A CATHOLIC BRAIN TRUST

The History of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs, 1945–1965

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Introduction

What is an intellectual, and what does it mean to be a Catholic intellectual? Commentators on both questions are not lacking. Charles Kadushin, for example, saw intellectuals in terms of their elite status or their roles in the academic or literary landscape. Others portray the intellectual as upholding one or another political philosophy, such as liberalism, conservatism, or Marxist socialism. No one denies that Catholics can be intellectuals any more than other people of faith, although there is still the lingering canard that if one is religious, one cannot be an intellectual. To defend the notion that the adjective “Catholic” and the appellation “intellectual” can be uttered without shame, many have attempted to combine them at every occasion. This has prompted the perennial question, “What is a Catholic intellectual?” From James Hitchcock, among others, comes the reply that at present “there is no agreement as to what a Catholic intellectual is.”

My purpose in this book will be to narrow the inquiry into Catholic intellectual life by focusing on the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (CCICA), from its beginnings immediately following the Second World War to the year 1965. It is, in effect, the story of the rise and demise of organized Catholic intellectual life in America in the last half of the twentieth century. The members of this Commission over the years considered the scholarly enterprise important and
thought that it was possible to be productive intellectuals and practicing believers. If we observe the ways in which well-educated and culturally persuasive individuals have contributed both to dialogue within the Church and outside in the public square, not only will the issues they engaged become clearer, but also the role of the Catholic intellectual will become more understandable. By examining a relatively short period—from 1945 to 1965, which many historians take to represent a significant transformation in American society—we will be able to register some correlations between cultural and/or institutional shifts and the movements behind them.  

Just as the overall sociological picture of Catholics in America shifted from one of low educational and economic status to one of high educational attainment and prosperity during this period, so too, did Catholic intellectuals create the conditions that moved them out of the ghetto and into the mainstream, at least in some fields of inquiry. The two are connected, in part because Catholic colleges and universities grew in the war’s wake, and more and more Catholics took advantage of graduate education, so that by 1961 Catholics had achieved proportionate representation among all other graduate students. However, it proved to be a more difficult task to engage those newly trained to enter into the scholarly professions. One of the CCICA’s goals was to change that.

The CCICA is, above all, a Catholic organization, not merely because it was founded with ecclesiastical approval but also because the intimacy created by a Catholic ethos affected its work, built its membership, shaped its goals, and accounted for its achievements. No other organization of its kind existed to that point. Catholic learned societies had been in place for many years, but there was no mechanism to coordinate joint research between disciplines. The idea for the CCICA was not a new one, but it emerged as the first multidisciplinary group from the general flurry of such organizations that began to spring up at the turn of the century.  

Although these societies improved the quality of the work done by Catholics in the various disciplines and professions, some Catholic intellectuals writing before the war determined that social transformation was still an uphill climb. As Martin R. P. McGuire, a professor of
classics at the Catholic University of America wrote in 1939, “neither our national Catholic university nor the more important among our other Catholic institutions of higher learning have yet taken the places which, in proportion to our numbers and resources, they ought to occupy in the intellectual life of the country.” By the end of the Second World War, academics in Catholic institutions of higher learning began to address this perceived crisis.9

A series of meetings between key organizers led to a call for a united coalition of intellectuals from each of the respective Catholic academic societies and from the professions, who would, at last, change the attitude toward the Church and scholarship. This collaborative group became the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (CCICA), founded in 1946 at the Catholic University of America. Specifically, the CCICA sought to draw in the best and brightest Catholics in the country, in and out of academia, to aid in rebuilding the Church and the world after the catastrophic losses of the world war. The CCICA grew to become much more.

My goal here is to indicate how the Commission focused on certain issues of the day, such as the church-state question or, indeed, on what the Church should expect of its scholars. In its efforts to address such issues, both discretely and in more public forums, it provided a vehicle for understanding how leading Catholic thinkers shaped Catholic identity in the United States. As such, it concentrated on the Church's intellectual elites—professors, college presidents, writers, government officials, scientists, and artists—an exceedingly small segment of the Catholic population of the United States. These well-placed individuals influenced Catholic culture through various media, through educational institutions, and through their participation in ecclesial- or government-sanctioned activities. Additionally, the CCICA helped to transform Catholic campuses into “environments for learning” and influenced larger cultural and political questions up through the Second Vatican Council.

These intellectual elites promoted greater cohesion among Catholics and fostered greater prominence in the civil conversation of the day. My examination of these intellectuals is different from, though related to, the recent contributions of Patrick Allitt, Michael Cuneo,
Michelle Dillon, and Mary Jo Weaver, among others, who have sought to understand postwar political and social ideologies among Catholics in America. Their work addresses the development of so-called liberal or conservative Catholics. These studies are important, but they do not focus on the construction of Catholic intellectual identity as such. By presenting the CCICA’s story, I hope that a new understanding of Catholic identity will emerge from the period and show the CCICA’s impact on the Church and the postwar social order. Its members were Catholics in action, working from a “site” within that social order—the campus, the laboratory, the printed page. Catholicism during this period transformed its loyalties to certain customs, practices, and modes of thought. If my presentation is successful, it will show how Catholics—at least in the intellectual realm—moved from being rather defiant of the wider culture to becoming fully integrated and engaged with it.

The plan of the book indicates the scope of the CCICA’s activities. Chapter 1 gives the preliminary background to its founding in 1946; a threefold explanation is offered for the decision to create the Commission. Three individuals figure prominently in the organizing stage: Monsignor Frederick Hochwalt of the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Edward Stanford, O.S.A., the CCICA’s first executive director. Chapter 2 delves into the CCICA’s initial moments, a time for agenda-setting in both the short and long terms. A link to Pax Romana, the international Catholic organization, becomes important for outreach overseas. Chapter 3 examines the impact of the CCICA on intellectual development in the aftermath of the Second World War through two of its projects, namely, war relief for displaced scholars and active participation in United Nations affairs. While the former runs its course by 1949, the ongoing involvement of CCICA members in UNESCO and other UN bodies is tracked into the middle of the 1950s. In short, this chapter lays out the importance of the international dimension of the CCICA’s work.

