

Malewitz, knowing this, provides ample opportunities for self-reflection at the end of each chapter, complete with links to media-based examples of core concepts covered in the chapter as they are represented in popular culture. This is a brilliant method of reinforcing the material from an archetypal perspective in ways that can be enjoyed by a single reader or shared by a classroom, family or study group. At the end of each chapter, readers will also find questions and reflections that are fertile starting places for internal processing and/or group processing.

As a psychotherapist who spend my days helping repair the ways in which we suffer across the lifespan due to the ways in which our trajectories are impacted during adolescence, I sincerely believe that this is a book that could change the world one person at a time and will be of great value to anyone touched by the wisdom and vision contained within its pages.

Tony Caldwell

PYCIOR, Julie Leininger, *Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton and the Greatest Commandment: Radical Love in Times of Crisis*, Foreword by Rowan Williams (New York: Paulist Press, 2020), pp. xxix + 233. ISBN 978-0-8091-5515-6 (paper) \$29.95.

Julie Leininger Pycior's book on the friendship of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton is clearly a labor of love, on more than one level – both personal and professional, both as topic and as motivation. It developed, as the author relates in her Prologue, from a sleepless Christmas Eve in the late 1990s as she wrestled with the question of how to live out the scriptural “greatest commandment” in her own circumstances as a secure Manhattan College history professor in her comfortable suburban home. Recognizing that this struggle for faithful discipleship takes many forms, she descends to her living room and pulls from her bookcase Thomas Merton's *The Hidden Ground of Love*, which contains his letters to Dorothy Day. Reading them, she reflects on the very different lives of the Cistercian contemplative Merton and the radical Catholic Worker activist Day, who nevertheless recognized and supported one another's efforts “to bear witness to love of God and neighbor” (xiv) through a decade of correspondence in the particularly turbulent atmosphere of the 1960s, the “times of crisis” of her book's subtitle. She finds in them a complementarity, a “powerful synergy” (xiv) in which Day's love of neighbor, the marginalized and despised “least of these,” is rooted in and sustained by love of God, and Merton's love of God, expressed in monastic prayer and contemplative silence, leads to compassion and prophetic advocacy for those oppressed by war, poverty and prejudice (see 8). This insight led to more than two decades of research and reflection culminating in

this volume, awarded first place in the history category for 2020 by the Catholic Media Association.

Synthesizing material from personal interviews with friends and colleagues of one or sometimes both her subjects, archival research at numerous institutions, reading of a wide variety of published and unpublished sources by and about Day and Merton, as well as resources providing background on the events that impacted their lives and their work, Pycior has provided the most thorough examination to date of the relationship – sustained only through the written word as they never met in person – between these two principal figures of twentieth-century American Catholicism, “friends – often uneasy friends, critical friends, even exasperated friends,” as Rowan Williams calls them in his Foreword, who were “most deeply and lastingly united” by their common commitment to the “holding together of the wealth of spiritual tradition and the destitution of contemporary human experience,” recognizing in the lost and the victimized, the abused and confused, “the face of the suffering Christ” (viii).

While the love commandment is at the heart of her exploration of the lives and interactions of these two figures, Pycior’s eight chapters offer a detailed chronological record of how that commitment impacted the relationship as a whole, its ups and downs, as it developed over the course of the last decade of Merton’s life, with particular focus on the letters exchanged,¹ Day’s regular columns and Merton’s numerous articles for *The Catholic Worker*, relevant journal entries of both writers, contacts with a wider circle of like-minded friends including Daniel Berrigan, Jim Forest, Eileen Egan and others, and their respective responses to critical issues and events in both the Church and American society.

