

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: “USEFUL TO THE MIND”: ADE BETHUNE’S
ILLUSTRATIONS FOR *THE CATHOLIC WORKER*, 1934-1945

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Ade Bethune made illustrations for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, the publication of the Catholic Worker movement, from 1933 through 1945. These illustrations served multiple functions. Obvious, expected functions included increasing the publication’s appeal to potential readers, and reiterating the messages delivered in the text. However, the drawings’ more interesting and unique function was to serve as dual models of the kind of lifestyle Bethune espoused. The illustrations both demonstrated this lifestyle through the depicted images, and acted as witnesses or artifacts of Bethune’s own practice. Bethune caused her drawings to fulfill these functions by carefully and self-consciously selecting subjects and styles that most effectively communicated, either explicitly or through evocation. Her drawings, which blend modernist abstraction with a romanticized medievalism, are an historically significant example of the impact of the Liturgical Arts movement in America.

“USEFUL TO THE MIND”:
ADE BETHUNE’S ILLUSTRATIONS FOR *THE CATHOLIC WORKER*, 1934-1945

By

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**“Useful to the Mind”:
Ade Bethune’s Illustrations for *The Catholic Worker*, 1934-1945**

Catholic artist Ade Bethune (1914-2002) was one member of a significant group of people living in the first half of the twentieth century who believed the state of sacred art was deplorable and needed to be reformed. Although she completed numerous church commissions and many secular ones throughout her long career, she is best remembered as the first illustrator of *The Catholic Worker*, a newspaper proclaiming the aims of a social justice movement by the same name.¹ Through her work for *The Catholic Worker*, Bethune gave physical articulation to her understanding of an ideal sacred art and Catholic life.

In May 1935, Bethune designed a new masthead for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper (fig. 1).² The powerful graphic image brings together two laborers of different races shaking hands within the embrace of Jesus Christ. The illustration aptly conveys the principal ideological tenets of the newspaper and the social movement that sprang from it: the nobility of labor, the equality of races and classes, and the central role of Christianity in the peaceful struggle for a better society. Furthermore, the drawing reflects Bethune’s own conviction that her images should act as vehicles to provide a model of ideal behavior and a glimpse into a utopian future. We can catch a glimpse of Bethune’s belief in the import and value of images in the way she talked about the masthead designs that preceded her own.

¹ *The Catholic Worker* newspaper preceded and inspired the Catholic Worker movement. The newspaper then became the means of disseminating the movement’s message. For the sake of clarity, in this essay I will use italics for the title of the newspaper and plain text for the name of the movement. The people associated with the movement call themselves “Catholic Workers,” and frequently abbreviate that title to simply “Workers.” I will capitalize these designations to indicate that I am referring to this particular set of people (and not workers in the general sense).

² *The Catholic Worker*, 3 no. 1 (May 1935): 1.

The Catholic Worker's first masthead was rather insignificant. When she started the paper, [editor and co-founder] Dorothy Day had used two little illustrations of workers holding a mallet and a pickaxe. These were in opposite corners at the top of the paper. After a few issues, she found an illustration of a black worker and a white worker. They still weren't on speaking terms, I guess, standing at opposite ends of the paper.³

Bethune recognized a need for a "significant" image as the newspaper's symbol. She also understood that pictures communicate to their viewers, delivering both intended and unintended messages. In this case, the distance between the workers in the early masthead conveyed the idea that they "weren't on speaking terms." When she replaced the old design with her new one, Bethune both remedied this problem and infused the masthead with additional, appropriate, meanings.

Bethune's masthead is just one example of her total production for *The Catholic Worker*. Ade Bethune began donating her drawings to the newspaper in March 1934, ten months after the paper was founded. Bethune's personal style was the signature look of the newspaper until after the Second World War. Her drawings were featured in every edition of the paper until 1945 and continue to make regular appearances today, even after her death. The frequency with which Bethune's images were published in the newspaper implies that they had a significant role to play in furthering the message of the Catholic Worker movement.

Among the more obvious purposes Bethune intended her illustrations to serve was to make the newspaper more visually appealing, and thereby to garner more readers. In confirmation of this objective, one of the movement's historians Jim Forest remembered, "It was my eye rather than ideas that first drew my attention to *The Catholic Worker*. I was attracted by the paper's black-and-white illustrations...[I]mages inspired me to read

³ Judith Stoughton, *Proud Donkey of Schaerbeek: Ade Bethune, Catholic Worker Artist*, (St. Cloud, MN: North Star Press of St. Cloud) 1988, 46.

the paper.”⁴ Bethune also hoped to reach the illiterate, for whom the articles were inaccessible.⁵ She chose subjects deliberately so her images would both enliven *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, and illuminate the Catholic Worker cause.

In addition to these basic functions, I contend Bethune was trying to accomplish something much more subtle and profound with her illustrations. She was providing small models of “true” Catholic art and life, and hoping her examples would be absorbed and followed. She had highly developed ideas about the aesthetic content and moral context of a perfect Catholic art, influenced in part by her affiliations with the Liturgical Arts Movement and the Catholic Art Association. These groups were, in turn, heavily informed by a debate occurring in Europe and the United States about the boundaries and relative values of “high” and “low” cultural forms. Bethune’s understanding of the aesthetic of a “true” Catholic art was also shaped in part by Aristotelian philosophy as mediated by her colleague and friend Graham Carey. Carey’s philosophy stressed the functionality of the art object.

Bethune also had complex notions of what a Catholic society should look like. Naturally, many of her beliefs on this subject were directly related to the principles of the Catholic Worker movement. Furthermore, in accordance with one of the movement’s major thinkers, Peter Maurin, and again with Graham Carey, Bethune yearned to return to an imagined past, or, more accurately, to bring that past forward into the present. She held a romanticized view of the Middle Ages, believing that during that era Christianity and society were perfectly melded. The intervening time since the beginning of the

⁴ Jim Forest, quoted in Robert Ellsberg, *Fritz Eichenberg: Works of Mercy*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books) 1992, 13.

⁵ Later Catholic Worker artist Fritz Eichenberg reports the desire on the part of Dorothy Day to have illustrations that communicate to the illiterate. Ellsberg, 53.

Renaissance was, in her view, both morally and artistically corrupt. She wanted to combine the greatest elements of the medieval past with the best aspects of the present. With her illustrations she endeavored to place before the eyes of her audience examples of an ideal art and visions of the society she longed to help create. Furthermore, she offered the images themselves as an indexical record of her own strivings toward a holy life.

In this paper I intend to demonstrate that Bethune skillfully manipulated the subjects and style of her images in order to increase the number of their potential associations, each leading to the ultimate goal of picturing her conception of the ideal individual and corporate life. She selected subjects that could be successfully juxtaposed with a variety of texts and draw additional significance from them. She combined two disparate artistic styles, medievalizing and modernist abstractions, each with their own connotations. Finally, she offered each of her works as a tangible record of her efforts to embody the philosophy of true Catholic living she espoused.

A brief overview of Ade Bethune's personal history will help ground the discussion of her work. In a series of interviews conducted in 1984, she remembered a happy childhood in Belgium sheltered within her devout Catholic family.⁶ Already pious as a child, young Bethune went to daily mass with her grandfather and began studying her own missal at age ten.⁷ She also attended a liturgically progressive Catholic school.⁸

⁶ Stoughton. This source is the only published biography of Bethune, and I gathered almost all of my biographical information from it. Bethune's given name was Adélaïde de Bethune. She went by the shortened version after a writer for *The Catholic Worker* misinterpreted her signature, A. de Bethune, and printed it as Ade Bethune instead. Bethune used the mishap as an excuse to drop the "de" that she found pretentious from her last name.

⁷ Stoughton, 14. A missal is a book that explains each part of the mass service so that an interested worshipper can follow along. In Bethune's youth, the mass was given exclusively in Latin, and that fact coupled with the popularity of personal pious practices like saying the rosary during the mass prevented the

The Bethune family emigrated from Brussels to New York City in 1928 because her mother wanted to “have her children earn their living instead of being idle, impoverished gentry in Europe.”⁹ Life in the United States involved a great transition for the Bethune family. From their large ancestral home maintained by two servants, they moved into a small apartment. Bethune’s mother served as a role model for her during this time; she remembered her mother adjusting to their newfound poverty with grace and cheer, and maintaining her spirit of generosity toward their new neighbors and friends.¹⁰

Bethune, aged fourteen, enrolled in Cathedral High School, and took classes at Parson’s School of Art on the weekends. Later, she decided to pursue her study more seriously and only attended the high school half time. She studied at the National Academy of Design the other half of the time, learning to draw from plaster casts in the classical academic tradition. In 1932, at the prompting of Arthur Covey, a favorite teacher, she transferred to Cooper Union, where she could more freely pursue her interests in two-dimensional composition and abstraction. She finished her course of study at Cooper Union in 1933.

Bethune’s relationship with *The Catholic Worker* began in autumn of that same year, before she had even begun seriously considering how to earn a living as a practicing artist. She had received a copy of the newspaper from a friend who recognized that Bethune would find the periodical persuasive. The combination of pious, hopeful Catholic message and radical program of social justice described in the pages excited

majority of people from understanding the service. Solving this problem was one of the major goals of the Liturgical Movement.

⁸ Keith Pecklers, *Unread Vision: the Liturgical Movement in the United States of America*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998) 228. This information will become relevant momentarily when I discuss Bethune’s involvement in the Liturgical Arts movement. This fact indicates an early exposure to the kind of progressive liturgical interests that would become an important part of her adult life.

