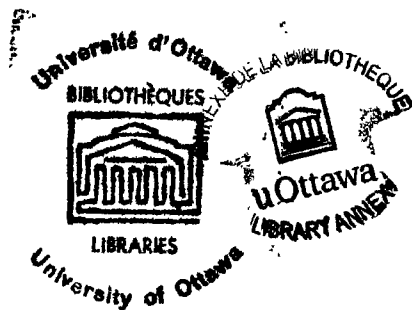


PETER MAURIN, PROPAGANDIST

by (Brendan Anthony O'Grady)

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INTRODUCTION

In the future a great deal will probably be written about Peter Maurin, but comparatively little has been written to date. Most of what has been published on Peter Maurin has been written by admirers, if not by avowed "disciples"; in other words, to date those who have written about him at all have seen fit for the most part to praise him. But even this panegyrical literature is not voluminous. Almost any worthy investigation properly pursued and presented, therefore, should contribute to the limited recorded study of this important figure in American Catholic thought and activity. The paucity of material on Peter Maurin may best be explained by the fact that his work is of so recent origin that it has not been possible to judge it completely as yet in its appropriate perspective.

While we may be too close in time to Peter Maurin to judge the philosophical value of his work, it is possible to analyze at least the technique employed by this outstanding twentieth-century propagandist and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement.

A contemporary of Peter Maurin, therefore, attempting to write with a high degree of accuracy within a few years of the subject's demise might at first be suspected of vanity, for the very selection of such a topic may suggest at least a tacit prophecy. The present essay does not, consciously, contain any such pretensions. Rather, it attempts an objective study, by a virtual contemporary, of the propaganda technique of Peter Maurin -- nothing more.

Though Peter Maurin was a pioneer in Catholic Action in America, it is not to be inferred from this work that the apostolate of the

laity is simply (or even primarily) a matter of technique. But technique is still very important; and Peter Maurin, as we shall see, was aware of its importance.

At the outset it is necessary to define -- to set limits to -- the scope of this essay. Our basic concern will be with Peter Maurin's propaganda technique. Now, in few other instances is it as obvious that "the style is the man himself"; hence, we shall first identify the man. Next, we shall review his public activities as an agitator, indoctrinator, and propagandist. Finally, we shall analyze in detail the style embodied in his writings.

Chapter I contains a biographical sketch of Peter Maurin, stressing especially those events in his life which bear directly on his work as an apologist. Material for this chapter has been gleaned from many sources (as noted), no one of which is complete in itself. A full-length biography, the complete preliminary manuscript of which has been examined in preparing this essay, may some day be published by Dorothy Day; in the meantime, Chapter I of this thesis offers the most complete biographical sketch of Peter Maurin to date: on this ground the inclusion of much of the first chapter that appears irrelevant to this particular thesis may be justified. Much of the biographical sketch itself is speculative because strictly factual details on Peter Maurin's life are at a premium. The sketch as a whole, however, meets with the approval of the person who is the leading authority on the subject, Dorothy Day.

The first chapter, however, is not the essence of this thesis. The attention of the specialist and the reader particularly interested

in the propaganda techniques, rather than the background, of Peter Maurin is directed especially to Chapters II and III.

Chapter II discusses specifically Peter Maurin's career as an "agitator" and propagandist, and co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement. This section attempts to cover the necessary background and details of his Easy Essay approach, his public speaking, and his round-table techniques. Material for this chapter, too, has been gleaned from several literary sources, none of which deals completely and exclusively with this particular aspect of his work. Much information here, furthermore, has come from a series of personal interviews with several intimate associates of Peter Maurin, among them Dorothy Day, Edward Willock, Arthur Sheehan, and Thomas Sullivan.

Chapter III attempts a detailed analysis of the literary technique -- the style -- of that collection of Peter Maurin's written essays entitled Catholic Radicalism. This chapter contains ten sub-divisions. Though many helpful suggestions and useful statements may be found elsewhere (as noted), this section is largely original work.

The final pages contain a Summary and Conclusion; an Annotated Bibliography; and several Appendices revealing significant, hitherto-unpublished material on the life and work of Peter Maurin.

Chapter I

THE MAN

Peter Maurin was preeminently a man of ideas. It is especially noteworthy that he very seldom permitted his own subjective story to intrude upon objective truth. As he did not volunteer many facts about his personal life, such information had to be pried from him piecemeal, giving us, at best, a series of scattered snapshots (more often mere fragments) which can hardly be combined to produce a fully satisfactory montage. Even with the limited material at hand, however, we are able to establish a number of certainties and several fairly safe theories.

