's daily Mass attendance and prayer life provided "power, gave him his hope," while his "experience made his faith personal, stronger, and animating."29  In his daughter Maria's view, Shriver "totally look[ed] to Jesus as his role model," including "in tough times".30

Shriver was a voracious reader, whose intellectual curiosity and interests strengthened and deepened his faith, and also intersected with and influenced his active life of public service.  As Coleman McCarthy, one of Shriver's speechwriters at OEO, explains:

Shriver was a passionate reader of philosophy, theology and literature, one who sought to make the connection real between daily politics and the resources of the inner life.  It was not a dose of piety, but an effort to go out of himself to seek communion with minds and spirits larger and deeper than his own.31

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26 Stossel, *Sarge,* 674 (emphasis in original).


28 John McCloskey, review of *A Good Man: Rediscovering My Father, Sargent Shriver,* by Mark Shriver, CatholiCity, http://www.catholicity.com/mccloskey/good-man.html (accessed December 15, 2014.  McCloskey, a priest, adds, "I can testify to this personally, as during my time as director of the Catholic Information Center in Washington, he made many visits to the Blessed Sacrament and frequently attended weekday Mass there."

29 Mark Shriver, *A Good Man: Rediscovering My Father,* 42, 43.

30 Stossel, *Sarge,* 674.

Michael Novak, a speechwriter for Shriver during the 1972 Presidential race, believes that Shriver loved the vein of Catholic thought that wanted to "reconstruct the social order," "put the yeast of the gospel in the world," "feed the hungry, comfort the afflicted," and that Shriver believed that the "Catholic tradition shed an intellectual light on American perplexities that nothing else rivaled."  

These intellectual interests and attitudes were apparently nurtured at an early age. After his conversion to Catholicism, Shriver's father "became an avid reader in the faith, and hosted prominent European Catholics like Hillaire Belloc and Paul Claudel." Shriver's parents were engaged in the national Catholic discourse and helped launch Commonweal magazine, a journal of opinion that continues to be edited and managed by lay Catholics. Its editor was a friend of Shriver's parents and a frequent guest at the Shriver home. His parents also opened a Catholic bookstore, where Sargent worked after school while growing up.

There is no index to Shriver's library or books read by him, but compelling evidence points to the breadth and depth of his ongoing interest in theology and philosophy. Thus, for example, McCarthy recalls discussing with Shriver (at a job interview dinner in 1966, in the midst of the War on Poverty) Catholic thinkers such as

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33 Van Allen, The Commonweal and American Catholicism, 165. Belloc was a prolific British Catholic author. Claudel was a French Catholic poet, dramatist, and diplomat.
Leon Bloy, Ronald Knox, Henri deLubac, and Romano Guardini. Novak has identified other Catholic authors or thinkers in whom Shriver had an interest: Teilhard de Chardin, G.K. Chesterton, Danilo Dolci, and Cardinal Suhard.35

Shriver was well acquainted with the work of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), who at the time of his death in 1973 was a twentieth-century interpreter of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas ("Thomism") and arguably the best known Catholic philosopher in the world.36 In a 1957 speech (when president of the Chicago Board of Education), Shriver referred to Maritain as "[o]ne of the world's greatest philosophers, a man whom T.S. Eliot described as the greatest intellect in the world today. . . ."37 Maritain "tried to develop Thomist social and political philosophy, applying its principles to modern problems."38 His ethical philosophy was based on Aquinas' natural law approach, but he "regarded ethical judgment as not purely cognitive but

34 Jones, "R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.: Biographical Portrait," 43.

35 Michael Novak, "The Last Liberal." Bloy was a French novelist, essayist and pamphleteer; Knox, an English priest and theologian; de Lubac, a French Jesuit theologian and theological expert at the Second Vatican Council; Guardini, an Italian priest and preeminent 20th century Catholic intellectual; de Chardin, a Jesuit paleontologist who worked to understand evolution and faith; G.K. Chesterton, an English writer, lay theologian, critic, and Christian apologist; Danilo Dolci, an Italian social activist, best known for his opposition to poverty and social exclusion, whom Dorothy Day admired; Cardinal Suhard, a French Cardinal influential in establishing the Worker-Priest movement, an initiative for priests to work alongside the working class in their places of work.

36 McCarthy, "Shriver: The Lightweight Label," 9. At one point in McCarthy's job-interview dinner, the discussion turned to Maritain. Shriver's familiarity with Maritain became apparent to McCarthy (who had read quite a bit of the philosopher himself), when Shriver reflected on the differences between the "early, middle and late" Maritain.


guided by pre-conceptual affective inclinations," and also afforded a larger role to history than traditional Thomism, "allowing for development in the human knowledge of natural law". Maritain also "defended democracy as the appropriate way for human persons to attain freedom and dignity." His influence on key documents emanating from the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council was substantial.\textsuperscript{39}

Shriver's deep interest (and that of Eunice as well) in the intersection of ideas and public policy is exemplified by a "Great Questions" discussion group they hosted while living in Chicago. The agenda of discussion topics included separation of Church and State, the rights of man, the First Amendment's freedom of speech and assembly, social insurance, marriage and the family, and "states rights v. strong federal government." Background reading materials were suggested for review prior to the discussions on particular subjects, \textit{e.g.}, selections from Maritain's \textit{Man and the State}\textsuperscript{41} were designated for the discussion of separation of Church and State.\textsuperscript{42}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41}Jacques Maritain, \textit{Man and the State} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).
\end{itemize}
While many of Shriver's public speeches (including when head of OEO) drew on religious resources and values, Shriver did not put on display his own private personal relationship or experience with God or Jesus Christ, or try to describe them in personal terms. Nor did he justify any political decisions by claiming they were guided by Divine inspiration or in response to his prayers. He was open-minded and curious about, and respectful of, others' faith and faith tradition (and even their lack of faith), and comfortable with the "back-and-forth of theological discourse across faiths and denominations."43

Liberal Democrat, Liberal Catholic

Shriver's politics in the 1960s were considered "liberal" as that term was commonly understood in the wake of the Roosevelt New Deal: emphasizing active state involvement in social welfare and ensuring civil rights, and advocating use of government (including the federal government) to provide people with sufficient means, i.e., with an "equality of opportunity," to live meaningful lives based on their own achievements.44 Post-World War II liberal ideas were "essentially reconciled to the existing structure of the economy and committed to using the state to compensate for capitalism's inevitable flaws."45

43 Stossel, Sarge, 674.

44 Joseph Kobylka, Cycles of American Political Thought Part 3 (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2006), 104-13, 120-29, 166-75, 200. "Active liberalism" shares with its economic counterpart, "Laissez-faire capitalism (or "minimal state liberalism"), "a central concern for preservation of individual rights of liberty and equality, but places "primary value" on freedom, with equality seen "as a component or adjunct to freedom." Inequalities in wealth are seen "as the natural result of self-interested competition and necessary to progress." The role of the state is "to protect property and unfettered competition." Minimal state liberalism is often viewed as one strand of modern "conservatism" in American politics.

The Democratic Party's tent in 1960 included an often uneasy alliance of politicians and voters across the political spectrum; liberals of various stripes were one element. Although he was as anti-communist as anyone in the Kennedy family, and was friendly to business as well, Shriver's "interest in civil rights and his abiding Christian concern for the poor placed him to the left of the Kennedy wing of the Democratic Party."\(^46\)

During the 1960 campaign, John Kennedy's top advisors picked up from his brother and campaign manager, Robert, "a concern for Shriver's politics which at once seemed too liberal . . . and too Catholic-inflected."\(^47\) To be sure, Shriver may be considered a "liberal Catholic," but his "Catholic-inflected" liberalism distinguished it, even if in subtle ways not generally appreciated at the time, from other philosophical approaches to liberalism. What William Clancy, the editor of *Commonweal* described in 1952 as "liberal Catholicism" applies to Shriver: it attempted "to work toward a new synthesis of the Church's unchanging truths with whatever good is to be found in the modern city of man," including liberalism's ideals of "maximum human freedom under law, social progress, and democratic equality."

Indeed, Shriver's personal efforts in embodying this synthesis was inspired not only by the thinking of then recognized liberal Catholic thinkers, but also by the radical social criticism of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin, whose "quite different reading of

\(^{46}\) Stossel, *Sarge*, 141.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 157.
problems of economic development did not yet enjoy" most liberals' attention.\textsuperscript{48} As Novak notes, Shriver boldly believed (and acted upon the belief) that the Catholic faith is a "culture-shaping force, a shaper of civilizations, an inspirer of great works, a builder of great institutions that bring help of all kinds to the needy in all dimensions of need."\textsuperscript{49}

Shriver's own liberal Catholicism thus aimed at recovering in a "Christian context" what is "valuable and true" in philosophical liberalism, but without embracing certain features (such as doctrinaire rationalism and overly optimistic view of human nature) that were perceived to conflict with Catholic thought or doctrine.\textsuperscript{50} Whatever Shriver's enthusiastic idealism and optimism, he did make clear, for example, that the War on Poverty did not "try to make men good -- because that is moralizing," or "try to give men false hopes -- because that is deception."\textsuperscript{51} And earlier, in speaking of race relations, he referred to the "moral responsibility to rid ourselves, so far as we can, of the weakness" of prejudice "arising from original sin."\textsuperscript{52}

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With this background, we now turn to how this highly knowledgeable Catholic layman, whose "liberal social conscience" was "based on a traditional piety and spirituality,"\textsuperscript{53} utilized spiritual values in the War on Poverty.

\textsuperscript{48} David O'Brien, \textit{Public Catholicism}, 231.

\textsuperscript{49} Novak, "The Last Liberal."


\textsuperscript{51} Jamie Price, "Empowerment & the War on Poverty."


\textsuperscript{53} Jones, \textit{R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.: Biographical Portrait}, 52-53.
CHAPTER THREE

THE WAR ON POVERTY'S SPIRITUAL WEAPONS AND VALUES

Despite constitutional issues that were raised, Sargent Shriver welcomed the compassionate service of church-affiliated organizations in EOA programs. Shriver believed that the resources of a variety of non-governmental groups (and their members) were required to wage the War on Poverty successfully. Testifying before Congress in April 1965, he noted that if the War on Poverty "were just a governmental program, it would be doomed," and that "[r]eligious groups, professional groups, labor groups, civic and patriotic groups are all rallying to the call" to join it.¹

Indeed, in Shriver's view, participation of non-governmental organizations fulfilled Congress's mandate that OEO "mobilize 'all the resources of the nation.'"² And when the EOA was under consideration, he told members of Congress that this nationally-driven federal program was an "American" one, because it relied on "local efforts and leadership, and the volunteer spirit of the individual."³

Shriver's active solicitation of members of civil society resonated with Maritain's strongly held view (and that of the Catholic Church's social teaching described in more detail in Chapter Four) that society should not be totalized in or reduced to the "State," and that the State is but a part of the larger "body politic" that


³ Shriver, "Statement at Senate Hearings on S2642."
transcends the State. That body politic includes all the various communities and institutions in which persons choose to participate and which "mediate" between persons and the State.\(^4\)

Moreover, as he directed this ambitious, controversial, and closely scrutinized program, Shriver saw the necessity of dispelling misconceptions about the program and building popular support for it.\(^5\) A dizzying schedule of public appearances -- including those before religiously-affiliated organizations -- presented one platform for Shriver to "shift Americans' understanding of poverty and transform the language in which poor people were framed."\(^6\)

Complementing other themes, Shriver's communications with faith-based groups, and some "secular" audiences as well, also drew on religious resources, such as Scriptural and theological texts, and quotations from religious figures, in explaining, promoting, and defending War on Poverty programs.\(^7\) As shown below, spiritual

\(^4\) Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 9-12. \textit{See also} John Cooper, \textit{The Theology of Freedom: The Legacy of Jacques Maritain and Reinhold Niebuhr} (Macon, GA:: Mercer University Press, 1985), 90-91, 100-01; Max Stackhouse, "Civil Religion, Political Theology and Public Theology: What's the Difference?," \textit{Political Theology} 5 no .3 (July 2004): 289, 286. Cooperation between government and non-government organizations in implementing War on Poverty is consistent with the view of so-called "Public Theologians" who, Stackhouse notes, hold that government is accountable to religious, cultural, familial, economic, and social traditions which are prior to government, and that politics "should be the limited servant of other institutions of society, not their master."

