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# DOROTHY DAY'S APOLOGIA FOR FAITH AFTER MARX

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## ABSTRACT

Dorothy Day has received a great deal of attention from contemporary scholars of U.S. Catholicism. This article makes a unique contribution to this growing literature by offering a close reading of Dorothy Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*. The purpose is to highlight the narrative's integrity as a sustained argument in defense of Christian faith transformed by wrestling with the Marxist charge: religion is the opiate of the people. Day deserves credit for a daring approach to Catholic apologetics in the 1950s. The article presents the narrative as a dialectic between the personal and the political, the material and the spiritual, and the natural and the supernatural that resolves itself in a creative synthesis through the Catholic Worker Movement. Day embraces Marxist aspirations and acknowledges their criticism's truth in defending the authenticity of her Catholic commitment. Day simultaneously demonstrates that the Incarnation's reality informs traditional Catholicism with its radical political character.

The life of Dorothy Day holds a certain fascination. She seems to have negotiated successfully the meeting of two worlds which most of her contemporaries perceived as mutually exclusive. She was, as is well known, a convert to traditional Catholicism of the pre-Vatican II variety and a radical with political commitments of the anarchist variety. *The Long Loneliness*, first published in 1952, reveals her own perspective on this process of conversion first to radicalism and then to Catholicism and then to the Catholic radicalism of the Catholic Worker movement.<sup>1</sup> The autobiography's preface, entitled "Confession," justifies her disclosure with the simple statement: "I have a right to give an account of myself, a reason for the faith that is in me" (11). Why did she feel the need to give "an account . . . a reason for [her] faith?" Perhaps the need arose because her peculiar twists and turns toward God

<sup>1</sup>The edition used here is *The Long Loneliness: An Autobiography* with an introduction by Daniel Berrigan, reprint ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981). Page numbers of quotations appear in parentheses immediately following citations.

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made a case for faith after a serious encounter with Marx. Day presents to her readers a reasoned faith tested in the fire ignited by the searing words: "religion is the opiate of the people." My thesis is that *The Long Loneliness* serves as a carefully constructed narrative-argument to demonstrate that embracing the truth in Marx's indictment and incorporating that truth into a religious commitment constitutes authentic faith after Marx.

### I. The Long Loneliness as *Apologia*

To claim that Day's autobiography is an apologetic for faith after Marx misleads if one expects a direct consideration of the philosopher's thought. Day never studied the works of the communist theorist. She confronted the Marxism diffused through the U.S. bohemian radical culture during the years surrounding the Russian revolution, when hopes ran high for a dramatic change in the social order. She admired many who, like herself, had accepted the Marxist slogan, "Religion is the opiate of the people," and thereby rejected all faith for the sake of their work with the masses. Her apologetic consists not of theoretical arguments but of a carefully fashioned personal account of a faith-filled knowledge gained through experience, especially in relationships with friends, lovers, and acquaintances.

The present analysis restricts itself to a single primary source, *The Long Loneliness*. Admittedly, knowledge of her activities gives this autobiography its credibility. Other accounts such as *From Union Square to Rome*<sup>2</sup> provide points of comparison and corroboration. Here, however, the exploration focuses upon *The Long Loneliness* to demonstrate its integrity as a self-contained apology for faith after Marx.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout *The Long Loneliness*, Day acknowledges her spiritual debt to avowed atheists whose commitments to social change made concrete the gospel demand to work for justice. These acknowledgments serve her argument, which is especially concerned with demonstrating that the religion which she eventually embraces is no opiate. It, in fact, requires a more complete solidarity with the suffering world, the masses, through Christ. She is careful to describe her faith as a response to joy which overflows into a communal faith. This faith is a loving commitment rooted in Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of God's

<sup>2</sup>Dorothy Day, *From Union Square to Rome* (Silver Spring, MD: Preservation of the Faith Press, 1938). This text was Day's first attempt at autobiography.

<sup>3</sup>The literature on Dorothy Day grows daily, but no study to date has analyzed *The Long Loneliness* in and of itself. Examples of recent analyses of Day that cull their arguments from a variety of her writings include James Terence Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), and Brigid O'Shea Merriman, *Searching for Christ: The Spirituality of Dorothy Day* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

redemptive suffering in solidarity with all people but especially the poor.