⁹ Stoughton, 21.

¹⁰ Stoughton, 31-32.

Bethune immensely. Young, idealistic, and eager to get involved, she offered to help in the best way she knew how, by contributing her art. She made and sent several drawings to the newspaper's editor Dorothy Day and her assistant Dorothy Weston with the following letter:

Dear Dorotheas—There is but one thing I can make: that is pictures. So I send you a few already—I hope you can use them for *The Catholic Worker*....I also mean to do your Patron St. Joseph for his feast in March. And whenever you are in need of a picture please ask me. All right? With all my best for the Work,
Ade Bethune¹¹

In response, Day invited Bethune to visit the newspaper's office. After a brief interview, Day asked Bethune to create new illustrations for the paper on a monthly basis. Day was extremely pleased with Bethune's first drawing for *The Catholic Worker*, a picture of St. Joseph in his workshop (fig. 2).¹² Accordingly, Day trumpeted the addition of Bethune to the newspaper in her editorial: "There are so many things to thank St. Joseph for this month! The picture which is the forerunner to this paragraph is the work of Ade Bethune, a young Belgian girl, and we must thank him for sending her with her work to the paper."¹³

In order to understand Bethune's relationship with *The Catholic Worker* newspaper and the Catholic Worker movement, it is useful to consider the initial establishment of the newspaper. The first issue of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper appeared in May 1933, at a turning point of the Great Depression. Sold for a penny in the

¹¹ Stoughton, 37.

¹² *The Catholic Worker*, 1 no. 9 (March 1934): 4. Reprinted in 2 no. 7 (December 1934): 5; 2 no. 10 (March 1935): 1; 3 no. 3 (July/August 1935): 1; 3 no. 6 (November 1935): 6; 3 no. 8 (January 1936): 5; 3 no. 8 (January 1936): 8; 4 no. 6 (October 1936): 5; 4 no. 11 (March 1937): 5; 5 no. 2 (June 1937): 5; 5 no. 8 (December 1937): 7; 5 no. 11 (March 1938): 4; 6 no. 6 (December 1938): 3; 6 no. 9 (March 1939): 2; 7 no. 2 (September 1939): 2; 7 no. 7 (March 1940): 1; 8 no. 2 (December 1940): 5; 9 no. 10 (September 1942): 3; 10 no. 4 (March 1943): 4; 10 no. 7 (June 1943): 10; 10 no. 10 (October 1943): 7; 11 no. 3 (March 1944): 5; 12 no. 2 (March 1945): 1.

¹³ *The Catholic Worker*, 1 no. 9 (March 1934): 4.

rough neighborhoods near Union Square and the Bowery in New York City, the paper's message was intended for the destitute, the down-and-out, and the young political radicals who worked among them. The inaugural editorial was addressed:

To Our Readers. For those who are sitting on park benches in the warm spring sunlight. For those who are huddling in shelters trying to escape the rain. For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work. For those who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight—this little paper is addressed. It is printed to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program—to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare.¹⁴

The editorial went on to define the newspaper's mission:

It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed. The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is the conversion of its readers to Radicalism and Atheism.

Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?

Is it not possible to protest, to expose, to complain, to point out abuses and demand reforms without the overthrow of religion?

In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the 'reconstruction of the social order,' this news sheet, *The Catholic Worker*, is started.¹⁵

This inaugural editorial was written by Dorothy Day, the editor of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper. She was also the founder, along with Peter Maurin, of the Catholic Worker movement. The philosophies of these two figures were the basis for the movement, and were therefore extremely influential for Bethune herself.

¹⁴ *The Catholic Worker*, 1 no.1 (May 1933): 4. Day is referring to two papal encyclicals. The first is Leo XII's *On the Condition of Workers*, written in 1891, and the second is Pius XI's *On the Reconstruction of the Social Order*, written in 1931. Both address poverty within the working class.

¹⁵ *The Catholic Worker*, 1 no.1 (May 1933): 4.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) was an adult convert to Catholicism.¹⁶ Five years into her life as a Catholic, she had a personal epiphany that led to her formation of the Catholic Worker movement. Already interested in issues of social justice, Day joined a delegation of unemployed workers marching from New York City to Washington, DC, in November 1932.¹⁷ They called their protest a Hunger Strike, and they demanded social legislation for unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, relief for mother and children, and, most of all, for work.¹⁸ Day was distressed by the lack of institutional Catholic support for the protest. While in the nation's capital, Day stopped in the yet incomplete National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception to pray for a way to reconcile these two strongest forces in her life—her concern for the overwhelming poverty around her and her desire for communion with God through the institution of the Catholic Church.

Day believed her prayer had been answered in the form of an eccentric French immigrant, Peter Maurin, who appeared on her doorstep immediately upon her return to New York. He had been sent by a mutual friend who thought the two had ideas in common.¹⁹ Maurin had a deep Catholic faith and highly developed plans for a revolutionary social program based on the French Catholic philosophical strain called “personalism.”²⁰ In his vision of an ideal future, families would return to the land and

¹⁶ There is an extensive body of literature about the life and work of Dorothy Day. My knowledge of Day's life comes primarily from her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952). Day also wrote an autobiographical novel called *The Eleventh Virgin*, which further details the tribulations of her early life. She later regretted having written and published this book, because she was embarrassed about some choices she made prior to becoming a Catholic. I also consulted numerous biographies of Day, including William D. Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); Robert Coles, *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987); Jim Forest, *Love is the Measure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).

¹⁷ Miller, 48.

¹⁸ *Long Loneliness*, 166.

¹⁹ The friend was George Shuster, editor of Catholic periodical, the *Commonweal*. *Long Loneliness*, 169.

²⁰ Peter Maurin was particularly influenced by writers Leon Bloy, Jacques Maritain, Emmanuel Mounier, and Nikolai Berdyaev. In *A Harsh and Dreadful Love*, William Miller describes the central tenets of personalism: that “the primacy of Christian love should be...infused into the process of history” instead of

live in a synthesis of what he cleverly termed “cult, culture and cultivation.” That is, they would combine faith, scholarship, and agricultural labor. Maurin recognized that his romantic utopian vision could not be instituted immediately, and therefore had a four part plan for building a “new society within the shell of the old.”²¹ He hoped for the establishment of hospices called “houses of hospitality” that would care for the poor in the cities, and the founding of agronomic universities that would teach farming techniques to newly transplanted urbanites. In order to transmit his message, he wanted formalized round-table discussions called “clarification of thought” and a newspaper that could be distributed to rich and poor alike. Maurin was lucky to find Dorothy Day because he considered himself primarily a prophetic witness, and was utterly lacking the capability to put his ideas into practice. He was a thinker, not a doer. Day, however, was inspired and invigorated by Maurin’s message and was ready to act. The first step was to found a newspaper whose radical message would be anti-capitalist, anti-communist, and profoundly inspired by the Gospels: *The Catholic Worker*.

Day, who had a background in journalism, was the editor. With the help of her brother and his wife she established the operation out of her tiny tenement apartment. Maurin was in charge of distribution of the first issue. Almost immediately, *The Catholic Worker* drew people. Volunteers of all sorts came to Maurin and Day to work and live together. Inspired readers sent donations. The group was soon able to rent a few apartments for the first of the houses of hospitality, and over time became a full-fledged movement, establishing houses of hospitality in other cities and cooperative farms in the country. The Catholic Workers lived together with the people they served, operated soup

existing outside of human time, the redemption of the world and change in the world had to be affected by human agency, through “putting on Christ.” 21-22.

²¹ Maurin borrowed this phrase and concept from the International Workers of the World.

and bread lines, housed the homeless temporarily or indefinitely, gave away clothing and shoes, raised money to support pickets and their families during labor strikes and published the monthly newspaper. Workers shared fundamental beliefs in the sanctity of labor, voluntary poverty, total pacifism, and anarchy, in the sense that there was no formalized hierarchy among the Workers and each person was meant to be responsible for him or herself and responsible to the group as a whole.²²

This is the organization with which Bethune aligned herself in 1933. Unlike many of the other Workers, she did not live in a house of hospitality, but moved back and forth from her parents' New York apartment and a position teaching high school art classes in Newport, RI. Though she volunteered countless hours doing many kinds of work for the movement, her major contribution was her art.

The first goal Bethune had for her images was that they enhance the message of the newspaper. A fellow artist remembered, "Dorothy [Day] wanted something emotional, something that would touch people through images, as she was trying to do through words, and something that would communicate the spirit of the Catholic Worker to people who, perhaps, could not read the articles."²³ Occasionally Day would request particular subject matter for Bethune's drawings, but for the most part, Bethune submitted images of whatever she wanted to depict. She based her choices upon the liturgical calendar, personal favorites, and things she thought would especially appeal to Day. She did not make drawings of current events or personalities but chose traditional subjects instead.

²² I used *The Long Loneliness* as the source for this description of the beginnings of the newspaper and movement.

²³ Fritz Eichenberg, quoted in Ellsberg, 53.