First of all, Peter Maurin was a peasant. (1) His birthplace, the small village of Oultet, in the commune of St. Julien du Tournel, Lozere, France, was a setting not of bourgeois ugliness but of peasant practicality. Born May 9, 1877, the following day he was christened Pierre Joseph Aristide Maurin, and took his place in a rural family which numbered over the years twenty-four children. (2) His mother, Marie Pages, to whom five children were born, died in 1885. Two years later his father, Jean-Baptiste Maurin, married Rosalie Bousquet, and from this second union came the other nineteen children. Some of Maurin's brothers and sisters joined religious orders, others became teachers, craftsmen and farmhands, while he himself went forth eventually to co-found a movement in America that has profoundly influenced the lives of many thousands.

Seventy years after his birth -- though he lived a good part of the time in cities, though he travelled thousands upon thousands of miles, though his combined formal and informal education far surpassed

that of the average peasant -- Peter Maurin still proudly bore the marks of rugged French peasantry. Thus, the first important fact in his life chronologically and geographically is also a key to his life as a philosopher and propagandist. Born on the land, he devoted much of his life to promoting a "green" revolution; born into the traditional Catholicism of southern France, he was an articulate defender of the Mediterranean culture.

Peter Maurin travelled a very long and winding road during his lifetime, each turn more or less influencing him. He may not always have known exactly where he was going, but never did he forget his starting point: the farm land that was his family's possession almost from the time of St. Augustine. (3) The farmhouse of Oultet, two hundred miles from Barcelona, was in sight to Peter Maurin from Paris, from New York, from western Canada -- wherever his travels took him; for it was there, at home, that he first learned the importance of personal responsibility and communal living. It was there, too, in his native village, that he saw the Catholic faith being lived in poverty, integrating the lives of individuals and giving a spiritual basis to the community. Particularly and more impressively he saw exemplified in his own home -- notably in the person of his father -- the Christian virtues. (4) The communal sheep runs, the village bake oven, the flour mill, the aged basket weavers, the Church spire two miles away, the hospice in a nearby Mediterranean town, (5) and the pious Catholic family life of his own home were to Peter Maurin more than symbolic remnants of a fast-dying culture; they were ^{the} vital realities of the new civilization that was his future hope.

As we trace his travels and single out several of the most significant signposts in his life, we are always aware that we are following a French peasant: short (slightly over five feet), thick-chested, with an oversized head, scarred brow, bright, quick eyes, a childlike smile, corded neck, calloused hands, shabby, rumpled clothing, heavy workshoes, and a thick accent of the Languedoc patois. He has been compared with St. Peter and St. Francis of Assisi but physically he most resembled St. Paul. (6)

Peter Maurin had the touch of the peasant about him until the very end. You could look at his rugged frame and listen to his booming voice and easily picture in your mind a pair of oxen ploughing a field with Peter urging them on in no uncertain terms. Even the very awkwardness of his walk was that of a peasant as he walks the uneven furrows! (7)

Not only was his manner rural, but also his key concepts are rooted in the soil: Mass production is an evil; there is no unemployment on the land; we must synthesize cult, culture and cultivation; we must return to the land by setting up communal farms ("agronomic universities"); manual labour is sacred; the poor are the ambassadors of God.

Strong in accent, physical stature, sympathy for the proletarians, and Catholic Faith, he also possessed the inexorable logic and attractive volatility that have distinguished so many of his countrymen. Though his deadly logic may have often required intellectual acceptance, it did not necessarily win volitional acceptance; that is why it was an asset in him to have augmented the syllogism with effective rhetoric and, above all, his personal example.

The first fourteen years of Peter Maurin's life were spent on the family holding in Gultet, and he received his primary education in the village school. His father sent the promising student, at the age of fourteen,

to Mende, where for two years he continued his studies, now under the guidance of the Christian Brothers. (8) As this early period contributed so largely to his formation, perhaps it would be well to study one of the few snapshots that he has left us of his home life:

Once as we sat around the table at dinner Peter was giving us slogans and he proposed this one: "Eat what you raise and raise what you eat." We asked him what they ate in his family when he was a boy.