The opening chapter, “The One Thing Necessary” (1-21), encompasses the period from the first extant letters of mid-1959 up to the eve of the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in October 1962 and the Cuban missile crisis of the same month, shortly after Day’s

1. The correspondence from April 1959 through August 1968 includes fifty-one letters, twenty-eight from Merton, twenty-three from Day. A complete chronological list can be found on the Thomas Merton Center website at: <http://merton.org/Research/Correspondence/y1.aspx?id=460>. Most of Merton’s side of the correspondence is found in 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; subsequent references will be cited as “HGL” parenthetically in the text. Day’s letters to Merton are collected in “The Correspondence of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton,” edited by William H. Shannon, in Anne Klejment and Nancy L. Roberts, eds., *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1996) 99-121.

return from her visit to the island. It provides background information on the foundation of the Catholic Worker, quotes extensively from the author's interviews with figures who had personal experiences of both Trappist and Catholic Worker life, relates the circumstances surrounding Merton's early writings for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper,² described as "the main platform for his trailblazing essays on the spiritual implication of the Cold War" (12), and provides summaries and samples of the correspondence, ranging from the mundane – Merton's forwarding to the Worker a supply of toothpaste donated to the monastery (see 8) – to the profound – Day as "the richest woman in the world" because of the prayers of the poor (10). As they grow in trust of one another, they share their struggles and questions – Merton's attraction to a hermit vocation and his problems with censorship, Day's worries about her daughter's family and difficulties with CW staff.

Pycior opens the following chapter, "Hopes and Fears" (23-43), which carries the story through mid-1963, with Day reading Merton's *The Wisdom of the Desert*, in which he presents the commitment of the early Desert Fathers to the "primacy of love over everything else in the spiritual life" (23), the central principle of their own developing "shared prophetic witness of contemplation combined with radical witness" (25). She records their appreciation of what Merton called "the boldness" (31) of Pope John's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, highlighting Day's presence in Rome as part of a Mothers for Peace delegation that was unexpectedly singled out for praise by John at a papal audience shortly before his death. Their support of the civil rights movement is exemplified during this period by Day's appearance at a rally for racial justice in Danville, Virginia, where she stepped in to replace a local religious superior pressured by her pastor not to speak and "underscored the link between peace activism and the struggle for racial justice" (33); and by Merton's pamphlet on "Black Revolution,"³ issued by Martin Luther King's Southern Chris-

2. More information might have been provided on the background of the first of these, "The Root of War Is Fear" (October 1961), a chapter excerpted from the forthcoming *New Seeds of Contemplation* (an extensive revision of the chapter with the same title in the original *Seeds of Contemplation* of 1949) with three additional paragraphs to "situate these thoughts in the present crisis" (*HGL* 140). Also, it is unlikely that Merton's brief mention in this added material of people sitting in bomb shelters armed "with machine guns with which to prevent their neighbor from entering" (Thomas Merton, *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. William H. Shannon [New York: Crossroad, 1995] 12) could have prompted the article by L. C. McHugh, SJ entitled "Ethics at the Shelter Doorway" in the September 30, 1961 issue of *America* (see 13), which in turn led to Merton's second *Catholic Worker* article, entitled "The Shelter Ethic," which appeared in the November issue.

3. This material, not specifically identified here, is drawn from Part III of Merton's

tian Leadership Conference, in which he emphasized that the “purpose of non-violent protest, in its deepest and most spiritual dimensions, is then to awaken the conscience of the white man to the awful reality of his injustice and his sin” (34). The author closes this chapter with Merton’s expression of admiration and respect for Day in his endorsement of her new history of the Worker, *Loaves and Fishes*, in which he finds her recognition of poverty as “a religious mystery” central to the book’s “extraordinary grace, and gentleness, and charm” (38-39), and with Day’s own concluding words there, calling for “a revolution of the heart” that leads to selfless service motivated by “that burning love, that passion, which led to the Cross” (43).

