

DAY, Dorothy, *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day*, edited with an Introduction by Robert Ellsberg (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2010), pp. xxiii+ 456. ISBN 978-0-87462-061-0 (cloth) \$35.00.

Recently, at the ITMS Twelfth General Meeting (June, 2011) at Loyola University, Chicago, I had the pleasure of attending the program entitled "A Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day Panel," which featured Robert Ellsberg, Tom Cornell and Rosalie Riegle. Ellsberg, the editor of this volume under review, has also edited a number of other Dorothy Day books, including *Dorothy Day, Selected Writings*,¹ and the more recent volume titled *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*.² Along with Jim Forest and Tom Cornell, he also co-edited *A Penny a Copy: Readings from The Catholic Worker*.³ As editor-in-chief and publisher of Orbis Books, Ellsberg has also edited and authored a number of other books related to religion and spirituality. After dropping out of Harvard University in 1975, Ellsberg was a volunteer with the Catholic Worker movement and managing editor of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper for two years. Returning to Harvard, he received a degree in religion and literature as well as a Master's in Theology from Harvard Divinity School.

The correspondence collected in this volume is divided into six time-periods: Part I: A Love Story: 1923-1932; Part II: House of Hospitality: 1933-1939; Part III: Called to Be Saints: 1940-1949; Part IV: Bearing Witness: 1950-1959; Part V: Prayer and Protest: 1960-1969; Part VI: All is Grace: 1970-1980. Along with the selection of letters, Ellsberg has provided the reader with an excellent preface and introduction and has skillfully inserted background notes to assist the reader in understanding Dorothy Day's relationship with her respective correspondents.

Heretofore, my knowledge of Dorothy Day was through two of her books, her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*,⁴ and her account of the development of the Catholic Worker movement,

1. *Dorothy Day, Selected Writings: By Little and By Little*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (New York: Knopf, 1983; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005).

2. *The Duty of Delight: The Diaries of Dorothy Day*, ed. Robert Ellsberg (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2008).

3. *A Penny a Copy: Readings from The Catholic Worker*, rev. ed., ed. Thomas C. Cornell, Robert Ellsberg and Jim Forest (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

4. *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (New York: Harper, 1952).

Loaves and Fishes,⁵ as well as an occasional reading of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. Although Ellsberg laments the "limited number of letters" (ix) available to include, I found the range of her correspondence and the authenticity of her writings to be unparalleled in my previous literary experience.

I should mention that *The Duty of Delight* is considered a companion volume to *All the Way to Heaven*, as the diaries and letters render the reader a valuable insight into the inner workings of Dorothy Day's spirituality forged through the bricks and mortar of life-experiences. Twenty letters sent to Thomas Merton, along with several explanatory notes by the editor, are included in the time period of 1956-1967. On a number of occasions these notes include direct quotations from Merton in his return correspondence to Day. Especially interesting are the commentaries by both Day and Merton regarding the Roger LaPorte self-immolation incident. Veteran Thomas Merton readers may want to pull out their copy of *The Hidden Ground of Love*⁶ to consult Thomas Merton's correspondence to Day. Ellsberg notes that an account of the Day/Merton correspondence can be found in the book entitled *American Catholic Pacifism*.⁷

Why the title *All the Way to Heaven*? It is an abbreviated form of the full quotation often used by Day, for example in a letter to Charles Butterworth, a Harvard Law School graduate and a onetime business manager for *The Catholic Worker*: "Our lives are open to all. We belong to a Kingdom not of this world, tho we are in it. May you be a constant reminder, a witness, of this other Kingdom, this glorious and beautiful Kingdom where we are willing and obedient and joyful subjects. Remember St. Catherine of Siena said, 'All the way to Heaven is heaven, because He said, I am the Way'" (254).

In March 2000, Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, announced that with the approval of Rome, the Cause for beatification and canonization of Dorothy Day had been initiated. There is ample evidence within the pages of this volume of letters

5. Dorothy Day, *Loaves and Fishes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

6. Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985) 135-54.

7. "The Correspondence of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton," compiled, introduced, and edited by William H. Shannon, in *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* edited by Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996) 99-121.

to further support her canonization. A theme running throughout the letters is the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount reflecting love for one another as well as love for our enemies. Day states in a 1941 letter To All the Catholic Worker Houses:

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” . . . Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers. (130)

Throughout the letters, there is the mention of Thérèse of Lisieux who through “the little way” personified the Sermon on the Mount. In a letter to the president of Catholic University, Day refused an honorary degree, explaining that she could not accept the degree from an institution that had an ROTC program and was in any way allied with the military-industrial complex. She stated: “Please do not misjudge me, or consider this effrontery on my part. I have a deep conviction that we must stay as close to the poor, as close to the bottom as we can, to walk the little way, as St. Thérèse has it” (374). Day had turned down honorary degrees from close to twenty universities for essentially the same reasons. However, Day did accept the Laetare Medal from the University of Notre Dame (1972) because “Fr. Hesburgh threatened to come to First Street and present it there if I did not come to the Midwest” (406).