One of the problems that particularly exercised the members during the period from 1948 to 1959 was the relationship between Church and state. This is addressed in chapter 4. Many of their national and local meetings generated an enormous amount of written material that
until now has not been taken into account in historical treatments of the subject. The reason for this is that many of the ideas that circulated were intended solely for the eyes of the membership, in part to allay public fears that an upstart group of Catholics was plotting a conspiracy.

The first eight years of the CCICA fell under the direction of Father Stanford, but, by 1953, Father William Rooney of Catholic University took the reins. He was quick to learn what an efficient man the CCICA had in Father Stanford, and he vowed to steer the organization with equal zeal. This he did until 1982, making him the longest serving executive director in the CCICA’s history. For Rooney and other CCICA members, the critical issues that assured excellence in various fields necessary for advancement called for a frank assessment of the present state of Catholic scholarship. In 1955 he called upon Monsignor John Tracy Ellis, whose paper at that year’s CCICA annual meeting continues to be much discussed to this day.11 Setting this benchmark and the discussion it generated is the subject of chapter 5.

One episode that illustrates the promise of scholarly collaboration across the disciplines was the proposal to update the Catholic Encyclopedia. This massive work was thought to be too apologetic in tone and needed to reflect current research and methodologies. An idea for the New Catholic Encyclopedia originated with the CCICA. However, the NCE was not a straightforward publishing venture. The details of its gestation and birth from 1955 to 1960 are given in chapter 6.

Chapter 7 is a broad attempt at analyzing the CCICA’s impact on campus culture in the United States. It touches on topics such as academic freedom, the Kirby seminars for younger scholars, and the Catholic registry of academics working in the United States from 1930 to 1960—a project that created dossiers on over 10,000 Catholic scholars, only to be abandoned by 1965. The role of the Catholic intellectual generally, and CCICA members in particular, may be gauged against the backdrop of the Second Vatican Council, which had concluded the previous year. Although their direct impact on the Council’s proceedings was negligible as a group, several individual members were instrumental in the development of the conciliar documents or proceedings; and one, Jacques Maritain, received a message from Pope Paul VI on
behalf of all intellectuals. The chapter concludes with a fundamental shift in the character of the CCICA that occurred in 1965, a termination of the Commission’s long affiliation with Pax Romana. An epilogue describes the CCICA’s next three decades in brief and offers some concluding remarks on the lessons learned from the history of this organization.

The archival holdings of a number of university and private institutional repositories on the Eastern Seaboard and in the Midwest provided most of the materials for this study. By piecing together the documentary evidence from these archives, I wrote not so much a chronological as an episodic narrative, that is, one that falls in and out of historical continuity because the lines of the narrative ran along different tracks. This was necessitated in part because no archive maintained a strict order, nor did any contain a full account of the actions of the Commission. Thus, it became a matter of linking the contents of several files in different archives in order to obtain some sense of what transpired at the CCICA’s headquarters and among its members across the nation.

The special problem of the CCICA archive at the Catholic University of America also raised methodological concerns. This archive has not been catalogued. The contents have passed through the hands of several executive directors, who maintained their own filing systems. After the first executive director, Father Stanford, there is no clear delineation found in the files of the projects or correspondence that the CCICA generated from year to year. Thus, I was obliged to investigate the material in several other archives to fill the gaps at Catholic University. In any case, I tried to follow a standard procedure for citation.

Some guiding questions include the following: Why, and how, did the CCICA organize? Who was selected for membership, and why? What specific agenda brought these people together? Once organized, to what did they turn their attention? What impact did they have on one another and on the issues of the day? How was their presence as a community of intellectuals affected by their Church or by their society? What successes or failures can be attributed to the CCICA? Why did its executive committee make policies in the ways that it did, particularly with respect to membership and affiliations with international organi-
izations? Was there a vision of Catholic intellectual life that the CCICA sought to advocate? And, if so, what was that vision?

Throughout the book, there will be references to dozens of individuals who, in one way or another, influenced the proceedings of the Commission. Often these were members of the clergy, but I omit any reference to their clerical titles unless it serves to explain that person’s specific role in the narrative. I have drawn much of the biographical data on the Commission members and their associates from the American Catholic Who’s Who, unless otherwise noted.
In the decades after the First World War, the American public was reluctant to enter into another European conflict. The nation thought of itself as the last bastion of civilization, immune from the petty squabbles between Europe's governments and free of the Communist menace then infecting Poland, France, and Spain. The moral high ground was worth preserving at the expense of an international community that seemed dead set on confrontation. Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose administration was hampered by neutrality legislation and steadfast public opinion against involvement in any European war, promised American mothers that their sons would be safe under his watch. Yet, by the end of 1940, with the presidential election over, it seemed certain that the United States would be drawn into another European crisis.

Catholic opinion in the United States prior to the nation's entry into the Second World War registered nearly universal opposition, too. America's Catholic masses were peppered with a continuous barrage of isolationist rhetoric—from the radio broadcasts of Father Charles Coughlin to the pages of the Jesuit weekly, America. In November 1939 a poll of Catholic college students indicated that nearly 97 percent thought that America should stay out of Europe's war. Moreover,
reports from Joseph P. Kennedy, the U.S. ambassador to the Court of
St. James and a prominent Boston Catholic, conveyed London’s re-
luctance to alter its policy of appeasement with Berlin, absent a shift
in Washington’s isolationism. At home, Catholic pacifists such as the
Catholic Worker Movement decried any attempt at moving toward
war, especially conscription, and actively promoted conscientious ob-
jection. Polling data prior to 1940 indicates that America’s Catholics,
slightly more than Protestants and far more than Jews, were against
participation in any foreign war.2