\(^5\) Sargent Shriver, Address to the Advertising Council, May 5, 1964, Washington, DC, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-to-the-advertising-council (accessed January 15, 2015). Shriver told the audience, "Our minds are so cluttered up with myths, slogans and cliches about the poor that it would be a great public service if you could help us clear the air."


\(^7\) See McCarthy, "Shriver: The Lightweight Label," 10, where McCarthy, who helped Shriver with speeches for three years, says that "it was always striking that rather than my sprinkling in quotes from the heavies -- as most politicians, wanting the wise sound, demand of speech writers -- the quotes would come from Shriver."
values and themes such as love, service, dignity, compassion, humility, forgiveness, and respect imbued his presentations.

**The War on Poverty, Church-Related Institutions, and the First Amendment**

In April 1966, Shriver stated with satisfaction that OEO had given "hundreds of grants" to church-related institutions to assist in running poverty programs.\(^8\) In a later presentation to a Methodist gathering, as he was about to step down from his position as OEO's head, Shriver concluded that the country could not win the War on Poverty "without the help of the churches," specifically praising the responsiveness and humanity displayed in their work on Head Start.\(^9\)

The wooing of church-related groups began early in the EOA's history. Just as the Act's programs were being implemented and "rolled out," Shriver explained to members of a Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities audience how they could join OEO and their communities in fighting poverty: helping recruit volunteers for VISTA; helping design and administer Job Corps Centers; helping communities design comprehensive anti-poverty programs; and devising new methods of combatting illiteracy among adults.\(^10\) Subsequent speeches were peppered with stories of the involvement of faith-based organizations throughout the country, including as

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\(^8\) Sargent Shriver, "Address at the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty Conference."


administrator or provider of War on Poverty services, and as helpmate to a community action agency funded by OEO. For example:11

- A Cincinnati clergyman helped apply for a Community Action Agency grant and then implement its plan to eliminate poverty in his church's neighborhood; with the help of Sisters of Mercy, an adult education program was established.

- In Walla Walla, Washington, Catholic Family and Child Services, United Church Women, and Unitarians together ran day care centers for children of migratory workers.

- In New Mexico, the State Council of Churches received funding for establishing education centers throughout the State to improve the educational level of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.

- In San Antonio, a Jewish synagogue rented a hall to a Lutheran church group to conduct pre-school classes for children from a predominantly Catholic area.

- In Michigan and South Carolina, Catholic and Protestant groups joined forces in programs to aid migrants.

- Four national organizations -- United Church Women, National Council of Jewish Women, National Council of Catholic Women, and National Council of Negro Women -- had formed Women in Community Service (WICS) and were handling and screening Job Corps applications by girls, and "doing everything imaginable" for enrollees in the women's Job Corps.

- Job Corps-trained women worked at the Bethany Methodist Hospital in Chicago (whose administrator was a Methodist clergyman).

- Fifty volunteers in the Foster Grandparents Program were "grandparents" twenty hours a week for youngsters at St. Joseph's Infant Home in Cincinnati; nearly all the children were unadoptable because of physical or nervous disorders.

- In 1965, early in the life of Head Start, the Archdiocese of Chicago was provided with $2.9 million for Head Start programs reaching over 23,000 children; and across the country, that summer Catholic-sponsored and administered Head Start programs worked with over 34,000 children.

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Shriver contrasted the extensive involvement of faith-based groups in government-funded OEO programs with the situation before passage of the EOA when, he claimed, "it was practically impossible for a federal agency to give a direct grant to a religious group."\(^{12}\) OEO was nonetheless determined to enlist the involvement of religious groups, even though questions had been raised when the EOA bill was before Congress about whether participation in delivery of the Act's social services violated the "wall between church and state" contained in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In fact, there had been predictions of lawsuits that "would grind" the anti-poverty program "to a halt."\(^{13}\)

The First Amendment to the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. . . ." The Amendment's two religion clauses -- the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause -- normally complement each other. However, they may sometimes conflict because of their somewhat different functions. As Earl Pollock has noted:

The Establishment Clause seeks government neutrality, not only between religions but also between religion and nonreligion; but the Free Exercise Clause, by its terms, gives special protection to religion -- the very opposite of neutrality. Thus, any government action that supports free exercise . . . can arguably also be characterized as aiding religion. Because of this tension between the two clauses, neither clause can be read entirely in isolation or as an absolute command, and each must be interpreted in conjunction with the other in order to enable them to coexist.\(^{14}\)

\(^{12}\) Shriver, "Address at the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty Conference."


Although the First Amendment does not contain the phrase, Thomas Jefferson's statement that the First Amendment erects a "wall of separation between Church and State," was later cited in U.S. Supreme Court decisions, and, it has been argued by some, means that a "secular" space should be strictly separated from religious influence, in order to assure that the Establishment Clause is not transgressed.

The First Amendment's Establishment Clause was a hot-button issue in the 1960 Presidential election, when a substantial segment of the Protestant ministers, thinkers, and laity were anti-Catholic or anxious about Catholic participation in politics, particularly where the office of the presidency was involved. One concern was that a Catholic president might be unable to withstand ecclesiastical pressures to take actions favoring Catholic institutions, perhaps in violation of the Establishment Clause. And after the election, the Kennedy Administration's 1961 aid to education legislation had been undermined by the issue of whether any federal program should include aid to parochial schools. Shriver was aware of the aid-to-education controversy.

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18 Shriver, "Address to the Catholic Interracial Council, Davenport, Iowa." Shriver said, "When President Johnson first sent his anti-poverty program to Congress, one of the first questions was: Would the program [f]ounder on the church-state issue -- would it suffer the fate of earlier aid to education bills and other legislation designed to open up opportunity for all Americans?"
In 1963 Shriver publicly expressed views on Church-State issues that anticipated those guiding his leadership of the War on Poverty. Like his godfather Cardinal Gibbons (whose concerns lay more with the State’s interfering with the Catholic minority's "free exercise" of religion), Shriver believed in the separation of Church and State. But he was concerned that, in an effort to ensure that government not "establish" religion, the required "separation" between Church and State would be defined so stringently that it (1) would suggest that certain problems or issues were solely in one realm or another, so that religious organizations should defer in matters of social justice to the State; (2) would dissuade or prevent Church and State from "cooperating" with each other in attacking social problems, and (3) would more generally result in a societal divorcing of "spiritual values" from secular affairs.

Thus, in January 1963, when speaking at the National Conference on Religion and Race, Shriver (then Director of the Peace Corps) said that justice is a "common objective of religion and government and the exclusive domain of neither."\(^{19}\)

Consequently, he urged, separation of Church and State should not be interpreted as a justification for either Church or State to "pre-empt or ignore" the pursuit of human dignity and freedom -- which "are the legitimate concern of both Church \textit{and} State."\(^{20}\) Shriver's position shows his consistent distaste for a "privatized religion" that leaves matters of public justice to the State. Shriver's frequent exhortations to church leaders (discussed below) to involve themselves and their congregations intensely in securing


\(^{20}\) Ibid. (emphasis in original).
social justice for the poor, mirror these views. His position also resonated with Jacques
Maritain's opinion that while "society in the twentieth century was to be led by lay
people and oriented toward the common good," the "church, political society, and the
state had to cooperate."\(^\text{21}\)

A few months later, when giving Fordham University's June 1963
commencement address, Shriver more fully elaborated his views on the Church-State
issue, which he characterized as "one of the most troublesome questions of our society,"
where "historic dogmas must come to terms with the realities of today's life."\(^\text{22}\) Shriver
noted that "old sources of conflict" (such as religious wars, State domination over
religion, State prescription of beliefs that must be followed), which gave rise to the First
Amendment's Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses, "have disappeared from our
society." However, he lamented, there were those (he did not identify the persons or
organizations) still harboring "outdated" fears of continuing conflict, who objected to
"all efforts at fruitful cooperation" between Church and State and read the Constitution
as erecting "a wall of distrust between Church and State".

Shriver then proceeded to argue that "separation of Church and State does not
mean the divorce of spiritual values from secular affairs," especially because
government and religion were no longer at "cross purposes," but now shared a
"common purpose" in "social progress," and the great social questions (such as war and

\(^{21}\) McCauliff, "Jacques Maritain's Embrace of Religious Pluralism and the Declaration on

\(^{22}\) Sargent Shriver, Commencement Address, "The Meeting of Church and State," Fordham
University, New York, New York, June 12, 1963, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/the-
peace, civil rights, education, elimination of poverty) "are all, at bottom, moral questions" that reflect "spiritual values." The "identity of private morality and public conscience" is, he claimed, as "deeply rooted in our tradition and Constitution as the principle of legal separation." He added:

Those who would read the Constitution as erecting a wall of hostility and distrust between Church and State neglect this aspect of our tradition. They are blind to the spiritual mainstream of American life. Legal separation is an important principle. Equally important is the need for cooperation and common effort in attacking social problems. For the State to deprive itself of the support of religious belief and organization is to enter into the battle for social justice without our strongest weapon: the spiritual beliefs from which social action springs. And without the cooperation of Church and State, of belief and power, our efforts will be doomed to failure.

Shriver's views may have been inspired by those of Maritain. In *Man and the State* Maritain was concerned that separation of Church and State not take on the same meaning in the U.S. as in Europe, *i.e.*, "a complete isolation . . . which has produced most unfortunate results." Shriver's belief in the "identity of private morality and public conscience" coincides with Maritain's view that the U.S. Constitution "is deep-rooted in the age-old heritage of Christian thought and civilization."23

To his Fordham audience, Shriver asserted that the Peace Corps was "an example of the need for spiritual values in the work of government," with its work "in the deepest sense" that of "reconciliation" (presumably a spiritual value). He also identified the Peace Corps' "[c]ompassion and service" as values (also presumably spiritual ones) that "can dissolve obstacles of race and belief anywhere in the world."

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23 Maritain, *Man and the State*, 182, 183. As noted above, *Man and the State* was background reading for conversation about Church-State issues by the discussion group held at the Shrivers' Chicago home in the 1950s.
The Peace Corps, he argued, offered a model for “the infusion [of] spiritual values into secular affairs.”

Shriver strongly suggested that when religious organizations and their members offer programs permeated by spiritual values (such as compassion, reconciliation, and a spirit of service), then such an orientation, culture, or way of serving others, must not, by itself, disqualify church-affiliated organizations from cooperating with government, or from the government aiding them in doing so. The Fordham address does not, however, clearly specify (1) what efforts at "cooperation" between Church and State (e.g., State funding of participation by religious organizations in government programs, federal aid to parochial schools) had been or might be challenged, attacked, or viewed with suspicion on First Amendment grounds, or (2) where Shriver would draw the line between legitimate cooperation and impermissible establishment of religion with respect to such cooperation. Nor does he attempt to distinguish the benefits of religious organizations' "spiritual efforts" when cooperating with the State from subsidization of "proselytization" by those organizations.