The letters are significant as Dorothy Day spent many hours returning letters to people who had made financial contributions to the Catholic Worker houses or were seeking advice about a difficult situation. In one typical year, Day estimated that she wrote over a thousand letters as she endeavored to answer every letter she received. Robert Ellsberg remarks that the editing work for the letters (many of them were typed) was easier than the transcription of the diaries, which were handwritten and difficult to decipher. However, Ellsberg expresses his disappointment over the limited number of letters that survived from the thousands that were written by Day during her lifetime. The good news is that the selected letters are representative of the many Dorothy Day correspondents; especially insightful are the letters to her daughter, Tamar, with whom she expressed disappointment because she had fallen away from the Church. Also disappointing to Day was the fact that none of Tamar’s nine children practiced their faith; although some con-

solution to Day was that several of her eleven great-grandchildren had been baptized as Catholics. In the earlier stages of her correspondence with Tamar, Day was judgmental and at times severe, but in the later years she mellowed and was more accepting of her daughter's decision. Jim Forest was also on the receiving end of a wrathful Dorothy Day letter when he divorced his first wife and remarried without an annulment from the Catholic Church. Day felt that Forest should not continue in his role as Secretary of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, under the auspices of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, as the many past good deeds of the members would be dishonored by his action. Seven years later, in April 1974, at the beginning of Holy Week, Day apologized "for [her] critical attitudes and [promised] to amend [her] life!!" (410).

According to Ellsberg, letter-writing for Dorothy Day was a "search for community." Although she recognized the "long loneliness" of her vocation and occasionally she mentioned her desire for solitude, community and being with people were important for Day as representing a solidarity in the quest for a better world, or, "on the supernatural plane, in the Mystical Body of Christ" (xxii).

The Dorothy Day papers, archived at Marquette University's Raynor Memorial Libraries in Milwaukee, were sealed for 25 years after her death in 1980. William Miller, an historian at Marquette, wrote the book *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement*. Throughout their correspondence, Miller urged Dorothy Day to save and send her papers to the archives at Marquette and she would complain at times of the mess the piles of papers would create in her room: "How you can bear to mess about with so much paper, I don't know. You tell me to save stuff, so I do, but it means my desk is a mess, my room is a mess" (421). Miller evidently made sense out of the "mess" and his original 1973 book was re-issued as a second edition in 2005 with new photos and high acclaim from Daniel Berrigan.⁸

There is much more, of course, in these letters worth noting and consequently far too much to be listed here. For example, there is Dorothy Day's reverence for Peter Maurin, her interesting references to Eugene O'Neill, who was part of her early life experiences, and her love for her family as expressed in the lone photograph

8. William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (New York: Liveright, 1973); 2nd ed. (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005).

of her in the book with her grandchildren, radiating the love that is so prevalent in the pages of this volume.

John Collins

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HOLDER, Arthur, ed., *Christian Spirituality: The Classics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. xvi + 376. ISBN 978-0-415-77601-1 (cloth) \$90.00; ISBN 978-0-415-77602-8 (paper) \$26.95.

This collection of brief introductions to thirty significant texts of Christian spirituality, ranging chronologically from Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs* in the third century to Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation* in the twentieth, is aimed at a broad audience but written by recognized scholars in the field, most of them associated with the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality (nine of the thirty contributors, including editor Arthur Holder, have served as president of the SCS). The scope is ecumenical, with both subjects and contributors drawn from Eastern and Western, Catholic and Protestant traditions; while only seven of the works discussed are by women, sixteen of the commentaries have female authors. The purpose, in the editor's words, is not merely to provide significant cultural, historical and biographical background for understanding and appreciating the texts, but to present them "as *living wisdom documents* that invite – even compel – contemplative reflection and existential response" (xiv), and of course to encourage readers to read, or reread, the works themselves.

Simple as it is, the book's title is perhaps somewhat of an overreach: "*The Classics*" may seem to suggest that this particular selection of texts constitutes the essential list of Christian spiritual writings over the centuries. Most of them would certainly appear on almost every "short list" of the most influential and significant texts of the tradition – works by Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius, Augustine, Benedict and Bernard, Julian of Norwich and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Luther and Ignatius, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Some lesser known texts, like *The Mirror of Simple Souls* by Marguerite Porete, burnt as a heretic in 1310, or Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), are convincingly described as worthy of inclusion. Some works not immediately categorized as "spirituality," like Jonathan Edwards' lengthy treatise on