

## ABSTRACT

Solidarity, Compassion, Truth: The Pacifist Witness of Dorothy Day

Coleman Fannin

Mentor: Barry A. Harvey, Ph.D.

The truth of the gospel requires witnesses, and the pacifist witness of Dorothy Day embodies the peaceable character of a church that, in the words of Stanley Hauerwas, “is not some ideal but an undeniable reality.” In this thesis I provide a thick description of Day’s pacifism and order this description theologically in terms of *witness*. I argue that her witness is rooted in three distinct yet interrelated principles: *solidarity* with the poor and the enemy through exploring the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, *compassion* for the suffering through practicing voluntary poverty and the works of mercy, and a commitment to *truth* through challenging the logic of modern warfare and the Catholic Church’s failure to live up to its own doctrine. I also argue that Day’s witness is inexplicable apart from her orthodox Catholicism and her life among the poor at the Catholic Worker.

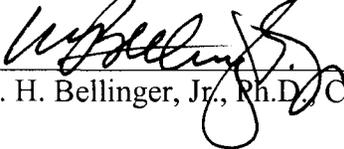
Solidarity, Compassion, Truth: The Pacifist Witness of Dorothy Day

by

Coleman Fannin, M.Div.

A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Religion

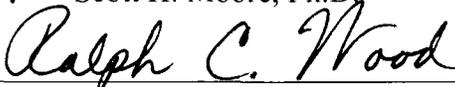
  
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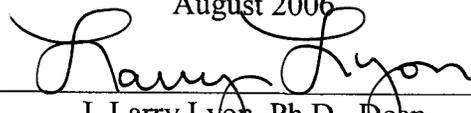
Approved by the Thesis Committee

  
Barry A. Harvey, Ph.D., Chairperson

  
Scott H. Moore, Ph.D.

  
Ralph C. Wood, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School  
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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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I also thank the members of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, who taught me that theology is not separate from a body of believers struggling to embody the gospel of Jesus Christ in a fallen and hurting world.

Finally, I owe more than I can express to Dorothy Day and her living legacy, the Catholic Worker. I am a visitor to this family and can only express my conviction that encountering it has changed me profoundly. Anything I understand is due to the clarity of Day's witness; any mistakes are mine alone.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Stanley Hauerwas praises Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, at the conclusion of two of his recent books, including *With the Grain of the Universe*, the text of his Gifford Lectures. Given that Hauerwas is a Protestant, a tenured professor, and a prominent theologian, while Day was a Catholic, never held an academic position, and never published a work of formal theology, why would he mention her so prominently? The answer must include the fact that she was an outspoken pacifist. More precise, however, he believes that the whole of her life is a credible *witness* to the gospel of Jesus Christ, at the heart of which is a commitment to pacifism. According to Hauerwas, the truth of the Christian message and its intellectual recovery by Karl Barth (the subject of his lectures) would languish without witnesses, and John Howard Yoder and John Paul II are primary examples because they “represent the recovery of the politics necessary for us to understand why witness is not simply something Christians ‘do’ but is at the heart of understanding how that to which Christians witness is true. If lives like theirs did not exist, then my argument could not help but appear as just another ‘idealism.’” Hauerwas acknowledges that Yoder and John Paul (and Barth) are in some ways “strange bedfellows” but contends that their shared convictions are *embodied* in the practice of Day and the Catholic Worker: “Because Dorothy Day existed, we can know that the church to which John Paul II and John Howard Yoder witness is not some ideal

but an undeniable reality. Moreover, such a church must exist if indeed the cross and not the sword reveals to us the very grain of the universe.”<sup>1</sup>

Although there have been many Christian pacifists, Day’s witness is particularly compelling because she converted as an adult and because her faith was forged in the poverty of the Bowery in New York City, where she and Peter Maurin opened the first Catholic Worker house in 1933. Hers was not the naïve, liberal pacifism dismissed by Reinhold Niebuhr and others at the dawn of the Second World War. Instead, the war, the nuclear arms race, and Vietnam only strengthened her resolve to speak about the inherent problems of modern warfare, and the *Catholic Worker* newspaper became an influential voice within and beyond the Catholic Church. There had been no pacifist movement in the Church for centuries and its theologians were still mired in debate about just war theory, but as Jim Forest says, “Perhaps more than any Catholic since St. Francis, Dorothy Day began a process with her church that put Jesus, rather than the theologians of the just war, at the center of the church’s social teaching.”<sup>2</sup> Day both followed the Church’s practices and challenged it with the implications and radical possibilities of its teaching.<sup>3</sup> Her enduring witness was significant in a clear shift from univocal reliance on

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2001), 217, 230. In *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2004), Hauerwas notes the connection between Day’s pacifism and the economics of a movement sustained by *begging*: “That the Worker is so constituted no doubt helps explain why Dorothy Day saw no tension between what might be thought to be her quite conservative Catholic piety and theology and her radical politics.” He closes the book with a remarkable statement: “I should like to think I have in some small ways tried to say in my work what Dorothy Day lived” (241).

<sup>2</sup>Jim Forest, “Opening Heart and Home,” *Sojourners*, July 2004, 32.

<sup>3</sup>By “radical” I mean both favoring changes in current practices and arising from or returning to a source—in this case, the teachings of the Church. Michael J. Baxter says that the Worker is radical in two senses: it “addresses the roots of social reconstruction by grounding it in the person and work of Christ” and “refuses to conform to the order—or disorder—imposed by the modern nation-state.” The second is

just war theory to allowance for, even encouragement of, pacifism and nonviolent action that has included both the Second Vatican Council and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops formally voicing support for conscientious objection.<sup>4</sup>

The above testifies to the accuracy of Hauerwas' claims about the validity and power of Day's witness and the centrality of pacifism to its character. Although fruitful work has been done on this latter element—most notably in *American Catholic Pacifism*, edited by Anne Klejment and Nancy Roberts—there remains a need for a comprehensive examination that attends to specifically theological concerns. Therefore, my purpose in this thesis is to provide a thick description of Day's pacifism and to order this description theologically in terms of witness. Utilizing a categorization developed by Tom Cornell, I will argue that Day's pacifism is rooted in three distinct yet interrelated principles: *solidarity* with the poor and the enemy through exploring the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, *compassion* for the suffering through practicing voluntary poverty and the works of mercy, and a commitment to *truth* through challenging the logic of modern warfare and the Catholic Church's failure to live up to its own doctrine.<sup>5</sup> I will discuss these principles at length in the next three chapters by tracing the development of their diverse sources, including socialist identification with "the masses," personalist

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crucial because it reads "'public theology' as ideology, that is, as a constellation of ideas that legitimate the dominant power relations of capitalist order by depicting particular forms of social and political life as natural or universal" ("Blowing the Dynamite of the Church': Catholic Radicalism from a Catholic Radicalist Perspective," in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement: Centenary Essays*, ed. William Thorn, Phillip Runkel, and Susan Mountin (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 92).

<sup>4</sup>See Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Declaration on Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious Objection," 21 October 1971.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas C. Cornell, "The Roots of Dorothy Day's Pacifism: Solidarity, Compassion and a Stubborn Hold on Truth," *Houston Catholic Worker*, September-October 1997.

philosophy, Catholic social teaching, and Scriptural exegesis. In particular, I will examine Day's writings (she published four books and hundreds of articles in the *Catholic Worker* and other periodicals) in order to draw out the connections between these principles. Finally, in chapter five I will bring Alasdair MacIntyre's analysis of tradition and the work of other Christian thinkers on the theology of violence to bear on Day's pacifist witness in order to show that this witness is the type of living argument necessary for Christians to comprehend and engage the modern world.

### *Character and Practice*

Central to my argument is the contention that Day's witness is inexplicable apart from her orthodox Catholicism and her life among the poor. Although I will progress thematically, I will intersperse chronological narrative and analysis in order to reflect the close relationship between the events of her life and the development and expression of her convictions before and after her conversion. I take as my model the methodology of James McClendon, who argues in *Biography as Theology* that the usual types of theological ethics (e.g., "realism" and "decisionism") are no longer adequate for individuals or communities living in our post-utilitarian, post-secular age. Instead, he says, "The hope of ethics, both secular and religious, lies in the recovery of what may be called an ethics of character." The concept of *character* elevates ethics to a level at which one's self is intimately related to one's actions, and by our actions "we form or reform our own characters." The character of an individual, in turn, is intimately related to the convictions of his or her community. This interaction is the realm of theology:

By recognizing that Christian beliefs are not so many "propositions" to be catalogued or juggled like truth-functions in a computer, but are living convictions which give shape to actual lives and actual communities, we open ourselves to the

possibility that the only relevant critical examination of Christian beliefs may be one which begins by attending to lived lives. Theology must be at least biography. If by attending to those lives, we find ways of reforming our own theologies, making them more true, more faithful to our ancient vision, more adequate to the age now being born, then we will be justified in that arduous inquiry. Biography at its best will be theology.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, an *ethic* of character requires a *theology* of character developed through the investigation of those recognized as exemplars by Christian communities. Throughout his systematic theology, including a chapter on Day in volume one, McClendon speaks of “embodied witnesses,” and at the outset of volume three, *Witness*, he argues that “Christian existence is both individual and social, both a journey of individual selves each uniquely qualified as a follower of Jesus and at the same time a journey together, a communal pilgrimage to realize the world newly disclosed in gospel light.” *Witness* is related to this community’s policy of evangelism because “authentic Christian existence is always missionary, possessed only to be imparted to others.” Further, for a Christian who has “crossed into an unknown realm, in Jesus’ phrase ‘a kingdom,’” what constitutes faithful witness upon returning to one’s homeland is “a Christian critique of its culture.” The United States, like the rest of the “Christian” West, is now a mission field; therefore, the policy of evangelism must be restated as a problem: “How shall present sharers of the journey be related to the human world in which they take their journey? What ties cement the people of the journey to the old, broken peoplehood in which once they did and now in a new way still do they have a part?”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), 14, 30-31, 37-38. McClendon also includes excellent discussions of how a theology of character is beneficial for re-assessing certain doctrines (e.g., the atonement) and the process of determining saints; see chap. 4 and 7.

<sup>7</sup>James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, *Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 20. See also vol. 1, *Ethics*, 2d. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), chap. 10.

McClendon argues that the answers to these questions are found in making *connections* between two worlds, the natural and the supernatural. It was to making such connections, and making them *visibly*, that Day dedicated her life as a Catholic. In fact, she converted in part out of disillusionment with communism's impersonal nature and lack of a spiritual foundation. Her attraction to communism was not deeply theoretical. Rather, it was grounded in a desire to identify with the poor, and it was her recognition that the Catholic Church truly unified immigrants and workers that drew her to it:

My very experience as a radical, my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God. Without even looking into the claims of the Catholic Church, I was willing to admit that for me she was the one true Church. . . . It may have been an unthinking, unquestioning faith, and yet the chance certainly came, again and again, "Do I prefer the Church to my own will?" . . . And the choice was the Church.<sup>8</sup>

Day was familiar with little of the Church's doctrine or social teaching at the time of her conversion or for several years afterward, but she immersed herself in its practices, which slowly opened her eyes to the community she had longed for, a connection with a story larger than her own. June O'Connor argues that Day underwent "a reorientation of her whole person such that desire and commitment, passion and generosity, become integrally united."<sup>9</sup> However, very little of this reorientation took place initially. Instead, her "unthinking" entry into the Church made possible a later cognitive conversion that began in earnest when she met Maurin, an itinerant French peasant whose stated purpose was "to make the encyclicals click."<sup>10</sup> Day not only had a natural compassion for the

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<sup>8</sup>Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day*, with a foreword by Robert Coles (New York: Harper & Row, 1952; reprint, San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 139.

<sup>9</sup>June O'Connor, "Dorothy Day's Christian Conversion," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 18 (spring 1990), 164.

<sup>10</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 194.

poor; she wanted to change the circumstances that led to poverty and injustice, and through Catholic social teaching and papal encyclicals Maurin helped her to reconsider her negative perception of the Church's positions and to reconcile them with her "radical" convictions. As Cornell, a former editor of the *Catholic Worker*, says, her pacifism was also partly formed prior to her conversion: "By nature Dorothy had a visceral revulsion against war. Part of it was her sense of human solidarity, part was natural sympathy for the abused, and part was an intuition that the lofty ideals always appealed to by every side in every war are a cover for base motives."<sup>11</sup> Still, these convictions were incomplete and can only partially explain the woman who titled a 1948 essay "We Are Un-American: We Are Catholics." Maurin's ruminations on modern warfare and her study of Scripture, theology, and the Catholic tradition transformed her "visceral revulsion" and gave her convictions a power they would not have had otherwise, power to witness to both the Church and the state.

For those who are doers and not only hearers, "Following has become not mere attentive perception, but life itself; now following is called *discipleship*. Moreover, the Christian story being what it is, such active followers will follow *by the Christian rules for following*." Day's Catholicism involves more than a spiritual connection, for she believes that it is both true and rational. As McClendon adds, "Faithful witness must distinguish between a path of *approach* to the gospel (in which the seeker need only ask, what would my life be if these things were true?) and a path of *following* it. 'Virtual reality' is not enough; we live by having a share in this truth."<sup>12</sup> The context for

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<sup>11</sup>Cornell.

<sup>12</sup>McClendon, *Witness*, 356-57.

following the gospel, then, is participation in a *tradition*. In short, Day submitted to Catholicism as her tradition, which she had never done with communism, and it became the basis of her spirituality, her theology, and her understanding of reality itself.

It is important, then, to understand how traditions function in general and how the Catholic tradition functions in Day's life in particular. In his seminal work *After Virtue* MacIntyre argues that conceptions of rational enquiry are found within certain social traditions. Thus the rationality of a particular action can only be answered by accepting the philosophical commitments of a given tradition; there is no objective rationality outside such a tradition. According to MacIntyre, "A living tradition . . . is a historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely about the goods which constitute that tradition."<sup>13</sup> Terrence Tilley adds that traditions are "not fixed but fluid" and "neither made nor found, yet both constructed and given." Following Yves Congar, Tilley argues that traditions (*traditio*) are not simply content (*tradita*) but require both givers and receivers. Thus they have two essential qualities: "First, the *sensus fidelium* is passed on in the practices of the faithful. Second, if this faith is to be kept alive, it requires that the faithful of every place and order in the enduring community that is the Church Militant engage in inventing Catholic tradition." For the *tradita* to be received in each new context they not only can but must change and may require "extensive reworking." By "inventing" Tilley does not mean that such changes are deliberate or necessarily novel; they are better understood as reformation or renewal. The most important thing is not to know *what* a tradition is. Rather, "Knowing a tradition is much more fundamentally a knowing *how* to live in and live out a tradition." This process

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<sup>13</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 222.

requires people—witnesses—who, though shaped by traditions, “can and do reshape traditions as they receive them by enacting them.” The approaches of Congar, MacIntyre, McClendon, and others “all show that because there are such tight connections among actions, beliefs, and attitudes in a tradition, one cannot understand beliefs without understanding the actions and attitudes with which they are linked in a practice or set of practices.”<sup>14</sup>

Again, it was Day’s engagement in practices that brought her from an isolated conversion to the communal life of the Worker. The question facing her, like that facing every convert, was how to relate her new faith to the culture from which she had come. According to McClendon, “Witnessing requires a new sociality, a revised engagement with those still fixed in the culture of origin.” Witnessing also requires membership in a community with a goal or *end*—what MacIntyre calls a *telos*—participating in a story they believe to be true.<sup>15</sup> Building on McClendon’s definition, Tilley notes three characteristics of practice: (1) a shared *vision*, or “a web of convictions expressing the goal of the practice”; (2) the development of *dispositions* “appropriate for persons involved in the practice”; (3) a *grammar*, or “a set of inferred rules that show how means and ends are connected in the patterns of life that constitute the practice.” Thus a tradition is “an enduring practice or set of linked practices” and the Catholic tradition is “a set of practices that, when engaged in properly, shape people into a communion of saints.” Neither practice nor participation is reducible to following a rule. Instead, the

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<sup>14</sup>Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 6-15, 29, 45-46, 52. See Yves Congar, O.P., *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay*, trans. Michael Naseby and Thomas Rainborough (New York: Macmillan, 1967). Tilley warns against delineating the “core” of any tradition and notes that such expressions are always contextualized; he prefers John Henry Newman’s “idea” of Christianity.

<sup>15</sup>McClendon, *Witness*, 21, 350.

authenticity of a tradition is revealed in its witnesses: “As with a language, so with a tradition; we really only have performances of the faith before us. . . . We cannot but begin with performances and their patterns, that is, practices.”<sup>16</sup>

The relationship of the Catholic tradition and its practices to Day’s witness will become clear in the following chapters when I attend to the specific liturgical, spiritual, and theological practices that correlate with the principles of her pacifism. For example, the Eucharist and the doctrine of the mystical body shape her impulse toward solidarity with the poor, her compassion is given structure by a commitment to voluntary poverty and the works of mercy, and her sense of truth is reformed by these practices and intense study of Scripture, encyclicals, theology, and literature as well as public debate and activism. It is also important to highlight the concept of a shared vision, which “tends to distinguish a religious practice from other types of practices.”<sup>17</sup> What is shared among Catholics is complex, of course, but it is a vision of what Catholicism is or could be that Day did not have before encountering Maurin. In other words, he shared with her his vision of the Catholic tradition and her life is best understood as a performance of that vision through which she passed it on to others. The truth of Day’s belief is validated by her performance; this is what I mean by “witness.” McClendon explains:

To speak truly and faithfully of God is indeed to speak in models, images, analogies—we have no other way. Yet images can speak not only falsehood but also truth. Some set of images, some vision of reality, is better than all the rest because it is truer, more faithful, more open to hard fact and to beauty and to wonder—more open to the realms of science, of art, and of faith. . . .

The vindication of vision depends in part upon the quality of life which that vision evokes. And thus we come for the time being to mention a final aid which

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<sup>16</sup>Tilley, 53-58, 65. See James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, *Doctrine* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

these image-bearing lives may provide to theology—they are witnesses concerning the vision which they represent. . . . Thus theology is drawn by its biographic material to face a challenge not only to its propositions, but also to the selfhood of its practitioners.<sup>18</sup>

A theologian cannot approach the life of a Dorothy Day and not be challenged by the character of that life, and this idea finally approaches the heart of her pacifist witness. Pacifism cannot remain purely theoretical, particularly if it is to challenge those who would dismiss it. Rather, to be effectively communicated it must be embodied. Personally, I find Day's life to be challenging not only to my consideration of the theology of violence but to my understanding of the very nature of the church catholic. Her witness has forced me to recognize the deficiencies of the ecclesiology of the Baptist tradition. However, not only do I see that the Catholic tradition has wisdom to impart to my tradition, but I also believe that the "catholic baptist" vision of McClendon and Yoder has wisdom for both of these traditions. It is my hope that this thesis will be received in an ecumenical spirit that seeks to uncover the peaceable character of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The pacifist witness of Dorothy Day approaches this goal in three ways: first, it reveals that Christians can be both radical and orthodox; second, it stirs us to actively contend with the violence of the modern world; and third, it engages tensions in the theology of violence in a fresh and constructive manner. In the next chapter, then, I will proceed to the first of the three principles that inform this witness: solidarity.

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<sup>18</sup>McClendon, *Biography as Theology*, 110.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Solidarity

Perhaps Dorothy Day's writing and activism or her life at the New York Catholic Worker house are more obviously related to the concept of "witness," but it is also important to consider their spiritual and doctrinal source: her commitment to *solidarity*, which began to take shape when the young Day became aware of urban poverty through walks on Chicago's South Side. Communism was her first attempt to synthesize her convictions in a form of life; it offered a cause to serve, something to believe in, even if she knew little of the intellectual content of its teachings. As a communist she was told that violence was sometimes necessary to achieve good ends for the poor, but this principle never took hold. Rather, through her relationship with Peter Maurin and immersion in Catholic tradition Day's identification with "the masses" blossomed into an embrace of the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ. Her quest for the implications of this doctrine in all areas of life, political and otherwise, led her to develop a profound sense of solidarity with all persons created in the image of God—including the poor *and* the enemy. While she expressed it in both word and deed, in this chapter I will examine how this solidarity was grounded in prayer, contemplation, and theological reflection.

#### *Identification with the Masses*

Day never joined the Communist Party, nor did she engage in its politics or undertake study of Marxist theory. Her attraction was due instead to the radical culture around the time of European revolutions—"when hopes ran high for a dramatic change in

the social order”—and a sincere, though unfocused, moral sensibility.<sup>1</sup> Day was baptized into the Episcopal Church, but her father was a skeptic and the family rarely went to church together. Art, books, and nature were substitutes for religion. Robert Coles says that “the connection between ‘art’ and life’ was real, substantial, a powerful influence on her everyday actions” and predated any connection to socialism or Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Day was inspired by Jack London’s essays on the class struggle and Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, and though she had yet to interact with the poor, she identified with them: “The very fact that *The Jungle* was about Chicago where I lived, whose streets I walked, made me feel that from then on my life was to be linked to theirs, their interests were to be mine; I had received a call, a vocation, a direction to my life.”<sup>3</sup> When she looked to her limited faith for support it was easily pushed aside: “My belief in God remained firm and I continued to read the New Testament regularly, but I felt it was no longer necessary to go to church. I distrusted all churches after reading the books of London and Sinclair.”<sup>4</sup> As Sandra Yocum Mize notes, Day had “a personal, apolitical religiosity unprepared for adolescent rebellion” and “a complacency ripe for the Marxist critique.”<sup>5</sup>

At college Day found camaraderie and inspiration in the growing number of social activists on campus and rediscovered the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. While both were adult converts, the Russians could hardly have been more

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<sup>1</sup>McClendon, *Ethics*, 288.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1987), 21.

<sup>3</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 38.

<sup>4</sup>William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 29.

<sup>5</sup>Sandra Yocum Mize, “Dorothy Day’s *Apologia* for Faith After Marx,” *Horizons* 22, no. 2 (fall 1995), 201.

different. Tolstoy was a rich man who became an idealist, an anarchist and pacifist who sought suffering that would bring enlightenment. His ideals were perhaps more like Day's; indeed, his negative illustration of violence in *War and Peace* influenced her pacifism. However, it was Dostoevsky's emphasis on the unity of humanity that captured her, and she quotes him in *From Union Square to Rome*: "All my life I have been haunted by God." The authors helped her "cling to a faith in God," but she believed that her faith "had nothing in common with that of the Christians around me . . . and the ugliness of life in a world which professed itself to be Christian appalled me. . . . I felt that I must turn from [faith] as from a drug."<sup>6</sup> She dropped out of college after just two years, moved to New York, and went to work for the *Call*, whose staff represented the many varieties of socialism. Still, Day was never formally a member of any of these groups; in fact, "her comrades said she would never be a good Communist, because she was too religious—a character out of Dostoevsky, a woman haunted by God."<sup>7</sup>

As a reporter Day covered a speech by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who later went to prison for her leadership of the Communist Party, and interviewed Leon Trotsky before the November Revolution. Neither impressed her, and she found herself mired in the feeling that would give rise to the title of her autobiography: "As I walked those streets back in 1917 I wanted to go and live among these surroundings; in some mysterious way I felt that I would never be freed from this burden of loneliness and sorrow unless I did." In response Day immersed herself in a variety of activist causes, particularly those

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<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings: By Little and By Little*, ed. with an introduction by Robert Ellsberg (New York: Knopf, 1983; reprint, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 9; *The Long Loneliness*, 43. Recall Marx's accusation that religion is "an opiate of the people."

<sup>7</sup>Paul Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2003), 17.

directed against the nation's mobilization for war. That year proved to be pivotal in the development of her pacifism, for it brought not only her first direct encounters with violence but also her first attempt to act on her identification with the poor. It brought her first arrest as well (during a strike for women's suffrage) and the rough treatment during her month-long sentence proved difficult to endure. "I would be utterly crushed by misery before I was released," she later wrote. "Never would I recover from this wound, this ugly knowledge I had gained of what men were capable in their treatment of each other."<sup>8</sup> She wondered what good suffrage would do, since everyone seemed primed for war regardless of his or her gender. While in jail she read the Psalms and prayed, although Mize believes that this served only "to mask the personal pain of injustice rather than to foment the social change needed to end its root cause."<sup>9</sup> Day's account supports this assessment, for while her attachment to communism was ambiguous, her periodic religious "responses" were always undertaken privately. Still, O'Connor adds, "Religious faith had a longer history in her soul than her radical sympathies." This faith led eventually to conversion, for "she recognized herself, in a word, as a *religious person*, attuned to the reality and presence of God."<sup>10</sup>

That Day was open to alternatives is apparent in her response to the war. After her arrest she worked for the *Masses*, a magazine opposing American intervention, then for the Collegiate Anti-Militarism League (CAML), which she referred to as the "Anti-Conscription League." She found the CAML's tactics too moderate and joined with

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<sup>8</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 51, 79.

<sup>9</sup>Mize, 202.

<sup>10</sup>June O'Connor, "Dorothy Day as Autobiographer," *Religion* 20 (July 1990), 284, 290.

others in attempting to push it “from polite dissent to war resistance.”<sup>11</sup> After the institution of the draft, however, she began work as a nurse, prompting scorn from friends. Day remained against the conflict, but nursing was an opportunity to offer direct aid to the poor, many of them displaced (and unionized) workers and victims of class and police violence. Isolated from her former associates and still finding her spirituality primarily through books, she became curious about the services at a Catholic church near the hospital and began standing in the back, unnoticed, nearly every day. Although she apparently saw no connection between the Mass and her work as a nurse, she was essentially performing the corporal works of mercy.<sup>12</sup>

However, Day’s community remained elsewhere, with the playwright Eugene O’Neill and other bohemian writers in New York’s Village district. Her relationship with O’Neill is important, Forest says, because “he was the only one in her circle of friends who shared something of the need which drove her into churches.”<sup>13</sup> O’Neill, a lapsed Catholic, sometimes recited Francis Thompson’s “The Hound of Heaven” to her, kindling her sense of being pursued by God. Elie adds that Day’s attraction to the bohemians was largely about the questions she shared with them: “How might the writer take part in the affairs of the day? How could they reconcile the solitude and apartness of the writer’s life with concern for the general welfare of society?”<sup>14</sup> She found few

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<sup>11</sup>Anne Klejment, “The Radical Origins of Catholic Pacifism: Dorothy Day and the Lyrical Left During World War I,” in *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), 19.

<sup>12</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 223.

<sup>13</sup>Jim Forest, *Love Is the Measure: A Biography of Dorothy Day* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994), 43.

<sup>14</sup>Elie, 45.

answers, however; this was the beginning of a very dark period, punctuated by the suicide of a friend who died in her arms and an apparent attempt on her own life. A doomed love affair, an abortion, and a failed marriage followed. Several of her biographers have postulated that the abortion was a turning point, the experience of sin that spurred her toward God, but if it was she never so much as hinted at it in print. Rather, Gary Wills is likely correct in stating that her “experiments” and rebellions were, at their core, attempts to find God.<sup>15</sup> That Day’s journey was so Augustinian in character comports well with her willingness to share intimate details in order to show her readers that they, too, had a home in the Church. More important, hers was also a search for peace, for her life up to that point had been marked by encounters with physical and emotional violence.

Although she moved numerous times over the next few years, Day encountered friends and neighbors practicing their faith, often attended services, and studied the New Testament, Blaise Pascal, Thomas à Kempis, and Dostoevsky. She began to recognize her sinfulness and desire for communion and even said the rosary, yet it was the birth of her daughter that finally moved her to convert. Her insistence on having Tamar baptized, in fact, ended her common-law marriage to Forster Batterham, a topic discussed at length in *The Long Loneliness*. Batterham, an atheist, saw the Catholic Church, with its stand against communism, as diametrically opposed to social progress. Day shared these sentiments and cherished her “natural happiness” with Batterham, but she also realized that “there was a greater happiness to be obtained from life than any I had ever known.”<sup>16</sup> Elie, for one, thinks that Batterham “is largely a literary device, and that Day’s deepest

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<sup>15</sup>Gary Wills, “Dorothy Day at the Barricades,” *Esquire*, December 1983, 230.

<sup>16</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 116.

conflict was with herself—a conflict between her fidelity to her radical background and her desire to set out on a different path.”<sup>17</sup> Clearly, however, she associated the Church with *charity*, “something to gag over, something to shudder at. The true meaning of the word we did not know.” In short, she believed that it was escapist and functionally, if not intentionally, on the side of the oppressors, giving the occasional handout but not challenging the social order. This is partly due to ignorance. For example, when a priest asked her to write about how the Church’s social teaching had led to her conversion, Day replied that she had “never heard of the encyclicals.” Indeed, while working for the *Call* she had interviewed a Jesuit who quoted extensively from *Rerum Novarum*, but she paid him no attention; Catholics were “a world apart, a people within a people, making little impression on the tremendous non-Catholic population of the country.”<sup>18</sup>

Initially, Keith Morton and John Saltmarsh conclude, “Catholicism did not resolve the tensions in Day’s life, did not provide the ‘synthesis’ she longed for. It grounded her spirituality but seemingly contradicted her politics.”<sup>19</sup> Coles, however, believes that she “married the church with her eyes wide open, her determination mixed with knowing resignation.”<sup>20</sup> Regardless, Day affirmed the Church’s claim to be “the tangible union between heaven and earth, between eternity and time” and “a substance to which she could attach herself.”<sup>21</sup> “I could worship, adore, praise and thank Him in the

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<sup>17</sup>Elie, 49.

<sup>18</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 87, 150, 62-63.

<sup>19</sup>Keith Morton and John Saltmarsh, “A Cultural Context for Understanding Dorothy Day’s Social and Political Thought,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 249.

<sup>20</sup>Coles, *Dorothy Day*, 65.