Nonetheless, although he does not explicitly say so, Shriver’s argument that there is an "identity of private morality and public conscience" seems to further suggest

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24 Sargent Shriver, "Commencement Address, 'The Meeting of Church and State,' Fordham University.” Shriver pointed out, as an example of Church-State cooperation that he presumably found inoffensive, how Peace Corps volunteers (of all faiths) were teaching in a multitude of Catholic and Protestant mission schools abroad. Jamie Price and Andrea Bartoli have analyzed how Peace Corps activities reflected spiritual values. See "Spiritual Values, Sustainable Security, and Conflict Analysis,” in The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security, eds. Chris Seiple, Dennis R. Hoover, and Pauletta Otis (New York: Routledge, 2013): 168. They write: "Compassion and service designate ways of treating other people that are reflected in the peacemaking protocols for Peace Corps volunteers [that] orient Volunteers toward decisions and actions congruent with" those values.
that the metaphor of a "wall" between Church and State should not be the basis for prohibiting any level of Church-State cooperation on Establishment Clause grounds.

The two 1963 speeches offer a framework for understanding Shriver's (and OEO's) navigation of Church-State issues when administering the War on Poverty, and strands of them can be found in speeches he later made. In specific connection with the War on Poverty, Shriver later made an observation implying that voluntary Church-State cooperation did not violate the First Amendment's Free Exercise Clause, since religious organizations were invited, but not compelled, to work with OEO:

People said that there was that "wall between church and state." But we said that wall was put there to keep government out of the pulpit, not to keep the Clergy away from the poor! That wall protects belief and even disbelief! It does not exclude compassion, poverty, suffering, injustice. That is common territory -- not exclusively yours, or mine -but everybody's! With no wall between! And so we said, "Reverend Mr. Jones, or Father Kelly, or Rabbi Hirsh," if you're not afraid to be seen in our company, we're not afraid to be seen in yours, because we are all about our Father's business!"25

As for the Establishment Clause, both the EOA itself and OEO rejected the position that when the government funds the participation of religious organizations in War on Poverty programs, it cannot help but aid their sectarian purposes. Nonetheless, recognizing concerns that such funding raised Establishment Clause issues because it could be viewed as disrupting government neutrality between religions (or between religion and nonreligion), the EOA itself and the OEO restricted use of EOA funds by religious groups. Thus, Sections 113(a) and 124 of the Act provided that no enrollees in the Neighborhood Youth Corps or students in the work-study program would be

25 Shriver, "Address at the Citizens Crusade Against Poverty Conference."
employed or work on projects involving the construction, operation, or maintenance of any facility used "for sectarian instruction or as a place for religious worship."

Furthermore, it was the OEO's general position, as the EOA's programs were being implemented, that there "was no constitutional infirmity involved" when sectarian institutions assisted people "if there was no sectarian content to what you were doing."\textsuperscript{26}

More specifically, and by way of example, by early 1965 some community action agencies had involved church-related institutions in remedial educational programs in poverty-impacted "target" areas. OEO applied the following standards "to ensure that no support [was] given the institution or to any programs which have religious content":

1) The program must be remedial in content. There could be no sectarian instruction or religious worship.

2) The funds must be used for purposes which would afford no direct or indirect benefit to the general education programs of the church-related institutions.

3) The community action organizations must show that use of the church-related institutions would meet a need which could not be satisfied economically or efficiently by available alternatives.

4) There must be evidence that use of the church-related institutions had the support of the broadly based community action organization or a consensus of the community.

5) The class of persons to be benefited by the programs must be identified by their need for remedial education or by some other non-sectarian objective test.

\textsuperscript{26} Norbert Schlei, in Michael L. Gillette, \textit{Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151. Schlei added: "It becomes more difficult if you are providing some sort of facility to the institution itself. Some people believe that if you aid the sectarian institution, you cannot help but aid their sectarian purposes. I know that at one point we took the position that that so long as the facilities and assistance were totally unrelated to any sectarian activity or purpose, it was all right.” Ibid.
These and other conditions standards were established by OEO's General Counsel.²⁷ Nonetheless, OEO informed Congress in April 1965, "some groups" still objected to expenditures of federal funds to church-related institutions.²⁸ But those objections did not prevent OEO from approving, by 1966, direct grants of funds to "hundreds" of religious groups, without, according to Shriver, "violating the principle of separation of Church and State." He told one Catholic audience that programs run by the Catholic Church "separately and cooperatively" had shown "no taint of proselytizing."²⁹ On another occasion he had even invited seminarians "of all religious faiths to "put aside their clerical clothes for a 'citizen sabbatical of service'" for two years with the Peace Corps or EOA's VISTA.³⁰

Shriver believed that religious organizations were themselves a likely source of constitutional challenges, and attributed the absence of litigation at least partially to their readiness "to put aside denominational differences in order to concentrate on the job -- and one job only, eradicating poverty." He had been "told that the War on Poverty has stimulated more interreligious work, more interracial work, more general...


²⁸ Ibid., 163.

²⁹ Sargent Shriver, Address at the Diamond Jubilee Banquet, Xavier Alumni Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 12, 1966, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-at-the-xavier-alumni-association-diamond-jubilee-banquet (accessed September 24, 2014); and "Address to the St. Vincent DePaul Society of Baltimore." As David O'Brien has written (Public Catholicism, 237), the Catholic "bishops supported the war on poverty . . . and in many local communities Catholic Charities officials and social action leaders helped organize interreligious and interracial coalitions to organize Head start programs, housing corporations, neighborhood centers, and antipoverty agencies."

³⁰ Sargent Shriver, Address to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Boston, Massachusetts, November 21, 1965, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-to-the-jewish-theological-seminary (accessed September 24, 2014). The volunteers "would refrain from direct proselytizing, like all other volunteers," and "could provide that sense of mission, that infusion of faith which is so essential to the Peace Corps abroad and the War on Poverty at home."
brotherhood than any program in recent history." Shriver's own respectful speeches to religious groups of a variety of denominations, which are discussed below, as well as OEO's funding family planning programs despite the opposition of Catholic bishops, may have dispelled denominational distrust -- including misgivings that participation by Catholic organizations in a federal program with a Catholic director would favor Catholic organizations over those of other denominations.

**Shriver's Use of Religious Themes, Sources, and Values**

At summer 1964 hearings on the bill establishing the EOA, Shriver firmly held that the War on Poverty was justifiable as a matter of "cold economics": doing "nothing" was very expensive; welfare and crime prevention cost billions each year, and helping people pull themselves out of poverty would add new taxpayers. But even before those hearings, Shriver told one audience that "[p]overty and hunger, injustice and illiteracy must be fought because it is right that we fight them," and "being right and possible, it becomes our duty". And after the passage of the Act, in the January 1965 speech to the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, Shriver asserted that "the

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31 Shriver, "Address to the Catholic Interracial Council."


33 Shriver, "Statement at Senate Hearings on S2642."

channels of communication we open, the relationships of confidence and mutual respect we create, the sense of dignity we instill, and the spirit of dedication which we engender -- all of these are at least as important as the economic wealth we augment.\textsuperscript{35}

Shortly thereafter, as the EOA's programs were being implemented (and already subjected to scrutiny and criticism), Shriver told a House subcommittee that the War on Poverty "must be a program to energize the moral sense of the American people." That April 1965 testimony is imbued with spiritual, indeed religious, values and images that are arresting in their prophetic-like fervor, as he makes the case for the War on Poverty on bases beyond "cold economics":

For the first time, the Federal Government and local government have pooled resources in a special kind of partnership with private agencies to combat poverty. And for the first time, the poor people are speaking up and having a chance to be heard. \textit{That perhaps is the final lesson of the whole effort: that the ultimate dimension of this war is a spiritual dimension because, for us and for all Americans, the war on poverty is a movement of conscience, a national act of expiation . . . of humbling and prostrating ourselves before the Creator. . . .}

When all is said and done, what the war on poverty will have achieved is to have gained for an entire people an appreciation of those words attributed to St. Vincent dePaul, "Before you go out and help the poor you must first beg their pardon." That is what the war on poverty is all about.\textsuperscript{36}

The use of the word "expiation" suggests that society has, whether intentionally or not, wrongfully inflicted injustice on the poor for which a national War on Poverty is necessary to make amends or reparation. To be sure, as Shriver told the subcommittee, "the war on poverty is not a handout program,"\textsuperscript{37} but the quotation from St. Vincent

\textsuperscript{35} Sargent Shriver, "Address to the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities."

\textsuperscript{36} House hearings (April 12, 1965), "Examination of the War on Poverty Program," 20, 22 (emphasis supplied).

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 17.
dePaul intimates that, to the extent there is any "blame" for why poor people are poor, it lay not with the poor themselves (whose pardon must first be "begged"), but with a society that allows such widespread dehumanizing poverty to exist in a land of plenty.

Shriver frequently aired these and other moral and spiritual considerations before faith-related organizations, such as the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, sectarian colleges and universities, and sectarian service organizations and lay groups. We are "bound in conscience," he told attendees at the National Conference of Catholic Charities Annual Convention, to fight a war against poverty, since "it is sinful to keep the status quo when 35,000,000 Americans can be labeled as poverty-stricken." Just as he urged a group of Catholic educators to drop an "edifice complex" and "walk with the poor," Shriver exhorted other audiences to change how they thought about and related to poor people (and their situations), and how they engaged the problems of the poor.

Although there was no "cookie-cutter" approach to Shriver's introduction of spiritual values and sources to audiences, in a 1966 article, "The Moral Basis of the War


40 Even before assuming leadership of OEO, and when holding public office, Shriver had referred in speeches to religious themes, values and resources. Sargent Shriver, Point of the Lance (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 177. For example, when speaking as president of the Chicago Board of Education about the aims of vocational education, he said to the audience of superintendents: "Consider the famous slogan of the Benedictine monks: Laborare est orare -- 'To work is to pray' -- a slogan seen on monasteries and abbeys throughout the world. Do we attempt to help our vocational education students appreciate the dignity of work which would enable them to believe in their hearts that when they work they are, in effect, praying?"
on Poverty," Shriver pulled together and amplified on various themes that he had been presenting to religious audiences of different denominations. The piece, written two years after passage of the EOA and after significant pockets of criticism had emerged, was contained in the respected "mainline" Protestant magazine, *Christian Century*. But with an ecumenical twist, Shriver draws not only on Scripture and Protestant thinkers, but on Catholic sources as well. The article was later inserted into the Congressional Record at the request of Democratic Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, and substantial portions were included in Shriver's November 1966 address to the Associated Church Press.

At the outset, the article forcefully challenges 20th century Christianity to respond to "the scandal, the horror of poverty that has now come out into the open" by "entering into the life of the poor." Shriver is pleased that in the U.S. Church and State, "separate legs supporting one body of effort," were engaged in the War on Poverty's "economic, political and moral struggle," an "ecumenical war," he states, that "strives to enlist everyone, people of all ages, all reaches of society and all religions." Shriver offers stories of "heroic" daily efforts of clergy, religious, and laity of different faith traditions fighting this war. And yet Shriver the idealist (and the realist) was plainly troubled by the extent of apathy and indifference about the presence of poverty, and of

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the hostility (such as from what he labeled "militant backlashers") to the idea of using a modest amount of the federal budget government money to fight poverty.\(^{43}\)

To dispel such indifference and hostility, the article challenges church leaders and their congregations to recognize and then act upon the "moral basis" for "entering into the life of the poor" and serving them. At one point, Shriver defines that "moral basis" in terms of a "duty dictated by justice" -- a duty recognizing that the poor "are basically good human beings" who "need the freedom of their own ambition or else they lose their ambition to be free." Consequently, OEO believed "that the War on Poverty is not an act of charity but a duty dictated by justice." Shriver does not, however, identify any particular ethical theory or framework -- such as utilitarianism or natural law -- as the basis for this "duty dictated by justice."