"We did not eat the calves, we sold them," he said. "We ate salt pork every day. We raised no hops, and there was no beer. We raised no grapes, so no wine. We had very little meat. We had plenty of bread -- there was a communal oven. We had plenty of butter; we had eggs. We had codfish from Brittany fishermen. They went all the way to Newfoundland and Iceland to fish. We had vegetable soups, salads and cheese.

"It was in 1882 when the public-school system started (I was five years old). It was obligatory in every village. My mother and father could not speak French, only a dialect like Catalan. (Joffre was born in French Catalonia and Foch in Basque. Catalan is spoken in Barcelona.) Our home language was more Latin than French. The name of our town was a Latin one, Oultet.

"The seat of our diocese was twelve miles away, and our parish church two miles. Oultet had fifteen families and in the parish there were ten villages. There were two priests who worked very hard. To help earn their livelihood they worked in the garden. The villagers provided them with wood, and they got some pay from the state, a compensation which was regulated by the concordat made by Napoleon.

"My family owned eighty sheep and there was one herder for all the village. He had a helper in summer. There were probably three thousand sheep in the flock and they grazed off what was still communal land. It was very cold in winter. We used branches from the trees for fuel, cutting them every three years. The leaves were for the sheep and the branches for firewood. We cooked at an open fire-place.

"My father is dead, and my stepmother must be seventy-five by now. Her name was Rosalie. She was nineteen when she married my father. Last I heard, my brother was still farming and dealing in cattle." (9)

It is believed that the Maurin home was a large stone dwelling, the family living on the second storey, the cattle on the first. Family economic circumstances may best be described as "poor". The rocky mountainside land, which at the age of eleven Peter Maurin plowed, yielded grudgingly. (10) Reared in this peasant poverty, Peter Maurin understood and loved the life on the land. In later years he displayed active interest in all who promoted rural culture or wrestled with rural problems: the historic Jesuit Reductions in South America, the efforts of the Grailville School of the Apostolate in the midwestern United States, the co-operative movement in eastern Canada; the ideas of Peter Kropotkin of Russia, of Lord Howard and William Cobbett of England, and of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in the United States; and, of course, he was in sympathy with the Distributist school of writers led by G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and Father Vincent McNabb, as well as A.J. Pentty, Harold Robbins, and Eric Gill. Kropotkin and Gill were certainly among his favourites. (11) At one time he expressed the hope of publishing his own magazine on rural life, The Agronomist. (12)

Before setting aside this early snapshot, and turning our attention from the rugged hillsides of southern France to the busy boulevards of Paris, we should stress the contribution to Peter Maurin's later propagandist techniques made by his early life on the land. Not only did several of his fundamental themes derive from this simple life, but also his French peasant mannerisms, dramatic gestures, sturdy physique, sincerity and simplicity of expression, shabby appearance, unrelenting logic, and thick accent -- none of which he ever lost.

These remained among his outstanding traits as a propagandist.

Next, the influence of Paris at the turn of the century was grafted onto Maurin's personality, adding largely to both his thought and his technique. As a young man he left the farm and, after studying for two years at Mende, was accepted on September 4, 1893 into the novitiate of the Christian Brothers in Paris. He was granted his teaching diploma on September 25, 1895. (13) This is the second snapshot, actually a mere fragment:

"I lived there in the southern part of France, a peasant on the soil, until I was fourteen. After that for a time I was a cocoa salesman traveling around France. Then while I was teaching at the Christian Brothers' School I was a member of a study club in Paris. At the same time Charles Peguy was there, but I did not know him, nor was I influenced by him, though people say I write like him. Instead I was interested in a group which published a paper twice a week, called Le Sillon. It had nothing to do with the decentralist movement, no, but it was interested in ethics. It understood the chaos of the times. Marc Sangnier was editor and backer of the paper. Later my friends got out a weekly paper called The Spirit of Democracy. They were looking for an ideology. They were preoccupied about the idea of an elite in a democracy." (14)

That fragment hardly supplies all the details we desire, nor have students subsequently been able to ferret them out. Suppositions drawn from the scanty facts, however, suggest ample fields for future scholarship. Though it is not within the scope of the present essay, other studies might profitably investigate, for instance, the possible impact upon Peter Maurin's social outlook of such men as Charles Peguy, Ernest Hello, Leon Bloy, and Marc Sangnier; for he was probably influenced by their works. (15) Our concern here, though, is primarily with his propaganda technique; and in this connection we note, first, particularly his early teaching career.