<sup>21</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 190, 197.

company of others,” she later wrote. “It is difficult to do that without a ritual, without a body with which to love and move, love and praise. I found faith. I became a member of the mystical body of Christ.”<sup>22</sup> According to John Mitchell, the usual dynamic of education in which the believer is introduced “to the symbols of Christian faith, the dignity of human persons, the mystery of suffering and redemption and the solidarity all people share with one another” was reversed for Day: “It wasn’t the Church which awakened her to the poor, to the meaning of suffering or the need for community. However, her conversion enabled her to understand the meaning of her convictions more profoundly.”<sup>23</sup> O’Connor adds that Day’s conversion narrative shows “a reorientation of her whole person such that desire and commitment, passion and generosity, become integrally united.” This *affective* conversion is also *cognitive*: “As her prereflective desires become oriented to God, she simultaneously becomes primed to appreciate a wholly new cognitive context in terms of which her attractions and commitments make sense.”<sup>24</sup> “Primed” is the key word, for while she was welcomed into an ecclesial body, her connection to it began with a single realization: that the Church, quite literally, *was* the poor; that is, the flood of immigrants in the cities was overwhelmingly Catholic.

The primary obstacle to Day’s exploration of this realization was her isolation, as she attended Mass regularly but kept her distance from the other parishioners. Further, like many progressives she had become a pacifist, but she had not acted on that belief, “even though in most other respects she shared their motivating assumptions,” because

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<sup>22</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 10.

<sup>23</sup>John J. Mitchell, *Critical Voices in American Catholic Economic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 161.

<sup>24</sup>O’Connor, “Dorothy Day’s Christian Conversion,” 164, 172.

“she was still seeking a way of life.”<sup>25</sup> In 1929 she worked briefly for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Protestant organization developing nonviolent methods for the labor movement. Although she would be a lifelong member of the FOR, at the time she felt isolated as the only Catholic on the staff. By this time she was also separated from nearly all her friends: “Being a Catholic, I discovered, put a barrier between me and others; however slight, it was always felt.”<sup>26</sup> She retreated to Mexico and two sources of solace: her daughter and the liturgy. It is important to recognize these as dynamically re-forming her understanding of solidarity. Day had never been close with her family or maintained many enduring friendships, but her love for Tamar was a connection deeper than any she had known and affected her valuation of human life, especially life requiring much from others. Further, the Eucharist brought not only the grace of the real presence (in the Catholic understanding) but instruction in the doctrine of the mystical body and preparation for the next stage of her life.

That stage began soon after her return to New York. Now distanced from the thriving activism in the city, Day felt “out of it” as a Catholic: “There was Catholic membership in all these groups, of course, but no Catholic leadership. It was that very year that Pope Pius XI said sadly, . . . ‘The workers of the world are lost to the Church.’”<sup>27</sup> Before leaving for Mexico, however, she had lined up several commissions with George Shuster of *Commonweal*, a left-leaning Catholic magazine, and in 1933 he enlisted her to cover an unemployment protest in Washington. The event stirred feelings

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<sup>25</sup>Charles Chatfield, “The Catholic Worker in the United States Peace Tradition,” in *American Catholic Pacifism*, ed. Klejment and Roberts, 4.

<sup>26</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 162.

<sup>27</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 72.

of bitterness within Day because it was organized by communists, not Christians. She felt “the call to action” and believed Christ was with the marchers—she called them “His comrades”—so she prayed that “some way would open up for me to use what talents I possessed for my fellow workers, the poor.”<sup>28</sup>

### *Transforming the Social Order*

The legend is that Maurin was waiting for Day on her front steps, although the truth may be slightly different. Still, she did meet him after returning from Washington and he did explain his three-point plan: founding a newspaper for “clarification of thought,” starting “houses of hospitality,” and organizing farming communes. Maurin had spent the previous seven years on a quest to find someone to help him implement this plan, Shuster had recommended Day, and the *Catholic Worker* was born. “He told Peter that we both had similar ideas,” she writes in *Loaves and Fishes*. “Namely, that the Catholic Church had a social teaching which could be applied to the problems of our day.”<sup>29</sup> This may contradict her other statements about being unaware of this teaching, or it may simply mean that while her ideas were embryonic, Maurin’s were explicit and articulated. It may also be an example of deference to him. Day often refers to Maurin as the founder of the *Worker* and to herself as his disciple, and her stated purpose is “to embody his principles and present them to the world.”<sup>30</sup> Some have commented that this was more her creative legend-building than reality, and the *Worker* movement was

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<sup>28</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 169; Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 226.

<sup>29</sup>Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963; reprint, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997), 13.

<sup>30</sup>Marc H. Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker: A Spiritual Journey Among the Poor* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978; reprint, Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2000), 52.

certainly more her creation than his, particularly in its pacifism. However, it was through him that she received a historically and theologically informed picture of Catholic tradition. She resisted the urge to turn him away and, in turn, he treated her as an equal in faith. In O'Connor's words, "Captivated by Maurin's vision partly, certainly, because it called on and affirmed her own already well-formed interests in the plight of the poor, Dorothy Day then found—and created—her 'vocation.'"<sup>31</sup> Thus the cognitive aspect of her conversion was perfected when she made this vision her own.

The essence of Maurin's vision is a solidarity that balances personal concern for the individual with a call for transformation of the social order. After the establishment of the first "house of hospitality" in New York's Bowery district Maurin implemented his program for "clarification of thought"—regular meetings at which he instructed Day and others using Scripture and encyclicals as primary texts. While he certainly added his own twists to the encyclicals, he was quite faithful to their spirit. Day says that he "spoke in terms of ideas, rather than personalities," "stressed the importance of theory," and "found a common ground with all in what he termed the Thomistic doctrine of the common good."<sup>32</sup> For Maurin the encyclicals bring these traditional doctrines into the present and, via the mystical body, connect the "individual" justice of the workers' movements into a spiritual whole. What is good for the individual—steady employment and personal freedom—is also good for the social order.

Maurin had been immersed in the encyclicals thirty years earlier while a member of *Le Sillon*, a French movement that supported democracy (as well as cooperatives and

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<sup>31</sup>O'Connor, "Dorothy Day's Christian Conversion," 165.

<sup>32</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 169-70.

unions) but preached “a Tolstoyan kind of pacifist opposition to the rising spirit of nationalism and militarism.”<sup>33</sup> *Le Sillon* was heavily influenced by *Rerum Novarum* (1891), in which Leo XIII sought a *via media* between socialism and liberalism by arguing for humanity’s natural right to associate and earn a living wage. More important, Leo says, “The practice of all ages has consecrated the principle of private ownership, as being pre-eminently in conformity with human nature, and as conducing in the most unmistakable manner to the peace and tranquility of human existence.”<sup>34</sup> According to Patricia McNeal, “[Leo’s] central concern was for a new international order in which peace was based on justice and love rather than on military defense, and he called for a reevaluation of the justice of defensive wars in a technological world. He also asked Christians to follow Peter’s call to obey God above humans, beginning a new era in which the church would declare independence from any particular social order for the first time since Constantine.”<sup>35</sup> Ronald Musto adds that *Rerum Novarum*, along with the Council of Trent, marked the beginning of a revolution in the papacy, which had remained largely isolated from the social and political trends of the nineteenth century:

If papal authoritarianism and its fears of the non-Catholic world were largely responsible for the repression of most Catholic dissent and individual peacemaking in the era after Trent, the changing attitudes of popes from Leo XIII to John XXIII toward the role of Catholics as peacemakers can indeed be seen as the fountainhead of Catholic efforts for peace in the twentieth century. The progress of papal thought on peace was certainly not simplistic—a move from a theology of authoritarianism to a theology of liberation. During [these] hundred years the popes rediscovered the essence of the Mystical Body: truth resides not only in the

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<sup>33</sup>Mary C. Segers, “Equality and Christian Anarchism: the Political and Social Ideas of the Catholic Worker Movement,” *Review of Politics* 40 (April 1978), 204-5.

<sup>34</sup>Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum*, 15 May 1891, no. 11.

<sup>35</sup>Patricia McNeal, *Harder than War: Catholic Peacemaking in Twentieth-Century America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-2.

head, but also in the members and spiritual strength resides throughout its physical and spiritual being.<sup>36</sup>

Pius XI built on Leo's foundation in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) but was more radical in calling for changes in modern economic systems. Pius noted that Leo's teaching had been held as suspect by a significant number of Catholics, specifically because it had "boldly attacked and overturned the idols of Liberalism, ignored long-standing prejudices, and was in advance of its time beyond all expectation," to the point that it was regarded as "a kind of imaginary ideal of perfection more desirable than attainable."<sup>37</sup> Maurin, however, accepted Pius' challenge to the lay apostolate to help bring about the perfection of the social order, while Day affirmed his critiques of communism for eliminating private ownership and viewing human association as a means to material advantage. As John XXIII reiterates in *Mater et Magistra*, "Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time. . . . Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority."<sup>38</sup> The pillars of private property, economic cooperation, and community are essential for establishing and maintaining peace among individuals and nations, and the bonds they create are fully realized only in the body of Christ:

For justice alone can, if faithfully observed, remove the causes of social conflict but can never bring about union of minds and hearts. Indeed all the institutions for the establishment of peace and the promotion of mutual help among men, however perfect these may seem, have the principal foundation of their stability in the mutual bond of minds and hearts whereby the members are united with one

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<sup>36</sup>Ronald G. Musto, *The Catholic Peace Tradition* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986), 169.

<sup>37</sup>Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, 15 May 1931, no. 14.

<sup>38</sup>John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961, no. 34.

another. If this bond is lacking, the best of regulations come to naught, as we have learned by too frequent experience. And so, then only will true cooperation be possible for a single common good when the constituent parts of society deeply feel themselves members of one great family and children of the same Heavenly Father; nay, that they are one body in Christ, “but severally members one of another,” (Rom 12:5) so that “if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor 12:26).<sup>39</sup>

Maurin was critical of *Quadragesimo Anno* because it did not affirm the ideal of personal responsibility in *Auspicato Concessum*, Leo’s encyclical on Francis of Assisi.<sup>40</sup> However, he affirmed Pius’ elevation of social action over political action because he saw the soul as intimately bound up with the spiritual, a principle negated by modernity’s rejection of tradition. For Maurin, Marc Ellis says, this meant “not simply secularization, but economic, military, and political systems freed from the guidance of the spirit and thus from protection afforded the person by the canopy of eternity,” leaving them free to oppress rather than serve the person.<sup>41</sup> It was this integrated, spiritual view of tradition that steadily displaced Day’s communist rationality. According to James Fisher, her conversion is “an illustration of the theory that an individual who ‘converts’ from one orientation to its exact opposite appears to himself and others to have made a gross change, but it actually involves only a very small shift in the balance of a focal and persistent conflict.”<sup>42</sup> Day, however, does not share Fisher’s assumption that Christianity and communism are opposites. Rather, Mize says, she recognizes that “Christianity

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<sup>39</sup>Pius XI, no. 137.

<sup>40</sup>Dorothy Day, “Days with an End,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1934. See Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Auspicato Concessum*, 17 September 1882.

<sup>41</sup>Marc H. Ellis, *Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 90. Recall MacIntyre’s diagnosis, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter five.

<sup>42</sup>James T. Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America: 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 14.

supersedes the communist vision of a classless society through concrete practices. Indeed, the Worker movement “provided a shared practical synthesis of all the elements of an authentic faith after Marx.”<sup>43</sup> Day remains sympathetic to communists because she knows the strength of their conviction and accepts many of their critiques of society and the church. In this she echoes Pius XI, who distinguishes between communism and a more moderate socialism that “inclines toward and in a certain measure approaches the truths which Christian tradition has always held sacred.”<sup>44</sup>

Many of Day’s associates initially appreciated the fact that conversion had not altered her belief in the possibility of social change. However, William Miller says, “The difference was that her friends talked of this goal as something that would crown their revolutionary struggle—that would be found in time. But for Dorothy, as she came to see, the way was love and the end was eternity.”<sup>45</sup> She also sees that socialism actually complicates the attainment of justice by building up divisions between people. In contrast, “The supernatural approach when understood is to turn the other cheek, to give up what one has, willingly, gladly, with no spirit of martyrdom, to rejoice in being the least, to be unrecognized, the slighted.”<sup>46</sup> Day advocates a decentralized economy that will allow all persons to enjoy the independence and dignity of work, and she fashions Maurin’s personalist philosophy into a critique of capitalism and socialism’s shared method of using “the masses” to achieve an equally impersonal end, “the state.” Because she takes Marx’s indictment seriously she can offer a fully Christian response in which

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<sup>43</sup>Mize, 205-7.

<sup>44</sup>Pius XI, no. 112-13.

<sup>45</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 199.

<sup>46</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 59.

“the demand for justice stays in this world, but the recognized sources for these natural aspirations are genuinely spiritual—a spirituality rooted in papal social teaching itself rooted in the Incarnation culminating in the Cross. To practice this spirituality means hardship, sacrifice, and dedication to the joys and sorrows in the present.”<sup>47</sup>

### *Natural and Supernatural*

Day recognizes that Catholicism requires a deeper solidarity than one built solely on the equality of persons in the present. She advocates revolution not through slogans but through the sacraments and the works of mercy; these are the “elements” that truly differentiate the Worker. It was rare for her to miss daily Mass (or weekly confession), for she believed that it is “the one immediate step to be taken towards peace”: “I can sit in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament and wrestle for that peace in the bitterness of my soul, a bitterness which many Catholics throughout the world feel, and I can find many things in Scripture to console me, to change my heart from hatred to love of enemy.”<sup>48</sup> Mitchell says that for Day the Eucharist is “a powerful symbol of God’s love for the world and the solidarity God intended between all people.”<sup>49</sup> However, it is more than a “symbol.” For her, in fact, the doctrine of the real presence distinguishes the Catholic faith from the many who merely “admire” Jesus:

If you know the New Testament at all (and you ought to look into it if you do not know it, for many Communists express an admiration for the Man Jesus, and I.W.W.’s in the old days used to speak of “Comrade Jesus”), you will find there that the first to whom Christ taught this doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament turned

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<sup>47</sup>Mize, 211, 208.

<sup>48</sup>Dorothy Day, “Day After Day: Thoughts on Breadlines and on the War,” *Catholic Worker*, June 1940; “In Peace Is My Bitterness Most Bitter,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1967.

<sup>49</sup>Mitchell, 161.

from Him. This teaching, that Christ would be their daily bread, was so simple, so elemental a thing, in spite of its mystery, that children and the simplest and least of people in the world could accept it. . . .

We are not capable always of feelings of love, awe, gratitude, and repentance. So Christ has taken the form of bread that we may more readily approach Him, and feeding daily, assimilating Christ so that it is not we but Christ working in us, we may be made more capable of understanding and realizing and loving Him.<sup>50</sup>

Roberto Goizueta adds that a sacrament presupposes that “the concrete, particular object or entity that embodies the universal reality is *in fact* historically concrete and particular.” This is why it is important that the Eucharist be *real* bread and wine “capable of being eaten and drunk,” for in this way it enables us to recognize the *real* presence, the connection between natural and supernatural. Although the substance of the bread and wine change when consecrated, their appearance as natural still has value: “One cannot love the universal and supernatural if one cannot love the particular and natural—and love these precisely *as* particular and natural. One cannot love the Creator if one cannot love the creature—and love him, her, or it precisely *as* creature.”<sup>51</sup>

Before I discuss Day’s understanding of the mystical body and the relationship of natural and supernatural I must briefly address the recent history of the Church’s teaching on these issues. The popularity of the doctrine of the mystical body reached its zenith in the late medieval period only to fade in the wake of the Reformation. It was renewed by Pius IX in *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore* (1863), which qualified the traditional phrase *extra ecclesium nulla sillas* by stating that those who are ignorant of Christianity but cooperate with divine grace can arrive at justification and salvation. In response many

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<sup>50</sup>Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome* (Silver Spring, Md.: Preservation of the Faith Press, 1938; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1978), 160.

<sup>51</sup>Roberto S. Goizueta, *Camínemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 48-49.

theologians posited that persons could be in the mystical or “invisible” church without being in communion with Rome, thus implying the coexistence of two “churches”—one the “body,” the other the “soul.”<sup>52</sup> Pius’ *Syllabus Errorum* (1864) essentially outlined the aspects of modernity that were to be rejected, and together these documents reinforced the “layer-cake” theology of a “super-nature” of church and revelation over the world and reason, leading to the Church’s withdrawal into a shell of sorts and opening another avenue for socialist philosophy to penetrate society.

The election of Leo XIII in 1878 was a crucial turning point. In *Rerum Novarum* Leo argued that liberalism gave birth to the mirror images of capitalism and socialism and implied that the individual could stand apart from society and choose between them. A group of theologians took up these critiques as well as Leo’s challenge to formulate a renewed Thomism rejecting the separation of the sacred and the secular, and the movement they started would reach its fruition with Vatican II. William Cavanaugh argues that the resurgence of the mystical body in this period was “an attempt to counterbalance the emphasis on the juridical, institutional nature of the Church” that had dominated since the work of Robert Bellarmine in the sixteenth century: “The term Mystical Body seemed to capture a new feeling that the Church was more than an institution, a semi-divine bureaucracy, but rather a communion that united in spirit Catholics of all nation-states despite the irrevocable disappearance of a united Christendom.” Whereas Leo had called for Catholic participation in democratic culture, Pius XI argued that the Church ought to “stop fighting the separation of Church and

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<sup>52</sup>Francis A. Sullivan, S.J. *Salvation Outside the Church?: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 123-24. See Pius IX, encyclical letter *Quanto Conficiamur Moerore*, 10 August 1863; document *Syllabus Errorum*, 8 December 1864.

state” and withdraw from politics in order to focus on moral unity. He used the image of the mystical body, as well as the “visible church,” to express this unity. According to Cavanaugh, “It was not that Pius XI wanted to retreat into a purely privatized version of Christianity; rather, he wanted to hew to a distinction between the political and the social.”<sup>53</sup> However, Sullivan describes the confusion that persisted:

For many years, Catholic theologians had been accustomed to discussing the notion of the mystical body in their treatise on grace, whereas their ecclesiology dealt almost exclusively with the institutional church as a “perfect society.” Membership in the mystical body was understood to depend on the degree to which one shared in the life of Christ by grace, whereas membership in the institutional church required professing Catholic faith, receiving the sacraments and being in communion with the Catholic bishops and with the pope. At the same time, it was also understood that the term “mystical body” was a traditional way of referring to the church. Thus one could explain how no one is saved “outside the church,” because people who are not members of the church as a visible society are, if they are in the state of grace, members of the mystical body.<sup>54</sup>

Emile Mersch’s *The Theology of the Mystical Body* (1935) emphasized the distinction between visible and invisible and attracted many followers, but others, notably Yves Congar, argued that the institutional church was the instrument of the true church (i.e., the mystical body) and that the two were “organically united.” Congar did recognize “elements” of the mystical body outside the Church and that “non-Catholics living in the grace of Christ could be said to belong ‘invisibly,’ and ‘incompletely,’ and yet ‘really.’” In *Catholicism* (1938), however, French theologian Henri de Lubac criticized the “body-soul” distinction as insufficient and Congar’s critique as incomplete.

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<sup>53</sup>William T. Cavanaugh, “Dorothy Day and the Mystical Body of Christ in the Second World War,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 458.

<sup>54</sup>Sullivan, 127-28.

Rather than focus on the “formation of individuals,” he emphasized the role of the church in the salvation of “humanity as a whole.”<sup>55</sup>

Pius XII responded to this debate with *Mystici Corporis Christi* (1943), which declared the baptized membership of the Catholic Church alone to be the mystical body of Christ. While non-Catholics can be related to the mystical body “by a certain unconscious desire and wish,” they remain deprived of “many and so powerful gifts and helps . . . which can be enjoyed only within the Catholic Church.”<sup>56</sup> This teaching faced strong objections and the documents of Vatican II reflect a more nuanced understanding. Still, this at least partially explains why these documents (e.g., *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes*) favor the phrase “people of God” when speaking of non-Catholics. As Sullivan says, “Since the term ‘the people of God’ in the documents of Vatican II is synonymous with ‘the church,’ the first sentence [of paragraph 13 in *Lumen Gentium*] means that all are called to belong to the church.” In other words, those who “belong” are Catholics; everyone else is “related.” This distinction has been clarified by later documents such as *Dominus Iesus*, which cites Aquinas’ affirmation of Christ as the head of humanity to show that the mystical body is coextensive with humanity, at least potentially.<sup>57</sup>

De Lubac grasps this point well in describing the unity of the mystical body (as understood by the early church) as a *supernatural* unity that “supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race.” The mission of the church is therefore “to reveal to

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<sup>55</sup>Sullivan, 129-30; Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard and Sister Elizabeth Englund (Kent, England: Burns & Oates, 1950; reprint, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 25.

<sup>56</sup>Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 29 June 1943, no. 13, 21.

<sup>57</sup>Sullivan, 131-32, 152-53. See Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, no. 13; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 6 August 2000, no. 4.

men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it.” Like Congar, de Lubac argues that the church and the mystical body are neither co-extensive nor separate: “The term ‘supernatural’ is applied equally to the means that shape man on his course toward his end and to that end itself, so the Church is properly called Catholic, and it is right to see in it in truth the Body of Christ, both in its invisible and final achievement.”<sup>58</sup> The “means,” of course, are the sacraments, and the unity of humanity is their end. Several of the Council’s documents also refer to the Church as the “universal sacrament of salvation”: more than a sign, it is an instrument of grace and reaches many who do not receive the other sacraments through its message of reconciliation. Thus the Church “must show to the world a concrete example of what it means to be a people at peace with God and with one another. In other words, it must be a holy people.”<sup>59</sup>

According to de Lubac, the sacraments are intimately related to the conception of the Church as an extension of the incarnation. Baptism, for example, marks the entrance into a social reality, but it has consequences that “are also spiritual, mystical, because the Church is not a purely human society.” He also argues that Aquinas errs in viewing the grace of the Eucharist, the “true” body of Christ, as an end in itself rather than intrinsic to nature and bound up with the Passion, “the very crucible wherein unity is forged.”<sup>60</sup> It is this transcendent, sacramental character that is unique to Christianity. Day is particularly conscious of the connection of martyrdom to the cross and that pacifists must always be willing to face a death that would reveal the risen Christ. Indeed, as she writes in one of

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<sup>58</sup>de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 25, 53, 73.

<sup>59</sup>Sullivan, 157-58.

<sup>60</sup>de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 83, 100, 140-41.

her final essays, the liturgy itself implies as much: “Certainly we can say that the worship offered by a Martin Luther King resulted in his great mission and in the courage with which he expected his own martyrdom. These people worked on the plane of this world, but it was the spirit that animated the weak flesh.”<sup>61</sup>

In several essays Day affirms de Lubac’s contention that Christianity should not form *leaders* (“builders of the temporal”) but *saints* (“witnesses to the eternal”): “The saint does not have to bring about great temporal achievements; he is one who succeeds in giving us at least a glimpse of eternity despite the thick opacity of time.” She adds that all people, not just clergy or members of religious orders, are called to be saints and notes the paradox of living in both the natural and supernatural realms: “Ah yes, when we are being called appeasers, defeatists, we are being deprived of our dearest goods—our reputation, honor, the esteem of men—and we are truly on the way to becoming the despised of the earth. We are beginning perhaps to be truly poor.” Because evil is real and often overwhelming on the earthly plane, the only solution is the plane of the Spirit—what de Lubac, in a passage Day quotes frequently, calls “that fourth dimension.”<sup>62</sup>

Thomas Frary argues that while the concept of “pure nature” preserved the gratuity of the supernatural and was a needed response to the Protestant emphasis on fallenness, it gave warrant to a separation of faith from everyday life and “an otherworldly spirituality that thwarted the development of social consciousness.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Dorothy Day, “What Do The Simple Folk Do?,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1978.

<sup>62</sup>See Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings*, 102; “Inventory,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1951. See “Beyond Politics,” *Catholic Worker*, November 1949, “Are the Leaders Insane?,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1954, and “What Do The Simple Folk Do?”

<sup>63</sup>Thomas Frary, “Thy Kingdom Come: The Theology of Dorothy Day,” *America*, 11 November 1972, 386.

Indeed, this is precisely the problem that de Lubac (in *Catholicism*) attributed to naturalism in philosophy and “confusions of bastard Augustinianism” in theology.<sup>64</sup> In *Surnaturel* (1946) he added that God who is absolute love has inscribed on the innermost being of every human creature the natural desire to be united with him. Some, including Karl Rahner, worried that this confused or even leveled the orders of nature and grace and risked denying the gratuity of the latter.<sup>65</sup> De Lubac responded with *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, in which he insists on both the simultaneity and gratuity of grace and the inherently supernatural character of nature: “The supernatural, which always represented God’s will for the final end of his creatures, put no obstacle in the way of the normal development or activity of nature in its own order; in other words, it fully assures the distinction between nature and grace.” Further, “It is not the supernatural which is explained by nature . . . [but] nature which is explained in the eyes of faith by the supernatural.”<sup>66</sup> David L. Schindler believes *Gaudium et Spes* reflects the vindication of de Lubac’s project, particularly in a passage often quoted by John Paul II: “Christ the Lord, Christ the New Adam, in very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.”<sup>67</sup>

Day’s supernatural theology was also inspired by the late-1930s visits of Fr. Pacifique Roy, a Josephite priest from Quebec who, like de Lubac, was branded a heretic for his views prior to Vatican II. In Day’s words, Fr. Roy talked “[of] how we had been

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<sup>64</sup>de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 313.

<sup>65</sup>David L. Schindler, introduction to Henri de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967; reprint, New York: Crossroad Herder, 1998), xix, xxiii. See Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques* (Paris: Aubier, 1946).

<sup>66</sup>de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, 34, 95.

<sup>67</sup>Schindler, xxvii; Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

made the sons of God, by the seed of supernatural life planted in us at our baptism, and of the necessity we were under to see that the seed grew and flourished. We had to aim at perfection; we had to be guided by the folly of the Cross.<sup>68</sup> According to Forest, “Dorothy had at last found a priest who understood the Gospels as she did, who heard in them a call to a way of life which was profoundly revolutionary, and who recognized in the Catholic Worker movement a faithful response to that call.” On Fr. Roy’s recommendation Day also began attending the retreat of Fr. John Hugo, a young priest from Pittsburgh. The retreat, developed by the Canadian Jesuit Onesimus Lacouture and loosely based on the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, was controversial; in 1939 Lacouture was exiled and Fr. Hugo reassigned by their superiors, although Hugo was given a temporary reprieve during the war.<sup>69</sup> The trouble arose from the retreat’s focus on “detachment” from the impulses for power and possessions, an element drawn from the thought of St. John of the Cross. Critics saw this as “Jansenistic” and a misconstrual of the proper relationship between nature and grace. Day was not immune to the controversy and was summoned to the office of the New York archdiocese and asked to cease publication of Fr. Hugo’s work.<sup>70</sup>

The retreat was also not without consequences at home or the Worker. Her daughter Tamar believes Fr. Hugo’s teaching on detachment led to “that period in my teens when Dorothy got very religious and severe, all because of that dreadful retreat,” while Fr. Harvey Egan recalls that some Workers, perhaps a majority, strongly disliked it,

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<sup>68</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 246-47.

<sup>69</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 111, 116.

<sup>70</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 340. Day attended the retreat from 1940 until 1976, and she often used a quote from John passed on to her by Fr. Roy: “Love is the measure by which we shall be judged.”

and that “those who made it became another kind of family, within the larger Worker family.”<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, Nina Polcyn Moore argues that Day made the “harsh” and “wooden” retreat “more livable and lovable.”<sup>72</sup> Day believed that it explained her life and purpose, specifically that she had been asked to give up the “natural happiness” of her marriage in order to “live in conformity with the will of God.”<sup>73</sup> As de Lubac (quoting Friedrich von Hügel) says, “‘Without the presence of a certain salt in the mouth, no one would want to drink’; yet it is quite clear that the salt which makes us thirsty is not the water which quenches our thirst.”<sup>74</sup> Day was not a gnostic; living with a desire for the supernatural did not mean rejecting material existence, as her life among the poor confirms. Rather, she writes, “It is not between good and evil, we repeat, that the choice lies, but between good and better. In other words, we must give up over and over again even the good things of this world to choose God.”<sup>75</sup>

In short, the retreat spurred a “second conversion” that “added the interior life to her exterior life.” Rather than simply reading about the saints and modeling their work, Day took up their practices, including contemplative prayer. Dorothy Gauchat argues that she became a “mystic” and tapped into a “wellspring of spirituality” that sustained

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<sup>71</sup>Quoted in Rosalie G. Riegle, *Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those Who Knew Her* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2003), 111.

<sup>72</sup>Quoted in Patrick Jordan, “An Appetite for God: Dorothy Day at 100,” *Commonweal*, 24 October 1997, 12.

<sup>73</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 256.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted in Baxter, “Blowing the Dynamite,” 85.

<sup>75</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, with a foreword by Michael O. Garvey and an introduction by Mark and Louise Zwick (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1948; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 163.

her for half a century, including the difficult war years.<sup>76</sup> Still, a dispute at a retreat in 1943 prompted her to take a sabbatical. “What she finally faced was that Jesus was not a social reformer,” Frary concludes. “. . . The Kingdom of God is not simply a present reality *or* a future hope. The Kingdom of God is indeed historical, rooted as it is in Christ. But it must also have a future dimension for which men had to work.”<sup>77</sup>

Supernatural love has a profoundly communitarian dimension but remains quite different from the natural love given to humanity by God. Any attempt to transform the social order based on natural aspirations (e.g., communism), however genuine, is bound to fail because it is founded in reason and thus abstract and remote. “Christianity transforms [natural love], makes it genuine affection, intimate, personal, tender—in a word, changes it into a true friendship, a most sublime love,” Day says. “Thus, the *practical* difference between Christian and pagan, that is, the difference in actual conduct, is that the Christian is motivated and inspired by love.” With this in mind she began to emphasize these practices for others: “For years, . . . we have been trying to change the social order. Now these last years I realize that I must . . . work to make those means available for people to change themselves, so that they can change the social order. In order to have a Christian social order, we must first have Christians.”<sup>78</sup>

Miller adds that the retreat confirmed her vocation: “Maurin had provided her with a vision of a human destiny that had come from a logic and knowledge of things infinitely larger than anything she had known before. Out of that vision had come her

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<sup>76</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 82, 84.

<sup>77</sup>Frary, 386.