However, he seems to recognize that the "apathetic," and those "riled" because government money is spent on people they believe are "lazy" or unwilling to "make it the hard way," may question the existence or extent of such a "duty". Shriver concurs with the view of a young urban Lutheran minister that the underlying source of this "indifference to poverty" is a "middle-class respectability" that is often "a commitment

\(^{43}\)Shriver, "The Moral Basis of the War on Poverty," 1532-33. Shriver also could not understand the "common objection" that Christ's statement, "The poor you will always have with you," somehow amounts an admission by Christ himself "that nothing can be done about poverty. Shriver's response was that Christ was "only saying that poverty will always result if the people did not obey God's will" (by the rich being selfish, by the poor being deprived of economic opportunity and denied equal rights to justice and liberty, and by some men always hoarding more good than they need), and that, "in effect . . . if enough human beings lived according to the Judaeo-Christian morality there need be no poverty at all in the world." Shriver later told an audience at Hardin-Simmons University that when he asked the evangelist Baptist minister Billy Graham about Jesus's statement, Graham responded, "Jesus did say that, but he didn't commend it. Jesus said, 'you're going to have them but you ought to do something about the condition.'" Sargent Shriver, Speech at the Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Texas, October 20, 1967, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/speech-at-the-hardin-simmons-university (accessed September 24, 2014).
to self-promotion, exclusion and evasion of human problems.” Shriver follows with the observation that "Christianity sometimes seems to have a case of moral hemophilia," with "its sense of social responsibility . . . bleeding away."44

"The test of 20th century Christianity," he proposes, "is not how much the poor enter into the life of the church, but how much the church enters into the life of the poor.” Citing Catholic thinker Michael de la Bedoyere's 1944 book, Christianity in the Marketplace45 and Protestant theologian Harvey Cox's provocative1965 work, The Secular City,46 Shriver says that the church "must go where the people are without fear of becoming secular," and not avoid the poor because of a fear of becoming "worldly".

Referring to developments in his Roman Catholic faith, Shriver also observes that one message of the recently concluded Second Vatican Council is that we can no longer "seek the spiritual kingdom of God by turning our back on the social realm of man." He adds:

We must instead go into that realm -- as social beings involved with other social beings, ignoring the sweat and not counting the change. The four Gospels are


45 Michael de la Bedoyere, an author of a number of books on political philosophy, wrote that Catholics must be full partakers in ordinary affairs, while preserving extraordinary spirituality. Christianity in the Marketplace (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1944). Cox's position was that the church is primarily a people of faith and action, and that "God is just as present in the secular as the religious realms of life, and we unduly cramp the divine presence by confining it to some specially delineated spiritual or ecclesial realm."

46 Harvey Cox, The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective, with a new introduction by the author (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). Cox's thesis "was that God is just as present in the secular as in the religious realms of life, and we unduly cramp the divine presence by confining it to some specially delineated spiritual or ecclesial realm. Ibid., xliii. See Michael Novak, "Harvey Cox's Secular City," March 5, 2007, First Things, http://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2007/03/harvey-cox's-secular-city (accessed February 9, 2014). Novak later wrote that the book "shook up everybody's categories, those of evangelicals, the mainline, Catholics, and maybe even Jews, and forced us all to look at basic things again, and think them anew."
not abstract ramblings on God; they are accounts of how Christ lived, of his actions among other men: what he said, what he noticed, his approachability and availability, the way he lifted the spirit of the poor, the way he dared the rich to be better instead of merely better off, his articulation of a nobler vision.

Shriver powerfully concludes that the "great truth of our era is that God cannot be honored unless mankind is served."^47

As earlier noted, and as the foregoing analysis illustrates, Shriver's views, while set forth in the Protestant Christian Century, draw from Catholic writings as well. Moreover, certain themes resonate with or look ahead to ideas that later were to be in the forefront of more critically-oriented quarters of Catholic theology. For example, in 1977, Johann Baptist Metz (a German theologian associated with the European school of "Political Theology") critiqued, in a more systematic way, what he termed "bourgeois religion" and the related "privatization" of religion.^48 Shriver's declamations coincide with Metz's envisioning the Church as an institution of "critical freedom," not the bearer of "middle-class consolations," always "calling into question the status quo, destabilizing the present in the name of a peace, justice, and freedom to come."^49

Shriver's emphasis on "service" and on the "social realm of man" also invites a comparison with a focus of Latin American Catholic liberation theologians, such as Gustavo Gutierrez and Jon Sobrino, on the need to create the Reign of God through a

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^47 Shriver, "The Moral Basis of the War on Poverty," 1533. He also quotes Albert Schweitzer, the great theologian, philosopher, physician, and medical missionary, who said that "whatever you have received more than others in the way of health, in talents, in ability, in success. . . . you must render in return [in] an unusually great sacrifice of your life for other life."


historical *praxis* for social human beings.\(^{50}\) (In this regard, Harvey Cox later wrote that "Liberation theology is the legitimate, though unanticipated, heir of *The Secular City.*")\(^{51}\) However, consistent with the tenor of post-World War II American liberalism, Shriver did not aim to set one class ("the poor") against another ("the middle class"), or embrace a Marxist interpretation of history or progress; he instead stressed at the outset of his *Christian Century* article that the War on Poverty "strives to enlist everyone, people of all ages, all reaches of society and all religions" in an "ecumenical" effort.\(^{52}\)

An underlying premise of the *Christian Century* article is that some "moral" basis is highly desirable, even necessary, to sustain a successful War on Poverty, since it would help build a solid consensus on the need for the legislation and would induce participation by all society's segments in its efforts. When speaking in early 1965 to the Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, Shriver had said that "the poverty program is the product of an aroused national conscience," "commitment," and "determination" constituting "a tide which nothing can withstand."\(^{53}\) However, by the time of the *Christian Century* article his confidence in the strength and breadth of such "commitment" and "determination" seems to have been shaken. As Shriver later observed:

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\(^{51}\) Cox, *The Secular City*, xlviii.

\(^{52}\) Shriver, "The Moral Basis of the War on Poverty," 1531.

\(^{53}\) Shriver, "Address to Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities."
We weren't quite prepared for the bitterness and the antagonism and the violence that accompanied an effort to alleviate poverty. There were an awful lot of people, both black and white, who had generations of pent-up feelings. I believe that when you take the cork out of the bottle like that, it's likely to burst forth because of a long period of compression.54

Shriver does not shrink from "bitterness and antagonism and violence" and "indifference to poverty," but here turns to the churches to help combat them. To be sure, the article first explicates one "moral" basis for fighting poverty -- not using religious authorities or motifs -- that many would find persuasive (thereby fostering unity). That basis is founded on a particular view (and, in this case, the view of a liberal Catholic) of the socially ethical demands of principles such as justice, equality, and liberty. However, that case, even if cogent to many, may not be so to other, large segments of American society (such as some conservatives). Their interpretation of the meaning of justice, equality, and liberty may point to no moral duty to aid to the poor, or in any event, may point to a different approach than the tax-supported, large-scale government-supported and administered programs found in the EOA.55 Consequently, Shriver urges the churches to draw on their religious resources, such as the Gospels themselves, to guide them in "entering the life of the poor" and to encourage the "apathetic" and "hostile" in their congregations that their Christianity requires them to aid and serve the poor.

54 Stossel, Sarge, 403.

55 See Sargent Shriver, Speech at the University of Notre Dame on Civil & Human Rights, South Bend, Indiana, March 21, 1974, speech-at-the-university-of-notre-dame-on-civil-human-rights (accessed February 11, 2015). In this speech, given after Shriver left OEO, Shriver observed a "profound moral dissonance in the moral philosophy of the nation" with respect to social and economic rights of the person, and pointed to a need "for a moral consensus about socio-economic rights as a pre-condition to decisive action on the political or legal level."
The *Christian Century* article's themes, and other related ones, can be found in speeches (some cited above) made by Shriver to as many as twenty faith-based religious conferences, social-service organizations, and colleges, representing a wide cross section of religious beliefs and traditions. (Contents of these speeches were presumably even more widely distributed through newspaper and other reports.)

To some audiences Shriver would quote Scripture or allude to Scriptural stories. This approach may have been influenced not only by those Protestant audiences before which he spoke, but also by Dorothy Day's "love of the Scriptures" (which "came from her "Protestant roots and predated the widespread use of the Bible by lay Catholics") and by how Scripture passages and images "wove themselves into her writings" and "were at the heart of her spirituality." It may also have been influenced by an important feature of Catholic social teaching during and after the Second Vatican Council: "a deeper appreciation of the biblical and Christological identity of the Church and Christian life."

Thus, for example, early in the life of the EOA, when maintaining that the success of the poverty program cannot be measured only in terms of "numbers" (e.g., dollars spent on the program, measurable "outcomes"), he reminded a Protestant audience that the "One who dwelt among us . . . refused to accede to the numbers game

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when He spoke of the dedication of God to one lost sheep."58 Scripture was also quoted in his presentation to the Volunteers of America (a faith-based non-profit organization), in which Shriver said, "Each of us is called upon to account to ourselves because -- in the words of St. John: 'He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.'"59 In the wake of summer 1967 urban rioting, Shriver reminded the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church that "as Christians, we cannot ignore St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, when he says, 'We are all members of one another.'"60

Consistent with his approach in the Christian Century article, and with Shriver's personal ecumenical openness and dialogue, Shriver occasionally referred to religious sages or figures familiar to the audience. Thus, in reminding the National Conference of Jewish Women that more than legislative programs and governmental expenditures are needed in fighting poverty, Shriver referred to the "eighth and most meritorious stage of charity" identified by the Jewish sage Maimonides. It involves "taking the poor in," even if they be strangers or sojourners, and a personal and collective effort beyond the power of law to compel or initiate.61 At Illinois Wesleyan University (affiliated with Methodists), Shriver quoted Methodism's co-founder John Wesley, who urged

58 Sargent Shriver, "Address to the Council of Protestant Colleges and University."


others to "do all the good you can" -- from which Shriver urged the audience to keep in mind that "small deeds" can constitute "a revolution" which affirms that "[h]uman beings matter" and "[e]very act is important." And Shriver regaled the audience at Baptist Hardin-Simmons University with his conversation with the famed Baptist evangelist Billy Graham, who told Shriver that Graham had been "converted" to the War on Poverty. Initially critical of the program, Graham later decided, after studying the entire Bible closely, that "'responsibility to the poor'" is "one of the greatest teachings in the scriptures, and believed that "'[w]e have the responsibility as a church, as a society, and as a people to the poor.'"

A number of speeches (in addition to those quoted above) were directed at the "indifference to poverty" that so troubled Shriver in the Christian Century article, in response to which Shriver emphasized the need for respectful person-to-person relationships with the poor. Thus, at Hardin-Simmons, Shriver challenged the audience, in the context of one of the foundational Christian moral commands:

How do you put into practical action that phrase, 'love your neighbor as yourself'? Well one definition of how to do that today is to put yourself into the skin of another man. To be weakened by his burdens and to be heartened by his joys.

And at a "Tri-College" program in Minnesota (one of them the Lutheran Concordia College), Shriver observed:

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62 Shriver, "Commencement Address at Illinois Wesleyan University."

63 Shriver, "Speech at the Hardin-Simmons University." Graham told a large group of Congressmen that while he did not want to get involved in politics, "the poverty program is above politics" and "shouldn't be a political football -- it's a work for all Americans."

64 Ibid.
But the only way the rich will ever find meaning in their lives is to go out and confront Lazarus at the gate -- person to person. Not because we want to practice Christianity, but because we want to participate in it."  

One reward of "fighting poverty, sickness, injustice," Shriver claimed at Muhlenberg College (a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America), is getting one out of "an interior ghetto of the mind where we seal off those parts of Christianity that don't suit us," "box off our obligations to love all men," and "shut out our commitments to serve all men."  

In emphasizing the values of dignity, respect, and humility, Shriver told the Volunteers of America that we must stop calling the poor culturally deprived, treating them as a "problem" rather than as human beings, and "insisting that the poor be helped on our terms." Only "if we are prepared to learn from the poor," Shriver said, and "to reach them on their terms," can we "be sure to remain true to our mission."  

