

siderable extent American society as well. While much of the material overlaps, the earlier book is fresher and more vivid, if somewhat less tightly organized, than the later book, rather like the contrast between the early and revised versions of Henry James's novels. The form of *From Union Square to Rome* is epistolary, a plea from Day to her politically left-wing brother to reconsider his antipathy to religion and to Christianity in particular - as she herself had done.

To this end Day reaffirms her commitment to social justice, insisting that the social order must change and that it was unacceptable for property to be concentrated in the hands of a few. At the same time, citing Thomas Aquinas, she asserted the right of private property, arguing for a balance between individually held property and the "communal aspects" of Christianity. Believing that a major social revolution in the West was likely - and here it is useful to remember that she was writing in the 1930s - Day nonetheless felt that such a revolution might be avoided by a "Christian revolution" that achieved social justice without the use of force.

Dorothy Day's influence was profound. She had an effect, for example, on the Catholic church's stance regarding nuclear weapons and conscientious objection during Vatican II. Also, the U.S. bishops respectfully referred to her pacifism in a pastoral letter written on nuclear weapons. There are now over 180 Catholic Worker sites around the world, a tribute to the heroic virtue of this complex and interesting person. However, about her imputed heroic virtue Day was known to have said: "I don't want to be dismissed so easily."

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Tom Merton: a Personal Biography

Joan C McDonald
Marquette University Press,
Milwaukee, 2006
ISBN 0874620163 (hardback)
468 pages
U.K. £18./Cdn. \$41.

The author claims that this is the first biography of Merton that combines the details of his diaries with other circumstances of his life published elsewhere. Although McDonald says that the factual material is accurate, the reader needs to be aware that she has extrapolated the events of Merton's life at certain key times by the insertion of dialogue and self-analysis denoted by italicized passages. This dramatization is purely the result of her own imagination. Additionally, the author has chosen to focus on certain events on the basis of her personal preference. In adopting these two literary filters McDonald becomes both the arbiter and interpreter of the significance of events. One has to question the legitimacy of these authorial devices in presenting a balanced and authoritative biography.

Book one spans the years 1911-1942, beginning with the meeting of Merton's parents in Paris until Merton's entry into the Abbey of Gethsemani. This early part seems committed to searching out novel details such as the name of the live-in companion of Merton's grandmother, and the use of graphic illustrations of marginal relevance. This search is most clearly

exemplified in the title of the book itself that responds to Merton's parents' desire to name him after a family friend but which has a somewhat trivializing effect on the credibility of the author's efforts. Book two spans the years 1942 to 1966 starting with a description of the daily life in the monastery and ending with Merton's move into a hermitage at Gethsemani. During this period Merton was writing some of his most influential works. It would have been helpful had the author presented more extensive coverage of Merton's evolving message thus providing a context in which the daily events of Merton's life occurred.

Book three covers the years 1966-1967 and chronicles Merton's health problems and his relationship with a young nurse. The emphasis on this relationship, although a significant personal event in many ways, seems to imply there was little else of significance happening in Merton's life. Merton's diaries indicate otherwise, leading one to wonder whether this section of the book fails to maintain an appropriate balance in the activities of his personal and spiritual life. Book four covers 1967 to 1968 and is set against the background of the Vietnam war and Merton's preparations for his trip to Asia. Book five paraphrases Merton's commentary from the diary of his trip to Asia in 1968. The author refers to both Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism as philosophies. Merton perceived Christianity as a religion not a philosophy and the author fails to make this clear. Additionally the suggestion that in terms of religious practice Merton saw a seamless relationship between East and West is a little naïve. Merton's spiritual search for the way to union with God on which he

spent 26 years as a cloistered monk receives scant attention in McDonald's book.

Dr. Les McKeown is Associate Professor of Theology at Newman Theological College Edmonton, Alberta. His dissertation was on Thomas Merton's assimilation of the writings of St. John of the Cross leading to his embrace of Zen vocabulary in relation to contemplation.

Love Healing and Happiness

Larry Culliford

O Books, Winchester, 2007

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You do not have to belong to, or practice, a religion to live a holy life. You do not have to be well educated. You need only to be regularly and consciously connected to the infinite, the source of cosmic energy, wisdom and love."

Larry Culliford writes with conviction and enthusiasm and this encouraging theme seems to me to lie at the heart of his new book which is subtitled 'Spiritual Wisdom for Secular Times'.

It is a comprehensive and compassionate exploration of the human experience of the process of being drawn to, of seeking, and of making this connection with the infinite.

Culliford takes a multi-dimensional approach to his subject, weaving together a distinctive tapestry with threads drawn from his personal and professional experience, literature, science, philosophy, contemporary culture, spiritual wisdom from