Day's apologetic in *The Long Loneliness* approaches that proposed in the 1920s by Virgil Michel, O.S.B., a champion of liturgical reform as a source of "social regeneration." As Patrick Carey explains in his introduction to *American Catholic Religious Thought*, Michel objected to the isolation of Neo-Thomism from modern philosophical thought. Carey quotes Michel as maintaining,

If we refuse to see the standpoint of others, or ignore their sincerity, we are not only shutting off all possibility of assisting them, but we are actually building a wall around ourselves and closing to them all avenues of approach." . . . Catholic philosophy . . . had to appear "in the garb that is intelligible and acceptable to the outsiders" and to show "so much appreciation of other viewpoints that it does not repel those of other belief at first sight."<sup>4</sup>

What Michel proposed in the 1920s for Thomist-based Catholic philosophy, Day attempts in the 1950s for Thomist-framed Catholic action. The reference to Michel serves here not to claim that he directly influenced Day, but to provide a standpoint from which to understand *The Long Loneliness* as an apologetic. Throughout her narrative, Day explores life experiences that "made intelligible and acceptable" the Neo-Thomist conviction that grace embraces nature and then transforms it. Among the natural aspirations awaiting transformation are those given expression by Marxists and other radical political atheists. Faith rooted in joy and love, expressed in redemptive suffering, takes concrete form in *The Long Loneliness* to demonstrate that authentic gospel living is hardly an opiate.

## *II. Rejecting the Opiate of Religion*

Day was no innovator in autobiographical format. She follows a simple chronology beginning with childhood through a rebellious adolescence to a committed adulthood. Each has several dialectical tensions including those between the personal and the political, the natural and the spiritual, and the material and the spiritual. She narrates her life as a struggle to live these tensions as a creative synthesis rather than to allow them to operate in her as disruptive conflicts. Crucial to this synthesis is her ability to reconcile her deep attraction to the spiritual with her conviction that Marx was right: religion is an opiate of the people.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Patrick Carey, ed., *American Catholic Religious Thought* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 51.

Her argument begins with her childhood. The narrative displays the human's natural propensity for religion. Day recalls earliest memories of the wonder and fear aroused by nature, in particular the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and her associating such feelings with a frightening, unpredictable God. The family soon thereafter moved to Chicago. Through her own initiative, she was baptized in the Episcopal Church around age eleven and becomes familiar with the Bible, especially the Psalms. She portrays a personal, apolitical religiosity unprepared for adolescent rebellion or, as she writes, "the turbulent life that was in me" (36). Here is a complacent piety ripe for the Marxist critique.

Day next confronts the reader with the urban injustices which she, a sixteen-year-old high-school graduate, discovered in her own city, Chicago. The narrative depicts her shock at the workers' plight. The discovery is paired with her exposure to radical intellectual and political responses to social inequity. These discoveries occur away from home at the University of Illinois, where she attends classes on a scholarship.

The adolescent Day awakened from her opiated slumber and quickly turned to the political as the means to redeem the material world, the here and now. Here began in earnest her "Searching," as she calls the book's first section. In recalling this period, Dorothy maintains, "I wanted, though I did not know it then, a synthesis. I wanted life and I wanted the abundant life. I wanted it for others too" (39). She wanted to join her passion for life with that of others. Where she found such passion was not in the self-satisfied churchgoers but in the activists seeking justice. At this point, she joined the Socialist Party and scorned her childhood religion.

The intellectual elite fueled her antagonism toward religion. The narrative portrays a sixteen-year-old college student who knew exactly what her university professor meant when he explained "that religion was something which had brought great comfort throughout the ages, so that we ought not to criticize it." She—now a brave, independent woman—certainly had no need of such a crutch.

I felt at the time that religion would only impede my work. I wanted to have nothing to do with the religion of those whom I saw all around me. I felt that I must turn from it as from a drug. I felt it indeed to be an opiate of the people and not a very attractive one, so I hardened my heart. It was a conscious and deliberate process. (43)

Her embracing of this position cannot be taken lightly. It is a crucial step in her argument. She internalizes the critique. It is she who needs a convincing apologetic embracing the popular critique of religion and

introducing more credible ways of understanding the spiritual, the religious. The heroine also claims an authentic voice for faith precisely by exposing her deeply felt rejection of religion as an opiate.