<sup>78</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 143, 189.

vocation, and Maurin, the worthy teacher, had given that vocation by his own saintliness. The retreats, as she said, simply underlined what Maurin had taught her.”<sup>79</sup> Michael Baxter, himself the founder of a Worker house, analyzes one of Maurin’s “Easy Essays” in which he uses the metaphor of “blowing the dynamite” of the gospel. This dynamite had been suppressed by the idea that natural desires could be fulfilled without the supernatural life of Christ in the Church. Maurin explicitly rejected this separation and said the spiritual ought to be integrated into all areas of society, including economics and politics. He did not deny the spiritual mission of the Church, but “‘spiritual’ signified specific practices and a specific form of social life.” Although both Day and Maurin recognized a natural law, they argued that it must not be conceived apart from its supernatural end, as the modern liberal state attempts to do. Indeed, Baxter says, Catholic scholarship’s attempt to contain the natural within an “autonomous sphere” was ripe for the theological critique provided by the Worker’s social life.<sup>80</sup>

In fact, Day wrote the chapter of *The Long Loneliness* on the retreat shortly after the promulgation of Pius XII’s *Humani Generis*, which “defended the neo-scholastic notion of ‘pure nature’ as necessary to preserve the integrity of nature and the gratuity of grace,” a direct challenge to the work of de Lubac and others. According to Baxter, this reveals that Day’s integrated understanding of the natural and supernatural “ran counter to the neo-scholastic two-tier paradigm that dominated the discourse of Catholic scholarship during the preconciliar era.” Day also published the work of two scholars, Virgil Michel, O.S.B. and Paul Hanly Furfey, who argued that authentic social

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<sup>79</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 375.

<sup>80</sup>Baxter, “Blowing the Dynamite,” 81-84. See Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Humani Generis*, 12 August 1950.

regeneration springs from the liturgy (Michel) or from participation in the inner life of the Trinity (Furfey). Still, “it was Day who was able to articulate [this perspective] in terms of specific practices that make up a supernaturalized life.”<sup>81</sup>

Day is also convinced that supernatural love can never lead to or justify violence. In this she follows Fr. Hugo, who in the introduction to *The Gospel of Peace* declares, “Necessary as it is to know something of the natural principles that determine the justice of war, it is far more necessary to know and to apply the supernatural truths that reveal the conditions for obtaining true peace.” He speaks of “certain pacifists” who deny the possibility of just warfare as “unhampered by the knowledge of theology, the exigencies of reason, the need for intellectual consistency and doctrinal integrity” and states that “the affirmation of the possibility of a just war is a starting point for true Christian pacifism.” This is because such a denial is also “a denial of human rights.” While he may be captive to terminology that is difficult to define, Hugo locates pacifism *within* the Catholic tradition and provides a proper context for just war theory. Whether a just war has ever been fought is difficult to say, but Aquinas’ formulation recognizes that “due to the actual condition of human nature, the full and simultaneous realization of all the conditions required for a just war is a moral impossibility.” The declarations of Pius XII reveal that while “Christianity is not opposed to war *as such*, it is opposed to wars in actual reality. Therefore, we must in practice oppose every concrete instance of war.”<sup>82</sup>

Mark and Louise Zwick say that in the area of peace it was Hugo who learned from Day, as she counseled him against becoming a military chaplain. In turn, he taught

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>82</sup>John J. Hugo, *The Gospel of Peace* (New York: privately printed, 1944), iv-vi, xvi, xxi.

her to speak of “weapons of the spirit”—such as prayer, fasting, and reception of the sacraments—as directly countering weapons of war, for “if peace is to rule human affairs, then peace must be waged with as much preparation, as much determination and as much sacrifice as the waging of war.” Day distinguishes between true and false pacifism and emphasizes the activeness of the former. The choice is between physical or spiritual weapons; passivity is never an option. Hugo also told her to develop “a theology of nonviolence”: “If you knew no theology, it would probably be simpler to make a solution. Yet the decision must be based on doctrine. Pacifism must proceed from truth, or it cannot exist at all.”<sup>83</sup> I will discuss truth in chapter four, but for now it will suffice to note that while just war principles stipulate that defense can be the most “loving” action, as early as 1940 Day wrote that tactics such as bombing cities and using poison gas could not be defended by any theory. “Love is not the starving of whole populations. Love is not the bombardment of open cities,” she later declared. “Love is not killing, it is the laying down of one’s life for one’s friend.”<sup>84</sup>

From the perspective of the mystical body, violence done to another person is also done to oneself and ultimately to Christ. “While most saw the Mystical Body as that which united Christians in spirit above the battle lines which pitted Christians in Europe against one another,” Cavanaugh notes, “Dorothy interpreted the Mystical Body as that which made Christian participation in the conflict simply inconceivable. The Mystical Body does not hover above the national borders which divide us; it dissolves them.” Her

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<sup>83</sup>Mark Zwick and Louise Zwick, *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 261-62; “Dorothy Day, Prophet of Pacifism for the Catholic Church,” *Houston Catholic Worker*, September-October 1997.

<sup>84</sup>Dorothy Day, “Our Stand,” *Catholic Worker*, June 1940; “Why Do the Members of Christ Tear One Another?,” *Catholic Worker*, February 1942.

writings emphasize “body” more than “mystical” and convey “a very concrete and sacramental sense that war is about the destruction of real bodies . . . There can be no unity in spirit when we attack one another in body.”<sup>85</sup>

The challenges of the Second World War—when many abandoned pacifism for “realistic” ethics—crystallized Day’s convictions, and her identification of war as “social sin” was perhaps the most controversial aspect of her stand. When Mike Wallace asked her, “Does God love murderers, does He love a Hitler, a Stalin?,” she responded, “God loves all men, and all men are brothers. . . . We are all murderers.” Day never retreated from her belief that every citizen was responsible before God for Hiroshima, Vietnam, and other atrocities. “It was Jesus who said that the worst enemies were those of our own household,” she said in 1972, “and we are all part of this country . . . and share in its guilt.”<sup>86</sup> If we are truly united with our enemies in the mystical body, then, as Walter Wink says, our solidarity with them extends to “our common evil”: “As we begin to acknowledge our own inner shadow, we become more tolerant of the shadow in others. As we begin to love the enemy within, we develop the compassion we need to love the enemy without.”<sup>87</sup> For Day love always involved such compassion, the second principle of her pacifist witness.

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<sup>85</sup>Cavanaugh, 457, 461-62. As the arms race heated up, Day declared, quoting St. Cyprian, that war is “the rending of the Mystical Body of Christ” (“Beyond Politics”).

<sup>86</sup>Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *Catholic Worker*, February 1960; “On Pilgrimage,” *Catholic Worker*, July-August 1972.

<sup>87</sup>Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 165.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Compassion

The founding of the Catholic Worker was, on the surface, a minor event in the midst of the Great Depression, but it quickly blossomed into a spiritual movement and a nationwide network of what Peter Maurin called “houses of hospitality” engaged in feeding, clothing, and sheltering those who were, for various reasons, the poor. Maurin taught Day that poverty was more than a cause for protest; it could also be a sign of *compassion* and a means to perform the works of mercy. Ellis adds that for Day poverty was a freely chosen, theologically informed way of life, “a response to the Gospel message which calls for a non-attachment to material goods as well as a shared spiritual life.” This is distinct from destitution, which “represents the evils of our present society which does not care for others, and reduces people to economic, social and spiritual obscurity.”<sup>1</sup> What destitution “obscures” is solidarity among all persons in the mystical body of Christ, and as she became conversant with Scripture and Catholic tradition Day realized that poverty and violence have much in common.

#### *The Personalist Center*

As O’Connor notes, “The doctrine of the Mystical Body supported, deepened, enhanced, and beautified an ethic of caring she had committed herself to years earlier.”<sup>2</sup> In the previous chapter I discussed Day’s youthful awareness of urban poverty, her work

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<sup>1</sup>Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker*, 52.

<sup>2</sup>O’Connor, “Dorothy Day’s Christian Conversion,” 172.

as a nurse during the First World War, and her participation in the workers' movements; she and Mike Gold, editor of the *Call*, even befriended homeless men and brought them to his apartment for shelter. Yet it was her relationship with Maurin that formed her localist and personalist politics. He had little use for the bureaucracy of the modern state and thought people ought to be educated together and work with each other to produce what they needed—a synthesis of “cult, culture, and cultivation.”<sup>3</sup> Modern society had separated sociology, economics, and politics from the gospel and in the process had lost any sense of ultimate, transcendent purpose. Social life was now organized around the drive for production and profit rather than the development of persons. As Robert Ellsberg explains, “Human beings, intended by God to be co-creators by virtue of their labor, had instead become alienated and atomized, bereft of any spirit of community, and reduced generally to the status of cogs in a machine. The Church, in Peter’s view, had an answer to all this but had failed to act on it.”<sup>4</sup>

This lack of action was what motivated both Day and Maurin. Unlike her, however, he had no interest or confidence in protest. What was needed was “a vision of a future society, and with this a program of constructive steps with which to begin realizing bits of the vision in one’s own life.”<sup>5</sup> Involving people of faith in social problems meant first instilling in them a spirit of responsibility. Maurin often said, and Day agreed, that Christians had turned to the state through home relief, social legislation, and social security and no longer saw themselves as being their brother’s keeper. “Perhaps a

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Coles, introduction to Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 5.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xxiv.

<sup>5</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 83.

Christian state could do all these things,” she wrote in 1938. “But since we are living under only a nominally Christian state, Christians will have to resort to those old-as-the-Church-itself methods of the works of mercy through houses of hospitality to care for immediate needs such as food, clothing and shelter.”<sup>6</sup> Day and Maurin’s response to the weaknesses of democratic capitalism, then, was not to seek a theocratic Christian state or a libertarian ideal of isolated responsibility. Rather, they believed the creation of local institutions would realize a bit of the vision in the present.

Beneath his simplified program Maurin held to a sophisticated view of society culled from several schools of thought. He learned of anarchism and distributism—a theory that rejects technology and urban civilization in favor of an agrarian society—from the Russian philosopher Peter Kropotkin, an early proponent of “anarchist communism” who believed that cooperation, not competition, to be the natural and most efficient tendency of humankind.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Maurin’s greatest weakness was that his “future” vision resembled a romanticized past. However, although he sometimes used the terms “utopian” and “communist”—even calling for “Christian communism”—his program was quite different from either. The Worker also did not concern itself with the rejection of legitimate government. With the rise of totalitarian regimes Maurin began to ascribe more value to democracy—Marxist regimes claimed authority rightly reserved for the divine—and he and Day were among the first to decry fascism. Indeed, they advocated anarchism because it provided the freedom denied by capitalism, socialism,

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<sup>6</sup>Dorothy Day, *Writings from “Commonweal,”* ed. with an introduction by Patrick Jordan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>7</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 43.

and fascism, which rely on coercion.<sup>8</sup> According to Mary Segers, they also embraced the anarchist principle of “direct action” *in the present*: “Only with Maurin and the Catholic Worker, direct action consisted not in terrorist acts of violence but in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy of traditional Catholic theology, which the Catholic Worker took to include actions such as picketing and helping striking workers as well as feeding the poor, visiting the sick, and sheltering the homeless.”<sup>9</sup>

John Howard Yoder discusses a utopian type of pacifism in which behavior is governed by a criterion that, “if everyone did it, would bring a new order.” One arrives at this order “not by compromising with the present but by confessing a faith which makes the future real in symbolic ways today.”<sup>10</sup> Day’s pacifism, in which the Sermon on the Mount functions as a criterion of sorts, certainly parallels this view. However, the works of mercy presuppose a *supernatural* end and a kingdom that is already present but not yet realized, thus freeing the Worker from the necessity of realizing utopia on earth, a pursuit that has had devastating consequences for humanity. According to O’Connor, “Her way of avoiding this pitfall was to practice and to advocate one step at a time, one brick at a time, one action at a time, life lived by little and by little, all of which was done against the backdrop of a comprehensive vision of a distributist society in which it would be easier for people to be good. Current scholarly judgment suggests that a fundamental weakness of the Catholic Worker movement can be noted at precisely this point: its

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<sup>8</sup>William A. Au, *The Cross, The Flag, and The Bomb: American Catholics Debate War and Peace, 1960-1983* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 24-25.

<sup>9</sup>Segers, 211, 216-17.

<sup>10</sup>John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*, rev. and exp. ed. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1992), 74-75.

failure to articulate a theory of the good society it sought to create.”<sup>11</sup> Day does recognize the power of “Utopias”: “There is always a great need of idealists who hold up the ideal rather than the practical. . . . Little by little, it can be found that the ideal works and is practical and then people are surprised.”<sup>12</sup> What O’Connor misses, however, is that Worker life does not require a theory. Rather, the performance of this life itself articulates its truth. Also, Day is self-critical and careful never to demand that her form of life is the ideal for every person. A utopian position is vulnerable to being of no use in the messiness of life, but the Worker’s achievements refute such a charge. On the contrary, Yoder says, it is warfare that is utopian:

War is utopian both in the promises it makes for the future and in the black-and-white way of thinking about the enemy, which it assumes. . . .

. . . It is utopian in continuing to believe . . . that one can win a war without committing atrocities. It is utopian in believing that the only obstacle to peaceful settlement is the inexplicable obstinacy of the other side.

In all these dimensions, it is the purist vision which seems to be guiding United States policies overseas. That purism is the product of the morality of the Western novel or film, with the easily identified good guys and bad guys, and the unlimited justification of violence in the hands of the good.<sup>13</sup>

Apparently Day was already familiar with Kropotkin, and she had an attachment to anarchism stemming from her studies of Tolstoy’s writings and de Lubac’s biography of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, a contemporary and opponent of Marx. However, although the egalitarian character of the Worker is derived in part from these philosophies, it is rooted more deeply in Scripture and Catholic tradition. Day advocates not “anarchism” in general but Christian anarchism, not pacifism but Christian pacifism. She once told a

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<sup>11</sup>O’Connor, “Dorothy Day as Autobiographer,” 291.

<sup>12</sup>Day, “Days with an End.”

<sup>13</sup>Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 76.

professor that the Worker’s anarchism “stems from the life of Jesus on earth who came to serve rather than to be served and who never coerced. There was no question of force.”<sup>14</sup> She also utilizes encyclicals to advocate a living wage and private property. For example, she quotes Pius XII: “What you can and ought to strive for is a more just distribution of wealth. This is and this remains a central point in Catholic social doctrine.”<sup>15</sup> Like Maurin, Day connects this point to poverty and pacifism:

We feel that the great cause of wars [is] maldistribution, not only of goods but of population. Peter used to talk about a *philosophy of work and a philosophy of poverty*. Both are needed in order to change things as they are, to do away with the causes of war. The bravery to face voluntary poverty is needed if we wish to marry, to live, to produce children, to work for life instead of for death, to reject war.<sup>16</sup>

Work is not merely economic but can and should be an expression of freedom that contributes to community and centers on the person, and Maurin’s farms—drawn from both distributism and Emmanuel Mounier’s call for small, “socialist” social forms not centered in the state—were an attempt to embody this conviction. Day is critical of the farms, where she spent several months a year, but her awareness of the conflict between “the ideal world and the fallen one” allows her to see them as a way “to narrow the gap between the life she lived and the life she wrote about.”<sup>17</sup> She recognizes that voluntary poverty is easier in the country, where one can produce one’s own goods by manual labor and not rely on industries interwoven with violence:

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 378.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 181. It is not clear from where Day takes this quotation, but it is consistent with the statements of Pius XII.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>17</sup>Elie, 100.

Our whole modern economy is based on preparation for war, and this surely is one of the great arguments for poverty in our time. If the comfort one achieves results in the death of millions in the future, then that comfort shall be duly paid for. Indeed, to be literal, contributing to the war (misnamed “defense”) effort is very difficult to avoid. If you work in a textile mill making cloth, or in a factory making dungarees or blankets, your work is still tied up with war. If you raise food or irrigate the land to raise food, you may be feeding troops or liberating others to serve as troops. . . . Whatever you buy is taxed, so that you are, in effect, helping to support the state’s preparations for war exactly to the extent of your attachment to worldly things of whatever kind.<sup>18</sup>

Segers is correct in noting that Day’s location contextualizes her advocacy for principles that draw heavily on anarchism and socialism.<sup>19</sup> However, Day understands “liberty,” for example, quite differently than many Americans (or Catholics). In fact, one of her purposes in utilizing diverse sources is “to show the tremendous freedom there is in the Church, a freedom most cradle Catholics do not seem to know they possess. They do know that a man is free to be a Democrat or Republican, but they do not know that he is also free to be a philosophical anarchist by conviction. They do believe in free enterprise, but they do not know that cooperative ownership and communal ownership can live side by side with private ownership of property.”<sup>20</sup> Further, her conception of “equality” and the practices of voluntary poverty and the works of mercy are part of an ontology in which each person is created in the image of God and at least potentially part of the mystical body of Christ.

Thus Christian personhood is distinct from the socialist idea of “the masses,” and William Miller goes so far as to say that Day’s personalism “was the most fundamental and clear-cut anticommunist idea and program that had been defined by an American

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<sup>18</sup>Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 86.

<sup>19</sup>Segers, 197.

<sup>20</sup>Day, *Selected Writings*, 170.

Catholic.”<sup>21</sup> However, as Michael Harrington—a former editor of the *Worker* whose book *The Other America* helped start President Kennedy’s “War on Poverty”—says, the *Worker*’s “many different strands” were a critique of *all* forms of statism: “[Day] called it anarchism, but what she wanted was for everybody to perform the works of mercy. . . . And if everybody did that, you wouldn’t need a welfare state.”<sup>22</sup> This critique unites the diverse thinkers from whom Maurin gathered his view of society. In short, they argue that the rise of secularism and capitalism in the eighteenth century initiated the decline of civilization and that the Church’s failure to respond led many to identify with Marxist, even fascist, versions of freedom. Only “the revival of the spiritual dimension in the person and the culture” could reverse this decline.<sup>23</sup> Still, Maurin was skeptical of Fr. Hugo’s retreat, for example, because it over-emphasized the spiritual at the expense of the natural; he preferred “a personalist action that would redeem nature itself.”<sup>24</sup>

The French philosophy of personalism originated as a religious and political response to the rise of existentialism and Marxism after World War I.<sup>25</sup> Led by Mounier,

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<sup>21</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 434.

<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 58-59.

<sup>23</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 18.

<sup>24</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 355.

<sup>25</sup>This philosophy is distinct from the “Boston Personalism” that originated with Borden Parker Bowne at Boston University in 1876. There appears to have been little interaction between the two traditions, and though they share characteristics they differ in several ways. Perhaps most important is in the Boston tradition’s idealism or realism, in which the “criterion of truth is empirical and rational coherence” and the emphasis is on personal experience and metaphysics. Martin Luther King, Jr., earned his doctorate at Boston and was the most prominent advocate of this type of personalism. King was a student of Edgar S. Brightman’s system of regulative moral laws operating independently of tradition. However, King transformed this system in ways that correlate with Day’s thought, particularly in emphasizing active response over passive, the social category over individualism, and self-sacrifice over self-preservation. He used these principles to oppose the Vietnam conflict and disputed Reinhold Niebuhr’s doctrine of human nature and critique of pacifism, which he also studied at Boston. Rufus Burrow, Jr., *Personalism: A Critical Introduction* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), xii-xiii, 77-78, 220-22.

a committed Catholic, the personalists argued that “a revolution of sorts was necessary, against capitalism and state socialism, liberal democracy, the bourgeois spirit, and nationalism.” According to Mounier, the human person cannot be known fully as either object or subject but only as “a living center of creative activity, communication, and commitment who comes to know himself across the bridge of action.” The goal of personalism, then, is not “to construct a closed philosophical edifice in which the concept of person could be housed” but to encourage free and active persons “to unite with others to create a society in which the structures, customs, and institutions are rooted in and revolve around the person as center.” Further, the common good is meant to serve personhood and requires solidarity that transcends “all conventional boundaries.”<sup>26</sup>

Thomas and Rosita Rourke argue that this is the double movement that modern, liberal forms of rationalism (e.g., capitalism and socialism) fail to comprehend but personalism’s Christian roots provide: the dignity of the person, created in the image of God and “deepened by the doctrine of the Incarnation which proclaimed that human nature was concretely united to the Divine Person of Christ.” These roots inform a call to action and an understanding of freedom as “taking on responsibility for others.”<sup>27</sup> This depends on a Thomistic understanding of history. “According to Aquinas,” Geoffrey Gneuhs says, “we are most free then when we love, when we act for the good, because then we are acting in God, the source of our being and the one to whom we are called to return.” Again, the common good “has to do with persons, not with the state,” and “any

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<sup>26</sup>Thomas R. Rourke and Rosita A. Chazarreta Rourke, *A Theory of Personalism* (New York: Lexington Books, 2005), 7-8. See Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

law that is not good is not true law and need not be obeyed.” Aquinas’ notion of divine law is therefore “a cogent defense for one engaged in civil disobedience.”<sup>28</sup>

Not only was Maurin aware of philosophical developments in his home country, but Jacques Maritain, who had been part of the original personalist circles, occasionally visited the New York house. Indeed, it was largely through the Worker that personalism became more widely known in the United States.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Day transformed it by more explicitly aligning it with the Catholic tradition. Patrick Coy contends that personalism crystallized her belief that every person is called to directly serve those in need, press for change in “the social and political conditions that are creating the problems in the first place,” and offer “viable alternatives while openly resisting and confronting current conditions.” This approach does not replace politics but is superior to it.<sup>30</sup> “True, Day wrote and spoke out against the abuses of the economic and political orders,” the Rourke adds, “but such activities never undermined or replaced the daily practice of the works of mercy.” Still, while it is true that “anyone who wants to can start a Catholic Worker house,” they underemphasize the role of tradition in asserting that “personalism never depends on institutional structure to get started.”<sup>31</sup> William Miller describes the Worker idea as a series of “concentric circles in which the dynamism

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<sup>28</sup>Geoffrey Gneus, “Radical Orthodoxy: Dorothy Day’s Challenge to Liberal America,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 212, 214-15.

<sup>29</sup>Rourke and Rourke, 10. Maritain’s neo-Thomism was quite different from the *ressourcement* stream that deeply influenced the Worker, and he later supported the war effort and advocated the Church’s reconciliation with democratic capitalism. However, Day embraced his teachings on the necessity of “pure means” and the primacy of the spiritual. See Mark Zwick and Louise Zwick, “Jacques and Raissa Maritain Influenced the Early Catholic Worker,” *Houston Catholic Worker*, November 1995.

<sup>30</sup>Patrick G. Coy, “Beyond the Ballot Box: The Catholic Worker Movement and Nonviolent Direct Action,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 175.

<sup>31</sup>Rourke and Rourke, 175, 185-86.

moved outward from the personalist center.” Anarchism, distributism, pacifism—each is connected to this center.<sup>32</sup> The practices of Workers depend on this center, but more important, the center of Catholicism (and Catholic personalism) *is* a person: Jesus Christ.

Day’s type of personalism, like her understanding of the natural and supernatural, has found widespread support among Catholic theologians. For example, John XXII argues that the Church’s social teaching “rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution” and “are raised in the plan of Providence to an order of reality which is above nature.”<sup>33</sup> John’s call to the laity to implement this personalist principle is echoed by John Paul II, himself a student of the “Lublin School” in Poland, a center of personalist thought. According to the Rourke, John Paul “sought to develop an ontology of the person with a particular focus on the person as concrete, existential, and acting, synthesizing Aristotelian-Thomist insights with those of phenomenology.” In *Laborem Exercens* (1981), for example, he insists that persons realize their humanity in and through work and that labor has priority over capital, and later he “extends personalism to the entire society, insisting that modern societies respect the subject character of all social organization.”<sup>34</sup> Reflecting on *Rerum Novarum*, John Paul echoes Leo’s recognition that the Church speaks through its social doctrine, which “situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Savior” and is “a source of unity and peace in dealing with the

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<sup>32</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 378. For more on the connection between anarchism and personalism, see Fred Boehrer, “Diversity, Plurality and Ambiguity: Anarchism in the Catholic Worker Movement” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 95-127.

<sup>33</sup>John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, no. 219-25. De Lubac also says that “Catholicism and personalism are in harmony and reinforce one another” (*Catholicism*, 337).

<sup>34</sup>Rourke and Rourke, 11-12. See John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens*, 14 September 1981 and Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 1 May 1991.

conflicts which inevitably arise in social and economic life.” He also affirms a limited role for the state in economics and notes that the lack of private property hinders human dignity and community. Unfortunately, rationalism has given rise to “a partisan interest which replaces the common good,” even to the point of “total war.” The logic of total war must be repudiated by “showing that the complex problems faced by those peoples can be resolved through dialogue and solidarity, rather than by a struggle to destroy the enemy through war.”<sup>35</sup>

As Coy remarks, its history “reveals that the tactics of nonviolent action give both form and substance to the outward expression of the Worker’s personalist politics.”<sup>36</sup> I will discuss this more thoroughly in the next chapter, but it is crucial to recognize the connection between personalism, which the Worker embraced early on, and the development of Catholic social teaching regarding the interrelation of economics and violence. Also, as we will see, the logic of total war that arose during World War II and the Cold War was also diagnosed early by Day, and “in a kind of exegesis on Peter’s personalist position” she posited voluntary poverty and the works of mercy as “the only answer to the chaos into which the world seemed to be heading.”<sup>37</sup>

### *Obedience and the Little Way*

Although Mounier “inclined to pacifism,” he believed that “evil was real, indeed personal, and could not be eliminated without firm decisions.”<sup>38</sup> Day, however, sees

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<sup>35</sup>John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 5, 13-14, 18, 22.

<sup>36</sup>Coy, “Beyond the Ballot Box,” 171.

<sup>37</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 281.

<sup>38</sup>Rourke and Rourke, 9.

pacifism as another facet of personalism to be proclaimed. Patricia McNeal remarks that evangelical pacifism, “with its emphasis on obedience to the spirit and word of the New Testament,” was a natural extension of [Day and Maurin’s] commitment to service and solidarity; in fact, it completed it.<sup>39</sup> Day thinks that pacifism is rational, compassionate, and compatible with tradition, but it is also a matter of *obedience*. To accusations of cowardice she responds that Christ and his followers suffered rather than violently resist evil. Indeed, pacifism is the bravest of all positions: “A pacifist who is willing to endure the scorn of the unthinking mob, the ignominy of jail, the pain of stripes and the threat of death, cannot be lightly dismissed as a coward afraid of physical pain.”<sup>40</sup> Yoder terms this “redemptive personalism,” which does not deny radical evil but seeks to “break the chain of evil causes and effects” by taking on suffering. In this way pacifism becomes “an [evangelical] appeal to the conscience of the person with whom one deals.” Such a position cannot rest on the observable “facts” of this world but “can be held only by those for whom it is rooted in some ground of faith beyond experience.”<sup>41</sup> Day often expressed this paradox through Paul’s words, “As dying, yet behold we live” (2 Cor 6:9): “We can suffer with others, we can see plainly the frightening chaos, the unbelievable misery of cold and hunger and bitter misery, yet all the time there is the knowledge ‘that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared to the joy that is to come.’”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Patricia McNeal, “Origins of the Catholic Peace Movement,” *Review of Politics* 35 (July 1973), 368.

<sup>40</sup>Dorothy Day, “Pacifism,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1936.

<sup>41</sup>Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 92-94.

<sup>42</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 85.

Charles Chatfield argues that Day's allusions to the Sermon on the Mount were intended to offer a decision to her readers: "Given her spiritual personalism, she likely intended to present the ethical necessity that each individual choose for peace or war, hoping to elicit a pacifist response."<sup>43</sup> Perhaps, as McClendon contends, this is because she did not have the preconceptions of a Catholic education: "Instead, she read the Greek New Testament in high school, with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount front and center in it. Nobody explained to her that the word 'peace' in the Christian liturgies she attended through her years of intermittent and later regular churchgoing didn't mean peace." Instead, her encounter with tradition came first through Maurin, "who was in full rebellion against the militarism of his French youth," and later through historians who "told her (correctly) that the early church was indeed pacifist." Day's pacifism "was not just a happenstance reading of Christian moral teaching . . . To be a pacifist put her at odds with many. But it put her in the center of obedience to Jesus Christ, and that was now what mattered."<sup>44</sup>

Mel Piehl points to Day's essay "Holy Obedience," which emphasizes the paradox that "the believer freely chooses to submit individual free will to God and other people."<sup>45</sup> Coy adds that her personalism "situated the locus of social change and revolution not in institutions, but in the heart of the individual. So it was with war. The way to stop the impending war [World War II] was for individuals to refuse to fight in

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<sup>43</sup>Chatfield, 8.

<sup>44</sup>McClendon, *Ethics*, 297.

<sup>45</sup>Mel Piehl, "The Politics of Free Obedience," in *A Revolution of the Heart: Essays on the Catholic Worker*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 177. See Day, *Selected Writings*, 168-73.

it.”<sup>46</sup> In short, to refuse to kill is the proper response to Christ’s command to love. Day argues that references to military service as “laying down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13) are blasphemous: “Men are taught to kill, not to lay down their lives if they can possibly help it. Of course we do not talk of brothers in wartime. We talk of the enemy, and we forget the Beatitudes and the commandment to love our enemy, do good to them that persecute us.” Real love is the folly of the cross: “We do not yet know what it means. Loving our enemy. We only fear him. We have great possessions, like the young man in the gospel and we turn from Christ to the use of force to protect them.” War does not express love for our fellows but loss of faith in them, epitomized by “the belief that only force can overcome force.” Sadly, this is also the belief of the Church, and it is up to the Worker to offer an alternative:

We know that men are but dust, but we know too that they are little less than the angels. We know them to be capable of high heroism, of sacrifice, of endurance. They respond to this call in wartime. But the call is never made to them to oppose violence *with non-resistance*, a strengthening of the will, an increase in love and faith. We make this call, and we feel we have a right to make this call by the very circumstances of our lives. We know the sufferings which people are already able to endure . . . We know it in the response which *The Catholic Worker* has met with throughout the land. We know it in the response of those very poor upon our breadlines who are helping us in carrying on the work all over the country.<sup>47</sup>

Day and her fellow Workers are able to demonstrate that their personalism and pacifism are more than theoretical. Worker life remains unromantic; in fact, many who come to volunteer are only able to endure it for short periods. Day herself struggled, often quoting Fr. Zossima from *The Brothers Karamazov*: “Love in practice is a harsh

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<sup>46</sup>Patrick G. Coy, “Conscription and the Catholic Conscience in World War II,” in *American Catholic Pacifism*, ed. Klejment and Roberts, 50.