Some or many of Shriver's views were -- and still are -- puzzling to those unmoved by or apathetic toward the plight of the poor. As noted above, Shriver apparently thought that these insights, if inculcated by challenging sermons and heroic outreach and ministry by the clergy and religious, would have the most promise of shaking those Americans religiously-professing, but indifferent to poverty, out of their lethargy. As he had earlier said, it "is the province of religion to instill a personal

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66 Sargent Shriver, Commencement Address at Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, June 4, 1967, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/commencement-address-at-muhlenberg-college (accessed September 24, 2014). In this speech, Shriver quotes the French Catholic philosopher and Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: "It is too easy to find an excuse for inaction by pleading the decadence of civilization. This defeatism . . . . is the besetting temptation of our time."

67 Shriver, "Address to Volunteers of America."
responsibility into mankind," and religion "reaches into the sanctuary of human experience where attitudes are formed."\(^68\)

Moreover, Shriver keenly appreciated the special spiritual and temporal resources that religious institutions could contribute to the War on Poverty, perhaps even more so after confronting the amount of resistance to it. As he said at the 1967 Methodist Annual Meeting, clergy could step into the position of community leaders, bearing the message that the poor need help, "not just dollars." This help was necessary, lest the crisis in cities and in rural America "gradually make all our churches into temples of irrelevance."\(^69\) Moreover, in a 1966 address to the National Baptist Training Union, Shriver asserted that the clergy members were uniquely suited to translate generalities into productive action plans and to ensure that "spiritual values" that are the roots of government programs such as the War on Poverty "stay firmly embedded."\(^70\)

More generally (and fundamentally), Shriver believed that government could not replace churches because government "operates on a success ideology" and "popularity is the soul brother of success." In his view, too many churches were "trying to spread a religion of success, instead of a religion of love," where values are more important than victories.\(^71\) Shriver urged that "Christianity is the religion which says we must risk failure, at least apparent failure, the way Christ did -- the way he was defeated and

\(^{68}\) Shriver, "Speech to the National Conference on Religion and Race."

\(^{69}\) Shriver, "Speech at the Methodist Annual Meeting."


\(^{71}\) Shriver, "Address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church."
rejected, the way he was crucified." Shriver cited "Speech at the Methodist Annual Meeting." Ministers and priests were needed to tell Christians what the government could not: Christianity "is a religion of love and that it holds out the risk of failure to everyone daring enough to commit himself to the service of the poor." The clergy must explain that religion is different than "religiosity," where "you feel good instead of doing good." Shriver, "Address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church."  

Although not as frequently as with church-related audiences, Shriver drew on religious authorities before "secular" audiences -- including, as we have seen, members of Congress. For example, the St. Vincent de Paul quotation that Shriver offered the House subcommittee was offered to the National Conference on Social Welfare in the month following its April 1965 hearings. At a Yale Daily News banquet and at a Association of Advertising Agencies convention (both held in October 1967), Shriver quoted the Jesuit poet and later Vietnam war protester, Daniel Berrigan: "Like the look of Christ, the poor man strips us down to the bone. . . The poor have it hard, the saying goes. Well, we're the hardest thing they have." And at the August 1967 Negro Shriners Convention, when commenting on the meaning of that summer's urban riots,

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72 Shriver, "Speech at the Methodist Annual Meeting."

73 Shriver, "Address to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church."


Shriver believed some "great good will come from these riots, the way St. Paul said good can come from evil."\textsuperscript{76}

Whatever the success Shriver and the War on Poverty achieved in reducing poverty in the United States, or in securing the support of religious denominations for it, this Roman Catholic senior government official's reaching out to a variety of different religious denominations and challenging them -- with references to Scripture and religious thinkers -- to acknowledge and then confront the problem of poverty \textit{in some meaningful way and on personal terms} bespeaks bold and self-confident leadership. But even assuming his "religious talk" did not transgress the Constitution's First Amendment, was this form of discourse by a senior government official properly sensitive to the pluralistic society in the United States with its First Amendment tradition?

This question can be addressed through the prism of the views of two Catholic thinkers notable at the time, with whose writings Shriver would have been familiar: Jacques Maritain (whom, we have seen, Shriver read closely) and the American priest John Courtney Murray, S.J. Both addressed the Church's role in modern pluralistic societies such as the United States and essentially took the position (with many other theologians) that: (a) the church should "influence the State only through the activities of Christian citizens in civil society," and (b) in discourse with members of a pluralistic society, "theology cannot be directly politicized, but must first be translated into some

more publicly accessible form of discourse in order to have an influence in civil society."

Maritain distinguished between two "planes of activity" after "the fall of Christendom" (i.e., after the emergence of modern secular states): that of the spiritual ("in which we act as members of the Mystical Body of Christ," with the "determining object [of] eternal life, God and the things of God, the redemptive work of Christ to be served in us and in others"); and that of the temporal or the world (in which we act "as members of the terrestrial city and as engaged in the affairs of the terrestrial life of humanity," whose concerns "in a general way [are] the things of time, the work of civilization or of culture"). However, the Christian has the "vocation of infusing into the world . . . a Christian sap." As William Cavanaugh has noted, Maritain held that:

The church . . . does not act as a body on the temporal plane, but exerts an indirect influence through the individual Christian. The individual Christian acting on the temporal plane of the political and the social is animated by the spiritual plane. . . . In this way, a 'New Christendom' is possible in which the state remains explicitly secular, but individual Christians bring the inchoate influence of the Gospel to bear on public life, without speaking explicitly Christian language in the public forum.

Murray similarly believed that the church "contributes to the common good by attempting to 'permeate all the institutions of society -- economic, social, cultural,"

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78 Jacques Maritain, Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 293-96. Christians "in the world" are required not simply to act as living members of Christ on the plane of the spiritual, "but also to act as Christians, as living members of Christ on the plane of the temporal." Otherwise, the world will be abandoned "to other energies, which do not labor for its good."

79 Cavanaugh, "Church." 400.
political -- with the Christian spirit of truth, justice, love, and freedom."\(^{80}\) For Murray, the subject of the indirect power of the Church "is not the ruler or the state but the individual conscience of the Christian citizen of the nation state," and "in the pluralistic public realm, the church must not speak theologically, but in the language of the natural law," which he believed "is, in theory, accessible to any reasonable person, Christian or not".\(^{81}\) Murray preferred "the rational argument of the public philosophy to theological appeals in the public forum," and "placed minimal trust in the concrete power of the biblical symbols to keep the Christian community faithful in interpreting its belief both to itself and to the non-Christian world around it."\(^{82}\)

When speaking in religious or theological terms, Shriver never was authorized to act, and did not presume to be acting on behalf of, the Catholic hierarchy or the Catholic Church as an institution. And, consistent with these views of Maritain and Murray, Shriver's speeches to many religious and secular audiences did "translate" religious perspectives in their appeals to humanism, dignity, self-empowerment, and solidarity with the poor.\(^{83}\)


\(^{81}\) Cavanaugh, "Church," 400, citing John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1960), 295-336. See also David Hollenbach, "Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism After John Courtney Murray," *Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (June 1976): 301. Murray's preference for what Hollenbach calls the "ontological thinking" of natural law theory sprung from his belief that "the substance of the Christian vision of the human person in society can be more accurately captured in the ontological language of a natural-law theory than in a public theology that makes explicit use of the ethical teachings, behavioral paradigms, and morally revelatory events recorded in the Bible."

\(^{82}\) Hollenbach, "Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism After John Courtney Murray," 301.

However, a number of Shriver's speeches quoted above (and sometimes to secular audiences) seem to run counter to the above-stated preferences of Maritain and Murray that Christian citizens (here, Shriver) not speak theologically, or with explicitly Christian language or symbols, in the public forum. Nonetheless, Shriver apparently reached essentially the same conclusion that David Hollenbach offered years later, in 1976:

In a pluralistic society such as contemporary America, an attempt to develop a social ethic which is rooted in Christian faith without beginning with the biblical symbols and never leaving them entirely behind is, I think, doomed to failure.

Hollenbach further lamented that the "missing element in the public ethos of America is a sense of the sacred in history and in society and human interaction." Ten years or so earlier than Hollenbach's observation, Shriver's writings and speeches did vibrantly express a sense of the sacred in the particular context of the necessity of alleviating the suffering of the poor in the United States. Shriver's words rhetorically embodied, even if not in some systematic theological fashion, what Hollenbach believed years later was lacking: harnessing the "unique power of the imaginative, the parabolic, and the dramatic to evoke this sense of the sacred" and "to sustain it in the shared world of public discourse."\(^{84}\)

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Communication with faith-based organizations (many Protestant or non-Catholic) was arguably fostered, not hindered, by the use of religious languages and references, especially when Shriver addressed religious traditions outside his own with respect and without any trace of condescension or a triumphalist type of Catholicism. Speeches to secular audiences neither proselytized nor included extended theological arguments; on occasion, they did include language and quotations that Shriver probably believed, in 1964-1968, did not threaten or offend anyone in the audiences, and there is no indication they did so.

Despite Murray's preference for use of natural law concepts in the public space, Shriver did not explicitly employ natural law reasoning as a form of discourse. Although he was certainly aware and appreciative of the natural law tradition, Shriver was probably diffident, when communicating as a Catholic with other denominations, about the effectiveness of referring to an ethical tradition associated with Catholic philosophy and theology. As Murray himself had acknowledged, the "whole doctrine philosopher, has modified his views on religion's potential contributions to formulating ethical norms that would promote more just and democratic societies. His more recent writings reveal an expanding appreciation of religion's potential contributions for strengthening a productive discourse ethic, particularly because religion gives a voice to the marginalized in society, to the "vulnerable forms of communal life."


Hollenbach, "Public Theology in America: Some Questions for Catholicism After John Courtney Murray," 294. Although Murray disclaimed "the lack of Catholic presuppositions behind the natural-law theory he employed in developing his social ethic . . . . there can be no doubt that the theological concern to make belief intelligible in a distinctively Catholic mode was operative in giving shape to his concept of reason." In his 1982 speech to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Catholic Teaching, Shriver observed that the Catholic tradition, resting "on a firm foundation of natural law . . . is denied, explicitly and implicitly, by the two most popular, competing theories today: -- the socialism of Karl Marx, and the capitalism of Adam Smith."
of natural law is a challenge, if not an affront, to [a Protestant's] entire style of moral thought and even to his religiosity," and "is alien to him, unassimilable by him."\(^87\)

In any event, even if Shriver did not refer to natural law in doing so, he certainly did not dispense with "rational argument" in making the case -- before both secular and religious groups -- for participation by all segments in society in the battle against poverty and support of its programs. He regularly referred to the Declaration of Independence's rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and to justice, fairness, and equality of opportunity in speeches to religious and secular audiences alike -- concepts of the type that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops cited in its November 1967 recommendation for "the immediate passage of strong and adequate legislation supporting the War on Poverty."\(^88\)

Moreover, even if Shriver did not explicitly refer to natural law philosophy in promoting and defending the War on Poverty, natural law had been one source of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching with which Shriver was familiar. We now turn to how those principles were reflected in Shriver's administration, promotion, and defense of the War on Poverty.