An attempt to divide Bethune's drawings for *The Catholic Worker* into categories reveals her principal interests.²⁴ In the years 1934-45, Bethune made thirty-eight individual images of saints at their labors, like *St. Martha* (fig 3), thirty-seven of saints in iconic poses, like *St. Paul* (fig. 4), twenty-three moments from the life of Christ, like *Come Follow Me* (fig. 5), fourteen of the Virgin Mary in various guises, like *Our Lady of Good Counsel* (fig. 6), nine of lay people, including farm laborers (fig 7.1) and the homeless (fig 7.2), and four of parables, like *Rejoice With Me For I Have Found My Sheep That Was Lost* (fig. 8).²⁵ She also contributed over fifty additional images that did not fit neatly into any of these categories, like this untitled image (fig. 9), and *Pray and Work* (fig. 10).²⁶

Bethune selected subjects that coordinated with the principles of the Catholic Worker movement: sacred work, racial equality, pacifism, and the possibility for every person even in modern society to live a saintly life. However, instead of illustrating these

²⁴ I created the following categories myself. Some of the images could have rested comfortably in two or more of the categories, and so the exact numbers of each tally could be altered slightly. Nonetheless, I believe the general view these categories give of Bethune's output is accurate.

²⁵ *St. Martha* was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 3 no. 3 (July/August 1935): 3. It was reprinted in 4 no. 6 (October 1936): 6; 5 no. 3 (July 1937): 6; 6 no. 2 (June 1938): 1; 6 no. 4 (September 1938): 4.

St. Paul was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 2 no. 8 (January 1935): 1. It was reprinted in 2 no. 10 (March 1935): 11; 5 no. 3 (July 1937): 4; 5 no. 9 (January 1938): 2; 6 no. 2 (June 1938): 1.

Come Follow Me was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 3 no. 3 (July/August 1935): 1. It was reprinted in 10 no. 9 (September 1943): 4.

Our Lady of Good Counsel was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 3 no. 9 (February 1936): 1. It was reprinted in 5 no. 1 (May 1937): 1; 9 no. 1 (November 1941): 3; 9 no. 2 (December 1941): 4; 9 no. 7 (May 1942): 4.

The drawing of farm laborers was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 2 no. 9 (February 1935): 3. It was reprinted in 7 no. 10 (July/August 1940): 4; 8 no. 6 (April 1941): 2; 8 no. 11 (October 1941): 4; 12 no. 4 (May 1945): 7.

The drawing of a homeless man was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 2 no. 6 (January 1935): 5. It was reprinted in 4 no. 1 (May 1936): 5; 6 no. 4 (September 1938): 3; 6 no. 11 (June 1939): 5; 7 no. 6 (September 1939): 5; 7 no. 5 (January 1940): 6; 7 no. 8 (May 1940): 8; 9 no. 10 (September 1942): 7.

Rejoice With Me for I Have Found My Sheep That Was Lost was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 9 no. 8 (June 1942): 2. It was reprinted in 9 no. 11 (November 1942): 5; 11 no. 2 (February 1944): 3.

²⁶ The untitled image was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 2 no. 1 (May 1934): 8. It was reprinted in 2 no. 11 (April 1935): 2; 3 no. 2 (June 1935): 6; 4 no. 1 (May 1936): 6.

Pray and Work was first published in *The Catholic Worker* 4 no. 4 (August 1936): 1. It was reprinted in 4 no. 9 (January 1937): 3; 4 no. 12 (April 1937): 1; 5 no. 2 (June 1937): 1; 5 no. 3 (July 1937): 1.

ideas via contemporary people or events, Bethune chose biblical, historical, or allegorical subjects that related to the Catholic Worker principles in metaphorical ways. She often mingled historical and present time in her depictions, showing medieval saints using modern tools for example, thereby increasing the illustrations' applicability to a variety of accompanying texts.

For example, one of Bethune's earliest efforts for *The Catholic Worker* was the creation of fourteen tondos illustrating the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (figs. 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, and 11.4 are *Healing the Sick*, *Harboring the Harborless*, *Visiting the Prisoner*, and *Burying the Dead*). All fourteen drawings appeared in serial in 1934 and 1935, reminding readers of the foundation of the Catholic Workers' mission. They were not created to illustrate any one particular story, but to reiterate the movement's overarching principals.

Bethune's 1937 image of the holy family underscores the Workers' belief in the nobility and sanctity of work (fig. 12).²⁷ Joseph at left and Christ in the middle are engaged in carpentry while Mary stitches a garment. The drawing is accompanied by the motto of the Benedictine order, "*Ora et Labora*," or "Pray and Work." The figures in the image wear contemporary clothing and use modern tools. The men wear pants and closed shoes. Joseph also has a brimmed cap. He uses a modern hacksaw, while Mary works with straight pins and a pair of scissors. By updating the figures' dress and tools, Bethune brings them forward in time, closer to the audience she hopes to reach. At the same time, the simple, non-specific architectural setting and the hand-tools (as opposed to mechanized ones) allow the image to concurrently occupy the past, lending it a certain universality borne of atemporality. The figures' facial expressions indicate complete

²⁷ *The Catholic Worker*, 4 no. 9 (January 1937): 5.

absorption in their labors, reiterating the unity of prayer and work expressed in the legend. An illustration from October 1936 similarly elevates manual labor, and its title *Lady Poverty* indicates the figure is an allegory of the voluntary poverty in which the Workers chose to live (fig. 13).²⁸

An example of an image displaying the Catholic Workers' interest in promoting racial equality is Bethune's popular image from 1934 of Christ blessing the children (fig. 14).²⁹ The drawing shows Christ surrounded by seven eager youngsters, two of whom are black. Although by contemporary standards the group of black and white children is far from truly multi-cultural, at the time of the image's original publication even this limited racial mix was considered fairly radical. Bethune's inclusion of two black children reminded readers of the Workers' commitment to serve all people regardless of race, and to actively work to improve race relations.

A few of Bethune's drawings relate to the Catholic Worker's commitment to pacifism. The official position of *The Catholic Worker* was that there was no such thing as a "just war" and that total pacifism was the only stance sanctioned by God.³⁰ This conviction was in opposition to the stated position of the Catholic Church, and was contested even among the different members of the Catholic Worker movement.

Furthermore, in the years just prior to the United States' entry into the Second World War maintaining a pacifist stance was a highly politicized act in the broader American culture.

²⁸ *The Catholic Worker*, 4 no. 6 (October 1936): 1. Reprinted in 4 no. 10 (February 1937): 2; 6 no. 12 (July/August 1939): 4; 7 no. 6 (February 1940): 4; 11 no. 2 (February 1944): 8; 11 no. 5 (May 1944): 7; 11 no. 8 (October 1944): 5.

²⁹ *The Catholic Worker*, 2 no. 6 (November 1934): 5. Reprinted in 2 no. 8 (January 1935): 8; 3 no. 1 (May 1935): 5; 3 no. 3 (July/August 1935): 5.

³⁰ Developed from the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, the Catholic Church maintains a belief in "just war," that is, a war that must be fought for the good of humankind. According to the Church, a war is only just when it is the absolute last resort for restoring peace, and when it is undertaken in the spirit of righteousness, not vengeance or jealousy. The Second World War was considered a just war.

It was necessary for Bethune to treat this subject gently, so as not to anger the institutional church or further escalate the rift within the movement. Bethune's drawing of St. Telemachus (fig. 15) published in *The Catholic Worker* in March, 1940 exemplifies this careful approach.³¹ In the drawing, the peace-loving martyr places himself between two fighting gladiators, ending their battle.³² The image touches on the idea of non-violence without directly commenting on the contemporary international situation. It illustrates a historical moment only vaguely related to the present.

A final example of Bethune's thoughtful choice of subject matter for her illustrations is her drawing of St. John of God (fig. 16).³³ The Catholic Workers maintained a particular fondness for St. John of God because of his association with newspapers. The sixteenth-century saint had initiated a project called "the Apostolate of the Printed Page," wandering the Spanish countryside selling religious books and pictures at cost in order to make them accessible to all. The image illustrates not only the particular suitability of Bethune's subjects, but also exemplifies her interest in showing historical figures in contemporary settings, bringing them closer to the people the newspaper served. In this case, the saint is engaged in an activity familiar to the Catholic Workers, selling a newspaper on the street, and he is doing it in a modern city like the ones in which most Workers lived.

³¹ *The Catholic Worker*, 7 no. 7 (March 1940): 7.

³² According to legend, St. Telemachus was a third century monk who tried to stop a gladiatorial fight in the Roman Coliseum. He was killed in this effort, but the sight of his innocent, bloodied body shamed the spectators, and gladiatorial fights were stopped forever.

³³ *The Catholic Worker*, 2 no. 10 (March 1935): 3. Reprinted in 4 no. 9 (January 1937): 2; 4 no. 12 (April 1937): 1; 5 no. 11 (March 1938): 2; 6 no. 9 (March 1939): 2; 7 no. 1 (September 1939): 2; 7 no. 3 (November 1939): 6; 7 no. 6 (February 1940): 5; 8 no. 3 (January 1941): 4; 8 no. 4 (February 1941): 4; 8 no. 7 (May 1941): 2; 8 no. 8 (June 1941): 2; 8 no. 10 (September 1941): 7; 9 no. 4 (February 1942): 4; 9 no. 6 (April 1942): 3; 10 no. 2 (January 1943): 4.