<sup>47</sup>Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 236; “Letter: Things Worth Fighting For?,” in *Writings from “Commonweal,”* 101-2; “Wars Are Caused by Man’s Loss of His Faith in Man,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1940.

and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams.”<sup>48</sup> What is important in the witness of the Catholic Worker, however, is not that one achieves holiness through a certain amount of suffering, as if one could ever suffer enough for Christ. Rather, it is in how one sees and treats the other who is truly destitute. As Day stated at a speech in the 1950s, “There is nothing particularly holy about dirt and rats and roaches. But there may be something very unholy about the way we regard those who suffer from these things. The safety of the rich lies in almsgiving. We must give until we become blessed. . . . The paradox again. Such as dying to live. No one pretends it is a simple matter.”<sup>49</sup>

Worker life, then, witnesses to the possibility of breaking down the problems of poverty and violence “on the earthly plane” into a form that individual Christians can address. Day recognizes the sense of futility felt by young people who cannot see the necessity of taking one step in the present moment, but this “little way” of Thérèse of Lisieux, one of her favorite saints, is the only way to bring forth the kingdom: “We can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform these actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.” Again, this is not new. In its first issue Day declares the paper to be “an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the ‘reconstruction of the social order,’” while according to its statement of aims and purposes the Worker’s goal is “to realize in the individual and society the expressed and implied teachings of Christ.” Jesus and his

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<sup>48</sup>Mark Zwick and Louise Zwick, introduction to Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 48-50.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 32.

disciples, including the popes and the saints, are radicals, for as Day also said in 1933, it is “possible to be radical and not atheist.”<sup>50</sup> Ellsberg explains:

To be both a radical and a Catholic did not mean that she inhabited an “underground” Church, distinct from the faith and practice of ordinary believers. Nor did it signify the kind of seductive idolatry that would identify the Kingdom of God with a particular movement or cause. . . . It simply meant that she held the powers of this world, as she held herself, accountable to the word and commandment of God.

That commandment, as she understood it, entrusted us with a special responsibility for the vindication and defense of life. Dorothy responded to that obligation not only in its personal form of charity but in its most political form as well: challenging resisting and obstructing the institutional forces which led to poverty and waste of war.<sup>51</sup>

In one of Maurin’s favorite encyclicals, *Auspicato Concessum*, Leo XIII argues that if the institutes of St. Francis were revived “every Christian virtue would easily flourish”; therefore, “everyone should . . . aim at imitating St. Francis of Assisi.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, Francis of Assisi has been the most-illustrated saint in the *Catholic Worker*, and Brigid O’Shea Merriman adds that Francis’ connection of poverty and pacifism “runs as a thread through many of [Day’s] writings.”<sup>53</sup> Francis, it must be remembered, regarded the rule of the Third Order to be “applicable to the ordinary Christian,” a principle revived by Leo and lay movements such as the Worker.<sup>54</sup> G. K. Chesterton, whom Day often quotes, recognizes in the saint the proper ordering of love: “As St. Francis did not

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<sup>50</sup>Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings*, 286; “To Our Readers,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1933; “Catholic Worker Positions,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1972.

<sup>51</sup>Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xvii-xviii.

<sup>52</sup>Leo XIII, *Auspicato Concessum*, no. 23-25.

<sup>53</sup>Brigid O’Shea Merriman, *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 178-79.

<sup>54</sup>Robert Ludlow, “St. Francis and His Revolution,” in *A Penny a Copy: Readings from “The Catholic Worker,”* rev. and exp. ed., ed. Thomas C. Cornell, Robert Ellsberg, and Jim Forest (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 89.

love humanity but men, so he did not love Christianity but Christ . . . to this great mystic his religion was not a thing like a theory but a thing like a love-affair.” In short, Francis’ philosophy, like that of Day, “revolved round the idea of a new supernatural light on natural things, which meant the ultimate recovery not the ultimate refusal of natural things.” Both were attempting to build “something that has often enough fallen into ruin but has never been past rebuilding,” that is, the church.<sup>55</sup> Day particularly identifies with Francis’ openness to the world, which set him apart from the monasticism of his day, and his embrace of the Sermon on the Mount as unique and normative for ethics:

Chesterton in writing about Pacifism (to which he stood opposed) said that there were “the peacemakers who inherited the beatitude, and the peacemongers who profaned the temple by selling doves.” We stand at the present time with the Communists, who are also opposing war. It happens at this moment (perhaps the line will change next week as it is wavering now), that the party line so dictates this policy. But we consider that we have inherited the Beatitude and that our duty is clear. The Sermon on the Mount is our Christian manifesto.<sup>56</sup>

In Day’s interpretation, Christ has called his followers beyond the temporal in favor of a new state of being prefiguring the *beatific vision*, the perfect happiness of immediate knowledge of God. There will be suffering, but because there is no “time” with God, there is no “reason” not to live in the way of perfection, regardless of the consequences: “In heaven there is neither time nor space, so we can be with everybody, everywhere at the same time, days without end. . . . The more you love in this life, the more you suffer, and yet who would be without love? God is love, the beatific vision is love; in Him we possess all things.” Put another way, the Sermon’s supernatural rationality corrects and perfects natural reason, and because the vision represents the

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<sup>55</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, *St. Francis of Assisi, The Everlasting Man*, *St. Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 29-30, 52, 59, 61.

<sup>56</sup>Day, “Our Stand.”

elevation of humanity to the plane of Christ, it is possible in a limited sense on earth: “The teaching has been that love which is of the Lover for the Beloved can only be between equals, and so to achieve this we must die to the natural and live supernatural lives, doing everything for the love of God.”<sup>57</sup> According to Piehl, the Sermon’s balance between ethics in the temporal—Augustine’s “third city”—and the supernatural—the City of God—orders has enabled the Worker “to uphold the transcendent mysteries of Christian faith while immersing itself in the mundane contemporary concerns of politics, economics, peace, and race relations.”<sup>58</sup>

As she does with soldiers, Day recognizes a link between workers, poverty, and militarization: “All our talks about peace and the weapons of the spirit are meaningless unless we try in every way to embrace *voluntary poverty* and not work in any position, any job that contributes to war . . . We must give up our place in this world, sacrifice children, family, wife, mother, and embrace poverty, and then we will be laying down life itself.”<sup>59</sup> Thomas Merton notes that casuistry in the theology of violence obscures the problem of “death and even genocide as big business,” which, at the same time, “involves a long chain of individuals, each of whom can feel himself absolved from responsibility.” In other words, “We have got to face the fact that war is not merely the product of blind political forces, but of human choices.”<sup>60</sup> Likewise, Francis declares that “if we had any possessions, we should need weapons and laws to defend them,” and Day says that

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<sup>57</sup>Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *Catholic Worker*, Feb. 1952; *On Pilgrimage*, 136.

<sup>58</sup>Piehl, “The Politics of Free Obedience,” 178.

<sup>59</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 155.

<sup>60</sup>Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 6; *Peace in the Post-Christian Era* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 7.

relinquishing the false security of possessions allows one to relinquish the state's protection, for "the only way to live in any true security is to live so close to the bottom that when you fall you do not have far to drop, you do not have much to lose."<sup>61</sup>

Again, the commitment to sacrifice or suffering, not a hatred of material goods or private ownership, is the basis for poverty. The poor are often forced into their condition by physical disability, mental illness, or lack of education or capital, and voluntary poverty is an attempt to understand their precarity. As Day says, "It is not true love if we do not know them, and we can only know them by living with them, and if we love with knowledge we will love with faith, hope, and charity."<sup>62</sup> Coy adds that the connection between hospitality and politics "is profound enough that it transcends both time and space within the movement," as those who live among the poor are unable to ignore the problems caused by some public policies: "In short, the Catholic Worker house of hospitality is a source of political knowledge leading to nonviolent action. We might usefully see hospitality and the solidarity it engenders as the grounding of a Catholic Worker epistemology."<sup>63</sup> Thus the first two principles of Day's pacifism are inseparable from one another and from poverty; one is not prior to the other.

### *Disarmament of the Heart*

As Ellis contends, "Being with the poor and the outcast, being in a sense with the victims of our society, discourages any pretense," and Day's introspection and self-

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<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Chesterton, 92; Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 86.

<sup>62</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 214; *On Pilgrimage*, 250.

<sup>63</sup>Coy, "Beyond the Ballot Box," 176-79.

criticism instead result in a remarkable humility.<sup>64</sup> When challenging the comfort of others she nearly always includes herself: “What right has any one of us to security when God’s poor are suffering? What right have I to sleep in a comfortable bed when so many are sleeping in the shadows of buildings here in this neighborhood of the *Catholic Worker* office?” Although many volunteers left “because of their own shame,” enduring such shame, she says, “is part of our penance.”<sup>65</sup> Further, Ellsberg says, “Each protest, each fast, was an effort to take upon herself, in some small way, the guilt of Dachau, Hiroshima, and other crimes as yet uncommitted, and thus preventable.”<sup>66</sup> Penance includes both an obligation to act and a willingness to trust in God’s will: “Leaving out of account Divine Providence, there is chaos and destruction ahead, and injustices breeding new wars. But we cannot leave out of account Divine Providence, so we can live in hope and faith and charity, and rejoice and continue to pray and do penance to avert another war.” Protesting a Mass for the military on the anniversary of Hiroshima, she quotes Luke 13:3: “‘Unless you do penance, you shall all perish.’ Penance comes before the Eucharist. Otherwise we partake of the Sacrament unworthily. . . . Our Creator gave us life, and the Eucharist to sustain our life. But we have [given] the world instruments of death of inconceivable magnitude.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Ellis, *A Year at the Catholic Worker*, 117.

<sup>65</sup>Day, *Selected Writings*, 70; *The Long Loneliness*, 216.

<sup>66</sup>Robert Ellsberg, “Dorothy Day and the Gospel of Peace,” *Living Pulpit* 7, no. 4 (October-December 1998), 21.

<sup>67</sup>Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 148; “Bread for the Hungry,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1976. The Greek word *metanoia* in this verse is usually translated “repent,” not “do penance.” It is possible that Day misunderstands the meaning. More likely, she simply associates repentance with the Catholic sacrament of penance, usually called confession, in which the forgiveness of sins is granted through the pronouncement of absolution by a priest. As I noted before, Day participated in weekly confession, another example of her form of life being inseparable from her Catholic practices.

Day's advocacy on behalf of workers is not my focus here, but it indicates the transformation of her concern for persons and her willingness to engage the laity. Indeed, Frary suggests, "She had a theology of the laity that antedated Vatican II, and to which Vatican II added only a systematic presentation."<sup>68</sup> As Coy explains, lay awareness of social issues and efforts to help them "inform their conscience" were rare prior to the council, but "Day chose to stake the future of her Catholic Worker movement on a position that ran absolutely contrary to this historical pattern." It is also important that she was successful. For example, many Catholic conscientious objectors continue to cite articles from the paper in their applications for CO status.<sup>69</sup>

The founding of the Worker was providential in that it both proclaimed and embodied an alternative form of action at a critical time. Mark Massa argues that it offered "an anti-structural vision of what American Catholicism might be during a period of great uncertainty and flux, when Catholic group identity was fluid and ambiguous and its new corporate 'niche' in the religious landscape remained unclear."<sup>70</sup> Yet to call the Worker "anti-structural" (or the Church a "niche") is an overstatement, for Day was loyal to the Church's authority, to the point that she was criticized for accepting its structure and dogma. How, her detractors wondered, could she be so radical about social and political issues and so conservative and traditional about her Catholicism?<sup>71</sup> Her response was that the Church has not spoken infallibly on many issues, thereby leaving

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<sup>68</sup>Frary, 387.

<sup>69</sup>Coy, "Catholic Conscience," 54.

<sup>70</sup>Mark S. Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 124.

<sup>71</sup>Jim Forest, "Dorothy Day: Saint and Troublemaker," in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 583.

room for interpretation. Further, although her positions caused tension, Day was afforded respect because she and her associates faced difficult and, on occasion, violent situations and did not back down from them. Catholic Workers not only assist victims of domestic violence and gang wars; many recount stories of aggressive, even armed, persons at the houses and of how nonviolent responses defused the situations. Day did not live in a war zone, but she faced threats and temptations to engage in violence and chronicled her experience for public consumption. In Sally Cunneen's words, "Telling us of her life at the Worker, she also helps us understand that each of us can live by a power other than conformity or force."<sup>72</sup> Sr. Rosemary Lynch adds that "Dorothy always understood the connections between the power of nonviolence within [Worker houses] and the power of nonviolence in bringing political peace to the whole world."<sup>73</sup>

Maurin thought that protest was rarely effective—"Strikes don't strike me," he often said—and unions were too confrontational, as society ought to be cooperative. To some, Segers says, it appeared that he "read the papal encyclicals selectively, accepting the principle of subsidiarity but rejecting the popes' stress on the importance of the just wage for the workingman, the validity of labor organization, and the necessity of state intervention to bring about greater justice for the poor."<sup>74</sup> Maurin, however, thought it more important to emphasize the tendency of labor organization and state power to subordinate values to economic considerations. Day agrees, but she also believes that the

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<sup>72</sup>Sally Cunneen, "Dorothy Day: The Storyteller as Human Model," *Cross Currents* 34, no. 3 (fall 1984), 283.

<sup>73</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 47. For insight into encounters with violence at the Worker houses, see Angie O'Gorman and Patrick G. Coy, "Houses of Hospitality: A Pilgrimage into Nonviolence," in *A Revolution of the Heart*, ed. Coy, 239-71.

<sup>74</sup>Segers, 210.

encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI support the right of workers to strike and form unions, which offer the opportunity “to experience solidarity in their support for one another in a common struggle.” As Mitchell says, “Her writings do not offer a systematic critique of capitalism as much as they offer the vision of a new cooperative economic order beyond capitalism.”<sup>75</sup> For Day, anarchism and distributism are not alternative “systems.” Rather, they show that societies and economies do not have to be organized materialistically. While the alternative cannot be developed wholesale, it can be demonstrated in microcosm by the Worker and other groups.

Day also extends Maurin’s “philosophy of work” and “philosophy of poverty” to modern warfare, often noting the tendency of capitalism and socialism to deny the dignity of the worker and legitimate violence in the pursuit of economic goals. Such flaws expose our idolatrous allegiance to these systems. While their intentions may be noble, clergy who support democracies set important principles aside by “accepting the easy way of capitalist industrialism, which leads to collectivism and the totalitarian state.”<sup>76</sup> With the decline of cultures united by values and the corresponding rise of large social and economic entities, Wink says, “Individuals sense that their only escape from utter insignificance lies in identifying with these giants and idolizing them as the true bearers of their own human identity.”<sup>77</sup> These “giants” have become the perceived bearers of the common good, a perception that the “localist” politics of the Worker denies.<sup>78</sup> According to the Rourke, while ideologies of both left and right claim to be in favor of the

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<sup>75</sup>Mitchell, 168, 164.

<sup>76</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 151, 183.

<sup>77</sup>Wink, 60.

<sup>78</sup>Massa, 105-6.

“individual,” they fail to recognize that this abstract, modern conception is fundamentally different from the real human person, who is “concrete, historically and culturally situated, and a member of a specific community.” Materialistic and utilitarian ideologies cannot hold these elements together, “as they inevitably take one component of the person and play it off against another.” Thus the roots of the problem are anthropological, and in Christian anthropology the person “is an autonomous center of responsible activity, yet is relational to his very core, oriented to the most profound solidarity with others.”<sup>79</sup>

However well this latter anthropology was applied in Christendom, its fracturing helps explain the modern emphasis on the “free” and “rational” individual independent of any tradition. Frary argues that the Catholic Church was complicit in this development in its withdrawal from politics and overemphasis on Christ’s divinity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Day, on the other hand, locates his humanity and identification with persons at the center of her theology.<sup>80</sup> One of her most famous declarations is that “our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system.” Certainly many radicals can agree, but what separates Day is “her distinctive announcement that the one true antidote for the system is the Church.” According to Michael Garvey, it is this conviction that places her far closer to John Paul II, who labeled this system a “culture of death,” than to any socialist, anarchist, or political liberal. As Forest writes, “That culture’s idolatrous worship of individual autonomy, its reliance on usury, its fetishizing of corporate power, its murderous addiction to increasingly apocalyptic weaponry to

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<sup>79</sup>Rourke and Rourke, x-xi, 6-7.

<sup>80</sup>Frary, 386.

underwrite a spurious notion of security—all are instances of an intolerable situation in which acquiescence has become indistinguishable from sin.”<sup>81</sup> Like Maurin, Day thinks the Church’s failure to address poverty is partially at fault, for “serving soup one day and war the next” makes little sense.<sup>82</sup>

Day believes that she can set an example by supporting unions and workers’ movements while refusing to participate in armed action. She makes it a point to call out influential Catholics such as John Brophy of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO): “You are a man of influence, and it is your duty as a Catholic and a trade unionist to preach in season and out of season the use of pure means. And by that we mean nonviolent coercion.” However, Day also challenges the laity, and though she is well aware of the ambiguous reasons for military service—she knew many soldiers personally and had relatives that fought in conflicts from the Civil War to Vietnam—she maintains that all persons have alternatives and must prepare to resist the temptation of violent response and choose the “better way” of the supernatural:

We must prepare now for martyrdom—otherwise we will not be ready. Who of us if he were attacked now would not react quickly and humanly against such attack? Would we love our brother who strikes us? Of all at *The Catholic Worker* how many would not instinctively defend himself with any forceful means in his power? We must prepare. We must prepare now. There must be a disarmament of the heart.<sup>83</sup>

Day called on workers to refuse to manufacture or transport “articles of war” intended for nations involved in the growing conflict in Europe. Rather than discuss their

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<sup>81</sup>Michael O. Garvey, foreword to Day, *On Pilgrimage*, xi.

<sup>82</sup>Jim Forest, “Dorothy Day and the Sermon on the Mount,” *Other Side*, August 1981, 16.

<sup>83</sup>Dorothy Day. “Open Letter to John Brophy, CIO Director,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1937; “Dorothy Day Explains CW Stand on Use of Force,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1938.

guilt for participating in the system (as she sometimes did), she focuses on their power to effect real change: “Whether you know it or not, you, the workers, hold in your hands the power to tip the scales in favor of peace or crime. Are you afraid of your power? We are waiting for your answer.” Again, Day disputes the argument that war is justified in order to defend Christianity, civilization, or democracy; these are worth saving but cannot truly be saved by violent means. Further, war is a waste of labor in a world already reeling from conflict. “Instead of gearing ourselves in this country for a gigantic production of death-dealing bombers and men trained to kill,” she argues, “we should be producing food, medical supplies, ambulances, doctors and nurses for the works of mercy, to heal and rebuild a shattered world.”<sup>84</sup>

Day and Maurin had long warned of the darkness of fascism, and she saw the crimes of Franco, Hitler, Stalin, and Tito with “a clearer eye, and sooner, than most of her generation.”<sup>85</sup> She picketed the German embassy and was among the first to publicly denounce anti-Semitism, a controversial position among the many who listened to Fr. Charles Coughlin’s weekly radio program that condemned both Jews and communists (and the New Deal). Those selling Coughlin’s paper even confronted their *Catholic Worker* counterparts, calling them “communists” and knocking them to the ground. In 1939 Day helped found the *Voice* to counter Coughlin and the *Worker* called on the country to open its doors to “all Jews who wish free access to American hospitality,” an

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<sup>84</sup>Dorothy Day, “To the Workers,” *Catholic Worker*, October 1939; “Our Stand.” Recall Augustine’s observation—comparing the City of God with Rome—that “keeping the faith” may involve relinquishing one’s “safety”: “The safety of the City of God, however, is of such a kind that it can be possessed, or rather acquired, only with faith and through faith” (*The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1118-19, book XXII, chap. 6).

<sup>85</sup>Charles R. Morris, *American Catholic: The Saints and Sinners Who Built America’s Most Powerful Church* (New York: Times Books, 1997), 144.

appeal that went largely unheeded.<sup>86</sup> After the war she was asked how she justified her pacifism in view of the Holocaust; her reply was that winning the war had not, in fact, saved many Jews. She was not sympathetic to fascism's goals or means but argued that the Allies did not recognize the presence of Christ in their enemies or the possibility that God works in the midst of evil:

During the Franco-Prussian war, Bernadette considered the Prussians the servants of God. When the Maccabees were being slain, one by one, in defense of their faith, they each testified that they were suffering for the sins of their race. How many Christians think of Hitler or Stalin in this way, as "the servant of God"? Do they remember them as temples of the Holy Ghost, creatures made to the image and likeness of God, two human beings for whom Christ dies on the Cross? Are they praying for them—with love and pity?<sup>87</sup>

After Pearl Harbor—and after less than a decade as a Catholic and in opposition to Maurin's desire to be silent—Day boldly declared her opposition to American entry into the war. "We are still pacifists," she writes. ". . . We must all admit our guilt, our participation in the social order which has resulted in this monstrous crime of war." She adds the phrase, "We love our country and we love our President" and acknowledges America's history of welcoming the oppressed and striving for peace, but she argues that the nation is now failing to live up to its own principles.<sup>88</sup> The facts of war, however grave, cannot supersede the commandment to love one's enemies. These declarations contextualize the difficulties that emerged for the movement during the war years. For example, nearly all the pacifist groups that had arisen after World War I faded away and many who opposed American involvement (and the growing bureaucracy of the

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<sup>86</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 101.

<sup>87</sup>Day, "Our Stand."

<sup>88</sup>Dorothy Day, "Members of Christ"; "Our Country Passes from Undeclared War to Declared War to Declared War; We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand," *Catholic Worker*, January 1942.

Roosevelt administration) were slandered, but Day made it a point to defend them.<sup>89</sup> In contrast to the Cold War and Vietnam, she did not engage in nonviolent action. Still, while she favored non-cooperation with conscription, Day spoke before a congressional committee on the Selective Service Act. A cleric testifying for the usual conscientious objector status for clergy and religious asked what right she had to speak, to which she replied, “I’m speaking for the lay people.”<sup>90</sup> Her testimony had some impact on the committee’s allowing Catholics to perform alternative service. In fact, although the leadership of the peace churches supported CO camps for their members, the Catholic camps—Gordon Zahn calls them “the first corporate expression of Catholic pacifism in this country”—were supported almost solely by the *Catholic Worker*.<sup>91</sup>

The newspaper’s offices were flooded with negative responses, but Day mounted a vigorous defense. A seminarian wrote that the attitude on pacifism among the students was unfavorable. Some thought it was the changing of a counsel (or ideal) to a precept (an obligation), while the rest were “swept along by the tide of friends and relatives who are fighting and by the solid fact to which they cling—the Japanese attack last December.” Day’s response repeats Fr. Hugo’s mantra that the precept is the end and the counsels the means: “The counsels (of poverty, chastity and obedience) are looked upon as the best means to the end toward which we are all obliged to aim, perfection.”<sup>92</sup> This position is a remarkable reversal, as the counsels of perfection—the rules of conduct

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<sup>89</sup>Bill Kauffman, “‘The Way of Love’: Dorothy Day and the American Right,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 228. Charles Lindbergh is a primary example.

<sup>90</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 44.

<sup>91</sup>Cornell.

<sup>92</sup>Dorothy Day, “Day After Day,” *Catholic Worker*, December 1942; “Day After Day,” *Catholic Worker*, February 1942.

given by Jesus—had historically been regarded as a calling for only a few, usually those in religious orders. They were not necessary for the salvation of or even advisable for lay Christians, who are called only to observe precepts to keep from indulging in one of these areas. This distinction was challenged by many of the Reformers, who maintained that all Christians, though they will fall short, are bound to do their utmost. This often resulted in a minimal conception of Christian obligation, but Day emphasizes a vision of perfection in regard to the counsels of poverty and particularly of obedience, under which pacifism falls. Another objection was that the Worker was straying from its support for the lower classes, many of whom were being victimized by the Nazis, but Day points out that they *are* being consistent: “From the first issue of *The Catholic Worker* we have opposed the use of force. . . . If we do not work out our program on these lines we might as well turn to revolution.” Once again she defends the bravery of pacifism:

One reader writes to protest against our ‘frail’ voices “blatantly” crying out against war. Another Catholic newspaper says it sympathizes with our sentimentality. This is a charge always leveled against pacifists. We are supposed to be afraid of the suffering, of the hardships of war.

But let those who talk of softness, of sentimentality, come to live with us in cold, unheated houses in the slums. Let them come to live with the criminal, the unbalanced, the drunken, the degraded, the pervert.<sup>93</sup>

Day notes that more pressing economic problems are obscured by the demand for focus and allegiance, in which all persons are asked to “do their part” for the war effort: “This is total war, and that means every man, woman and child, possessed, heart and mind, body and soul, by the state.” As she later concludes, the state neither provides the security it promises nor accepts responsibility for the destruction it unleashes: “The modern States which built up a Hitler, which did not depopulate concentration camps and

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<sup>93</sup>Day, “Members of Christ.”

gas chambers by providing living space, giving asylum or by imposing economic sanctions, are monstrosities. When they are driven to force finally, they fail to accomplish that peace which they set out for.” The only solution is for workers to “lay down their tools and refuse to make the instruments of death” and for all Christians to perform the works of mercy, the opposite of “the works of war.”<sup>94</sup>

The rise of “nuclear pacifism” after Hiroshima and Nagasaki soon faded in the face of anti-communism. As Day recalls, “Our insistence on worker-ownership, on the right of private property, on the need to de-proletarianize the worker, all points which had been emphasized by the Popes in their social encyclicals, made many Catholics think we were Communists in disguise.” Now the Worker was criticized for defending the rights of communist leaders, and Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York threatened either to shut down the paper or force it to remove the word “Catholic” from its name. When the paper argued that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and other jailed communists ought to be allowed freedom on bail while they prepared their defense, angry letters and cancellations poured in. Day responds by noting that although she disagrees with communists about violence, she also disagrees with many Christians, adding that much of the “freedom” enjoyed in the West is dependent on the defense industry. Here she discusses her visit to coal mines in western Pennsylvania:

There is no respect for property here. So why do we talk of fighting communism, which we are supposed to oppose because it does away with private property. We have done that very well ourselves in this country. Or because it denies the existence of God? We do not see Christ in our brothers the miners . . . We deny Christ here. And what about that other argument about the use of force?

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<sup>94</sup>Dorothy Day, “If Conscription Comes for Women,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1943; “The Pope and Peace,” *Catholic Worker*, February 1954; “Works of Mercy Oppose Violence in Labor’s War,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1941.

We live in an age of war, and the turning of the wheels of industry, the very working of the mines depends on our wars.<sup>95</sup>

Unlike many on the “left,” the writers of the *Catholic Worker* were experienced in critiquing communism and their pacifist stance was not compromised by earlier defenses of communist expansion in Eastern Europe. As she had since the thirties, Day maintained that communism was “essentially a response to Christian failures to promote social justice” and “could only be countered by a deeper Catholic commitment to the welfare of workers and the poor, not by political or military confrontation.”<sup>96</sup> During the sixties Day made a controversial visit to Cuba after which she sympathized with the revolution. At the time she said that “according to traditional Catholic teaching, the only kind Fidel Castro ever had, the good Catholic is also the good soldier.”<sup>97</sup> William Miller argues that the trip illustrates that Day never fully addresses the communist conception of freedom that drove revolution.<sup>98</sup> Not only is this not true, she is openly critical of the “natural” goals and means of communists *and* the anti-communism of Catholics who have their own “atheistic” allegiance to state power:

Have not we Catholics, by and large, gone down the road of compromise so far that we can awaken no enthusiasm among the people? That the only thing we can whip up enthusiasm for . . . is an anti-Communist crusade? A crusade that utilizes the anti-Christian and Mohammedan concept of a “holy war.” . . . The policy of the United States is anti-Catholic because it is atheistic. God does not enter into it for in place of Him there is EXPEDIENCY. It has become expedient that we murder, it has become expedient that we ignore the precepts of Jesus Christ laid down in the Sermon on the Mount and applicable to ALL MEN, not just to a chosen few who

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<sup>95</sup>Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 187-88; “Beyond Politics”; “Reflections on Work,” *Catholic Worker*, December 1946.

<sup>96</sup>Mel Piehl, “The Catholic Worker and Peace in the Early Cold War Era,” in *American Catholic Pacifism*, ed. Klejment and Roberts, 79-80.

<sup>97</sup>Dorothy Day, “Pilgrimage to Cuba—Part 1,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1962.

<sup>98</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 471.

are to be perfect. It has become expedient that we preach hatred of Communists to the people . . . Christianity has been reduced by the theologians to a rule of expediency, Christianity has been made to identify itself with Americanism, with the scum of the Right!<sup>99</sup>

Day is pointed in criticizing clergy who unquestioningly submit to the state's military endeavors. The Worker, of course, stands against this: "We were to live without killing, not matter what the provocation or consequence, not matter how many other Christians or Christian bishops were fighting wars or blessing them."<sup>100</sup> As I noted earlier, one factor is the Church's failure to address poverty, its "serving soup one day and war the next." Living among the poor gives Day a perspective that many clergy cannot or will not see: "And this goes for the priest too, wherever he is, whether he deals with the problem of war or with poverty. He may write and speak, but he needs to study the little way, which is all that is available to the poor, and the only alternative to the mass approach of the State." Such loyalty is very different from duty to country:

We have to begin to see what Christianity really is, that "our God is a living fire; though He slay me yet I will trust him." We have to think in terms of the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount and have this readiness to suffer. "We have not yet resisted unto blood." We have not yet loved our neighbor with the kind of love that is a precept to the extent of laying down our life for him. And our life very often means our money, money that we have sweated for; it means our bread, our daily living, our rent, our clothes. We haven't shown ourselves ready to lay down our life. This is a new precept, it is a new way, it is the new man we are supposed to become.<sup>101</sup>

The key to this "new way" is to release immediate "success" as a goal for ethics.

