

Article

Franz Jägerstätter and the Way of the Cross: Conscientious Objection in the Greater German Reich

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Abstract: While Jägerstätter's life and courageous stand against Hitler and National Socialism are well known and documented, the connections between his reading of scripture, his understanding of the way of the cross, and his conscientious objection have not been sufficiently explored by scholars. In his letters and writings, Jägerstätter repeatedly appealed to scripture's call for the Christian to bear his or her cross and endure suffering, which he then used to support his stand as a conscientious objector to the Nazi regime. In one form or another, he refers to bearing the cross dozens of times in his letters and writings to emphasize the Christian's call to obedience and discipleship to the glory of God. This article will examine his understanding of the cruciform life in the Greater German Reich, as one who conscientiously traveled the way of the cross. Jägerstätter used scripture as authoritative above other sources of knowledge or guidance—such as church hierarchy or tradition, experience, and feeling—to see the evil of National Socialism with clarity of vision; to prioritize his responsibilities to God, family, community, and the state; and to refine his conscience as a subject of the Greater German Reich. In these ways, Jägerstätter stood as a steadfast and committed man of faith and a model for the virtues of conscientious objection in the Christian tradition.

Keywords: Franz Jägerstätter; resistance to Nazi Germany; conscientious objection; Catholic social teaching



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While Catholic social teachings on just war theory are well known and have a long and varied history, given the influence of luminaries in the church such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, its contributions to conscientious objection are less well known and perhaps more controversial. This article will explore the work and contribution of one twentieth-century Catholic martyr, Franz Jägerstätter, who, as a simple Austrian farmer of St. Radegund, stood up against the National Socialist regime and its mandate that he serve the German Wehrmacht in the Second World War. In refusing to serve he became an exemplar of courage and conscientious objection, despite immense pressures to acquiesce.¹

Jägerstätter was condemned by the Nazi regime for *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (undermining military morale). He was a conscientious objector, one whose personal conviction was perceived to undermine the strength of the military and to go against the best interests of the "Aryan" *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community). Jägerstätter argued that he could not join the Nazi military forces because the Nazi government was an evil regime, one that actively fought against the Church and that perpetrated evil in the world. Likewise, he refused to take the oath required of all soldiers because to do so would be to bind oneself in a sacred oath to a source of evil. Given his convictions, it is not unreasonable to assume that Jägerstätter could have served in the military of what he judged to be a just society. Nevertheless, the Nazi courts convicted him of sedition and executed him at the Brandenburg-Görden Prison on 9 August 1943.

Though dismissed, ignored, condemned, or despised after his refusal to serve in Hitler's army in the Second World War by officials and neighbors alike, after the war, Jägerstätter's story inspired a sea change in how Catholics and, more broadly, peoples in the western world perceive conscientious objection. When Jägerstätter refused to swear the oath to serve in the Wehrmacht, many viewed him as a shirker, and worse, a criminal, one

who selfishly and cowardly refused to fight and do his part for his race, nation, community, and family. He was viewed as a sinner who refused to submit to God's established governing authorities. He was even viewed as someone seeking suicide because he knew what his refusal would bring. However, in the decades following his death his story came to light in the work of Gordon Zahn's biography, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter*, published in 1964. Just a couple years later at the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Thomas Roberts offered a reflection of Jägerstätter's significance given that he was given no pastoral guidance about conscientious objection from church leadership or Catholic catechetical texts (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xi). As Zahn has argued, "Certainly there was no institutional encouragement for such a choice [conscientious objection], or, for that matter, any support for those who did make it" (Zahn 1962, p. 204). He was a hero who walked the way of the cross in the Greater German Reich, that is, picked up his own cross and followed after Christ, and yet without the support of the church.

Historians have demonstrated that the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," was inspired in part by Jägerstätter through the work of Archbishop Roberts, who helped to draft the document.² The text encourages the protections of the freedom of conscience. It reads in part:

Thanks to this belief, the Church can anchor the dignity of human nature against all tides of opinion, for example those which undervalue the human body or idolize it. By no human law can the personal dignity and liberty of man be so aptly safeguarded as by the Gospel of Christ which has been entrusted to the Church. For this Gospel announces and proclaims the freedom of the sons of God, and repudiates all the bondage which ultimately results from sin (cf. Rom. 8:14–17); it has a sacred reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice, constantly advises that all human talents be employed in God's service and men's, and, finally, commends all to the charity of all (cf. Matt. 22:39). (Pope Paul VI 1965)

Gaudium et Spes demonstrates that, in the decades following the Second World War, the Roman Catholic Church emphasized the individual's prerogative to stand against "all tides of opinion," whether shaped by political ideology or otherwise (Pope Paul VI 1965). The individual must be free to choose as he or she thinks best to serve God and the common good. The freedom of the conscience must be protected in a truly free society. After Zahn's biography and the archbishop's work spreading the word, Jägerstätter has become a revered figure for his courage and prophetic insight, one who took a stand, seemingly alone and unaided, against the Nazi regime.

It was not long after that calls resounded to beatify Jägerstätter as a Catholic saint who helped the church understand the meaning of courage and responsibility. As Jim Forest has written,

Franz Jägerstätter helped the Catholic Church change direction. How providential it was that the story of Franz's life began to circulate during the Second Vatican Council and played a part in giving shape to what the Catholic Church today teaches about war, peace, conscience, and individual responsibility—guidance in stark contrast to what was taught in Franz's day: trust your rulers and do as you're told; it is no sin to obey. (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxvi)

Just days after Jägerstätter's beatification in October 2007, Pope Benedict XVI said that "Baptism commits Christians to participating courageously in the spreading of the Kingdom of God, if need be cooperating with the sacrifice of life itself" (Pope Benedict XVI 2007). Jägerstätter is an exemplar of a man who bravely stood for God's kingdom values, knowing he could lose everything, including his family and life.