There were exceptions to this general opposition, such as George
Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago and Monsignor John A. Ryan, the na-
tion’s foremost authority on Catholic social thought. Both men had
attempted to support the administration’s positions on engagement as
one aspect of Roosevelt’s foreign policy. But the prospect of a foreign
entanglement was enough to convince the vast majority of Catholics—
together with the rest of the United States—to oppose giving aid to
European combatants on anything more than a cash-and-carry basis.
Dreaded though it was, war came; and in August 1940 the Adminis-
trative Board of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC)
agreed to cooperate in preparedness programs for national defense.3
This was a far cry from endorsing President Roosevelt’s program of di-
rect aid to Britain, which by this time had become a clear goal in his
foreign policy. By late 1941, shortly after America’s entrance into the
Second World War, the Catholic hierarchy in the United States turned
its attention to the restoration of world order at the earliest possible
moment.4

This reaction was not unique. Private organizations such as the
New York–based Council on Foreign Relations were busy developing
white papers and reports delineating transition procedures—the prac-
tical side of what amounted to a shift in mentalities toward “recon-
version.” At the national level, the U.S. Department of State’s Division
of Cultural Relations, established in 1941, met over the next two years to
discuss the potential postwar crisis. By 1944, it recommended that the
U.S. government “cooperate in the creation of a United Nations provi-
sonal commission on educational and cultural reconstruction.”5 At
the international level, the Atlantic Charter of 1941 and the fledgling
United Nations Declaration at the start of 1942 both made provisions for long-range global security and cooperation under more accommodating circumstances, thus opening the way for what became the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The NCWC, too, through its Social Action Department, put the bulk of its resources into policies and programs designed to provide a smooth transition from a war-driven society to peacetime. Other Catholics, prompted by recent papal peace proposals that hoped to move belligerents away from the futility of war, joined in this cause. For example, in a 1943 address at Columbia University, John LaFarge, S.J., the Harvard-trained advocate of racial harmony and an editor at *America*, reminded educators there that Catholicism was on record as seeking ways to actively restore the peace. In “The Church and World Order,” LaFarge recalled a recent joint statement of religious groups that called for “an organization of international institutions which will develop a body of international law; guarantee the faithful fulfillment of international obligations, and revise them when necessary; assure collective security by drastic limitation and continuing control of armaments, compulsory arbitration and adjudication of controversies, and the use when necessary of adequate sanctions to enforce the law.”

In contrast to LaFarge, most Catholics in America were more occupied with carrying on the war. When the Allies finally brought about the defeat of the Nazis in April and May 1945, reconversion efforts sprang up across Europe. The conflict with Japan was soon to be concluded by sheer daring and raw power when the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. War’s cruelty could not have been more stark. How would humanity redeem itself? Could the Church meet the challenges of an uncertain future?

The Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (CCICA) was a product of the postwar attitude that sought to bring about assurances that this type of conflict would never occur again. It was part of the civilizing process in secular society. This was always a primary focus of the group, whose aim was to advance a Catholic perspective on matters of social and cultural importance. The goal had always been to unite scholars and leaders of high caliber to realize the
peaceable society that had eluded the world for much of the first half of the twentieth century. They gathered precisely as Catholics and intellectuals. From their moorings in the faith, they launched the promotion of a just social order, and, in the process, they helped to shape Catholic identity in America. Their mission was to serve God and country by cultivating an informed Catholic mind—to perform, in the words of John Courtney Murray, “a ministry of clarifying.”

Forming the Commission: A Threfold Impetus

No one has done more to chronicle the growth of Catholic higher education in this country than Philip Gleason, who was himself chairman of the CCICA from 1985 to 1987. In an important study, Gleason mentions the CCICA in several places but is often constrained to give only the briefest account. Nevertheless, he does manage to advance the thesis that the origins of the group came at the instigation of certain Jesuit educational leaders, together with Monsignor Frederick Hochwalt, then secretary general for the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA), executive director of the NCWC’s Department of Education, and a leading figure in the development of the CCICA.

Gleason points to two reasons that brought about the Commission: meetings of academics at Georgetown and Fordham universities, and the postwar interest among Catholic intellectuals in the nascent UNESCO. However, there is a third reason that connects these “Jesuit meetings” and Hochwalt’s activities at the NCWC and NCEA, which concentrated on promoting the hierarchy’s influence in UNESCO. Equally important in the CCICA’s formation were international contacts with those people who were drawing Catholic intellectuals into their own burgeoning postwar movements. To understand these connections it is essential to recount the history of Catholic involvement in the founding of the United Nations and specifically with the roles undertaken by future CCICA members.

During the war, it became obvious that the League of Nations was a complete failure. As an instrument for international cooperation, it never garnered the support it needed to survive as a viable option
Launching the CCICA

against global conflict. In the United States, Catholic bishops were interested in initiatives that would bring the nations of the world into conformity with Pope Pius XII’s statements on international peace. Responding to this challenge, the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP), an advocacy group whose secretariat was in the NCWC’s Social Action Department, issued several reports on the desirability and achievement of peace. But the Roosevelt administration did not speak publicly on the question of a postwar peace until June 1943, at which time the president hinted at forming some kind of international organization to create amity among its members. Thus, the Four-Power Declaration, advanced by the State Department, was on Roosevelt’s desk by August 10, 1943. This pact between the United States, England, the Soviet Union, and China committed the Allies to a series of talks in the summer of 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC, as well as at Yalta in February 1945. These discussions eventually led to the United Nations Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) that took place at the Fairmont Hotel on San Francisco’s Nob Hill from April to June 1945. When its Charter was delivered at the final session of the UNCIO in late June, it became the cornerstone upon which the present-day United Nations was built.

Throughout these proceedings, the hierarchy of the American Church remained cool, fearing that any attempt to incorporate the Soviets into the organization would be tantamount to permitting Communist atheism to obtain an international foothold. This was not mere paranoia: any and all Communist incursions into American society were vehemently condemned. What was more pressing were the proposals being discussed in San Francisco. From the bishops’ point of view, the proposals would perhaps advance the cause of peace, but they were not tempered by justice.