Both voluntary poverty and pacifism are a matter of deference to the supernatural grace

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<sup>99</sup>Dorothy Day, "We Are Un-American: We Are Catholics," *Catholic Worker*, April 1948. I am unsure if she is referring to the Americanist heresy condemned by Pius IX in *Syllabus Errorum* or a more general belief in American exceptionalism.

<sup>100</sup>Forest, "Dorothy Day and the Sermon on the Mount," 16.

<sup>101</sup>Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," *Catholic Worker*, December 1965; "Fear in Our Time," *Catholic Worker*, April 1968.

of Jesus Christ; in recognizing grace we also recognize that our security is only found in Him. At the same time, pacifism is not passive, nor is it ineffective. “In the context of the Kingdom, pacifism is a question of belief,” Frary argues. “[Day] believed in the power and effectiveness of love to the same degree that others believed in the power and effectiveness of violence in obtaining for men some quality of life.”<sup>102</sup> For many readers, “direct action” was fine as long as they were not expected to be part of it. “But there were a very great many who has seemed to agree with us who did not realize for years that *The Catholic Worker* position implicated them,” Day muses. “If they believed the things we wrote, they would be bound, sooner or later, to make decisions personally and to act upon them.”<sup>103</sup>

If the Worker is “anti-structural” at all, it is here, for the Church had for centuries relied on religious orders to meet the world’s needs. Yet its structure was hindering this mission by blinding it to the realities of those supposedly in its care. Thus each house of hospitality was (and is) given functional independence and residents are free to express their consciences. This sometimes leads to conflict, as at the outset of World War II, but contributes greatly to the Worker’s sense of community and its witness of poverty. Further, as Coy says, “The experience of living in a Catholic Worker hospitality in solidarity with the poor softens the aversions many people have to presuming to know a ‘truth,’ and to speaking that truth to the world through nonviolent action.”<sup>104</sup> This confidence in truth is the third principle of Day’s pacifist witness.

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<sup>102</sup>Frary, 387.

<sup>103</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 264.

<sup>104</sup>Coy, “Beyond the Ballot Box,” 179.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Truth

As I have explained, it was only after her conversion and under the tutelage of Peter Maurin that Dorothy Day was able to reconcile her Christian sympathies with her positions on social and political issues, which were heavily influenced by communism. However, as her youthful reading habits and activism attest, Day was always deeply concerned with *truth* and pursued it with an energy few could match. This principle can be seen as the intersection of solidarity and compassion. In other words, if the solidarity of the mystical body is real, then this doctrine makes demands on Christians, and if compassion is to be of value, then it must be grounded in truth. I have also been arguing that Day's pacifist witness is *traditioned*, that is, a product and part of the Catholic tradition that has little meaning apart from this context. Of course, pacifism is not the norm of this tradition, a fact I will examine in chapter five. Here it is important to recall MacIntyre's definition of tradition as a *living* argument. In the words of de Lubac, "Faith is not a repository of dead truths which we may respectfully set aside so as to plan our lives without them."<sup>1</sup> Day affirms the Church's teachings, but she also believes that many are open for debate and revision, including just war theory. In this she is not striking out on her own but following Scripture, the saints, and papal documents, and her minority position requires her to be particularly careful in studying these sources. My concern in this chapter, then, is Day's "embodiment" of this argument, which she

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<sup>1</sup>de Lubac, *Catholicism*, 365.

addressed head-on in her writings and eventually took to the streets. As tradition is living, so is the faith of Dorothy Day, a faith centered on discerning truth and bearing witness to it before the Church and the world.

### *Clarification of Thought*

As I noted in chapter two, 1917 was a critical year in the development of Day's pacifism. That spring she joined a bus tour of Columbia University students to hand out leaflets and make speeches protesting military mobilization. They met with resistance from police; in Baltimore there was a riot and an officer hit Day with a club. Then, on April 2, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany in order to make the world "safe for democracy." Day opposed the war but was not yet a pacifist, as she welcomed the Russian revolution and could only contrast the joy of the revolutionaries with the "war-mad" audience at a rally supporting American engagement.<sup>2</sup> As McClendon observes, "Day was caught up in a false eschatology, one that would seek peace by the way of violence, justice by way of forced chaos."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, she was arrested in front of the White House for supporting a strike for women's suffrage and resisted violently, biting the warden and kicking two guards. She also quit the *Call* after slapping a mentally ill man who was trying to embrace her. "It was always clear that she would leave her mark on the world," Wills writes, "but it must have seemed, in 1917, that the mark she would leave would be a bloody one."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Day, *From Union Square to Rome*, 73.

<sup>3</sup>McClendon, *Ethics*, 288.

<sup>4</sup>Wills, 228.

After her pregnancy and conversion Day all but gave up going to radical meetings, but she worked briefly for the Anti-Imperialist League, a communist affiliate aiding the opposition to U.S. forces in Nicaragua. More important, by this time she identified herself as a pacifist, for it was something she had to reconcile with her associates who were not. Although not central in her conversion narratives, this conviction was a factor in her struggle over the next few years to find something that would support her new family while integrating religious faith, social justice, and writing.<sup>5</sup> What she found was Maurin's vision. "Objectively, [the vision] was true because, in the logic of those elements that fit into the equation summing the problem of existence, it took into consideration the whole of the equation—time and eternity, spirit and matter," William Miller says. "Subjectively, it was true because of Peter's sanctity. This, as Dorothy saw it, made him the believable teacher."<sup>6</sup>

The basis of Maurin's commitment was fundamentally different than that of the era's secular movements, for he grounded his ideas in Jesus' example of renunciation and sacrifice and believed that only in this spirit can the integrity of the person be restored and the social order transformed. Therefore, he was more than a dissenter; he was first and foremost a disciple, and he often repeated that his philosophy was not revolution but tradition—"a faith so old it looks like new"—though it was clearly "a tradition made dynamic and faithful to its calling to represent Christ in the world." Prior to his involvement with *Le Sillon* Maurin had been drafted into the French military while serving with the Christian Brothers, a Catholic lay order. After two years he returned to

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<sup>5</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 70.

<sup>6</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 243.

teaching and began to reflect on the coercive and destructive potential of social organization. His explorations of pacifism, in particular, caused concern among some of his peers who “feared his interest in social questions would disturb his religious vocation.”<sup>7</sup> Yet Maurin avoided pacifist terminology, even cautioning Day during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War because he thought that the world was not ready to listen. This has led some to speculate about the strength of his convictions. However, Miller contends that “peace was so profoundly and integrally at the center of his vision that he did not have to particularize about it.”<sup>8</sup>

Day was also convinced that Maurin completely rejected violence and believed that his reluctance was a way of exercising his freedom: “Peter did not want to be fragmented, if we can use that word, by being called a pacifist or an anarchist, both of which words would serve to set him apart from men.”<sup>9</sup> The evidence is on her side, as he often spoke against the violent tactics of class struggle and terrorism in his “Easy Essays.” In 1938, for example, he argued that governments have no fixed standards of morality and thus cannot settle the question of war for Christians. The next year he published a lecture by Theodor Cardinal Innitzer of Vienna arguing that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus blesses those who make peace, declares himself as the one who brings peace, and calls his followers to make peace with each other, love their enemies, and refuse every form of violence. Maurin understood the central dilemma of personalism: for the spiritual development of persons to proceed, the social order must to be changed,

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<sup>7</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 18-19, 24.

<sup>8</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 355.

<sup>9</sup>Day, “The Pope and Peace.”

but the spiritual nature of reality makes violence unacceptable. In Ellis' words, "Incarnation meant reform *and* nonviolence."<sup>10</sup>

Maurin also published an address by Eric Gill in which the artist (and distributist) argues that the entire structure of warfare has changed. Instead of small professional armies participating in limited engagements, war is now conducted on a mass scale with entire populations mobilized for the effort, and the vast majority who fight know little about the conflict. If war has ever been heroic that time has passed, and it is no longer a question of justice or defense but simply of terrorism. Maurin, in fact, was prophetic in his assessment of capitalism, socialism, and fascism as ideologies that were all part of the same march toward totalitarianism, an argument Day would take in earnest after World War II. "For Maurin the power of modernity and the end of tradition seemed to be hurtling the world into darkness," Ellis states. "It was the voice of tradition that would illumine this darkness by providing cultural continuity to the Western world, by critiquing the present, and finally by forming the basis for a new social order." In fact, after the first few issues of the paper Maurin told Day that she was placing the locus of power in centralized politics rather than where it truly is—in local, personal activity.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently she took his advice, as the strength of her writing is its connection to life at the Worker. Although it fit her message, Day's journalistic style did not lend itself to formulating a theological structure. Rather, Patrick Jordan says, "She was a reporter of daily realities for whom faith, hope, and love were tested in the roiling crises of her Catholic Worker experiences, her travels, and her witness—all beneath the shadows cast

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<sup>10</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 145, 20.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 145, 34, 42.

by the grimmest of centuries.”<sup>12</sup> She can be harsh and confrontational at times, but her slant is essentially positive. “She’s not writing to depress people into revolution,” Forest says. “She wanted to inspire people to revolution, and it’s a quite different method.”<sup>13</sup> Numerous lengthy, theoretical articles appeared in the paper, but her columns were the driving force because they were accessible to, in Maurin’s words, “the man on the street,” as well as clergy and opinion leaders. Day has been criticized for not articulating a “theory,” but her transparency enabled her readers to grasp the theology that informed the movement. As Ellsberg explains, “She wrote to give reason for a marriage of convictions that was a scandal and stumbling block to many: radical politics and traditional, conservative ideology. Yet it was not what Dorothy Day wrote that was extraordinary, nor even what she believed, but the fact that there was absolutely no distinction between what she believed, what she wrote, and the manner in which she lived.”<sup>14</sup>

Day’s pacifism was less well-received than her voluntary poverty or support for workers’ movements, yet it is where she most clearly differentiates herself from socialism (and capitalism). For Marx the role of violence is secondary, as he likens conflict to “birth pangs” preceding the emergence of a classless society. Although the state is an instrument of violence for the ruling class, its power is in controlling the process of production; violence is only a means to seize this control, an element of “restraint” largely lost in the revolutions in Europe. Christianity and communism seek a similar end—transformation of the social order—but the latter justifies the use of any

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<sup>12</sup>Patrick Jordan, introduction to Day, *Writings from “Commonweal,”* xiv.

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 18.

<sup>14</sup>Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xv.

means to achieve it and threatens liquidation of all who do not conform. Day, however, distinguishes between “worldly” and “unworldly” justice. Transformation comes through the love of Christ and is not bound by time:

“Nothing will be achieved until the worker rises up in arms and forcibly takes the position that is his,” the Communist says. “Your movement, which trusts to peaceful means, radical though it may seem, is doomed to failure.”

We admit that we may seem to fail, but we recall to our readers the ostensible failure of Christ when He died on the Cross, forsaken by all His followers. Out of this failure a new world sprang up.<sup>15</sup>

Still, Day repeatedly states that the Church all too easily assents to similar means—often in response to communism—rather than use “weapons of the spirit.” To her mind this is “madness”: “This means the weapons used by either Communist or Christian, who today seem to me in both political [and] economic life to be Marxist also. The Communist believes in force, in espionage; so do the press and the pulpit of the Christian churches.” She calls on Christians to separate from this logic of force:

If we are truly living with the poor, working side by side with the poor, helping the poor, we will inevitably be forced to be on [the communists’] side, physically speaking. But when it comes to activity, we will be pacifists, I hope and pray, nonviolent resisters of aggression, from whomever it comes, resisters to repression, coercion, from whatever side it comes, and our activity will be the works of mercy. Our arms will be the love of God and our brother.<sup>16</sup>

Day sympathizes with revolutionaries but not their violence: “What attracts one in a Che Guevara and a Ho Chi Minh is the hardship and the suffering they endured . . . The impulse to stand out against the state and go to jail rather than serve is an instinct for penance, to take on some of the suffering of the world, to share in it.” She also argues that it is “better to revolt, to fight, as Castro did with his handful of men . . . than to do

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<sup>15</sup>Day, *Selected Writings*, 243.

<sup>16</sup>Day, *On Pilgrimage*, 204; “Beyond Politics.”

nothing.” Day surmises that revolution, however flawed, can result in a better social order that will, in turn, provide a place for grace to flourish. The end does not justify the means, but the motivation to attain it is often positive. Following Gandhi, she also prefers violence to passivity or cowardice:

What about the business of letting the other fellow get away with things? Isn't there something awfully smug about such piety—building up your own sanctimoniousness at the expense of the *increased* guilt of someone else? This turning the other cheek, this inviting someone else to be a potential thief or murderer, in order that we may grow in grace—how obnoxious. In that case, I believe I'd rather be the striker than the meek one struck. One would almost rather be a sinner than a saint at the expense of the sinner. No, somehow we must be saved together.<sup>17</sup>

### *Challenging Her Church*

Some Catholics read Day's support for specific actions as endorsements of socialism rather than responses to and critiques of it, giving the Worker a stigma in some circles that persists to this day. However, the fact that her ideas are often drawn directly from encyclicals, for example, reveals that the real problem is that many American Catholics are either not familiar with or not in agreement with the Church's social teaching. Of course, violence was among the last issues to be revisited by this teaching. There are two reasons for this, both related to the separation of natural and supernatural. The first is uncritical acceptance of just war theory. As refined by Aquinas in the thirteenth century, just war theory grants responsibility for deciding the morality of armed conflict and the presumption of justice to temporal authorities, not the Church or individual persons, thereby placing the burden of proof on the objector to war. Clergy have since supported the policies of “Christian” nations with few exceptions, and

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<sup>17</sup>Dorothy Day, *Selected Writings*, 179; “About Cuba,” *Catholic Worker*, July-August 1961; *Loaves and Fishes*, 61.

McClendon argues that this makes Day's pacifist witness all the more remarkable, for while the Church often officially spoke for peace, "What was often if not always implied was a peace achieved by fighting 'just' wars or crusades, that is, wars that were conducted only under particular limits, rules, and conditions, and for particular goals."<sup>18</sup>

The second reason is loyalty, stemming from the Catholic community's desire to overcome latent anti-Catholicism and find a place in American social and political life. Stereotypically, Protestants were individualistic, devoted to progress, and loyal to the nation, while Catholics were self-isolating, submissive to Rome, and poor. The Social Gospel movement, in fact, was a response by Protestant leaders to the immigrant population in the cities.<sup>19</sup> That population's needs kept many bishops focused on local institutions (e.g., churches and schools) and their attempt, later dubbed "Americanism," to assimilate immigrants into a single American Catholic culture. Leo XIII's *Testem Benevolentiae* (1899) condemned the Americanist position but resulted in a decades-long isolation of the bishops from Rome. Although his social doctrine was influential, most American Catholics paid little attention Leo's teaching on peace and international affairs. They were eager to show allegiance to their adopted homeland, and the convergence of Americanism, Catholic modernism, and Protestant-influenced theological liberalism resulted in uncritical support for its wars, including the bishops' formation of the National Catholic War Council during the First World War.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>McClendon, *Ethics*, 296.

<sup>19</sup>Elie, 5-6.

<sup>20</sup>McNeal, "Catholic Peace Movement," 347-48. See Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Testem Benevolentiae*, 22 January 1899.

This history is disputed and too complex to adequately address here, but it is important to recognize that despite the support of the majority of American Catholics, World War I was a turning point in the Church's theology of violence. Benedict XV was a strong opponent of the war and criticized just war theory as outmoded and theologically inadequate, a stand that earned him the title "Pontiff of Peace." However, his appeal to individual conscience was more in line with the older humanist peace tradition than with the internationalism that had sprung from the Council of Trent and Leo's writings.<sup>21</sup> The latter took hold when the newly formed National Catholic Welfare Council tabbed John A. Ryan, a prominent social theorist, to head its Department of Social Action. Ryan had approved of Benedict's proposal for ending the war but was a strong advocate for the League of Nations. He was also instrumental in founding the country's first Catholic peace organization, the Catholic Association for International Peace (CAIP), in 1927. The CAIP formally rejected pacifism, and though it initially supported neutrality its commitment to collective security and the just war ethic led it to alter this position. The Worker, however, joined other pacifist groups in advocating strict neutrality, and this early division represented "the two major ways in which American Catholics understood the issue of war as the nation and the Church entered the decade of the sixties."<sup>22</sup>

The approach of Ryan and the bishops was to synthesize Thomism and Catholic social teaching with liberal theories of economics and government. Unfortunately, Gneuh contends, "In so doing they had to accept many of the premises of liberal thought and as time went by the distinctive critique of Catholic doctrine became minimized," an

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<sup>21</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, 7.

<sup>22</sup>Au, 27.

accommodationist trend that continues today.<sup>23</sup> Whereas Ryan (and the Catholic press) emphasized the power of the state, McNeal says, “Day believed that peace depended on the actions of individuals and not nations or world organizations; her internationalism resided in human solidarity and the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ whereby the action of each individual affected every other individual.” She and Maurin saw the global rise in aggression as “the play of power politics” and responded with a roughly formulated but thoroughly evangelical pacifism that “stepped out of the whole intellectual and social ethos of Americanism.” The CAIP’s internationalism, however, left it “with no alternative to war once it was declared by the government of the United States.”<sup>24</sup> Although the CAIP placed itself in the larger American current of reform and attempted to apply many of Leo’s teachings to social ethics, in the area of peace Day and the Worker—where individuals embodied peace in community—took the lead.

As early as its fourth issue the *Catholic Worker* accused the Communist Party of encouraging labor violence, and in 1935 it published an article by a Dominican priest utilizing just war theory to condemn modern warfare and an imaginary dialogue, written by Furfey, between a “patriot” and Christ implying that following the latter required the renunciation of violence. Forest claims that with the latter article “the Catholic peace movement in America was born.”<sup>25</sup> One year later Day argued that “the conditions necessary for a ‘just war’ will not be fulfilled today.”<sup>26</sup> However, “At the time there were

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<sup>23</sup>Gneuhls, 209.

<sup>24</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, xi; “Catholic Peace Movement,” 367, 372.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in John L. LeBrun, “The Way of Love: Pacifism and the Catholic Worker Movement, 1933-1939,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 448.

<sup>26</sup>Dorothy Day, “For the New Reader,” *Catholic Worker*, December 1936.

fewer pacifists in the Catholic Church in America than there were poor men in line for coffee at the Catholic Worker house on Mott Street on a weekday morning.”<sup>27</sup> While Day declared the paper to be pacifist and encouraged nonviolent action, neither was at the forefront of her concern as yet. It is interesting to ponder what might have become of the Worker had the Depression faded without the outbreak of war. Regardless, while it initially reduced its readership, in the long run the paper’s stand enhanced its profile and contributed significantly to its endurance.

Day’s pacifist witness faced its first test with the Spanish Civil War, which had a heightened political character because Spain was the lone European nation where elements of democracy and socialism were emerging together. Thus many liberal radicals supported the communist-backed Republican government, while many Catholics saw the conservative nationalist (and overwhelmingly Catholic) revolutionaries as waging a holy war against atheistic communism. Day, along with Maritain, Mounier, and others, sought a middle way, agreeing that blame for killing priests—she calls them “martyrs”—and desecrating churches was shared by those who had convinced the poor that the Church belongs to the powerful but adding that those who justified vengeance in the name of Christ were guilty of the greater sacrilege. She recognizes the legitimate fear of many that the Church will be removed from Spain, but she refuses to believe military action could save it. By resorting to force, Christians were like those who said to Christ, “Come down from the Cross. If you are the Son of God, save Yourself” (Mt 27:40). Christ, however, would respond as he did to Peter: “Put up thy Sword”:

His were hard sayings, so that even His own followers did not know what He was saying, did not understand Him. It was not until after He died on the Cross, it

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<sup>27</sup>Elie, 117.

was not until He had suffered utter defeat . . . that they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and knew the truth with a strength that enabled them to suffer defeat and martyrdom in their turn. They knew then that not by force of arms, by the bullet or the ballot, would they conquer. They knew and were ready to suffer defeat—to show that great love which enabled them to lay down their lives for their friends. And now the whole world is turning to “force” to conquer.<sup>28</sup>

Day understands that her position will be unpopular, but she invokes the same “martyrs” to support her, declaring that “their blood cries out against the shedding of more blood to wash out theirs” and that by trusting in force “we are neglecting the one means—prayer and the sacraments—by which whole armies can be overcome.”<sup>29</sup> The *Worker* was summarily expelled from the Catholic Press Association, which it would never rejoin, and another stream of letters and cancellations arrived. Ellsberg notes that “on the subject of war and peace, it was charged, she was drifting into the area of politics, a world of complexities and ambiguities best left to politicians and theologians.”<sup>30</sup> The reaction indicates how influential the paper had become, as it was being widely read by priests and in seminaries. Day and the editors also began to discuss pacifism more thoroughly, printing the work of writers such as William Callahan, Furfey, and Arthur Sheehan as well articles by Pius XI attacking nationalism as a source of war. Furfey connected pacifism to the counsels of perfection, declaring, “The Prince of Peace would rather that we suffer injury than protect our national rights by violence.”<sup>31</sup> Callahan, on

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<sup>28</sup>Dorothy Day, “The Use of Force,” *Catholic Worker*, November 1936.

<sup>29</sup>Dorothy Day, “Explains CW Stand.”

<sup>30</sup>Ellsberg, “Gospel of Peace,” 20.

<sup>31</sup>Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 193-94.

the other hand, spoke of conscientious objection and “just war pacifism,” i.e., that the conditions of just war theory could no longer be fulfilled.<sup>32</sup>

As the world’s attention turned to fascism, most socialist and pacifist groups fell silent and even supported the policies of their respective nations, but Day lauded those who refused military service. Her position, along with that of *Commonweal*, “signaled the first American Catholic rejection of the traditional just war theory.”<sup>33</sup> McNeal, among others, criticizes Day for being unable “to supply adequate arguments in response to the evils of Hitler and Japanese aggression,” while William Miller refers to her neutrality as “curious” and argues that she kept the war at a distance in order to not be “stained” by it: “Seen in the perspective of forty years, Dorothy’s pacifist stand at this point was one of the significant events in contemporary religious history,” but at the time it “seemed a much too simplistic response to the problem of the various madnesses that the world then faced.”<sup>34</sup> Some readers may have felt this way. However, although Day decried the actions of the states involved, she recognized that the belief that they could solve the “problem” by violence was itself a problem. Her “response” is “simply” that Jesus is asking Christians to put down their swords and perform the works of mercy: “If we are not going to use our spiritual weapons, let us by all means arm and prepare,” she wrote in early 1941.<sup>35</sup> This may be a problem for “realistic” ethicists who believe that

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<sup>32</sup>Cornell.

<sup>33</sup>Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 121.

<sup>34</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, 47; Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 331-32.

<sup>35</sup>Dorothy Day, “Pacifism Is Dangerous, So Is Christianity,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1941.

Christians are responsible for the preservation of the state and conclude that violence is the only way to do so, but it is not a problem for her.

Criticism came not only from the outside. Although some Workers went to conscientious objector camps, others sympathized with the Allies. Day, however, called resisting Nazism with violence “a terrible temptation.” She had long recognized the insincerity of her “noble” identification with the poor, and now, O’Connor says, “She directed a similar distrust to the supposedly courageous choices of others.”<sup>36</sup> She did not allow the interventionists to publish their criticisms and sent a letter to the houses asking everyone to register as conscientious objectors. The letter sparked anger, as some saw it as an attempt to impose authority on a movement that espoused freedom of thought, and confusion, as others had not realized that pacifism was an integral part of what they had joined.<sup>37</sup> A weekend retreat led by Furfey was convened at the Worker farm in Easton, Pennsylvania. According to Miller, “It was the last great get-together the Catholic Workers had before we were separated by war.”<sup>38</sup>

John Cogley, later a writer for *Commonweal*, was angered by the tone of the retreat, and his subsequent enlistment resulted in the closing of the Chicago house, while another dispute shut down the Milwaukee house. “The C.W. is gone,” Cogley wrote. “Now there is a group of pacifists defending their positions by calling attention to their good works and another group of die-hards like myself who leave gracelessly. Peace!

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<sup>36</sup>June O’Connor, *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day: A Feminist Perspective* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 77-79.

<sup>37</sup>Rosalie G. Riegle, *Voices from the Catholic Worker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 20-21, 31-32.

<sup>38</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 337.

Peace! And there is no peace.”<sup>39</sup> The passage of time mellowed Day’s view of the incident. “It is a matter of grief to me that most of those who are Catholic Workers are not pacifists,” she later said, “but I can see too how good it is that we always have this attitude represented among us. We are not living in an ivory tower.”<sup>40</sup> Cogley came to see her pacifism as invaluable because “it has made it impossible for non-pacifists like me to accept violence unthinkingly.”<sup>41</sup> However, his comment neglects the depth of Day’s belief, as she declares that pacifism is true and not merely a necessary minority witness, the typical place afforded it by Catholic ethics.

Elie argues that as the war continued Day increasingly spoke as an independent individual, “a Catholic radical who must obey the dictates of her own conscience.”<sup>42</sup> This ignores the fact that she never ceased referring to traditional sources. Certainly she was wounded by the internal strife and the war itself: “The world is too much with me in the Catholic Worker. The world is suffering and dying. I am not suffering and dying in the CW; I am writing and talking about it.”<sup>43</sup> She had taken over leadership of the Worker from Maurin—he was often traveling and pacifism had made her its public face—and now she had “the terrible task of holding the movement and the paper together.”<sup>44</sup> Subscriptions to the newspaper, which had reached 190,000 in May 1938, plummeted to 50,500 by November 1944 and only nine of the peak thirty-two houses

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<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 344.

<sup>40</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 272.

<sup>41</sup>Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 171-72.

<sup>42</sup>Elie, 140.

<sup>43</sup>Quoted in Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 364.

<sup>44</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 157.

were still operating.”<sup>45</sup> Many supporters distanced themselves, and a dispute at a retreat prompted her to take a sabbatical. She returned with a scathing critique of President Truman’s speech after the dropping of the atomic bombs:

Mr. Truman was jubilant. President Truman. True man; what a strange name, come to think of it. We refer to Jesus Christ as true God and true Man. Mr. Truman is a true man of his time in that he was jubilant. He was not a son of God, brother of Christ, brother of the Japanese, jubilating as he did. . . . *Jubilate Deo*. We have killed 318,000 Japanese. . . . We are making the bombs. This new great force will be used for good, the scientists assured us. And then they wiped out a city of 318,000. This was good. The President was jubilant.<sup>46</sup>

The conflicts of the twentieth century had moved beyond encounters between soldiers; killing was more indiscriminate and nations were less hesitant to harm noncombatants. As I noted in chapter two, before the war Day recognized that modern tactics could not be framed as “just,” and now she utilized just war language to argue that one did not have to be a pacifist to reject nuclear warfare. She began by calling on the United States to end its nuclear program, “put on sackcloth and ashes, weep and repent.” She anticipated the response and her reply was consistent: “One of the saints [probably Francis], when asked what he would do if he were told he was to die within the next day, replied that he would go on doing what he was doing. That is the state of mind we must cultivate.” The willingness of Christian thinkers to posit an “interim ethic” for warfare or deterrence led Day to intensify her rhetoric. In perhaps her most important essay of the era she declares that “we are against war because it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the only important thing is that we abide in His spirit. It is more important

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<sup>45</sup>Kauffman, 229.

<sup>46</sup>Dorothy Day, “We Go on Record: The CW Response to Hiroshima,” *Catholic Worker*, September 1945.

than being American, more important than being respectable, more important than obedience to the State. It is the only thing that matters.”<sup>47</sup>

Pius XII, whose public neutrality regarding the Nazis and response to the Holocaust has been the subject of recent controversy, never mentioned pacifism or conscientious objection in his wartime addresses, but in the war’s latter stages he condemned the bombing of Rome and the use of atomic bombs as “unjust” and after the armistice he spoke of the “emptiness” of deterrence and the “hollowness” of a just war fought with modern weapons.<sup>48</sup> Musto argues that the war “taught the church a new lesson” and that in place of nineteenth-century optimism and trust in government Pius embraced “the role of the Catholic laity in making peace.” The American bishops, however, did not follow the pope’s lead. During the war they issued five statements, none of which condemned obliteration bombing or nuclear weapons and the last of which reiterated just war principles and supported the United States’ stand against the spread of communism.<sup>49</sup> This was a startling turn, as the isolationism of the 1930s had been reversed in favor of the position of the CAIP, which had refused to support conscientious objection and openly condoned the decision to use atomic weapons.

As Pius envisioned, the “new spirit” would have to come from the laity. Growing disillusionment convinced many that a postwar peace movement must be “less piously moralistic,” Piehl contends. “. . . The initial opposition to war had turned many modest

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<sup>47</sup>Day, *Selected Writings*, 270; “We Are Un-American.”

<sup>48</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, 50-51.

<sup>49</sup>Musto, 185, 246.

young Catholics into radical advocates of sweeping social change.”<sup>50</sup> If he is referring to Day as “piously moralistic,” then it is an inaccurate label. The Worker did assume a lead role in Catholic activity but it was able to do so because she had remained steadfast during the war. It also enjoyed a tenuous protection from the hierarchy. For example, in response to numerous complaints Bishop J. Francis McIntyre of New York noted that he “had not studied these things in the seminary” and deferred to Jesuit theologian Joseph O’Connor, who said the Worker stood on solid theological grounds.<sup>51</sup> Day, in turn, saw no reason to ask for support or permission. According to Rosalie Riegle, “This attitude of respectful distance didn’t give the bishops a chance to say no and probably muted criticism in the Catholic press.”<sup>52</sup> Although they did not always appreciate her disagreements with them, the bishops never took her up on her offer to stop publishing articles on pacifism, or even the entire paper, if they asked.

Of course, few had a problem with the Worker’s feeding and clothing of the poor. We must be careful not to assume that bishops never raised objections to military actions, but their tendency to “find” just war rationales or simply step aside cannot be obscured. Day recognized this and stated in a 1950 essay in *Commonweal* that it was “time to protest against this horror of war, each one to say no against the acceptance expected by the State.”<sup>53</sup> However, Eileen Egan adds, “By a special gift, she was able to direct attention to issues rather than engage in naked confrontation with the ecclesiastical

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<sup>50</sup>Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 204.