Day left the university after two years to follow her family who moved to New York City. Journalism combined with political discussion and activity marked this period which followed her brief academic sojourn. Though she maintained her rejection of religion, her spiritual hunger erupted now and then in this exciting, tumultuous world. Two such eruptions stand out in the narrative. The first is her experience of a hunger strike among suffragettes arrested during a demonstration in Washington, DC. After her second day in solitary confinement without food, a desperate Day requested a Bible. Yet even as she read the Psalms which she cherished as a child, the Marxist indictment remained. She claims a deep distrust of such religious sentiment. "I did not want to go to God in defeat and sorrow" (81). After the authorities gave in to the hunger strikers' demands, Day admits:

I had no thought of religion. . . . I had seen myself too weak to stand alone, too weak to face the darkness of that punishment cell without crying out, and I was ashamed and again rejected religion that had helped me when I had been brought to my knees by my suffering. (83)

Her prison experience only verified Marx's statement. So the narrator reinforces the authenticity of her Marxist commitment. Its ideology interprets her own experience. Religion had served as her drug to mask the personal pain of injustice rather than to foment the social change needed to end its root cause.

The second eruption appears immediately after her jail experience. Its juxtaposition of the tensions in Day's life is memorable. She writes of her time spent with friends in New York City, including her vivid memory of Eugene O'Neill's throaty recitation of "The Hound of Heaven" at the back of a smoke-filled bar, affectionately known as "Hell Hole" by its faithful patrons. She then continues in an almost matter-of-fact tone. "Many a morning after sitting all night in taverns or coming from balls at Webster Hall, I went to an early morning Mass. . . ." She describes this stop in a church as a manifestation of her "wavering life . . . not knowing that we are of body, mind and soul, and that all our faculties can be brought into harmony. I felt strongly that the life of nature warred against the life of grace" (85). The narrator demonstrates the strength of "natural faith" that erupts despite her conscious and deliberate Marxist commitments—not to mention her hedonism. The pieces of what her life was to be were there: round-table discussions well into the night and daily Masses, but they remain

at this point in discord awaiting a transformation into a harmonious order.

Day abruptly shifted her wavering life to spend the year 1918 working as a nurse in King's County Hospital. She quotes a letter written at the time that reflects her reasons for the shift. "I hate being Utopian and trying to escape from reality. . . . Now that we are in the thick of the war and there is so much to be done, I might as well try to do some of it. . . ." Her friends, she continues in the letter, accused her of assisting in the war effort but she insisted: "It is the poor that are suffering. I've got to do something" (88). Whatever her socialist friends did or Marxist theorists said, she showed her constancy in seeking an authentic solidarity with the oppressed. During this time, she also attended early morning Mass with a devout co-worker. Again major pieces of her future life were present—daily worship and dedication to serving the poor through the "corporal works of mercy." Yet, divorced from the formative context of Christian community, these actions held little lasting attraction or meaning. While perhaps not an opiate, religion remained a refuge divorced from her self and from social transformation.

Day left the hospital to have time for writing. She is truthful enough to admit: "I was rebelling too against the discipline, long hours, and steady hard work" (83). So she returned to her "Time of Searching," as the concluding chapter of part 1 is named. The book describes in elliptical passages a period of emotional upheaval in her relationships with men and of little purposeful direction in political or spiritual commitments.

Day's bohemian life among political radicals and the journalists who wrote about them did not deliver the abundant life which she sought. Here the narrator takes a decisive turn away from obvious solidarity with the poor and their advocates. Using money made on the sale of the movie rights to a novel, she bought "a little house on the beach of Staten Island where [she] could settle down to study and 'to write'" (109). Marxism had been tried and found woefully wanting; hedonism had not satisfied her lust for life abundant. After drinking deeply of both, Staten Island served first as refuge from chaos and then as site of a new creation.