Selling the plan to the American bishops proved to be a formidable challenge. Archbishop Samuel Stritch of Chicago, chairman of the Social Action Department of the NCWC and a member of its Administrative Board, consistently held in disdain the White House’s endorsements for the Dumbarton Oaks and UNCIO proposals, despite constant courting by the Department of State, which hoped to bring the hierarchy around. Part of the effort was to invite the bishops to
supply consultants to the American delegation in San Francisco. Eventually, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius personally asked the NCWC to designate a representative to the U.S. delegation to the UNCIO. On the recommendation of Archbishops Stritch and Francis Spellman, Dr. Richard Pattee was authorized to attend. Pattee, a member of both the Social Action Department and the CAIP, was joined by an attorney, Thomas H. Mahony of Boston, a fellow CAIP member. Both of these individuals would figure prominently in the CCICA, and Mahony would become its fifth chairman from 1950 to 1951.

At the time of the UNCIO meeting, Pattee had been working for the NCWC for less than two years as a Latin American specialist. In fact, he was in Latin America writing for the National Catholic News Service when he was reassigned to represent the NCWC in San Francisco. He contributed several stories on the upcoming UNCIO from the perspective of Latin America, and other writers whom the National Catholic News Service assigned followed the same international angle to generate further interest. NCWC General Secretary Monsignor Howard Carroll reported to the Administrative Board that the authors were all well placed in the discussion. Three of those whom he mentioned by name would eventually become involved in the CCICA: Christopher Dawson (United Kingdom), Oscar Halecki (Poland), and Yves Simon (France). Pattee was well connected and respected. He held a doctorate in international affairs and had worked in the State Department’s Division of the American Republics in 1938, which allowed him to develop contacts throughout the Southern Hemisphere.

Mahony, too, brought his own expertise. An international lawyer as well as vice president of the CAIP, he was practiced and knowledgeable in foreign affairs. As a representative of the CAIP, Mahony was the point person for a group that had been working within and for the conference of bishops for nearly twenty years as a semi-autonomous organization. The CAIP grew out of meetings following the Church’s Eucharistic Congress of 1926 in Chicago. The permanent organization was founded in Washington during Easter Week, 1927, by Bishop Thomas J. Shahan, rector of the Catholic University of America. It was comprised mainly of academics interested in “furtheining Christian principles of justice and charity in international life.” During the pe-
period in question, its membership included some of the most prominent Jesuits in the country: LaFarge, Edward Conway (of the NCWC’s Social Action Department), John Courtney Murray (America and Theological Studies), and Wilfrid Parsons (America and Theological Studies), all of whom would go on to become CCICA members.

Mahony proved instrumental in getting the Catholic position across to the UNCIO’s American delegation that an International Court of Justice and an International Bill of Rights would be essential for any future United Nations Charter. For the bishops this was non-negotiable, and Mahony impressed upon the delegation that peace had to be coupled with justice—complete with terms that had teeth. In his advocacy, he was ably assisted by Catherine Schaefer of the Social Action Department, who had joined the staff there after graduating from Trinity College in Washington. Although she went to the San Francisco proceedings as an observer for the Social Action Department, she played an important role by acting as a conduit for information between the delegation (the principals included Pattee, Mahony, and, on security matters, Conway), the National Catholic News Service (of which Pattee and Conway were accredited members), and the NCWC. Schaefer was, moreover, the assistant executive secretary of the CAIP and would later be instrumental in linking the NCWC’s Department of Education, the NCEA, and the members of the Jesuit gathering that together helped launch the CCICA.

Just days prior to the San Francisco conference and in preparation for their deliberations at the April meeting of the NCWC Administrative Board, the general secretary, Monsignor Carroll, on behalf of the chairman, Detroit Archbishop Edward Mooney, asked Father Murray for some talking points on the issue of religious freedom relative to human rights, a topic sure to be discussed in San Francisco. He supplied these on April 9, 1945, and the bishops met on the next day. In these remarks, Murray gave the bishops his latest thoughts on the subject, some of which had been appearing in Theological Studies and would eventuate in additional articles in that journal. They unfolded along three planes: the ethical, the theological, and the political. Murray’s treatment began with a pointed question: “Are we Catholics prepared to demand religious liberty for all men today?” He explained
that acceptable Catholic positions on religious liberty could be achieved only when a proper understanding of the phrase was reached. Religious syncretism or absolute equality was necessarily excluded from a Catholic understanding. By contrast, if religious liberty were to “mean that, with respect to the State and its temporal power, every man must be allowed to choose at his own risk the path along which he personally will attempt to reach God, the answer [to the question of committing to religious liberty based on this definition] is: Yes.”

Murray argued that religious liberty for the whole of humanity could only be realized if seen under the aspect of the natural law “and not on the basis of the particular theological convictions of either Catholic or Protestant or Jew.” By arguing from the natural law, any contribution to a political charter, such as the one contemplated for the United Nations, would be supple enough to adapt to “the exigencies of the common good in today’s conditions.” At their spring meeting, the bishops agreed to carefully measured language that religious liberty “implies the immunity of the citizen from interference on the part of the state with his obedience to his conscience in private family life, in the religious education of his children, in free association for religious purposes and in propagating, by written and spoken word, his belief in God in the precepts of the moral law in due consideration of the rights of others.”

The importance of Murray’s contribution to the Administrative Board’s deliberations over the UNCIO lies in the fact that one of the founding members of the CCICA was also in touch with the events leading to the San Francisco meeting. Because of Murray’s editorship at America and because he was a member of the CAIP, his awareness of the developments at the proceedings in San Francisco went beyond what was reported in the press. This had some import for intellectual action, too. On the horizon for both Murray and the bishops was the possibility of cooperative efforts for a peaceful social order, one that involved the participation of countries with differing ideologies and laws on religious liberty. UNESCO would comprise an international effort at forming intellectual and social cooperation through education, which was thought to be the best vehicle for the elimination of mass warfare.
This was something that the Catholic hierarchy in the United States could get behind. It was both a practical and efficient way to allay the problem of mistrust between nations, and it was well in keeping with the Christian tradition of learning. Already in November 1944, after their fall meeting, the Administrative Board stated pointedly that, among other things, the Second World War had come from “bad education.” This assessment was corroborated by Archbishop Conrad Groeber of Freiburg who, in a pastoral letter after the Armistice, indicted Nazi educational policies as tearing young people from their families and forcing them into service to the state. A short notice in *America* conveyed the substance of the Archbishop’s letter: “Militarization and Germanization of the younger generation was the real purpose of all educational policies instituted by the Nazis.” The problem of “re-education” of the Germans was immediate, but the long-term goal of fostering international understanding for peace was also looming.