<sup>51</sup>Coy, “Catholic Conscience,” 58.

<sup>52</sup>Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 94.

<sup>53</sup>Day, *Writings from “Commonweal,”* 118.

institution.”<sup>54</sup> Day’s approach, despite being direct, was undergirded with love as well as self-criticism. According to Forest, “She was by no means an opponent of the bishops or someone campaigning for structural changes in the Church. What was needed, she said, wasn’t new doctrine but living out the existing doctrine. True, some pastors seemed barely Christian, but one had to aim for their conversion. . . . The way to do that was to set an example.”<sup>55</sup> Further, critics were unable to effectively charge her with undermining Catholic doctrine. “This was the unbreakable thread—fidelity to the teachings of the Gospels,” Roberts says. “It unified Dorothy Day . . . and conservative Church authorities. Theirs was a complex relationship. . . . Through the years that relationship grew, in large part through her diplomacy.”<sup>56</sup>

#### *Perseverance of a Saint*

This relationship was put to the test when Cardinal Spellman vowed to break the strike of the Queens gravediggers’ union. After several Workers joined a picket line outside his residence he sent word that the house might be shut down.<sup>57</sup> Day wrote that Spellman’s action was “a temptation of the devil to that most awful of all wars, the war between the clergy and the laity,” and after he exhorted a group of American troops to pursue “victory, total victory” she denounced his words as “un-Christian.”<sup>58</sup> Elie speculates that such tension “made her despair of bringing about change within the

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<sup>54</sup>Eileen Egan, “Dorothy Day: Pilgrim of Peace,” in *A Revolution of the Heart*, ed. Coy, 71.

<sup>55</sup>Forest, “Dorothy Day,” 583-84.

<sup>56</sup>Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 106.

<sup>57</sup>Elie, 179.

<sup>58</sup>Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1949; Elie, 398.

Church”: “With Peter Maurin’s death [in 1949] her movement had lost a vital connection to working-class Catholics. Moreover, those Catholics were moving up in the world—moving out of the Catholic ghettos and into the suburbs. In such a world the person of faith was called to appeal to believer and unbeliever alike.<sup>59</sup> However, despite occasional self-doubts and frustrations and a willingness to work with other groups, Day did not shift her focus. If anything, she despaired of Catholics sacrificing their convictions in order to participate in larger movements.

For Day the only response to the frightening possibilities of the nuclear age was the teaching of indiscriminate love, for “to live under the ‘protection’ of such weapons without resisting, without raising an outcry, was, in her view, to participate in the ultimate blasphemy.”<sup>60</sup> Although the state promises to provide security in exchange for allegiance, she argues that militarization brings only more carnage: “It is as though we are saying these days, as it was said at the beginning of the last world war, ‘This is no time for the beatitudes. This is the time for the militant virtues.’ All the forces we used then, including the atomic bomb, did not bring us peace but built up an ever vaster war.” In other words, security is not a legitimate reason to maintain arms or use force, as “it is better than the United States be liquidated than that she survive by war.”<sup>61</sup> Forest recalls Day’s address to a group of college students during the Cold War:

Some of those in the room found Dorothy’s pacifism naïve if not subversive. One of them demanded to know what Dorothy would do if the Russians invaded the United States. Would she not admit that in this extreme, at least, killing was in order, even a duty? “We are taught by Our Lord to love our enemies,” Dorothy

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<sup>59</sup>Elie, 212.

<sup>60</sup>Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xxxiii.

<sup>61</sup>Day, *Writings from “Commonweal,”* 117-18; “We Are Un-American: We Are Catholics.”

replied. “I hope I could open my heart to them and receive them with love, the same as anyone else. We are all children of a common Father.” Again, . . . there was a shocked stillness in the room.<sup>62</sup>

Theologically, the “necessity” of violent resistance to evil (e.g., Christian realism) rests on a view of human nature as fallen and inevitably sinful. Recall, however, Day’s insistence on the formation of a supernatural rationality, which is a question of faith (and theology). Simply put, if the God of the New Testament exists, the Christian’s future—and present—is secure. It is therefore reasonable to be obedient to Christ even if he calls us to be pacifists. Further, as I will discuss in the next chapter, just war theory (when properly understood) is also bound to this supernatural rationality, and trust in the power of the state remains a misunderstanding of faith. “Our so-called ‘Faith’ is not worth fighting for,” Day argues. “So don’t let us talk anymore of saving our faith when we beat the drums for a war with Russia. It is a war between empires, and neither of them is Christian.” It is a luxury to make such claims while protected by a powerful military force, but there have been pacifists in many violent situations, including those of the early church, and such faith is undertaken with humility:

People probably do not realize with what fear and trembling I speak or write about the Catholic Worker, our ideas and our point of view. It is an extreme point of view, and yet it is tested and proved over and over again; it is almost as if God says to us “Do you really mean what you say?” and then gives us a chance to prove it. We have to live with the positions we take, and at the same time we are bound to be beset with all kinds of human doubts: who are we, who have so seldom been tried and have not suffered as others have in war, to take such a position? . . . I know what human fear is and how often it keeps us from following our conscience. We find so many ways of rationalizing our positions.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 212.

<sup>63</sup>Day, *Writings from “Commonweal,”* 101; “Fear in Our Time.”

As I have noted, the willingness to maintain arms requires a differential valuing of human persons. During the Korean War, for example, Day noted the parallels between the sufferings of those on both sides. “Who are the poor?” she asks. “They are our soldiers in Korea fighting in zero weather, thousands of them suffering and tortured and dying. . . . They are the Koreans themselves, north and south, who have been bombed out, burnt out in the rain of fire from heaven.” Deterrence and warfare are often justified by principles Christians can support—liberty, dignity, and security—but once the fighting begins these are “put back into storage just as if they were tanks.” As Day cautions, “Only by the sacrifice of intellectual honesty is it possible to identify the cause of truth with that of an army.” These “principles” are, in the end, only shadows:

We must prepare to fight for freedom here in America, they say, but we have lost our freedom here. People have come to accept the idea that we are a nation of industrial slaves, creatures of the State which doles out relief and jobs, and which is now going to seize the young and the strong for defense.

We have lost our democracy because we have lost our faith in men—we no longer look upon them as creatures of body and soul, temples of the Holy Ghost, made to the image and likeness of God. If we have no faith in their spiritual capacities, we make no call on their spiritual resources.<sup>64</sup>

Some clergy and union representatives spoke publicly against Day’s critiques of the Korean conflict, saying that the movement ought to focus on the poor. “Labor leaders themselves felt that in our judgment of war, we judged them also for working in the gigantic armaments race, as indeed we did,” Day wrote. “Ours is indeed an unpopular front.”<sup>65</sup> Yet the “front” was becoming more popular. The paper’s circulation rebounded and it began publishing the articles of Ammon Hennacy and Robert Ludlow, both

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<sup>64</sup>Dorothy Day, “The Message of Love,” *Catholic Worker*, December 1950; *Writings from “Commonweal,”* 117-18; “Man’s Loss of His Faith.”

<sup>65</sup>Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 222.

converts and students of Gandhian nonviolence. Unlike the Depression and the wars in Europe, the Cold War was “a symbolic standoff,” waged in the cultural imagination and via the new medium of television, requiring symbolic action.<sup>66</sup> Such action included occupying missile bases, blockading submarines, refusing conscription, and not paying taxes. The latter idea came from Hennacy, and together he and Day led annual protests of civil defense air raid drills from 1955 to 1961. The group would gather in Washington Square Park, a block from Civil Defense headquarters, carrying signs and handing out leaflets proclaiming, “In the name of Jesus, who is God, who is Love, we will not obey this order to pretend, to evacuate, to hide. . . . We do not have faith in God if we depend upon the Atom Bomb.” When a judge accused them of failing to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” Hennacy replied that “Caesar has been getting too much around here and someone has to stand up for God.”<sup>67</sup>

The protests were not out of character for Day but a logical extension of her personalism, for “perhaps even more dramatically than the draft, the civil defense drill made tangible the state’s pervasive but usually abstract and disguised power to wage war by demanding that all individuals act in accord with its policies.” Following Hennacy she framed the protests as “acts of repentance” for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This identified them *with*, rather than solely *against*, the nation, and thus guaranteed their success. According to Piehl, “If the purposes were only political then its success or failure could be measured in practical terms. But . . . the Catholic Worker’s campaign was against the ‘spiritual evils’ that had made the bomb and the drill possible

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<sup>66</sup>Elie, 237.

<sup>67</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 135, 138.

in the first place.” Day’s emphasis on conscription kept the focus on persons, thereby demonstrating “the power to affect deeply the real lives and destinies of a few people—a more convincing form of witness than many causes could muster.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the draft was more important than “the power to split atoms”:

It is more important because it is an interference with the destiny of a human soul. It is usurpation of authority in the moral sphere, as regards the individual. Collectively, this power to conscript men for military duty results in turning the whole world into an armed camp.

Christians are not supposed to live in armed camps. The atmosphere of armed camps is poisonous with hatred, whereas Christians must live in that communion of love which is the life of the Mystical Body of Christ. The two states of life are unalterably opposed to each other. We will take an important step toward true Christianity when we realize this truth and act upon it.<sup>69</sup>

The jail sentences allowed the Workers to meet members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Committee for Non-Violent Action, and the War Resisters League, groups that were rooted in the social gospel tradition but had more in common with the Worker than the CAIP.<sup>70</sup> Fueled by these connections, the protests grew in strength until the drills were stopped, a success that confirmed Day’s status “among the leaders of American pacifism.” “The movement was too small and religiously idiosyncratic to carry much weight in the swelling national peace movement,” Piehl concludes. “Among peace-conscious activists and writers, however, Day and her followers exercised an influence far out of proportion to their numbers or political importance.”<sup>71</sup> Other “leaders” began extending invitations for Day to visit their communities. She was nearly

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<sup>68</sup>Piehl, “Early Cold War Era,” 85-86, 81-82.

<sup>69</sup>Dorothy Day, “Atom Bomb and Conscription Still Issues to Be Faced,” *Catholic Worker*, April 1946.

<sup>70</sup>Nancy L. Roberts, “Journalism and Activism: Dorothy Day’s Response to the Cold War,” *Peace & Change* 12, no. 1 (1987), 14.

<sup>71</sup>Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 215-16.

wounded by gunfire while visiting Koinonia, an interracial Christian farm in Georgia, and also stopped in Montgomery, where she was encouraged by the bus boycotts because they revealed that nonviolent action was beginning to be taken seriously.<sup>72</sup> She later visited César Chávez in California and Mother Teresa in Calcutta. These figures, as well as Martin Luther King, Jr., were all influenced by *satyagraha* (“the power of truth”), Gandhi’s term for nonviolent resistance. Day suggests that this approach applies to just war theory “as one of the peaceful methods that must be tried before war was declared,” and Piehl believes that its effectiveness helped bolster Catholic pacifists’ morale and edge them toward a “more practical and politically engaged activism.”<sup>73</sup>

The most prominent Catholic to identify with Day’s pacifist witness was Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and best-selling author. A conscientious objector during World War II, Merton had been shaken by the Church’s lack of response to the Holocaust and had begun to question his own “silence” regarding the arms race. He looked to Day because she was the only Catholic speaking publicly about militarism, while she had read *The Seven Storey Mountain* and appreciated the similarities of his journey to her own. They corresponded for nine years, writing over twenty letters apiece to one another. At the time Merton was facing opposition to his articles on violence, each of which was carefully scrutinized by censors, but in 1961 he began a series of circular letters to friends in the peace movement. That year the *Catholic Worker* published a chapter from his *New Seeds of Contemplation* with additions the censors had not seen. “At the root of all war is fear: not so much the fear men have of one another as the fear they have of *everything*,”

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<sup>72</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 174.

<sup>73</sup>Zwick and Zwick, “Prophet of Pacifism”; Piehl, “Early Cold War Era,” 83-84.

Merton declares. “It is not merely that they do not trust one another; they do not trust even themselves. . . . They cannot trust anything, because they have ceased to believe in God.” He affirms the “war-madness” of deterrence and says that “prayer and sacrifice must be used as the most effective spiritual weapons in the war against war.”<sup>74</sup>

Daniel Berrigan later said it was one of Merton’s essays in the *Worker* that “set me on fire,” and McNeal adds that “it would not be an overstatement to say that every Catholic peace activist of the sixties read Merton’s writings on peace.”<sup>75</sup> However, Merton, like Gandhi and King, is not an absolute pacifist, and in an essay entitled “Shelter Ethics” he supported the right of self-defense if an intruder enters one’s home or air raid shelter. Day’s response was that restraint—not killing—is acceptable in such a situation.<sup>76</sup> They exchanged several more notes on the topic, and while Merton argues that the dignity of the human person requires a willingness to defend such persons, Day replies that “such a view of neighbor also inclines one to respect and love our neighbor as the image of God, rather than as our enemy” and tells him of her experience in jail, when violent persons were converted through the peaceful response of other prisoners.<sup>77</sup>

As Au notes, “Merton’s concern was not to work out the implications of any preconceived theory of pacifism or the delineation of the limits of the exercise of the right of self-defense. Rather, he sought to describe the existential condition of modern society and the concrete requirements for justice and human survival in the modern era,”

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<sup>74</sup>Thomas Merton, *Essential Writings* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 105-7.

<sup>75</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, 161.

<sup>76</sup>Elie, 332.

<sup>77</sup>Merriman, 114. See also William H. Shannon, ed., “The Correspondence of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton,” in *American Catholic Pacifism*, ed. Klejment and Roberts, 99-121.

and in his practical conclusions he “was clearly in the pacifist camp.”<sup>78</sup> Although he believes that a just war is theoretically possible, Merton recognizes that modern wars are “shot through with evil, falsity, injustice, and sin to such a degree that one could only with difficulty extricate the truths and the causes for which the fighting was going on.”<sup>79</sup> In this he is quite close to the ethic Day learned from Fr. Hugo, and like her he affirms the weaknesses of casuistry and notes that nonviolence could be “far more significantly Christian than the rather subtle and comfy positions of certain casuists.”<sup>80</sup> Still, her response reflects a more consistent differentiation between warfare that requires military buildup and a method of restraint more akin to police action. As Yoder points out, “It is widely agreed that the use of ‘the sword’ is the sine qua non (i.e., indispensable) definition of the state. If there is no coercive power, there is anarchy. Over against this kind of definition, the political pacifist argues that the police power is not the center but the far edge, . . . the last resort of any wholesome human community.” From this perspective, “The doctrine of the ‘just war’ is an effort to extend into the realm of war the logic of the limited violence of police authority—but not a very successful one.”<sup>81</sup>

By this time Day was also more forcefully addressing the hierarchy. After Pius XII’s 1956 Christmas message reaffirming just war doctrine (and criticizing CO status for Catholics), the paper received letters and calls arguing that if the conditions given by the pope were fulfilled a citizen could not refuse to fight. Day did not accept this reasoning

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<sup>78</sup>Au, 116-17.

<sup>79</sup>Merriman, 114-15.

<sup>80</sup>Merton, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, 53, 151.

<sup>81</sup>John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 44; *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 204.

and concluded that in modern warfare “it is impossible for these conditions to be fulfilled,” though she added that “when the Pope follows up this paragraph with a reiterated call for disarmament, we cannot feel that he is calling for war, or endorsing war.” In his confirmation address Pius’ successor, John XXIII, addressed the need to overcome global poverty: “In bringing about so laudable, so praiseworthy a proposition and to level the differences there are grave and intricate difficulties in the way, but they must be victoriously overcome, even if by force.” Day thought John was more open to pacifism and, perhaps too sympathetically, read “force” as a metaphor:

Heaven must be taken by violence, and working for a better order here in this world means a terrible struggle. We need all the strength of body and soul and mind too. To live in poverty ourselves, to share the misery, the homelessness, the uncertainty and the precarity of others; to make our protest against the evils of the day, the injustice—to speak out strongly, fearlessly, risking job and home for oneself and for family; enduring the scorn of the world, and often too, of those one loves. . . . Yes, we must set ourselves with all the force we possess, against war, and the making of instruments of war, and our means are prayer and fasting, and the non-payment of federal income tax which goes for war.<sup>82</sup>

Where Day found support, others saw inconsistency. Nonetheless, theology of violence moved front and center in the second year of Vatican II when John issued *Pacem in Terris*, in which he asserts that humanity is created for peace, not war, declares that there can be no just war fought with nuclear weapons, and calls for an end to the arms race.<sup>83</sup> According to Elie, the encyclical “set aside the circumspection of previous popes and the ancient Christian ‘just-war’ theory.”<sup>84</sup> Day traveled to Rome in 1963 with a group of fifty “Mothers of Peace” to thank John, and two years later she returned to fast

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<sup>82</sup>Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1957; “The Pope Is Dead. Long Live the Pope/Viva John XXIII,” *Catholic Worker*, November 1958.

<sup>83</sup>John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, no. 109-13, 164.

<sup>84</sup>Elie, 347.

and urge a condemnation of modern war. She also sent every bishop a copy of a special edition of the *Catholic Worker* designed as a teaching tool. Her influence on *Gaudium et Spes*, the council's concluding pastoral, is debated, but James Douglass, the *Worker* who drafted sections of the document, believes that her fast "was the most important element in the bishops' turning from what had been a compromised statement around war and peace to a more direct statement that actually condemned total war and supported conscientious objection."<sup>85</sup> Whether or not this is true, delegates were aware of Day's presence, and *Gaudium et Spes* takes up the issue of peace only after discussing the human person, noting that the human family "cannot accomplish its task of constructing for all men everywhere a world more genuinely human unless each person devotes himself to the cause of peace with renewed vigor."<sup>86</sup> Although the council still regards pacifism as the calling of a minority, Yoder notes that the bishops listened to Day "simply because of the symbolic quality and integrity of her commitment."<sup>87</sup>

The council definitively settled the question of whether a Catholic can be a pacifist or conscientious objector, a move the American bishops later confirmed with their "Declaration on Conscientious Objection" (1971) and, though it affirms the right of armed defense, "The Challenge of Peace" (1983), which mentions Day.<sup>88</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* was cause for celebration, as the Church had not addressed a specific method of

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<sup>85</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 35.

<sup>86</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 77-81.

<sup>87</sup>Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 83.

<sup>88</sup>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Declaration on Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious Objection"; "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response," 3 May 1973, no. 73-78.

warfare since the Second Lateran Council in the twelfth century.<sup>89</sup> However, the good feelings were soon tempered by the escalating conflict in Southeast Asia. The *Catholic Worker* was one of the first publications to oppose entry into Vietnam; many Workers became conscientious objectors and did alternative service while others refused the exemption and spent time in prison. By 1965, however, the character of the peace movement was changing, and the last moment when pacifists maintained a leadership role was at the mass rallies in New York that fall.<sup>90</sup> A group of Workers had been staging annual demonstrations of burning draft cards, and that year a young man named Roger LaPorte was inspired to set himself on fire in front of the United Nations.

In the wake of LaPorte's death John Leo of the *National Catholic Reporter* claimed that the Worker was "traditionally intolerant of distinctions which are not its own" and questioned whether its "sort of built-in rejection of complexity" had contributed to the incident.<sup>91</sup> Merton wrote fiery letters to Day, Forest, and Berrigan and declared his intention to withdraw from the Catholic Peace Fellowship (CPF). Anne Perkins remembers Day being very upset by Merton's letter, in which he called LaPorte's act "demonic" and told her "I wouldn't let your people do these things if I were you."<sup>92</sup> However, she responded only indirectly in the paper, acknowledging the horror of LaPorte's act but saying that it was wrong to condemn one man for killing himself when in Vietnam "there were more killed on both sides last week than at any time since the war began." It was not the peace movement that was "demonic" but the war machine, a fact

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<sup>89</sup>Egan, 95.

<sup>90</sup>Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 232.

<sup>91</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 482.

<sup>92</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 73.

LaPorte had sought to bring attention to. Three years later Berrigan, his brother Philip (a sometime writer for the *Worker*), and seven other Catholics broke into the Selective Service office in Catonsville, Maryland and burned the files they stole in the parking lot. Although she sympathized with the cause, saying, “Your suffering is what redeems the action,” Day, along with Merton, denounced the incident as an act of violence.<sup>93</sup> She also worried that less “dramatic” efforts would now be ignored and reminded her readers that peacemaking was often quite ordinary.<sup>94</sup>

It was a humbling time for Day, even in the midst of apparent progress. “Here she had what she struggled to achieve in those bitter days of World War II, substantial unity on pacifism,” Cornell says. “But there was a new set of problems, just as intractable . . . And there was a new division, this time over the nature of authentic nonviolence.”<sup>95</sup> Vietnam was the first conflict to openly split Catholics, and Zahn noted in the paper over a year after the My Lai massacre that none of the hierarchy had stepped forward to condemn the action or the war itself.<sup>96</sup> Many seemed to ignore *Pacem in Terris* and *Gaudium et Spes*. Figures such as Day, Merton, and the Berrigans, as well as *Commonweal* and a handful of other publications, stood on the side of Paul VI, “who in 1965 had criticized the United States involvement in Vietnam,” while conservative publications and most of the laity and bishops stood opposed. The latter, in fact, did not

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<sup>93</sup>Elie, 379-81, 399, 409; quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 48-49.

<sup>94</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 163.

<sup>95</sup>Cornell.

<sup>96</sup>Gordon Zahn, “The Church as Accomplice,” in *A Penny a Copy*, ed. Cornell, Ellsberg, and Forest, 186-88.

declare the war unjust until late 1971.<sup>97</sup> The Catonsville action also revealed that the place for the Worker's kind of pacifist witness was rapidly shrinking, as the anti-war movement had become a coalition of groups with little else in common. Chatfield argues that the movement had developed two "poles," one that worked through the system and another that thought the problem *was* the system. Public perception was aggravated by "the dominant image of antiwar protest [as] radical, confrontational, and countercultural, whereas the mass of it was politically and culturally in the mainstream."<sup>98</sup>

Meanwhile the Catholic peace witness was growing and diversifying. Day helped start CPF in 1964 and an American chapter of Pax Christi was founded in 1972 with her support. The rise of these groups marked "what might be called the coming of age of the American Catholic peace witness," Piehl says. Pax and CPF were forerunners of "the growing breadth of Catholic concern about war and the growing internal diversity of American Catholicism in general," even sparking talk of a "Catholic Left." However, many of these new activists "were too caught up in their own novelty and what they saw as immediate moral imperatives to explore the considerable religious and intellectual heritage" of Day and the Worker, which they thought of, if at all, as "symbols of the past."<sup>99</sup> The result was the loss of a clear Catholic character or focus. Au, for one, believes that this is "evidence of the very *American* character of the movement and its desire to be part of a wider movement for revolution in America." CPF, in fact, had been formed as "part of a deliberate effort to move away from the Catholic Worker's tradition

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<sup>97</sup>Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker*, 143, 161.

<sup>98</sup>Chatfield, 10.

<sup>99</sup>Piehl, *Breaking Bread*, 235-37.

of avoiding organizational links with other non-Catholic groups precisely to preserve its Catholic identity.” He adds that the Catholic Left largely abandoned the “the agrarian ideal of Maurin and the traditional conservative critique of modernity” in favor of “the pre-Constantinian model of the Church”; that is, they did not refer to the medieval synthesis of church and state in Europe.<sup>100</sup> However, it is too easy to posit that Day and Maurin, particularly the former, are nostalgic for either the early or medieval forms of the church. Rather, they both recognize that the “ideal” has not been achieved and offer to learn from all these forms, a far more adequate understanding of tradition.

The cultural changes directly affected the Worker through those coming to live at the houses, and their disinterest in its routine deeply troubled Day. “She perceived a growing sense of despair in the young, a frustration, and eagerness for fast ‘results,’” Ellsberg states. “Many were questioning the ‘relevance’ of such undramatic efforts as the Works of Mercy. They rejected the personalist revolution of Peter Maurin, rejecting, too, the faith that was the basis of her own radical vision.”<sup>101</sup> Day also worried that the renewal of Vatican II was being used to “vandalize” the tradition and she was upset by the growing acceptance of birth control and abortion.<sup>102</sup> Catholics, an isolated subculture at the time of the Worker’s founding, were becoming part of the mainstream and viewed themselves as productive, even patriotic, citizens. This increased the visibility of the movement but came at the cost of accepting the nation’s militarism and anti-communism. Day valued the idealism of the sixties, as it resembled the Worker’s early days, but she

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<sup>100</sup>Au, 151-52, 157-58.

<sup>101</sup>Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xxxvii.

<sup>102</sup>Forest, *Love Is the Measure*, 182.

also thought that the decade was “full of signs of something vital having gone out of the world—a glue that had held things together no longer worked.”<sup>103</sup> By the mid-seventies she was spending less time at the New York house and more at her cottage on Staten Island, and it was there that she died on November 29, 1980.

Day has been claimed by the “liberal” and “conservative” strains that have emerged in the wake of the council. For example, Riegle says, “Conservative Catholics project her acknowledged liturgical conservatism in later years as proof that she was conservative in other ways. More liberal Catholics pass on the stories that support her anarchism, her wry subversive humor, and her trenchant criticism of both the state and the church she loved.”<sup>104</sup> As I will discuss in the next chapter, these factions are both right *and* wrong. Regardless, we must not forget the impact and of Day and her fellow Catholic peacemakers during the post-war years. As McNeal says, the 1971 statement of the American bishops marked “the first time in the United States, and possibly in history, a national hierarchy [had] announced as unjust a war being waged by its own nation.”<sup>105</sup> Day’s endurance “earned grudging respect from many proudly atheistic radicals” and helps explain how the Worker “came to be admired by those who simply ignored or glossed over some of its tenets, prominent among them its core faith.”<sup>106</sup> This respect includes many Catholics, lay and religious, and perhaps more incredibly did not require Day to change her belief in the truth of her positions.

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<sup>103</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 490.

<sup>104</sup>Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, xv.

<sup>105</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, xiii.

<sup>106</sup>Robert Coles, *A Spectacle Unto the World: The Catholic Worker Movement* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 51.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Witness

So far I have outlined Dorothy Day's pacifist witness in terms of solidarity, compassion, and truth and discussed her significance in relation to the socio-political context of the twentieth century. Not only did she transform the lives of many who encountered her writings or came to the *Catholic Worker*, she also influenced the structures of the Church and started a movement that endures today. As Edmund Miller notes in reviewing a recent collection of essays, much of this can be attributed to "the potency of personality." Personalities come and go, however, so why are there Worker houses across the nation when there is no longer, for example, a Hull House in Chicago? Why is there an effort to promote the canonization of a woman whose life was, at the very least, complex and who asked not to be called a saint because she did not want "to be dismissed so easily"? Why does the rate of scholarship on Day continue to increase? Why is she a central figure in a debate among "liberals" and "conservatives"—and even Catholic Workers—about the future of the Church in the United States? "The memory of a founder, however, is rarely a leak-proof source of unity," Miller says, and the essays of which he speaks "underscore the truth that the recorded life and thought of a past charismatic founder can be cited to opposing ends."<sup>1</sup>

What, then, are we to do with this confusion? At the outset I outlined several important themes for examining Day's life theologically. Now I will return to and

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<sup>1</sup>Edmund B. Miller, "No Catholic Church, No Dorothy Day," review of *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, *New Oxford Review* 71, no. 5 (May 2004): 42-43.

expand these themes in order to argue that Day—like Francis of Assisi, whose words and practices not only transformed his Church but are revisited with each generation—is what de Lubac terms a “witness to the eternal,” that is, a *saint*. My Baptist tradition does not formally recognize saints, and I have little at stake in whether the Catholic Church decides to do so with Day. Regardless, the character of her life is not that life itself but the eternal truth to which it bears witness. In this context life is a gift of grace and a saint recognizes only gratitude. As Ellsberg says, this was one reason Day did not like to be called a saint, as “she believed she was responsible for her failures; everything else was due to God.” Forest adds that “her canonization would change our idea of what we understand by the word *saint*. If Dorothy can be a saint, probably anybody can be a saint.”<sup>2</sup> This was her conviction—that everyone is called to be a saint—and it means not perfection but recognizing the truth and pursuing it, however difficult or inconvenient the path. To live in this way does not require a choice between liberal and conservative, nor is it an alternative to these categories. Rather, it blows them apart and challenges how our notions of rationality relate to Christian ethics, because it is central to Day’s message that “the cross and not the sword reveals to us the very grain of the universe.”<sup>3</sup>

### *The Church, the State, and the Sword*

The pacifism of Day (or any Christian) is embedded in a number of theological and historical discussions. For example, as the gospel spread and persecution lessened, clergy and theologians were forced to consider (or, in light of Jewish history, reconsider) the question of the church’s proper relationship to the state. When Christians, simply

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<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 195-96.

<sup>3</sup>Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, 30.

because of their numbers, became capable of influencing government, a number of possibilities presented themselves—a number that has only grown with the passage of time. We can consider this dilemma as a continuum with two poles, one the position that the church ought not concern itself with the state at all and the other that the church ought to *be* (or control) the state. The “options” between these extremes are not only theoretical, as some have been implemented—imperfectly, of course—by intention or necessity over two thousand years. In short, this complex history reveals that the church has not reached a definitive answer to this question. Another consideration—one I will return to—is whether the church *ought* to have such an answer or simply declare certain options “off-limits” and go forward in whatever context it finds itself.

The church-state question has been fantastically complicated in the West by the advent of modernity. From Constantine to Luther it was answered quite closely to our second pole, meaning that the church held (or controlled the hand that held) the “sword” of the state and that the possibility of violence for Christians was taken for granted. However, the fracturing of the Church has taken this coercive power away, a fact the splintered parts of the body have had considerable difficulty addressing. For one thing, just war theory was crafted in this prior set of circumstances, and the need to reconcile the new situation with the old theory helps explain the current disparate views in the theology of violence. Some think it needs only modification, while others see the prying apart of church and sword as a providential consequence of division that reveals the error of the theory itself. Again, factors such as the rise of “secular” democracy and economics only enhance the confusion, particularly for Catholics and in regard to tradition, which just war theory is undoubtedly a part of.