### *III. Accepting the Joyous Cost of Faith in Christ*

The book's middle section, entitled "Natural Happiness," stands in sharp contrast to the previous section which overwhelms the person with seemingly infinite details about various political movements and figures. This section is intensely personal with rich, sacramental descriptions of persons and places. "[T]his period of my life was so joy-

ous and lovely, I want to write at length about it, giving the flavor, the atmosphere, the mood of those days" (116). She communicates a feeling of personal happiness reminiscent of her childhood and yet tempered by her critical perspective gained in her life since leaving home.

Her life on the beach among wonderfully strange friends and invigorating sights, sounds, and smells was coupled with her love of Forster Batterham, her common-law husband. His love of nature reawakened in her a thirst for the spiritual. She reconstructs the awakening to highlight new qualities within her spirituality. "I found myself praying, praying with thanksgiving, praying with open eyes while I watched the workers on the beach and the sunset, and listened to the sound of waves and the scream of snowy gulls" (117). Her careful phrasing suggests not only the human's innate orientation to the transcendent, as in the childhood account, but now an orientation toward the world. She "found herself praying" as if it came upon her not as an external imposition but as an internal eruption. At the same time, her prayers were of thanksgiving, not despair. She opened her eyes to the world of workers and sunsets and waves and gulls rather than closing them to an interior reality cut off from the world.

She writes bluntly of a progression from the natural to the supernatural, particularly in discussing her love for Forster and his love of nature. "I have always felt that it was life with him that brought me natural happiness, that brought me to God" (134). She felt "grateful for love, . . . grateful for life. . . ." Grace, if understood as pure gift of God's love, "a share in the divine life" (257), slowly worked its transforming power on Day. The natural happiness and love culminated in a concrete "share in divine love," the "blissful joy" of the couple's conception of a child. Her religiosity was not the denial of or escape from the world, but a response to it.

Her words of faith and joy belie, however, the internal critique springing from the Marxist charge: religion is an opiate. As Day presents this period, the critique hovered over all her spiritual longing. While saying the rosary, she derided herself for her religious response to her pregnancy. "'You are biological. Like a cow. Prayer with you is like the opiate of the people.' And over and over again in my mind the phrase was repeated jeeringly, 'Religion is the opiate of the people.'" Then she would argue in response: "'I am praying because I am happy, not because I am unhappy'" (132-33). The latter argument won, of course, and her happiness overflowed with the birth of her daughter. The story presents the internal debate to demonstrate that Day's religious conviction did not mask sorrow and suffering, but completed her joy. Here the narrative carefully argues that a genuine alternative to "religion as opiate" does exist.



Day then uses her justification for baptizing her daughter to explain further her own attraction to the Church. On the one hand, they are very conventional. "I felt that 'belonging' to a Church would bring that order into her life which I felt my own had lacked" (141). On the other hand, she identifies her decision with her rather unconventional concerns and commitments. She insists that "it was my joy at having given birth to a child that made me do something definite" (141). She also admits the inadequacy of communism as "the answer to [her] desire for a cause. . . ." "The answer" comes only through "faith in Christ" whose "Sermon on the Mount answered all the questions as to how to love God and one's brother" (141). Whether or not her reasons at the time of her decision were as clearly articulated as suggested in her narration, their articulation is central to the apologetic's effectiveness. The "confession" is also persuasion. Christianity supersedes the communist vision of a classless society through concrete practices. Christianity, not communism, answers all the "how to" questions concerning loving not only God but also one's brother. Religious practice, not Marxist slogans, provides the impetus for revolution.

Days' defense of choosing the Roman Catholic Church among the Christian churches borrows rhetoric not from the Catholic Evidence Guild but from Marxist/socialist movements.

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. . . . [The Catholic Church] claimed and held the allegiance of the masses of people in all the cities where I had lived. (139)

That which appears most offensive to many outside and some within the Catholic Church, namely, the masses of seemingly ignorant and superstitious immigrants, Dorothy identifies as the feature which she as a political radical could most easily embrace. To be in solidarity with the suffering, one goes where they are, embraces what they embrace. In this case, one joins in common allegiance with the masses through participation in worship, in the Mass.