The title of chapter 3, “Straight but Crooked Lines” (45-63), which moves from late 1963 through 1964 (a year in which no surviving letters were exchanged), is particularly apropos as the phrase⁴ is used by both figures to describe the current political and religious situation (see 52). The increasing challenge to traditional sexual morality, official and unofficial “wholesale changes in the Mass” (47) following the 1963 promulgation of the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican II, their own health problems and those of friends, problems with Church authorities of their mutual friend Daniel Berrigan and others, and of course the Kennedy assassination and the deepening of American involvement in Vietnam, engaged the attention of both Merton and Day to varying degrees during these months, as did the founding, under the guidance of Day friend and Merton correspondent Eileen Egan, of American Pax, an offshoot of a British group that would eventually merge with the quasi-official Catholic peace movement Pax Christi, and of the Catholic Peace Fellowship, affiliated with the strongly pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, that became the catalyst for the retreat at Gethsemani on “The Spiritual Roots of Protest” organized by Merton and attended by many of the key figures in the growing Christian peace movement. All these events, challenges, opportunities and catastrophes are best considered, Pycior suggests, in the context of Day’s stark presentation of alternative responses to crisis: “an atmosphere . . . of fear or of the love which casts out fear” (56).

first major statement on racial justice, “Letters to a White Liberal,” first published in *Blackfriars* and *Ramparts* in late 1963, then in Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964) 3-71.

4. It is worth noting that the same phrase provided the title for the recent memoir of Jim Forest, friend and biographer of both Day and Merton and a major figure in this book: see Jim Forest, *Writing Straight with Crooked Lines: A Memoir* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2020) – which like the volume under review was honored by the Catholic Media Association with a first place award for 2020, in the memoir category. See the review by Michael McGregor immediately below.

The relatively brief chapter 4, “Lives in the Balance” (65-77), focuses on 1965, a year in which the correspondence between Merton and Day picks up again, though latterly under extremely difficult circumstances. It is a time of hope – for Merton more than for the government-averse Day – due to the passage of the Voting Rights Act and various bills promoting the so-called Great Society and War on Poverty, but marked as well by the escalation in Vietnam that would soon undermine this progressive domestic agenda. Pycior mentions but does not dwell on Merton’s full-time move into his hermitage in August of that year, focusing particularly on her two subjects’ private and public efforts to support a strong statement on peace in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: Merton through contacts with individual bishops and his articles “An Open Letter to the American Hierarchy” and “St. Maximus the Confessor on Non-Violence” (appearing in the September issue of *The Catholic Worker*); Day by her participation (along with nineteen other women) in a water-only fast for peace in Rome as the council fathers met to debate issues of conscientious objection and nuclear warfare, resulting in a strong if qualified support for the former and, in Day’s words, “an unequivocal condemnation” of the latter, “a statement for which we had been working and praying” (77). But as Pycior notes at the very conclusion of the chapter, before the year would reach its end a tragic event would test the two friends’ relationship nearly to the breaking point.

This event was the self-immolation of Roger LaPorte, a 22-year-old Catholic Worker volunteer (who had only been at the house a couple of weeks, a detail not noted here) who set himself aflame in front of the United Nations to protest the Vietnam War in the early morning of November 9, 1965 and died the next day. Chapter 5, aptly entitled “A Harsh and Dreadful Love” (79-91), drawn from a favorite passage of Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* that Dorothy Day often quoted,⁵ is taken up almost completely with this tragic incident and its aftermath. Merton’s immediate appalled response led to telegrams to both Day and Catholic Peace Fellowship leader Jim Forest, the former expressing his shock and concern and conviction that such actions would do “grave harm” to the cause of peace (84), the latter withdrawing as a sponsor of

5. The words of Father Zossima, a character greatly admired by Merton as well, are “Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams,” which Day sometimes quoted in a slightly different form, as “Love in practice . . .” – the version found at the conclusion of this chapter (91). For quotation of the full passage (in the classic Constance Garnett translation) in its context in the novel, see William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (1973; Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image, 1974) 24-25.

the CPF – a decision reversed after a long, thoughtful letter from Forest, and the former followed by an apology for “his ill-considered telegram” (89), which had prompted, not surprisingly perhaps, a considerable over-reaction by Day, who interpreted it as “holding us responsible” (87) for what had happened, which certainly was not Merton’s intent. The issue was resolved, though not without lingering bitterness, as Pycior notes, on Day’s part, writing in her journal long after Merton’s death and not too long before her own, “TM wrote to urge me not to urge our young men to do this! Hard to forgive him this stupidity” (91) – certainly a misapprehension, or misremembering, of what Merton had in fact said.⁶ But in the main, in the author’s judgment, the two friends were able to move beyond this estrangement and resume their mutual respect and support for one another. She comments: “The bond between Merton and Day would be tested almost beyond measure, but their love of God and neighbor would see them through.” The lasting lesson is that interpersonal tensions in times of crisis “do not have the last word for those who strive to root themselves in the great commandment of love” (80).