MacIntyre, for one, argues that while our culture retains “simulacra” of moral discourse, we have lost the context in which it is intelligible, as evidenced by the increasing difficulty of reaching moral agreement. He tells the history of this decline in stages, ending with the theory of *emotivism*, which legitimizes the disarray by claiming that “the apparent assertion of principles functions as a mask for expressions of personal preference” and “rests upon a claim that every attempt, whether past or present, to provide a rational justification for an objective morality has in fact failed.” MacIntyre begins his history with Aristotle, who saw the nature of the human person as on a journey from a present state to a potential future fulfillment (or *telos*) and therefore needing guidance from the *virtues*. This approach was “complicated and added to, but not essentially altered” by the Christian tradition, most notably by Aquinas. The virtues were re-imagined as “expressions of a divinely ordained law,” while the true *telos* was only to be achieved in the next world. This was not only a product of revelation, “but also a discovery of reason and rationally defensible.”<sup>4</sup>

Aquinas’ view has been challenged by the Reformation and the “Enlightenment Project,” a series of approaches to moral argument “according to which an agent can only justify a particular judgment by referring to some universal rule from which it may be logically derived.” For example, for Hume this rule is the passions, for Kant it is reason alone, and for Kierkegaard it is radical choice. However, these solutions are no better than the problem, for each is “in the end an expression of the preferences of an individual will and for that will its principles have and can have only such authority as it chooses to confer upon them by adopting them.” In short, the Enlightenment has elevated the

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<sup>4</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2-6. 19-20, 52-54.

individual to the status of moral agent, “free” to make choices without guidance, but the loss of a shared ethical life is not without consequences, as it has left behind rules for morality that, if they “cannot be found a new status which will make appeal to them rational, appeal to them will indeed appear as a mere instrument of individual desire and will.” One possibility is to find a new *telos*; this is the view of utilitarianism, which determines morality by whatever policies will provide the greatest good for the greatest number. Another is analytic philosophy’s series of attempts to ground morality in “practical” reason, which can “assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more.” It can speak of means, but “about ends it must be silent.”<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, both these approaches define morality according to principles—such as *good*, *rights*, and *justice*—that are vacuous without a shared context. In politics, for example, “The mock rationality of the debate conceals the arbitrariness of the will and power at work in its resolution.” The space left by the departure of the moral community has been filled, then, by the procedural rationality of Max Weber, that of “matching means to ends economically and efficiently.” Bureaucracy—what Day calls “this filthy, rotten system”—is all that shields us from the arbitrary, but its long-term goals are hard to define and short-term goals all too easily manipulated. MacIntyre recognizes that there have been two responses to this situation. The first is that of Nietzsche, who argues that if morality really is arbitrary, then “the rational and rationally justified autonomous moral subject of the eighteenth century is a fiction”; therefore, we can only reclaim our subjectivity “by some gigantic and heroic act of the will.” MacIntyre contends that our bureaucratic societies mask Nietzschean premises and that it is therefore possible to

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 20-21, 40, 62, 53-54.

predict the periodic emergence of social movements informed by them.<sup>6</sup> “To put it differently,” Brad Kallenberg says, “the emotivist world is neither stable nor self-sustaining. Rather, it is a battleground of competing wills awaiting the emergence of a conqueror.”<sup>7</sup> What is perhaps harder to see is that this is true in the United States, where the fact that “rational” individuals reach radically different conclusions is “dignified by the title ‘pluralism.’”<sup>8</sup> John Paul II observes:

Those who are convinced that they know the truth and firmly adhere to it are considered unreliable from a democratic point of view, since they do not accept that truth is determined by the majority, or that it is subject to variation according to different political trends. It must be observed in this regard that if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism.<sup>9</sup>

Albert Camus argues that rebellion—in capitalistic and socialistic forms—raises a fundamental question: “Is it possible to find a rule of conduct outside the realm of religion and its absolute values?” “When the throne of God is overturned,” he says, “the rebel realizes that it is now his own responsibility to create the justice, order, and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition.” Law becomes “nothing but the law of force; its driving force, the will to power.”<sup>10</sup> Camus recalls *The Brothers Karamazov*, which Day uses to explain contrasting views of freedom and history. The Grand

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 71, 25-26, 113-14.

<sup>7</sup>Brad J. Kallenberg, “The Master Argument of MacIntyre’s *After Virtue*,” in *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, ed. Nancey Murphey, Brad J. Kallenberg, and Mark Thiessen Nation (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1997), 13-14.

<sup>8</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 32.

<sup>9</sup>John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 46.

<sup>10</sup>Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Knopf, 1956; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1991), 21, 24-25, 41. See Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 10.

Inquisitor rightly identifies the longing of every soul for freedom but argues all that can be done is to pacify the people with an illusion until their flesh and spirit perish. “In the end,” he says, “they will lay their freedom at our feet and say to us: ‘Better that you enslave us, but feed us.’” Christ, however, sits quietly and offers no alternative system, for to bind humanity to time is “to deny to it the most fundamental requirement for appreciating its true end: its freedom.”<sup>11</sup> In Gneuhs’ words, Day and Maurin “explicitly founded the *Catholic Worker* in response to this crisis of modernity” and “rejected the welfare state because it offered a materialistic vision of human existence, destroyed freedom, and denied personal responsibility for the good of the other.”<sup>12</sup>

Both Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism depend on the Enlightenment idea of *progress* and accept the state’s role as holding the material world together in the midst of it. The former envisions the attainment of an earthly paradise through struggle, while the latter keeps the process going for pragmatic reasons. As Camus says, “Every form of collectivity, fighting for survival, . . . postpones justice for a later date, in the interests of power alone. But power opposes other forms of power. It arms and rearms because others are arming and rearming.” Although these forms attempt to replace God with history, in the end they *deny* history in favor of *expediency* and “systematic violence, or imposed silence.”<sup>13</sup> Ellis says this explains “the relentless movement toward mass death” in the twentieth century. The Nazi death camps, for example, “were more than a testimony to Hitler’s madness. They enlarged our conception the state’s capacity to do

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<sup>11</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 472, 247. See Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Novel in Four Parts with Epilogue*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 246-64; Dorothy Day, “More About Cuba,” *Catholic Worker*, July-August 1962.

<sup>12</sup>Gneuhs, 214.

<sup>13</sup>Camus, 219, 289.

violence and, moreover, were an example of a systematic form of extermination made possible through the employment of technology and modern bureaucracy.”<sup>14</sup> Further, Richard Rubenstein notes that the Holocaust was not “an antireligious explosion of pagan values in the heart of the Judeo-Christian world,” but a consequence of that world’s “secularization of consciousness involving an abstract, dehumanized, calculating rationality.” In such a context we ought not be surprised that “the secular state has dethroned all mystifications of power and morality save its own.”<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, modern ethics tends to emphasize the need for a theory comprised of rules for decision-making, but in the end all such theories rest on the same arbitrary foundation. The reason Day and Maurin were able to recognize the “coming darkness” of the twentieth century so early, however, is that they embody what MacIntyre posits as the only rational alternative to Nietzsche’s argument: the tradition exemplified by Leo XIII’s *Aeterni Patris* (1878), which requires commitment to a community in which “the conclusions which emerge as enquiry progresses will of course have been partially and crucially predetermined by the nature of this initial commitment.”<sup>16</sup> This third form of moral enquiry, also called *meta-ethics*, contends that “ethics must be shaped in the same way that language, culture, and history shape the rest of our thinking.”<sup>17</sup> Rules have authority only as part of a life formed by the *virtues*, which biblical culture transformed by grounding them in history and changing their *telos*. “It is for the sake of achieving

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<sup>14</sup>Ellis, *Peter Maurin*, 11.

<sup>15</sup>Richard L. Rubenstein, *The Cunning of History: The Holocaust and the American Future* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975; reprint, New York: Perennial, 2001), 31, 91.

<sup>16</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 24-25, 60.

<sup>17</sup>Kallenberg, 8-9.

this latter good that we practice the virtues and we do so by making choices about means to achieve that end,” MacIntyre states. “. . . Such choices demand judgment and the exercise of the virtues requires therefore a capacity to judge and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way.”<sup>18</sup>

For Aristotle the end of human life is rationality, applied in a community that presupposes a wide range of agreement on goods and virtues and makes possible the bond of friendship that constitutes a *polis*.<sup>19</sup> According to Kallenberg, the problem is how to reconcile what Aristotle terms “theoretical” and “practical” reason into a single form of life, and MacIntyre’s solution is *tradition*, which entails other concepts that I discussed in chapter one.<sup>20</sup> For example, *practices* are both communal and extended through time, inseparable from and sustained by institutions. What makes sense of a person’s action is his or her *narrative* embodied in the *polis*, but the *polis* as Aristotle understood it has vanished, replaced by “bureaucratic unity.” In this situation, “The nature of political obligation becomes systematically unclear. . . . Loyalty to my country, to my community becomes detached from obedience from the government which just happens to rule me.” While certain forms of government are “necessary and legitimate,” the modern state is not one of them, and the alternative is “the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 147, 150.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 154-55.

<sup>20</sup>Kallenberg, 20.

<sup>21</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 208, 254, 263.

*Incarnational Ethics*

The point of this explanation is that the Catholic Worker is just the kind of alternative *polis* MacIntyre suggests, and as an extension of the Catholic tradition it has a rationality through which pacifism “makes sense.” The problem with the rationality of the Enlightenment, Goizueta says, is that it “can only deal in abstract generalities, so it is forced to turn human life into such an abstraction.” While an ethic focused on external acts and norms may be better than such theories, far superior is “the concrete life of love, which is best represented not by doctrinal concepts or ethical imperatives but by concrete human lives.” A Christian community is rooted in the incarnation, where “the universal God is revealed *in the particular* person of a first-century Jewish carpenter’s son from Nazareth.” This is the only way to overcome the incommensurability of our “truths” and “meanings”: “If community is the *source* of individuality, then the possibility of transcending one’s individual experience and one’s own ‘truth’ is *presupposed* in human praxis. . . . The possibility of mutual, shared understanding implies, in turn, the possibility of shared norms—mediated, always, by the particular perspectives through which they are revealed.” In short, truth is inseparable from the practices of particular people in particular communities. Further, it is found by identifying with particular *poor* persons; this is the true meaning of the oft-misunderstood “preferential option for the poor.” “If God did not love the poor preferentially,” Goizueta contends, “. . . God would implicitly be loving the wealthy preferentially—by implicitly condoning the unjust status quo from which the wealthy benefit.”<sup>22</sup> Knowledge of the poor, then, is the social location from which the theology of violence, for example, must begin.

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<sup>22</sup>Goizueta, 92-94, 152-53, 177.

It is the inability to conceive of such an alternative *polis* that leads to many of the misunderstandings and rejections of the Worker as well as like-minded individuals and communities. There seems to be a contradiction here: Day is clear in her “anarchist” critiques of the modern state, but she often challenges the United States to live up to its own stated principles, lobbies within the “system” for change, and lauds politicians and other leaders who make decisions she approves of. Since she clearly believes that the state must draw on spiritual truth, does she long for a kind of Christendom? If so, it is one very different from the history of coercive power in Europe. Just as Day believes in the truth of pacifism but uses just war arguments to make her points, she also believes in small, limited government but directs democracies to their highest ideals. She also openly questions whether the state has grown too large for demonstrations to do much good and laments its assuming responsibilities that are the duty of Christians.<sup>23</sup> In other words, idealism and realism are interwoven in her thought, but she always speaks of the ideal *as* realistic and the truth of the gospel as the highest allegiance.

It may be helpful to briefly consider several other figures that share aspects of Day’s politics. One is Dietrich Bonhoeffer, alternately seen as an advocate of pacifism or the embodiment of realistic ethics for his part in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer, of course, was Lutheran, and following Luther Protestants all but discarded the virtues. Day encountered them in the Catholic Church, which transformed her understanding of, for example, charity. Rightly understood, charity “alters the conception of the good for man in a radical way; for the community in which the good is achieved has to be one of

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<sup>23</sup>Day, *Loaves and Fishes*, 190.

reconciliation.”<sup>24</sup> Stanley Hauerwas believes that this is exemplified by Bonhoeffer’s suggestion that “our stumbling toward the truth begins with such confession making possible a politics that does not need to justify the evils we have perpetrated on one another, too often legitimated as ‘necessities.’” Indeed, the German church reflects the “Constantinian” shift outlined by Yoder: “Prior to Constantine it took exceptional conviction to be a Christian. After Constantine it takes exceptional courage not to be counted as a Christian. This development . . . called forth a new doctrinal development, ‘namely the doctrine of the invisibility of the church.’”<sup>25</sup> Luther’s confirmation of this doctrine led to the dominance of a minimal ethic for Christian citizens.

In his early work *Discipleship*, however, Bonhoeffer is “determined to break the church out of its standard mode of compromise with, and accommodation to, political powers for the sake of its own survival as church.” Even the ethic of Luther—whose theology of two kingdoms affirmed that “faith and ethical convictions were one reality”—had been “eclipsed by the reductionism of Protestant liberalism in which Jesus became a mere teacher of moral truths.”<sup>26</sup> Bonhoeffer’s term for this is “cheap grace”—“grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ”—which reduces the church to the provider of the sacraments while dismissing the Beatitudes as impossible ideals. He contrasts this with the “costly grace” lost with “the expansion of Christianity and the increasing secularization of the church.”

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<sup>24</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 174.

<sup>25</sup>Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 14, 43. See John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 136-37.

<sup>26</sup>Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, introduction to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 4, *Discipleship*, ed. Geffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 3, 8.

Bonhoeffer recognizes this even in the United States, where for those weary of religious wars *tolerance* had become “the basic principle of everything Christian.” His contention is that the church must become visible again because “it is essential to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that it occupies space within the world.”<sup>27</sup>

As for Day, visibility requires ecclesiology grounded in Christology and the incarnation and discipleship centering on obedience and the unity of humanity. “Because Christ exists, he must be followed,” Bonhoeffer says, and this way of following is the way of the cross. Specifically, “Jesus’ disciples maintain peace by choosing to suffer instead of causing others to suffer,” and the Sermon on the Mount puts suffering “into the clear-cut context of love for our enemies.”<sup>28</sup> According to Geoffrey Kelly and John Godsey, “In his strongest condemnations of war and violence Bonhoeffer relies on the commands of Jesus Christ, which in their starkness and counter-culturalism are given to us not to dissect in endless casuistry, but only to obey. Christ is the prime reality; hence, attacks on people are, for Bonhoeffer, attacks on none other than Jesus Christ.”<sup>29</sup> As Ellsberg said recently when speaking to a group promoting her canonization, the incarnation was the central doctrine of Day’s faith:

This strong incarnational faith was the thread that united the various aspects of her life: her embrace of voluntary poverty and a life in community among the poor; her practice of the works of mercy—feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless; her prayer and commitment to the sacramental life of the church; her staunch commitment to social justice; her “seamless garment” approach to the protection of life; and her dedication to Gospel nonviolence. It was the Incarnation, ultimately, that showed the way to that synthesis reconciling “body and soul,” the spiritual and

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<sup>27</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 44-46; *No Rusty Swords*, trans. Edwin Robertson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 103, quoted in Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 59; *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 68, quoted in Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 48.

<sup>28</sup>Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 59, 85, 108, 137.

<sup>29</sup>Kelly and Godsey, introduction to Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 15.

the material, the historical and the transcendent, the love of God and the love of neighbor, “this world and the next.”<sup>30</sup>

This parallels Merton’s discussion of Christian conscience and responsibility:

“The doctrine of the Incarnation makes the Christian obligated at once to God and to man. . . . Whoever believes that Christ is the Word made flesh believes that every man must in some sense be regarded as Christ. For all are at least potentially members of the Mystical Christ.” Merton also connects the mystical body to charity, which “cannot be what it is supposed to be as long as I do not see that my life represents my own allotment in the life of a whole supernatural organism to which I belong. Only when this truth is absolutely central do other doctrines fit into their proper context.”<sup>31</sup> Like Day and Merton, Bonhoeffer believes that society must be formed by truth and that the West has erred in subordinating it to an illusory peace founded on violence and necessity rather than the forgiveness of sins. “Bonhoeffer rightly saw that the Christian acceptance that truth does not matter in such small matters prepared the ground for the terrible lie that was Hitler,” Hauerwas states. “In order to expose the small as well as the big lies a community must exist that has learned to speak truthfully to one another.”<sup>32</sup>

Forgiveness is but one of the ways Christian existence is fundamentally performative. While “Christians have always been concerned about ‘getting it right,’” and rightly so, Hauerwas says, our contingency means this achievement is not necessary: “In other words, recognizing and explicitly acknowledging an eschatological rather than a

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<sup>30</sup>Robert Ellsberg, “Dorothy Day: Model for Our Time,” *Houston Catholic Worker*, July-August 2005.

<sup>31</sup>Merton, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, 10; *Essential Writings*, 158.

<sup>32</sup>Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 60, 70.

teleological orientation serves as a helpful reminder that the story centers on a sovereign God and not on the acting human subject.” All Christian performances “are repeat performances, at once emulating the one true performance of God in Christ but also an extension and variation . . . of that singularly defining performance.” Hauerwas clarifies this point by connecting Bonhoeffer (and Day) with Yoder, who argues in *The Politics of Jesus* that nonviolence is political. Although he is aware of the principle-application models of American Catholicism, Yoder has in mind the social-responsibility models of Walter Rauschenbusch and Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr that have been central in the church’s reconciling itself with the Constantinian form known as *liberalism*:

With Constantinianism the true church becomes invisible because now it is assumed that God is governing the world through Constantine. As a result peace is turned into an ideal rather than a practice constitutive of the church. Correlatively, Christians now look for sources of moral knowledge other than the Scriptures and, in particular, the teachings of Jesus. Christians begin to think the primary moral question is “What would happen if everyone acted like that?” no longer remembering that Christians should ask, “How must we act as disciples of Christ?”<sup>33</sup>

According to Hauerwas, the distinguishing mark of liberalism “has been the attempt to suppress memory in the interest of eliminating conflict.”<sup>34</sup> This attempt denies the historicization identified by MacIntyre in favor of a universal rationality available to any person at any time. Ethical theories developed within this framework either form around view of history as progress (with a new *telos*) or inevitable conflict. Reinhold Niebuhr exemplifies the latter view in the following passage:

I do not believe that war is merely an “incident” in history but is a final revelation of the very character of human history. . . . I believe that an international crisis merely reveals in its most vivid form what human history is like, and I accuse

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 82, 97, 103, 144-45, 174.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 238.

pacifists of not being aware of its character until it is thus vividly revealed. At that moment they seek to escape history and its relative responsibilities by a supreme act of renunciation. I do not believe that the incarnation is “redemption” from history as conflict. . . . The redemption in Christ is rather the revelation of a divine mercy that alone is able to overcome the contradictions of human history from which even the best of us cannot extricate ourselves.<sup>35</sup>

For Niebuhr and other “realists,” the requirements of Christian ethics are not a call to perfection or holiness beyond our “natural” goodness but are “structured into our freedom,” and our sinfulness means we should not attempt to achieve them outside a relationship between two people; any larger group “requires a rational estimate of conflicting needs and interests.” In this view, Hauerwas contends, “Justification by faith is loosed from its Christological context and made a truth to underwrite a generalized virtue of humility in order to make Christians trusted players in the liberal game of tolerance.”<sup>36</sup> Consequently, what often goes unexamined in the theology of violence is the proper basis of ethics; that is, whether it is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ or “responsibility” to liberal democratic society. Frary poses this question another way; that is, “whether the Kingdom of God is a present reality or only a future hope. The manner in which a person answers this question determines his relationship to the world and the function of the world in aiding or hindering the realization of his eschatological hope. Dorothy felt this tension all her life, and it formed the theological context from which and in which she shaped her theology.”<sup>37</sup>

If the kingdom is purely eschatological, then the counsels of Jesus are not “relevant” for such questions as military action; therefore, they may be pushed to the

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<sup>35</sup>Quoted in Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, 95.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 135-37.

<sup>37</sup>Frary, 385.

margins and an ethic developed from some other norm. For Yoder, this understanding of “responsibility” is a remnant of Christendom that ought to be finally dispensed with.

“Common sense” or “realistic” slogans “point to an epistemology for which the classic label is the *theology of the natural*: the nature of things is held to be adequately perceived in their bare givenness; the right is that which respects or tends toward the realization of the essentially given.” The logic of the just war position, for example, wrongly assumes that the questions of casuistry can be given neat answers. What matters in such passages as Luke 12:49-13:9 and 14:25-36, however, “is the quality of the life to which the disciple is called. The answer is that to be a disciple is to share in that style of life of which the cross is the culmination.” The distinctiveness of such a life is not separation but “a nonconformed quality of (‘secular’) involvement in the life of the world. It thereby constitutes an unavoidable challenge to the powers that be and the beginning of a new set of social alternatives.” The ethic of Jesus is concrete and historical. As Aquinas understood, “The Kingdom of God is a social order and not a hidden one. . . . It does not assume that time will end tomorrow; it reveals why it is meaningful that history should go on at all.” Particularly striking is his reading of Romans 12-13, often cited as justification for the Christian’s right to kill, in which Paul is speaking of a particular situation and not “the nature of all political reality” or “an ideal social order”:

Romans 12-13 and Matthew 5-7 are not in contradiction or tension. They *both* instruct Christians to be nonresistant in all their relationships, including the social. They *both* call on the disciples of Jesus to renounce participation in the interplay of egoisms which this world calls “vengeance” or “justice.” They *both* call Christians to respect and be subject to the historical process in which the sword continues to be wielded and to bring about a kind of order under fire, but not to perceive in the wielding of the sword their own reconciling ministry.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 5-8, 38-39, 144-45, 105, 201-10.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Wink adds, “Jesus is not telling us to submit to evil, but to refuse to oppose it on its own terms. . . . He is urging us to transcend both passivity and violence by finding a third way, one that is at once assertive and yet nonviolent.”<sup>39</sup> This “third way” is not abstract but “a skill honed through the idiom of the Bible, which reaches its consummation in Jesus and the church.”<sup>40</sup> It is the “true” pacifism that Day distinguished from “false,” passive pacifism. In Merton’s words, Christian nonviolence “is convinced that the manner in which the conflict for truth is waged will itself manifest or obscure the truth” and “lays claim to a *more Christian and more humane notion of what is possible.*” At the same time, its *telos* frees it from the dangers of a focus on what Merton calls “this fetishism of immediate visible results”: “The chief difference between non-violence and violence is that the latter depends entirely on its own calculations. The former depends entirely on God and on his Word.”<sup>41</sup>

For Yoder this again highlights the dichotomy between two views of history. “It has yet to be demonstrated that history can be moved in the direction in which one claims the duty to cause it to go,” he says, but this duty “creates a new autonomous ethical value, ‘relevance,’ itself a good in the name of which evil may be done.” Christ, however, “renounced the claim to govern history”; therefore, “the calculating link between our obedience and ultimate efficacy has been broken, since the triumph of God comes through resurrection and not through effective sovereignty or assured survival.”<sup>42</sup>

According to Hauerwas, this ethic has no “predetermined understanding of what counts

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<sup>39</sup>Wink, 100-1.

<sup>40</sup>Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 176.

<sup>41</sup>Merton, *Faith and Violence*, 20-23, 27.

<sup>42</sup>Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 230, 234, 238-39.

as violence or nonviolence” but names the reality of a community represented by Yoder and John Paul II and “exemplified by a life that joins what they each hold dear. The name given to that life is Dorothy Day.” Placing Bonhoeffer with these figures “risks making him subject to the same criticism so often directed at Yoder—i.e., Bonhoeffer’s account of the church makes the church politically irrelevant,” but he—like Day, who also faces these criticisms—understands that “the gift the church gives to any politics is the truthful proclamation of the gospel.”<sup>43</sup>

McNeal is correct in saying that Day’s witness “challenged the church’s theology” but wrong to contend that she “did not articulate a theological rationale for these positions.”<sup>44</sup> Witness is not separate from theology. Indeed, the movement is itself a kind of tradition within the tradition; it continues to thrive *and continues to be Catholic*. This is because the communal embodiment of a tradition has “a way of making claims on human action, and the members have a way of wanting to enact, pass on, and honor the traditions of the community,” Coy says. “. . . Nonviolent action is not only politically but also socially taxing, and membership in a Catholic Worker community reduces those many costs while adding various affirmations into the mix.”<sup>45</sup> The Worker’s organic anthropology is an antidote to the modern dichotomy between individual and community. As Goizueta says, such an anthropology “cannot be *intrinsically* anti-institutional.” Rather, the institution, extended through time, enables its organic quality.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 172, 55; *With the Grain of the Universe*, 230.

<sup>44</sup>McNeal, *Harder than War*, x-xi.

<sup>45</sup>Coy, “Beyond the Ballot Box,” 179-80.

<sup>46</sup>Goizueta, 52, 64, 58-60.

In fact, Piehl says, very little of the Worker is new, as “it has spent most of its theological energy elaborating such thoroughly traditional doctrines as the eucharist and the mystical body of Christ.” This returns to the question of authentic freedom: “For what seems to most people a restriction of liberty—submission to the spiritual authority of the Catholic church—has been understood by the Catholic Worker as the highest expression of human freedom.” Rather than trying to impose their views as necessary marks of Christianity, the Workers have claimed only that they are *compatible* with the Church’s teachings. This has freed them to persuade others without moving toward either “ecclesiastical control of politics” or “sectarianism.” Piehl adds that unlike other movements that renounce organization and coercion, the Worker has refused to withdraw from society or politics. While this may seem to place it alongside such efforts as the Social Gospel tradition, it differs “in putting personal spiritual transformation ahead of politics as a means of social reconstruction, in not compromising its ideals in order to achieve concrete social gains, and in making its ethical vision a corollary of religious faith, rather than redefining religion in purely ethical or social terms.”<sup>47</sup>

Unlike John Ryan, Day did not openly identify with the Social Gospel. Robert Trawick notes that her politics, gender, and religious affiliation differ from those of the Social Gospel theologians, and while she shared their criticisms of industrialization and capitalist expansion, she stood with industrial unionism and the political forces that supported its cause.<sup>48</sup> Morton and Saltmarsh argue that she intentionally went another

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<sup>47</sup>Piehl, “The Politics of Free Obedience,” 201-2, 206-7, 180-82.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Trawick, “Dorothy Day and the Social Gospel Movement,” in *Gender and the Social Gospel*, ed. Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 139-40, 142-43.

way, in part out of “an acceptance that the world and the human beings in it, including herself, were flawed and not perfectable.”<sup>49</sup> Niebuhr and many other Social Gospel theologians reached similar conclusions and shifted to “Christian realism,” demanding that Christians “undertake the moral compromises needed in a world not yet ruled by the law of love.”<sup>50</sup> Day, however, founded the Worker, and Massa recognizes in her supernaturalist and localist theology an alternative to the Protestant *and* Catholic ethical traditions (and other American movements) of the pre-war years. While these groups “identified the public sphere and the common good with the centralized and bureaucratic modern state,” she “simply denied that the primary political mechanism for the implementation of justice and the meeting of basic human needs was the government on any level.” Likewise, the “downward path” she espoused after the war had a greater purpose than protesting the increasing conformity of the culture. Rather, “Over against both the Protestant and post-Protestant ‘guardians’ of American culture, no less than against the heavy clerical champions of Catholic accommodation and adaptation to the American circumstance, Day and Maurin uttered a loud and resounding ‘no.’”<sup>51</sup>

The error in William Miller’s claim that “Dorothy therefore had no strong Church tradition to back her” in her pacifism should be clear.<sup>52</sup> Still, considering that this tradition overwhelmingly subscribes to just war theory, her faithfulness on this point is disputed. Recall again, however, that for Day the Catholic tradition is a *living* tradition, “a historically extended, socially embodied argument.” As MacIntyre says, “It is the

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<sup>49</sup>Morton and Saltmarsh, 249.

<sup>50</sup>Trawick, 146.

<sup>51</sup>Massa, 105-9.

<sup>52</sup>Miller, *Dorothy Day*, 313.

possession and transmission of the kind of ability to recognize in the past what is and what is not a guide to the future which is at the core of any adequately embodied tradition.”<sup>53</sup> This is Day’s approach to the Catholic tradition and particularly to just war theory. She both submits to the wisdom of the Church’s history while making an argument about how it ought to relate to the world. In this she represents a radical traditionalism, for by integrating elements from its margins and beyond she is able to critique the “alien rationalities” within it that assent to violence.

### *Beyond Liberal and Conservative*

Many Christians in our polarized church and society are unable to grasp such a “radical traditionalism.” This point brings us, finally, to the debate in contemporary American Catholicism—and in Christianity at large—over the proper relationship of church and state, a debate in which the discussion of violence is central. The recent history of Catholic moral enquiry is inseparable from the renewal of Thomism that had been going on for three decades when Leo XIII was elected pope in 1878. However, Leo’s call to make Thomism the official philosophy of the Church generated “a number of different and rival Thomisms.” This division was not new but was rooted in Aquinas’ harmonization of Aristotle’s account of nature and reason with Augustine’s supernatural theology.<sup>54</sup> The perceived difference between Augustine and Aquinas endured, however, so while every Catholic theologian was now, in some sense, a Thomist, Catholic theology aligned roughly into *neoscholastic* (Aquinas) and *personalist* (Augustine) streams.

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<sup>53</sup>MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 222; *Three Rival Versions*, 128.

<sup>54</sup>MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 72, 123.

In the mid-twentieth century the former group, including Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx, “proposed and attempted a positive engagement with modern intellectual and cultural movements” called *aggiornamento*. The latter group, led by de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, and several German theologians (of whom Joseph Ratzinger was a student) advocated a return to the sources of the early church known as *ressourcement*. Although they united at Vatican II in opposition to what Ratzinger terms the “anti-Modernist neurosis” of the previous century, these groups began to divide over *Gaudium et Spes* and how to engage a world that relegated religion to the private sphere. The “Neo-Thomist” camp focused on finding spiritual signs in other social and cultural movements, while the *ressourcement* camp said that this neglected the reality of sin in and “tacked on” Christ to the natural world. The former is often labeled “liberal” and the latter “conservative,” but the reality is more complex. Ratzinger (now Benedict XVI), for example, argues that the Church is countercultural out of a concern for the unity of knowledge. In doing so, Joseph Komonchak says, he is fighting “the curse of modern theology,” that is, “the neoscholastic dualism which returns to the separation of nature and grace of centuries past,” instead of “emphasizing their organic unity.” Such discussions are inadequate “if they do not address the need for a radical transformation of nature in relation to God. . . . The drive of modernity to operate without God and without this transformation leaves the poor without anything.” The loss of a common heritage and the philosophical shift from attempting to understand the world to attempting to change it complicates the situation, and the Church has not, in fact, turned to the sources but to this kind of philosophy.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict’s Theological Vision,” *Commonweal*, 3 June 2005, 11-14.