Yet, the reader is left to wonder whether such arguments had a certain hollow ring to the woman newly received into the Catholic communion. She writes of anguish in separating herself from her two greatest loves: Forster and "the life [she] had led in the radical movement" (149). Yet her admission of anguish also clarifies the authentic connection between religious conviction and suffering. Her joyful response to Tamar's birth demanded great suffering for the child's sake. She forthrightly recalls finding

no particular joy in partaking in these sacraments, Baptism, Penance, and Holy Eucharist. . . . One part of my mind stood at one side and kept saying, "What are you doing? Are you sure of yourself? What kind of affectation is this? What act is this you are going through? Are you trying to induce emotion, induce faith, partake in an opiate, the opiate of the people?" I felt like a hypocrite if I got down on my knees, and shuddered at the thought of anyone seeing me. (148)

The Marxist indictment reappears even as she takes the final steps that separate her forever, or so she thought, from her previous life devoted to promoting the radical restructuring of society.

Her critique, however, does not stop with brief recollections of her personal doubts. At this point, the narrative admits the Church's ongoing guilt in its siding "with property, with the wealthy, with the state, with capitalism. . . ." Yet, Dorothy still "loved the Church for Christ made visible." Recalling Romano Guardini's view, she declares: "the Church is the Cross on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from his Cross, and one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the Church" (149-50). Here her apologetic fully manifests itself. Day has, to paraphrase Michel, seen the standpoint of others, and knows firsthand their sincerity. The Church she embraces is never "the perfect society" instituted by Christ but the one criticized for its many failures. The Church, the very cross of Christ, remains both a primary source of suffering and a manifestation of redemptive power when transformed by Christ's love even unto death.

"Natural Happiness" ends with her spiritual sensibility attuned to, as she would identify it, the "supernatural." This clear spiritual orientation stands at the end of this section in sharp contrast to the wanderer's state of disorientation at the end of the book's first section. Yet her political commitments to changing the social order, to creating the possibility of natural happiness for others, and to serving persons in need, remain in the world which she abandoned. In reflecting upon the Catholic silence over the Sacco-Vanzetti case, she exclaims, "How I longed to make a synthesis reconciling body and soul, this world and the next. . . . No wonder there was such a strong conflict going on in my mind and heart" (151). Mere conversion to the Catholic Church had not resolved the conflicts between the personal and the political, the natural and the supernatural, and the material and the spiritual. In some respects, the narrative implies that conversion had exacerbated them. In covering a demonstration in Washington for *The Commonwealth*, she recalls her own "summer of quiet reading and prayer . . . [as] sinful as [she] watched [her] brothers in their struggle, not for themselves but for others" (165). So the second section ends with Day

once again searching as she prays that she might find a way to serve the poor.

#### *IV. Transforming the Opiate: The Catholic Worker and the Practices of Incarnation*

The way to serve came, of course, in the person of Peter Maurin.

He was a man of tremendous ambition, in spite of his simplicity, or perhaps because of it. He wanted to make a new synthesis, as St. Thomas had done in the Middle Ages, and he wanted to enlist the aid of a group of people in doing this. He was no more afraid of the non-Catholic approach to problems than St. Thomas was of the Aristotelian. (170)

Maurin's confidence became her own, and she found in the Catholic Worker Movement a way for the tensions between natural/supernatural, personal/political, material/spiritual to operate as a dialectic of creative interdependence rather than one of mortal conflict. But, to illustrate the happy coexistence, her narrative shifts away from the personal to the communal to focus upon the movement. Part 3 is, however, titled "Love Is the Measure" rather than "The Catholic Worker." The movement's means and end are Day's principal concern in concluding her account of "the reason for the faith that is in her." The movement provided a shared practical synthesis of all the elements of an authentic faith after Marx.

The very name, Catholic Worker, indicates the synthesis between the means and end which finally came to pass. Day's commentary on the Worker's activities and fundamental commitments serves as a recapitulation of her personal and political commitments transformed through their grounding in her Catholic commitment, crystallized in Maurin's interpretive framework.