This article will focus not on Jägerstätter's biography or his beatification in 2007, but on his view of the way of the cross and, in light of this, his rationale for conscientious objection, which have significantly contributed to Catholic Social Teaching on war and peace. In this study, I will primarily draw from Jägerstätter's letters to his wife from prison,

as well as essays and notebooks written during the war. He wrote his letters from prison knowing the Nazi authorities would read them, and thus they are necessarily guarded. However, his first notebook, written after his initial military training but before he was called up again to serve in the war, between summer 1941 and winter 1942, was written at home and at a time in which he tried to work out his thinking, knowing he would have to explain himself to the military officials, as well as friends and family. These primary sources provide an exceptionally clear understanding of his view of the way of the cross and his rationale for refusing to serve in the Nazi army, as well as how he developed spiritual disciplines that enabled him to refine his conscience and strengthen his resolve. The sources demonstrate his devout faith, his strength of character, his love for his wife and children, and commitment to walking the way of the cross.

I will argue that Jägerstätter demonstrated a clear view of what constituted sin regarding the citizen's participation with the Nazi regime. He considered any act that advanced Nazi ideology and war aims to be a sin against God. Though not alone in considering Christianity and National Socialism as mutually exclusive beliefs systems, he was highly unusual in his willingness to die to ensure his faith did not become polluted by compromises with Nazism. Furthermore, Jägerstätter took seriously his responsibility as an individual before God to choose good over evil, refusing to relegate the responsibility of certain areas of his life, such as service to the state, to Hitler as the Führer of the Nazi Reich. Regardless of what church officials told him about obeying the secular authorities, he knew that he could not avoid judgment if he obeyed man over God. Lastly, this article will argue that Jägerstätter went to great lengths to protect his conscience from becoming numb or seared amid the continuous onslaught of pro-Nazi messages and pressures. In these ways, Jägerstätter stood as a steadfast and committed man of faith and a model for the virtues of conscientious objection in the Christian tradition.

While Jägerstätter's life and courageous stand against Hitler and National Socialism are well known and documented, the connections between his reading of scripture, his understanding of the way of the cross, and his conscientious objection have not been sufficiently explored by scholars. In his letters and writings, Jägerstätter repeatedly appealed to scripture's call for the Christian to bear his or her cross and endure suffering, which he then used to support his stand as a conscientious objector to the Nazi regime. In one form or another, he refers to bearing the cross dozens of times in his letters and writings to emphasize the Christian's call to obedience and discipleship to the glory of God. This article will examine his understanding of the cruciform life in the Greater German Reich, as one who conscientiously traveled the way of the cross. Jägerstätter used scripture as authoritative above other sources of knowledge or guidance—such as church hierarchy or tradition, experience, and feeling—to see the evil of National Socialism with clarity of vision; to prioritize his responsibilities to God, family, community, and the state; and to refine his conscience as a subject of the Greater German Reich.

1. On Bearing the Cross

Woven throughout Jägerstätter's writings are references Christ's call to his followers to walk in the way of the cross. Jägerstätter refers to Christ's calling so as to give encouragement and inspire resolve (in himself and others) in times of hardship. As recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said to his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?" (Matthew 16:24–26)³. This is a gospel text that Jägerstätter refers to, directly and indirectly, literally dozens of times throughout his letters and writings. It is a central theme in his reflections.

Jägerstätter spoke of the way of the cross in various ways, such as "carrying" or "bearing" one's cross in obedience to Christ. For example, well before the war and his imprisonment, he gave his godson Franz Huber wise words to live by in a letter dated

1935. Franz Huber was Jägerstätter's younger cousin. Jägerstätter wrote this letter, as was customary, when Franz Huber finished his education (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 145). He ended his letter with this admonition and encouragement:

The most courageous and best Christians can and will fall, but they will not remain in the filth of sin. Rather, they will get themselves up and receive the fresh power of the sacraments of penance and the altar, and so that they will move toward their goal. Even if terrifying days come over us, if we believers are pressed down with the burden of suffering, then we shall recall that God invites none of us to carry a cross that is too difficult for us to bear.

Consider two things. From where? To where?

Then your life will have its proper meaning.

Whoever goes on a journey without a goal

Wanders poor and weary.

Whoever lives life without a goal

Has flourished in vain. (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 149)

The Christian is (or ought) to be moving in a direction, the way of the cross, and this direction is toward a "goal," God's will for their lives. For Jägerstätter, this is the Christian's fundamental orientation. The cross is the needle on the compass, so to speak. It tells the Christian where to go.

In bearing the cross, one follows the way of the cross. In bearing the cross, one does not follow one's own ambitions, desires, and goals, but rather, one denies himself and follows after Christ. Thus, in bearing the cross, the Christian truly becomes a Christ-follower, a disciple of Christ. In short, bearing one's cross is about obedience to God. Jägerstätter's list of "What every Christian should know" opens with a statement of obedience. This list was written sometime between May and August 1943, just before his execution. The first point is as follows: "St. Joseph is a magnificent model of silent and prompt obedience. We recognize true Christians less by their words than by their actions (See Matt 1:1:18)" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 215). Likewise, number 15 on the list also speaks to the foundational nature of obedience to the Christian life: "Authentic spirituality comes about not by talking about God, but by living according to God's command. Without this obedience, even wonderful acts mean nothing (See Matt. 7:21ff.)" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 215). This way of the cross, this path of obedience, is one the Christian may have to walk alone, without company or guidance. The majority, Jägerstätter wrote, "are usually timid about making sacrifices, and they should not entrust themselves to leaders whose actions differ from their words (See Matt 7:15ff)" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 215). These were his thoughts as he awaited the guillotine. He knew what it meant to walk alone, without company and without the guidance of leaders who were true to their word. Jägerstätter clearly had in mind a pattern of living based upon discipleship, obeying the call of Christ, wherever that may lead.