An additional point about the subject matter Bethune chose to illustrate is that because of the nature of a newspaper, where images are juxtaposed with text, Bethune's drawings could take on additional meanings by virtue of their placement in the layout. An example lies in the April 1937 newspaper, where Bethune's ostensibly politically neutral image of Blessed Martin de Porres tending to the sick (fig. 17) becomes politically charged by its position adjacent to an article titled "Race Problem," which protests unsuitable housing conditions for black working class people in Chicago.³⁴ The valorizing image of the black holy man reinforces the Catholic Workers' position on the evil of racism. By illustrating classic Biblical tales and the lives of saints, or broad themes like labor, motherhood, and mercy, Bethune was able to create malleable images that could be applied to and appear in conjunction with a variety of contemporary topics.

Although Bethune's particular skill at choosing appealing subjects is certainly significant, it is just the beginning of her commitment to the enhancement of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper, and of her personal program of exemplification. An important aspect of Bethune's images is the uncommonness of her style within the illustration genre. Her images stood out as strong and inventive among the offerings of other popular newspapers and magazines, making them both recognizable and memorable. Their bold, eye-catching appeal caused them to reach out to potential new readers, drawing them in.

An example of the kind of illustration common during this period is a drawing by Henrietta McCraig Starrett for *The Saturday Evening Post* (fig. 18).³⁵ This weekly magazine had very broad readership and was doubtless familiar to both the Workers

³⁴ *The Catholic Worker*, 4 no. 12 (April 1937): 4.

³⁵ *Saturday Evening Post*, 207 no. 40 (April 6, 1935): 12.

themselves and the people they served. The Starrett illustration has four figures rendered in a naturalistic style, with convincing space, proportion, and value. Although there is textural interest in the hatched and scribbled lines that produce the tones, the image is generally conservative in approach. The figures are youthful and attractive and wear contemporary fashions. A series of comparisons with other reproductive images in various related categories will demonstrate how Bethune's approach differed.

Bethune was angered by the prevailing Catholic visual culture and its reliance on a style she characterized as sentimental realism, as presented in the *Saturday Evening Post* illustration.³⁶ An example of the kind of imagery rebuked by Bethune is a holy card from the early twentieth century depicting a moment from the life of St. Rita of Cascia (fig. 19.1).³⁷ In her 1938 article for *The Catholic Worker* entitled "CW Artist Explains her Pictures," she calls printed holy cards like this one "vulgar," and "fake" "injustices."³⁸ The soft lighting and sweet, placid facial expression in this image are typical of the sentimental Catholic visual culture from which Bethune sought to distance herself. In contrast is an image of St. Dorothy printed in *The Catholic Worker* in February 1936 (fig. 19.2).³⁹ It too shows a moment in the life of a saint, but in Bethune's own style. Here Dorothy is being sentenced to death for refusing to worship idols. Though St. Dorothy lived in the fourth century, Bethune shows her in a contemporary courtroom with a jailor in contemporary dress. The work is flat, bold, and graphic.

³⁶ I will return to a discussion of Bethune's opinions of contemporary Catholic visual culture and their source in the debate within the art world and in the Church about separating "high" from "low" culture.

³⁷ David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 67-68. St. Rita of Cascia was a fifteenth century nun. On Good Friday, 1442 she prayed to participate in the pain and sacrifice of Christ and received a mark of stigmata, a wound on the forehead from the crown of thorns.

³⁸ Ade Bethune, "CW Artist Explains Her Pictures," *The Catholic Worker* 6 no. 4 (September 1938): 8.

³⁹ *The Catholic Worker*, 3 no. 9 (February 1936): 1.

An additional comparison can be made between an image by Bethune for *The Catholic Worker* and the cover of a different religious periodical, the *War Cry*. The *War Cry* is the official newsletter of the Salvation Army, an evangelical Christian sect with an emphasis on charity and social justice. The December 1942 edition of the newsletter featured an image by Warner Sallman entitled *The Christmas Story* (fig. 20.1).⁴⁰ This image is typical in style and subject of all of the illustrations featured in this publication. It can be compared with a Nativity by Bethune published in *The Catholic Worker* in December 1934 (fig. 20.2).⁴¹ Both use extremely abstracted space, but Sallman's image is naturalistic in color and modeling. His figures are smoothed, beautified, and idealized. In contrast, Bethune makes linear, almost crude, drawings of her figures, emphasizing their repeated patterns across the surface of the image.

The style of Bethune's work helped to distinguish *The Catholic Worker* from other publications. Communist newspaper *Daily Worker* and *The Catholic Worker* had similar, sometimes even overlapping, audiences because of their social messages. In fact, in some ways, the *Daily Worker* can be considered *The Catholic Worker's* biggest competitor. Both newspapers were intended to attract poor laborers to their own causes and were often sold in immediate proximity to each other. The contrast of a cartoon by Fred Ellis published in 1929 in the *Daily Worker* with an image by Bethune published in *The Catholic Worker* in 1934 demonstrates the newspapers' different approaches toward

⁴⁰ David Morgan, *Protestants and Pictures: Religion, Visual Culture and the Age of Mass Production* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 233.

⁴¹ *The Catholic Worker*, 2 no. 7 (December 1934): 1. Reprinted 3 no. 7 (December 1935): 1; 5 no. 8 (December 1937): 1; 6 no. 6 (December 1938): 1; 10 no. 1 (December 1942): 1; 12 no. 10 (December 1945): 1. There are clear differences in the message of these two images; the war-time patriotism in the Sallman is not expressed in the Bethune image. The purpose of this comparison, however, is to contrast style, not subject.

illustration (figs. 21.1, 21.2).⁴² Both images are called *The Sower*. Ellis' Daumier-like charcoal drawing of a colossus in overalls scattering issues of the *Daily Worker* across the city is not of the same sentimental genre as the St. Rita prayer card or the *War Cry* cover, but it still dramatically differs in style to Bethune's striking, almost art deco figure.

The style of Bethune's drawings stood out against the sea of naturalistic imagery found in other ephemeral print sources around the same time. Although her style was not entirely unique within the realms of religious publications or fine arts sources (two categories to which I will return), it was certainly unusual among the popular, inexpensive periodicals available to the masses. This clear, graphic style helped bring new readers to *The Catholic Worker*. Its legibility increased the didactic power of the images. Most importantly, however, Bethune's style served to express her ideas about true Catholic art and life.

Naturally, Bethune's style reflected her own understanding of what Catholic art should be. In her 1938 article "CW Artist Explains Her Pictures," Bethune discussed practical circumstances that influenced her aesthetic choices.

Let's take newspaper illustrations:

1. What are they made for?

To be read and understood.

Hence they should be legible and direct in statement—no useless digressions or distractions. When they are made in particular for a paper preaching holy poverty and inexpensive process: for instance "line engraving" (i.e. just black and white, no greys) instead of the much more expensive "half-tone engraving" (i.e. with all shades of greys, as in photographs).

⁴² The Ellis image is from *1929 Red Cartoons: reprinted from The Daily Worker*, edited by Sender Garlin, introduction by Joseph Freeman. (New York: Comprodaily Publishing Co.) 1929, 6. The Bethune image is from *The Catholic Worker*, 2 no. 6 (November 1934): 1. It was reprinted in 2 no. 8 (January 1935): 3; 3 no. 2 (June 1935): 5; 3 no. 6 (November 1935): 1; 4 no. 1 (May 1936): 1; 4 no. 4 (August 1936): 4; 4 no. 8 (December 1936): 7; 4 no. 10 (February 1937): 2; 6 no. 1 (May 1938): 8; 6 no. 6 (December 1938): 7; 6 no. 9 (March 1939): 2; 7 no. 1 (September 1939): 6; 7 no. 4 (December 1939): 8; 7 no. 6 (February 1940): 8; 8 no. 2 (December 1940): 8; 8 no. 7 (May 1941): 4; 8 no. 8 (June 1941): 8; 8 no. 10 (September 1941): 6; 9 no. 1 (November 1941): 8; 9 no. 7 (May 1942): 2; 10 no. 6 (May 1943): 9; 10 no. 7 (June 1943): 12; 12 no. 3 (April 1945): 5.

2. What are they made from?

Coarse paper and printing ink.

Hence they should respect the nature of paper and ink—not “fake.” They should not “look” like an imitation oil painting, imitation etching, imitation mosaic or photograph, etc. Since the paper is coarse, very well, they should avoid delicate detail and accommodate themselves of the situation by being also large and bold in scale to fit with the coarse paper.

3. What are they made with?

Cuts and a printing press.

Hence they should be sharp and clear cut. (Something vague and indefinite would mess up in printing.) Newspapers in particular are printed on a rotary press, that is, indirectly, instead of directly from type and cuts. This indirect method and also the cheapness of the work is always liable to cause distortions. The pictures will be better if they allow for this by being simple and coarse, so that even distortion cannot hurt their legibility.⁴³

The enumeration reveals her reliance on a philosophy of art articulated by her friend and colleague Graham Carey, and based on his understanding of Aristotle and Thomas

Aquinas.⁴⁴ Carey explained the idea, called the Four Causes, in his an essay titled,

“What is Catholic Art?”⁴⁵ He wrote,

Art is the imposition of an original FORM upon a MATERIAL by the use of certain MEANS to achieve a given END. Works of art thus seem to have four elements or kinds of causes, Formal, Material, Efficient, and Final...A thing is not beautiful unless it is perfect of its own kind, unless it has a harmonious and just relationship between its four artistic causes.⁴⁶

The formal cause, or reason why an object looks the way it does, is the idea in the mind of the artist that he or she translates into matter. The material cause is the type of matter the artist chooses to fashion into art (in Bethune’s article it is “coarse paper and printing ink”). The efficient cause is the method by which the artist alters the material with which he or she works (“cuts and a printing press”). The final cause is the outcome the artist

⁴³ Bethune, “CW Artist,” 8.

