

**RADICAL SOCIAL ACTIVISM, LAY CATHOLIC WOMEN AND AMERICAN
FEMINISM 1920-1960.**

by

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Introduction

This dissertation describes a movement we can call Radical Social Activism that grew out of historical developments within the American Catholic Church and among Catholic women between the years 1920-1960. This Radical Social Activism among Catholic women cannot be associated with the better known feminisms of today, movements we frequently associate with White, middle-class, and academic or business-oriented women. The Catholic women participating in this activism did not abandon Church teachings on women but worked within the androcentric Catholic Church to achieve some great results as radical social activists. We shall see how Radical Social Activism worked in the lives of Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen. These women exemplified a Radical Social Activism that developed out of movements within the Catholic Church that placed a new emphasis on the role of the laity; while this emphasis intended to stifle the clamor for reform, it also enabled these women to actively work for social welfare progress and a return to Christian love and charity.

In the last one hundred and fifty years, American women have been the beneficiaries of a feminist social development. Catholic women, however, were not well represented in the beginnings of American feminism. Although a few Catholic women were involved with the early women's Suffragist movement, the overwhelming majority

did not participate in mainstream feminism, in part due to their immigrant background. Western women's progress during this time, in terms of civil and legal rights was unprecedented, due largely to society's response to industrialization. Women stepped out of the family setting and into active roles in a society that began increasingly to measure success in terms of economic gain. Yet these role changes tended to downplay the importance of the family and led to a de-emphasis on society's spiritual well being.

Methodology and Structure

The topic of radical women activist came to me as I was researching my master degree. I was writing on the feminist stands of Mary Baker Eddy and Rosemary Radford Ruether¹. It was here that I learned the basic historical background to American feminism. It was in this paper that the kernel of interest began and the formulation of the question of what the Catholic Church actually taught on women. Further what was the Catholic Church doing to answer the questions and scholarship of women theologians were asking ?

My academic curiosity was piqued when I found few Catholic women who had joined the forces of feminism. In fact my findings led me to discover that many active laywomen accepted their traditional female role and limits in the Church. There was evidence, however, that their acceptance of their role also gave them a decisive drive in

¹ Kathleen Carlton Johnson. "A Comparison of the Feminist Theological Positions of Mary Baker Eddy and Rosemary Radford Ruether." Thesis University of South Africa, 2004.

their mission and vision why? Their acceptance of their womanhood in the Church gave them an energy to transcend the limits that the Church put on them, making their work effective and crossed the boundaries of the traditional to become radical, but not feminist.

I came away from this research with examples, writings, books, and projects undertaken by women who were “not feminist”. I formulated two questions on this study, first, what was the churches teaching on women and second why were there not more Catholic women involved with the feminist struggle in American Church history between, 1920-1960.

My last test was to find women who were outstanding Radical Social Activist, who had all the opportunities to join the ranks of the feminist and did not. Dorothy Day qualified on all counts; she was a bohemian that had even written for the *Masses* magazine. She had been a common law wife and a mother, worked for the vote and been jailed for her activities. In short she had participated in the secular American culture, but converted to Catholicism. She was a journalist and founded the Catholic Worker. She did not find gender productive to her ultimate vision. Dorothy was more interested in a person who did not have food, regardless if they were male or female, they were hungry.

I chose Maisie Ward, although English by birth and from an illustrious English family, she set herself the task of a Catholic street preacher. On her marriage to Frank Sheed, she founded with her husband, Sheed and Ward publishing house. The most influential Catholic publishing house in the world between 1920's - 60's.

Lastly, I wanted a person who had grown up with Catholic Action and had embraced the academic life, but again not feminism. Catholic feminism began in the ranks of Catholic female academics. Dohen was a trained sociologist and well aware of scientific study, had an excellent background in her literature, taught at a prestigious university in New York City. She had every opportunity to select a feminist stance. She would write influential books on holiness and even one on women for women and about women in the Church. She wrote for the Catholic Press and she was ever aware of single women in the Church. Dohen fit all the criteria for selection of my radical group.

I quickly had to formulate a period of time where I could test my understandings with fact. I chose the period of time from 1920, when women did get the right to vote, until 1960, just prior to Vatican II. Vatican II would become a boundary between the old more closed Catholic Church to a new more open Church. Vatican II had set its task to define Church in the modern world.

From the start, the definition of feminism, can be very diverse and tricky, but it had to be defined for this study. Feminism began as suffragism, that is, to give women the legal right to vote. Once this was obtained a new more encompassing definition of feminism took hold. Feminism was linked to “equality” now not in just legal matters, but also in the workplace, professions and academic institutions. A further development would be the Christian feminist who want “equality” with men in the authority of the Church. Institutions were to be affected by this new “equality” of women.

The Catholic Church teaches that man and women are equal before God, but that their roles are different, as their sex is different. Each sex has a role to fulfill. The Church has never taught that women are inferior, but has given women and man an equal footing in all areas but the authority of the Church. This is where Catholic women theologians take the Church to task. But this is not part of my study. My study is to look and see why Catholic women did not become feminist and yet excelled at radical social activism.

It is admitted in Karen Kennelly's *American Catholic Women*, that "the history of American Catholic women's involvement in reform and social activism has yet to be written". She notes that there are monographs and articles, but they are scattered, as I was to find out. Her book which is from 1989, is one of the very few that are on the subject of American Catholic Women. Most of my work was either with one of three universities; Fordham for Dohen in Special Collections. Dorothy Day has a wonderful depository at Marquette University, Special Collections, in Milwaukee. Maisie Ward's primary papers may be found along with all the papers of Sheed and Ward Publishing house in Special Collections of Notre Dame University.

There is very little scholarship on Catholic Laywomen in general, a monograph, a dictionary entry, but little that drew this type of information into an entire study. I used many bibliographies to help find material and many dissertations that had to be retrieved from institutions. I have tried to put together here, an overview of American feminism and the Catholic Church between 1920-1960, and to show that there were women who

had every opportunity to follow American feminism but did not. To my knowledge this is one of the first written studies to explore Radical Social Activism and Lay Catholic Women in the American Catholic Church. There have been in the last several years scholarship and books that have taken on the task of initializing a study of traditional women in the Church, not only the Catholic Church but the Jewish Tradition, evangelical women, and Islamic women who have also rejected feminism. New scholarship² will be noted in the conclusion of the last chapter in this paper.

These changes in the role of women and the demands for a greater self-awareness of woman as person set dynamic forces into motion. Some of the issues and solutions for women in the modern society collided with moral and ethical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Some Catholic women responded to the challenges of the changing society around them while still maintaining a spiritual faith in the Church. I have selected three such women who responded with a Radical Social Activism, who participated in the American Catholic Church but who did not participate in the general feminism of the times. These women—Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen—represented in their Radical Social Activism, a feminism of the spirit, as it were, while still remaining within the structure and Magisterium of the Church proper.

It is imperative that the social and historical status of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States be understood, thus the first chapter will look at the Church in its historical setting. It will try to see the Church in its history as a minority denomination and misunderstood Church. A Church that was to stand for the Old World but set in the

² See, Christel, Manning. *God Gave Us the Right*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999..

New World and thus this small Church was very suspicious and often suffered bigotry and oppression for its first hundred years. Next, in Chapter Two we must look at the Church in the new century and the forces that set the need for a Liturgical revival and that paved the way for the coming of Catholic Action. Both of these socio-religious frameworks would empower the laity of the Church in the secular world and influence radical action.

Chapter Three looks at the impact of industrialization on the family and women's call for an equality that was a direct outgrowth of natural law, philosophical thinking and the rise of the middleclass. The economic revolution of the time was to influence such social institutions as education, social structure, and family life. Feminism is an outgrowth of a concept of equality based in political thought as exemplified in the Declaration of Independence in the United States and in the French Revolution. This equality was quickly enjoined to gender and it evolved into a political and legal cause for the right for women to vote. Basically, however, Suffragism (equality before the law) and early feminism (equality for financial, historical and political equity) were middleclass women's movements.

As women moved into secular society, they made compromises concerning their family duties and responsibilities. Issues of divorce, birth control, and abortion became popular remedies that helped limit family duties and responsibilities. However, the Catholic Church has always viewed divorce, family planning, and abortion, as theological challenges to Catholic teaching and has consistently refuted the expediency of these solutions on moral grounds. For this reason many feminists left the Church. Other

women, however, did not abandon the idea of marriage, or family, or their roles as caretakers; in fact, they sought to elevate those roles and expand them to include social justice and give respect and voice to the less literate and less fortunate among them.

In Chapter Four, I look at Day, Dohen and Ward in more depth. These women accepted the Church's teaching but still participated in the community at large to bring about a voice for women. They were not feminists, and in fact rejected feminism. Day, Dohen and Ward, embraced the Church's teaching as Catholic women and became Radical Social Activists.

Lastly, in Chapter Five the background of the Church's teachings about the place of women in the Church prior to Vatican II will show why Day, Dohen, and Ward were not feminists. This chapter further shows the roots of Catholic Feminism that developed after Vatican II, found in the writing of radical Catholic feminist theologians like Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether in the late Sixties. (Today, many of their disciples continue this work, women theologians who are actively participating in scholarship and who challenge the church's stand in every theological teaching where women are implicated.)

The Church has never prohibited women's rise in the secular world, but, has reminded women that their task is in the "care" of love, and in the spiritual implications of their role in the family. According to Church teaching, woman, and man are equal in the sight of God, but charged with different roles. If this seems to limit women as some feminists have claimed, making them less equal, it did not stop Day, Dohen and Ward in participating and changing the secular world around them while still remaining loyal to

the teachings of the Catholic Church

Chapter One

1900, the Secular World and the American Catholic Church:

Politics and Religion

The Catholic Church in America is peculiarly many-sided, a complexity of the most ancient and modern elements, a mixture of reactionary and progressive forces.

Walter Rauschenbush, 1912³

It must not be supposed that the Church so concentrates her energies on caring for souls as to overlook things which pertain to mortal and earthly life.

Leo XIII, 1891 (*Rerum Novarum*)

³ Walter Raushenbush, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York, 1912), 26.

The American Catholic Church entered the new century in a complex form. It had grown from a minority religion at the inception of the Republic to one of the largest denominations in the United States. The growth of the Church was a byproduct of waves of immigrants who had come to America starting in the 1830s and culminating with the immigration laws of the early 1920s.⁴ However, the Vatican still treated the American Catholic Church as a missionary church. The Church of Rome had always been somewhat skeptical of the American Church because Rome had had a very negative experience in dealing with the French government after the French Revolution. Recall that the French government had obliterated the French Church and indeed had quite figuratively set the Enlightenment Goddess of Reason in its place. The Catholic Church in France was eventually reinstated, but the new idea of the separation of Church and State was to complicate matters between the Vatican and the French state.

The United States had borrowed a great deal from French Enlightenment thinking in its own revolution of 1776. Indeed, it found it necessary to include the separation of Church and State in the first Amendment of the Constitution. To many enlightened minds, religion had become the root of intricate political problems. Firsthand experience cautioned the framers of the Constitution. They too had dealt with a King who was also the head of a Church in which politics and government were entangled. The writers of liberty demanded that the governed could practice any religion they liked. Religion and Government were not to be linked as Thomas Jefferson made clear in 1802.

⁴ Immigration between 1880-1920 was over 23 million, mostly from southern and eastern Europe. See Andrea Tone, *Controlling Reproduction: An American History* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1997), 159.

Believing... that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their Legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.⁵

For the Vatican, this was a difficult pattern to deal with. We must recall that Emperor Constantine had helped in the organization of the new religion, and had made it a church-state unity. The Roman Catholic Church had always had a church-state relationship with her members, and was skeptical of the new country that was in the same frame of mind as the French. Still, the new American Church struggled and grew in an oppressive anti-Catholic atmosphere. America was a Protestant country, in spite of an official policy of freedom of religion, and discrimination and outright bigotry were common practice where the Catholic Church was concerned in the early Republic. The fear of a Catholic having ties to a foreign prince (the pope), made all Catholics suspicious to the majority of Protestant Americans. (This prejudice was not easily dispelled—even the election of John F. Kennedy in the 1960's was fraught with anti-Catholic sentiment and questions about a president loyal to Rome.)

⁵ Thomas Jefferson to Danbury Baptists, 1802. ME 16:281. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (ME) Memorial Edition (Lipscomb and Bergh, editors) 20 Vols. Washington, D.C., 1903-04.

The American Church was constantly aware of this struggle and many of its bishops strove to make the American public aware that the Roman Catholic Church was most definitely an American Church. These efforts, which ranged from the democratization of church government to flag waving for American policy, formed the root of what is now called Americanism—the bending over backwards to make the American public see that the American church was American. But the Vatican called a halt to Americanism in an open letter to the American Bishops in 1899, in *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*.⁶ In it, the pope voiced concern that the Church in the United States was developing into another or alternate Church: “For it would give rise to the suspicion that there are among you some who conceive and would have the Church in America to be different from what it is in the rest of the world.”⁷

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, a new world was quickly taking shape, at least in Western society, due to the powerful forces of both industrialization and urbanization. By themselves, these two forces would not have made an impact without the new focus on scientific thought. The Nineteenth Century had been bridge between the old order and the coming new order, but when the three dynamic forces of industrialization, urbanization, and science came together, a raw energy like waves battered the social institutions.

The response to the new and coming modern world was a complex set of dramas. Very few of the threads of social upheaval were separate from the others; in short, they formed an intertwined and complex plasma that moved together. Industrialization in the United States had an impact on the growing middleclass, as the parents of daughters

⁶ Pope Leo XIII, January 22, 1899, *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

became willing and able to educate them. These educated women would lead the suffrage movement and pry the door open for women in the modern world, at least in the United States.

More profound changes came from the scientific reasoning that undermined the faith base of organized religion. Tradition and sacred teachings were questioned; indeed, it was Darwin (1809-1882) who challenged the very basis of the Bible in his evolutionary theories. Malthus's (1766-1834) writings on the growth of population, combined with evolutionary theory, helped found eugenics,⁸ a powerful force in the early turn of the century that linked behavior with genes, not faith. Faith was being replaced with "Fact." Industrialization's economics and the fast growth of wealth and the inequalities that this brings to a society had ramifications in the theories of Marx and the development of a socialist government. Labor wanted to organize to protect itself from the owners of industrial complexes. Amidst all of this, modernism was developing a new scientific way of seeing and testing the world, including our very being. It challenged contemporary religious, historical, and even governmental thought. Writers and artists felt the new energy and with fresh creativity translated it into a new language and visual culture in powerful visual and verbal statements. Amidst all of this, the Catholic Church had taken on the task of addressing one of the primary social problems—the inequality between labor and capital. Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* (On The Conditions of Workers, 1891).⁹

⁸ Eugenics analyzed of the mechanism of inheritance and development of human traits with a view toward improving the "quality" of the race. From Charles Winick, *Dictionary of Anthropology* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1956), 194.

⁹ Pope Leo XII, 1891, *Rerum Novarum*.

The following duties . . . concern rich men and employers: Workers are not to be treated as slaves; justice demands that the dignity of human personality be respected in them, . . . gainful occupations are not a mark of shame to man, but rather of respect, as they provide him with an honorable means of supporting life.

...

It is shameful and inhuman, however, to use men as things for gain and to put no more value on them than what they are worth in muscle and energy.¹⁰

Eventually, however, complex social issues encroached on sacred studies, and the lack of dialogue and scientific skepticism in general caused the next Pope, Pius X, to close the door on modernism and its culture of experimentation. In July of 1907, he issued *Lamentabili Sane* (Syllabus Condemning the Errors of the Modernist).¹¹ Just two months later he published the Encyclical, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*.¹²

. . . suppressing the evil at the outset and preventing its spreading for the ruin of souls or, worse still, gaining strength and growth." [31] We decree, therefore, that in every diocese a council of this kind, which We are pleased to name the "Council of Vigilance," be instituted without delay. The priests called to form part in it shall be chosen somewhat after the manner above prescribed for the censors, and they shall meet every two months on an appointed day in the presence of the Bishop. They shall be bound to secrecy as to their deliberations and decisions, and in their functions shall be included the following: they shall watch most carefully for every trace and sign of modernism both in publications and in teaching, and to

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Pope Pius X, July 3, 1907, *Lamentabili Sane* (Syllabus Condemning the Errors of the Modernist).

¹² Pope Pius X, September 8, 1907, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*.

preserve the clergy and the young from it they shall take all prudent, prompt, and efficacious measures. ¹³

The nail in the coffin of all experimentation in Modernism was the Oath Against Modernism, in 1910. All priests and seminarians had to take this oath before ordination.

I declare that I am completely opposed to the error of the modernists who hold that there is nothing divine in sacred tradition; or what is far worse, say that there is, but in a pantheistic sense, with the result that there would remain nothing but this plain simple fact—one to be put on a par with the ordinary facts of history—the fact, namely, that a group of men by their own labor, skill, and talent have continued through subsequent ages a school begun by Christ and his apostles. I firmly hold, then, and shall hold to my dying breath the belief of the Fathers in the charism of truth, which certainly is, was, and always will be in the succession of the episcopacy from the apostles. The purpose of this is, then, not that dogma may be tailored according to what seems better and more suited to the culture of each age; rather, that the absolute and immutable truth preached by the apostles from the beginning may never be believed to be different, may never be understood in any other way. ¹⁴

Loyalty to the Church and her teachings was safe, at least from those involved with the Church, its sacraments, and all of its teachers. However, this closing of the Catholic world to the “New” had its costs. Professor Scott Appleby ends his excellent

¹³ Pius X, September 8, 1907, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis (On the Doctrine of the Modernists)*.

¹⁴ Pius X, September 1, 1910, *The Oath Against Modernism*.

book on this era, *Church and Age Unite! The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism*, with this summation:

The sterility of thought and the lack of creativity that characterized American Catholic theology and apologetics for decades after the initial condemnation of Modernism and the subsequent imposition of Anti-modernist oaths were neither accidental, nor, as some have suggested, due to an inherent incompetence of American Catholics in matters intellectual. Instead, they were the unfortunate result of a studied decision taken by Rome . . .¹⁵

There were other ways that the Catholic Church was going to have to deal with new and modern ideas, as the institutional doors were locked to intellectual development; social problems came in the windows.

Social Problems and the Rise of Catholic Action

America was already under change when it entered the new century:

The truce concluded at Appomattox Court House in April of 1865 marked more than the military and political victory of the North; it also signified triumph of a new business way of life for Americans. In the half-century separating the Civil War and World War I, the United States moved rapidly from its old largely agrarian and commercial condition toward a new status as an industrial power. By

¹⁵ R. Scott Appleby, "*Church and Age Unite!*" *The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 243.

1914, the nation's economy, its social values, and its political goals differed strikingly from those familiar to Americans in 1860.¹⁶

The turn of the century was marked with unrestrained competition and uninhibited *laissez-faire*. Economics had become a new arbiter as a philosophy, as witnessed in the writings of Karl Marx, but more than that it was the outcome of an industrial engine that was responsible for the shift from an agrarian society to a dominant urban way of life. It was industrialization that drove the need for labor in the plants, mills, mines, and factories of America. It was industrialization that welcomed the millions of immigrants. It was industrialization that pointed up the inequality of labor and capital. It was industrialization that had caused Leo XIII to write *Rerum Novarum*, the encyclical that demanded a living wage for workers and an equitable distribution of the wealth that the workers helped produce.

Leo was not the first pope to see the old world passing away, as there had been other pontiffs who saw the problems of a coming modern world. However, there were internal problems for the papacy such as the unification of the Italian States that made demands on the temporal lands of the Vatican and intense conflicts with the French regimes and assorted monarchs that had required much negotiation and political tact. Leo's papacy stood at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. He realized that industrialization and the rise of science alongside modernism made new demands on the Church.¹⁷ Christian ideals had become bankrupt in

¹⁶ John A. Denovo, ed. *The Gilded Age and After* (New York: Scribner's), 3.

¹⁷ "A term originally used in the Counter-Reformation, modernism came to mean a vague collection of teachings seen as bringing modern liberal innovation into the traditional understanding of the Bible and Christian theology as well as of the hierarchical order of church and society." Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 200.

worth or were used in name only. He understood that the Catholic Church had to live in a more secular political age of scientific fact that would constantly challenge Faith. A new strategy was needed to deal with a secular world.

Leo was not the first to see the rise of a new modern culture. Pope Pius IX in 1864 had issued *The Syllabus of Errors*. This encyclical drew attention to Pantheism, Naturalism, and Absolute Rationalism.¹⁸ According to the encyclical, the world was a dualistic system.

The faith teaches us and human reason demonstrates that a double order of things exists, and that we must therefore distinguish between the two earthly powers, the one of natural origin which provides for secular affairs and the tranquility of human society, the other of supernatural origin, which presides over the City of God, that is to say the Church of Christ, which has been divinely instituted for the sake of souls and of eternal salvation :... The duties of this twofold power are most wisely ordered in such a way that to God is given what is God's (Matt. 22:21), and because of God to Caesar what is Caesar's, who is great because he is smaller than heaven. Certainly the Church has never disobeyed this divine command, the Church which always and everywhere instructs the faithful to show the respect which they should inviolably have for the supreme authority and its secular rights . . .¹⁹

¹⁸ Pope Pius IX, 1864, *The Syllabus of Errors*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

The pre-Leonine Church realized that there was a distinct change in the way the world was being perceived by society and that old forms, alliances, and ideals were no longer useful as tools of guidance and dialogue, but represented a

negative Platonic legacy of a highly clericalized and dualistic understanding of the church. In this legacy, the laity was identified with “the world” and was often seen as an object of suspicion. Throughout the nineteenth century, the popes regularly used the adjective *lay* to describe the enemies of the church.²⁰

However, in the twentieth century, the Church was being slowly shut out of society by the loss of papal lands and the loss of prestige in the intellectual realm. The popes realized that if the Church was to have an impact on the world, then it would have to turn to “All” of the Church, clerical and lay.²¹ “As the popes and the bishops lost power in society they were forced to turn to the laity as allies in order to maintain at least indirect ecclesiastical influence within society.”²² This turn toward the laity was to mark the entry of Radical Social Action.