Jägerstätter's wife Franziska encouraged him—indeed, they encouraged each other—to walk in the way of the cross. This is especially evident in the last six months of Jägerstätter's imprisonment. For example, on 21 March 1943, Franziska wrote to her husband, "Dear husband, our girls are full of hope for your return soon, and I would rejoice with them if it would be God's will to include you again soon in our family circle. However, one does not know God's eternal puzzles, and one must accept everything with gratitude that God sends us. The loving God will not send us a cross and more suffering than we can bear. He will lead us so that we do not forget him . . ." (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 89). Just a couple weeks later on 4 April 1943, Franz wrote back, "Seeing you again would clearly bring me great joy. Yet I would like to advise you to wait for a while. Dearest wife, we now patiently carry our crosses farther until God will take them from us" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 95). A week later, on 11 April 1943, he wrote in another letter, "The words which Christ said are true: my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light [see Matt. 11:30]. I see my cross and suffering in relation to the suffering of other people, I must say to myself that God

has laid on me one of the smallest crosses" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 98). The week after that, he made a fascinating comment that the cross Christians must bear "will never become as hard and difficult as that which Satan often lays on his followers. How many people break under this burden and then take their own lives!" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 100). Jägerstätter thoughtfully considered not just the cost of following Christ in obedience but what would happen if he did not follow. Another burden would be placed upon him, one that Satan would give. Far better, he argued, that we accept Christ's call to bear the cross that God has given us, for it will never be more than we can bear.

This language of bearing one's cross is a recurring theme that reveals Jägerstätter's motivations and orientation: he meant to follow after Christ, to obey Christ's command to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow him. This spiritual orientation enabled Jägerstätter to see more clearly paths that might deviate from the way of the cross.

2. Breaking Free of Social Control

The work of Gordon Zahn is helpful to understand how Jägerstätter was able to break free from Nazi social controls to bear his cross in obedience to Christ. Zahn's classic work *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars* illuminates various levels of social control that encouraged and compelled individuals to align themselves with Nazi policies and war aims. At the first level, Zahn argues, "The Nazi totalitarian state formally required such behavior (i.e., conformity to Nazi demands) and enforced its requirements by exercising (or threatening to exercise) its power to inflict the penalties of imprisonment and even death for any overt refusal to conform."⁴ At a second level, one's fellow citizens and neighbors made the same demands, rewarding compliance with approval and honor, or condemning the refusal to comply with dishonor and exclusion. At a third level, the individual himself felt compelled to conform to Nazi demands because of his "emotional attachments to *Volk*, *Vaterland*, and *Heimat*" (nation, fatherland, and home). If he refused to do his duty, he felt guilt and shame (Zahn 1962, p. 177). Furthermore, at a fourth level, the individual would feel compelled to conform to Nazi demands so as to lighten the burden on those friends, family, and countrymen who were serving in the war and faced danger; by refusing to serve, the individual placed a greater burden on those he loved and was duty-bound to protect and serve. At the fifth and last level, the individual would confront on all around him "the external controls and war- and duty-supporting symbols" of the Nazi totalitarian state that aligned the identity of the people to the survival and flourishing of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.⁵ If the state were destroyed, so would the people be destroyed. This is one reason why Jägerstätter on numerous occasions aimed to fight against the Nazi conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. He used Scripture to loosen these social controls and undermine Nazi claims on the individual.

Jägerstätter condemned the Nazi concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the national community of Aryans based on race, a notion that fractured the Church into racial groups. For example, during his initial military training, Jägerstätter wrote to his wife on 1 November 1940 that a fellow soldier stole two pairs of his socks, which he had hung up on the furnace to dry. "If one leaves something laying around and comes back an hour later, it is gone," he said. "One must have luck to get back what he left out. Apparently this is part of being a *Volk* community" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 24). The Nazi sense of racial community was absurd. Just a month later, in a letter dated 9 December 1940, he sarcastically joked that we would build the *Volksgemeinschaft* by sharing among his comrades cookies and a pack of cigarettes he received from a Women's Association care package (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 47). He called the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* a "hodge-podge" that was purportedly racially "pure," (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 178) and that many people belong to it "without holding its convictions simply in order to receive its earthly benefits" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 202). Historians have argued that many Germans benefited materially from the Nazi persecution of the Jews, through goods purchased at severe discounts, items looted, and the liquidation and purchase of Jewish businesses and apartments (Dean et al. 2007; Dean 2008).

One cannot claim membership in the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*, Jägerstätter argued, and yet still be faithful to Christ and his Church. The Church and the *Volkegemeinschaft* are mutually exclusive; they have different values between them. In a notebook dated 1942, Jägerstätter wrote, “The people must face a choice: either membership in the N.S. *Volk* community along with donations to the red [Nazi collection] containers is necessary for our sanctification as Catholics, or it is an obstacle to it” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 173). One cannot support both in good faith. Indeed, in this same notebook, Jägerstätter explicitly calls the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* an “anti-Christian *Volk* community” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 178).

More to the point, Jägerstätter appealed to Scripture to undermine the Nazi concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, to loosen its bonds on the Christian, by affirming that all Christians belong to Church—a community (*Gemeinde*) that transcends national borders, ethnicities, languages, geography, social and economic hierarchies, and all other boundaries in human society. In his list, “What Every Christian Should Know,” at number 127, he cited Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 4:1–16, which states in part,

I [Paul], therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1–6)

Jägerstätter reflected on this passage as it related to the individual under Nazi subjugation. He wrote, “Christ, enthroned in heaven, is not far from us nor a stranger to us. He as our head and we as his members form one completely mysterious reality, the mystical body of Christ, the church. In the church, Christ is fully acknowledged as the Savior and draws the church’s members into the divine life which flows from Christ, the head” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 225). Christians are unified with Christ, and he gives them life abundant. He elaborated on this idea in number 137 of the same document, stating that every Christian in the body of Christ will have to suffer, as Christ suffered, and yet the mystical body of Christ “will be fully realized when the suffering and struggling church is entirely transformed into the triumphing church. Out of this profound mystical suffering arises the joy of suffering for others” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 226). The Church, not the *Volksgemeinschaft*, is the true community to which the Christian belongs.

3. Insight into Nazism as an Evil

Jägerstätter’s faith and his commitment to the way of the cross gave him an unusually clear sense of the nature of National Socialism and the Nazi regime and the evil they perpetrated in the world. His letters and writings indicate that he despised National Socialism as the war came closer to home. In fact, the evidence indicates that Jägerstätter never supported the National Socialists because of their apparent incompatibility with Christianity.