⁴⁴ Bethune acknowledged her debt to Carey in an interview with her biographer Judith Stoughton, saying, “I found Graham’s analysis of how a work of art comes to be very valuable in looking at my own work...” Stoughton, 49.

⁴⁵ Graham Carey, “What is Catholic Art?” *Christian Social Art Quarterly* 1 no.1 (December, 1937): 7-27.

⁴⁶ Carey, 18.

hopes to achieve through his or her making, or the purpose of the object (“to be read and understood”). In this formulation, the creation of beauty is not the primary goal of the artist, but beauty is the natural byproduct of balanced application of the four causes. To put it differently, beauty results when, because of the skillful working of an appropriate medium, an artist creates something that perfectly suits a given purpose. Bethune’s effort to balance the “four causes” within her own work is evidenced through her rejection of strongly naturalistic styles and her embrace instead of two alternative, temporally disparate styles, modernist abstraction and a romanticized medievalism.

Bethune forged relationships with two organizations that endorsed a particular aesthetic for sacred art: the Liturgical Arts Society, which published *Liturgical Arts*, and the Catholic Art Association, which published *Christian Social Art Quarterly* (later titled *Catholic Art Quarterly*). She both influenced the thinking of these groups (her art was praised in the pages of *Liturgical Arts* and she contributed articles and images to *Christian Social Art Quarterly*), and was in turn inspired by the ideas presented in the periodicals. Both organizations were founded in response to the impression that the quality of the visual arts in Catholic churches had become intolerably poor. In reality, of course, it was not the art that had changed in quality, but the fashion of what was considered acceptable and tasteful that had shifted over time. The groups represented by these periodicals were in touch with a debate going on in the larger culture about the relative value of popular cultural forms. The style of Bethune’s drawings reflects her own engagement with this debate, as mediated through the two sacred arts organizations.

The wealthy and educated classes of America began attempting to draw a clear distinction between high/elite and low/popular cultural forms as early as the 1850s.⁴⁷ In his book *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth Century America* scholar Paul Gorman discusses the complicated nature of the intellectuals' critique of mass culture.⁴⁸ During Bethune's early career the American intelligentsia believed the ubiquity of low popular culture was the inevitable but degenerate product of industrial capitalism. Intellectuals combined attitudes of condescension with feelings of compassion for the lower classes, insisting that popular cultural forms were a blight that had to be eradicated for the people's own good, even if the people themselves were too ignorant to know it. They believed the seductiveness of mass culture lured in and then poisoned the minds and spirits of the lower classes, which were utterly naïve to the danger.⁴⁹

One of the most influential critics of the prevalence of low cultural forms was Clement Greenberg. In his famous 1939 essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," he wrote about a particular subset of low culture: kitsch.⁵⁰ He declared,

Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times. Kitsch pretends to demand nothing of its customers except their money—not even their time.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Paul Di Maggio "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford), 1991, 374-397.

⁴⁸ Paul Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1996.

⁴⁹ Gorman.

⁵⁰ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in *Clement Greenberg: the Collected Essays and Criticism*. John O'Brien, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1986.

⁵¹ Greenberg, 10.

He stated, “[s]elf-evidently, all kitsch is academic,” that is, unoriginal, uncreative, uninteresting.⁵² He declared kitsch “predigest[ed],” and “synthetic,” the opposite of art that was “genuine” and “authentic.”⁵³ He blamed the social conditions resulting from industrial capitalism for the creation and perpetuation of the problem, writing,

Because it can be turned out mechanically, kitsch has become an integral part of our productive system in a way in which true culture could never be, except accidentally. It has been capitalized at a tremendous investment which must show commensurate returns; it is compelled to extend as well to keep its markets. While it is essentially its own salesman, a great sales apparatus has nevertheless been created for it, which brings pressure to bear on every member of society.⁵⁴

In sum, Greenberg believed kitsch was an insidious force threatening to destroy culture itself.

In a chapter of her book *Material Christianity* called “Christian Kitsch and the Rhetoric of Bad Taste,” historian of religion Colleen McDannell offers an excellent overview of the concurrent and interrelated history of Christian reflection upon parallel issues of quality in sacred art.⁵⁵ The discussion began with a group of Catholics in Europe who objected to the mass produced material culture called *l’art Saint Sulpice* after the district in Paris in which it was sold. In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, objects in the style of *l’art Saint Sulpice* were favored throughout the Catholic world, including the United States. The art had a similar nickname in this country, “Barclay Street art,” after the street in New York where it was marketed. An example of the aesthetic of Barclay Street art is found in a 1908 advertisement for Bernardini Statuary Company of New York (fig. 22). The three statues are similar in style to the St.

⁵² Greenberg, 11.

⁵³ Greenberg, 15.

⁵⁴ Greenberg, 11.

⁵⁵ McDannell, “Christian Kitsch and the Rhetoric of Bad Taste,” *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press) 1995, 163-97. She also provides a wonderful discussion of this question in relation to gender.

Rita holy card (fig. 19.1) in their idealized naturalism and formulaic appeal to the emotions. This kind of artistic production was severely criticized by both the Liturgical Arts Society and the Catholic Art Association, and thus, Bethune herself. These two organizations subscribed in part to the binary formulation of “high” art versus “low” presented by Greenberg and his colleagues, wherein the so-called Barclay Street art is the kitsch condemned by the cultural elites.

It is clear from her writing that Ade Bethune was aware of Greenberg’s and other intellectuals’ stance. She consciously aligned herself with their ideas about the danger of kitsch. One might return again to the holy card of St. Rita as an example of the kitsch prevalent in Catholic America (fig 19.1). In her article “CW Artist Explains Her Pictures,” Bethune railed against images of this type:

We do not as a rule know enough about the ‘method of operation’ of printed holy cards to realize how they are vulgar products of commercialism, turned out for ‘profits’—not for use, by irresponsible workmen, under inhuman conditions of labor. They try to hide the cheapness of their making under a mask of fake richness and sentimental glamour. They are a bunch of injustices and lies crying to Heaven for revenge—even though they claim to represent the symbols for the Most High and the people of His kingdom.⁵⁶

Furthermore, in the same article Bethune defended the aesthetic choices that brought her work far from the sentimental norm of contemporary religious imagery:

I believe my pictures look queer to some people mainly because we happen to be living in an industrial age. In any normal society they would be considered as very ordinary and simple... We often just think of them as ‘entertainment,’ and if they are not pretty, pleasant, vaporous or sensual as a magazine cover, we think they are poor entertainment. But pictures should not be made to gratify our senses. It seldom occurs to us that pictures should be something ‘useful to the mind.’... Their purpose is to inform our mind by their meaning and arrangement.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Bethune, “CW Artist,” 8.

⁵⁷ Bethune, “CW Artist,” 8.

This anti-kitsch rhetoric was significant for the reception of Ade Bethune's drawings by her contemporaries and by later viewers. Observers repeated the idea that the state of the arts in the Catholic Church was disgraceful and needed rectifying. A writer for the journal *Catholic Art Quarterly* announced, "[b]ehind all the tawdry religious art is the working proverb of most business—'Give the public what it wants!'... This can be corrected by education, especially in the young...Aesthetically, Catholic children are weaned on trash."⁵⁸ In the correspondence section of a 1932 issue of *Liturgical Arts* the editor introduces a letter:

This final letter...states in no uncertain terms the opinions of many who have written us. We have selected it from the many for its more vivid and full statement of what a great number of the laity seem to feel.⁵⁹

The letter itself begins:

Dear Sir:

No new periodical could be more timely or more needed than *Liturgical Arts*. It should have been launched two generations ago, to nip in the bud the then horrible growth of corrugated iron and prison-stone churches dotting our cities and looking like jails on the outside and either wedding cakes or vaudeville theaters in their interiors.⁶⁰

Continuing the exaggerated rhetoric, Bethune's biographer Judith Stoughton claimed, "[b]efore Ade Bethune, there was little relief from mediocrity and sentimentality in twentieth century religious art," and that with Bethune, "the problems of sentimentality and inappropriateness in liturgical art and music had been exposed and were on the way to being healed."⁶¹

For Greenberg and his colleagues the opposite of kitsch, and the redeemer of its moral delinquency, was the avant-garde. They promoted a kind of modernism that was

⁵⁸ Melville Stienfels, "Modern Religious Art," *Catholic Art Quarterly* 7 (1944) 4. Quoted in Pecklers, 234.

⁵⁹ Maurice Lavanoux, *Liturgical Arts* 1, no. 2. (Winter, 1932): 78.

⁶⁰ Benjamin Musser. *Liturgical Arts* 1, no. 2. (Winter, 1932): 78.

⁶¹ Stoughton, xii and ix.

everything kitsch was not: abstract, challenging, and stoic. According to the formalist history developed and espoused by Alfred H. Barr Jr., then director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and Clement Greenberg, scholar and critic, modern art was evolving through time, becoming ever more abstract, and ever more pure. In his extensive 1936 essay for the catalogue of the Museum of Modern Art's *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition, Barr explained some of the formal differences between naturalistic and modern styles with an illustrative example.⁶² He compared two posters advertising the same printing exhibition (fig. 23). Both posters were designed in 1928, but for different audiences. "The poster at the left is done in the fairly realistic poster style common to mediocre travel posters the world over. The poster at the right is by contrast highly abstract. In it natural objects are reduced to flat, almost geometric forms arranged on a strongly diagonal axis..." It is obvious from his value judgment that Barr prefers the poster at right, which shares in the modernist interests in abstraction, flatness, and the materiality of medium.