Pius X’s 1905 encyclical called *Il Fermo Prosposto*, though it was focused on the laity in Italy, was a dynamic call to the laity in the church as the principal means to solve “social questions.”

Those chosen bands of [lay] Catholics who aim to unite all their forces in combating anti-Christian civilization by every just and lawful means . . . seek to restore Jesus Christ to the family, the school, and the society by reestablishing the

²⁰ Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: The Popes Confront the Industrial Age* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 308.

²¹ See Yves M. J. Congar’s *Lay People in the Church: A Study for the Theology of the Laity* (Newman Press).

²² *Ibid.*, 308.

principal that human authority represents the authority of God. They take to heart the interests of the people, especially those working and agricultural classes, not only by inculcating in the hearts of everybody a true religious spirit . . . all these works, sustained and promoted chiefly by lay Catholics and whose form varies according to the needs of each country, constitute what is generally known by a distinctive and surely a very noble name: “Catholic Action,” or the “Action of Catholics.”²³

In his first encyclical, *E Supremi* (1903), Pius X’s motto was “restoring all things to Christ” (Eph 1:10). In this encyclical, he proclaimed the basic outline of Catholic Action.

For it is not priests alone, but all the faithful without exception, who must concern themselves with the interests of God and souls—not, of course, according to their own views, but always under the direction and orders of their bishops . . . Our predecessors have long since approved and blessed Catholics who have banded together in societies of various kinds, but always religious in their aim.²⁴

Both Leo XIII and Pius X endorsed Thomist theology and philosophy²⁵ as a tool in dealing with the secular world. Aquinas’s concepts, especially Epistemological Realism, Community and Authority, Ethics and Natural Law, and Public Religion,²⁷ provided support for Catholic Action by affirming that natural law and God’s law were

²³ Anthony Rhodes, *The Power of Rome in the Twentieth Century: The Vatican in the Age of Liberal Democracies, 1870-1922* (Franklin Watts, 1983), 223.

²⁴ Pope Pius X, 1903, *E Supremi*.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas’s philosophy attempted to fuse or update Christianity with the scientific principles of Aristotle’s philosophy.

²⁷ Holland, 120-122.

not in opposition. This lent further support to those who may have needed the permission to work for social justice and still maintain concern for their souls. In short, though the Leonine Papal strategy to restore Thomism to Catholic thinking, this was intended to bring about the restoration of a Christian social order, it may have given the impetus to those looking to circumvent it instead.

The papacy's moral authority would now be exercised indirectly in a new modern bourgeois paradigm, through the controlled mobilization of lay Catholics on major strategic fronts, organized through the parallel structures of modern institutions and movements, and using the new industrial technologies of mass communications and mass transportation.²⁸

Thus the Vatican legitimized Catholic Action as a tool to enter the new bourgeois society.

The National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) was founded immediately after WWI to coordinate the American Church's response to Catholic Social teaching.²⁹ Founded in 1923, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference grew out of the rural life bureau of NCWC. However, there were two movements that started in Europe that became important to the American Church: Young Christian Workers Movement and the Liturgy Reform movement.

“Through the action of men and women in all levels of society, committed to social justice and loving service, the world would ultimately be reformed.”³⁰ This was the motivation behind The Young Christian Workers Movement, known in Europe as

²⁸ William McSweeney, *Roman Catholicism: The Search for Relevance* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), 68.

²⁹ Recall that the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* called for social reforms that held the dignity of the worker, and indeed the person, in a bourgeois society and economy.

³⁰ Mary Irene Zotti, *A Time of Awakening: The Young Christian Worker Story in the United States, 1938 to 1970* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1991), 2.

Jeunesse Ouvriere Chretienne or simply as “Jocism,” founded by Canon Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967) of Belgium. In 1913, Cardijn reached out to young workers between the ages of 14 and 25. They met in small groups to conduct a method that became known as the social inquiry: Observe, Judge, Act.³¹ This was a method that authorized Catholic activists to gather facts about their community, make judgments on their own about what they observed, and then develop a plan of action. The movement evolved into an apostolic organization and in 1925 The Young Christian Workers held their first national congress. Starting in the United States in 1938, and revived in earnest after WW II, it became a model for many of the Catholic Action organizations. It also presented itself as an alternative to the socialism and communism of many intellectuals in the United States in the 1920s and ‘30s. But more than its organization, it was the method of Observe, Judge, Act that was used in many of the other Catholic Action organizations. These young people were to penetrate the society and make it holy.

The Social problem will not be solved by a simple redistribution of goods. What is necessary, profoundly necessary, is to socialize souls, so that hearts and minds may unite in the Mystical Body of Christ, in that vast association in which one is able to forget oneself, to go beyond one’s personal interest in order to seek the general good, the common good . . .”³²

Note the word “Mystical Body. ” This is in reference to the Mystical Body of Christ as the motivation for an increased obligation of all members of the Church to pursue a unified body of Christian democratic ideals.³³ This concept provided purpose to all

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³² Paul McGuire, “Apostolate of the Workers,” *Columbia*, January 1938, 24.

³³ The Mystical Body of Christ is a reference to Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians. The most complete teaching on the Mystical Body occurs in the June 29, 1943, encyclical by Pius XII titled *Mystici Corporis Christi*.

members of the Church, including the laity. No longer were the laity to think of themselves as on the receiving end of the sacraments only. They too belonged to the Mystical Body and were obligated to partake in their own way.

What united all was the vision of a new social order which was distinctly Christian . . . it was the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ that grounded the agenda and goals of each. Further, these movements promoted the liturgy as the source, the fountain for true Christian social action.³⁴

This key concept was fostered by the Liturgical movement founded in Europe by Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-1875) at the Benedictine Monastery at Solesmes.³⁵ The underlying motive of the liturgy as the meeting ground of people and Christ, as sacrifice and the community, was to draw people into the concept of the Mystical Body. No longer would the Church simply go through the motions. The Church attempted to explain the meaning of the liturgy to the people to enable them to feel a part of the Mystical Body. Dom Prosper traced the origins and history of liturgical texts, revived Gregorian chant, and restored the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes. By 1900, the movement's center had shifted to the abbeys of Maredsous and Mont César in Belgium, where Dom Lambert Beauduin became the spokesman.³⁶

A young Virgil Michel (1890-1938), a student at St Anselm's College in Rome, studied with Dom Beauduin there. Beauduin's important book *Liturgy, the Life of the Church* had a great impact on the young priest as well as many other priests.

Other influential books on this subject are Romano Guardini's (1885-1968) *Vom Geist der Liturgie 1918 (The Spirit of the Liturgy)* and Robert Hugh Benson's *Christ in the Church, 1911-1956*.

³⁴ Keith F. Pecklers, *The Unread Vision: The Liturgical Movement in the United States of America, 1926-1955* (Liturgical Press, 1998), 97.

³⁵ *Ibid.* For background, may I suggest reading chapter 3.

³⁶ Thomas J. Shelly, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Catholic History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 807.

Beauduin only wrote one book, *Liturgy, the Life of the Church*, but his presence at liturgical weeks and his university teaching influenced many, including young priests from the United States and Germany who would later bring the movement to this country (US).³⁷

It was another Benedictine, Dom Odo Casel, who began the publication of the *Ecclesia Orans* series (books on the liturgy) that included Romano Guardini's (1885-1968) *Vom Geist der Liturgie 1918* (*The Spirit of the Liturgy* in English). This same book was to be published in English in 1935 by Sheed and Ward, a publishing house founded by, Maisie Ward, whom we will read about in Chapter Four. It was this book that made the liturgical movement international in scope.³⁸

When Virgil Michel returned to Collegeville, Minnesota, from his studies in Europe, one of his first acts was to translate and publish Dom Beauduin's book on the liturgy into English. His enthusiasm for the Liturgical Movement was evident in his development of the "Popular Liturgical Library," consisting of pamphlets on different aspects of the liturgical topics. To make the voice of the Liturgical Movement even more prominent in the American Church, he founded *Orate Fratres*.³⁹ The last step to build interest in the movement was to found a press to publish and promote writers on the Liturgical Movement. This was called the Liturgical Press and was founded in Collegeville, Minnesota, in 1926.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 807.

³⁸ It was a young German seminarian that first read Guardini. This seminarian is currently Pope Benedict XVI. Guardini was an Italian ordained and taught in Germany. Currently all his writings are being reprinted.

³⁹ Godfrey Diekmann became editor of *Orate Fratres* (*Pray, Brothers*) in 1938 due to the early death of Michel. In 1951, the magazine name was changed to *Worship*, the name it is still published under today. The first issue had 800 subscribers; by 1927, there were 1,680 subscribers. Mark J. Twomey, *Seventy-Five Years of Grace: The Liturgical Press, 1926-2001* (Collegeville, MN:Liturgical Press, 2001), 11.

Michel believed that the solution to the social problems of his day was the formation of an American culture that was truly Catholic—a culture which would embody the principles of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ . . . A culture infused with the true Christian spirit could transform human behavior into Christ-like behavior, embracing gospel values and casting aside conflicting values of materialism, selfishness, and individualism, all of which fractured the unity of the body of Christ.⁴⁰

Virgil Michel felt a return to the liturgy was the key to attaining these goals. In his words: “He who lives the liturgy will in due time feel the mystical body idea developing in his mind and growing upon him, will come to realize that he is drinking at the very fountain of the true Christian spirit which is destined to reconstruct the Social order.”⁴¹

When Catholics were united through the Mass, regardless of what part they played in the community, the end result was to be the sanctification of the world. It was a concept that was more egalitarian than hierarchical. It was about sharing in the redemption of the world in a circular pattern, with each person playing his or her own important part. Participation in the liturgy meant social responsibility, which had even more significance for Michel in light of the integrated view of Christian life. Michel argued for the equality of women and men, including shared apostolic partnership. He said, “Women are born to be in their own way apostles, not only examples, of Christian ideals and life.”⁴²

He contended that it was the pioneers of early Christianity and not the pioneers of the women’s movement in this country, who first advocated the feminist agenda.

⁴⁰ Pecklers, 129.

⁴¹ Virgil Michel, “With Our Readers,” *Oratre Fratres* 12 (1938): 318.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 131.

Early Christianity offered a radical witness in freeing women from slavery and from subjugation of men, which had been normative in pagan Greece and Rome. Further, women assisted Jesus in his earthly ministry, helped the other apostles in spreading the gospel, and had an influence in public life. Deaconesses assisted in administering baptisms, instructing Christians in times of persecution and in preparing for the sacraments, and in works of mercy.⁴³

The Liturgical Movement became the heart of the Catholic renewal in the United States that responded to the Vatican's call to integrate the Church into the modern world. The hierarchical model of authority, although still in existence at this time, was giving way to a more circular pattern of shared authority. This would become a true reality with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. It became the source for the Christian social consciousness. Catholic Action now had a spiritual source for its integration into modern society.

The movement was an organic part of twentieth-century American ecclesial renewal, closely related to the biblical, patristic, and neo-Thomistic movements, which offered theological support for the work of the liturgical pioneers. Together these movements campaigned against individualism and materialism in the United States, offering a new vision of Church and human society.⁴⁴

There formed a set of circumstances that gave the laity an opportunity to develop new ideas. The first and most important was the Vatican's understanding of a new world. The popes came to the realization that the Catholic Church was no longer viewed as the authority and no longer wielded moral significance in the age of scientific thinking.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 281.

Indeed, the Church as the font of Faith had to operate in a “Fact-filled” contemporary understanding of political, social, and economic imperatives. The rise of bourgeois society had clearly undermined the political system that had been a Church-State relationship until the American Revolution. The rise of natural law and individual rights were adjunct to a new economic world order. Industrialization based on a new understanding of scientific principles revolutionized production and affected society to its core. The shift from an agrarian society to an urban world redistributed wealth and population; ultimately it changed the very structure of men and women’s lives in Western society.

It was a shift from Faith to Fact that, in a series of transitional phases, made the Church realize, if it was to participate in the new order in society, it must change the way it delivered its message. Beginning with Leo XIII, the Church spoke loudly to the social, political, and economic world with *Rerum Novarum*. The Church further realized that members of the clergy were not the primary players in the new society. It was not the sanctified clergy of the convent and monastery, but the ordinary lay people who were to be the teachers and movers in the coming world through Catholic Action. The Liturgical Movement gave the moral energy to laypersons to organize and make a difference in the secular world in which they lived.

Chapter Two

Catholic Action and the Roots of Radicalism

The American Catholic laity entered a new era in the late 1920's, an age in which the responsibilities of the people in the pews were taken increasingly seriously, or at least discussed with growing frequency under the rubric of the lay apostolate and Catholic Action.⁴⁵

J. Dolan

“Rome will have to do more
than to play a waiting game;
She will have to use
Some of the dynamite
Inherent in her message.
To blow the dynamite
Of a message
Is the only way
To make the message dynamic.”⁴⁶

Peter Maurin

⁴⁵ Jay Dolan *et al.*, *Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 222.

⁴⁶ Peter Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution* (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1948), 3.

There had been two Lay Catholic Congresses, first in Baltimore in 1889 and later in Chicago in 1893. Bishop John Ireland of St. Paul had wisely observed that the laity was too dependent on their priests. He observed further, “laymen in this age have a special vocation.”⁴⁷ Priests spearheaded many of the lay movements. In addition to Virgil Michel who led the Liturgical Movement as mentioned in Chapter One, Father Michael J. McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus for lay men in 1882, and Father Thomas Augustine Judge (1868-1933) founded the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate for lay missionary work in 1909.

In the 1920s, parish life for the majority of American Catholics reflected the impact of immigrant culture on the American Church.⁴⁸ Many of the rural as well as urban parishes were organized with ethnic consideration. Most Catholics lived around their parish life, particularly in immigrant parishes due to the language barrier. There were organizations such as devotional societies, sodalities, and confraternities organized within the parish.⁴⁹ All Catholic parishes had to have at least a grammar school. This was the chief tool that the American Bishops had mandated to help enculturation of the “new” immigrants; these schools also helped foster the Catholic Faith in the United States.

The Liturgical revival, as we have seen in chapter one, created a theological frame for the formation of Catholic Action to take place. It was the Pius X motto, “drawing all things to Christ,” that was given form by the very sacrifice of the Mass. The ordinary life

⁴⁷ Alden V. Brown, *The Grail Movement and American Catholicism, 1940-1975* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 19.

⁴⁸ James S. Olson, *Catholic Immigrants in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987).

⁴⁹ Jay Dolan, R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, and Debra Campbell, *Transforming Parish Ministry: Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity and Women Religious* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 210.

of the layperson was to be the means by which to bring Christianity into the modern world.

It was in this democratic thinking with which journalist Dorothy Day, writer and publisher Maisie Ward, and teacher and sociologist Dorothy Dohen were to influence the secular world. Their influence stemmed not from convents, or from any role as mothers, although both Day and Ward were mothers, but as participants within the society in which they lived. They did not join new religious organizations; they were part of the world. They were not there to demand the world become Catholic, but to show what it meant to be a Catholic in the world. This is the key to their radical stance, as we shall see.

Other Catholic women were prominent in Catholic welfare and social aid; however, they were not militant in introducing new pathways to the Church's development of the laity and of women's presence in the Church proper. One such woman was Genevieve Brady (1884-1938), the former president of the Social Service Relief Board of New York City. After the death of her husband, she established herself in charitable work. Brady worked in tandem with Catholic Charities and the National Council of Catholic Women.⁵⁰ Still others were even less traditional than Brady; however, their impact on Catholic Action or their philanthropy and good works were in the ordinary sense, ordinary. It was the more radical social activism that changed the Catholic Church and the roles women could play within it.

To fully comprehend this achievement we must see where Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen drew their strength and inspiration. Catholic Action was the Church's way of influencing an increasingly secular world. It took many different forms.

⁵⁰ James J. Kenneally, *The History of American Catholic Women* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 167.

Catholic Action was not to be religious, in the sense that it was not a monastic or controlled organization of the hierarchy. It was intended for the layperson living in the world, whose practice of Catholic Faith would influence secular society. Although this was to be a lay group, the Church hierarchy was to oversee all organization. Belonging to this group made the lay person more concentrated in his or her efforts to influence modern society.⁵¹

As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the first Catholic Action groups started to appear in Europe in the 1910s and 1920s, including the Young Christian Worker movement, founded by Canon Joseph Cardijn in Belgium in 1913.

In 1913 [Cardijn] reached out to young workers between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five and convinced them that they had a special importance—they were human beings created by God with a divine mission to serve others. Meeting in small groups and using the method which became known as the social inquiry, Observe, Judge, Act, his young workers developed self respect, a social conscience, and the courage to plan and carry out action for change.⁵²

There were many organizations based on this one, including the Young Christian Farmers, Young Christian Students, Young Christian University Students, and others. They all used the same “Observe, Judge, and Act” thinking. The hope was that they would develop a social consciousness and apply it to the secular world.

⁵¹ A layperson is one who is not ordained or not living a vowed life of celibacy, poverty, and obedience. The lives of priests and religious were strictly controlled for the betterment of the person involved. A lay person is a person living in the world and not a member of the clergy, religious order or congregation.

⁵² Mary Irene Zotti, *A Time of Awakening: The Young Christian Worker Story in the United States, 1938-1970* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1991), 2.

The Grail Movement also came from Europe and impacted women in the American Catholic Church. The Grail was a very specialized organization and not meant for all American Catholic women. The Grail was founded by a priest, as were many of the initial organizations of Catholic Action.

Jacques van Ginneken (1870-1945) envisioned women as a vital force in the coming work of the Church. He did not want a religious order but a group of women he called “Women of Nazareth.” Like Mary, they were to live in the secular society and be the yeast for the renewal and spiritual growth of the Church. They were a unique group in that many of the early followers of the Grail in Holland were also some of the first women to receive their doctorate at a Dutch university. They were to use their autonomy to define their own work and to provide a place for women other than the convent. They came to the United States in the 1940s under the guidance of Lydwine van Kersbrger (1904-1948) and Joan Overboss (1910-1969).⁵³ The Liturgical movement was important for them because it was the model for their prayer life. It was on this topic that Dorothy Day would visit and experience the ideals of the Grail firsthand. For both clergy and lay leaders in the American Catholic Church, the Grail became the crossroads where the new Liturgy and ideas on social consciousness were discussed and appraised.

Radical Catholicism

Catholic Action founded many organizations centered around the Church. However, it was not until after WW I that the hierarchy founded a national organization

⁵³ Janet Kalven, *Women Breaking Boundaries: A Grail Journey, 1940-1995* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

for the American hierarchy, called the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC).

Its charge as written in its Certificate of Incorporation was as follows:

To unify, coordinate, encourage, promote and carry on all Catholic activities in the United States; to organize and conduct social welfare work . . . ; to aid in education; to care for immigrants, and generally to enter into and promote education, publication and direct the objects of its being.⁵⁴

Part of this organization was the Department of Lay Activities, which was broken into the National Council of Catholic Men (NCCM) and the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW). These organizations started at the parish level and ascended to the national organization.

They established a service bureau that found placements for social workers, published information on social work and legislative matters relating to Catholic interest, and maintained contact with government agencies to arrange for Catholic representation when necessary. The NCCW also ran the National Catholic School of Social Service for Women, in Washington, D.C. and for a time conducted a series of settlement houses around the country.⁵⁵

Note that this was a structure put in place by the American hierarchy to facilitate the Vatican's interest in social action. The laity was still a marginal group in the structure.

The Liturgical movement gave a sound theological framework to many of the Catholic Action organizations. The Grail, for instance, used the structure of the Liturgical hours for its prayer life and the Mass as its central point of the day. Prayer and the Body of Christ was the mass itself; this made one more conscious of the other members of the

⁵⁴ *Encyclopedia of American Catholic History*, 1005.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1006.

Body of Christ. Thus social consciousness (the welfare of others) and the corporal works of mercy (care of others in the community) were primary.

There are examples of those who took Catholic Action seriously and founded new organizations of lay people to work on Christian ideals. The Cana Movement, for example, grew out of a series of retreats given to married couples by Father John P. Delaney. Father Edward Dowling used Delaney's ideas and notes during a series of retreat talks called "Cana Conference" talks. These talks dealt with the sanctity of marriage and marriage for the Catholic in the modern world. They were set in contemporary language with contemporary examples. In time these became so popular that there was a series of retreats/talks that became the "Pre Cana" Organization, which dealt with Catholic couples who were thinking about marriage. One organization would necessitate the founding of another.⁵⁶

NCCW and NCCM saw the founding of the Catholic Life Movement (CLM) in 1943. When discussing birth control, divorce, and other family problems they stressed Catholic values and the association of Catholic families. Patrick Crowley and his wife Patty headed the movement. The organization went international with the Vatican's blessing and became a world movement known as the ICCFM.⁵⁷

These various Catholic organizations were not radical; they were organizations that bridged the gap between the lay world and the Church's organized world. They were not meant to be radical, but to maintain the teaching of the Church to the ordinary layperson. They were also heavily controlled by the hierarchy and usually had strong ties

⁵⁶ Leo R. Ward, *Catholic Life, USA* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1959). I recommend this book for this material.

⁵⁷ The Crowley's were to sit on the Papal Birth Control Commission, 1964-1967.

to the clergy, either in the organization or in written limitations of the organization's area of interest.