One should bear in mind that Hitler and the Nazis did not keep their aggressive militarism and racism secret. Hitler’s manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925 and 1926, clearly lays out for all to see his dreams for *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German people in the east. He dreamed of a *Großdeutschland* (Greater Germany), a nation in which all ethnic Germans would be united in one state to dominate central and eastern Europe. Upon his appointment as Chancellor, Hitler began the military rebuilding of Germany’s armed forces in 1935, initiated the *Anschluß* with Austria in 1938, negotiated the annexation of the Sudetenland in September 1938 with Britain, France, and Italy, and, finally, began the invasion of Poland in September 1939, which led to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Jägerstätter understood the significance of what had happened to his country, and he was deeply disappointed with the many Austrians who welcomed the *Anschluß* and Nazi rule. He was particularly frustrated by the Austrian Catholic leadership (Zahn 1964, p. 47). He wrote, “I believe that what took place in the spring of 1938 was not much different from that Maundy Thursday nineteen-hundred years ago when the Jewish crowd

was given a free choice between the innocent Savior and the criminal Barabbas.”⁶ The Catholic leadership chose to side with Hitler as an unrepentant malefactor rather than the conservative and pro-Catholic Fatherland Front led by Kurt Schuschnigg. Jägerstätter refused to cast a “Ja” vote for the plebiscite affirming the Anschluss, even though his friends and priest counseled him to do so, as his vote would reveal his opposition to the Nazis (Zahn 1964, p. 47). Moreover, they argued, it was futile to resist the Nazi takeover (Zahn 1964, p. 47).

His steadfast resistance to the Nazi regime and its ideology was based on his conviction that the National Socialist regime was evil and that it perpetrated evil in the world, including against the Church. Because of these reasons, Jägerstätter could in no way support the regime or advance its ideology or goals in any way whatsoever. He referred to Nazi ideology as clearly incompatible with Christianity. Jägerstätter wrote in a notebook in prison in March 1943, likely in preparation for explaining his position to others, including his interrogators, “How can someone combine being a soldier of Christ and also being a soldier of the N.S. revolution, simultaneously fighting for the victory of Christ and his church and also for the victory of National Socialism?” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 209). This is a question he asked repeatedly in his notes from prison. (Jägerstätter 2009, pp. 199, 208). Life as a disciple of Christ demands that one deny himself, pick his cross, and follow—this is the way of the cross. One cannot follow Christ in this manner and also follow the Nazi’s messiah.

It is clearly apparent from Jägerstätter’s writings that he viewed National Socialism as a belief system in competition with Christianity (Zahn 1964, p. 125). Historians such as Emilio Gentile and Michael Burleigh have argued that National Socialism was a kind of political religion, an ideology that competed with Christianity, one that demanded the whole person, as Christianity does, one that offered new savior, system of values, liturgies, rituals, and eschatological hope for the “Aryan” race (Burleigh 2000a, 2000b; Gentile 2000, 2004). In short, Nazism offered a race-based gospel for “Aryans” in central Europe. Many devout Christians, like Jägerstätter, perceived the incompatibility between National Socialism and Christianity (Cochrane 1962, p. 241; Schilling 1966, p. 22). Even Nazis argued for the incompatibility. The historian Doris Bergen contends that even most “hard core Nazis leaders”—including Martin Bormann, Heinrich Himmler, and Adolf Hitler—were convinced of a fundamental opposition between Christianity and National Socialism (Bergen 1996, p. 1).

Jägerstätter could not understand how Christians could side with Nazis and even become ardent Nazis, given what he perceived as the complete incompatibility of Christianity and Nazism. In a note he wrote on the back of a letter from his priest, Pastor Karobath, while in prison awaiting execution sometime in July or August 1943, he said, “I believe that if someone had said to us six years ago that in a few years almost all of us Catholics in Austria would be undertaking terrible acts for National Socialism—acts which at that time were illegal for us in Austria—this someone would have been regarded as the greatest fool in the world. Yet today the fools are those who do not do these things. So do the times change” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 242). Jägerstätter wondered how it was possible for Christians in good faith to serve the Nazi regime. He even appealed to Pope Pius XI’s judgment on National Socialism in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* (*With Burning Concern*) in 1937. Jägerstätter wrote in his prison notebook in 1942, “I believe that many people have forgotten what the Holy Father said about National Socialism in his encyclical many years ago, namely, that National Socialism is even more dangerous than Communism” (Jägerstätter 2009, pp. 189–90). But how so?

Jägerstätter referred to Adolf Hitler as someone who actively threatened the churches. On a small letter card used for notes, Jägerstätter argued, “There exists no greater crime than intentionally ruining or bringing to ruin the faith of children and adults. If someone were capable of destroying all of the world’s churches—which could of course be rebuilt—he would have undertaken a crime less serious than if he were capable of turning people from their faith so that they were lost for all eternity. In fact, someone is now accomplishing

effective blows against us, as a result of which many believers are falling aside" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 239). There is no doubt to whom he is referring: Adolf Hitler. But it is unclear from this passage precisely how Hitler is "turning people from their faith." Hitler actively led people away from the way of the cross. One could certainly point to his attempted takeover of the German Protestant churches by establishing the Reichskirche (Reich's Church) and placing a hand-chosen bishop, Ludwig Müller, to lead it. One could also point to Hitler's first major foreign relations coup in agreeing to the Reichskonkordat of 1933 with the Roman Catholic Church, a treaty between Nazi Germany and the Vatican. Jägerstätter perceived that Hitler was leading Christians away from the Christian faith and down the road of perdition.

The bottom line is that Jägerstätter believed that his participation in the war in the service of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany would bring further evil into the world. In a note entitled "A Just or Unjust War?," dated between December 1941 and January 1943, he asked rhetorically, "Is there anything more evil than when I am required to murder and rob people who are defending their homeland only so that I might help an anti-religious power attain victory and then be able to establish a world empire with belief in God or, to be more accurate, with no belief in God?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 197). He simply refused to believe that God would call him to serve a government that would foster such evil in the world.