Chapter titles clearly indicate the recapitulation. She begins with "Peasant of the Pavements" to introduce her readers to Peter Maurin's thought. Then she shows its impact on previous commitments in the chapters which appear in the following order: "Paper [Journalism], People and Work"; "Labor"; "Community"; "Family"; "Retreat"; and "'War Is the Health of the State.'" She concludes with a chapter eulogizing Peter Maurin at his death followed by a brief account of the Worker's move to a new location on "Christie Street."

Peter Maurin's Christian personalism provided the evocative rhetoric that effectively articulated the new shape and meaning of familiar action. Day's journalism, for example, became part of the arsenal for "what actually amounts to a class war, using such weapons as the

works of mercy for immediate means to show our love and to alleviate suffering" (181). The movement's commitment to voluntary poverty confuses neighbors who are sure that only Communists accept such hardship. Day ruefully recalls:

Our insistence on worker-ownership, on the right of private property, on the need to de-proletarize the worker, all points which had been emphasized by the Popes in their social encyclicals, made many Catholics think we were Communists in disguise, wolves in sheep's clothing. (189)

The battles are the same; 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. Here, the narrative argues that real religion bears no resemblance to an opiate. To participate in the process of redemptive suffering, to be Christ in the world goads one to action, not stupor.

Her preconversion experience, viewed through the eyes of the convert and crafted for the reader as autobiography, testifies to a reality which ultimately only Catholicism names in its fullness. Her past gives meaning and texture to what she recognizes as central to her Catholic conviction while her Catholic conviction gives meaning to her past. In writing about her pre-Catholic Worker days in the first two parts of her autobiography, she provides occasional editorial comments that indicate what she identified as the groundwork that showed her the rationality of Maurin's synthesis between Catholicism and radical social change.

What made the synthesis possible was her absolute conviction of the incarnational reality in individuals as the hidden Christ found especially in the poor; in community as solidarity of all people through the Mystical Body of Christ; and in sacrament as Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. Day's autobiography interprets her life so that all three aspects of Christ manifest themselves well beyond the institution's purview. The Church, after all, remains the Cross of Christ when it functions as opiate rather than living as suffering redeemer in the world. The world, on the other hand, carries within it the potential to be fully transformed by God's grace.

The hidden reality of Christ's presence in people remains a constant part of her argument. Besides Maurin, the one person who receives repeated attention in *The Long Loneliness* is Rayna Simons, her first close friend at the university. Day's description clearly points to a hidden Christ as she recalls Rayna as "so unself-conscious, so inter-

ested in others, so ready to hear and discuss all that interested them" (70). This woman, a secular Jew, eventually a committed Communist who dies in the Soviet Union, manifested the work of Christ for Dorothy. Her editorial comment in the book's first section is telling. "When I think of Rayna, I think of Mauriac's statement in his life of Christ that those who serve the cause of the masses, the poor, working for truth and justice, have worked for Christ even while denying Him" (71). Rayna anticipates in the autobiography what Peter Maurin completes for Day. His love was also "impersonal" in that "he loved all, saw all others around him as God saw them, saw Christ in them" (274). Peter's love provides the "supernatural" complement to Rayna's "natural" love of others, Day's descriptions leads the reader to appreciate the beauty in Rayna's Communist commitments even as she demonstrates how Peter's Christian conviction supersedes it.

The Sacco and Vanzetti executions provides Day with a striking example to illustrate how her radical political sympathies have informed her view of the communal reality of Incarnation. In the autobiography's middle section, "Natural Happiness," she writes at some length of the executions' devastating affect on Forster and on herself. She also claims an impact on her experiential understanding of the phrase: Mystical Body of Christ.

All the nation, I mean, that is made up of the poor, the worker, the trade unionist—those who felt most keenly the sense of solidarity—that very sense of solidarity which made me gradually understand the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ whereby we are the members one of another. (147)

The narrative here carefully constructs a memory to demonstrate that embracing the truth in Marx's indictment contributes to a more authentic understanding of the most fundamental Christian teaching.