To understand radical social activism and the role it played in the Catholic Action movement in the United States, we must first define "radical social activism." The name, Radical Social Action, assumes an even deeper commitment to Catholic Action. It was a composite of Church direction and interest in the modern world, as found in encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum*. Radical social activism meant actual engagement with industrialization and the attempt to right the inequalities it produced and the social tensions it was responsible for. The theological understanding of the new Liturgy promoted the Mystical Body of Christ, challenging "comfortable Catholics" to respond with positive action. The Faith was to impel some action on the part of the layperson. "Radical" meant those involved went right to the core of the problem and gave their all to solve it. It was the extreme call to Action. It accepted poverty and the loss of permanence; it challenged society in its pure attitude of devotion to its call. It was meant to be courageous rather than "comfortable." The Sacrifice of the Mass was a symbolic emblem of their sacrificial life for the good of the Mystical Body. Christ's command to love one another was an imperative to make love equal to a social consciousness. A social consciousness was to produce action to alleviate the suffering in modern society.

Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen did not come to Radical Social Activism by default. On the contrary, they came by a hard-won path. For the three women selected it was a difficult and conscious way (although different for all three) that, for the reasons I hope to show, stayed in the confines of the American Catholic

Church. Yet even as laywomen, they were challenged when it came to authority and genuine understanding of their contributions.

Radical Catholicism has its roots in the economic upheaval brought by industrialization. Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* would make Catholics look to the Church for the relief of suffering and the reinstatement of human and divine principles that some intellectuals thought were in serious danger of disappearing from Western civilization. Communism, socialism, and fascism were all trying to solve economic disparities in various ways. However, none of these took into account the Christian principle of the individual.

This caused a group of intellectuals to put forth an agenda they called Distributism. This was neither capitalism nor socialism; it was a third way to economic health. Distributism was a philosophical and economic model based on the writings of Hillarie Belloc (1870-1953) and G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936). Both of these men were trying to offer a more human and certainly Catholic way for the modern world to consider a more equitable distribution of the wealth that industrialization had produced. The turn of the century was a time of social upheaval stemming from this economic reality. Marxism, which had been just a theory, became a reality with the Russian Revolution of 1917. However, there had been unrest in the social ranks in Europe since the French Revolution (1789).⁵⁸

It is difficult for many to see Chesterton and Belloc as social and economic commentators. Chesterton wrote 80 books in his life. The topics included mystery books, literary criticism, humor, and fiction. Belloc is more known today for his children's verse

⁵⁸ Belloc wrote several books on the French Revolution, such as *Danton* (1899) and *The French Revolution* (1911). It should be noted that Belloc was born in France and educated in England.

than his ground-breaking economics found in *The Servile State* (1912). Chesterton converted to Catholicism in 1922 because of his admiration for how *Rerum Novarum* called attention to the plight of labor. He set out his ideas in “Uses of Diversity” (1921).

Belloc and Chesterton often worked together and their writing was exhibited to the public in Belloc’s journal, *Eye-Witness*. Much of what Chesterton and Belloc wrote was in the line of apologetics for their Catholic Faith. Belloc and Chesterton were in a long line of distinguished “converts” to the Catholic Church. These converts included John Henry Newman (1801-1890), Coventry Patmore (1817-1896), Eric Gill (1882-1940), Graham Greene (1904-1991), Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966), and Edith Sitwell (1887-1964).

Belloc and Chesterton held orthodox Catholic views, and as the Vatican had condemned Modernism in the encyclical *Pascendi*, the Church welcomed laymen who supported their doctrines.

The spiritual revival that began after World War I brought numbers of converts to Catholicism, many of whom were intellectuals who used their literary skills in the service of their new belief.⁵⁹

Many of the writings of Belloc and Chesterton came to the United States via the Sheed and Ward Press.⁶⁰ This press would become an important worldwide distributor of Catholic writers.

It must be noted that Maisie Ward was deeply influenced by Distributist ideals.

The Distributists’ goal was spiritual: to promote an organic, unified society through a return to agrarian life. For them, land should be redistributed and

⁵⁹E.I Watkin. *Roman Catholicism in England from the Reformation to 1950*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 1957), 206.

⁶⁰ Sheed & Ward was founded in England in 1926, and an office opened in New York in 1933.

mechanization and government intervention shunned. These ideas were not new but had their proximate origins in the Catholic Ruralist movement, which had been in existence for over a decade, in particular in the rural religious community of Ditchling, England, overseen by Maisie's friend, Father McNabb.⁶¹

Maisie and her husband, Frank Sheed, joined the Scottish Catholic Land Association in 1931. The rural small farm and the organic community that formed around this life became a theme for two of our radical women, Maisie Ward and Dorothy Day. Maisie Ward would support cooperatives such as those in the Canadian Maritimes to the cofounding of the Catholic Housing Aid Society in England and the American Catholic experimental community of Marycrest in New York State.⁶²

Distributism's writings presented a three-pronged manifesto advocating a return to the land, a rejection of mechanization and technology, and an end to large government. Chesterton, who was a contemporary of Dorothy Day's, had an actual outline of his Distributists society.

1. The taxation of contracts so as to discourage the sale of small property to big proprietors and encourage the break-up of big property among small proprietors.
2. The establishment of free law for the poor, so that small property could always be defended against great. [This is a criticism, for example, of the adoption in England at the end of the Middle Ages (and later the United States) from Roman

⁶¹ Dana Greene, *The Living of Maisie Ward* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 79-80.

⁶² See chapter four: "The Limits of Personalism: *Integrity Magazine* and the Marycrest Community, 1946-1956" in James Terence Fisher's *The Catholic Counter Culture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 101-129.

law of the concept of statute of limitations, whereby when property had been stolen, the owner had to go to court within a very short period of time to try to re-establish ownership, be able to pay lawyers, etc.]

3. The deliberate protection of certain experiments in small property, if necessary, by tariffs and even local tariffs.

4. Subsidies to foster the starting of such experiments.⁶³

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin (1877-1949) founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933. Maurin would become the philosopher visionary of the Catholic Worker movement. Maurin brought a French European background along with the ideals of Personalism to the movement.

Aristode Pierre Maurin was born in France on May 9, 1877⁶⁴ and belonged to a large family of 24 children. He joined the Christian Brothers, a teaching order that stressed simplicity of life, piety, and service to the poor. His religious life was interrupted by mandatory military service from 1898 to 1899. In 1902, in an anti-Catholic, anti-Vatican move, the Premier of France, Emile Coombs, passed a governmental policy that closed all the religious schools in France. Maurin became involved with Le Sillon, a Catholic lay movement that advocated Christian Democracy and supported cooperatives and unions.⁶⁵ Le Sillon turned into a political arm of French politics. Disillusioned, Maurin emigrated to Canada in 1909.

⁶³ Mark and Louise Zwick, "G.K. Chesterton and Dorothy Day on Economics: Neither Socialism nor Capitalism," *Houston Catholic Worker* 21, no. 5 (September-October 2001).

⁶⁴ Dorothy Day, "Peter Maurin 1877-1977," *The Catholic Worker* (May 1977), 1, 9.

⁶⁵ Le Sillon was founded by Marc Sangnier (1873-1950). The movement was condemned by Pope Pius X, Jacques Maritain would be drawn to Le Sillon while he was a student in Paris.

During this time Maurin was exposed to the ideas of Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950).

Personalism requires an affirmation of value, viz., the affirmation of the absolute value of the human person. We are not asserting that the human person is an absolute, although for a Christian believer the Absolute is indeed a person, and in strict terminology the spiritual does not exist except as personal. But we do assert that the human person as defined by us is an absolute in comparison with any other material or social reality and with any other human person. It can never be considered merely as part of a whole, whether of family, class, state, nation, or even humanity. God himself, in the doctrines of Christianity, respects the liberty of the person, even while vivifying it from within. The whole theological mystery of free will and original sin is based on the dignity of free choice conferred on man. The Christian accepts it because he believes that man was in his very nature made according to the image of God, that he is called to perfect that image by an ever increasing participation in the supreme liberty of the children of God.⁶⁶

Mounier was a harsh critic of the middleclass or bourgeois society. Maurin also criticized this comfortable society as not responsive to the real values of life and spiritual underpinnings of our true God-given nature. He was deeply influenced by Emmanuel Mounier's Personalism. Both Maurin and Mounier complained about France's bourgeois society and its longstanding lack of response to the problems of society. Maurin turned his attention to similar issues he found in the new world where he incorporated

⁶⁶ *Roots of the Catholic Worker Movement: Emmanuel Mounier and Personalism*. Excerpts from his work. <http://www.cjd.org/paper/roots/remman.html>. Mounier wrote *A Personalist Manifesto* (1938) and *Be Not Afraid: Studies in Personalist Sociology* (1954).

Personalism into the Catholic Worker Movement in the hopes to combat the individualism, capitalism, materialism, excess comfort, excess government, the passion of conquest and other ills in order to bring people back to a spiritual existence.

The following excerpts from Mournier's own words succinctly summarizes his platform:

The bourgeois and individualist civilization, which has been supreme in our world for many years, is still firmly in the saddle. It is linked up with the roots of a Christianity that it has contributed so much to dislodge.

The bourgeois conception is the outcome of a period of civilization which has been developing from the Renaissance to our own day. It arose out of revolt of the individual against a social system that had become top-heavy and a spiritual system that had become inflexible. This revolt was not altogether disorderly and anarchic. It vibrated with legitimate aspirations of the human person. But it turned soon enough to so narrow a conception of the individual that from the very start it engendered in itself the germ of its decadence.

By extending their fields of conquest over five continents, industrial capitalism opened up to the captains of industry and some adventurers in finance great possibilities of adventure. But in discovering the automatic fecundity of money, finance capitalism at the same time opened up to them an easy world to conquer, in which all vital tensions disappeared.

The natural rhythm of things, their resistance and endurance, were broken down under the influence of an unlimited power, which came, not from labor as applied

in an orderly way to natural forces, but from speculation. This speculation, in which profit is gained without the rendering of service, was the ideal towards which all capitalist endeavour tended. Thus the motive passion of adventure gradually gave way to the soft enjoyment of comfort, the passion of conquest to the ideal of the impersonal mechanism, of the automatic distributor of pleasures devoid of risk or of excess, regular and constant, derived from the machine and from fixed income. Once a civilization has become used to the way of this unhuman ease, it no longer creates in order to give rise to new creations, but its very creations produce ever greater quiet and inertia.

Thus the substitution of speculative profit for industrial profit, and of the values of comfort for the values of creation, has gradually dethroned the individualistic ideal and opened the way to the spirit which we call bourgeois because of its origin and which seems to us to be the exact antithesis of all spirituality. It took hold first of the upper classes but gradually descended to all classes, even the humblest.

For money separates. Money separates man from struggle with natural forces, for it levels all resistance. It separates men from each other, for it has commercialized all exchange and has falsified both speech and conduct. It takes the modern man, who can endure nothing but the spectacle of his own security and shuts him up, far from the living reproaches of poverty, in his own residential sections, his own schools, his own habit, his cars, his relations, his religion—in all of which he sees himself and his ideas reflected a hundredfold.

We are indeed far from the hero. The rich man of the classical period is himself fast disappearing. On the altar of this sad world there is but one god, smiling and hideous: the Bourgeois. He has lost the true sense of being, he moves only among things, and things that are practical and that have been denuded of their mystery. He is a man without love, a Christian without conscience, an unbeliever without passion. He has deflected the universe of virtues from its supposedly senseless course towards the infinite and made it centre about a petty system of social and psychological tranquility. For him there is only prosperity, health, common sense, balance, sweetness of life, comfort. Comfort is to the bourgeois world what heroism was to the Renaissance and sanctity to mediaeval Christianity—the ultimate value, the ultimate motive for all action.⁶⁷

Maurin wrote *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution* consisting of what he called his little essays or phrased essays. These were his intense, pithy poems that encapsulated the teaching or idea he wanted to get across. The introduction to the book was written by Dorothy Day, who tells us of some of the influences on Maurin:

Peter was influenced in his reading by Kropotkin and Eric Gill, A. J. Penty, Harold Robbins, Belloc and Chesterton. He introduced us to these writers. He preferred the word socialist because he believed that nothing was so important as man's freedom.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* <http://www.cjd.org/paper/roots/remman.html>

⁶⁸ Peter Maurin, *Catholic Radicalism: Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution* (New York: Catholic Worker Books, 1949), iv.

All of the mentioned names were either anarchist or writers on popular economics. Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), was a communalist—an ideal that will reappear in much of the Distributists' thinking. Part of their menu was agriculturalism, for they saw the land and its rural life as a purifying element in society.⁶⁹

Eric Gill (1882-1940) was an artist who was also involved with the Liturgical Movement and the Back to the Land Movement.⁷⁰ (He illustrated the first cover of Fr. Virgil Michel's *Orate Frates*.) A. J. Penty (1875-1937) was very interested in the medieval guild system and how this could be translated into a Christian socialism.⁷¹

Harold Robbins was also a socialist, but it was the writings of Belloc and Chesterton that were the militant voice of Distributism.⁷²

All of these writers had three things in common. They were all against capitalism, as they believed it was the cause of so much suffering in modern society. They were all committed to a decentralized government. Less government was more, in their thinking. They all had some scheme for a return to a rural or agricultural base. It was these ideas along with French Personalism that Maurin would draw on to form his ideas for a model of the Catholic Worker.

Dorothy Day outlines Maurin's program for the Catholic Worker:

Alleviation of the immediate needs of the poor and indoctrination by example through voluntary poverty and the practice of the works of mercy, corporal and spiritual.

⁶⁹ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (1892). A classic in its field, this book was published in New York by G. P. Putnam and Sons in 1906. The entire book may be seen on the web at http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/kropotkin/conquest/toc.html

⁷⁰ Gill was a member and wrote for *The Cross and the Plough: Organ of the Catholic Land Associations of England and Wales*.

⁷¹ A.J. Penty's book, *Distributism: A Manifesto* (1937). Chesterton introduces the book.

⁷² One of the authors not mentioned here is Father Vincent McNabb (1868-1943).

Clarification of thought through the Catholic Worker, leaflets, articles, discussions and meetings.

Houses of Hospitality in every poor parish to practice mutual aid, hospitality and charity, houses which would also provide workshops where the unemployed could be employed and where the unskilled could become skilled.

Farming communes, or agronomic universities, which would be founded on the faith and poverty of the Irish universities which housed scholars and students from all over Europe and which in turn evangelized the world, and which in turn in our day could become Christian communities of families where the communal and private aspects of property could be restored, and man would receive according to his needs.⁷³

These were the ideas that Day and Maurin used to found their Catholic Worker. They were both radical souls in that they would not accept the “Comfortable Catholic Church” and indeed the comfortable world of the middle class.

The economic crisis in Western society brought a change to the entire community. The Christian-oriented ruling class charged with the welfare of all others in society was eroded by industrialization. Capitalism, which was driven by profit regardless of the violation of the beings that produced it, was a startling and harsh reality for the intellectual world if not the Christian Church. The Catholic Church tried to alleviate the suffering and responded with encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum*. It rallied the laity and fought back, demanding the humanity of the worker in the industrial process.

⁷³ Maurin, iv.

The secondary troubles of industrialization became the social issues of the times. Middleclass industrialist society produced a “leisure class,” and as a result women of this class wanted to be empowered to participate in the economic, artistic, and governmental world. Up until the mid-1840s, this was not a legitimate desire for women in Western society. The empowerment of women by suffrage was to legitimize their desire to legally enter the world arena. This was the first step in a program that would bring such social issues as divorce and birth control to the general public. Feminism was a force to emancipate women. The Catholic Church had a difficult time battling the issues, but morally and socially the Church felt obligated to respond.

Catholic Action was the template the Church was going to use to penetrate the modern world, not from the outside but from the inside. The Laity was of the world. The lay movements encompassed the men and women of the Church as well as youth, women, and workers. They were not radical; rather, they were organizations that carried out social organizations/projects, often under the direct control of the hierarchy, as the Cana and pre-Cana Conference. There were a few organizations that were radical and pushed the boundaries, sometimes to the extreme. The Grail was one of these radical organizations, and there were others that started in response to the society they felt called upon to help. An example of this would be Catherine du Hueck (1896-1985), who founded the Friendship House movement and ultimately Madonna House in Canada.⁷⁴ Her founding of a Friendship House in Harlem in 1936 was a first. She did this with the

⁷⁴ Also known as Catherine Doherty.

help and encouragement of Father John LaFarge (1880-1963), who was very active in interracial social activism.⁷⁵

Radical Social Activists wished to live a lay vocation to the maximum in the community. The women about to be presented—Day, Dohen, and Ward—were willing participants of Catholic Action and observers of their times who rejected the secular world's values. (In Chapter Five I examine in detail the actual organization and accomplishments of each of these Radicals.) They also uniquely rejected the secular aims of feminism to accomplish their ends and worked from within the conservative and often burdensome organization of the Catholic Church. This is the topic of Chapter Three.

⁷⁵ See LaFarge's 1937 book, *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations*. It may be noted that many of the points used by LaFarge would appear in the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954.

Chapter Three

The Catholic Woman and the American Feminist

The limitation of families through these practices (of birth control) is injurious to the race. It leads inevitably to an increase of softness, luxury, and materialism, and to a decrease of mental and moral discipline, of endurance, and of the power of achievement.⁷⁶

John A. Ryan, 1916

Very early in my childhood, I associated poverty, toil, unemployment, drunkenness, cruelty, quarreling, fighting, debts, jails with large families.

The people who lived on the hilltops owned their homes, had few children, dressed them well, and kept their yards clean and tidy. Mothers of the hills played croquet and tennis with their husbands in the evening. They walked hand in hand with their children through the streets to shop for suitable clothing. They were young looking mothers, with pretty, clean dresses, and they smelled of perfume.⁷⁷

Margaret Sanger, 1931

⁷⁶ John A. Ryan, "Family Limitation," *The Ecclesiastical Review*, June 1916, 690.

⁷⁷ Margaret Sanger. *My Fight for Birth Control* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1931), 5.

Granted, the achievements of Day, Ward, and Dohen are in different arenas—social action, publishing, and university education. However, there is the common thread of membership in and acquiescence to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Even the great skeptic Henry James, who had read St. Teresa of Avila's autobiography, thought her to be one of the "ablest women on record," though he felt it "a pity that so much vitality of soul should have found such poor employment."⁷⁸ Women in the Catholic Church had defined their role in the Church as one of either marriage or vowed virginity. The problem of the Laity's becoming increasingly involved with a complex society caused new applications and opportunities for the Laity to open new pathways. The Church's plan of action lay in the industrial world, which was eventually going to lead to tension over the way women were defined within the Church.

Catholic Action was the desired method of informing and educating the modern world. It was not without its controls, and the clergy played a very heavy part in running and overseeing the organizations. The Catholic Church welcomed the participation of women in these organizations. Their role was defined as clerical or auxiliary and was allowable as long as it did not stray into the male-dominated area of authority and sacrament. Women had very specific roles in the Church proper as wife and mother or as consecrated virgin. Their role as women in the Church had been seen as either a "Mary" or an "Eve." Either they were holy and obedient like the Blessed Virgin, or a sin-bound temptress like Eve. It was a difficult task for women to operate between these two perceptions. In the 1920s, the Church in the United States assumed that Catholic women

⁷⁸ Mark and Louise Zwick, *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), 193.

were dedicated to their families or at the very least obedient to the teachings of the Church. Suffragism and feminism were part of the American cultural scene at that time, but there was little dialogue between Catholic women and the women's movement or the universal suffrage movement. Granted, several of the Bishops—John Lancaster Spalding was one—were supporters of women receiving the vote, but the social complications of this legal equality were not foreseen.⁷⁹

Feminism was an entity in American society with a history starting in Seneca Falls in 1848. It had progressed from the abolitionist movement to the temperance movement and finally to the suffragist movement. The majority of Catholic women in the 1920s were part of the ethnic immigrant culture that predominated in the United States at that time.

The mass immigration of nearly 9 million Roman Catholics between 1890-1925 transformed the church from a minority religion to the largest denomination in the United States.⁸⁰

The key word here is “majority.” There are examples of Catholic women in the middle and upper classes; however, they were not the majority of that class. The predominant religion of the upper class was a selection of Protestant denominations. Furthermore, Roman Catholicism was still regarded with suspicion.

In addition, immigrant Catholic women based their lives around an ethnic parish, where they struggled to learn a new language and see that their children were getting

⁷⁹ John Lancaster Spalding (1840-1916) supported women's higher education and the franchise for women. See John T. Ellis, *John Lancaster Spalding: First Bishop of Peoria; American Educator* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1961).

⁸⁰ James S. Olson, *Catholic Immigrants in the United States* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1987), 101.

acculturated into a new world that would provide greater opportunity than what they had known in the old country.

For millions of Roman Catholic immigrants, the nationality parish played a key role in easing the adjustment to urban society in the United States. Instead of finding themselves in an alien world full of strange nationality groups and a church dominated by the ascetic rationalism of the Irish, these immigrants were able to create a familiar world of traditional holidays, ceremonies, and saints in their churches; preserve the language and traditional values in their parochial schools; control social life in their parish societies; and confront God and mortality with the assistance of a priest who spoke their language and shared the past. . . . In the nationality parishes, despite their cultural diversity, the church maintained its Catholicity in the United States.⁸¹

Few were interested in the feminist proposals for voting rights; voting rights were not considered “necessary” concerns. The “concerns” of universal suffrage, temperance, and birth control were, however, considered the natural concerns of middle-class women. These women strove to involve themselves with society and work for the betterment of conditions for women. Feminism was interested in the advancement of equal rights for women. It would be the legal recognition of the Suffragist vote, that would set the next wave of feminism allowing women to enter the world of government, finance, and education as equals with men in American society.

There is another concept to add to this mix—marriage itself. Protestant Churches viewed marriage as a mutual contract, but Catholics viewed it as a sealed Sacrament. The contract is the same in both instances, but in the Catholic Church, marriage was also

⁸¹ Olson, 125.

a covenant and thus a source of grace for each involved in the marriage. Marriage was a sacred application of the love of Christ for His Church. Men and women did not strive for equality since they already were equal in the eyes of God. Men and women had distinct roles in marriage and each was charged with carrying these out as their duty. Marriage was sacred and indissoluble once entered into by the male and female.⁸² Sex was an imperative to the marriage itself. Without the act of consummation, there was no marriage. The chief aim of this act was to bring children into the world and thus into the light of salvation and the Church. It was a sacred trust. Sexuality for its own sake was not a concept addressed by the Church until Vatican II. This is the theological basis for marriage in the Catholic Church.