\(^87\) Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 17. See also John F. Quinn, "The Enduring Influence of We Hold These Truths," *Catholic Social Science Review* 16 (2011): 76. According to Quinn, Willmoore Kendall, a conservative who was impressed by Murray's book, "was not sure that the American Founders were as free from John Locke's influence as Murray claimed and wondered whether natural law on its own could serve as the basis for civil society."\(^87\)

\(^88\) National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Poverty Legislation," November 14, 1967, *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1970*, ed. Hugh J. Nolan (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971), 617. The bishops wrote that continuing support of the War on Poverty would reinforce the confidence of those impoverished that the country "will keep faith with them in increasing the pursuit of justice, fairness, and equality of opportunity for all citizens".\(^87\)
CHAPTER FOUR

SHRIVER, THE WAR ON POVERTY, AND PRINCIPLES OF
ROMAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

What is known as "Catholic Social Teaching" (or "Doctrine") is an evolved, complex and nuanced body of principles and criteria for evaluating the economic, political, and social order and for making prudent judgments concerning public policy and programs. It has been articulated in papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents issued since the nineteenth century. They in turn have drawn on Catholic natural law thinking (and to some extent on other philosophical traditions), on Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, and on theological teachings of the Church.¹

Catholic Social Teaching currently addresses subjects such as the human person, the family, the social order, the role of the state, work and wages, poverty and charity, the environment, and the international community. However, it is not a rigid and codified set of rules whose application readily leads to evaluation or formation of policies. Instead, it "suggests a framework" for making concrete analyses or decisions when faced with a number of options,² leading to differences of opinion on application of its principles to particular issues.³


Key principles of Catholic Social Teaching (as currently identified by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) include the following:

- The sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person are the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social thinking.

- The person is not only sacred but also social, and the organization of society directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.

- There is a virtue of human "solidarity" (whatever may be national, racial, ethnic, economic, or ideological differences), at the core of which is the pursuit of justice and peace.

- Marriage and the family are central institutions that must be supported and strengthened.

- People have a right and duty to participate in society, seeking the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

- The scope and limits of governmental intervention are determined by the "principle of subsidiarity".

- A basic moral test is how the most vulnerable members of society are faring, and there is an option for the poor and vulnerable;

- There is a dignity in work, and the basic rights of workers must be respected.⁴

Sargent Shriver’s 1982 address to a conference of Catholic bishops evidences his personal familiarity with and admiration for the so-called "social" papal encyclicals embodying principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

... I wish all Catholics would read them, believe them, and follow them. They contain the closest approach to truth concerning the condition of humankind today and the best proposals for improving that condition.⁵

When Shriver entered federal public service in 1961, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) were the major modern papal documents addressing social and economic issues. *Rerum Novarum*’s central theme is "the just ordering of society," developed by Leo XIII in the particular context of the condition of workers in industrialized economies.  

*Quadragesimo Anno* was issued by Pius XI in the depths of a worldwide depression, when "totalitarian regimes were being imposed in Europe, as the class struggle was becoming more bitter." It warns about "the failure to respect the freedom to form associations and stresses the principles of solidarity and cooperation in order to overcome social contradictions."  

Marvin Krier Mich has noted how *Quadragesimo Anno* emphasizes:

> . . . the common good of society and the responsibility of the state to promote the well being of every segment of society. The principle of intervention by the state in the economic arena was balanced by the principle of subsidiarity. Social justice was presented as the virtue, with social charity, that is essential for the reconstruction of society.

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5 Shriver, "Address to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Catholic Teaching and the American Economy." Although Shriver admired and respected the papal encyclicals, he made clear that in the War on Poverty they needed to be translated into effective action. See Shriver, "Address at the National Conference of Catholic Charities Annual Convention," where Shriver said that in the fight against poverty, "the social theories of the papal encyclicals" (and other ideals and theories as well) must be accompanied by attacking "the structures of destitution by which the poor are enslaved to poverty. . . ."


8 Marvin L. Krier Mich, *Catholic Social Teaching and Movements* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1998), 79. In Krier Mich’s opinion, "social charity" has "structural and institutional dimensions," distinguishing it from almsgiving (i.e., individual charity), and Pius XI used the concept to "keep love, caritas, as the central moral virtue in Catholic social teaching." Social charity "emphasizes a
In the 1930s, Jacques Maritain noted that *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* were examples of a third "intermediate" plane of activity (between the "spiritual" and "temporal" planes discussed above), and that their principles of a "Christian political, social, and economic wisdom," acted as a "theological firmament for the more particular doctrines and activities engaged in the contingencies of the temporal."  

Shriver would have been familiar with both encyclicals, which formed "a touchstone of Commonweal editorial policy throughout the Depression and the New Deal era."  

Other "foundational" documents of Catholic social doctrine were issued in the 1960's, when Shriver was in charge of the Peace Corps and OEO, and, at the same time, the Catholic Church was undergoing an *aggiornamento* ("bringing up to date") that included the Second Vatican Council ("Vatican II"), whose sessions occurred in 1962-1965. Those 1960s documents included John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) (with major themes of community and socialization); *Pacem in Terris* (1963) (focusing more positive orientation of benevolence, of wishing another well, not simply receiving their 'due'" under principles of "social justice." (Ibid., 80.

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on peace and human dignity); Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (1965)\(^{13}\) (presenting "in a systematic matter the themes of culture, of economic and social life, of marriage and the family, of the political community")\(^{14}\); and Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967)\(^{15}\) (which "presents the outlines of an integral development of man and of a development in solidarity with all humanity").

Shriver later reflected that papal encyclicals have been "difficult for Americans to understand and follow" because they are based on a Catholic view of natural law principles and philosophy of man that are "profoundly different" from those underpinning "Adam Smith capitalism".\(^ {16}\) Nonetheless, when heading OEO, Shriver did on occasion explicitly refer to papal encyclicals, to other papal writings, and to the teachings of Vatican II. Thus, in his 1966 *Christian Century* article, Shriver drew from Vatican II the lesson that we cannot any longer "seek the spiritual kingdom of God by turning our back on the social realm of man."\(^ {17}\)

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\(^{16}\) Shriver, "Address to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Catholic Teaching and the American Economy."

\(^{17}\) Shriver, "The Moral Basis of the War on Poverty," 1533. In this regard, paragraph 57 of *Gaudium and Spes* declared:

*Christians, on pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, should seek and savor the things that are above. This duty in no way decreases, but rather increases, the weight of their obligation to work with all men in constructing a more human world.*
For the most part, however, the influence of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching on Shriver's leadership of the War on Poverty was revealed less directly. We concentrate here on (a) the sacredness and dignity of each human person and the solidarity of all humans; (b) what has come to be known as the "option for the poor and vulnerable"; and (c) Shriver's administration of the War on Poverty, from the standpoint of the principle of subsidiarity.

Dignity of Each Human Person and the Solidarity of All Humans

Pope John XXIII explained in *Mater et Magistra* that "Catholic Church's social teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution." At the same time, there is "[t]he solidarity which binds all men together as members of a common family". Likewise, Pope Paul VI wrote in *Populorum Progressio* (1967, ¶ 17) that each human belongs to the "community of man," and "the reality of human solidarity" brings both benefits and obligations. Accordingly, in *Gaudium et Spes* (1965, ¶ 29), a central document emerging from Vatican II, the Council stated that "[h]uman institutions, both private and public, must labor to minister to" the dignity of persons.

Shriver deeply believed in the "sacredness of life itself" (a phrase he used in speaking to students at the University of California at Berkeley) and had a vision of society as a "community, not a community crowd." His beliefs reflected Catholic

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doctrine and teaching, but also were likely influenced by the thinking of Catholic philosophers, including Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier. Maritain emphasized a "personalism" which he distinguished from the post-Enlightenment understanding of "individualism". Maritain viewed individualism as a purely material concept that inadequately took into account "human beings' social and spiritual dimensions"; consequently, each human was viewed, in an atomistic way, as a "fragment of a species." By contrast, as one scholar has noted," Maritain looked at the whole person, not the individual acting only for himself and his own self-interest, and examined rights in the context of the community." Similarly, Mounier's philosophy of personalism "emphasized personal responsibility and placed the individual person before any material or ideological considerations," while also stressing "the importance of love and community."

Into his public presentations Shriver wove the themes of human dignity and solidarity. He urged civil rights leaders at a National Urban League program to fight a "poverty of opportunity, of learning, of jobs, and of dignity" that degrades poor Americans, white or black. He reminded a Yale University audience that human life


21 McCauliff, "Jacques Maritain's Embrace of Religious Pluralism and the Declaration on Religious Freedom," 596. See also Cooper, *The Theology of Freedom: The Legacy of Jacques Maritain and Reinhold Niebuhr,* 95. Cooper notes that in Maritain's view one of the fundamentals of political society is "the genuine will to live together, which constitutes civic friendship."


23 Sargent Shriver, Address at the Community Action Assembly sponsored by the National Urban League, Washington, D.C., December 9, 1964, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-at-the-community-action-assembly-sponsored-by-the-national-urban-league (accessed January 15, 2015) (emphasis supplied). The next year, in *Gaudium et Spes,* ¶ 63, the Second Vatican Council noted that while economic progress can mitigate social inequalities, "it is often made to embitter them; or, in some
is "too valuable to be wasted by war or by poverty or by indifference." He called for everyone "to stop calling the poor culturally deprived" and "treating them as 'a problem' rather than as human beings." Indeed, he thought, the problems of poverty "will not be solved until we acknowledge that the poor have as much or more to give that they get -- in insight, in culture, in spontaneity, and in basic humility."

As noted above, Shriver appreciated that sustained political support for and volunteer participation in the War on Poverty, would benefit from the middle and upper classes feeling some sense of solidarity with the poor. Labeling members of an ethnic, racial or other group as "subculture," he told members of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, is "bigoted," a way of saying, 'He's different,'' leading us "to conclude we don't have to treat him as one of us." Shriver certainly respected the differences among individuals when they bore "no taint of inferiority or superiority,"


25 Shriver, "Address to the Negro Shriners Convention."

26 Shriver, "Address to Volunteers of America."


but believed that the spirited action needed to achieve justice must spring from "the most basic similarity, the common denominator of us all" -- "our humanity." Shriver made clear, however, that "human unity, human beings united in the common purpose of just being human to each other" would be a false one unless it was "backed up" by "huge reserves of justice."

As noted earlier, Shriver believed some sense of solidarity or community with the poor must also come from "person-to-person confrontation." He delighted in explaining that one program that broke down walls between middle-class and poor was successful because it was "personal," adding that America needs to embrace a philosophy of "personalism" (referring specifically to Mounier). As noted above, he told audiences (including the one at the University of California at Berkeley) that the command to love one’s neighbor as yourself is converted to practical action when "you put yourself into the skin of another man," being "weakened by his burden" and "heartened by his joys."

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29 Shriver, "Address to the National Baptist Training Union." Similarly, in his address at the Annual Brotherhood Dinner of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Shriver reminded the audience that they were not "businessmen first, or lawyers first, or bankers, or doctors first -- first of all, we're human beings," living not only in local communities, but in national and world communities as well.


31 Shriver, "Speech at the Tri-College Program."

32 Shriver, "Address at the University of California, Berkeley"; Shriver, "Speech at the Hardin-Simmons University." In a speech given at about the time he left OEO, Shriver quoted Dorothy Day, "one of the United States' great Apostles to the poor," as an example of embodying the idea of "standing in another man’s place". Sargent Shriver, Remarks at the Institute of North American Studies, Barcelona, Spain, March 17, 1968, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/remarks-at-the-institute-of-north-american-studies (accessed February 11, 2015).
Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

The opening line of *Gaudium et Spes* states that to be Christian is to be one with the poor:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the [people] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. (Emphasis added.)