In the book's final section is the chapter "Labor," Day illustrates Christian solidarity with the workers. She actively supported labor strikes through *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and her frequent appearances on the picket lines. She did so despite Maurin's protests, "strikes don't strike me" (181). The whole chapter on labor is written to frame the work in "the great mystery of the Incarnation" (204). Christ was a worker who "set us an example and the poor and destitute were the ones we wished to reach." She ends the chapter arguing for how following Christ in solidarity with the poor and destitute also transforms Marxists' aspirations. Inspired by Pope Pius XII's distinction between people and the masses in one of his Christmas Messages, Day deliberately notes: "It is people who are important, not the masses" (221). The political has been transformed into a personal com-

mitment to those who are the ends as well as means to social transformation.

More than any other aspect of Catholicism, its sacramental forms of worship attracted Day. Throughout *The Long Loneliness*, she identifies the human need to worship in her own attraction to public prayer and in the ritual actions of others. The most distinctive discussion of worship comes in the opening paragraphs of "Community," her account of the Catholic Worker community.

Days begins the chapter by connecting "a sense of reverence . . . bring awakened in great masses of people throughout the world by the new revolutionary leaders" with "the need to worship." She then observes that "the sad result is giant-sized posters of Lenin and Stalin, Tito and Mao. The dictator becomes divine" (223). Yet she goes further to make her point at this juncture in her story. She implicitly highlights the radical implications of the real presence in the Eucharist by highlighting the real presence of concern in the communists' providing bread for the masses. She presents a story about "a mad friend . . . , a Jewish worker from the East Side." At the New York City House of Hospitality,

He sat at the table with us once and held a piece of dark rye bread which he was eating. "It is the black bread of the poor. It is the Russian Jewish bread. It is the flesh of Lenin. Lenin held bread up to the people and he said, 'This is my body broken for you.' So they worship Lenin. He brought them bread." (223)

She goes on to note the fervor of this worship of Lenin and similar leaders. Her next comments insinuate that Christians fail to display as great a devotion to Christ, God incarnate. It is here, in fact, that she bemoans the fact that Rayna "never met a Christian." The failure of Catholics to answer the deepest yearnings of the poor, the hidden Christ, and those committed to their betterment stands as a judgment against all complacent believers.

She ends the chapter "Community," with an alternative image of practicing Christians. She describes the "breadline of hundreds of men who come twice a day for meals, with the best of whole-wheat bread, made from whole-grain flour" and of the man who supervises this work, Tom Sullivan. He makes manifest a Christian devotion equal to any Communist's commitment to the underclass. Yet, in contrast to Lenin who provides bread, Tom, who ensures the distribution of "the best of whole-wheat bread" possesses "a gentle and unobtrusive authority. . . . [He] keeps a quiet eye on the men in the house and does a great deal of praying. People love him because he loves God, and for love of God loves the poor. They feel this in him and trust him" (235).

Here again is evidence of grace transforming natural aspirations to provide the spiritual nourishment which sustains the physical one for those who have neither. Here again her incarnational theology displays itself in a community's practice. Here again is a concrete argument for Christianity's ability to overcome Marxist accusation of "religion as opiate." Religion provides the finest bread for people, not promises of victory for the masses.

Feeding each individual encountered links every Catholic Worker to the absolute, the ultimate, to God, in a profound way. Maurin had emphasized "seeing Christ in others, loving the Christ you saw in others. Greater than this, it was having faith in the Christ in others without being able to see Him" (171). In the final section, Day presents the Catholic Worker as her "proof" of the *concrete* reality of Christian transcendence. The Catholic Worker is the answer to Marxist critics.

The Catholic Worker redefines charity, which Day claims had previously been for her "a word to choke over" (150). The Christians whom an adolescent Day had condemned use charitable acts as an opiate to feed their self-satisfaction, she had been convinced. Day now understands the central Christian virtue as "a sense of personal responsibility to take care of our own, and our neighbor, at a personal sacrifice" (179). The key phrases here are "personal responsibility . . . our neighbor . . . at a personal sacrifice." Redemptive suffering, sacrifice for the sake of each individual neighbor encountered, can hardly be administering or ingesting an opiate. Beyond simply countering the Marxist charge, "Christian personalism," as the Catholic Worker's guiding philosophy is called, critiques both bourgeois Christianity and the Marxist/socialist philosophy's impersonal means of using "the masses" for achieving an impersonal end, "the state."