The bishops were poised to lobby on select proposals in San Francisco through their official and semi-official team of observers, but the layers of organization within the bishops’ conference were sometimes a hindrance. For instance, when China brought forward a proposal that one of the entities attached to the UNCIO, namely, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), should provide and promote educational and other forms of cultural cooperation, Pattee became suspicious and called the NCWC’s Department of Education, under Monsignor Hochwalt, for instructions on how to proceed. Despite the fact that the proposal was backed both by the Soviets and the archenemies of American Catholic schools, the National Education Association, Hochwalt thought that he had to take up the matter with the episcopal head of his department, Archbishop John McNicholas. The lumbering pace of these consultations virtually eliminated the NCWC from making future suggestions to the government, for under State Department rules, the deadline for submissions had long passed; and, once missed, future input was not allowed. When its members met in November 1945, McNicholas described to the bishops’ Administrative Board “the opposition on the part of the State Department that thwarted” his department’s efforts to secure adequate representation at a London meeting of
UNESCO that took place on November 1–16, 1945. It was in London that UNESCO adopted its constitution and was formally launched.

Despite the setback, Monsignor Carroll reported some positive news: the Vatican’s Secretariat of State, led then by Giovanni Battista Montini, had been following the work of the NCWC’s observers “with the greatest possible interest,” and he extended his congratulations “for their splendid work.” Pius XII and the Holy See were barred from participating in the San Francisco meetings under the terms of the Lateran Treaty, which prevented the pontiff from taking part in international peace conventions without the unanimous invitation of all concerned parties. Having a Catholic voice present at these initial meetings was naturally welcomed, and the Holy See avoided any appearance of meddling in the proceedings.

Meanwhile, James Shotwell, a historian teaching at Columbia University, was put in charge of developing a new chapter to the United Nations Charter (Chapter IX) endowing certain entities within the organization to promote educational and cultural cooperation, the precise nature of which was to be decided. This idea was the result of intense lobbying on the part of French, Chinese, and American educational groups at the San Francisco meeting. There the insertion of Article 57 of the draft Charter sought the inclusion of “specialized agencies, established by intergovernmental agreement and having wide international responsibilities . . . in economic, social, cultural, educational, health and related fields, [to] be brought into relationship with the United Nations.” The result was UNESCO.

Even if they could not influence its constitution, America’s bishops were intent on keeping their hand in the development of UNESCO, despite being excluded from its creation. After the London inauguration of UNESCO, a period of gestation for the CCICA was begun as well. At the Administrative Board’s November meeting, the newly elected chairman, Archbishop Stritch, “suggested that the Department of Education encourage and develop a federation of Catholic educational, cultural and scientific groups into an Academia that could legitimately seek representation in the American delegation to attend the next UNESCO meeting in Paris in early Spring of 1946. It was the sense of the meeting that this be done.” It seemed that the door was opened for
collective action by Catholic intellectuals to unite in common cause. Prompting the bishops to green-light the project was done through calculated moves by the NCWC’s Monsignor Hochwalt and an outside academic, John Courtney Murray, S.J.

**The Murray Memorandum**

At this time, Murray was already one of the leading lights of American Catholic intellectual culture. He had been studying the state of Catholic education in the United States since before the war and was convinced that the educational sphere was marked by an overwhelming need to produce Christian humanists who could stand up to the challenges of the world. This was the aim, he said in 1941, to which “the whole of Christian education is directed.” He lived what he believed. Murray was perhaps the most public face in all of Jesuit higher education during the war, and he helped to articulate a vision of his order’s educational charisma that was years in the making. Lying in the background for the role that Catholic intellectuals would play in postwar reconstruction was the complex relation between the American hierarchy and the Jesuits involved in higher education in the United States. By the end of the Second World War, Jesuit educational institutions were growing and already had approximately 40,000 students attending their schools.

But Jesuit influence had taken a turn earlier in the 1920s, when Wlodimir Ledochowski, S.J., the Jesuit General in Rome, tried to manipulate the structure and mission of Jesuit schools in this country. He was motivated by Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val, who had him summoned to the Holy Office in February 1927 to answer charges that Jesuit colleges in the United States were doing more harm than good. That meeting set in motion a process culminating in the establishment of a Commission on Higher Studies, whose members included several highly placed Jesuits in American institutions in various parts of the country. James Macelwane, S.J., president of St. Louis University and a future CCICA member, led this body. They were responsible directly to the Father General in Rome. This commission’s activities were meant
to strengthen the American Jesuit colleges. Ledochowski himself was quite clear on its role, which he saw as a way of taking “a more influential share in determining the intellectual policy of the country.” This influence continues to the present day.

Before the bishops’ fall meeting, Hochwalt and Murray met on November 8, 1945, to discuss a plan of action in forming a group of intellectuals. We do not have a record of this conversation, but it is possible to detect some broad outlines. First, some mention of the program for participation in UNESCO was discussed. This anticipated what turned out to be an overly hopeful intention to have a Catholic presence in London at the UNESCO meeting. Second, the establishment of an autonomous organization comprised of Catholics could meet the criteria set up for participation in the work of UNESCO and could serve the Church’s other intellectual interests at home. Murray wrote Hochwalt on the next day:

I am convinced that the solution to our problem can only be found in terms of an autonomous body, which will have influence by reason of its own intrinsic excellence—the combined and united excellences of all Catholic scholars, institutions, and agencies in the United States. The previous formula, used to pry our way into the London meeting, has its own validity and necessity; but I do not think it will ever be enough. I do hope we can get at least a negative approval (“we do not disapprove”) from the bishops. I hope, too, that they can be convinced that any fear of “independent action” is baseless. There is a need of autonomous responsibility indeed; but it can be kept within the proper framework.

Murray outlined his framework for the “solution” in a four-page, single-spaced memorandum, which would become the spine of the CCICA constitution.