Here Day is quite helpful, for as Mize argues, she “explores life experiences that ‘made intelligible and acceptable’ the Neo-Thomist conviction that grace embraces nature and then transforms it,” including the “natural aspirations” of Marxists and other political radicals.<sup>56</sup> It is also important to consider the recent change in the Church’s position on religious liberty, exemplified by the documents of the council. I have noted Baxter’s critique of Americanism in which the central figure is John Courtney Murray, who “is credited with demonstrating that Catholics can give their full moral and intellectual assent to the political arrangement that prevails in the United States, particularly to the constitutional separation of church and state.” Such an assent had been ruled out “on the grounds that the state derives its power from the spiritual power of the church,” meaning that the church “should be given privileged status in relation to the state.” Baxter contends that American Catholics had seen church-state separation as a pragmatic compromise to the ideal of the Catholic state, but Murray argues that it *is* the ideal. His argument rests on understanding natural and supernatural as separate and the incarnation as “a divinely inaugurated interruption in history which establishes a new spiritual order of human existence, and this spiritual order confines the activity of the state to a limited sphere, the temporal, thereby holding its expansive tendencies in check.” This is precisely the kind of politics “without ends” that Baxter thinks is destined to fail, for a politics “specifically designed to relegate matters of theological truth to a separate sphere . . . is not, in Augustinian terms, genuine politics at all.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Mize, 200.

<sup>57</sup>Michael J. Baxter, “Writing History in a World Without Ends: An Evangelical Catholic Critique of United States Catholic History,” *Pro Ecclesia* 5, no. 4 (fall 1996): 444-47.

Baxter is also critical of several prominent Catholic historians who have legitimated Murray's conclusions. John Tracy Ellis, for example, assures his readers "that Catholics have been, are now, and always will be the kind of Americans who know how to keep their particular religious beliefs and practices out of the political arena and who willingly join with those of other denominations and religious traditions in promoting a non-religious 'public' discourse, all for the good of the nation." Meanwhile, David O'Brien advocates "Public Catholicism," a view that dismisses "Evangelical" Catholics (e.g., Catholic Workers) in a Niebuhrian manner while they "dedicate themselves (more responsibly) to the real business at hand . . . in the hope that the decision-makers inside the beltway will follow some of their policy recommendations." Unfortunately, Public Catholics fail to fully consider the fact that this is rarely, if ever, the case. If anything, the state uses their "neo-Constantinian" assent as justification for its actions. More important, Baxter says, they fail "to take seriously a contention that has been central to the life of the Catholic Worker from the beginning, namely, that the modern nation-state is a fundamentally unjust and corrupt set of institutions whose primary function is to preserve the interests of the ruling class, by coercive and violent means if necessary—and there will always come a time when it is necessary."<sup>58</sup>

Particularly disconcerting to Baxter, then, is the Public Catholics' embrace of a revised just war theory. Like pacifism, when "faithfully theorized and practiced" the just war tradition "calls for a politically disruptive witness on the part of its practitioners."<sup>59</sup> Just war theory was formed and elaborated, initially by Augustine, out of a pastoral

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<sup>58</sup>Baxter, "Writing History," 442, 462; "Blowing the Dynamite," 90.

<sup>59</sup>Michael J. Baxter, "Just War and Pacifism: A 'Pacifist' Perspective in Seven Points," *Houston Catholic Worker*, May-June 2004.

concern for determining if a person's going to war or behavior in combat was sinful. As Bryan Hehir notes, "The transmission of the normative doctrine from Augustine to Aquinas had presupposed the framework of the *Republicana Christiana*."<sup>60</sup> With the advent of the modern state the doctrine "came to be seen primarily as a set of norms for managing the affairs of modern states in the arena of international politics."<sup>61</sup> What is often missed, however, is that in affirming religious liberty the council "divorced itself from any one social, political, or economic system," including the Constantinian alliances of Europe. "The scriptural tradition replaced the un-Christian traditions of Roman law, natural law, or Aristotelian logic," Musto states. "This change opened the door for a gradual discarding of the just-war tradition. Its evangelical outlook and concern for individual conscience also put Vatican II firmly behind the rediscovered tradition of biblical pacifism."<sup>62</sup> Perhaps this is too optimistic, as the passages Musto cites approvingly have contributed to the division in the wake of the council. For example, though it recognizes the right of "those who for reasons of conscience refuse to bear arms," *Gaudium et Spes* also says that soldiers "are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace" and affirms "the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles."<sup>63</sup> Interpretation of this declaration, of course, depends on one's understanding of natural law. As I noted earlier, Day and Maurin recognize a natural law, but one with a limited and descriptive function that cannot be

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<sup>60</sup>J. Bryan Hehir, "Just War Theory in a Post-Cold War World," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 20, no. 2 (fall 1992): 238-39.

<sup>61</sup>Baxter, "Just War and Pacifism."

<sup>62</sup>Musto, 193.

<sup>63</sup>Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 79.

conceived apart from a *telos*.<sup>64</sup> In *The Long Loneliness* Day includes a quote from Ludlow, who connects natural law with anarchism and says that, coupled with the Sermon on the Mount, it reflects the duty to make moral judgments:

The question of pacifism may be treated from the natural or supernatural viewpoint. From the natural viewpoint it derives its validity from reason, and natural morality, which is derived from the nature of man, is susceptible of development in that we understand more its implications as we understand more the nature of man. From an ethical and psychological standpoint it seems evident that pacifism, as exemplified in non-violent procedure, is more reasonable than is violent procedure and therefore is more in accord with man's nature which differs from sub-human nature precisely in that man is capable of rationality.

As the Catholic religion is not in opposition to nature but rather completes it and confirms nature it would seem that there could be no opposition between a pacifism basing its validity on man's reason and the official teaching of the Church.<sup>65</sup>

A supernatural rationality that is grounded in revelation and orders and completes natural law is why Nicole d'Entremont can say of her fellow Workers who burned their draft cards, "These are young men who have learned well one historical fact, and that is that you can never win over an ideology by killing the men who have the idea. . . . Are such young men dodging or are they confronting reality?"<sup>66</sup> As MacIntyre says, all that can be grasped initially about natural law are "the conditions for entering a community in which we may discover what further specifications our good has to be given."<sup>67</sup>

However, Catholic ethicists such as George Weigel have reinforced Murray's view by

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<sup>64</sup>See Baxter, "Blowing the Dynamite," 81-84. For example, in discussing the "better" of the supernatural Day says that "we are still living in the Old Testament, with commandments as to the natural law" (*On Pilgrimage*, 163). John R. Bowlin argues persuasively that this is how Aquinas' formulation of natural law is best understood ("Aquinas and Wittgenstein on Natural Law and Moral Knowledge," in *Grammar and Grace: Reformulations of Aquinas and Wittgenstein*, ed. Jeffrey Stout and Robert MacSwain (London: SCM Press, 2004): 154-74).

<sup>65</sup>Quoted in Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 267-70.

<sup>66</sup>Nicole d'Entremont, "Chrystie Street," in *A Penny a Copy*, ed. Cornell, Ellsberg, and Forest, 142-43.

<sup>67</sup>MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions*, 136-37.

appropriating the “realism” of liberal Protestants such as Niebuhr and Paul Ramsey. Yet this is not solely a “neoconservative” tendency. For example, Hehir, a model of “liberal” Public Catholicism, praises Murray and Ramsey for reshaping just war thinking from “rote repetition in the textbooks of ethics” into a form that could “meet the demands of cold war politics and strategy.” He acknowledges that modern weapons and the lack of a central political authority pose new challenges to the moral use of force. In the end, though, “The decentralized, anarchic nature of international politics still stands . . . as the reason why the just war argument must be retained.” In the name of “human rights” Hehir wants to focus on the “political” or “interventionist” character of just war theory rather than the “strategic” dimension dominant in Cold War discussions.<sup>68</sup> As Lisa Sowle Cahill says, however, Hehir fails to recognize “the thoroughly communal and perspectival nature” of moral discourse and instead insists that “it is legitimate and even obligatory for Christians to strive to transform the social order toward greater conformity to rationally-discerned and cross-cultural standards of justice.”<sup>69</sup>

More ominous is Hehir’s vulnerability to what Day calls the “terrible temptation” of justifying evil means for good ends. He notes that in assessing liberation theology, for example, John Paul II argues that “force must be eschewed, even when injustice is resisted” but does not extend this condemnation to war against “an unjust aggressor.” However, Hehir is nervous about “whether any modern war . . . would meet the pope’s understanding of a just war,” particularly in an editorial in which John Paul uses the Gulf War “as an example of why modern warfare will always violate traditional ethical

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<sup>68</sup>Hehir, 239-43, 252-55.

<sup>69</sup>Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Theological Contexts of Just War Theory and Pacifism: A Response to J. Bryan Hehir,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 20, no. 2 (fall 1992): 260.

restraints.” Although he acknowledges that the pope’s critique comes from *inside* the just war framework, Hehir dismisses his propositions against modern war as not “argued in the detail necessary to make them convincing.”<sup>70</sup> He also does not deal with *Centesimus Annus*, which declares “no, never again war,” or *Evangelium Vitae*, which preserves self-defense *in theory* but recognizes the legitimacy of *not* defending oneself “according to the spirit of the Gospel Beatitudes.”<sup>71</sup>

Although the pope cannot be said to be an “absolute” pacifist, his approach is consistent with Musto’s reading of Vatican II and the “true” pacifism of Day and Hugo. Unfortunately, in dissecting Hehir’s argument Cahill displays several of the same confusions. First, she calls pacifism and just war “fundamentally different conceptions of Christian identity” and further divides them into Augustinian and Thomistic forms. Second, she misidentifies Hauerwas and Yoder with the former, which emphasizes “witness,” and Day and Merton with the latter, which emphasizes “compassionate solidarity.” Finally, she contends that John Paul II remains in the natural law-based just war framework that is focused on rules and conditions and has been further developed by Murray and the American bishops. This is distinct from the Augustinian stream that includes Luther, Niebuhr, and Ramsey and is more conscious of the command of love. Cahill rightly notes that pacifism is not a “theory” but a “way of life,” but errs in saying that just war theory “is not communal in any specific sense *precisely* because its purpose is to unite . . . antagonistic religious, moral, and cultural communities around a set of

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<sup>70</sup>Hehir, 249-52.

<sup>71</sup>John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 52; Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, no. 55.

minimal criteria.”<sup>72</sup> In short, by relying on easy divisions she neglects the context of just war outlined above as well as its connection to pacifism.

Unlike Fr. Hugo, Day does not affirm the “original” version of just war theory, but she follows him in recognizing the importance of its doctrinal basis and that strict adherence to this doctrine would likely end the Church’s involvement in war or would be at least a significant improvement—as even realism would be. In the end, though, Day is more like Merton, who argues that the Church must “get free from the overpowering influence of Augustinian assumptions and take a new view of man, of society and of war itself . . . by a renewed emphasis on the earlier, more mystical and more eschatological doctrine of the New Testament and the early Fathers, though not necessarily a return to an imaginary ideal of pure primitive pacifism.” As I have said, Day is careful to separate pacifism from idealism, but she recognizes another deficiency of just war theory, what Merton calls “an excessive naïveté with regard to the good that can be attained by violent means.”<sup>73</sup> While the intention of priests, for example, who try to follow just war doctrine is “to bring about peace and initiate rational discussion” in order to repair the damage done by war, the means used to accomplish these “good ends” *become* the ends. As Day noted in 1975, “All the wars we have seen since 1933 . . . have not achieved any of the ends we as a people have wanted, or have been told we were working for.”<sup>74</sup>

This failure has been carried into recent decades by some versions of liberation theology. Matthew Smith, for one, argues that the Worker movement is itself “a form of

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<sup>72</sup>Cahill, 260-64.

<sup>73</sup>Merton, *Peace in the Post-Christian Era*, 41-42.

<sup>74</sup>Day, “On Pilgrimage,” December 1965; “Bill Gauchat: The Way of Peace,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1975.

liberation theology.”<sup>75</sup> While liberation theology is quite distinct from liberal theology, the two have sometimes been confused when the former has appropriated elements of the latter. Smith’s contention exemplifies the problem Edmund Miller points out, namely, interpreting the epiphenomenal aspects of Day’s witness—serving food, supporting unions, protesting war—as evidence that she is a “liberal.” This is characteristic of O’Brien’s essay in the same volume in which he uses such language as “social change,” “the peace and justice agenda,” and “faith-based opposition to violence, racism and social injustice.” Not only does he depend on “a fixed, transcendent vision” of the meaning of these terms, O’Brien’s references to a “Catholic Left,” an “American Catholic Church,” and “liberal Catholicism” betray a belief in the inevitable progress of history similar to that of liberation theologians.<sup>76</sup> As Goizueta notes, liberationists influenced by socialism have often failed to recognize the difference between Marx’s notion of *praxis* and that of Aristotle, for whom *praxis* is action, not production (*poesis*): “What makes human life *human* is precisely that it is an absolute value in itself—regardless of its productivity, usefulness, or practicality.”<sup>77</sup>

Thus a “liberal” form of liberation theology is are vulnerable to a return to seeing the person as a means to an end, particularly when it fails to see, as Day does, that “the Church is beyond time” and that theology is rightly “theo-centric, not historo-centric.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Matthew R. Smith, “The Catholic Worker Movement: Toward a Theology of Liberation for First World Disciples,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 151.

<sup>76</sup>Miller, “No Catholic Church,” 43. See David J. O’Brien, “The Significance of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement in American Catholicism,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 41-58.

<sup>77</sup>Goizueta, 84.

<sup>78</sup>Miller, “No Catholic Church,” 43-44.

Gneuchs explains that Day rejects the linear view of reality (exemplified in her day by Ryan) because she realizes that “love is not measured in *doing* but rather in *living* the eternal now.” He calls the “leftist” interpretation of the Worker a “gross misreading.” Rather, Day offers a “radical critique of modernity and the liberal bourgeois world.” She is able to do so because she “lived this liberal ideology” and “found it wanting.” Her alternative, then, is a transcendent personalism rooted in the doctrines of the mystical body and the incarnation.<sup>79</sup> Edmund Miller draws attention to the corresponding conservative error, that is, assuming that time is “cyclic repetition.”<sup>80</sup> Just as some align Day with the Catholic Left, so there are various attempts to elevate her “conservatism.” Some are quite enlightening; for example, Au links her with the European and “old” American Right’s repudiation of “the fundamental tenets of the philosophical liberalism underlying the structure of American economics, politics, and society,” while Kauffman notes that Day resembled other conservatives of the time who tended to be isolationist and decentralist and rejected “the bureaucratic, militaristic, centralizing thrust of [the] New Deal.”<sup>81</sup> Others, however, have noted her orthodox positions on issues such as abortion and homosexuality and called her “conservative” as a slight.

Such labels reflect the kind of reduction that is challenging the post-conciliar Church and the vision of Vatican II, which is not the property of right or left. In Fr. Richard McSorley’s words, “The right are those who see religion as personal, without

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<sup>79</sup>Gneuchs, 205, 210-13. Ann O’Connor and Peter King argue that to speak of the Worker as simply another social justice movement is to miss the point, that is, its Catholic character (“What’s Catholic about the Catholic Worker Movement? Then and Now,” in *Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Thorn, Runkel, and Mountin, 128-43).

<sup>80</sup>Miller, “No Catholic Church,” 43. Recall the emphasis of Protestant “realists” on the inherent and inevitable sinfulness of humanity.

<sup>81</sup>Au, 19; Kauffman, 226.

any social aspect to it. Then there are Catholics on the left who work for justice and peace and very often don't do much personal prayer. That division is widening by misinformation from one group against the other."<sup>82</sup> This problem is manifested in American politics, where a Catholic voter must choose between opposing abortion or the war in Iraq, and reinforced by Public Catholics in their angry debates. For example, Miller says, O'Brien "disapprovingly cites the alliance of Catholic bishops, in their prolife efforts, with 'conservative politicians opposed to Catholic teaching on many other questions,'" but he "seems happy to form alliances with others opposed to Catholic teaching."<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, the Rourkes note that neoconservatives overemphasize the individual in "their relatively uncritical support for the liberal, capitalist economic order which is now becoming globalized. They fail to see any connections between it and the proliferating poverty, unemployment, and cultural demise." Instead, they encourage "warlike attitudes" against foreign nations or groups that make such complaints."<sup>84</sup>

The consequences of this division have been displayed in a recent round of controversies in which the theology of Day and the Worker play a central role, a story Scott Moore tells to great effect in "The End of Convenient Stereotypes." The first controversy stemmed from a symposium in *First Things*, the "conservative" journal edited by Richard John Neuhaus, on the judicial usurpation of politics. In short, the symposium was cited as evidence of a breakdown of the alliance on the right between "theocons" relying on a supposedly "Thomist" conception of natural law and "neocons"

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<sup>82</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 96.

<sup>83</sup>Miller, "No Catholic Church," 43. See O'Brien, 49.

<sup>84</sup>Rourke and Rourke, 5. The Rourkes specifically name the "economic personalism" of Rev. Robert Sirico and the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty. Having attended an Acton conference for graduate students, I can only agree.

more focused on economics and the rights outlined in the Declaration of Independence. The ensuing debate reveals several confusions resulting from Protestants and Catholics (and Jews) aligning themselves with political ideology among both the “conservative” perpetrators and the “liberals” outraged by this unholy alliance. Also, the worries of some theocons about the legitimacy of a nation-state that sanctions abortion, for example, is precisely the kind of questioning that has not been pushed far enough. While they believe the judiciary is acting against the wishes of the American people, Hauerwas rightly contends that it is only legitimating their desire for autonomy, a natural consequence of Enlightenment liberalism.<sup>85</sup> Thus their unwillingness to question the roots of American society and politics mirrors that of liberals.

The second controversy erupted over the hiring of Baxter by the “liberal” theology department at the University of Notre Dame. Despite being a qualified professor and Holy Cross priest, he was initially rejected by a departmental committee, perhaps for being associated with Hauerwas, his dissertation director. The university president, Edward Malloy, stepped in and appointed Baxter, and in his letter to the committee Malloy alluded to earlier “disputes” in the department involving Hauerwas and Richard McBrien, former chair of the department and an opponent of Baxter’s appointment. What is most interesting, Moore says, is that the appointment was *opposed* by the *National Catholic Reporter*, a “liberal” publication, and *supported* not only by the *Houston Catholic Worker* and a number of scholars with sympathies for the Worker

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<sup>85</sup>Scott H. Moore, “The End of Convenient Stereotypes: How the *First Things* and Baxter Controversies Inaugurate Extraordinary Politics,” *Pro Ecclesia* 7, no. 1 (winter 1998), 20, 28. See “Symposium: The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics,” *First Things* 67 (November 1996): 18-42; Jacob Heilbrunn, “Neocon v. Theocon,” *New Republic*, 30 December 1996, 20-24.

(including MacIntyre) but also by Neuhaus in the pages of *First Things*.<sup>86</sup> Further, the *Reporter* published a second, friendlier article noting that “Baxter’s allies say he blows apart the usual liberal-conservative categories that have often been used to describe Catholics since the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>87</sup>

The question is why this is the case. Moore concludes that just as the *First Things* controversy “wreaked havoc with traditional sensibilities about religion and politics on the right,” the Baxter controversy did so on the left.<sup>88</sup> There is an additional element: the individuals and groups intertwined with both controversies, including Hauerwas and Day (whom Moore does not discuss). McBrien, for one, refers to Hauerwas and his Catholic students as “sectarians” in his *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, calling their views “diametrically opposed to Catholicism,” particularly to *Gaudium et Spes*. A “sectarian” is “one who defines the church as the exclusive locus of God’s activity, and the mission of the church as limited to a countercultural, otherworldly salvation.” Elsewhere McBrien has referred to Day as a saint while stating that her “countercultural” approach “is not representative of the Catholic tradition. It’s like a dissenting opinion.”<sup>89</sup> The sectarian charge is not new from the right, either. Weigel, for example, refers to Day this way in at least two books and aligns her with St. Francis in “breaking with the mainstream tradition of American Catholicism and its view of the American

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 23-26. See Richard John Neuhaus, “Religion within the Limits of Morality Alone,” *First Things* 72 (April 1997).

<sup>87</sup>Pamela Schaeffer, “Notre Dame Dispute May Signal a Shift: Countercultural Catholic Voice Stirs a Storm,” *National Catholic Reporter*, 31 January 1997.

<sup>88</sup>Moore, 27.

<sup>89</sup>Quoted in Schaeffer. See Richard P. McBrien, ed., *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

Experiment.”<sup>90</sup> This is company Day would be proud of, but is this definition even correct? As Moore says, the stance of these sectarians “is better described as affirming confessionally particularist approaches to morality, politics, and faith.” In short, “One of the dreams of Enlightenment Liberalism was the desire to remove the scandal of particularity from the engagement of religion and politics. . . . Baxter and Hauerwas recognize that the scandal of particularity cannot be removed without compromising authentically Christian convictions.”<sup>91</sup>

This, I think, approaches the heart of the matter, as it is the “confessionally particularist” (or “radical traditionalist”) kind of Christianity that public theologians and others of both right and left are often unable to reconcile with their positions. Therefore, they must label such views “sectarian” or “irresponsible” in order to dismiss them. This is difficult, the Zwicks say, because “McBrien and Weigel are both speaking of a woman who went to daily Mass and communion and weekly confession, made a holy hour daily, memorized and studied constantly the papal encyclicals, prayed the Divine Office, participated in the Catholic renaissance before the Second Vatican Council, and lived the Sermon on the Mount. . . . She was thoroughly Catholic in the Benedictine tradition. Are she and the Benedictines outside the Catholic tradition?” The question, then, is who the real dissenters are and if, in fact, tradition itself is the real threat. “Perhaps it is the Americanists . . . who might more properly be called ‘sectarian,’” the Zwicks contend, “because they respond to the tensions between Church and world by restricting religion

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<sup>90</sup>Mark Zwick and Louise Zwick, “Why Argue About Fr. Michael J. Baxter and Notre Dame?,” *Houston Catholic Worker*, March-April 1997. See George Weigel, *Tranquillitas Ordinis: The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); *Freedom and Its Discontents: Catholicism Confronts Modernity* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1991).

<sup>91</sup>Moore, 29-30.

to a private affair and going along with everyone else in the public arena. This has never been the Catholic tradition.”<sup>92</sup>

That pacifism or strict just war theory is central to the faith and practice of most confessional particularists is no accident, for it is the theology of violence that most clearly reveals the difference in ethics regarding church and state. My argument is not that Day is the definitive example of confessional particularism, only that her witness is a powerful and effective example of the form of life necessary to display the truth of this approach. Neither is every aspect of the Enlightenment or modernity to be discarded. Indeed, as I noted above, the separation of the church from the sword is no less than providential, and as Moore says, “Liberalism has looked utterly compelling in the face of the twentieth century options of Nazism, Stalinism, and Communism.” The problem, however, is that the common cause of Christians with liberalism in order “to make the world safe for democracy,” a phrase I mentioned in chapter four, “betrays the conviction that the guiding teleology was not one of religion but of a certain sort of politics. . . . The question remains, however, once the world has been made safe for democracy, what need does it have of Christianity? Very little. Hence, we see the increasing privatization and the trivialization of religion in the public square.”<sup>93</sup>

Whereas conservatives and liberals believe that the antidote is a return to the “real” politics of the United States—Neuhaus calls this “contending for the soul of the liberal tradition”—Baxter, Hauerwas, and Day recognize that this *is* the reality.<sup>94</sup> As

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<sup>92</sup>Zwick and Zwick, “Why Argue.”

<sup>93</sup>Moore, 33-34.

<sup>94</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, “The Liberalism of John Paul II,” *First Things* 73 (May 1997).

Moore says, “The Enlightenment commitment to ‘the rational, dispassionate search for truth, and . . . the dissemination of knowledge for the sake of knowledge’ is a kind of religion,” one that “requires an absolute faithfulness since it alone possesses the capacity to adjudicate between the irrational excesses of traditional religions.”<sup>95</sup> In other words, there can be no “neutral” separation of church and state. “Faced with this situation, the Church does not need a theory of the state,” Baxter contends. “What the Church needs is a description of the true character of the state and a set of practices to resist it.” These practices are embodied well, though not exclusively, in communities like the Worker:

History does not, of course, begin and end with the Catholic Worker. But history does begin and end with Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, and the Catholic Worker at its best has conformed its aims and purposes to this truth. In so doing, it has demonstrated a basic point . . . that it is possible to avoid an Americanist accommodation to the liberal state without resurrecting the fantasy of the confessional state.<sup>96</sup>

At the time of his essay Moore envisioned a realignment that would put Baxter, Hauerwas, and Neuhaus (and, by extension, Day) on the same “side.”<sup>97</sup> This, however, appears increasingly unlikely. In the essay defending Baxter’s hiring, Neuhaus calls him “a child of Kant, a modern theologian who critiques the entirety of the tradition by a criterion of his choosing,” in this case, pacifism.<sup>98</sup> Baxter’s response is to point out the differences between Kant’s project and his own attempt “to demonstrate the necessity of the Church for moral reflection,” as well as Neuhaus’ failure to consider “the extent to which the body politics can permeate religion and bleach out its distinctive character.

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<sup>95</sup>Moore, 39-40.

<sup>96</sup>Baxter, “Well Worth an Argument.”

<sup>97</sup>Moore, 30.

<sup>98</sup>Neuhaus, “Morality Alone.”

When this happens, the Church ceases to respond critically to the political life of whatever nation in which it is located.”<sup>99</sup> *First Things* exemplified this failure after September 11 when it ran an editorial supporting President Bush and declaring that “this is, for America and those who are on our side, a defensive war.” The article distinguishes between “real” and “fraudulent” pacifism and concludes that “pacifists embrace not nonviolent resistance but nonresistance.” Not only do nonviolent resisters “live in an unreal world of utopian fantasy that has no basis in Christian faith,” they “have no legitimate part in the discussion about how military force should be used.”<sup>100</sup> According to Baxter, this separates the absolutes of Christianity from the “relativity” of politics, because “the last thing we want involved in politics is someone who believes in an absolute ethics, such as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>101</sup>

The impact of the “absolute ethics” of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, however, may only yet be reaching its zenith. Her pacifist witness revealed the potential of the encyclicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was decades ahead of Vatican II and the Catholic peace movement she helped found. Indeed, as Fr. McSorley says, “Dorothy was Vatican II before Vatican II.”<sup>102</sup> Her influence is still being felt today, and not only in the affirmation of pacifists and conscientious objectors. As the Zwicks point out, the altered terrain of Catholic thought on violence enabled John Paul II “to take the theological discussion of war and peace beyond a disagreement

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<sup>99</sup>Baxter, “Well Worth an Argument,” *First Things* 75 (August-September 1997).

<sup>100</sup>Editors, “In a Time of War,” *First Things* 112 (December 2001): 11, 14.

<sup>101</sup>Baxter, “Just War and Pacifism.”

<sup>102</sup>Quoted in Riegle, *Dorothy Day*, 100.

between pacifism and just war doctrine.”<sup>103</sup> That it is possible for the “reformist” methodology of Baxter and other Catholics (and Protestants) to challenge the “public church” model is due in large part to Day. Yet disagreement lingers and the Worker “remains marginalized in the discourse of Catholic social ethicists.”<sup>104</sup> Kristin Heyer, for one, laments this division and calls for “a creative combination of both, rather than living with substantive pluralism or relegating one to minority status.” Unfortunately, her solution fails in seeking compromise rather than truth, especially when she argues that both models have “equally inherent” risk and that “the multifaceted nature of the basic public church posture helps guard against too optimistic or too pessimistic a view of the wider world and a disproportionate reliance upon a particular theological ‘canon within a canon.’”<sup>105</sup> Heyer misunderstands the dynamic, for Day and the Worker are an example not of division but of bringing together the elements torn apart by division.

A better approach is not only to replicate the Catholic Worker but to take up its practices in local communities and congregations. In Edmund Miller’s words, “Only he [or she] who dwells first on the mystery of the Church and the Mystical Body can grasp the radicalism of Dorothy and the Worker.”<sup>106</sup> Ellsberg argues that if Day is remembered in a hundred years, “it may well be because the Church will have assumed the prophetic witness which she embodied, and the definition of the word ‘Christian’ expanded to

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<sup>103</sup>Zwick and Zwick, “Prophet of Pacifism.”

<sup>104</sup>Baxter, “Blowing the Dynamite,” 87.

<sup>105</sup>Kristin L. Heyer, “Bridging the Divide in Contemporary Catholic Social Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 66, no. 2 (June 2005): 430, 403.

<sup>106</sup>Miller, “No Catholic Church,” 44.

embrace its original identity with ‘Peacemaker.’”<sup>107</sup> For this to happen, however, the kind of politics she embodies must be considered in more theological depth. I have attempted a small contribute to this effort here, but many aspects must be explored more fully, including Day’s doctrine of sin, her distinction between cooperation and coercion, her understanding of natural law and other doctrines, and the ways in which her theology reflects elements drawn from others. As for the questions her pacifist witness raises for the Baptist tradition, they include the necessity of a sacramental sense of the church and a robust ecclesiology as the other side of Baptist distinctives such as religious liberty and the priesthood of all believers. I can only close with a statement from Hauerwas: “For those inclined to so dismiss my argument, I have no decisive response other than to ask if they represent practices that can produce a Dorothy Day.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Ellsberg, introduction to Day, *Selected Writings*, xviii-xix, xxix.

<sup>108</sup>Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, 231.

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