The Protestant denominations, however, were not as clear on the permanence of marriage. Divorce, in fact, had scriptural precedents.⁸³ There was no divorce for Catholics in that sense, however.⁸⁴ Divorce was seen as a growing problem in the post-war era, along with a declining birth rate among the middle and upper classes. The concept of sexuality itself was being put forward as an entity that was not connected to moral action. The scientific community was formulating new ideas and new methods of knowledge. Lester Frank Ward (1841-1913) published the first sociology textbook, *Dynamic Sociology*, in 1883. The discipline of sociology was first taught at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, in 1890. Sociology became a university department in 1892 at the University of Chicago. Subsequently, psychology moved away from the

⁸² M. J. Stravinkas, ed., *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1998), 625-655.

⁸³ T. Alton Bryant, *The New Compact Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 346-347.

⁸⁴ There was annulment, which meant that certain qualifications had not been met in the marriage itself. See page 75 of Stravinkas. Annulment meant there was no sacrament, thus no marriage.

spheres of religion, theology, and the metaphysical to a new appreciation for the “scientific knowledge of the mind.” There was a new cognitive science of the mind. In 1890, William James (1842-1910) published the *Principles of Psychology*. James was the first professor of psychology at Harvard University. In the 1890s, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) developed and applied a method of uncovering repressed wishes known as psychoanalysis. Sexuality, suppression, denial, repression, compensation, and sublimation were all significant to our memories, and Freud linked this to our sexual selves. His books were well received by the scientific modernist community. Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), and his later work, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), are important for their impact on cultural society as well as Modernist thinking and literature, not only in the United States but all of Western Europe as well.⁸⁵

Transcendent values had little to do with the factual knowledge that the scientific method used for clarification; thus morals, faith-based concepts of religious principles, and theological ideas were of no use to the scientific or Modernist school. In short, they were seen as medieval thinking and thus based on superstition. The rise of new scientifically based knowledge at the university level opened new ground for Modernist thinking.

Economics, Suffragism, and Birth Control

Rosa Luxemburg (1870-1919) gave a speech in 1912 at the Second Social Democratic Women’s Rally in Stuttgart, Germany. The title of this speech was

⁸⁵ Recall that the Roman Catholic Church under Pius X put a gag on Modernism in the encyclical *Pascendi* (1907).

“Women’s Suffrage and Class Struggle.” Luxemburg made it abundantly clear that there was a direct connection between the vote and the economic imperative of the state.

Economically and socially, the women of the exploited classes are not an independent segment of the population. Their only social function is to be tools of the natural propagation of the ruling classes. By contrast, the women of the proletariat are economically independent. They are productive for society like the men. By this I do not mean their bringing up children or their housework which helps men support their families on scanty wages. This kind of work is not productive in the sense of the present capitalist economy no matter how enormous an achievement the sacrifices and energy spent, the thousand little efforts add up to. This is but the private affair of the worker, his happiness and blessing, and for this reason nonexistent for our present society. As long as capitalism and the wage system rule, only that kind of work is considered productive which produces surplus value, which creates capitalist profit. From this point of view, the music-hall dancer whose legs sweep profit into her employer’s pocket is a productive worker, whereas all the toil of the proletarian women and mothers in the four walls of their homes is considered unproductive. This sounds brutal and insane, but corresponds exactly to the brutality and insanity of our present capitalist economy. And seeing this brutal reality clearly and sharply is the proletarian woman’s first task.

For, exactly from this point of view, the proletarian women’s claim to equal political rights is anchored in firm economic ground. Today, millions of proletarian women create capitalist profit like men—in factories, workshops, on farms, in home industry, offices,

stores. They are therefore productive in the strictest scientific sense of our present society. Every day enlarges the hosts of women exploited by capitalism.⁸⁶

Capitalism and industrialization had produced a number of criticisms and constructions for new ideas on economics and the state. The 1800s in Europe was a time of social change in a relatively short period of time. The concepts of freedom and liberty were closely linked with economic principles, especially in England. Capitalism, as an economic system based on private property, was the door to voting or enfranchisement and thus wealth in England. Many theorists saw the calamity that industrialization had caused with its imbalance of wealth. This wealth caused a shift in society, which was slowly becoming bourgeois. With the ownership of property by the entrepreneur, there was no social consciousness of a moral obligation to the worker. Yet, it was the worker who was the true creator of the wealth.

Several thinkers advanced new ideas on sharing wealth, such as Charles Fourier (1772-1837). His new concept of private property was a system known as communitarianism: community members would share the wealth they produced. Fourier saw the social ramifications of capitalist economics and thus wanted to see that everyone shared, regardless of gender, in the wealth that was produced. He stated, “The extension of the privileges of women is the general principle of all social progress.”⁸⁷ This communalism was also espoused in the writings of Saint-Simon (1760-1825) and the Englishman Robert Owen (1771-1858). Fourier and Saint-Simon were known as “Utopian Socialists.” The new economic thinking spawned a socialism that presented a

⁸⁶ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1912/05/12.htm>

⁸⁷ Susan K. Grogan, *French Socialism and Sexual Difference: Women and the New Society, 1803-44* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992), 20.

different way of thinking about the family unit as well as the equality of men and women. Marx (1818-1883) and Engels (1820-1895) both wrote about women and family in economic terms. They saw women as doubly oppressed. They agreed that women were oppressed in their relations with men. Marriage, Marx suggested in his economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844, “is incontestably a form of exclusive private property.”⁸⁸ Forty years later, Engels made this point in *Origin of the Family* (1891) when he said, “within the family, he is the bourgeois, and the wife represents the proletariat.”⁸⁹

Marx and Engels had a strategy for women to gain their independence. If we look closely it could be mistaken for the plan used by the women’s suffrage movement and later the feminist movement in the United States:

This analysis led Marx and Engels to argue a long-term strategy for women’s liberation: first women should obtain political equality; then they should use political equality in the struggle for economic equality and economic independence from men. Only after men and women achieved equality within capitalism could they fight together for the full self-realization that socialism alone could bring.⁹⁰

Feminism with defined goals did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century, but demands for female equality can be seen by the seventeenth century, if not sooner. However, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the expression of democratic ideas stimulated a new awareness of the social question of the place of women in society.

⁸⁸ Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner, *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 366.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 336.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

Mary Wollstonecraft drew attention to the inequalities suffered by women in her *Vindication and the Rights of Women* (1792). Her radical ideas were ill timed, however, due to the backlash against the French Revolution. Enfranchisement of women or workers was an unwelcomed idea. After all, France and England along with other countries in Europe were barely holding on to what order they had. Governments were not going to consider another radical outlook that might upset the already jeopardized political/social world in which they were governing.

The socialist movement produced a group of writers interested in the subject of women and economics. One of the neglected writers of the time was August Bebel (1840-1913) who wrote *Women and Socialism*, which⁹¹

was the most popular socialist text in any language during the period. First published in 1879, with an improved edition following in 1883, it was translated into several languages in the following years, topping the socialist best-seller charts almost everywhere.⁹²

Bebel, the founder of the German Social Democratic Party in Germany, wrote his work five years before Engels published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

From the beginning of time oppression has been the common lot of woman and the laboring man . . . her position was even lower than his, and even by him was she regarded as an inferior and continues to be so to this day . . . Woman was the

⁹¹ This book is also known under the title *Women in the Past, Present and Future*. Bebel renamed the 1883 version of the book.

⁹² August Bebel, *Woman in the Past, Present and Future* (Zwan Publications, 1988). Original work 1879. Introduction by Moira Donald.

first human being that tasted bondage. Woman was a slave before the slave existed.⁹³

It is easy to see why this book had numerous editions and was reprinted so many times. However, it was Bebel's interest in population that would attract the interest of Margaret Sanger.

Bebel dedicated an entire chapter to "Overpopulation." In his book *Women and Socialism*, he subscribes to Malthusian ideas of population and talks frankly about the sexual urge in both sexes:

It is a law which every individual must fulfill as a sacred duty towards himself, if his development is to be healthy and normal, to neglect the exercise of no member of his body, to refuse gratification to no natural impulse. Each member must discharge the functions assigned to it by Nature, on pain of injuring and stunting the entire organism.⁹⁴

Human sexuality and the restraints put on it by the Church in particular were put under scientific scrutiny. Equality for women meant that motherhood should also be voluntary. "Voluntary motherhood" was an ideal that would be renamed as "birth control." Birth control had a great champion in Margaret Sanger (1883-1966), who would invoke the ideas of Bebel as well as Malthus in her own writing. She would also praise Sir Francis Galton, who wrote the highly circulated treatise on Eugenics titled *Human Faculty* (1884). Sanger would also incorporate into her thinking the ideas of Marx, Engels, H.G. Wells, and others. In her book *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922), the aim of the women's movement was equality, but there was an exchange involved—for equality

⁹³ Bebel, vii.

⁹⁴ Bebel, 43-4

women were going to have to give up their domesticity of home and husband. If they wanted equality and independence they were going to have to forgo either the male companion in the rearing of children and sublimate the desire for home, or they were going to have to control the birth of children in a way that made both doable. Birth control was the answer. There was a shift away from total dedication to the domestic household and birth of children to a greater emphasis on the rearing of ideally two children, which would allow more opportunities for work and self-realization. It was the triumph of a comfortable lifestyle.

The study of the family had come under scrutiny in the new science of sociology. The ills of society were not examined as breaches of morality. Instead, they were approached from a fact-based hypotheses of behavior. There was no right or wrong; there was only data and the compilation of such to draw conclusions as to the basic behavior taken.

Marriage had traditionally belonged to the realm of morality and thus to the Church. Due to the influence of the social sciences, however, views of marriage began to change.

The topic of divorce no longer was addressed within the larger subject of the family; clergy addressed the topic of the family within the pressing issue of divorce. However, what was new was the shift toward a different emphasis on the purpose of marriage. Clearly, the emphasis was less and less on procreation, and more and more on the function of the family as a social unit. This change of

emphasis was due in a large part to the growing value placed on the social sciences.⁹⁵

Suffrage was achieved in the United States in the 1920s, but the arrival of the Modernist idea of a scientifically based life was not stopped with the vote. The suffrage movement itself kept away from such controversial topics as birth control and family planning—or “volunteer motherhood,” as it was called. However, one truly controversial subject was raised, much to the dismay of feminist Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906).⁹⁶ It occurs in Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s (1815-1902) controversial book, *The Women’s Bible* (1895) as the following summary explains.

From her unique feminist perspective, Stanton argued that the historical impact of Christian ideas, particularly about sexuality and maternity, had been to degrade women. The body of the book was organized as a series of commentaries, deliberately informal and irreverent, on Biblical passages that mentioned or affected women. In these commentaries, Stanton criticized the Bible for its irrationalities and superstitions, but she also encouraged the development of a new “rational” religion, deliberately designed “in harmony with science, common sense and experience of mankind in natural laws.”⁹⁷

Stanton’s book was condemned by the suffragist movement for fear that it would erode support for the movement itself. However, the book shows that even the great co-founder of American suffragism was interested in the scientific approach to modern

⁹⁵ Kathleen Tobin-Schelesinger, “Population and Power: Religious Debate Over the Contraception, 1916-1936” (Dissertation, University of Chicago, August 1994), 179.

⁹⁶ Susan B. Anthony was leader of the suffragist movement in the United States until her death.

⁹⁷ Ellen Carrol Dubois, *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony Reader* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 228-229.

living, a tenet that Sanger would use convincingly against the Catholic Church in the battle over birth control.

Though birth control was not part of the suffrage movement, it was part of an agenda calling for scientific interpretation and application of societal living. Equality by the vote was the first step to “freeing women” from domesticity and constant birthing of children. Eugenics comprised part of Sanger’s birth control platform, which advocated the scientific betterment of the race through better breeding practices. Although she was not the only advocate of birth control, Sanger was the most flamboyant one and consequently well covered by the press. Sanger’s brilliance, however, lay in her ability to convince the religious mainstream congregations in America that birth control was medically scientific. Thus, she thoroughly convinced the Anglicans at the Lambeth Conference in 1930 that her endeavors were in the light of progress.⁹⁸ The Church believed it stood on moral ground, and would not be moved by the arguments of progress and science.

The Catholic Woman, Why Different?

Suffragism was supported by some clerics of the Roman Catholic Church, but others were more conservative and did not think that it was a good idea for women to enter the political arena. However, all of the hierarchy and clergy of the Catholic Church were united on several key points that would set them apart from, if not in conflict with, mainstream American thinking on women, Modernism, marriage, and ultimately birth control and divorce.

⁹⁸ The Lambeth Conference was a watershed event where the Anglicans accepted birth control and all of the other mainstream churches adopted a similar stance. The Catholic Church, however, answered with the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (1930).

It was this Catholic thinking that kept our radical laywomen from feminism. It is their dedication to the Church and the submission to its doctrine that set their lay apostolate in motion. What made them radical was the method they chose to speak to their communities. They were very much a part of the ordinary world. Their lives were neither found in a convent nor in a parish woman's club. Their radicalism was twofold. First, they were not convinced by the scientific arguments of social change and they were loyal to the teachings on women in the Catholic Church; however, it was how they interpreted that loyalty that made them the radicals they were. They did not choose the feminist path and yet in their choice they were radicals within their own Church.

The Church had been tracking the advances of Naturalism and its movement towards socialism.⁹⁹ Leo XIII had been charting this economic change most accurately, and it was this economic imperative that was changing social institutions. The concept of equality for the sexes was one of the formats used for the scientific interpretation of relationships, including marriage. In the encyclical *Humanum genus* (1884), Leo XIII linked

the secularization of marriage with the commercial spirit of capitalism.

Naturalists claimed, he lamented, that marriage simply “belongs to the genus of commercial contracts, which can rightly be revoked by the will of those who made them.”¹⁰⁰

Marriage for the Catholic was a sacrament. For this reason, the bishops of the United States in conference assembled and wrote a pastoral letter to the faithful in 1919.

⁹⁹ Naturalism was opposed to dualism, or a mental explanation of things or any idea outside the grasp of biology in explanation. There were no moral absolutes, for they were beyond the realm of physical proof. From Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Joe Holland, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 155.

The letter covered many of the current social issues that were of concern to society and thus the Catholic Church. In article IX, the bishops addressed social relationships. They spelled out the problem of marriage and birth control, divorce, and women's influence.

On Marriage:

For the Christian the performance of these duties is lightened by the fact that marriage is not a mere contract: it is a sacrament and therefore, in the truest sense, a holy estate. It sanctifies the union of husband and wife, and supplies them with graces that enable them to fulfill their obligations.¹⁰¹

On Birth Control:

The selfishness that leads to race suicide with or without the pretext of bettering the species, is, in God's sight, "a detestable thing" (Gen 38:10). It is the crime of individuals for which, eventually, the nation must suffer. The harm it does cannot be repaired by social service, nor offset by pretending economic or domestic advantage.¹⁰²

On Divorce:

We consider the growth of the divorce evil and evidence of moral decay and a present danger to the best elements in our American Life. In its causes and their revelations by process of law, in its results for those who are immediately concerned and its suggestion to the minds of the entire community, divorce is our national scandal.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Hugh J. Noland, ed. *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1970*. (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1971), 242.

¹⁰² Noland, 242.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 243.

On Women:

The present tendency in all civilized countries is to give women a larger share in pursuits and occupations that formally were reserved to men. The sphere of her activity is no longer confined to the home or to her social environment. . . . so far as she may purify and elevate our political life, her use of the franchise will prove an advantage; and this will be greater if it involves no loss of the qualities in which woman excels. Such a loss would deprive her of the influence which she wields in the home, and eventually defeat the very purpose for which she entered the public arena.¹⁰⁴

Just prior to the constitutional amendment granting women the right to vote, the organization that had fought so hard for the vote, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, had defined “voluntary motherhood” as one of their ideals. Voluntary motherhood was their way of controlling their future by controlling their sexuality. Although they did not endorse abortion, they wanted freedom from involuntary childbearing and freedom from sexual submission to their husbands. Mary Ware Dennett, a member of the organization, and Margaret Sanger were both proponents of voluntary motherhood. Both wanted birth control to free women from a life of drudgery and allow them some individualism. The two women were constantly challenging each other; however, it was Margaret Sanger’s radical and active stand and the coverage given by the media that made her famous and the leader of the birth control movement in the United States. Sanger challenged the federal Comstock Law and was willing to go to prison for

¹⁰⁴ Noland, 244.

her views.¹⁰⁵ In this challenging of the Comstock Law, she received extensive media coverage. Sanger used her resultant notoriety as an opportunity to expound her views on birth control to the entire nation. Although Mary Ware Dennett founded the National Birth Control League in 1919, Sanger went on to gain public support and in 1929 she founded the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control. By WWII she was looking at a global movement. Margaret Sanger seemed to have had only one opponent to her work and that was the Catholic Church.

The Church was implacable in its resolve not to bend in its teachings on birth control and divorce. The Church had been skeptical of the outcome of equality for women, since the suffragists had taken on the task of enfranchisement. The Church had long held that the scientific approach to human problems was incomplete without moral guidance. The Vatican issued *Humanum genus* (1884) under Leo XII. In 1878 Leo had issued *Quod apostolici muneris*, which saw socialism as the source of many problems:

The socialist radicalized the modern problem in three ways: (1) by their refusal of “obedience to the higher powers,” (2) by their claim for “absolute equality of all men in rights and duties,” and (3) by their debasing of “the natural union of man and woman.”¹⁰⁶

Pius XI restated the Church’s position on marriage in his encyclical of 1930, *Casti connubii*. He reiterated that marriage was not just a “private contract” and that marriage had been raised “to the rank of a truly and great sacrament of the New Law.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ The Comstock Law, passed in 1873, prohibited the use of the USPO to send pornography or birth control literature through the mail.

¹⁰⁶ Holland, 156.

¹⁰⁷ Holland, 251.

Marriage for Catholics was indissoluble and a meeting of equals. Sexuality was for the procreation of children and, as of 1930, it also had a spirituality that was above the mere convenience of the relationship. This encyclical restated the sinfulness of birth control in a Catholic marriage.

This was the historical and theological underpinnings of the Catholic woman in both the United States and the Catholic Church as a whole. The model for woman was Mary, the mother of Jesus. It would be a difficult task to change the image of the Catholic woman to a suffragette or birth control aide. Women in the American Catholic Church were predominately immigrants, although by 1920 a second generation of American Catholics born into American culture would be in the American Church. These women had been reared in an ethnic parish in most instances and had found middleclass American values highly charged with a foreign Protestant ethic. However, the next 30 years would change the American Church with women working outside the home, a growing urban society and two world wars, to say nothing of the impact of telecommunications and the onset of a consumer society.

In general, however, most American Catholic women subscribed to the acceptable model of Mary. She was the perfect combination of both mother and virgin. Mary encompassed all women in her own life, both virgin and mother:

To many American Catholics this was not only an acceptable model but a familiar one, resting in part on a Christian tradition that held such a pattern was designed by God, exemplified by the Virgin Mary, and revealed by Pauline interpretation of scripture and natural law. Furthermore, it was reinforced by biological differences and supported by historical tradition proclaiming the supremacy of

man. Consequently, numerous Catholics believed in distinct spheres of activity for each sex. Woman's centered on her position as perpetuator of the race and nucleus of the family.¹⁰⁸

It was no wonder that there were few Catholic suffragists. James Cardinal Gibbons warned the vote would rob woman of her character. Archbishop Henry Moeller implored females to stand fast against this unchristian assault.¹⁰⁹

One of the demands of the women's movement was for female education, but they wanted this to occur in the same educational system that men had long been entitled to. The Catholics were against this because they believed that women were different. Thus, women's education should not make them male, but make them women fully prepared for their role in life as helpmates and mothers. The insistence of equality, especially in education, was for some "unnatural reforms that obscured the difference between the sexes and undermined the stability of the home."¹¹⁰

The concept of women as a different sex that should be treated differently appeared in an article in *Catholic World* in 1943. The article was very much against women going to work in the factories for the war effort:

Let the government in these times exhaust all possibilities in manpower before they resort to the use of women, especially mothers, for the war machine. Let the end of the war put an end to women in industry. Let women keep their rightful,

¹⁰⁸ James J. Kenneally. "Eve, Mary and the Historians: American Catholicism and Women" *Horizons* 3/2 (1976): 187.

¹⁰⁹ Kenneally, 191.

¹¹⁰ Kenneally, 199.

irreplaceable role in the home, and necessarily in those fields and professions where they are essential, not merely exploited.¹¹¹

The Church defined woman as the complement of the male. Furthermore, she was equal in marriage and had her own role to play. She could be either mother or religious. But if she married it was not a mere contract, it was a sacrament and the children from that marriage were future members of the Body of Christ. She was to surrender to the will of her husband for the betterment of the family. Her locus was the center of the family.

These ideas were diametrically opposed to the natural philosophy of a scientific world that had spawned liberalism, naturalism, and socialism. All three movements had played an important part in the new evaluation of the freedom of the individual. The individual was of the greatest worth, equality was the natural good, and education was the great equalizer of the new society. Those who could not understand these tenets of secular society were either stuck in a morass of superstition or, as the feminists saw it, oppressed by the patriarchal system that was religion.

The Church has never made an encyclical on women in the modern world that has forbidden Catholic women to participate in feminism. In May of 1923, Pope Pius XI met with a group of women from the International Suffrage Alliance in Rome, but he did so in an unofficial capacity. Pius knew that universal suffrage was coming. In a letter he summed up the attitude of the Church:

Since custom and law open to modern women more and more the vast sphere of intellectual culture, of social action, of civil life itself, it shall belong to her with greater reason to make use of these means of influence to promote everywhere

¹¹¹ Joseph B. Schuyler, "Women at Work," *Catholic World*, April 1943, 30.

respect for family life, the care of the Christian education of her children, and the energetic protection of public morality.¹¹²

¹¹² William B. Faherty, *The Destiny of Woman: In Light of Papal Teachings* (Westminster, Maryland: Newmann Press, 1950), 87.