Although written “in haste,” the document displays Murray’s characteristic acuity. Both Hochwalt and Murray were concerned with the international dimension of Catholic intellectual life and particularly as it affected global stability. The memorandum began by laying out two issues. First, how can an agency or some other body be formed that
would “command a place on the National Commission of the Educational and Cultural Organization of the United Nations, and be able adequately to represent Catholic educational, scientific and cultural interests?” Second, how could an agency or body “establish and maintain relations with organized or individual Catholics throughout the world, with a view to strengthening Catholic solidarity and cooperation in the general work of international reconstruction?”

Murray did not think that any such agency existed. If the task before the two men was “intellectual cooperation,” then Murray could identify only one organization that could address the needs of the post-war world, namely, the CAIP. Even so, he wondered if this group fit the bill “on paper” only. He was also aware of the lack of available resources even within the bishops’ conference. Indeed, in a marginal note on this point, Murray scrawled that both the NCEA and NCWC’s Department of Education would be “permanently and rather totally occupied with domestic problems. Hence, they can be only a cooperating, not a leading, agency in international peace.”

Murray then called for “a total mobilization of the whole Catholic educational, scientific, and cultural world in the U.S.” He proposed a threefold agenda for this group: membership, structure, and general character. “Ideally,” Murray wrote, membership “would be universal” and would draw principally from four fields: universities, “associations with educational or cultural interests,” specialized agencies (here he suggested the American Catholic Library Association), and individual scholars, writers, editors, and “men of cultural attainments.” The structure would form under the management of an executive committee, together with a salaried executive director, “the organizational spark plug . . . of academic name and repute.” Finally, the general character would be academic, with a mix of mostly laity and some clergy. Murray was quick to note that the formation of the group’s ethos should follow the principles articulated in the papal theory of Catholic Action; that is, it would be predominantly lay in character; this in order to show its academic, not ecclesiastical character. Clerics would obviously belong, but on the title of academic standing. It should be under episcopal mandate, recognized by the bishops as responsible in the
whole field of Catholic intellectual cooperation. It would act, however, on its own responsibility, and of itself take the initiative in studying problems, drawing up programs, giving out statements, etc. etc. Therefore, the association would speak and act in the name of the Catholic educational, scientific, and cultural world as such. The broad lines of its policy might be laid down by the bishops, but within them it should have a full measure of freedom. . . . Its whole spirit would be dictated by its aim—to unite in bonds of fraternal solidarity and cooperation the whole Catholic intellectual world, and make it a force in the international field, for the glory of God and the good of the Church, and for no other inferior or less universal aim.43

He then pointed to several specific aims and functions. The first gave priority to the work of UNESCO, and committees within the organization would be established to assign “the Catholic solution” to educational and cultural problems as these arose. Second, Murray hoped that the group would “foster and stand in close relationship with the international movement among Catholic students, as particularly represented by Pax Romana.”44 Pax Romana, for which Murray served as international chaplain after the war, was a Catholic constituent organization of students and university graduates of various nations approved by the Holy See.

From this association with student movements, Murray hoped, a number of minor activities could emerge. In his plan, the group should sponsor a literary organ, “sort of a Catholic Foreign Affairs,” and organize regional and national conferences on matters on which Catholic thought should and could be brought to bear. Finally, the group should “establish and sponsor a ‘Catholic International House’ for a variety of purposes: (a) to house its own secretariat and also the North American Regional Secretariat of Pax Romana, its (roughly) parallel student organization; (b) to be a living place for selected foreign students; (c) to be a center of Catholic ‘intellectualism’—a radiant center, through courses, lectures, conferences, etc.”

In addition to some general comments on the financial and organizational manner in which the association would assemble (Murray was
open to episcopal financing), Murray entertained possible names for it: “The Catholic Academy of the United States,” or “The American Academy of Catholic Thought and Culture,” or “The American Institute of Intellectual Cooperation,” or “The American Catholic Academy of Education, Science, and Culture.” He hoped that it could contribute to a global discussion of issues affecting world order. “The whole premise of the association,” he wrote, “insofar as it will concern itself with the Educational and Cultural Organization of the United Nations, is that this problem is an academic problem, that must be solved by academic people, organized for the purpose. . . . [Whatever] political action may be necessary there must stand a mobilized Catholic intellectual world, alive to its full responsibilities.”

Hochwalt took the memorandum seriously and decided to promote such an association among the bishops who would be traveling to Washington in the following week for their November meeting. Hochwalt also had received a memorandum from J. Hunter Guthrie, S.J., dean of the Graduate School at Georgetown University, a copy of which had come into his hands through Apostolic Delegate and Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, for whom it was prepared on the occasion of a visit to the Nunciature in Washington. Guthrie’s three-page document was slightly shorter than Murray’s, but it displayed similar sentiments. It offered a twofold rationale for organization of Catholics in the aftermath of the war; namely, that Catholics ought to organize for the immediate tasks required for reconstructing Catholic intellectual life, and Catholic intellectuals ought to “maintain an effective policy of presence in the total work of the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization.”

Interoffice correspondence at the NCWC between Hochwalt and the Office of the General Secretary indicates that portions of Guthrie’s memorandum were set aside for future action, apparently because they were not germane at the time. Correspondence between the NCWC Office of the General Secretary and the Apostolic Delegation in the United States indicates that the plan was for “the work to begin modestly and as it progresses, will gradually begin to satisfy the interest and demands of those who have become articulate in the international field in matters of education and culture.” As far as the NCWC was
concerned, this was to be undertaken under the auspices of the NCEA, with the approval of Archbishop James H. Ryan, the new episcopal chairman of the NCWC’s Education Department, among other interested members of the hierarchy.

Guthrie’s memorandum enumerated several concrete aspects of the proposed work. First and foremost was the task “of formulating Catholic thought and policy on all problems that will appear on the agenda of UNESCO” as well as “securing representation on the United States National Commission to UNESCO.” Another immediate task included the “rehabilitation of Catholic university life in Europe.” Guthrie indicated that these problems could not be adequately addressed all at once, but that the need for a new association of Catholics was a first step.