To make clear the shape of the faith for which she is compelled to give reasons, Day candidly distinguishes her views from those who use Christian suffering as another excuse to ignore the plight of those unjustly treated. "We were ready to 'endure wrongs patiently' for ourselves . . . but we were not going to be meek for others enduring *their* [*sic*] wrongs patiently." Day depicts the Catholic Workers' tireless efforts to alleviate the economically deprived, even while Catholic Workers espouse and live a life of voluntary poverty. As she presents this choice in the chapter "Labor," the Catholic Worker's commitment to the poor requires giving of one's life. Simply "to pledge yourself to voluntary poverty for life . . . is not enough. One must live with them, share with them their sufferings too. Give up one's privacy, and mental and spiritual discomforts as well as physical" (214). Day testifies to the difficulty of this poverty not simply in what one must forego but in what one must witness. One must confront one's "own shame" in be-

ing able to serve only food to those “stripped then not only of all earthly goods, but of spiritual goods, their sense of human dignity” (216). Many volunteers, especially the young, find such limitations unbearable but for Day “enduring this shame is part of our penance” (216). To live with these limitations and to continue to serve Christ in those who come to the Houses of Hospitality is part of the redemptive suffering.

Day presents absolute pacificism as the most radical aspect of her Christian faith—more difficult to justify even than the voluntary poverty. Despite grave disagreements, personal uncertainties, and harsh criticism among Catholic Workers, she maintained her absolute stand even during World War II. Interestingly enough, her discussion in section 3, “Love Is the Measure,” of specific Catholic Worker activity ends with a position which stands in absolute contradistinction to Marxist/socialist convictions. Communist class war justifies the use of any means for its end, social transformation. A converted Day, on the other hand, insists that if “Love Is the Measure,” then violence in any form can never be justified. Transformation of the social order comes through the power of God’s love manifested in Christ who accepts even death to bring forth new life. Here is the logical outcome of her argument for an absolute faith in a graced nature whose measure is love.

Day provides her final judgment on the Catholic Worker and the long loneliness in the “Postscript.” Her appeal at the story’s conclusion is to lived commitments in faith. “We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community” (286). Yet experience indicates that love and community are not the stuff of dreams. “[I]n the words of Father Zossima, [love is] a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire”—a fire intensified by Day’s own relentless refusal to succumb to the religion that numbs the sense of concern for whoever walks through the door and into the house of hospitality. The argument is as much for Catholics about the authentic way of faith as it is against Marxists about the unauthentic way of faith.

#### *V. Awakening the Body of Christ: An Apologia for Catholics to Practice Catholicism*

Perhaps the reader is wondering how such an autobiography could serve as an effective apologia for faith after Marx. Did avowed Marxists change their points of view as they read this story? As far as I know, they did not. But many Catholics have been changed by Day’s willingness to take the Marxist critique seriously and to make religion more than a practice in Catholic personal piety or, worse, smugness



and triumphalism. More than a simple *quid pro quo* response, Day makes manifest the radical nature of the gospel. Her views are more radical than any Communist feared by another notable Catholic of the 1950s, Joseph McCarthy and his anti-communist warriors. She places within familiar Catholic frames of reference radical commitments such as her identification of "Mystical Body of Christ" as solidarity with the oppressed like Sacco and Vanzetti. Christian solidarity demands an active but nonviolent seeking of justice through the transformation of the social order.

Dorothy Day's apologetic for faith after Marx insists not only on the reality of human's spiritual dimension but also the spiritual demand to make God's kingdom present now. Day took seriously the concrete reality of Incarnation and the liberating power of Christ's redemptive suffering unleashed through the Body of Christ, the church. She wanted Catholics to shake off the stupor of a religion of pie-in-the-sky and enter into the presence of Christ in the here and now. Marx had delivered the indictment and, from Day's perspective, the Catholic Worker movement showed the power of Christian faith to root the Marxists' natural aspirations in the concreteness of the incarnational reality manifested in the Catholic Church's sacraments and teachings as well as the joys and sorrows of the poor and oppressed. To embrace Christ's suffering for the sake of the neighbor's redemption is hardly an opiate.