As Paul VI put it in 1971:

In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.\(^3^3\)

Subsequent papal encyclicals, right up to the present in the writings of Pope Francis,\(^3^4\) have referred to a "preference for the poor" or "option for the poor," the "immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without health care and, above all, those without hope of a better future."\(^3^5\) The concept of a "preference" or "option" for the poor was originally associated with the liberation theology emerging in Latin America after the 1968 Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin, Columbia and in the writings of theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Clodovis Boff, and

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Leonardo Boff\textsuperscript{36} -- although, to be sure, the Vatican in 1984 condemned certain Marxist elements liberation theology.\textsuperscript{37}

The first major national effort focused exclusively on poor people, the War on Poverty was controversial in no small part because it \textit{was} a "preference for the poor". As Shriver told audiences, many people wondered why the poor should be given special help when the poor are "so lazy" and unable to make it the "hard way" (like they did) -- suggesting that the poor deserve to be in that position. Some also believed the poor enjoyed being on welfare.\textsuperscript{38} Shriver sought to counter these attitudes by explaining how social structures and injustices contributed to poverty and by regularly emphasizing that the War on Poverty was not one of federal welfare "handouts," but instead was a "hand-up" for those willing to help themselves out of poverty.

Shriver also made religious and moral arguments suggesting a preference for the poor -- even if not using that term, which was not then in the theological lexicon in the U.S. The solidarity of persons in all of society's classes is related to a "preference for the poor". And Shriver observed in his 1966 \textit{Christian Century} article that the four Gospels are not "abstract ramblings" on God, but accounts of how Christ lived, including "the way he lifted the spirits of the poor, the way he dared the rich to be better


instead of merely better off".\textsuperscript{39} Shriver's words closely resemble what the Vatican stated in 2004: "The Church's love for the poor is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, by the poverty of Jesus and by his attention to the poor."\textsuperscript{40} Shriver elsewhere noted that St. Vincent dePaul referred to the poor as "our lords."\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{Principle Of Subsidiarity}

A central and much-discussed principle of Catholic social thought is the principle of subsidiarity, which is "the primary norm for determining the scope and limits of governmental intervention".\textsuperscript{42} It came to international attention in \textit{Quadragesimo Anno} (¶ 79), which described subsidiarity in the following way:

> Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help \textit{[subsidium]} to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them.

The Catholic Church believes subsidiarity is essential for promoting both the dignity of the person and the solidarity of persons in community. Because of the "vital contributions from different associations -- ranging in size from the family to government,"\textsuperscript{43} subsidiarity is believed to respect and enhance personal dignity. The

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Shriver, "The Moral Basis of the War on Poverty," 1533.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, \textit{Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church}, ¶ 184.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Sargent Shriver, "Address to St. Vincent De Paul Society of Baltimore."
  \item \textsuperscript{42} USCCB, \textit{Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy}, ¶ 124.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Ibid., ¶ 99.
\end{itemize}
sum of social relationships in civil society (the family, groups, regional associations, professional groups, recreational groups) are seen as constituting a "network" that "strengthens the social fabric and constitutes the basis of a true community of persons." This network also makes possible "higher forms of social activity." Subsidiarity also aims for "institutional pluralism" and "provides space for freedom, initiative, and creativity on the part of many social agents," while at the same time insisting they "should work in ways that help build up the social body."

Embedded in Quadragesimo Anno's description of subsidiarity are its "negative" and "positive" dimensions. In its "negative" sense, and because of a concern that "excessive intervention can harm individuals and subsidiary groups," subsidiarity restricts intervention by the State only to those activities "which exceed the capacity of individuals or private groups acting independently." In its "positive" aspect, subsidiarity defines "good government intervention as that which truly 'helps' other social groups contribute to the common good by directing, urging, restraining, and regulating economic activity as 'the occasion requires and necessity demands.'" The

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46 Vischer, "Subsidiarity as a Principle of Governance: Beyond Devolution," 118. Subsequent encyclicals tended to emphasize one or the other dimension depending on their subject matter.


48 USCCB, Economic Justice for All, ¶ 124.
American bishops' 1986 pastoral letter, *Economic Justice For All*, contains an explanation of subsidiarity integrating these two aspects: government (a) should "not replace or destroy smaller communities and individual initiative," but (b) should "help them contribute more effectively to social well-being and supplement their activity when the demands of justice exceed their capacities," cooperating and building consensus with "diverse agents in our economic life."  

Shriver's speeches do not use the word "subsidiarity". However, given his familiarity with Catholic social encyclicals, Shriver undoubtedly was familiar with and agreed with its principles, underlying premises and spiritual dimensions. Here, as in other areas, his views may well have been also influenced by Maritain, traces of whose thinking are evident (many years later) in the American bishops' description of subsidiarity. Eschewing the word "subsidiarity," Maritain referred to "the pluralist principle". His philosophy of "integral humanism" emphasizes the creative activity of human persons coming together in a variety of institutions and social movements ("inferior to the State") that "mediate" between the individual and the State, each of them "embodying positive liberties." These mediating institutions are fundamental.

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50 Maritain, *Man and the State*, 69-70. He writes: "First . . .everything in the body politic which can be brought about by particular organs or societies inferior in degree to the State and born out of the free initiative of the people should be brought about those particular organs or societies; second, that vital energy should unendingly rise from the people within the body politic."

51 Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, 52. He concluded (ibid.) in light of *Quadragesimo Anno*.
forms of expression for the person, facilitating the formation of personal identity,\textsuperscript{52} and linking persons to society as a whole in a way that gives them greater power to act.\textsuperscript{53}

For Shriver the meaning and values of subsidiarity had not merely been the subject of academic inquiry; they infused his service-filled life. Before joining the Kennedy Administration, when working with people and organizations in and near his Chicago neighborhood, Shriver experienced benefits and rewards from personal participation in the projects of mediating institutions. In March 1964, when Shriver was lobbying for passage of the EOA, the liberal journalist Murray Kempton (1917-1997) perceptively observed that Shriver's "temperament never distracts him from what are essentially problems of local government."\textsuperscript{54}

As noted above, Shriver emphasized that the EOA relied "on local efforts and leadership, and the volunteer spirit of the individual" and the War on Poverty needed to "involve all sectors of the economy and all of the American people, the private business sector, the private philanthropic sector, and other sectors."\textsuperscript{55} These views give a big nod

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\begin{flushright}
Civil society is made up not only of individuals, but of particular societies formed by them, and a pluralist body politic would allow to these societies the greatest autonomy possible and would diversify its own internal structure in keeping what is typically required by their nature.

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\textsuperscript{52} Hehir, "Religious Ideas and Social Policy: Subsidiarity and Catholic Style of Ministry," 100-01.

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\textsuperscript{53} See Maritain, \textit{Man and the State}, 9-12, 22, 23, 123, 150; Cooper, \textit{The Theology of Freedom: The Legacy of Jacques Maritain and Reinhold Niebuhr}, 90-91, 100-01.

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\textsuperscript{55} Senate hearings on S2642; House hearings (April 12, 1965), "Examination of the War on Poverty Program," 20. In this regard, the operation of the Job Corps embraced non-governmental, mediating institutions. See Sargent Shriver, Address to the National Job Corps Competition Expo Lunch, Washington, D.C., September 22, 1981, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-at-the-national-job-corps-competition-expo-lunch (accessed February 10, 2015), where Shriver said that the Job Corps:

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\ldots was not [in the 1960s], and never has been, a Federal government program imposed on an unwilling and uninterested economic system. From the start it was a joint venture by business,
toward the individual and local community leadership, efforts, and volunteer spirit valued by subsidiarity.

But whatever Shriver's appreciation of the benefits of local government addressing problems, he agreed to take the reins of, and then led construction of, a $1 billion federal government program. One challenging the EOA on subsidiarity grounds might have argued that elected governments in fifty states and their local units were better suited to helping the poor, because they were "lower" in the political hierarchy and presumably closer to the people. Moreover, the argument might have been, the states traditionally had responsibility (however much eroded by the New Deal) for doing so in this country. And, indeed, while Republicans in Congress did not attack the EOA bill head-on, they did argue, among other things, that it violated the principles of federalism and granted too much discretion to a poverty "czar".56

However, in the view of Shriver (who was well familiar with the doctrine of states' rights)57 when states "aren't protecting all citizens and the citizens aren't given a fair opportunity in life, then that's when the federal government has to get involved."58 As explained earlier, Community Action sprung from the belief that state and local government agencies (and the old-line welfare bureaucracy) were woefully inadequate

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57 See Stossel, *Sarge*, 383. States' rights had been "an absolute cardinal principle" of the Democratic Party in Maryland when Shriver was growing up.

in helping the poor, so that it was necessary to circumvent them, through federally-funded Community Action Agencies requiring "maximum feasible participation" of the poor. Shriver had also believed that "for white Southerners states' rights was often just a diplomatic cover for racism -- a way to block federal money from going to blacks."\(^{59}\)

As one scholar has noted, if "small communities are themselves unjust or in need," then more extensive legal intervention may be required under principles of subsidiarity.\(^{60}\) Shriver had grounds to argue that Community Action was consistent with subsidiarity, since the "lesser and subordinate bodies" -- i.e., poor families and the communities in which they lived -- were often blocked from meaningful participation in local civic and governmental institutions and needed help (subsidium) from the federal government in establishing CAAs that would assist them in contributing more effectively to their social well-being.\(^{61}\) And, in this regard, \textit{Gaudium et Spes} (¶ 75), issued shortly after passage of the EOA, urged that "[g]reat care" be taken "about civic and political formation, which is of the utmost necessity today for the population as a whole . . . so that all citizens can play their part in the life of the political community."

\(^{59}\) Stossel, \textit{Sarge}, 383.


\(^{61}\) See George Adler, "Community Action and Maximum Feasible Participation: An Opportunity Lost But Not Forgotten For Expanding Democracy at Home," 566. Adler reviews some research suggesting that the interests of the poor are better protected in larger units government -- at the federal and state levels. Although identifying various problems with community action as drafted in the EOA and implemented by OEO, Adler believes that "subsidiarity . . . is admirably demonstrated in OEO's funding of independent neighborhood organizations," which were an "attempt to increase the organization's ability to participate in the political process rather than reduce the people in the area to a greater degree of dependence on a local welfare system perceived as indifferent to their needs."
Shriver described the purpose, operation, and benefits of CAAs (the formations of which very voluntary) in terms echoing Catholic subsidiarity doctrine and its underlying perspectives. The poor, many of whom feel that "nobody cares about or understands them," are not second-class citizens, he asserted, and they have a civil and human right to participate "in shaping their own destiny." He said that listening to the needs of the poor and helpless, expressed through the CAAs, is "at the heart of democracy"; their involvement can also help heal "deep spiritual divisions". As noted above, facilitating the "formation of personal identity" has been identified as a benefit of the "mediating institutions" (here CAAs and the local organizations working with them) valued by subsidiarity. Shriver's comments also point to the interrelationship of the principles of dignity of the person, solidarity, and subsidiarity.

Shriver "disdained bureaucracies as wasteful and inefficient," and was sensitive to charges that the OEO he led was a large federal bureaucracy. In explaining community action, he pointed to the distinction between a bureaucracy and a democracy: "[a] bureaucracy thinks the people are free while a democracy frees the people to think." Community Action, he claimed, is not a "rigid social welfare structure" imposed by a bureaucracy in Washington, but "an organic creation of the neighborhood itself" that "molded itself to fit the unique and diverse needs" of the many

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62 Shriver, "Address at the Diamond Jubilee Banquet, Xavier Alumni Association."


64 Shriver, "Address to the Advertising Council." Shriver told the audience: "There will be no poverty Czars. There will be no giant bureaucracy, but there will be assistance for local plans, worked out and presented by local leaders. . . ."
different communities involved." Sargent Shriver urged one audience to participate in the "creative localism" of CAAs. OEO's appreciation of the potentially stultifying effects of bureaucratization in administration of CAAs accords with subsidiarity's concern (as expressed by the Vatican) with "certain forms of centralization" and "bureaucratization" that "lead to a loss of human energies. . . ."

As explained in Chapter One, "by the end of 1965 every conceivable Community Action constituency -- including the poor themselves -- felt somehow alienated by the program." Subsequently, administration of the program shifted from the vision that certain task force members had initially embraced, i.e., "empowering the poor to agitate against the local political structure for institutional reform," to one emphasizing more "the poor and local officials working together -- not in opposition."