While Bethune and the sacred arts organizations with which she was associated attacked the aesthetic of idealized naturalism present in much Catholic visual culture, they did not wholly approve of the avant-garde modernism that was offered as a solution by cultural critics. Instead they endorsed a so-called "hieratic" style.⁶³ The hieratic style promoted stylization that simplified images and reduced forms to their most essential components, but maintained an emphasis on figuration and representation. McDannell explains the hieratic style "had a ritual stiffness...that emphasized the characteristics of

⁶² Alfred H Barr, Jr., *Cubism and Abstract Art*. (Museum of Modern Art: New York) 1936, reprinted 1964, 10.

⁶³ McDannell, 178.

frontality, stasis and severity.”⁶⁴ The style was an adaptation of the kind of modernism promoted by Greenberg and his colleagues.

Ade Bethune’s first drawing to appear in *The Catholic Worker*, the representation of St. Joseph (fig. 2) is revealing of her aesthetic choices. This drawing is clearly related to the modernism championed by Alfred Barr, Clement Greenberg, and others. Forms are resolutely flattened. The rectangular silhouette of the workbench denies perspectival space, as does the solid black of the undefined background. The tools at right and the words “Saint Joseph” float against the picture plane, emphasizing its flatness. The figure is arranged in a contorted non-naturalistic pose, capturing the essence of the posture, but not its optical veracity. Within the realm of contemporary Catholic visual culture, Bethune’s hieratic style was a radical modernism. Within the realm of avant-garde art, however, the St. Joseph image and the hieratic style were not considered especially innovative. Bethune used modern characteristics that had begun to be explored in high art circles decades earlier, and had already trickled down in large part to the greater culture.

It has already been demonstrated above that in addition to adamantly denouncing religious kitsch, Bethune turned toward the forms of modernism that Greenberg positioned as kitsch’s polar opposite, and embraced the hieratic style that Catholic critics believed to be the solution to the problem. Indeed, Bethune reported having favored the modern styles of Art Deco and International style architecture above the “Victorian doodads” of popular religious visual culture.⁶⁵ The combination of cultural criticism and formal modernism might imply that Bethune’s images fall distinctly within the realm of

⁶⁴ McDannell, 178. McDannell even uses one of Bethune’s drawings called *Mary Mediatrix* to illustrate the hieratic style.

⁶⁵ Stoughton, 24.

high culture as understood by cultural critics of the period. The reality is not quite so clear. There are elements of Bethune's illustrations that display ties to low cultural forms.

One aspect of Bethune's work that preserves a link with low culture forms is its reproduction. Instead of copyrighting her originals and allowing only a privileged few access to them, she intended for her drawings to be distributed as cheap prints to a broad audience. The ephemeral nature of a newspaper illustration is in stark contrast to the weighty permanence of the "important" high art of her time.

Another way in which Bethune's art displays ties to low cultural forms is in its affinity with so-called "folk" art. Greenberg considered folk art an authentic, and therefore good, expression of the creative impulse. For him, folk art was low culture that retained a certain dignity and innocence (unlike sinister kitsch). Bethune agreed with this position and commented that "whenever I show [my pictures] to little children or simple, unsophisticated folk, [they] exclaim over their beauty."⁶⁶ Naturally, as a Catholic Worker artist, she wanted to reach the lowest people on the economic, social, and educational scales, the "folk" of both the city and countryside.

There are also areas where Bethune may not have intended to overlap with low culture. Certainly one of the great advantages of her illustrations is their straightforward intelligibility, allowing them to be readable at a distance. However, their eye-catching appeal and crisp legibility are qualities shared with the low culture kitsch imagery she detested. One major danger of kitsch according to American intellectuals is its encouragement of undisciplined, passive seeing and of the resulting unquestioning acceptance of what is presented. Kitsch images are made in an easily legible style so that

⁶⁶ Bethune, "CW Artist," 8.

the viewer does not need to think in order to apprehend their subjects and receive the ideological messages behind them. Furthermore, kitsch's themes are familiar, comforting and digestible. The viewer of kitsch is not challenged in any way by what he or she sees, making the image's power to influence all the more subtle, but sinister. Bethune's images are typically familiar, comforting and digestible as well. But does the viewer remain unchallenged by her work?

In part the answer to this question depends upon who the viewer is. One might dismiss Bethune's easily legible figural compositions of familiar subjects as too simple and pleasant to be interesting. She was certainly aware of this possibility, and remembered a conversation she had with Dorothy Day about such a reception:

One time somebody said...there was not enough bitterness or strength in [my pictures]. Too namby-pamby, not critical enough. And so I said to Dorothy, "Should I do something about that? What do you want me to do?"⁶⁷

While one viewer found Bethune's drawings "namby-pamby," a different viewer might recognize in Bethune's images what could be considered a very challenging message: a call to abandon the familiar cultural surroundings of capitalism and embrace a life of rigor and self-discipline, qualities that in themselves were praised by the contemporary cultural critics who championed "high" modernist art.

In addition to their complex relationship with modern abstraction and the people who championed it, Bethune's drawings in *The Catholic Worker* are also related to a different modern art source: German Expressionism. Expressionism flourished from around 1905 to 1920, and centered primarily around two artist groups, *Die Brücke* in Northern Germany, and *Der Blaue Reiter* in Southern Germany. Like Bethune, both of

⁶⁷ Rosalie Riegle Troester, ed. *Voices from the Catholic Worker* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 1993, 73.

these groups were interested in the graphic arts, especially the woodcut. Also like Bethune, they were deeply concerned with exploring and expressing spirituality.⁶⁸ Thus, a work like Emil Nolde's 1912 woodcut *The Prophet* (fig. 24), with its planes of starkly contrasting white and black and its haunting subject shares much with Bethune's images. Similarly, the bold outlines and shallow space of Käthe Kollwitz's 1922-23 woodcut *The Volunteers* (fig. 25) look familiar from Bethune's drawings.⁶⁹ It remains unknown whether Bethune knew these two particular works but it is very likely that she had seen images similar to them, as German Expressionist prints were frequently reproduced in American religious literature during this period.

Bethune's drawings have something beside formal similarities in common with German Expressionism. Both the Expressionists and Bethune looked to earlier cultures for inspiration. The Expressionists were especially interested in the "primitive," believing that pre-industrial people had a stronger connection to spirituality than modern Western Europeans. The 1912 publication *Der Blaue Reiter*, edited by Expressionist artists Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc has reproductions of many ancient or non-Western works of art, including six of fifteenth-century German graphic arts.⁷⁰ Bethune was especially interested in the Northern European arts of this period, viewing it as pure and untainted by the commercialism and materialistic grandeur of later church art. She found the austerity of medieval visual sources both robust and authentic. It is primarily

⁶⁸ Donald E. Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press) 1987.

⁶⁹ It is unknown whether Bethune knew these two artists, but there is a strong likelihood. They were well known by the time Bethune was working. Additionally, at the time of her death, Bethune's personal library included a catalogue from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Collection of Non-Objective Paintings at the Baltimore Museum of Art, January 6-29, 1939, and a catalogue from an Exhibition of Contemporary Belgian Painting, Graphic Art and Sculpture at the Brooklyn Museum, January, 1930. Of course, it is uncertain when she acquired these volumes.

⁷⁰ Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, eds. *Der blaue Reiter*. (Munich: R. Piper) 1912.

through her embrace of a medieval aesthetic that Bethune communicated her hopes for a future utopian society.⁷¹

One of the reasons Bethune's images remind the viewer of the Middle Ages in Northern Europe is that they look so much like woodcuts. Woodcut prints remain associated with the early German and Flemish artists who popularized them, especially Albrecht Dürer and Martin Schoengauer. They also were an important element in early print publications of the Bible, and thus bring to mind links with pious scriptural literacy. A relevant example of biblical illustration might be the print of Moses and the burning bush from the German Koberger Bible, published in Strassburg in 1483 (fig. 26). In reality, Bethune made finished ink drawings of all of the images that appear in *The Catholic Worker*, and these are the originals. She made the drawings with the print process in mind, however, knowing that they would be transferred to plates for printing in the newspaper. However, Bethune's adoption of a medieval aesthetic is more than mere coincidence of medium. She also made conscious decisions to ground her style not only in modern abstraction through the hieratic style, but also in part in the influence of medieval graphic arts.

One of the stylistic hallmarks of modern abstraction is shared by medieval graphic arts. The flatness of the picture plane is emphasized by pressing shapes to the surface instead of depicting them receding into naturalistic space. A folio from Ashmole Manuscript 399 displays this abstraction of space (fig. 27). In the upper panel, a figure at left points to an object floating in space (an overturned bottle? a hemorrhaging uterus?).

⁷¹ Bethune's interest in reviving positive aspects of the past may relate to a broader trend in America during the 1930s to champion an idealized version of American history and attempt to recover its lost tranquility. This phenomenon is discussed in Alfred Haworth Jones, "The Search for a Usable American Past in the New Deal Era," *American Quarterly* 23 no. 5 (December 1971), 710-724.