Chapter Four

Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen: Radical Social Activists

During the 1940s and 1950s, there emerged, on the periphery of the Grail, the Catholic Worker, and Friendship House, a small cadre of “Free-lance” female activists who lent their support to a number of Catholic causes and generated a new vision among Catholic laywomen through their writings and public appearances.¹¹³

Karen Kennelly

¹¹³ Karen Kennelly, ed., *American Catholic Women* (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 179.

The American Catholic Church emerged from the immigrant 20s as a strong and well-identified religious group. Catholic education was firmly established, as every parish had at least the mandated elementary school. In higher education, Catholic colleges and universities were founded. Catholics were seen in general as a conservative group, especially where family matters like birth control and divorce were concerned. The Church was well represented in the secular press, even if it was often seen as anti-scientific and not socially and culturally progressive. It produced citizens that were supportive of American ideals. In 1928, Catholic Alfred E. Smith ran for president of the United States. Smith had been the governor of New York and his administration was known for social issues such as low-income housing and for laws designed to curtail socialist groups that threatened the common peace and security of the state.

Smith never made the presidency for a number of complex reasons, but foremost among them was an anti-Catholic agenda rooted in anti-immigrant feelings (as witnessed in the Sacco and Venzetti case of 1921).¹¹⁴ This was the time of a falling birthrate among white middleclass Americans, who perceived the immigrant Catholic population as a threat to the American way of life. Catholics were not the only perceived threats; the Eastern European population, which was mostly Jewish, and American blacks, were also targeted for discrimination and harassment.

After World War I, the Klan spread nationwide. At its mid-1920s peak, it had perhaps 3 million members. The Klan was sworn to protect small-town values from foreigners, immorality, and change. The enemy was the outsider-alien, symbolized by Roman Catholicism.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ The trial of Sacco and Venzetti was a landmark American trial in 1921. They were executed in 1927.

¹¹⁵ *Concise Dictionary of American History* (New York: Scribner's, 1983), 559.

Socialist and communist ideas flourished in 1930s America. The stock-market crash of 1929 and the ensuing poverty, displacement, and hardship caused by an industrial system built on capitalism challenged the very democratic principles that the United States had produced. The Depression was well named, for it was a depressing time for economics as well as people's personal lives. The economic reality of the Depression set off difficult social situations, soup lines, unemployment, and dislocation. It was a challenge to social justice. Many saw the answers in socialism, or looked to Russian communism as an ideal solution. Stalin's Russia, however, turned into totalitarianism, as did the governments of Italy and Germany in the 1930s, where states took over total control of people's lives to "help" them.

Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a young student at Columbia University in the mid-1930s, would later write his famous autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948). In this observation, he relates to us that communism was one of the ideas that was surfacing in the liberal circles and academic community of which he was a part at this time. He tells us:

Like so many others—a Communist in my own fancy, and I would become one of the hundreds of thousands of people living in America who are willing to buy an occasional pamphlet and listen without rancor to a Communist orator, and to express open dislike of those who attack Communism, just because they are aware that there is a lot of injustice and suffering in the world and somewhere got the idea that the Communists were the ones who were most sincerely trying to do something about it.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1948), 136.

Dorothy Day was also a part of the Bohemian/intellectual New York community. Interestingly, both Merton and Day became converts to Roman Catholicism—Day in 1926 and Merton in 1938. Merton’s path led him to priesthood and the cloister of the Trappist monastery.¹¹⁷ In 1917, Day, a journalist like her father, started writing for the radical *Masses*, a stylish socialist magazine with defiantly communist leanings. Its editor, Max Eastman, was a professor of philosophy at Columbia University, and the magazine’s readership consisted largely of the socialist and liberal intelligentsia rather than the working people that the monthly professed to serve.¹¹⁸ *Masses* magazine was to shut down in 1917, shortly after she started there, and reopen under a new name, *The Liberator*.

Dorothy Day

Born in Brooklyn in 1897, to a family who was not particularly religious, Day began her education at the University of Illinois in 1916 but left after a year and ended up back in New York. Day was not much different from her contemporary compatriots who followed the budding intellectual lifestyle. She lived in Greenwich Village, among bohemians and anarchists and associated with many of that culture. Day fell in love, but the love affair ended with an abortion and, for a time, a broken self. Between 1919 and her first novel in 1924 (*The Eleventh Virgin*), Day entered a common law marriage with Forster Batterham and had a child.

She fell in love for the first time, beginning an affair straight out of a Dreiser novel—a pregnancy; a suicide attempt; an abortion—and no sooner was it over

¹¹⁷ Both Day and Merton would become important writers and leaders in social justice in the American Catholic Church. Day and Merton would later become friends and peace activists during the Vietnam war.

¹¹⁸ Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazines* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 29.

than she wrote a novel of her own about it, as if by Village standards the experience wasn't real and true until it was retold as fiction.¹¹⁹

While Day was working at her socialist journalism, she became aware of the suffering of the masses, and began to listen to the socialists' agenda.

She studied anarchism of Emma Goldman. She interviewed Leon Trotsky. She went to Webster Hall for the Anarchists Ball and to Madison Square garden to celebrate the 1917 revolt in Russia, and was caught up in the "mystic gripping melody of struggle, a cry for world peace and human brotherhood."¹²⁰

Day took part in a suffragist protest in Washington, D.C., was arrested and incarcerated for 30 days, an experience that marks the beginning of her activism. Day was drawn to communism, but the communists never really trusted her, as she was "God Haunted."¹²¹

In 1925, Day bought a small house away from hectic city life with some of the money she had earned from her first book. This became a changing point in her life. The natural beauty of the place and its peace brought about a change that moved her soul to a deeper meaning, and she started to pray. She also discovered she was pregnant again but this time viewed it as a sign of God's favor and perhaps forgiveness for the abortion of her younger days. Day was moved to desire for this child and even to have the child baptized. She was well aware that her new sense of religion was going to threaten her relation with the anarchist Foster Batterham, so she decided to leave him when the baby was born and start a new life as a Roman Catholic.

¹¹⁹ Paul Elie, *The Life You Save May Be Your Own: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 34.

¹²⁰ Elie, 17.

¹²¹ This is what William Miller tells us in his *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1982).

With a small child to raise, Day traveled first to Mexico and then to Florida, becoming a writer as a freelance journalist for *Commonweal*, the lay Catholic magazine. Through the magazine's editor, George Schuster (1894-1977), she was introduced to a small man with a French accent named Peter Maurin. Day was 36 years old. It was 1932.

Day recounted her first meeting with Maurin:

He was a short, broad shouldered workingman with a high, broad head covered with graying hair. His face was weather-beaten; he had warm grey eyes and a wide, pleasant mouth. The collar of his shirt was dirty, but he had tried to dress up by wearing a tie and a suit which looked as though he had slept in it.¹²²

Here was the one person who could give light to so many ideas that Day had inside her. Together they founded the Catholic Worker Movement in December 1933, with Maurin as the brains and Dorothy its heart.

Peter Maurin (1877-1949) was born into a large, poor family in the south of France. He entered the Christian Brothers, but due to the anti-Catholic government that disbanded all Catholic education in France in 1904, he became involved with a new Christian socialist movement called Le Sillon. He immigrated to Canada, and after fourteen years made his way to New York. He was deeply influenced by the Personalism of Emmanuel Monier and the papal social encyclicals, such as *Rerum Novarum*.¹²³

Maurin convinced Dorothy Day to begin founding Hospitality Houses and publishing *The Catholic Worker*. It was 1933, the worst year of the Depression. The

¹²² Miller, 228.

¹²³ Personalism was the philosophy espoused by Monier. He argued that one must accept personal responsibility for the welfare of society. In Christian terms, we are our brother's keeper.

Church was doing little to nothing to grapple with the poverty and destitution of the working poor.

Maurin solidified all that Day had been reading and thinking. She loved the Church, but the Church seemed to be too tied to its institutional moorings to help. Day wrote in her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*:

I loved the Church for Christ made visible. Not for itself, because it was so often a scandal to me. Romano Guardini said 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.¹²⁴

Day's disappointment in the hierarchy and Church leadership was to be confirmed often in her dealings with one bureaucracy after another in contacts with dioceses in which she would found her Hospitality Houses. She was dedicated to the poor and the marginal members of society.

But there was another love too, the life I had led in the radical movement. That very winter I was writing a series of articles, interviews with workers, with the unemployed. I was working with the Anti-Imperialist League, a Communist affiliate, that was bringing comfort and aid to the enemy, General Sandino's forces in Nicaragua. I was just as much against capitalism and imperialism as ever, and here I was over to the opposition, because of course the Church was lined up with property, with the wealthy, with the state, with capitalism, with the forces of reaction.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (San Francisco: Harper, 1952), 149-150.

¹²⁵ Day, 149.

Day's deep-seated concern for society and her socialist bent had congealed with the Sermon on the Mount in the Corporal works of mercy and come together in the guidance and vision of Peter Maurin.

The books listed in the end of Maurin's *Catholic Radicalism: Essays for the Green Revolution* (1949) show what an unusual character he was. Maurin was neither academician nor politician, vagabond nor teacher, and yet he encompassed all of these characteristics and more. In the back of his book he listed his Great Books that were a must-read for those who wanted to understand his ideas.

In Maurin's reading list we can see the personalist writers, including *La Revolution Personnaliste et Communautaire* and *The Personalist Manifesto* by Emmanuel Mounier. Mounier insisted on a communalism where people shared and where private property was not a way for individuals to control another set of individuals. Instead, everyone had responsibility for each other. The Distributists were well represented, with Chesterton's *Outline of Sanity*. The list also included Arthur Penty's *A Guildsman's Interpretation of History and Post-Industrialism* and *Toward a Christian Sociology*. Also found on the list was *Church and the Land* and *Nazareth or Social Chaos* by Father Peter McNabb. Books by Eric Gill, the artist and convert to Catholicism, included *Work and Leisure* and *Art in a Changing Civilization*.¹²⁶ The socialist writings on the list had a Christian bent and included Nicholas Berdyaev's *The Bourgeois Mind* and *Christianity and Class War*. Peter Kropotkin's *Fields, Factories and Workshops* was also on the list.

¹²⁶ The Distributists also had a great impact on Maisie Ward, who wrote on Chesterton. She was also a member of the agrarian farming Catholic movement and supported many of the attempts of Christian return to the land, as in Marycrest in upper New York. See James Terence Fisher, *The Catholic Counter Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 101-129.

Thomism was represented by Seraphine Michel's *The Thomastic Doctrine of the Common Good*. One of the foremost proponents of Thomism was, Jacques Maritain, who had three books on the list, including *Freedom in the Modern World*, *Temporal Regime and Liberty*, and *Things that are Not Caesar's*. The only writer to have as many books on the list as Maritain was the great English Catholic historian and convert, Christopher Dawson. Four of Dawson's books were on the list: *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, *The Making of Europe*, *Progress and Religion*, and *Religion and the Modern State*.

Religion itself was represented by surprisingly few works. These were not dogmatic or theological; rather, they were lay versions popularizing theological principles. These books included Robert Hugh Benson's work on the mystical body, *Lord of the World*, and Chesterton's very popular *Saint Francis of Assisi*.¹²⁷

What is particularly interesting about Maurin's suggested reading list, in short, is that it contained plenty of books on economics and the morality of the state as well as individual responsibility of the members of the community to each other's welfare. It was not, however, littered with pious books and great theological arguments. It was more of a laymen's guide on how to act and react to society as a Christian. It was a Christian response to socialism and communism, ideas that wanted to respond to capitalism, but on the spiritual side of mankind in its endeavors for peace and justice.

Maurin's plan for the Catholic Worker Movement was fairly straightforward, as Day recounts in her own words in a *Catholic Worker* article in May 1955.

Because Peter's program called for such practical things as houses of hospitality and farming communes or agronomic universities, we have often forgotten the

¹²⁷ To see a complete list of the recommendations of Peter Maurin, see Mark and Louise Zwick, *The Catholic Worker Movement: Intellectual and Spiritual Origins* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 324-325.

first point in his program which was the need for clarification of thought, the need to clarify the “theory of revolution.” He used to quote Lenin as saying, “there can be no revolution without a theory of revolution.” But Peter’s was the green revolution, a call for a return to the villages and the land “to make that kind of society where it is easier for men to be good.”¹²⁸

The first step in Maurin’s program was “clarification of thought,” which sounds very much like the Jocist’s motto of Father Cardijn (founder of the Young Christian Worker Movement): “Observe, Judge and Act.”¹²⁹ Maurin also insisted on a simplistic agrarian life of the soil, making the assumption that the machinery of the industrial age was somehow contaminated by the use of capitalists. His green revolution was not so much a socialist cry for land as it was for a simpler life. It is no wonder that he enjoined St. Benedict as one of his guides. The founder of Western monasticism, St. Benedict’s motto was “*Ora et labora*” (“Work and Pray”), which was the essence of a simplistic life far from the grinding, impersonal machinery of the industrial age.

How Peter loved St. Benedict whose motto was “Work and Pray.” . . . He loved St. Benedict because he said that what the workers needed most was a philosophy of work. He loved St. Francis because he said St. Francis, through his voluntary poverty, was free as a bird. St. Francis was the personalist, St. Benedict the communitarian.¹³⁰

Elective poverty was also one of the main tenets of his vision, in contrast to the society that was slowly turning into consumers. It was part of the personalist agenda that

¹²⁸ From *The Catholic Worker*, May 1955, p. 2, and also at the following website in whole: <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/daytext.cfm?TextID=176>

¹²⁹ See Mary Irene Zotti, *A Time of Awakening: The Young Christian Worker Story in the United States, 1938 to 1970* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1991).

¹³⁰ Day, May 1955.

we are responsible for each other, and that what we have, we share. This was the communalist concept so dear to his teaching.

His whole message was that everything began with one's self. He termed his message a personalist one, and was much averse to the word socialist, since it had always been associated with the idea of political action, the action of the city or the state. He wanted us all to be what we wanted the other fellow to be. If every man became poor there would not be any destitute, he said. If everyone became better, everyone would be better off. He wanted us all "to quit passing the buck."¹³¹

Liberty and freedom were bound up in community life. Maurin recognized the dignity of all and wanted to offer what he had to the high and low. He believed that if we cared for our brothers and sisters there would be no greed, but rather a sharing that would benefit all.

Above all it was in the name of man's freedom that Peter opposed all "government ownership of the indigent," as one Bishop put it. Men who were truly brothers would share what they had and that was the beginning of simple community. "Two 'I's' make a 'we'," he used to say, "and 'we' is a community and 'they' is a crowd," a lonely crowd, he would have added if he had read Reisman's book. Men were free, and they were always rejecting their freedom which brought with it so many responsibilities. He wanted no organization, so The Catholic Worker groups have always been free associations of people who

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

are working together to get out a paper, to run houses of hospitality for themselves and for others who come in “off the road.”¹³²

Lastly, Maurin was very much opposed to wars of any kind—class, race, civil, and international. This would be one of the hallmarks of Dorothy Day, who became very much involved with the Catholic pacifist movement.

In addition to being opposed to international and civil wars, he was opposed to race wars and class wars. He had taken to himself that new constitution that new rule of the Sermon on the Mount, and truly loved his enemies and wanted to do good to all men, including those who injured him or tried to enslave him. He literally believed in overcoming evil with good, hatred with love. He loved the rich as well as the poor, and he wanted to make the rich envy the poor who were so close to Christ, and to try to become closer to them by giving of their means to start these schools, farming communes and agronomic universities. Houses of hospitality are always run by the generosity of the poor who work in them and by the donations of the more comfortably off who send what they can to keep them going.¹³³

Day supplied the journalistic background and the love of the poor, while Maurin, who had few life skills, supplied the communitarian ideas. The *Catholic Worker*, printed by the Paulist Press, becomes the voice of the movement. The press coincided with the founding of the first Hospitality House, open to those who needed a bed, a hot meal, or warm clothes. Day and Maurin were a good match.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

My whole life had been in journalism and I saw the world in terms of class conflict. I did not look upon class war as something to be stirred up, as the Marxists did. I did not want to increase what was already there but to mitigate it. When we were invited to help during a strike, we went to perform the works of mercy, which included not only feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, but enlightening the ignorant and rebuking the unjust.¹³⁴

The Catholic Worker Movement was like no other so far in Catholic Action. It was founded on the principles of Catholic Action, which called for one to live one's religious faith in the real world. But the movement was different because it did not assume or ask for help from the Church for either leadership or organization. It was a lay movement and it did not seek authority from the Church proper, other than it dedicated itself to the corporeal works of mercy, and sought Christ in the poor, regardless of who they were. The movement allied itself with the workers, and with those striving for economic justice.

We started publishing *The Catholic Worker* at 436 East Fifteenth Street in May, 1933, with the first issue of 2,500 copies, within three or four months the circulation bounded to 25,000, and it was cheaper to bring it out as an eight-page tabloid on newsprint rather than the smaller-sized edition on better paper we had started with. By the end of the year we had a circulation of 100,000 and by 1936 it was 150,000.¹³⁵

To give you an example of what Day's work was like, Jean Stafford, the wife of poet Robert Lowell, wrote a brief description of the conditions she found at one of Day's

¹³⁴ Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 181.

¹³⁵ Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 182.

Hospitality Houses. Robert Lowell was working as an editor at Sheed and Ward in 1941, and he would make his wife volunteer at one of the Catholic Worker Houses. She relates the following impressions:

The first time I went down I was terrified just by the approach to the place. It is a block from Pell St. and two from the Bowery, just off Canal. I had to walk seven blocks through the kind of slums you do not believe exist when you see them in the movies, in an atmosphere that was nearly asphyxiating. The Worker office was full of the kind of camaraderie which frightens me to death and I was immediately put at a long table between a Negro and a Chinese to fold papers, a tiring and filthy job. The second time it was about the same except that Mott St. seemed even more depressing and that time I typed.¹³⁶

One can see here in graphic detail the challenge of Dorothy Day's hospitality to middleclass Catholics. She wanted to impel their faith to action, not mere words.

1933 was also the time of the New Deal under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. The stock market crash in October of 1929 had produced a chaotic situation in labor and the country in general. Roosevelt waded into the problem, with some socialist-like programs that were to help the situation. He founded the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Unemployment Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration that was to help farmers. Perhaps one of his most visible programs was the Public Works Administration (PWA), which touched if not employed many people.

¹³⁶ Ian Hamilton, *Robert Lowell: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1982), 82.

It was a bold experiment for the American government, and the people never forgot Roosevelt's compassion for the ordinary citizen. They returned him to office four times for his generous spirit. It was also an experiment in government trying to share with the people for the common good. It was not quite socialism, but it was close enough for the Supreme Court to condemn many of the programs started by Roosevelt's New Deal.

Day's work was well received, especially by those who used her Hospitality Houses, but the hierarchy was still skeptical, perhaps because it misinterpreted her Christianity as being too radical and not sufficiently Church-oriented.

Many were surprised that, in contrast with most charitable centers, no one at the Catholic Worker set about reforming them. A Crucifix on the wall was the only unmistakable evidence of the faith of those welcoming them. The staff received only food, board and occasional pocket money. The Catholic Worker became a national movement. By 1936 there were thirty-three Catholic Worker houses across the country. Due to the depression many needed their help.¹³⁷

The Catholic Worker Movement also experimented with farming. It was one of the tenets of Maurin's philosophy for the Green Revolution. In 1935, there was a rented house and farm on Staten Island, and soon after that Mary Farm in Easton, Pennsylvania. There are still farms connected with the movement today.

As the country made its way as best it could through the Depression years it became obvious that strife was brewing on the international scene. Hitler took control of Germany in 1933 and in 1936 the Spanish Civil War began. War clouds were starting to gather. Day was a pacifist.

¹³⁷ *Encyclopedia of American Catholic History*, 415.

The Catholic Worker's first expression of pacifism, published in 1935, was a dialogue between a patriot and Christ, the patriot dismissing Christ's teaching as an able but impractical doctrine. Few readers were troubled by such articles until the Spanish Civil War in 1936. The fascist side, led by Franco, presented itself as defender of the Catholic faith.¹³⁸

Not all members of the Catholic Worker community agreed with Day, and by the time the United States entered the war, fifteen Hospitality Houses were closed. After the war, Day did not allow the Catholic Worker community to participate in annual civil defense drill because she believed that such preparations for attack were an attempt to promote nuclear war.¹³⁹

Day was instrumental in the civil rights movement of the 60s and in the antiwar movement during the Vietnam conflict. She was last imprisoned in 1973 at the age of 75 for taking part in antiwar demonstrations.

Day is one of the most radical examples of social activism in the Catholic Church. She took the call to the laity very seriously, but she surpassed the gentile and kind institutions that the laity had set up. The various groups that had been set up were under the direct control of the Bishops and the Church hierarchy. If anything, Day even challenged the Church to stand up for the principles that it believed in. The Church was central to Day as the sacraments were central to the mystical body, but her call was to the essence of the radical nature of the corporeal acts of mercy, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and treating anyone who came for help as a neighbor. They were human beings first and their dignity was to be served. Christ had said, "If you do this to the least

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 416.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 416.

of our brethren you do it to me.” Day pushed the institutional Church to recognize the radical call of Jesus. The Church was not very responsive, however. Individual priests were helpful, but the Church was in general an advisory, or at the very least frustrated the work of the Catholic Worker Movement in many ways.