Only two letters from Merton and none from Day survive from 1966 (though in September Merton thanks her for notes she has sent over previous months [see *HGL* 151]). This paucity of material provides the author with an opportunity in chapter 6, “One Tremendous Love” (103-20), to survey Day’s responses to the sexual revolution as it impacted both the breakdown of her daughter’s marriage (and other details about her own siblings, one of whom died this year) and tensions and conflicts in the Catholic Worker community, with particular attention to her (and to a lesser extent Merton’s) perspective on same-sex relationships – a combination of a traditional sexual ethic with support and compassion for specific individuals. While the focus of this chapter is largely on Day, it is framed by reference to Merton’s famous February 1966 letter to Jim Forest encouraging him not to “depend on hope of results” (103) in his peace work, and by a summary of Merton’s brief but intense romantic relationship with the nurse who cared for him after back surgery that gave him a “newfound appreciation” (119) of the role of *eros* and well as *agape* in the experience of love.

6. This is not the only time that Day misinterprets – or misremembers – Merton, writing to Catholic Worker turned Trappist Fr. Charles (Jack) English, “I’m rather hurt at Merton, who talks about ‘witless pacifists’ and ‘notorious CW’” (18) – phrases which Pycior points out “there is no evidence Merton ever wrote” (19), given his consistent deep respect for the Worker in public and private writings; if he did they were surely meant to express not his own views but those of conventional opinion, examples of Merton’s characteristic irony, missed or misread.

The escalation of the Vietnam War during 1967 and the broadening of the opposition and increase in active resistance to the conflict are the central focus of the penultimate chapter, “Kairos: The Providential Hour” (121-36), drawing on Merton’s favorite scriptural term for the moment of critical decision that transcends mere *chronos*, measurable time. Much of the chapter is taken up with Dorothy Day’s anguished reflections on support for the war by Cardinal Spellman and other church officials, as well as her decision to withdraw her sponsorship of the Catholic Peace Fellowship over Jim Forest’s divorce and impending remarriage, subsequently changing her mind due to Merton’s gentle persuasion. Pycior writes of this period, “for Merton and his circle, ‘the summer of love’ meant love of God and love of neighbor as expressed in opposition to the war that they considered an abomination” (131). The activities of Daniel Berrigan, Eileen Egan and the CPF are detailed, culminating in the first draft board action when Berrigan’s brother Philip and three others poured their own blood on Selective Service records in Baltimore in October, a protest that Merton found problematic, as he would the burning of draft records by the Berrigans and seven others the following year. It was also a time when Merton’s steady stream of contributions to *The Catholic Worker* resumed, signaling the reconciliation of Merton and Day after the upheavals of the previous year, beginning with his article on “Albert Camus and the Church” in December 1966 and including the March article “Ishi: A Meditation,” on the last of the Yahi tribe of California Indians and the parallels between past genocidal wars on Native Americans and the current southeast Asian conflict.⁷

The final chapter, evocatively entitled “Not Survival but Prophecy” (137-53), a phrase Merton used to describe the “vocation of the monk in the modern world” (137), in fact aptly sums up the vocations of both the protagonists of Pycior’s book, though of course neither of them, aware as they were of their own shortcomings, would ever claim the prophetic mantle for themselves. The friends’ reactions to the cataclysmic events of what Merton called “a beast of a year” (138) – the King and Kennedy assassinations, as well as the Catonsville draft board raid – are chronicled in detail, while other significant signs of the times such as the pope’s encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*, and “the rising Latino movement” (145) and its charismatic labor leader Cesar Chavez, champion of nonviolence, also receive attention. What turned out to be Merton’s final