Stossel adds:

> From the very beginning, [Shriver] had viewed Community Action to be a more collaborative project than an antagonistic one. . . . [H]e wanted to agitate the poor into political consciousness. But such was the nature of Shriver's optimism that he always believed that however "agitated" the poor might become, they would still be working in concert with -- rather than in opposition to -- local government.

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69 Ibid., 411, 476 (emphasis supplied).
In this regard, Shriver told one audience that Community Action means "working for a sense of community -- that brings all Americans of all races and creeds together in a common cause -- the cause of humanity -- the cause of the poor, and the underprivileged." Shriver's vision that the empowered poor work in concert with local government resonates with the views of the Catholic bishops in the 1986 *Economic Justice for All* that "[h]uman life is in community," and that the public policy toward the poor should "enable them to become active participants in the life of society, "so that they can "share in and contribute to the common good." As George Adler has observed, "developing the community in ways which enhance the opportunity structure for individuals transfers power to both the individual and the community." The more collaborative-less antagonistic approach to community action perhaps underestimates the necessity for rough-and-tumble, even divisive, political confrontation in order for the poor to secure needed social services; on the other hand, it reflects a belief that solidarity-in-community (an emphasis of Catholic Social Teaching), among all groups in that community, best unleashes the vital energies of all involved.

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70 Shriver, "Address to the Catholic Interracial Council, Davenport, Iowa."


72 Adler, "Community Action and Maximum Feasible Participation: An Opportunity Lost But Not Forgotten for Expanding Democracy at Home," 568. Adler contrasts a "participatory justice" perspective with that suggested by the "language of maximum feasible participation" in the EOA, which Adler claims "was drawn from the New Left's idea of participatory democracy, focused, in the classical liberal tradition, on the participation of individuals as distinct from the community in which they lived." Ibid., 567-68.

73 See James Masters, "A History of Community Action Agencies." Masters concluded in 1989 that, after the passage of the Green and Quie Amendments (restructuring CAAs), "[i]n many places, the CAAs board became the arena for local officials, the business sector, and the poor to reach agreement on the policies, self-help activities, and programs to help the poor in their community."
Voluntary local participation (by way of CAAs) was supplemented by Shriver's own conception of National Emphasis Programs service programs (such as Head Start, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Foster Grandparents, Health Services Centers, and Legal Services), which themselves can be viewed from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching's principles. Thus, for example, promoting the support and strengthening of the family is a central principle of Catholic Social Teaching, and one objective of Head Start was to strengthen the ability of child and parent to "relate positively" to each other.\textsuperscript{74}

Shriver explained in his 1965 House subcommittee testimony that the effectiveness of the War on Poverty programs needed to be evaluated not only in terms of "specific tangible results," but also in terms of their "catalytic effects": "processes set in motion," the "energies" released, and the destroyed "myths" about the poor.\textsuperscript{75} These "catalytic effects" on civil society's own programs enhanced and promoted energies of the mediating institutions and community cooperation that subsidiarity values and respects. Most notably, many "mediating" local faith-based organizations, private agencies, and individual volunteers as well, worked in their own communities with local War on Poverty programs, including the National Emphasis Programs. By 1967, the


\textsuperscript{75} House hearings (April 12, 1965), "Examination of the War on Poverty Program," 18.
War on Poverty attracted an "army" of 325,000 volunteers. A good example of a "catalytic" program outside of OEO's bailiwick is the Campaign for Human Development, the U.S. Catholic bishops' own national anti-poverty program, established in 1969. The involvement of mediating institutions and volunteers very probably contributed to the "groundswell of support" for OEO when its future was seriously in doubt in fall 1967.

Shriver's respect for mediating institutions, and their underlying contributions to society, reflects a progressive Catholic's nuance on liberalism. It also aligns him, as a matter of principle, with certain conservative thinkers. Indeed, Shriver maintained that the War on Poverty was "basically a conservative program," in part because 90% of its money "goes to the local government or to the private sector."

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76 Shriver, "Speech at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Medicine."


78 Stossel, Sarge, 475. In discussing the reasons for this support, Shriver said that the OEO's War on Poverty was "a local program that involves local leadership -- from business, the churches, labor unions, even the poor." Shriver, "Speech at the Young Democrats of America National Convention."

79 See Novak, "The Last Liberal". Novak, a Catholic political philosopher and speechwriter for Shriver during the 1972 presidential campaign, who later turned increasingly "conservative," noted after Shriver's death how many OEO programs:

. . . were designed to raise flying buttresses outside of government, involving "mediating structures" (most notably, the urban churches and big business and the world of celebrities) and civil society. . . A lot of big government liberalism, too -- but with an arresting number of conservative elements.

CONCLUSION

From the time he was asked by President Johnson in early 1964 to lead the ambitious War on Poverty, Sargent Shriver was convinced that a strong national commitment to fight poverty -- by all segments of society -- was necessary. Even before heading OEO, Shriver said in 1963 that in "the battle for social justice . . . without the cooperation of Church and State, of belief and power, our efforts will be doomed to failure." And while Shriver did not then explicate what types of Church-State cooperation he had in mind, he offered the Peace Corps as a model for "the infusion [of] spiritual values into secular affairs."\(^1\)

The extent of Church-State "cooperation" arising out of the EOA, however, went well beyond the Peace Corps experience, a result of Shriver's ability to translate his vision and values into extensive, productive, and lasting cooperation between Church and State in the implementation of EOA programs. Securing an EOA that did not entirely preclude funding of religiously-affiliated groups tested (as did other elements of the legislation) the political savvy of Shriver and his allies. And despite warnings of lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of their funding by OEO, the involvement of religious groups' involvement in EOA activities expanded, subject to guidelines devised by OEO to prevent "proselytizing". There is no evidence, such as discriminating in favor of certain denominations for political purposes, that Shriver was motivated by political expediency. Instead, Shriver acted on a conviction (developed before the War on Poverty) that spiritual values motivating religiously-affiliated organizations were

\(^1\) Shriver, "Commencement Address, 'The Meeting of Church and State,' Fordham University."
essential to achieving social justice and should not be spurned because of unwarranted concern that government funding inevitably established religion.

From the outset Shriver identified the "great lasting power" of incorrect "myths, slogans, and clichés about the poor" that challenged sustained support of the EOA's programs. A sturdy national commitment was further threatened, even eroded, as discussed above, by unexpected controversies over the CAAs and the Job Corps, by squeezing of OEO budgets because of funding of U.S. escalation in Vietnam, and by the range of reactions (liberal and conservative) to urban rioting.

Shriver used public appearances to counter misconceptions about EOA programs and to foster widespread support for them. While not limited to such themes, Shriver offered moral and spiritual considerations to faith-based organizations, and some "secular" audiences as well, to explain and justify a War on Poverty, and to enlist their participation. He challenged how audiences thought about poor people, related to them, and approached their problems. He urged them to approach the poor as persons of dignity and to serve them with compassion, humility, and love.

In developing these themes, Shriver thoughtfully drew on Scriptural and other religious resources, often in stirring and prophetic language. Snippets or short quotations from his speeches, wrenched as they are from the complete texts, neither convey their full power nor capture Shriver's personal magnetism when delivering them. To be sure, the speeches cannot be divorced from political considerations: they were given by a senior government official seeking support of the members of his audiences for the centerpiece of the Johnson Administration's domestic program. But Shriver did

not attempt to politicize religion through his use of religious themes and values. He did not suggest that his views were entitled to respect because of any special relationship he had with Jesus Christ, or because he was a pious and knowledgeable Catholic. Nor did he intimate that the moral case for fighting poverty could only be made based on religious beliefs. The challenges in the speeches were made to the non-poor -- whatever their religion and political party, as part of a national effort to eradicate poverty.

No one with knowledge of Shriver's personal piety, ongoing intellectual curiosity, and familiarity with religious doctrine and thinkers could suggest that his speeches were cynical exercises in political manipulation or pandering. As Colman McCarthy later wrote, "His enthusiasm for ideas and moral issues had to be respected because he was no recent convert . . . whose candlestick dripped with the wax of piety."\(^3\) And he often confronted audiences with perspectives about the poor and poverty in America that could be unsettling and uncomfortable for them.

Shriver's liberal Catholicism was shaped in substantial part by the then-evolving principles of Catholic Social Thought and by the lives and thinking of notable Catholic figures such as Jacques Maritain and Dorothy Day, who themselves were influenced by its principles. Some light on Shriver's own liberal perspective or approach to Catholic Social Teaching may be found in a 1966 *Commonweal* interview of the distinguished Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, whose writings frequently had been critical of Catholicism. Niebuhr said that he had become aware (especially since Vatican II) that Catholicism, once it was freed of being a product of medieval culture and related itself to an "open society and democracy," had "a greater awareness of the collective

problems of justice than any Protestant, idealistic secularist, or utopian secularist ever had." Catholicism, he added, "knows that there is a social substance in human existence and there is a collective egoism in which you have to have a balance of power."  

Shriver was a liberal Catholic who related his beliefs to an "open society and democracy." He acknowledged the "separateness" of Church and State, but at the same time claimed that there are common problems of justice that both should address. He sought as an individual Christian to build a societal moral consensus on the need to alleviate poverty, with a full appreciation of both the sacredness of individual persons and the "social substance in human existence".

Shriver's speeches reflected principles of still developing principles of Catholic Social Teaching. The provocative and critical edge to his challenges to both faith-based and secular audiences pointed to principles (e.g., preferential option for the poor, solidarity through personal experience and learning from the poor, distaste for privatized religion) that were already central to or would become further embedded in Catholic Social Teaching.

The EOA drafted under Shriver's supervision, enacted into law through his considerable efforts, and implemented at the OEO he directed, represented a combination of national and local planning and initiatives that was sensitive to the principle of subsidiarity and its underlying values. Shriver played a crucial role in structuring a national War on Poverty that included programs aimed at invigorating "bottom-up" participation by local communities, with the cooperation of the

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"mediating" structures of local civil society, all of which was designed to ensure greater justice for the poor. The tensions between federal and state and local governments over programs and funding, and between the controversial CAAs and local governments in their communities, perhaps could have been better anticipated at the outset. But they were inevitable to some degree in a program designed to alleviate poverty with the participation of the poor themselves.

In the end, much of what Shriver's OEO implemented has been resilient and served the poor for over fifty years, even if the War on Poverty has not been "won." With personal character and virtues permeated by his Catholicism, Shriver, the idealist and the realist, faced a battery of imposing obstacles while leading OEO. His Catholicism did not restrict his freedom; instead it provided Shriver's life with the kind of "weight and solidity" that Stanley Hauerwas later demanded churches foster in their congregations. Shriver was liberated to move forward with "sufficient ballast and force to act rather than react," and with the conviction that spiritual values are essential to any lasting victories in the War on Poverty.

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5 See Sargent Shriver, Address at Holy Cross College Hanify-Howland Lecture, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 25, 1984, http://www.sargentshriver.org/speech-article/address-at-holy-cross-college-hanify-howland-lecture (accessed February 11, 2015). Shriver said, "You've heard, I suppose, that the 'War Against Poverty' was a failure. You've heard that all those 'social programs' were failures. You know that Reagan pledged to get rid of them all. . . . But he couldn't. Not because of politics played by Democrats, but because all those hideous programs turned out to be popular! They weren't Washington programs at all. . . . These are all community programs, financed in part by the Federal Government, yet relying on community leadership and support."


## APPENDIX

### CITED SPEECHES OF R. SARGENT SHRIVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/17/64</td>
<td>Statement of Sargent Shriver, Special Assistant to the President, before Committee on Education and Public Welfare, United States Senate, June 17, 1964.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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