Day came from a Protestant background and had an abortion, a common law marriage, and a child. In spite of all this, she became a Catholic and decided to help the poor. Day wanted to raise the consciousness of the community wherever the Catholic Worker was found. She challenged the Church proper to practice what it preached. In that way, she was a radical both as a Christian and as a woman. Her gender never stopped her work, but then again Day never wanted to serve in the Church in a priestly capacity. She saw herself as the Church, as part of the mystical body. Her feminism was not the kind that most American middleclass women wanted. Day did not strive to be equal to men; she strove to be loved by God. God had made her female, but this did not lessen her capacity to serve and love others. True, it was as a woman that she experienced her faith, but that never limited her challenges to help others. The call of the Gospel was radical, and she was faithful to that call.

Maisie Ward

Maisie Ward stands at the other end of the radical spectrum from Dorothy Day. Ward was born in 1889 on the Isle of Wight, off the southern coast of England. Her parents, Wilfrid and Josephine, were both writers. Ward was the eldest of five children, and she too would become a writer.

Ward was called the “Grandchild of the Oxford Movement” because her grandfather, William George Ward (1812-1882),¹⁴⁰ was a follower of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), one of the chief participants in the Oxford Movement. William George Ward’s book *The Ideal of a Christian Church* (1844) was an important document of that movement that led many in the English upper classes to convert to Roman Catholicism.

William George Ward had converted in 1845 and found himself in a very insular Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in England had been almost a cult unto itself. The laws of Britain, generated by a Church-state relationship necessitated by the split with Rome in the 1530s, prohibited Catholics from holding public office and the professions were closed to them as well. Catholics could not attain a university degree or attend university. They were sealed off into their own world. Wilfrid (1856-1916), Ward’s son, would also be a writer and wrote on nineteenth-century English Catholicism. His books, *William George Ward and the Oxford Movement* (1889) and *William George Ward and the Catholic Revival*, are still read today for they recreate that period in time so accurately.

Maisie Ward’s mother Josephine also wrote novels. Josephine Hope had been raised by her maternal grandmother, the Duchess of Norfolk. Her family had also converted to Catholicism through the Oxford Movement.

The family that Ward was born into was literary, aristocratic, and deeply religious. She was educated at private Catholic schools and was headed towards university, but this was a dilemma for women at the time.

¹⁴⁰ William George Ward (1812-1882) was a professor of mathematics and logic at Balliol College, Oxford.

Cambridge University was orientated toward mathematics and science and did not admit women. London University allowed women to matriculate, but it was too secular for a Catholic woman to attend. To go to university meant to attend Oxford, at least Catholics had some connection. Women attended Oxford lectures in the first decades of this century, but a chaperon had to accompany them and they could not enroll in a degree-granting program.¹⁴¹

Ward grew up in a world torn asunder by World War I and with a practical sense of religion. She thought that belief must be acted on.

The personal decisions of Maisie's life were made against the backdrop of postwar Europe. With the Great War ended, many longed for peace and expected spiritual revival. Four years of slaughter of Christians by Christian promoted both a decline in the influence of most churches and a search for spiritual meaning both in and outside institutional religion.¹⁴²

The writings of Father Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914) deeply influenced Ward. His book, *The Mystical Body and its Head* (1911), made an especially great impression on Ward's thinking, and also became one of the standards in the liturgical movement that was just forming in Europe.

Ward's practical sense of religion led her to join a new society in England called the Catholic Evidence Guild. This proved to be providential in two ways. First, Ward started to see her calling, announcing to the world the Catholic religion, first on the speaking circuit and later in her worldwide publishing career that she undertook in 1926. Second, Ward met Frank Sheed (1897-1981) through the Guild. A young law student

¹⁴¹ Dana Greene, *The Living of Maisie Ward* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 36.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 50.

from Australia, Sheed had joined the Catholic Evidence Guild as a lay preacher in London. Ward and Sheed married in 1926. Ward was 36 at the time and eight years older than Sheed.

Ward's mother Josephine was worried that the young couple would want to live in Australia, where Sheed was from, so she put up the money to found the Sheed and Ward publishing house.¹⁴³ They housed their offices on Paternoster Row in London in the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The goal of Sheed and Ward was to provide books that awakened the reader to truth. "And as publishers," Maisie wrote, "we felt always that our choice of books must be such as to build a deeper awareness of God among Christians."¹⁴⁴

Ward was the vice president of the company and spent her time selecting, editing, and translating manuscripts, cultivating authors, and drawing up contracts. Several months after the founding of the press, however, she found herself pregnant. Rosemary Luke, the couple's first child, was born in 1927. In 1930, Ward gave birth to Wilfrid John Joseph.

Ward's accomplishments were amazing. In addition to her marriage, and two children, she managed to write twenty-nine books (thirty-two in all, if we take into account her edited and translated work). She also lectured and performed Catholic Evidence Guild work. Her energy and commitment to her work is witnessed by her written output and her publishing impact on the Catholic world. As a woman, Ward has no peers in Catholic publishing. She and her husband ran a financially successful

¹⁴³ Originally, the "Ward" was to be Maisie's brother, Leo. When he suffered a nervous breakdown, Maisie, the other "Ward," stepped in. See Greene, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Greene, 73.

publishing house that also disseminated the works of Catholic writers to the English-speaking world.

Sheed and Ward published perhaps the best of the Catholic English Revivalists—G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, C.C. Martindale, Monsignor Ronald Knox, Christopher Dawson, and E.I. Watkin. They united the American Church with many of these monumental Catholic thinkers in the fields of theology, philosophy, and letters. They would publish Father Gregory Baum, Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Urs von Bathasar, Jean Danielou, Karl Rahner, Avery Dulles, and a prelate named Joseph Ratzinger (the current Pope of the Catholic Church). This was quite a feat, especially considering that they managed to stay financially afloat.

Maisie Ward, perhaps more than anyone, brought to our attention the heroic efforts of the French clergy and laity to revitalize the faith in that country. French thinkers and activists, such as Abbe Godin, Abbe Michonneau, Henry Perrin, Jacques Loew, Yves de Montcheuil, Jean Danielou, Yves Congar, Henri deLubac, and Cardinal Suhard, had a profound influence on me.¹⁴⁵

Ward was important as an editor and perhaps most importantly, as a disseminator of Catholic thinking in the 30s, 40s, and on into the important Vatican II 60s in the English-speaking world.

As a writer, Ward herself contributed to several fields in Catholic publishing. Sheed and Ward published for the scholar, but were also genuinely interested in the lay Catholic and his or her education and sanctification. Ward's most effective books were on the Catholic Revival in England. She wrote three books on Chesterton, who not

¹⁴⁵ Dolores Elise Brien, "The Catholic Revival Revisited," *Commonweal*, December 21, 1979, 714-716.

surprisingly had been a personal friend of her family.¹⁴⁶ She wrote *The Oxford Group* (1937) on the Oxford Movement, which her grandfather was an important member of. Ward wrote on John Henry Newman, one of the primary members of the Oxford Movement. She felt competent enough to write the introduction to the Sheed and Ward production of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* in 1946 and the biography *Young Mr. Newman* in 1948. Ward also wrote *Robert Browning and his World*, Vol. I (1967), and Vol. 2, *Two Robert Brownings's?* (1969).

Ward's religious writing covered two areas. The first was the Fathers of the early Church, Anthony of Egypt, and St. Jerome. She wrote on the saints, such as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bernardino. Ward penned several collections on the saints' lives, including *Saints Who Made History* (1959) and *Early Church Portrait Gallery* (1960). These were to be found in all Catholic libraries. They are personal and lay-friendly biographies that are easily accessible to the lay reading public. They were very popular for their time.

Ward also wrote on various women in the Church, including Catherine of Siena (1950). She wrote the introduction to a book by Mary Oliver, *Mary Ward, 1585-1645*, who had been a controversial religious woman of her time. Another controversial and eccentric person who Ward wrote about was Caryll Houselander (1901-1954). Ward was fascinated by this neurotic woman who was so full of Christian compassion. After Houselander's untimely death, Ward edited and published her letters in *The Letters of Caryll Houselander: Her Spiritual Legacy* (1965).

Perhaps the most interesting of Ward's books are those that she wrote about her own life. They are revealing, for they show her dedication to the many causes and works

¹⁴⁶ Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1943), *Return to Chesterton* (1952), introduction written by Maisie Ward, G. K. Chesterton, *The Coloured Lands* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1938).

that she was involved in. She wrote about her family in *The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition*, Vol. 1 (1934), and Vol. 2, *Insurrection and Resurrection* (1937). Ward wrote on the heroic nature of the common person in the Blitz during the war, *This Burning Heat* (1941). She wrote about herself and her family more intimately in *Unfinished Business* (1964) and *To and Fro on the Earth* (1973). One of Ward's most interesting books was a composite of writings that she edited, *Be Not Solicitous: Sidelights on the Providence of God and the Catholic Family* (1953). This we shall look at in Chapter Five, as it involves her comments on Catholic women and motherhood. Ward also wrote some devotional books. The most famous is *The Splendor of the Rosary* (1945) that became very popular as a devotional.

Maisie Ward was a unique person who found herself at a unique place in the English-speaking Catholic world. There are no other women we can mention with both the background and the opportunity to do what she did. Ward was an editor and a writer as well as a street-corner preacher in the Catholic Evidence Guild. She came from a long line of English families that had left the Church during the Reformation and were now seeking the solace of the sacraments of Rome. She was from a long line of writers and practical Christians that were motivated by their faith and their desire to share it with others.

Ward was a radical, in that she made her way alone. Although few women were allowed into the sacred area of theology and philosophy, she just did what she saw as necessary.

Not until the School of Sacred Theology at Saint Mary's College in 1944, were women to study theology as it was traditionally defined. Yet unwittingly, Catholics were reshaping the meaning of theology itself.¹⁴⁷

Ward lectured and spoke to whoever would listen and did not agonize over the male-dominated Church. She did not live her life under the limitations perceived by Christian feminists, and thus her contributions still stand without rival.

Dorothy Dohen

Dorothy Dohen was born in New York City in 1923. At this time, Maisie Ward was 34 years old and Dorothy Day was 26. Dohen was just ten years old when Day founded the Catholic Worker Movement.

Dohen was born into the era of Catholic Action in the American Catholic Church. A remarkable example of the thousands of young people who created the lay Catholic movements of the post-World War II period of the Catholic church in the United States; Young Christian Workers, Young Christian Students, the Grail, the Catholic Action movements of the 1940s, the many dimensions of the lay apostolate. They had caught the meaning the Gospels gave to their young lives; they had a sense of vocation to bring that vision to others, but to bring it as lay persons remaining amid the challenges and complexities of the every-day world.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Dana Greene, "Maisie Ward as Theologian," 50-61. Found in *Women and Theology*, Mary Ann Hinsdale and Phyllis H. Kaminski, eds., Annual Publication of the College Theology Society, 1994. Vol. 40.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph P. Fitzpatrick, S.J. "Dorothy Dohen, A Lay Apostle: Reflection of an Era," *Commonweal*.

Dohen graduated from the College of Mount St. Vincent in New York in 1945 and became a social worker. After graduating from college, she spent time with the Grail and the Young Christian Workers. She was also drawn to writing and wrote for *The Torch*, *Integrity*, *Commonweal*, and *Blackfriars*.¹⁴⁹

In 1951, Dohen wrote her first book, *Vocation to Love*, published by Sheed and Ward. The book was about living a holy life in the world. Many of its chapters appeared as articles in *Integrity*. (Dohen would become the editor of this magazine from 1952 to 1956.) These articles were originally written under her assumed name of Elizabeth Williams. She continued to write under this name until the early fifties.

Vocation to Love represents Dohen's thinking on Catholic Action and their commission to work for a better society.

If the lay apostle has the vocation to restore all thing to Christ, then it follows that he has the vocation to be Christ, or, in other words, to be a humanity for Christ—a humanity for Christ in whom the Word can again be made flesh, to fulfill His mission of establishing order and harmony between God and man, of saving souls, and founding a society that will be conducive to the saving of souls.

If then our vocation is to be a humanity for Christ, we will become holy by becoming just that. The degree that Christ becomes incarnate in us will be the degree of our sanctity. Our mission is to take Christ where he could not go unless we generously give Him our humanity.

¹⁴⁹ These are all Catholic magazines. *The Torch* (1916-) is published by the third order of St. Dominic. *Integrity* was an entirely lay production (1946-1956) edited by Ed Willock. Dohen would be one of its editors. *Commonweal* (1924) was a lay-run magazine. *Blackfriars* (1920) was published under the auspices of the English Dominicans.

We must be sanctified through our apostolate.¹⁵⁰

The depth of Dohen's understanding and knowledge of spiritual matters is rather unique for a young Catholic laywoman of the time. After all, she was just 28 years old when she wrote this book. In 1959, Dohen received her MA. In 1960, she started teaching at Fordham University in New York City. In 1966, she completed her Ph.D.

Dohen wrote her second book in 1958, titled *Journey to Bethlehem*. This book could be summed up in her phrase, "the secular hero dies once; the saint dies daily." Again, this is a practical manual for the laity. A small book of 96 pages, it covers the high points of Christian spirituality, The Cross, Hope, and Love in practice. The last chapter is titled "Daily Heroism" and draws largely on the "little way" of Theresa of Lisieux (1873-1897).¹⁵¹ Theresa was a phenomenon in the turn of the century Church. Her "little way" inspired the ordinary person living an ordinary life to sanctity. Dohen as well as Dorothy Day saw Theresa's simplicity and humility as something that the laity could practice in order to overcome the problem of reaching sanctity and holiness in everyday living.

There is, I say, a scandal to those who want their saints to be inaccessible. They are horrified by her undramatic heroism, by her ordinariness, by her commonplace qualities . . . The simple can understand her and so can the wise.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Dorothy Dohen, *Vocation to Love* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1951), 27.

¹⁵¹ Theresa of Lisieux was canonized in 1925. She did nothing out of the ordinary. She was a nun for nine years and died of consumption. It was her book, *L'histoire d'une Ame*, based on her inner conflicts that made her a saint.

¹⁵² Dorothy Dohen, *Journey to Bethlehem* (Chicago: Fides Publishing, 1958), 88.

Dohen was the editor of *Integrity* magazine, which was started by Ed Willock and a handful of Catholic laypeople in 1946. They started the magazine to confront “complacent Catholics.”¹⁵³ The magazine tried to produce a dialogue with Catholic laypeople and the gospel. It published some of the best Catholic writers, but the emphasis was always on basic virtue and its application to daily life. Willock demanded a down-to-earth vocabulary and a simple, direct message. There were no deep theological arguments or scholarly presentations. The magazine was about basic Christianity and what the basic Christian was doing about it.

Dohen stopped writing and dedicated herself to her students at Fordham, where she taught for 24 years. Though she progressed in spiritual understanding, her private spiritual life was unknown to many.

Her private life with the Lord was a life of profound spiritual experience, a life kept hidden from even her closest friends. It was a life completely of faith, but also a hidden darkness in which she faced alone the terrible mystery of unbelief. Dorothy knew that important aspects of her life—her vocation to love, to the lay apostolate, to virginity, her positive acceptance of death as an integral part of the Christian mystery—all this made no sense at all except through faith. She was deeply aware of the difficulties of faith in our modern world.¹⁵⁴

Dohen’s own life and profession led her to look closely at the need for spirituality for women, particularly single professional women in the Church. It was difficult to find a niche in the Catholic Church as a single woman except the convent or marriage. Single

¹⁵³ Ed Willock, “Catholic Radicalism in America,” in *Catholicism in America: A Series of Articles from Commonweal* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1953), 133-142.

¹⁵⁴ Fitzpatrick, 327.

professional women were not considered except in a marginal, shadowy way. But their ranks were growing, however.

Dohen would address the issue of women in general in her book, *Woman in Wonderland* (1960), published by Sheed and Ward. The book contains fourteen chapters, with the last one titled “Toward a Spirituality for Women.” In the next chapter, we shall look closer at Dohen’s criticisms and guidelines for modern womanhood as she takes on feminism in her book.

Dohen’s greatest contribution to radicalism was her insistence on a place for women intellectuals in the Church. Professional women could be valuable assets to the Church as educated laypersons and as lights to others. Dohen saw her role as a layperson. She was not a militant, and she did not march with or found any militant group. She never married and took a private vow of chastity, so she could fulfill her teaching obligations with single-minded dedication. She was much loved both as a teacher and as a faculty member at Fordham.

Dohen was not unwilling to criticize the American Catholic Church. She saw that the Church was often too close to the national political agenda. Dohen’s last book, *Nationalism and American Catholicism* (1967), was perhaps the book most read by the general public. (Note that this was written as the United States was embroiled in the Vietnamese conflict.) Dohen saw a paternalistic pattern in which the hierarchy aligned itself with the government agenda. She was keenly aware of the implications of this pattern.

Dohen died of cancer in 1984. Her contribution was to make a new pathway for laywomen to attend to their work and become laywomen of grace in the secular world.

This was a new way of influencing the society in which she lived and worked. Dohen was a radical social activist, but she was a quiet one. She gave everything to her work, and she continued to live in the world.

Summation

Dohen, Day, and Ward come to us from a Catholic Church that was set on its mission in the modern world, a mission that was, as Pius X had said, to “bring all things to Christ.” The clergy and the hierarchy had long been an authoritative voice on secular matters, but, at the turn of the century, the Church realized that this authority could no longer be maintained. The Church was quickly going to be marginalized in the coming techno-secular global society. The layperson was the key to the evangelizing of the future.

These three women did not become feminists, yet they lived in the aftermath of the vote and the rise of needed reforms, if women were going to participate in secular society. They believed deeply in the religious call for a spiritualization of their lives. They were concerned with the concept of neighbor and a society that shared the goods that were available in a community setting. That is, they were opposed to a society that disenfranchised people because they were not “worth” anything to the industrial machine that produced the wealth. All people were equal, and all were creations of God. Therefore, all needed one another to make a society work. Religion was something that called us to help and to see everyone as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Although Day was perhaps the most radical social activist of the three, Ward also gave her entire being to disseminate information that would help people read and

understand the problems inherent in the secular world. Dohen represents another radical way of taking her secular teaching and turning her excellence and devotion to her work for the greater glory of God as a layperson.

Feminism and its banner of equality were not deep enough to attract the souls of Day, Dohen, and Ward. What the feminists offered was not a complete system. It was a secular path for a secular world based not on theology, but on the individual's need to participate and define oneself in the masculine world. Day, Dohen, and Ward were not concerned with individual fulfillment; they were doing God's will.

Chapter Five

Why Dohen, Day, and Ward Were Not Feminists

(Suffragists) were an association primarily of white, native-born, middle-class American women between 1890-1920.

Aileen Kraditor¹⁵⁵

For radical feminism the core issue is women's control over their person.

Rosemary Radford Ruether¹⁵⁶

In God's eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root.

John Paul II¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman's Suffrage Movement: 1890-1920* (New York: Crossroads, 1965), 220.

¹⁵⁶ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 228.

¹⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women)*, 1988, sec. 27 (Apostolic Letter).

The advancement of women has been a great social development in the last 150 years. Catholic women were not well represented in the beginnings of American feminism. Although there were a few Catholic women involved with early suffragism, they were the exception and not the rule. Most Catholic women were from the immigrant population base, or they were less educated and not in the majority of the rising middleclass in the mid-1800s, unlike their protestant counterparts. The progress in civil and legal attainments by women in Western society was unprecedented in human history during this time. There were many problems as women stepped out of the family setting and into more active secular roles in society. There were tradeoffs between the social/family responsibilities and the working/active participation of women in secular society.

These changes in the role of women and the demands for a greater self-awareness of woman as person set some dynamic forces in motion that have collided with the moral and ethical understandings of the Catholic Church.

In the meetings of Vatican II (1962-1965), the Catholic Church met the modern world and struggled to guide the Church into a new millennium of Christianity. Sixteen documents were developed. Some of these documents dealt with internal issues, such as revelation, missionary activity, and ecumenism. Others dealt with updating organizations such as the office of Bishop, and with spiritual matters that concerned the education of priests and nuns. The documents reiterated much of what had been said before, but now the laity had their own encyclical, one that addressed their responsibilities. These two documents on the constitution of the Church, one pastoral and the other dogmatic, were

to become in many ways pivotal to the success of the universal Church in dealing with the modern world.

The pastoral *Constitution of the Church in the Modern World* states:

With respect to fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent.¹⁵⁸

This kind of language allowed many Christian feminists to assume the same wording would also be used to eliminate the discrimination of gender in the Church hierarchy. However, there had never been an encyclical on women as women. Women had always been addressed in encyclicals as women within marriage. The closest one may come to a viewpoint on women as women is in John Paul II's apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women)* in 1988. (He further addressed women in his 1995 address, "To the Women of the World."¹⁵⁹)

We are speaking here of the documents of Vatican II, all of which came after Dohen, Day, and Ward had established themselves and their social activism. However, it would not have made any adjustments to a feminist stance for any of these women. This is because today's Roman Catholic Church sees the role of women as intimately tied to their gender role of procreation. This does not necessarily mean that the Church sees all women in the light of their role as procreators, or that they must participate in that action only. Rather, the Church believes that the genius of woman is intimately tied to her role in the creative process, and thus the role of caregiver and service are something that she

¹⁵⁸ *Gaudium et Spes (Constitution of the Church in the Modern World)*, 1965.

¹⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Letter to Women*, 29 June 1995.

brings to each and every place she may be, each and every relationship she has, and each and every role she endeavors to play.

Therefore, the Church gives thanks for each and every woman: for mothers. For sisters, for wife; for women consecrated to God in virginity; for women dedicated to the many human beings who await the gratuitous love of another person; for women who watch over the human persons in the family, which is the fundamental sign of the human community; for women who work professionally, and who at times are burdened by great social responsibility; for “perfect” women and for “weak” women—for all women as they have come forth from the heart of God in all the beauty and richness of their femininity.¹⁶⁰

This letter written by John Paul II warns that the dignity and vocation of women has been challenged by “significant changes in our time.” He pleads for the Church to go back to its foundations so that it may see the issues clearly. John Paul II then goes on to clarify that “In God’s eternal plan, woman is the one in whom the order of love in the created world of persons takes first root.”¹⁶¹

John Paul II finds much to laud in women’s achievements in the Church:

The Witness and the achievements of Christian women have had a significant impact on the life of the Church as well as society. Even in the face of serious social discrimination, holy women have acted “freely,” strengthened by their union with Christ.¹⁶²

John Paul II explains that a woman’s dignity is seen as connected to her

femininity:

¹⁶⁰ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, sec. 31.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, sec. 29.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, sec. 29.