7. Other articles, published in the June, July, November and December issues, are not mentioned in this chapter. Also published in 1967 is what is widely considered Merton’s most powerful essay on nonviolence, “Blessed Are the Meek,” issued as a pamphlet by the Catholic Peace Fellowship in July after appearing in *Fellowship* two months earlier.

article on peace, written for Eileen Egan's Pax journal and modestly titled "A Footnote from *Ulysses*," echoes the titles of both this and the preceding chapter in its assertion that nonviolence is "not pragmatic but prophetic . . . the language of *kairos*," as well as alluding to the anthem of the civil rights movement in its proclamation of hope that "This is the day of the Lord, and whatever may happen to us, He shall overcome," which Pycior reads as "Eerily anticipating his own demise at the end of that year so filled with tragic deaths" (144). The events of his Asian journey, which had prompted the comment about survival and prophecy made in response to Dom Jean Leclercq's invitation to speak at the December conference of monastics in Thailand, and Dorothy Day's elegiac tribute to Merton in the pages of *The Catholic Worker*, lead up to the author's summation of her book's central insight: "Refusing to despair, and despite their own faults, Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton gave enduring witness to facing grave crises with faith, hope, and, above all, love" (153).

Pycior begins her concluding "Coda" (155-65) with Dorothy Day's July 1976 journal comment that she should pray to Merton "for aid now, and patience, and 'diligence' in my work" (155) before turning to her address on "Bread for the Hungry" the following month at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, where she shared the stage with Mother Teresa and their mutual friend Eileen Egan, passionately expressing her devotion to the Eucharist as well as her anguish that even as she was speaking a military Mass at the nearby cathedral was about to begin, and this on August 6, the anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. A heart attack a few weeks later made this her last public appearance, though she continued to write up to a few days before her death on November 29, 1980; her final years were spent at Maryhouse, the women's CW residence that was bought through a donation from Merton's colleague John Eudes Bamberger, now abbot of Gethsemani's daughter house Our Lady of the Genesee in upstate New York. But Pycior also ends as she began, incorporating her own experience on another December evening, in the wake of the horrific school massacre in Newtown, Connecticut, as her participation in a weekly gathering for centering prayer (developed by Trappists influenced by Merton) with fellow parishioners of widely different tendencies counters the temptation to despair with "the promise of light and life" (163) in the coming celebration of the Incarnation – both a reminder of Merton's witness to "the meditative – the mystical, even – alive in our wounded world" and of Day's assurance "that our loving actions signify in mysterious ways beyond all telling" (163), and an invitation to respond, as they did, to the gospel call to become agents of love "as embodied in the divine, and in that spark of the divine in every

person” (165) in our own contemporary times of crisis.

As valuable and readable as it is, the book would have benefited from a more rigorous final round of proofing and fact-checking. A number of titles are slightly askew.⁸ Names are not always accurate.⁹ Details of more peripheral materials are sometimes mistaken.¹⁰ These relatively minor inaccuracies, though rather numerous and potentially distracting, do not significantly undermine the value of the book’s invitation to consider Day and Merton, not as “paragons of straightforward religious achievement,” in Rowan Williams’ words, but as “Christian disciples in the making,” to whom we may look “not for solutions or good examples but for *epiphanies*, for moments when the veil is torn and the face of Christ appears” in most unlikely guises, moments when we as readers are confronted with “the question of whether we too want to be disciples in the making” (ix).

Readers can be grateful to Julie Pycior not only for this challenge, but

8. E.g. *Dancing in the Waters [sic] of Life [passim]*; “Maximus the Confessor on Peace” [vs. “. . . on Nonviolence”]: 72; “Love Winter When the Plants Say Nothing” [vs. “. . . Plant Says . . .”]: 46, 230; the book-length poem by Robert Lax, is *Circus [not The Circle] of the Sun* (40, 179).

9. Christine Bochen (whose endorsement graces the back cover!) as “Christen” (197, 200, 216); Br. Mark Filut as “Filip” (220); Robert Hass as “Haas” (205); William Apel as “Appel” (202); June Yungblut as “Yungblunt” (137, 138, 139, 233).