Like Murray, Guthrie’s vision of the group was academic and lay-dominated: “definitely a university-level group, following the classical lines laid down in the Papal theory of Catholic action. It would not be ecclesiastical in character but its members, whether clerical or lay, would be entitled to membership on the basis of academic standing and valid interest.” He also suggested that it would operate “under the authority of the Bishops,” though it should retain the right to “act on its own responsibility and, of itself, take the initiative in studying problems, drawing up programs, giving out statements, etc.” Moreover, it would “speak and act in the name of the Catholic educational, scientific, and cultural world as such. The broad lines of its policy should be laid down by the Bishops but within them it would have a full measure of freedom.”

Guthrie concluded his memorandum by simply listing two assemblies of scholars who had been meeting in New York and Washington to discuss the proposed association in order to convey to the Apostolic Delegate that there was interest. The latter group, which had been meeting at Georgetown University, was comprised of thirteen core members, though only four would actually become CCICA members in the coming months: Guthrie himself, Conway, Goetz Briefs, and Phillips Temple. The New York gathering at Fordham University left a considerably longer paper trail and will be taken up momentarily. While Guthrie’s memorandum is helpful in gaining a more complete
understanding of the vision and principal actors in the beginning stages of the CCICA, some of its more ambitious proposals were of little practical use. The bishops’ call for the development of intellectual capital sought not only to put into place a qualified body of Catholics at the UNESCO meetings, but also served to foster a common intellectual life among otherwise diverse and disparate Catholic professional societies. Therefore, they favored the proposals of Hochwalt and Murray.

As the head of the NCWC’s Department of Education, Hochwalt was placed in charge of the project, but because he also headed the NCEA, he asked its College and University Department to appoint a subcommittee to develop a proposal. In the first weeks of January 1946, the project consumed him. The subcommittee reported on their progress to the NCEA’s Executive Board on February 5. By March 1, the committee had disseminated a statement on a new organization of leaders to “be known tentatively as ‘The Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs.’”

The Fordham Meeting

As Murray wrote his memorandum in response to his conversation with Hochwalt, he had to have had in mind the results of a meeting at Fordham University on October 26, 1945, just two weeks earlier. That meeting was called by Fordham’s President Robert Gannon, S.J., to coordinate participation of Catholic colleges in UNESCO. Fortunately, a brief but detailed memorandum and transcriptions of the morning and afternoon sessions have been preserved. Before rehearsing their contents, however, let us go back to what Catherine Schaefer was doing in New York at the time. Authorized by the head of the Social Action Department, Father Raymond McGowan, Cardinal Stritch, and Monsignor Carroll, she had been sent to establish an Office for United Nations Affairs, on Manhattan’s East Side in rooms supplied by the Archdiocese of New York, to monitor the progress of the United Nations at close range. McGowan had been one of the invitees to the Fordham gathering but declined when he learned that Schaefer would attend as one “connected with the Catholic Association for International Peace.”
This role was often used by Schaefer as a surrogate function in carrying out assignments from the Social Action Department, particularly in meetings with UN officials. She sent her report to McGowan, and it later made its way to several offices of the conference.55

For Schaefer, this would have been one more in a string of meetings in metropolitan New York related to tracking developments on UNESCO. Although she went to Fordham on behalf of the CAIP, she made it clear that she was there to gauge the potential outcomes of the gathering for the NCWC’s relation to this emerging international body.56 She explained that Monsignor Hochwalt and others had been making one appeal after another to gain representation at the upcoming UNESCO meeting in London, which would take place only six days after the Fordham discussions. According to Monsignor Carroll, in each instance, the U.S. Department of State appeared to be stonewalling.57 Carroll later told the bishops that after the date for the London meeting was set, the NCWC’s Department of Education made it known to the State Department the desirability of “having representatives in the U.S. delegation who could present the viewpoint of Catholic education.”58 After repeated attempts at obtaining an appointment with Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Carroll admitted that the NCWC’s efforts were entirely frustrated.59 With its attempts at influencing UNESCO apparently thwarted, the NCWC would try to influence all those satellite movements that could conceivably have an impact on the proceedings. The Fordham gathering presented itself as such a movement.

In her report to the NCWC, Schaefer said that the meeting “was apparently Dr. Halecki’s idea,” and that “Father Gannon merely assented and signed the invitations.” In fact, this was a collaboration between Halecki and Gannon. Sometime prior to August 5, Halecki had had a conversation with Gannon on the matter of UNESCO—a still unrealized dream, but one that began to take shape when the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) published its recommendations on July 31. This group had been meeting in London over several years to plan for postwar education. Halecki alerted Gannon to Washington’s plans to respond to the CAME proposals by advocating for constituent-based national commissions. Halecki wished to orga-
nize Catholic groups for participation on the U.S. National Commission to UNESCO and told Gannon that it would be desirable to have an organizational meeting at Fordham, albeit in tandem with the NCWC and especially with its Department of Education.60

The meeting at Fordham took place on October 26, 1945. Schaefer reported that it was attended by other Jesuits, including Gannon, Murray, Parsons, and Father Edward Rooney of the Jesuit Educational Association. Although he was part of the organizing committee, Gerald Walsh, S.J., did not attend. Schaefer also mentioned a certain “Father Talbot, S.J.”; this was Francis X. Talbot, S.J., until 1944 the editor of America magazine and founder of the Catholic Book Club, then on assignment at Georgetown University. The other Jesuits present were William Schlaerth, an associate dean at Fordham, and his counterpart at the University of Scranton, Edward Jacklin. Two other priests attended: Dom Basil Matthews, O.S.B., and Father Joseph McSorley, C.S.P., who came as an “interested and edifying spectator of the proceedings to cheer and to wish that millions of others will be as strongly in favor of your plans as I am.”61 Excepting Gannon, Schlaerth, Jacklin, Matthews, and McSorley, all others would become CCICA members.