A woman's dignity is closely connected with the love which she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected with the love which she gives in return. The truth about the person and about love is thus confirmed . . . Woman can only find herself by giving love to others.¹⁶³

The Church's stand on this matter has not been without its critics and detractors. The Church has been charged with saying one thing about gender discrimination in the secular world and quite another when it comes to women's role in the Church. However, the Church has never taught anything other than equal but separate roles for the genders. Currently, the arguments for priesthood and diaconate for women are hotly debated between Christian feminists and the Church; however, this is not the issue of this particular paper. Here we are to establish that feminism from its onset was a social movement that had its early roots in the "equality" concept that was part of the initial liberalism that flourished idealistically. Feminism then evolved as a powerful social concept spurred by a rising middleclass and industrialization.

Catholicism, as Church, produced a social structure of its own by the sacramental life. Marriage was seen as a sacrament and not as a social structure or "contract." A woman had a twofold pathway in which she could fulfill her life, as perfect or imperfect as it was—marriage or vowed virginity. Over the last 100 years, the Church has often spoken on the impact of the social responsibility of the Catholic in the modern world. Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* is a good example of the social doctrine enunciated for this world, as are the subsequent encyclicals that tell the Catholic what his or her duty is in modern society.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 30.

With the rise of the middleclass came challenges to the social structure of the basic unit of society, the family. In order for women to participate in the new structure of society they had to have some protection and realign their responsibilities to the family in a way that allowed them to undertake a manageable role in modern society, if they wanted to be part of it. The issues of liberty and equality began to translate into instruments that would allow them a “freedom of person” or freedom as an individual person. Divorce, birth control, and abortion are all traceable to this concept of “freedom of person.” This falls under the banner that men and women must be “equal.”

The Church has never taught that men and women were not equal. It has taught that men and women are equal before their creator, but that each has a distinct role to play in living. The concept of “freedom of person” is found in the role that we are called to. This does not mean that women may not participate in the secular world. Rather, it simply means that women have basic roles to play in society and that if they choose to participate in secular society they may do so, but they cannot change their basic call in life. It is this call to our role that will give us the freedom to be who we were created to be.

In other words, a mother may work, but her family comes first. A woman may engage with the world, but her marriage is sacred until death. A female may become pregnant, but “new life” is sacred and it is her responsibility to bring the first love to this new life. In her pregnant state, woman is in the sacred role of her gender. The Catholic woman finds her “freedom” in her gendered role. She may control her reproductive rights. She may choose not to marry. She may choose to discipline her sexuality and by

cooperating with her husband, they may limit their family to what is reasonable according to circumstances or situations.

What the Church questions in the use of artificial birth control is the economically opportune selection of family simply for a comfortable lifestyle. The Church has been in agreement that all acts of procreation should be open to the potential for conception. However, it is not averse to limiting the procreative act. This is a complicated concept for up until recently the Church held that procreation was the only reason for the act in marriage. Subsequently the Church has come to recognize that sexuality in marriage may also be for communication between the couple. It is, in fact, part of the communication that allows growth in married love.

In *Humane Vitae* (1968) the Church does allow for a form of family planning.¹⁶⁴ However, abortion is banned in all cases. It is viewed as the chief tool of “personal freedom of person,” a cornerstone of liberal modern philosophy. For the Church, abortion is the antithesis of true freedom. It is the very banning of the element of “love” from the unborn. It violates the definition of “mother,” and regardless of the liberal and natural rights of the individual, the higher ethic is the love for the human being so formed in the mother. A mother’s sacrificial love with all of its physical and psychological attributes is the very building block of a Catholic society, as well as Christian community.

Many in the Church wrote on the woman issue, especially as gender became a topic at the turn of the century. We have shown in previous chapters the Church’s

¹⁶⁴ Called the rhythm method, it is a method of gathering information on the woman’s reproductive cycle. This information allows the couple to have intercourse that will limit the opportunity for fertility. Most dioceses in the United States have a married couple that teaches classes on this method. The method is not as reliable as other methods of controlling births. It has come under criticism from Catholics who are married and from clergy. For an excellent account of this and the Church’s struggles against contraception see Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Catholics and Contraception* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2004).

response to the issue of “birth control” as well as its insistence on defining woman in light of her procreative role in society. But there were also women who wrote on the category of “Catholic Woman.” As obedient daughters of the Church, none of these writers condoned feminism; on the contrary, they willingly reinforced the Church’s complementary stand on gender. In 1969, however, there came a break after Vatican II, when Catholic women did question much of the gendered teaching. The two most prominent names in this initial phase of questioning are Mary Daly (*The Church and the Second Sex*, 1968) and Rosemary Radford Ruether.¹⁶⁵ Ruether’s first book is a critique of the theological tradition in the Church (*The Church Against Itself*, 1967). Note that these books come right after Vatican II. It was in fact Vatican II that opened the doors to dialogue and discussion in many areas that had been under-discussed or considered improper topics. Up until this time, certain areas such as women and priesthood as well as women and oppression by the patriarchy were nonexistent subjects that the Church deemed unnecessary to Catholic life and discussion.

Women Writing on Women and the Church

Before Vatican II there are examples of women writing on the Church’s teaching. Many of these authors were not Americans, but Europeans or transplanted Europeans. These authors wrote books that were popular reading for Catholic women in their times.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether is still one of the most prominent scholars and theologians writing on Christian feminism in the United States today.

¹⁶⁶ There were male writers on Catholic women, such as Father William B. Faherty. Faherty was known for his book *The Destiny of Modern Woman: In the Light of Papal Teachings* (1950). He was also interested in a new type of woman in the Church—the single, highly educated woman who was often part of the academic or professional ranks. Faherty’s book *Living Alone: A Guide for the Single Woman* (1964)

Perhaps one of the most widely read was Sigrid Undset(1882-1949). Undset is s well known for her fiction, *Kristin Lavransdatter* (1920-1922) for instance, she is also the author of books on women in the secular world and the hardships and choices that they had to make to be women and still participate in modern society, such as *Jenny*(1911). Her more contemporary novels are not as well known as her Norwegian trilogies which she won the Nobel prize for in 1928. She also wrote against feminism in her essays which unfortunately have not been translated. Undset became a Catholic in 1924, and remained a great defender of Catholicism and human dignity, She is well known in her native Norway for her defiant stand against Hitler . When Norway was invaded by the German's she went to the United States for the duration of the war.

Gertrud von le Fort (1876-1947), who was born into a French family in Germany, wrote on women and their role in society. Her book *The Eternal Woman* was printed in serial style in 1936.¹⁶⁷ In her own words, the book was about “the religious significance of femininity and its ultimate reflection in God.”¹⁶⁸ Catholic feminist Mary Daly would use this book to make a case against the Church in her own infamous book, *The Church and the Second Sex*. This book heralds the coming of radical Catholic feminism. Daly targets von le Fort's book because it sold over a hundred thousand copies of the German original and was thus widely distributed and purchased. It represented the official Catholic point of view, but it also became a much sought-after text that Catholic women obviously saw as a guide.

addressed the larger topic of single women in the Church, regardless of profession. This was a new and growing group that the Church had not given much attention to.

¹⁶⁷ The book appeared in Germany in 1934. It was syndicated in *Commonweal Magazine* in 1936.

¹⁶⁸ Gertrud von le Fort, *The Eternal Woman* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1962), viii.

Gertrud von le Fort's book was translated into French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and English. The concept of the "The Eternal Woman" was doomed, Daly says, because it did not take into account psychological, biological, historical, and social facts. She further found that von le Fort was fundamentally anti-evolutionistic in regard to women.¹⁶⁹ Note that the change is from the Church's concept of the symbolic woman to the more scientific understanding of the authentic person. Daly finds:

The Eternal Woman, to have a vocation to surrender and hiddenness; hence the symbol of the veil. Selfless, she achieves not individual realization but merely generic fulfillment in motherhood, physical or spiritual (the wife is always a mother to her husband as well as to her children). She is said to be timeless and conservative by nature. She is shrouded in "mystery" because she is not recognized as a genuine human person.¹⁷⁰

Another writer that influenced Catholic women was Eva Firkel, born in Breslau in 1906. Her book *Woman in the Modern World* was translated into English from the German in 1956. Her book was a Christian outline of relationships that covered all of the biological and psychosomatic characteristics of women. It was a combination of Christian religious teaching and scientific terminology. Her book was well received by the Church for it was not written in the pious and religious language that so many books on women in the past had been and it had the veneer of a scientific language.

Also *The Grail's* Lydwine Van Kersbergen contributed articles to *Catholic World*. These articles were later gathered and published as a booklet entitled *Woman:*

¹⁶⁹ R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, and William L. Portier, *Creative Fidelity: American Catholic Intellectual Tradition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 300.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 300.

Some Aspects of her Role in the Modern World (1956). This booklet was not revolutionary and very much the Church's admonition of "acceptance."

Dorothy Dohen was one of the new hybrid Catholic women. She was a university professor who contributed to the literature on the spirituality of women in modern times. Dorothy Dohen's book, is one of the first things written by an academic Catholic woman on "Women" to be published first by the Catholic house of Sheed and Ward and then by a secular press. Her book *Women in Wonderland* (1960) addressed women who were entering the age of the modern world, as the Church was approaching Vatican II. It was the culmination of the teachings of the Church to that point, but it was also more than that. It was not repetition of Church doctrine, but a thoughtful and realistic view of woman and the dilemma of living in the modern secular world as woman and Catholic.

Edith Stein(1891-1942) who was philosopher and teacher and was concerned deeply with women and her new role in society was of Jewish heritage and became a Catholic and then a Carmelite nun. It must be noted that she too was a friend of Father Przywara's as has been Le Fort. Her work was not as well known in the general population because it was not translated from the German until after the Second World War. However, Stein's writings did appear in *Integrity* magazine, which Dorothy Dohen edited in the mid-1950s.¹⁷¹

Two very interesting influences on the woman issue come from very diverse sources, but the impact of each has yet to be studied in depth. Interestingly, both women were French. Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897) was a French Carmelite. Her writings were simple but famous and include *The Story of a Soul*. Although Therese did not write

¹⁷¹ Articles such as John M. Oestereicher, "Edith Stein on Womanhood," *Integrity* Vol. VII, No. 12 (September), 28.

specifically for women, her simple book captured the Christian world's attention. Therese became the favorite of Dorothy Day.¹⁷² However, the pathway to sanctity that she wrote about was filled with attitudes and sacrifices similar to those that the Church used in the rhetoric and guidance of Catholic women to a life of gendered happiness. A scholarly book has yet to be written on the influence of this very young French Carmelite in the modern Catholic world.

Lastly, there was a secular book written on women whose impact was on an international level and difficult to ignore. The second wave of feminism can be traced to this very influential writer. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) published *Le Deuxieme Sexe* in two successive volumes. *The Second Sex* was published in English in 1953. It traced the oppression of women through a patriarchal Western history. The book became very influential in the secular world and helped radicalize American women.¹⁷³

Postscript:

I would like to remind the reader that we are dealing here with women prior to Vatican II. Since then new scholarship on women from works by Rosemary Radford Ruether and other feminist theologians, has asked many questions of the institutional Church. We are just beginning to see scholarship on the women of the Catholic Church that contains both feminist and more traditional, "unchallenging" conservative, Catholic women. I would direct your attention to the last ten years where we have seen material such as Christel Manning's article "Women in a Divided Church: Liberal and

¹⁷² Dorothy Day. *Therese* (Notre Dame: In: Fides Publishing, 1960).

¹⁷³ We must further note that it was almost in parallel years that Alfred C. Kinsey made his contribution to human sexuality. His *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* was published in 1948. His *Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* followed in 1953.

Conservative Catholic Women Negotiate Changing Gender Roles.”¹⁷⁴ Manning is also the author of the Book *God Gave Us the Right*,¹⁷⁵ a book that looks at conservative evangelical Protestant women, Jewish Orthodox women and conservative Catholic women, trying to look at similar factors that keep these women out of the mainstream of feminism. One of the interesting points made in the book is that feminism is defined in many differing ways. Elaine Howard Ecklund’s journal article, “Catholic Women Negotiate Feminism: A Research Note,”¹⁷⁶ also looks at other cultures as Islam and Hebrew and seeks factors that may be the same for Catholic conservative women. Finally, new scholarship on the moral issues of contraception and feminism are now current. A new book called, *The Moral Veto: Framing Contraception, Abortion and Cultural Pluralism in the United States* by Gene Burns looks at the political and feminist interpretation of the issues of contraception and abortion.

Debra Campbell’s *Graceful Exits* discusses the future of women in the Catholic Church. She claims that the “real” women, those who have made real contributions to society and Church were women who remained Catholic in heart but had to leave the Church to do anything worthwhile as individuals. She finds that the narratives written by Catholic women are full of reactions to their female church education which although opting for pious and chaste women, truly preaches a self denial of all individuality.

174 Christel J. Manning, “Women in a Divided Church: Liberal and Conservative Catholic Women Negotiate Changing Gender Roles” *Sociology of Religion* v 58p.375-90 Winter ’97.

¹⁷⁵ Manning, Christel. *God Gave us the Right*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999

¹⁷⁶ Elaine Howard Ecklund, “Catholic Women Negotiate Feminism: A Research Note” *Sociology of Religion* 64 no4 515-24 Winter 2003.

In narratives written by Catholic women, the enchantment that is killed is the magic conjured by the promise of salvation through self-erasure, absolute, body-denying asceticism, and submission to reason and authority: the foundational teachings of a traditional Catholic girlhood.¹⁷⁷

It is the loss of individuality that marks the argument of her book. Individuality sets feminists apart and makes them less submissive to unequal or oppressive social situations. The women of her book, are all former Catholics who had to leave the Catholic Church in order to be themselves, according to Campbell. These women are diametrically opposed to the Radical Social Activist of my thesis.

There are two books that conclude the arguments on traditional women in the Church, one written by Alice von Hilebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman*,¹⁷⁸ which is much of the old ideas between two covers, however, it is beautifully written and transcendent so we cannot disagree with the basic premise of the book which is the teaching of the Catholic Church to this point on women. There is in short, nothing new here. However, there is another book *Women In Christ: Towards a New Feminism*, edited by Michele Schumacher¹⁷⁹, that bears study and interest. It is not a simple reworking of the message of the Church. It is an intelligent and scholarly presentation of faithfulness to the Church but with a hope that some of the issues could be addressed. It

¹⁷⁷ Campbell, Debra. *Graceful Exits: Catholic Women and the Art of Departure*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003,) xxiv,

¹⁷⁸ Alice von Hildebrand. *The Privilege of Being a Woman*. (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Sapientia Press, Ave Maria University, 2002)

¹⁷⁹ Michele M. Schumacher ed. *Women in Christ: Towards a New Feminism*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2003).

would bear further study by all who are interested in the gender issues and the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

Dohen, Day, and Ward all had the opportunity to join the modernist and feminist culture of their times. Indeed, Dorothy Day was involved with bohemian “Village” life for several years. She was also an activist for liberal causes such as the suffragette movement and worked for such Modernist magazines as *The Masses*. Day had affairs, an abortion, and finally a common law marriage. She was drawn to a communalist philosophy, but had looked long and hard at communism. At the time of her conversion to Catholicism she greatly admired personal communalism, as taught to her by Peter Maurin.

Maisie Ward was certainly never in the same political and social company as Day. She was not married until later in life. Although she had a fruitful marriage she and her husband spent many days and months apart due to a lecture schedule or to managing the international publishing house they had started in 1926. In 1933 an office was opened in New York, and after that Ward and her husband Frank lived between the two continents. Remember that Ward was responsible for 29 books of her own, as well as 2 children. (Ward always had help with her children, thus she had more time to spend on research and writing.)

Maisie assumed that a woman’s vocation was within the family, but her own life was always a public one. Her suggestion in “Plea for the family” that women care

for each other's children was in the very least ironic, given her own inability to care for her young children.¹⁸⁰

Ward is a woman of contradictions, however. She supported the traditional role of women in the Church, but then she could do nothing else. Ward could not or would not take on this contradiction in her life; to do so would have meant that she had to take on Catholicism as well.¹⁸¹ Her life was shot through with authority and to her the Church was the ultimate authority. Ward tried in her own way to further thinking and pondering about Christianity in her publications and lectures. She did not see the merit in challenging the authority of the Church. Unlike Dorothy Day (or Broness de Hueck, another social activist who founded Madonna House and worked with racial issues Harlem) Ward did not adopt a radical lifestyle to help further her message. She was an efficient Catholic who accepted the dogma of the Church and was a woman who lived by the rules.

Dohen, on the other hand, was from the era of Catholic Action of the 30s and 40s. There is a generational gap between Ward and Day, who were born in the 1890s, and Dohen, who was born in the 1920s. This deference is evident in her easy acceptance of the secular world. Dohen was born into the era of Catholic Action, and thus was highly motivated to live her Catholic life in a secular setting. She did not choose the convent nor did she follow the path to marriage. She was content to see herself as a laywoman within the Church, where her true contribution was made. The spirituality of the laywoman was her constant interest.

¹⁸⁰ Dana Green, *The Living of Maisie Ward* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 147.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

Dohen was different from the two earlier women in many ways. She was unlike Ward, who had successfully transferred her obedience to the Church as woman. She was also unlike Dorothy Day, who was insistent on the Christian practice of love of neighbor, regardless of gender, race, or class. Dohen was an “educated” laywoman, teaching at Fordham University for 24 years.¹⁸²

Recall that in 1914 Dorothy Day had been a student at the University of Illinois at Urbana, but never took a degree.¹⁸³ Maisie Ward did not take any advanced degrees either. She had early on dedicated herself to the Catholic Evidence Guild and it was there she met her future husband, Frank Sheed. She had already published by the time she was married in 1926.

Dorothy Dohen was an articulate laywoman who understood modern secular society and tried hard to form spirituality for professional women in the Church. Like Day and Ward, she never went down the path of secular feminism, considering that she was in the very birthing grounds of Christian feminism. The most articulate feminists in the Catholic Church were to come from the ranks of Catholic academic women, such as Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Dohen had written *The Vocation to Love* (1951), *Journey to Bethlehem* (1958), and her most articulate work on women, *Woman in Wonderland* (1960). Her first two books are small, simply written, and lucid treatises on spirituality. What is amazing is that these were written when she was 28 and 35, which was quite a feat for one so young and living in the secular world.

The realistic demands of feminism and the necessary individuality of voice are not present in Dohen’s rhetoric. She willingly embraces Church teaching, as seen in this

¹⁸² Patrick W. Carey, *The Roman Catholics* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 206.

¹⁸³ William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 31.

small passage that she wrote on Mary, the Mother of God who is the ideal model of womanhood for Catholic women.

Her “Be it done unto me according to thy word,” is our example of wholehearted surrender to the Holy Spirit, perfect acceptance of the Will of God exactly how and when and in what way He desires its accomplishment. At every moment of her life, in all her joys and sorrows, in the marvelous bliss of the first Christmas day as well as in the last dreadful hour on Calvary, Mary was always accepting. She was always ready to let His Will be done, always perfectly abandoned to it, always willing to embrace it.¹⁸⁴

There are 14 chapters to this book, and they basically break down into the theology of woman and the types of women—married, widowed, vowed, and single. Dohen’s last chapter on the “Spirituality of Women” is interesting for it culminates in a concept not often seen in Catholic writing. The chapters are free of sentimental and quasi-church saccharin language used when describing women or the Virgin Mary. Her final chapter is realistic, tough, and demanding.

The cross is all the more difficult to bear when it comes into the life of those who never expect to receive it. In a civilization like our own, dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, suffering seems especially out of place. Yet great suffering persists; we may know about it professionally or merely read about it in the newspaper. We may dedicate our days to relieving it or we may simply contribute an occasional dollar to the victims of famine and war. But since the presence of suffering in an age which inordinately desires ease and a good time, presents what

¹⁸⁴ Dorothy Dohen, *Vocation to Love* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1951), 161.

may become a spiritual crisis for the individual, it is necessarily related to seeking God.¹⁸⁵

Dohen makes some interesting observations on American society, and the family in particular. She finds that American life is culturally and historically pinned to business for definition. The economic institution has been called the primary characteristic institution of American society.¹⁸⁶

Dohen sees a direct relationship between capitalism and the family and women in American society:

The primary position that business takes in American life has important ramifications for the family and, as a consequence, for the position and happiness of women. Obviously, if business is primary, the family has to be secondary. One may well ponder how far this fact influences the woman's evaluation of herself.¹⁸⁷

Dohen is not suggesting that women stay at home, but she is pleading for recognition of how central family is to community. She is uncannily accurate in her observation of the family in 1960. As we look at this period some 50 years ago, her observations seem prophetic:

The nuclear family is then in an ironic position. Because the center of American life has moved outside the home, the home can do less and less for the family. The family performs fewer and fewer functions for itself and consequently is weakened. The less the family is capable of doing for itself the more the functions are taken over by outside agencies, the more dispensable the family apparently becomes and the more inadequate and unnecessary the woman dedicated solely to

¹⁸⁵ Dorothy Dohen, *Women in Wonderland* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 261.

¹⁸⁶ Dohen, 55.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

her family feels. Practically every vital function once performed by the family has now become the specialized task of professional people.¹⁸⁸

Dohen makes some startling observations about the Industrial Revolution that may explain the psychological roots of feminism. She found that in pre-industrial society men and women worked side by side. Most of the work was done in the home. There were no offices or factories where one went to work. In this society, men and women woke up surrounded by their work. Childcare, cooking, farm chores, and weaving were all done in and around the home. It was the Industrial Revolution that took the work out of the home and into the factory. In short, it moved production out of the home. Women became isolated from the core and were left only with the chores.