Perhaps the object is falling through the air? Or maybe it is a sign pasted on the surface of the picture to indicate something about the woman in the bed? The vague ellipse indicates that the object fills space, but the object lacks a convincing depiction of volume. In the lower panel anatomical parts fill the blank spaces around the figures, resting against the picture plane. Neither panel has a horizon line to indicate where the floor ends and the walls begin. The upper panel also has skewed orthogonals in the bed. They do indicate that that bed recedes into space, but it is a confusing and shallow space. Bethune's use of objects floating against the surface of the picture plane like signs has already been noted in her *St. Joseph* of 1934 (fig. 2). Another example of distorted space occurs in her 1936 drawing of Jesus the carpenter *Et Erat Subditus Illis* (fig. 28).⁷² Bethune shifts the orthogonals of the wooden plank and the sawhorses, and foregoes a horizon line.

Many of Bethune's drawings are reminiscent of medieval manuscript illumination. A page from a twelfth to thirteenth century French manuscript contains some of the elements that Bethune used in her work (fig. 29).⁷³ Bethune frequently juxtaposed text and image within her drawings, inscribing them with labels or phrases. Furthermore, her images were combined with text on the pages of the newspaper, just as they are on the French manuscript page. Occasionally Bethune used framing devices to offset her images, as in her series of the Stations of the Cross from 1935 (fig. 30).⁷⁴ The

⁷² *The Catholic Worker* 3 no. 6 (November 1935): 3. Reprinted in 3 no. 7 (December 1935): 5; 4 no. 2 (June 1936): 1; 12 no. 3 (April 1945): 4; 12 no. 9 (November 1945): 3.

⁷³ Colum Hourihane, ed. *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 205.

⁷⁴ *The Catholic Worker* 2 no. 10 (March 1935): 6-7. Reprinted in 7 no. 7 (March 1940): 2-3; 8 no. 5 (March 1941): 2-3; 9 no. 3 (January 1942): 2-7; 9 no. 6 (April 1942): 6-7; 10 no. 5 (April 1943): 1-8; 11 no. 3 (March 1944): 7; 12 no. 1 (February 1945): 4-5.

simple white lines that frame the images are far less complicated than the twisting series of circles and rectangles on the manuscript page, but they serve a similar function.

A final point of comparison between medieval manuscript illumination and Bethune's drawings is in her adoption of initial letters as a format for illustration. The French manuscript page has an initial I that begins the word *Incipiunt* and contains an image of St. Basil. Bethune first created a group of initial letters in 1941 for a commission from Father Joseph Stedman for his well-known book *My Lenten Missal*. She allowed *The Catholic Worker* access to these images. The initial M framing an image of the Last Supper was the first to appear in the newspaper in 1942 (fig 31).⁷⁵

I have already explored some reasons for Bethune's interest in the modern hieratic style. But why was she also so drawn to medieval aesthetics? The answers to this question lie both in Bethune's self-identity and her association of the medieval period with romantic notions of vigorous individuals living in a Christian society. Indeed, she and her friends advocated a return to the humility, personal industriousness, and cooperation that they believed to have been fundamental characteristics of the Middle Ages.

The ascetic lifestyle espoused in Bethune's illustrations and practiced by Bethune herself was profoundly inspired by her fascination with the medieval period. Bethune's father was proud of their Flemish heritage. He kept Gothic Revival style furnishings in their home, and he encouraged Bethune's early efforts at drawing in a Gothic style.⁷⁶ Bethune later supposed that she had inherited from her father what she called a "Gothic inclination," or, a preference for the flatness and stylization she saw in medieval

⁷⁵ *The Catholic Worker* 9 no. 6 (April 1942): 4.

⁷⁶ Stoughton, 31.

Germanic arts.⁷⁷ As a young art student in New York, Bethune was entranced by the medieval architectural sculpture in the George Grey Barnard Collection, which later became the foundation of the Cloisters collection.⁷⁸

In 1938, as her career was just beginning, and after she had already started creating images for *The Catholic Worker*, Bethune moved to Newport, RI to live full-time and work with two friends, artists John Howard Benson and Graham Carey. The two had opened a business called the John Stevens Shop that specialized in hand carved tombstones. They were both devout Catholics whose ideas about sacred art and holy living were greatly compatible with Bethune's own. Soon after Bethune took residence, the three began considering the possibility of sharing their ideas through a more personal and immediate medium than their lectures and journal articles.

The idea of a John Stevens University started as a joke stemming from late-night conversations among the three about a philosophy of art and its integration into a Christian life. The joke turned serious when the stone carvers and Bethune began taking in apprentices in 1939. They based their "university" in part on a medieval monastic model. Benson and Carey brought male apprentices into their homes to live with them and their wives. Bethune and two or three female apprentices lived together above the workshop in a large, sparsely furnished room. They went to daily mass together, and they shared the chores of cooking and cleaning, and tending a vegetable garden and chicken coop. Bethune taught two-dimensional composition, calligraphy, wood

⁷⁷ Stoughton, 31.

⁷⁸ Stoughton, 31.

engraving, and stained glass. The lifestyle at John Stevens University was frugal and industrious, but its members delighted in living in Christian community.⁷⁹

The words people chose to describe the John Stevens University allude to a key concept. Peter Maurin half-jokingly called the University “The Regressive School of Backward Studies.”⁸⁰ One of Bethune’s apprentices wrote about her experience for a Christian Youth magazine, titling her article, “*Retour au Moyen Age*” (Return to the Middle Ages).⁸¹ A deep dissatisfaction with the state of society and of the arts at present, and the idea of a return to the past are themes repeated again and again in Bethune’s own, and also Graham Carey’s writing.

In her article “The Person and the Industrial Counter-Revolution” Bethune expresses disgust with the condition of contemporary culture with rhetorical questions:

Why are we in such a mess today? Why have we as much misery, sickness, ugliness and destitution as ever? Why are the cultural and educational standards so appallingly debased? Why is graft gilded over and embezzling made a virtue? Why are we burdened with crime and insanity? Why do we see hate and violence between capital and labor? Why are our wars the most inhuman in history?⁸²

For Bethune, the answers lay in the modern abandonment of personal and corporate piety. She believed that these virtues were last present on a grand scale during the Middle Ages, and that all the intervening time had been corrupted by ever increasing secularism. Carey expressed the situation in this way:

[D]uring the period known as the Middle Ages the Christian principles were taken *sufficiently* seriously by a *sufficiently* large proportion of the members of society, so that the whole of society was colored by them, and manifested a peculiar Christian tone. Whether or not this or that particular man practiced his religion, there was always, in the Medieval period, a sufficient amount of Christian belief

⁷⁹ Stoughton, 61-78.

⁸⁰ Stoughton, 67.

⁸¹ Stoughton, 68.

⁸² Ade Bethune. “The Person and the Industrial Counter-Revolution,” *Christian Social Art Quarterly* 3, no.2 (Spring, 1940), 17.

in the back of people's minds so that moral assumptions and ethical axioms upon which judgments were made were Christian ones.

"This state of affairs came to an end in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Medieval period closed in a great moral and intellectual turmoil known as the Renaissance."⁸³

His choice of words to describe the Renaissance runs counter to the traditional narrative about the period. He denigrates it, favoring the medieval era instead. In the same article, Carey goes on to offer a solution to the problems of contemporary society:

Only by a return to Christ can the world be saved. Only through the Church can men return fully to Christ. The failure of the Medieval world to remain true to Christ has brought on the disorders from which we suffer. Only a return to the Church can bring these disorders to an end.⁸⁴

The three-time repetition of the word "return" is done for rhetorical emphasis, but it also reveals the passion with which Carey and Bethune believed hopes for the future lay in the past.

Bethune did not expect some time-travel jump into history, however. She acknowledged that the immediate past would not just go away. She wanted instead to excise the evils of the present and replace them with the virtues of an earlier period. Bethune mentioned this objective in an article arguing against mass-production and promoting hand manufacturing:

Strictly speaking, then, we do not want a return to the state of affairs a hundred years ago. We can never return to any former state of affairs. It is a delusion. But we *can* advocate a movement from mass production to private and local production...⁸⁵

In this case, Bethune wanted to excise the modern vices of industrial capitalism and replace them with historical modes of production.

⁸³ Carey, 8.

⁸⁴ Carey, 26.

⁸⁵ Bethune "The Person," 18-19. Italics added.

A similar impulse toward the valorization of the pre-modern past was expressed in the pages of *The Catholic Worker*. Peter Maurin's idea about agronomic universities was articulated in the paper through the column "Return to the Land." Again, the choice of the word "return" (as opposed to perhaps "journey" or "settlement of," for example) is significant. An illustration style that communicated the hope of return was therefore particularly appropriate for the newspaper.

Bethune especially liked the aesthetic qualities of a medieval style, but, more importantly, she considered the style to be morally more sound than the artistic styles that postdated it. Bethune and her colleagues believed it was not only the medieval culture that produced the style that was virtuous, but also the style itself. They claimed that a medieval aesthetic was honest, sincere, and humble in the positive sense of the word. Bethune wrote extensively of her desire to restore an older series of visual conventions as well as return to an ideal society. In praise of "early Medieval heraldry" she declared:

[H]eraldry was progressing in the traditional footsteps that all ages and races of human artists have trod whenever they have not refused to bow humbly to the two-dimensional nature of their material. Such obedience to surface has always been rewarded with beauty, as well as in the attempts of primitives as in the consummate perfection of Egyptians and Byzantines.⁸⁶

In the same article she disparaged the Renaissance tradition with the words:

The best tradition of all races and times has always sought to represent every object by its own inner structure rather than by the light and shade in which human eyes are able to see it. The Renaissance alone, imitating the decadence of the Roman Empire, pushed the pride of its own vision to its logical end in an amorphous impressionism.⁸⁷

And she concluded with:

We have the best artistic traditions of mankind to show us the honest beauty of drawing with true respect for both essence in representation and limitations in

⁸⁶ Ade Bethune, "Two Dimensional Drawing," *Christian Social Art Quarterly*, 2 no. 4 (fall, 1939), 37.