The question his critics put to him was, Why couldn't he fight for the greater German state and not the National Socialist Party? Jägerstätter addressed this criticism directly in a short essay written in 1942 entitled "War or Revolution?" Fighting for Hitler and the Nazi state was an impossibility, he asserted. "It is as though I were to try to fight for God the Father but not for the Son or the Holy Spirit. The German state and the N.S. Party are now two inseparable realities" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 190). The state became intertwined with the party and its ideology. To fight for the state would be to fight to advance National Socialism in Europe and the Nazi racial war aims. He refused to serve a state that demanded he commit evil acts. In "War and Revolution?," he wrote, "I can never and shall never believe that we Catholics must make ourselves available to do the work of the most evil and dangerous anti-Christian power that has ever existed" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 190). The Nazi regime was not just non-Christian, or against certain Christian tenets, but it was actively and fundamentally anti-Christian, working to destroy the Church.

Jägerstätter engaged with scripture to counter the argument that Christians should obey the government no matter what it asks of their citizens. One must keep in mind that religious and secular values in the Greater German Reich were in many ways compatible. As Bergman argues, "self-sacrifice, loyalty, obedience, duty, and honor were sacred values for the German Catholic citizen as both German *and* Catholic, as both patriot *and* believer (Bergman 2013, p. 88).⁷ Yet Jägerstätter understood that the way of the cross may run counter to his society's demands. In his short essay from 1942 entitled "War or Revolution?," he paraphrased the argument others often made to him, that "Christ commanded us that we have to obey a secular government, even if it is not Christian" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 190). The scripture often used to support such a contention is Mark 12:17, which states in part, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Jägerstätter responded by stating, "But I do not believe that Christ said that we must obey a state when it commands us to do bad things" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 190). He does not cite a specific verse but seems to provide a sensible and verifiable overview of Christ's teachings on the Christian's relation to the state. Nowhere in scripture does Christ command his followers to do evil in the service of the state.

Moreover, Jägerstätter believed that he would likely die in the war if he chose to serve. So, why not refuse and die for a righteous reason? Why go to war for Nazi Germany, imperil his soul, and likely get killed anyway, rather than stand in faith for God and be executed? This was his rationale. He would die regardless—so at least he had an option as to how and why he would die. As Gordon Zahn argues, "He loved Austria intensely, and he absolutely refused to serve the oppressor of his country. He always knew and said that he would be executed, but he preferred to die this way than to do evil to others and die

anyway on the battle front" (Zahn 1964, p. 80). He had a choice to make, and he refused to have any part in serving Hitler's regime.

4. Responsibility

Jägerstätter's commitment to the way of the cross not only gave him a clear perspective of evil, but he prioritized his responsibilities accordingly. He was committed to living faithfully in light of what he knew to be true. He took ultimate responsibility for his own actions in walking the way of the cross, believing that he would one day give an account to God. Jägerstätter believed that no matter what one's position or role in life is, no matter what society asks, the individual must give an account of his or her actions. One cannot slough off responsibility for acts done or left undone onto another party, regardless of what the social expectations or norms may be.

Yet one of the most common responses to Jägerstätter's intransigence in his conscientious objection was that the soldier was not responsible for the decisions of his leaders. The soldier's duty, so he was told, was to serve his country and obey the chain of command. The military and society more generally could not function otherwise. Moreover, Christians were called to live in subjection to their governments (Romans 13:1). Therefore, the argument went, he should have no qualms about serving the German military. On the contrary, he should take pride in service to the state and Hitler, knowing that he was serving his community, nation, and *Volkgenossen* (national comrades).

However, Jägerstätter argued that he could not hand over his moral responsibility to Hitler or any other person. There was no one who could answer to God for his actions except he himself. Jägerstätter was ultimately responsible for his own moral choices (Zahn 1964, p. 105). This was part of the burden of carrying his cross—he bore the weight of his own actions. This perspective is clearly evident in a dream he had in 1938 that made a lasting impression upon him, well before he was called to serve in Hitler's war. In this dream, he saw a train with numerous compartments, and as the train stopped, youth boarded ready to go on a journey. Then, he heard a voice saying, "This train is going to hell." After waking and thinking about the dream, he understood that "the train represents the N.S. Volk community and everything for which it sacrifices and struggles" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 173). The compartments were all the various offices and programs designed by the party to entice the people to support it, such as the Hitler Youth and the Winter Relief. The youth were boarding the train thinking that the future was bright and their state wanted the best for them. Little did they know that the train was headed on a one-way trip to hell.

The date of this dream has been disputed among scholars. Jim Forest and Erna Putz assert that Jägerstätter had this dream in January 1938, while Gordon Zahn argues it was later that year in the summer, after the Anschluss in March (Jägerstätter 2009, pp. xvii, 172). The handwriting in the document, which Jägerstätter wrote in 1942, does not clarify the issue (Bergman 2013, p. 80). Yet the historical record indicates that, after the plebiscite on 10 April 1938, all youth between ten and 18 were required to sign up for the Hitler Youth (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 173). It was after this when Jägerstätter most likely read news reports of 150,000 Austrians joining the Hitler Youth, which then informed his dream of youth boarding the train to hell (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 173). Zahn's interpretation is more convincing as he links the dream to the historical event just prior.

In any case, the dream illustrated for Jägerstätter that the individual had the responsibility to choose the train they boarded. The individual had the responsibility to refuse to board that train to hell, even though it looked like fun at first glance. The conductor was taking that train to a certain destination, but it was the individual's choice to climb aboard or wait for a better train to an altogether different destination.

An elemental aspect of Jägerstätter's journey on the way of the cross was his personal responsibility in relation to God, to remain in alignment with what is good and true. He could not lie—to himself, his family, his community, or nation. This was one reason why he refused to take the Wehrmacht oath of unconditional allegiance to Hitler. He could not utter words that were out of alignment with his conscience and his desire to walk righteously

with God. Words matter. Moreover, as Robert Krieg has argued, Jägerstätter anticipated *Gaudium et Spes* in asserting that the “ethical fiber of the Reich’s soldiers” was endangered because they took a sacred oath and then were “required to rob and kill noncombatants” (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxv). One could not try to be a good person while at the same time serving evil ends, even if only trying to fulfill one’s duty to the state.