The consequent dissatisfaction has never been resolved. Now a woman seems to face these alternatives: either she must stay in the home and care for her children and feel herself shut off from the production of society, or if she desires to participate in what she feels is the larger work, she must leave the home and thereby fulfill inadequately her duty to her offspring. The roles of producer and mother can no longer be combined without strain.¹⁸⁹

We can trace some of Dohen's ideas back to Thorstein Veblen, who coined the phrase "conspicuous consumption" and discussed the visual message it gave to community.¹⁹⁰

Dohen goes on to talk about birth control and the conflicts it brings into many Catholic women's lives. She talks about feminism and its roots, but more important she does not take on a blind allegiance to Church doctrine. She is a thinking scholar and sees

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁹⁰ Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) was an American economist best known for *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published in 1899.

the modern solutions for women as flawed, not because she is blindly espousing Church teachings, but because she sees the wisdom in the Church's understanding and dedication to the human person. "Their solution to the difficulties of women, quite consistently, is a return to the feminine patterns of years ago."¹⁹¹ Dohen realizes that women are in a new society; however, she offers hope of living as a woman and as a good Christian. Unlike much of the other literature of the Church on women, she demands that they have enough love and education to see what is right for a Christian woman in the modern world.

It is their obligation to assess Christian values and the values of their own society, and to fulfill in their personal lives a feminine role adapted to contemporary needs.¹⁹²

This may sound very simplistic, but her last chapter on "A Spirituality for Women" reviews the Church's basic principle teachings on women.

The Spirit of loving surrender, or self-effacement before the marvel of the divine creative action, of simplicity in waiting until He accomplishes His designs does seem to be especially a woman's way to perfection.¹⁹³

Dohen further states that our culture in the United States is not conducive to docility, simplicity, and self-effacement. These values are foreign to American women and are no longer necessary in contemporary American society. For a modern woman, these virtues are difficult to understand, much less acquire. The "rational" is often the hallmark of modern culture, yet there is an entire person of feeling, emotion, and will that is untouched. It is as if women have negated this half of themselves so they can fit into the modern definition of Woman. According to Dohen, women have taken on the masculine

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 250.

shell while still having the needs of the feminine discourse within. This is the dilemma of the modern women.

Dorothy Day's writings on feminism are limited. June O'Connor, one of Day's biographers, dedicates chapter two of her book *The Moral Vision of Dorothy Day* to "The Woman: Ally and Critic of Feminism." O'Connor says Day's writings yield numerous observations that conform to conventional patriarchal outlook.¹⁹⁴

Another feminist scholar, Patricia McGowan, thought Day was not an advocate of women's suffrage. She believes that Day was not a feminist in any self-conscious, intentional, or public way. Day spurned sociopolitical feminism, and she was no closet feminist either.¹⁹⁵ Insofar as the women's movement emphasized rights over responsibilities and focused on freedom rather than justice, it failed to engage Dorothy Day.¹⁹⁶

Day was more concerned with transcendent values that would build the Mystical Body, promote Justice, and lead one to do good works for one's neighbor. She found the women's movement to be a middleclass construction with self-centered aims. Day was interested in humanity. She was interested in seeing what values healed rather than divided people. At the end of her book *Loaves and Fishes*, she offers this simple but telling summary of what she was doing:

Yes, we fail in love, we make our judgments and we fail to see that we are brothers; we are all seeking love, seeking God, seeking the beatific vision. All sin

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁹⁵ Patricia McGowan, "Somebody Loves You When You Are Down and Out," *U.S. Catholic* 40 (1975): 28-31.

¹⁹⁶ O'Connor, 45.

is perversion, a turning from God and turning to creatures. If only our love had been stronger and truer, casting out fear.¹⁹⁷

Day, Ward, and Dohen could have easily participated in feminism. If they did not live in its historical presence they could have been involved as Day was with its social presence. Day was a convert to Catholicism and grew in holiness. This holiness sought a deeper and less institutionalized Church. Her demands of the Corporeal Works of Mercy were absolute necessities if we were to live a Catholic life in our communities. Day never chose to make her movement an institution of the Catholic Church, however, for that would have made it an adjunct to the institutional Church. She was a layperson who demanded that the secular world be just and equitable. Day did not want the voice of the Church to speak, but the lay voice of the Catholic Worker. This was a radical idea for its time. There were no gender issues to her work, as everyone who was in need, male or female, could be helped by any man or woman. The Mystical Body of Christ was everywhere and represented by everyone she met or who needed her help.

Ward, on the other hand, lived a life of privilege and yet she went to work as a lay preacher. She could have entered a convent, but she was compelled to be a layperson. She and her husband, Frank Sheed, brought important Catholic authors to the modern, English-speaking Christian world. She was devoted to the Church not merely in the sense of the institution, but as the holder of truth. It was this she was trying to put before the secular world—the written Truth. Ward could have been a feminist, as many had chosen that road in her socioeconomic class. As with Dorothy Day, Ward's devotion to the Mystical Body enlarged the world rather than limited it.

¹⁹⁷ Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1963), 184.

Dohen valiantly stood before the 60s and 70s as an academic woman who spoke of humility and self-sacrifice. She believed that women needed to learn to serve and to find the great wisdom in being “hidden.” She saw feminism as a limiting, self-centered search that would only lead to problems for the individual, the family, and ultimately the entire community. Dohen did not think one should sugarcoat the situation as feminism demanded. There were solutions, but they were not immediate. To be real and to be a woman was difficult in these uncertain times, but if a woman knew who she was, then she would have the grace to choose wisely. This was the radical thought of Dorothy Dohen.

All three of these women used their faith to engage secular society. Each one saw the deep truths and wisdom of the teachings of the Church, even though often patriarchy and institutional limitations were obvious in their own lives. They chose to work around these barriers. They challenged the Church to grow in new ways. Women founded major international social work groups, such as the Catholic Worker. They founded Catholic publishing houses and they spoke on street corners. They taught and wrote on topics that were clear, but at the same time critical of Catholic presentations on women.

Gender had not entered the Church’s conscience at the turn of the century. Its chief concerns were marriage and the family, procreation ethics, and divorce. Catholic women were either too busy or too uneducated to take roles in society. The search for “equality” as witnessed in suffragism led to the vote and the upward mobility of a capitalistic system, which changed a great deal for women in the last century. New opportunities arose and women wanted them. These opportunities in turn modified the basic pattern of women’s lives in Western society. Family limitation, modification of the

marriage laws, such as divorce, and education for women were essential elements of the feminism that was developing beyond the simple “vote” issue. For women, a new outlook was emerging for themselves and their futures.

The challenges to the Catholic Church on gender issues were minimal until after Vatican II. Day, Dohen, and Ward were loyal daughters of the Church, but they were radicals in that what they did in each of their lives was push limits. They did this not only where laywomen were concerned, but in their social activism, where they opened new roads for women to minister in the Catholic Church.

Feminism was not an active principle in the Catholic Church until after Vatican II. It was founded by Catholic academics. But as we have seen the Church has stood firm on its definition of woman. The concept of evolution in society is a rather new idea. It is curiously related to the principles of science, not faith. The complementary aspects of gender have not changed in the Catholic Church, and even the most recent documents from the Vatican are steadfast in their consistent theology on women.

Day, Dohen, and Ward were followers of the theology of the Mystical Body of Christ. Their deep spirituality sets them apart. They were people of faith first and women second. Feminism, which places women first and spirituality second, was not attractive to any of them. Perhaps these three radical women understood that, as the gospel says, “the truth shall set you free.”

The concepts of feminism right from the start were not compatible with the Church’s teaching on women. Dohen, Ward, and Day had ample opportunity to ingest the feminist line of thinking. However, they remained dedicated to the Church as Mystical Body and to the ideal of Catholic Action. They stormed the secular world of their times

with radical social activism that was more interested in the wholeness of the person.

Feminism, to their thinking, was limiting to the human person and self-centered.

Dohen, Ward, and Day realized the limitations of being a woman in the Catholic Church, but that did not stop them from pursuing the truth and living a Christian life in the secular world. What made them radical was their single-mindedness and devotion to the sacramental life, as well as their belief that it was important for the world to join in its benefits. They were women with a mission to bring peace, truth, and love to the secular world. They had learned that when one loved with their whole being it mattered little what their gender was. They did not define their person through gender; rather, they considered gender to be a given, and made it the starting point from where they would pursue their personhood.

However, Day, Dohen and Ward were still very much individuals as we have seen, who impacted their communities if not their Church, and they did it without leaving the Church tradition.

We have looked into a framework of the American Catholic Church from 1920-1960. The Church by the early twenties had second-generation immigrant American Catholics. By the 1960s the Church would enter Vatican II and come out changed in a multitude of ways. However, dogma never changes. It can be reinterpreted perhaps but not changed. The entire feminist and suffrage concept has made great progress for the world, or has it? Could some of these ideas be part of a progress that perhaps at some future date others may find folly or inaccurate as to our true human nature? I believe that

the Church, although slow moving, and not particularly prone to the concept of progress—revelation perhaps, but not progress—can only speak the truth. Feminism has already taken up miles and miles of books in scholarship and many hours and years of documentation and studies on the inequality of the sexes. In the end, we are finite beings, regardless of our gender. It seems to me that Ward, Day and Dohen precipitated a great wisdom, enabling them to see deeper to our nature as human beings, a nature of love. Yes, gender is the very covering of our efforts, but that does not stop the charge of “love one another as I have loved you.” This statement is equal for both men and women.

I would like to reflect on the words of John Paul II as he spoke to the vocation of women, that we (women) are the first place another human learns to love, that we are the first teachers of the child, and we are the heart when the head has relied only on logic and legality. We can bend when we must and heal those who need help. When all else fails, we can love, not because we want to be equal, but because we must, if we are to be truly human. I do not see Day, Ward or Dohen as submissive puppets of the Church’s teaching but as pilgrims that loved and used every opportunity they had to make that love change the secular world around them.

Addendum A.

Chronology for the Modern Feminist Era and American Catholic Church

- 1833 Oberlin College allows women to attend but not to take a degree
- 1840 Female delegates Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are forced to sit in the gallery and not participate at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London
- 1848 The first Women's Rights Convention is held July 19-29th in Seneca Falls, N.Y. Elizabeth Cady Stanton writes the "Declaration of Sentiments"; its 9th resolution is for the vote.
- 1849 Elizabeth Blackwell, first woman doctor to graduate from medical school
- 1853 Antoinette Brown Blackwell, first woman to be ordained as a Congregational minister
- 1867-1913 Referenda on woman suffrage is held in states
- 1867-1914 National Women's Suffrage Association is founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
- 1873 Comstock Act limits the distribution of birth control materials via the United States mail
- 1880 Leo XII Encyclical *Arcanum* (On Christian Marriage)
- 1882 United States Malthusian League
- 1889 Maisie Ward is born in England
- 1891 Leo XIII's Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labor)
- 1893 Catholic Lay Congress in Chicago
- 1895 Elizabeth Cady Stanton writes *The Women's Bible*
- 1897 Dorothy Day is born in New York
- 1898 publication of *The Story of a Soul* by Therese Martin, Canonized in 1925
- 1907 Pius X Encyclical *Pacendi Dominici Gregis* (Doctrine of Modernism)
- 1911 Marie Curie is awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry
- 1913 *The Women Rebel* is founded and edited by Margaret Sanger to support birth control

- 1914 National Birth Control League is founded
- 1917 America enters WWI
- 1918 War Over
- 1919 American Bishops speak out on birth control (Pastoral Letter, 1919)
- 1919 The National Prohibition Act passes--(Volstead Act) Eighteenth Amendment
- 1920 The Nineteenth Amendment (Women Suffrage) passes
- 1920 Joan of Arc is canonized
- 1920 Margaret Sanger writes *Women and the New Race*
- 1921 Sacco and Venzetti are convicted but not executed until 1927
- 1921 Immigration Act of 1921 limits immigrants from certain parts of Europe
- 1921 First American Birth Control meeting is held in New York City: Sanger is arrested.
- 1922 The American Social Hygiene Association begins sex education
- 1923 Margaret Sanger writes *Happiness in Marriage*
- 1923 Dorothy Dohen is born in New York
- 1924 *Commonweal* magazine is founded by Catholic laymen
- 1925 Scopes trial on Evolution
- 1925 *Oratre Fratres* Magazine is founded (Liturgical revival)
- 1925 Theresa of Lisieux is canonized by Pope Pius IX: (Pope John Paul is to make her a Doctor of the Church
- 1926 Sheed and Ward Publishing House is founded in London,
- 1927 Dorothy Day becomes a Roman Catholic
- 1929 Stats: 1) 80% of family needs are purchased by women, 2) seven out of ten homes have electricity, 3) 27 million automobiles are sold
- 1929 Three Sanger Birth Control Clinics are raided by State of New York

- 1929 Stock Market crashes
- 1929 Virginia Woolf writes *A Room of One's Own*
- 1930 The Great depression begins
- 1939 *Casti Connubii* Encyclical by Pius XI stresses the sanctity of marriage, prohibited Roman Catholics from using any form of artificial birth control, and reaffirmed the prohibition on abortion
- 1939 Episcopal Church accepts the modern use of birth control at its Lambeth Conference (most mainline churches follow suit)
- 1931 Pius XI, Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, (*Restructuring of the Social order*)
- 1933 Dorothy Day founds *The Catholic Worker Newspaper*
- 1933 Hitler becomes the legal head of the German Government
- 1933 Gertrude Stein publishes *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*
- 1937 AMA recognizes birth control as a legitimate topic for medical schools
- 1939 Germany invades Poland, WWII begins
- 1942 US gets involved in War
- 1942 Planned Parenthood Federation of America is formed
- 1948 Thomas Merton's *Seven Storey Mountain* becomes Bestseller
- 1948 Alfred Kinsey and others publish *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*
- 1951 Monica Baldwin's *I Leap Over the Wall* about dissatisfaction with religious life becomes a well-received popular novel
- 1952 Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) writes *Le Deuxieme Sexe [The Second Sex]*
- 1953 Brown vs. The Board of Education
- 1953 Alfred Kinsey et al. publish *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*.
- 1955 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) dies; philosopher who maintained that the universe and humankind are evolving toward a perfect state. His written works include *The Phenomenon of Man* (first published 1955).

- 1955 Gregory Pinkus develops the Birth Control Pill
- 1960 John F. Kennedy becomes the first Catholic president of the United States
- 1962-1965 Pope John XXIII announces the Second Vatican Council on Jan 25, 1959; 16 major documents to come out of the Council
- 1963 Betty Friedan writes *The Feminine Mystique* (60,000 copies sold)
- 1966 National Organization of Women (NOW) is formed
- 1966 Masters and Johnson publish *Human Sexual Response*
- 1967 James L. Kavanaugh writes *A Modern Priest Looks at His Outdated Church,*
- 1967 Rosemary Radford Ruether publishes her first book *The Church Against Itself: An Inquiry into the Conditions of Historical Existence for the Eschatological Community.*
- 1968 *Humane Vitae*, Pope Paul IV Encyclical
- 1968 Mary Daly writes *The Church and the Second Sex.*
- 1969 Cornell University establishes the first University Women's Studies program
- 1970 Kate Millet publishes *Sexual Politics*
- 1971 University of Michigan hires first Affirmative Action women into academic ranks
- 1971 The Boston Women's Health Collective publishes *Our Bodies Ourselves*
- 1972 *Ms. Magazine* is founded
- 1973 Adrienne Rich's *Driving into the Wreck.*
- 1973 Mary Daly writes *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation.*
- 1973 Roe vs. Wade, Supreme Courts decision on abortion
- 1974 Rosemary Radford Ruether. *Religion and Sexism: Tthe Image of Women in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition.*
- 1975 Women's Ordination Conference is formed

1975 Maisie Ward dies

1976 Adrienne Rich. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Institution and Experience.*

1977 Matthew Fox writes *On Becoming a Musical Mystical Bear: Spirituality American Style.*

1977 Women's Studies programs develop in the academy.

1977 Ann Douglas writes *The Feminization of American Culture.*

1978 Mary Daly writes *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism.*

1978 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write *The Mad Women in the Attic: Women Writers and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination.*

1978 Naomi Goldberg writes *The Changing Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions.*

1979 Sister Theresa Kane addresses Pope John Paul calling for the ordination of women.

1980 Collete Dowling writes *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence.*

1980 Matthew Fox writes *Western Spirituality Historical Roots and Ecumenical Routes.*

1980 Dorothy Day dies

1984 New York Times runs an ad by Catholics for a free Choice, "Diversity of opinions regarding abortion among committed Catholics" Oct. 7

1984 Monica Hellwig writes *Christian Women In a Troubled World.*

1984 Geraldine Ferraro becomes the first woman to run for Vice President on a national ticket

1984 Dorothy Dohen dies

1985 Women's Ordination Conference takes place at Mankato State,

1986 Women in the Church Conference, Washington D.C.

1988 Mathew Fox writes *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of the Global Renaissance*

1988 “Gaia Conscious Conference and celebration of the re-emergent Earth Goddess,”
San Francisco

1988 US Catholic Bishops issue “Partners in the Mystery of Redemption”

1988 John Paul issues *Muliers Dignitatem* (On the Dignity of Women)

1988 France becomes the first Western nation to approve RU-486, the abortion pill.

1989 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger issues “*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian Mediation*” on Oct 15, which precludes women from ordination

1995 Pope John Pail II issues *Letter to Women*, (Women Teachers of Peace) June 29.

2002 John Paul writes *Decree on the Attempted Priestly Ordination of Some Catholic Women*, July 10.

2004 John Paul writes “*On the Occasion of the International Convention on ‘Natural Regulations of Fertility and Culture of Life.’*” Jan 28.

Addenda B

Encyclicals, Apostolic Letters, Apostolic Exhortations, Apostolic Constitutions

Important to this presentation

Pius IX (1846-1878)

The Syllabus of Errors, Pope Pius IX, 1864.

Leo XIII (1878-1903)

Arcanum, (On Christian Marriage), Feb 10, 1880

Rerum Novarum,(On Capital and Labor), May 15, 1891

Longinqua, (Catholics in the United States) January 6, 1895

Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae,(Virtue, Nature and Grace and Americanism) January 22, 1899.

Pius X (1903-1914)

E Supremi,(On the Restoration of All Things to Christ), October 4, 1903.

Lamentabili Sane, (The Errors of Modernism), July 3, 1907

Pacendi Dominici Gregis,(On the Doctrine of Modernism), September 8, 1907.

The Oath Against Modernism. September 1, 1910.

Pius XI (1922-1939)

Casti Connubii,(On Christian Marriage), December 31, 1930

Quadragesimo Anno, (Reconstruction of the Social Order), 1931.

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963)

Mater et Magistra (On Christianity and Social Progress) May 15, 1961

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Pope Paul IV (1963-1978)

Humanae Vitae, (On The Regulation of Birth), July 25, 1968

Vatican II Documents. (1962-1965)

Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity) November 18, 1965

Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World), December 7, 1965

John Paul II (1978-2005)

Familiaris Consortio (On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World).
November 22, 1981.

Mulieris Dignitatem (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women), 1988.

Letter to Women, Women Teachers of Peace) John Paul II, June 29, 1995.

Decree on the Attempted Priestly Ordination of Some Catholic Women, July 10, 2002.

“*On the Occasion of the International Convention on ‘Natural Regulations of Fertility and Culture of Life.’* “ Jan 28, 2004.

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See also: <http://www.marquette.edu/library/collections/archives/day.html#papers>

Dorothy Dohen's papers are at the Special Collections Fordham University, Rose Hill Campus, Bronx, New York.

<http://www.library.fordham.edu/archives>

Maisie Ward's papers may be found at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame Indiana, Special collections *CSWD Sheed and Ward Family Papers: Manuscripts and personal papers of Maisie see CSWD 12-14*

<http://archives.nd.edu/findaids/ead/index/SWD046.htm>

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Radical Social Activism—Summary

This dissertation describes a movement I am calling Radical Social Activism that flourished among Catholic women between the years 1920-1960. The Catholic women participating did not abandon their Church's teachings on women but worked within the androcentric Catholic Church to achieve some lasting results as Radical Social Activists. This Radical Social Activism worked in the lives of Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen, three women who retained a firm attachment to the Catholic faith and who would not align themselves with the incipient feminism of the times, but who, nevertheless, strove for social change and justice without regard for political or social recognition. Their work was radical because they were not complacent with the status quo and worked to change it. Their work was social because they ignored Church politics and reached outside their individual egos. And their work was definitely action oriented in that they practiced their beliefs rather than simply preach them.

Few Catholic women were involved with the early women's Suffragist movement; the overwhelming majority did not participate in mainstream feminism, in part due to their immigrant background. Women stepped out of the family setting and into active roles in a society that increasingly measured success in terms of economic well being. These role changes produced trade offs in terms of how the family was viewed and it de-emphasized society's spiritual well being.

Some of the issues and solutions for women in modern society collided with moral and ethical teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. I have selected three such women who responded with Radical Social Activism, and participated in the American Catholic Church, however, they did not participate in the general feminism of the times. These women, Dorothy Day, Maisie Ward, and Dorothy Dohen, represented in their Radical Social Activism, a feminism of the spirit, as it were, while still remaining within the structure and Magisterium of the Church proper.

As women moved into secular society, they made compromises concerning their duties and responsibilities to family. Issues of divorce, birth control, and abortion became popular remedies that helped limit family duties and responsibilities. However, the Catholic Church has always viewed these as problematical and theological challenges to Catholic teaching and has consistently refuted the expediency of these solutions on moral grounds.

Yet, if the Church's view on women limits women as feminists have claimed, it did not stop Day, Dohen, and Ward from participating and changing the secular world around them, while still remaining loyal to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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