⁸⁷ Bethune, "Two Dimensional." 40.

surface. The Chinese, Indian and Persian; the Alaskan, Mayan, and Peruvian; the Keltic, Scandanavian and Visigothic; the Egyptian, Assyrian and Greek; the Coptic, Byzantine and Medieval; the Congolese, Maori and countless other cultures give us the same example. *If the Renaissance has made us abandon the path of tradition for a few hundred years, we need not be ashamed of returning to our heritage.*⁸⁸

By mixing the modern hieratic style with medieval artistic conventions, Bethune gave visual embodiment to her desire for the same mixing in the future society. One of the purposes of her illustrations, then, was to suggest by means of their subject matter *and* their style the possibilities of an ideal future. The readers of *The Catholic Worker* newspaper were instructed via two modes of communication: the written text and Bethune's images.

Perhaps the most unusual function of Bethune's drawings was to exist as a record of her own attempts to live according to her beliefs. Her conception of the unity of art and labor and her philosophy of sacred work allowed her illustrations to serve as offerings to God as well as to the newspaper. The simple equation, art is work and work is holy, means that each of Bethune's images is a tangible artifact of her godly living. By publishing the images she was able to place those artifacts before the eyes of a large audience, and hopefully, inspire them by example.

Evidence for Bethune's conception of the status of art as a subset of the larger category of production can be found in both her essays and Graham Carey's articles. For example, in an article for the *Christian Social Art Quarterly*, Bethune explained: "In talking about art, I shall include every form of human productive activity...from cleaning

⁸⁸ Bethune, "Two Dimensional." 41. Italics added.

the cellar to reading Holy Scripture.”⁸⁹ The idea is elaborated upon in Carey’s essay “What is Catholic Art?”

Art is thus a much broader field of activity than we have been accustomed to think, we who have been brought up in and accepted the Renaissance notion of it. It is just fully human making. It is not confined to the making of one thing to the image and likeness of another, nor is it only the making of things to be enjoyed for their beauty. It includes iconographic things and beautiful things, but it also includes every conceivable kind of thing that can be made, from a symphony that is played with a full orchestra to a ditch that is dug with a shovel. Art is the production of any kind of thing at all by a human being, provided he acts as a human being when he makes it.⁹⁰

In the same article Carey casually mentions various kinds of laborers that he considers artists, “[w]hether he is a carpenter, a surgeon, a soldier, or a priest,” “a writer of epics or a cobbler of shoes.”⁹¹ Because making art is just one of the myriad ways to labor it partakes of the same sanctity connected with well-done work.

In “The Person and the Industrial Counter-Revolution,” Bethune explains the sacred nature of labor. She begins with the distinction between the definitions of person and personality. “We might compare the person to raw matter, the personality to the finished product made with the raw matter. God has created everyone of us a person. But we do not all become a personality.”⁹² According to Bethune, it is the task of each individual to create his or her own personality. One does this by accepting responsibilities, becoming self-reliant, and acting with personal dignity. Bethune goes on to explain how the formation of personality relies upon doing one’s work well. She asserts,

whenever we do act responsibly, we produce a double effect: first, the work itself turns out to be a good job, and also, at the same time, our personality has been

⁸⁹ Bethune “The Person,” 14.

⁹⁰ Carey, 20.

⁹¹ Carey, 19.

⁹² Bethune, “The Person,” 11.

improved. It becomes self-evident, therefore, that it is worth while to do any necessary work, even menial work, with full responsibility. And it becomes self-evident that we have, every one of us, a sacred inalienable personal right to do this necessary work with full responsibility.⁹³

Carey expresses a similar idea about the inherent necessity of humans doing work when he writes, “And [a man] must make things, that is, impose his ideas upon the material he finds around him, and thus he is an artist. ‘Homo Faber.’”⁹⁴ Implicit in this statement is the idea that since God created humans to be this way, it is God’s will that people be makers of things. Bethune believed that there is natural happiness in doing a job well. She also called for a return to personal production,

[W]e can choose to make things for ourselves rather than buy the ready-made, mass-produced articles turned out by commercialism. We shall choose to make them ourselves not necessarily because we can produce them better, faster, more easily or more cheaply, but because we at least are able to make things as persons; whereas mass-production on the assembly line can never, under any circumstances, be personal production. As Christians, we put a value on the person that comes above any advantage in speed, ease, or cheapness.⁹⁵

There is an emphasis here on personal sacrifice that is further underscored later in the article:

It is easier to go into a restaurant to eat than it is to buy (or grow), peel, cook, and serve our own meals....It is more difficult to...prepare our own meal. It requires intelligence, concentration, skill, foresight, coordination, conscientiousness, plus time and labor. But it is worth it—at least if we are interested, not only in eating the good food we want, but especially in the dignity of our own free person, and in our right to work intelligently and well.⁹⁶

When we understand the import Bethune placed upon hard work as necessary for the fulfillment of human potential as created by God, we can recognize each of her drawings

⁹³ Bethune, “The Person,” 14.

⁹⁴ Carey, 9.

⁹⁵ Bethune, “The Person,” 19. There is an irony here, because her images were reproduced on a mass scale. I am convinced that she saw no inherent contradiction here because even the reproduced images bear the mark of her original hand-making. Also, she did not make them for profit, but for the benefit of others.

⁹⁶ Bethune, “The Person,” 19.

as an index of her own striving toward that fullness of personality. Each of her illustrations is a record of her daily efforts at living in accordance with what she believed to be God's desires. In addition to frequently featuring labor as subject matter, the images are artifacts that point to Bethune's labor in making them.

A final point can be made about the images as physical embodiments of Bethune's ideas. I have already demonstrated that Bethune's illustrations model an ideal art and lifestyle and indicate her own work. They also function for Bethune as bearers of "goodness" into the world. Remember the quote above wherein a viewer accused Bethune of making images that lacked strength and critical impulse, calling her drawings "namby-pamby." Bethune asked Dorothy Day whether she should therefore change the style of her work.

And Dorothy said, 'Oh no! Please. We don't have enough good things in the world. I want *beautiful* things. I want vines and grapes and mothers. Good things!⁹⁷

In addition to highlighting the concern over sentimental kitsch discussed above, this quote is revealing of the spirit with which Bethune's illustrations were made. She had choices about the way in which she would communicate the Catholic Worker ideals and her own ideas about right living. She could have produced sad or angry images of protest against iniquity (remember Käthe Kollwitz's moving woodcut (fig. 25) as an example of an alternative tone). I would argue, however, that Bethune was concerned about the balance of good and evil in the universe. She did not want to encourage malice or despair in any way. She created images that were uplifting, positive, and inspiring. There was nothing ironic or cynical about them. And on the rare occasions when she did depict evil, she did so in a humorous way. In her drawing of Satan tempting Jesus, the devil appears

⁹⁷ Troester, 73.

as a long snake with a smirking face (fig. 32).⁹⁸ The depiction is a comical cartoon rather than a truly frightening creature. Her standard method of depicting a wealthy businessman is a puffy, squinty-eyed caricature, more laughable and pitiable than angering. An example is in the image of Jesus expelling the money-changers from the Temple (fig. 33).⁹⁹ In this drawing, Jesus is the focal point of the emotion, and the “evil” that swirls around him is punning and silly. Because her illustrations were intended as useful exemplars of proper living, they also had to model appropriate Christian responses to the suffering of the world: hopefulness, humility, and mercy instead of anger, self-righteousness or despair. The images offer joyful celebration of the good and gentle mockery of the bad.

There has been very little written about Ade Bethune’s illustrations for *The Catholic Worker*, and therefore, much remains to be explored. What can already be ascertained is that Ade Bethune’s illustrations for *The Catholic Worker* from 1934-1945 both echoed the ideals of the Catholic Worker movement, and communicated those ideals to others. The instructive value of her images can be attributed to a number of factors, from the most basic choices of subject to the sophisticated and subtle negotiations of her style. Bethune drew upon source material that she found particularly effective or inspiring, including differing strains of modernism and a romanticized view of the medieval past. Bethune’s combination of medieval references and modern forms increase her images’ complexity and appeal. The two temporal periods communicate different messages through the associations they raise in the viewer. The medieval allusions evoke thoughts of austere monasticism and comforting tradition, while the modern stylistic

⁹⁸ *The Catholic Worker* 9 no. 4 (February 1942): 1.

⁹⁹ *The Catholic Worker* 3 no. 1 (May 1935): 1. Reprinted in 4 no. 7 (November 1936): 6; 6 no. 3 (July 1938): 1; 6 no. 8 (February 1939): 6; 12 no. 8 (October 1945): 8.

elements communicate newness and relevance for contemporary society. She also engaged with the critical literature of her day, embracing some aspects of cultural critique and rejecting others in order to fashion a unique and ultimately functional style. Bethune needed to be conscientious in her selection of source material and the blending of her influences because she fully believed in the import of her craft. More than mere decoration, her images had a functional goal: to express and exemplify an ideal world.

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