10. Merton’s article “The Vision of Peace: Some Reflections on the Monastic Way of Life” (an excerpt from his booklet *Monastic Peace*) appeared in *Jubilee* in August 1958, not September 1961 (15-16, 174), an issue which included his article “The English Mystics”; Merton was immediately preceded as novice master by Walter Helmstetter, not Urban Snyder (30); Merton’s sixth book of verse, *Emblems of a Season of Fury*, was not an “anthology” (36) – perhaps confused with *A Thomas Merton Reader*, published the previous year; “Chant to Be Used in Processions around a Site with Furnaces” is not about Adolf (misspelled “Adolph” on page 180) Eichmann, but Auschwitz commander Rudolf Hoess (46); the celebrated prose-poem *Hagia Sophia* is not an epic (47, 108); *Seasons of Celebration* is not a collection of sermons but of fifteen pieces on liturgical matters, only one of which is a homily (48); the liturgy celebrated at Dom Bede Griffiths’ Indian ashram was not “Zen-influenced” but the traditional Syro-Malabar rite, though with a marked Hindu ambience (59); *The Way of Chuang Tzu* was not “a book-length meditation” on “higher and deeper fulfillment” but a series of sixty-two passages from the fourth-century BCE Taoist master as adapted by Merton, preceded by a substantial introduction (68); Merton’s essay on the Jesuit Alfred Delp, executed by the Nazis, appeared in *Jubilee*, not *The Catholic Worker* (70); Merton’s “Freedom Songs” were written in 1964, not 1968, the year that four of them were performed as a memorial tribute for Martin Luther King (139); Sidney Griffith was the author of the Foreword, but not the Introduction, to *Pre-Benedictine Monasticism* (175, 176, 215); “The Wild Places” is a review-essay on Roderick Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind* rather than an “ecological jeremiad” (129); William Miller’s biography of Day was published in 1982, after her death, not in 1972 (217).

for the unanticipated consequences of her personal efforts to put the love commandment into practice in the circumstances of her own life. When New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, considerably more conservative than Pycior, was invited to give the commencement address at her college in 2012, she wrote him a letter drawing on her ongoing research to suggest that he speak to the graduates not on various contested issues in church and society, but on love, Merton's "hidden ground of love" and Day's declaration at the conclusion of her autobiography that "The final word is love" (xvii). The cardinal followed her advice, invoking the pair in his address as "Two real giants when it comes to love" and seeing in the young people before him "today's Thomas Mertons and Dorothy Days" (xix).

But the story doesn't end there. When the 2015 visit of Pope Francis to the United States was being planned, responding to a request for suggestions for the pope's address to the joint session of Congress, Cardinal Dolan, at the time the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, proposed that the witness of Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton be highlighted (see xv). Like the cardinal himself in 2012, the pope responded positively to this proposal, and the pair joined Lincoln and King as examples of "great Americans" representing enduring Christian and authentically human values and actions. Thus did the author's labor of love, her reaching out in a gesture of active, loving engagement to someone with whom she disagreed on many issues, result in a graced moment that touched the minds and hearts of millions, a concrete sign that obedience to the greatest commandment is fundamentally sacramental, serving as a sign and instrument through which God's own love can shine forth in creatures, as it did in the two figures whose complex, mutually supportive friendship is so powerfully recounted here.

Patrick F. O'Connell

FOREST, Jim, *Writing Straight with Crooked Lines: A Memoir* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), pp. ix, 326. ISBN: 978-1626983571 (paper) \$30.00.

Half a century after Thomas Merton's death, there are few people left who met him or even saw him, let alone had a years-long relationship with him, which makes peace activist Jim Forest's eagerly anticipated memoir – in which he discusses his extensive correspondence with Merton about nuclear disarmament, anti-war activities and international peace – all the more valuable to Merton Society members.

As a young man, Forest attended the 1964 retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani at which Merton, Daniel Berrigan, A. J. Muste and others explored "the spiritual roots of protest" (the subject of Gordon Oyer's