The roster given in President Gannon’s papers indicates that of the forty invited—including, among others, Pattee, Monsignor Fulton Sheen, and Maisie Ward—nineteen attended.62 Oddly, George Shuster, the noted Catholic president of Hunter College and former Commonweal editor who had been most involved in talks on the future UNESCO, was not invited.63 Jeremiah D. M. Ford, another invitee, replied to Gannon that he was particularly sorry for not being able to attend (due to recent surgery) because he had “had the honor of making the first public address before the old Institut de Coopération Intellectuelle of the League of Nations, when it was opened at Paris.” He went on to describe the importance of the upcoming meeting at Fordham: “Catholic colleges and universities have been defenders of the cause of true culture from the time of their establishment in the Middle Ages. In this age of a frenzied interest in scientific endeavor which is infecting so many of our American institutions of so-called higher learning, it is the duty of our Catholic institutions to hold high the banner of the liberal arts and the distinctive humanities.”64
Lay people were a significant presence at the Fordham gathering. Among the participants were Oscar Halecki, a Polish scholar of Eastern European history working in Fordham’s History Department; Carlton Hayes of Columbia University’s History Department and the former U.S. ambassador to Spain; Francis Crowley, the dean of the School of Education at Fordham; Waldemar Gurian of the University of Notre Dame’s Department of Political Science and editor of the *Review of Politics*; Herbert Bell, a former president of the American Catholic Historical Association and professor of history at Wesleyan University; Ross Hoffman, a professor of modern history at Fordham and another past president of the American Catholic Historical Association; Jean Paul Misrahi, a professor of Romance languages at Fordham; and Dietrich von Hildebrand, a noted philosopher at Fordham. Schaefer hastened to add: “I was the only woman present.”

When Schaefer arrived, Halecki was already providing some personal history on the question of international educational cooperation. He had been a delegate from Poland to the League of Nations Organization on Intellectual Cooperation (OIC). That entity, while not technically defunct (the League continued to exist until 1946), was to be enlarged when UNESCO was launched, and it was thought by many to be UNESCO in embryo. While Halecki was serving as secretary of the international committee for the League’s OIC, from 1922 to 1924, he made a plea to League members for national commissions comprised of leading interest groups. He succeeded in obtaining official recognition for the Commission Catholique sur la Coopération Intellectuelle of the Union Catholique d’Études Internationales that was then based in Paris. Halecki planted the idea in Gannon’s mind that whatever emerged from meetings on cooperation between Catholic groups in this country, the potential for international outreach was equally important. Gannon heartily concurred and appointed Halecki chairman of the organizing committee.

When Schaefer arrived at Fordham on October 26, Halecki was already engaged in a discussion of the “Institute of Intellectual Cooperation” (presumably she meant the OIC) and Pax Romana. He rehearsed the inadequacy of international cooperation on educational issues in the early days of the League of Nations:
In the first draft of the 1920 charter, Catholics were particularly afraid of the way education would be handled. In the old League of Nations, many Catholic countries were represented by Catholic delegates. In the future, the situation may be different and I think the Soviet Union will be interested in this field of the United Nations organization. I am of the opinion that my own country will be hardly different. Catholic countries like Spain and Portugal will be excluded. . . . Therefore, it will be today even more than in 1922 and 1923, a terrible sin of omission if a Catholic commission is not organized immediately. Therefore, my suggestion is that we create in all countries where we have a strong Catholic group a strong Catholic commission.76

Halecki’s sally immediately launched the discussion. Rooney suggested that the creation of any new American commission might frustrate, or at least duplicate, the work of already established Catholic organizations, such as the NCEA or the CAIP.77 Parsons noted that other educational bodies were interested in pursuing a place on the proposed national commission, such as the American Association for Education. Schaefer, too, spoke about the presence of a number of educational organizations at the San Francisco planning conference, although it was a struggle for their interests to be given official sanction within the UN charter. According to Schaefer, “the American delegation was reluctant to enter the word [‘education’ into the Charter].”78 Equally challenging was the insertion of the word “religion” into UN documents, although it appears several times. The word “God” was omitted.

Halecki “believed it particularly important that both a national group and an international group representing Catholic educational and cultural interests in view of Articles VIII and XIV of the Draft Educational Charter should be formed.”79 This draft had been developed at the San Francisco meetings of the UNCIO, which Schaefer attended. She recounted the development of these articles, referring the group specifically to the CAIP statement on the preliminary outlines for what became UNESCO.80 The CAIP was in agreement with the principles of such an organization, but it cautioned against any program that excluded any sectarian opinion.
In her report, Schaefer noted participants’ interest in the development of “some national organization representing all Catholic educational and cultural interests." This would include many of the Catholic professional societies, such as the American Catholic Historical Association and the Catholic Philosophical Association, as well as Catholic periodicals and college-related groups, presumably the Newman Clubs. The hope would be to include as broad a constituency as possible under the umbrella of a “National Commission.” The proposal received unanimous support.

In fact, the suggestion had originated with Hayes: “I do feel it would be important, if it could be created in this country, [to form] an organization that would speak for our Catholic learned societies here.” Drawing on his experience as America’s ambassador to Spain, he told the assembly that many Spanish Catholics “were most anxious to know about the Catholic Church in America. They wanted to know about the universities. We should have a corresponding Catholic organization to cooperate with the Institute of International Education, Dr. Stephen Duggan’s organization.” Others were ready to agree, though some, like Parsons, expressed doubt. But when they heard Hayes proclaim that “there is definite work to be done” and when they considered his hope together with Halecki’s call for a national Catholic effort to influence UNESCO, these calls gelled into a collective call for the CCICA.

The afternoon session of the Fordham meeting turned toward practical action. During their luncheon, Halecki, Murray, and Hoffman worked to draft resolutions for discussion and amendment. They were cognizant of the morning’s news: there would be an American national commission to the new UNESCO, the details of which would be worked out at the London conference. The question of how to address this national commission forced the Fordham group to confront the matter of its own identity. Were they forming as a “commission” that could draw together otherwise disparate Catholic groups in order to represent them all, or were they to be understood as one of many “private and public enterprises and institutions” seeking to have a voice in the U.S. national commission to UNESCO? They opted for both. All agreed that the expected commission would profit from “a national association broadly representative of Catholic educational and cultural groups,” whose purpose would be to adequately represent Catholic