Jägerstätter directly connected the refusal to lie with his responsibility to live a good life before God. It is an absurdity to think one can live a lie and still walk with the God of truth. The incongruity of one’s faith and actions is blatant hypocrisy. He argued,

One often hears it said these days: ‘It’s all right for you to do this or that with an untroubled mind: the responsibility for what happens rests with someone else.’ And in this way responsibility is passed on from one man to another. No one wants to accept responsibility for anything. Does this mean that when human judgement is finally passed on all the crimes and horrors being committed at this very time that one or two individuals must do penance for them all someday?⁸

The absurdity of such a situation is obvious. Each man is responsible for his own actions and inactions—this is how the world operates. Moreover, Jägerstätter believed that he had to live in the truth. In a short essay he wrote sometime in July or August 1943, just before his execution, he argued,

I am of the mind that it is best that I tell the truth, even if it costs me my life: I cannot obey [the oath] in all of its aspects . . .

Neither God nor the church gives a commandment requiring that we must—under the burden of sin—commit ourselves in an oath to obey [human] authorities in all matters. So do not have a heavy heart when others declare that I am [a] sinner. (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 236)

Walking the way of the cross demanded that he live by the truth, in all aspects. If truth is from God, then walking by the truth can only lead ultimately to the good of the soul. Yet some called Jägerstätter a sinner or a criminal because he would not submit to the Nazi government, his governing authority, and would not serve the state in its need. His stance against the government contradicted long-standing “church teachings, especially since the Congress of Vienna (September 1814–June 1815),” which “stressed obedience to civil authorities as well as to ecclesiastical authorities. As a result, it was widely assumed that civil disobedience was sinful.”⁹ But here Jägerstätter acknowledged the Christian’s limited submission to the governing authorities.

The limits of the Christian’s submission to the state are worth exploring for a moment. The key text often used to assert obedience to the state is Romans 13, in which the apostle Paul wrote,

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct but to bad. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive its approval, for it is God’s agent for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the agent of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer.

Jägerstätter’s understanding of the citizen’s obedience to the state reflects a nuanced reading of this text. The apostle Paul assumes that the ruler is “not a terror to good conduct but to bad.” But what happens when the ruler is “a terror to good conduct” and an instigator of bad conduct, such as in Nazi Germany? Jägerstätter read between the lines, as it were, and argued that one is not morally bound to obey a ruler who is “a terror to good conduct.” One does not sin by refusing to submit to an evil ruler. In fact, one’s defiance can demonstrate to others the evil nature of the regime. Indeed, as Zahn argues, the significance of Jägerstätter’s position is that “no matter how hopeless the situation or seemingly futile the effort, the

Christian need not and must not despair. Instead, the believer can and *should* be prepared to accept and assert moral responsibility for his or her actions . . . If nothing else . . . it is always possible to save one's own soul *and perhaps some others as well* by bearing individual witness against evil (emphasis in original)" (Zahn 1964, p. ii). One's conscientious objection bears witness to evil in the world, that others may beware.

5. On the Conscience

Jägerstätter's commitment to walk the way of the cross gave him keen insights into the evil of National Socialism and Hitler's regime and a profound sense of responsibility to live rightly before God in this world. But it also enabled him to maintain a sensitive and healthy conscience in the Greater German Reich. He warned against allowing a worldly authority to entangle a person's conscience. In a notebook dated May–August 1943, shortly before his death, he wrote, "No earthly authority has the right to enslave a person's conscience. God's rights surpass the rights of human beings" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 220). The conscience cannot be bound by earthly powers. One's primary allegiance is to God alone.

One way Jägerstätter evaluated his conscience was through consistent self-evaluation. Before he was arrested and imprisoned, he wrote in a notebook dated summer 1941 to winter 1942, "Each day God sends us numerous small tests such as in patience, in humility, in love of neighbor, and so forth. For this reason, at the end of each day our conscience must investigate and decide which of the tests we answered incorrectly or poorly. When we have failed, we must repent of our sins and failings and resolve to do better the next day on the new tests" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 162). This is one way he faithfully stayed on the straight and narrow way of the cross. He was willing to critically examine his life, his failures and mistakes, to grow in wisdom and love for his neighbors.

Those who opposed his stance in one form or another would often argue with Jägerstätter, stating that he had failed to properly prioritize his commitments. Sitting in a Berlin prison cell with his hands in chains, waiting for his death sentence to be carried out, he responded to this claim through a series of questions meant to demonstrate that one must always be obedient to God, first and foremost. He wrote,

They always want to prick my conscience concerning my responsibilities for my wife and children. Is the action that someone does somehow morally better because this person is married and has children? Or is the action better or worse because thousands of other Catholics are doing it? Has smoking a cigarette also become a virtue because thousands of Catholics are doing it? Is someone permitted to lie in taking an oath just because he has a wife and children? Did not Christ himself say that whoever loves wife, mother and children more than me is not worthy of me? (see Luke 14:26). On what basis do we ask God for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit if we should adhere to blind obedience in any case? (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 243)

He explicitly referenced one of Jesus' most difficult teachings to underscore how difficult walking the way of the cross is for the Christian. Disciples of Christ are called to holiness, to take up their cross and follow him, wherever he may lead. One's role or situation in life does not dictate ethics.

Moreover, it is clear from Jägerstätter's writings that his position as a husband and father mandated that he take special care to ensure a healthy conscience. "If a father evaluates things and acts according to the fundamental convictions of the Catholic faith, he can think that, as a matter of conscience, he must occasionally give an evaluation and judgment [concerning National Socialism] that differs from what some pastors are currently telling their parishioners. Is a father as priest allowed to do this for his family and friends?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 209). Jägerstätter's understanding of his role as a "father as priest" compelled him to take responsibility for his own conscience, knowing that he was a model for his wife and children. They would be looking to him as the leader of the family for how to engage with the Nazi regime and its values. His message to them as a priest was that a Christian can have nothing to do with National Socialism.

Jägerstätter's prison letters and writings demonstrate the process through which he questioned himself and his motives, as well as refined his conscience. Specifically, he repeatedly asked himself pointed questions that he felt compelled to truthfully answer. For example, in a short essay written sometime between December 1941 and January 1943, before he was called to wartime service, he posed key questions starkly, perhaps knowing that he would be called to give an answer for his position. He wrote, "What can it benefit me if I obey and execute the evil orders of the Führer and, in doing so, commit no sin but also am not able to attain perfection?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 197). He answers his question with more questions. "How can people today declare many men and women of earlier times to be holy—men and women who put their lives at risk—when most of these men and women would have refused to carry out the evil orders that are now required of us?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 197). The only answer he could find to these questions was to refuse to serve in the German military to advance Hitler's war.

Jägerstätter's rigorous self-examination helps to explain his intractable position, his courageous stand, knowing it meant death at the hands of the Nazi totalitarian state. He realized that the times called for men and women with strong and healthy consciences, or they risked a European-wide collapse. Between the summer of 1941 and the winter of 1942, and thus well before he was imprisoned for refusing to serve, he wrote a short essay addressed to his family entitled "A Brief Reflection on the Current Era." He wrote that

A great stream has engulfed us. Now all of us German-speaking Catholics have to swim and struggle in this stream regardless of whether we jumped into it on our own or whether others pulled us into it . . . Getting out of the stream will be more difficult for those who jumped into it and also pulled others into it. Their bad consciences have weakened their spiritual strength, and without such strength they will soon give up their struggle against the waves. These people may stay longer in the water, too, because they possess not much strength to pull themselves from the waves, and they will not be quickly thrown a life-saver from the shore. They may eventually be pulled under the waves and washed up dead on the shore. (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 170)

Only the strong can pull out the drowning, but the rescuer could be dragged under trying to help. The rescuer must be willing to risk the danger to help save others overwhelmed by the "great stream" that had engulfed the German lands. The powerful metaphor of the "great stream" is not the Second World War itself but the ideology of National Socialism that emerged in Bavaria in the early 1920s to sweep throughout Germany and the German-speaking lands in the subsequent decades. The struggle is a spiritual one that has manifested in a world war. One cannot imagine a more powerful "stream" to escape.

Much has been made of Jägerstätter's apparent indication while in prison that he was willing to compromise his conscience and serve in the Wehrmacht in a non-combat role as a medic. Jägerstätter wrote to his wife on 11 March 1943, "I also want to say that I am ready to serve as a military medic, for in this work a person can actually do good and exercise Christian love of neighbor in concrete ways. Doing this would not disturb my conscience. I would also receive punishment [by doing this work]. It would resolve everything, if God wills it. We would see each other again in this world" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 86). Franziska supported this decision, knowing he would be serving God as a medic (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 86). One may assert that Jägerstätter compromised his position in being open to serving in the German Wehrmacht as a medic because he would still be serving Hitler, the National Socialist regime, and Nazi racial war aims. By rendering aid to injured German soldiers on the battlefield, even enabling some of them to return to the battlefield to continue fighting against the Allies and prolonging the war, he would give his life and energy to the Nazi cause. While this criticism is understandable, I would argue it is an unfair critique of a man who is trying to follow his conscience, who has already demonstrated his courage in standing up to Nazi aggression, and who also wants to serve and protect his wife and family.

But this passage in Jägerstätter's writings has been debated among historians. While Jim Forest has argued that the Nazi authorities did not approve Jägerstätter to serve as a medic and so avoid execution (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxii), Zahn contends Jägerstätter voiced this option to his wife as an option but never followed through in committing to this decision (Zahn 1964, pp. 64–65). As Zahn notes, his letters do not mention the prospect of serving as a medic again, and by July 1943, it appears that he dropped the possibility. It appears also that Jägerstätter could have appealed for medic duty up to the morning of his execution on August 9 to avoid the judgement (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxiv). However, the records indicate that he did not pursue this course of action. In any case, the main problem that Jägerstätter had to overcome was taking the oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler. As he responded to his defense lawyer, "I cannot and may not take an oath in favor of a government that is fighting an unjust war" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxiv). His conscience simply would not allow him to align with the values and aims of the Nazi state.

It appears that Jägerstätter was very careful to maintain a healthy conscience through the spiritual practice of Bible study and reflection. He viewed Bible study and reflection as essential to the spiritual formation of the Christian as he or she traveled the way of the cross. In his list of truths that every Christian should know, written in 1943, he stated, "In the Bible God himself speaks to us and gives our hope an unshakeable foundation. If all the books written by human authors would have nothing more to say to us, our souls would still be able to direct themselves to God's word" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 221). Scripture is the individual's primary source of authority in the life of faith. Moreover, it is a stable and sure source of strength and hope, as Jägerstätter affirmed in his last days.¹⁰ Later in the same list, he reflected on the importance of scripture for the maturation of the spiritual life. He referenced Hebrews 2:1–4, as critical to his view. The passage states,

Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message declared through angels proved valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was confirmed for us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

The verses underscore the idea that Christian belief is inextricably tied to holy living and that Christians must ensure they remain faithful to the unadulterated gospel message as preserved in scripture, lest they "drift away," as Jägerstätter no doubt believed true of many Christians living as subjects in the Greater German Reich (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 170). In reflection on this passage, Jägerstätter wrote a lesson for all Christians to remember: "The great significance of the Bible for the configuration of the Christian life—for the formation of our conscience, will, and whole person—comes to light in these words. It should not happen, therefore, that someone possesses an entire series of spiritual books, but does not possess the 'book of books' [i.e., the Bible] in which God speaks to human beings" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 228). Belief in the gospel as expressed and preserved in scripture is elemental to Christian spiritual formation and the refinement of the conscience. Jägerstätter presents scripture as a necessary and trustworthy guide to keep one true to the way of the cross.

6. Conclusions

Jägerstätter was an ordinary man who demonstrated extraordinary strength of character and resolve as he stood up against the Nazi regime and its war of aggression in Europe. Typically, a man who refused to fight could be called a coward or shirker, one who refused to bear the burden his fellow male citizens had to carry, yet Jägerstätter was so obviously not a coward or shirker, but a man of conviction and fortitude. Even immediately after his execution and after the war, the people of St. Radegund could only fault him for his religious fervor, not his character (Zahn 1964, pp. 136–59). He could not be called a coward or sinner for his position.

After the war, his story posed a fundamental question: What is to be done with such men during wartime? Should they be imprisoned by states as criminals or condemned by the church as sinners? Should they be shunned as cowards and shirkers? Such condemnations could not reasonably be applied Franz Jägerstätter, a man who conscientiously carried his cross and followed Christ, as best he understood. The world had to make room for conscientious objectors like Jägerstätter, to allow for the possibility that they may indeed be right, and that our societies would be better off respecting their freedom of conscience rather than executing them as criminals and traitors.

Jägerstätter's courage and conviction inspires those who learn of his story to ask: Why was he able to stand apart, to refuse to serve the German military and Nazi war aims? How was he able to stand alone when so many of his countrymen took a different course, each doing what he thought was his duty? Jägerstätter had the same education as many male Austrian farmers, and he was brought up in the same Catholic church, receiving the same catechism, as his countrymen. While this article cannot provide a detailed answer as to what set Jägerstätter apart, given its constraints, but by way of conclusion I would emphasize a few key points about his life and perspective.

First, he was deeply concerned with living a true Christian life, that is, a life marked by discipleship to Christ. This meant never giving in to the temptation to lie, to pretend that fighting for the Nazi cause could be consonant with his Christian faith. In short, his letters and writings indicate a deep desire to remain faithful and obedient to what he understood Christ called him to. Obedience to God's commands was critical to living a true Christian life, to following the way of the cross.

Second, Jägerstätter developed a life of devotion that, it appears, helped orient his primary allegiance away from the state and to God. He read Scripture daily, often at night before bed. It has been argued that he read the New Testament "countless times and thought long and hard about its stories and teachings" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xxv). He also regularly received Communion, sometimes daily (Zahn 1964, p. 156; Fried 1947, p. 82). He had a disciplined prayer life. He mentioned in his letters a routine of "daily prayers" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 89). He said, "The spirit of prayer must live in us, even when we are not able to undertake special prayers because of our work. Then work as worship becomes our prayer" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 277). Furthermore, he faithfully served his community of faith as sexton at his local church, in which his responsibilities ranged from grounds management, "assisting at daily Mass, and helping arrange baptisms, weddings, and funerals" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. xvii). He expressed religious devotion inwardly through the traditional spiritual disciplines such as prayer, confession, and fasting, but also outwardly through service and publicly bearing witness to God's truth.

Third, while a farmer with an elementary education, he carefully examined his position with intellectual rigor so that he gained confidence in his position and could effectively argue his case before neighbors, priests, religious authorities, and the German judges. In short, he was a man of conviction based on faith and reason. Throughout his writings from prison, he would pose questions to reveal the irrationality of a Christian fighting for Hitler. Just a sampling of these questions reveals the power of this method of argument: "Who can simultaneously be a soldier for Christ and a soldier for National Socialism? Who can fight for the victory of Christ and his church and at the same time fight for the N.S. idea and its ultimate victory?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 199). The answer is obvious: No one can fight for both because the aims of Christ and the Nazis are opposed. Jägerstätter even wrote out a list of 11 questions about the inconsistencies of a Christian partnering with the National Socialist state or party, which he prepared in advance of his meeting with Bishop Joseph Fliesser of Linz in February 1943 (Bergman 2013, p. 82). He started with this question, "Who can and will answer these questions for me?" (Jägerstätter 2009, p. 207). No one, not even the bishop, could offer him convincing reasons to change his mind, and thus he grew more confident in his position (Bergman 2013, p. 83).

Jägerstätter remained steadfast in his journey on the way of the cross, and he listened to his conscience, even unto death. Pope Francis recently summarized Jägerstätter's

significance for the Church in a document for the EU Youth Conference, published on 11 July 2022. He said, “Despite cajoling and torture, Franz preferred to be killed than to kill. He considered the war totally unjustified. If all the young men called to arms had done as he did, Hitler would not have been able to carry out his diabolical plans. To triumph, evil needs accomplices” (Brockhaus 2022). Jägerstätter developed the practice of conscientious objection and contributed to Catholic Social Teaching not as a theologian sitting in an academic chair or as a priest in a cathedral or rural parish, but as a farmer-theologian and father as priest.

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Notes

- ¹ The most important works on the life and conscientious objection of Franz Jägerstätter are the following: Franz Jägerstätter. 2009. *Franz Jägerstätter: Letters and Writings from Prison*, edited by Erna Putz, translated with commentary by Robert A. Krieg, introduction by Jim Forest. New York: Orbis; Gordon Zahn. 1964. In *Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter* (Springfield, IL: Templegate); and Roger Bergman. 2013. “Toward a Sociology of Conscience: The Example of Franz Jägerstätter and the Legacy of Gordon Zahn,” *Journal of Peace and Justice Studies* 23, no. 2, 73–97.
- ² See Jägerstätter, *Letters and Writings from Prison*, xi.
- ³ All Scripture verses are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated or if they are quotations within other quotations.
- ⁴ This paragraph is based on Zahn *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars*, 177.
- ⁵ Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler’s Wars*, 177.
- ⁶ Quoted in Zahn, *In Solitary Witness*, 47.
- ⁷ Emphases in the original.
- ⁸ Quoted in Zahn, *In Solitary Witness*, 122.
- ⁹ See Jägerstätter, *Letters and Writings from Prison*, Letter from Fran to Franziska, 9 April 1943, and the notes from the editor, 98.
- ¹⁰ See editor’s notes in Jägerstätter, *Letters and Writings from Prison*, 221.

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