As a student for five years and then as a teaching Brother for approximately five years, Peter Maurin was necessarily intimately familiar with the pedagogical method of St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. But, inasmuch as he never mentioned St. La Salle, seldom spoke of the Christian Brothers, and gave no explanation to his American friends for leaving the order, Peter Maurin's debt to the Christian Brothers is nowhere explicitly stated. (16) The Visitor-General of the Christian Brothers in Rome verifies Peter Maurin's service with that teaching order. This is his record:

1. Aristide Pierre Maurin a été en effet membre de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes.
2. Il a pris l'habit religieux au Noviciat de Paris, (ancienne Maison généralice, 27, rue Oudinot), le 4 septembre 1893.
3. Il a obtenu son diplôme d'Instituteur à Paris, le 25 septembre 1895.
4. Pendant sept ans (1895-1902), il a été employé à l'enseignement, dans des écoles élémentaires, excepté sa première année d'apostolat où il fit une petite classe au grand pensionnat de Passy, en 1895-1896. On le trouve ensuite à:
Issy (St. Nicolas) le 18 novembre 1896;
Charonne (Paris) 1896-97.

Il fait un an de service militaire 1897-98 puis reprend l'enseignement à:

Neuilly près Paris, 1898-99;
Versailles St. Louis, 28-9-1900 -- 29-1-1901;
Vajours (Ecole Fenelon), 29-1-1901 -- 31-12-1902.

Ces nombreuses mutations, et ses brefs séjours en ces cinq établissements, font pressentir que le jeune maître n'était pas dans sa voie, sans qu'on eut cependant de notables reproches à lui faire. Il avait émis des Vœux temporaires en 1895 et les avait renouvelés depuis lors régulièrement, jusqu'en 1902. A cette date, il ne voulut pas se lier de nouveau et, libre de tout engagement, il se retira de notre Institut.

Depuis cette date, nous manquons de renseignements sur ses voyages et activités.... (17)

It is a certainty, therefore, that he taught in the Christian Brothers' schools, and as a result he must have been professionally acquainted with the La Salle method of simultaneous instruction. Indeed, he may have disapproved of that method; but that is quite unlikely, for some of the teaching techniques he himself employed in his public mission in America suggest a real debt to La Salle. Here again we come upon a topic that might be studied further with profit; but for our purposes it is sufficient here simply to call attention to the fact that there are some obvious similarities between the educational principles of La Salle and the propaganda practices of Peter Maurin. For instance, La Salle recommended as teaching techniques repetition of key ideas, simplicity of expression, conciseness, accuracy, and phraseology adapted to the understanding of average students (18) -- techniques Peter Maurin himself constantly employed.

To be sure, if it were present at all the influence of the eighteenth-century pedagogue was altered by the twentieth-century propagandist, adapted to suit circumstances in the public forum rather than the disciplined classroom, supplemented by a wealth of personal experience, and "individualized" by the propagandist's distinctive idiosyncrasies. The vade mecum of the Christian Brothers, The Conduct of the Schools, was in all probability Peter Maurin's handbook while he taught in the Christian Brothers' schools; unconsciously -- and in an altered form -- twenty-five years later, it may have served as a silent guide. Peter Maurin's brother, at any rate, is strongly of that opinion:

Peut-être n'ai-je assez insisté sur l'action profonde qu'ont eue sur sa pédagogie les ouvrages des F F des Ecoles Chrétiennes et en particulier le livre de Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle: La Conduite des Ecoles. Sans doute que ses procédés d'enseignement doivent à ce livre; évidemment comme pour tout le reste, il l'a fait sien et adapté à ses aptitudes et à sa tournure d'esprit. (19)

As we shall see presently, his later experience as a French tutor (1917-1927) in the United States may have been equally important in the practical order. But, regardless of the possible influence of La Salle or of other educationists, Peter Maurin sometimes spoke of Charlemagne's tutor, Alcuin, as the ideal type of teacher. (20) It is said that Peter Maurin especially liked Alcuin's (and John Dewey's) precept that one learns best by doing. (21) The Berlitz method of language tutoring (which Peter Maurin seems to have used) apparently is based on a similar principle. (22) It would be a gross heresy, however, to conclude that Maurin was a mere activist or that he subscribed to a philosophy of utilitarianism; for, actually and fundamentally his view was based upon the idea of St. Francis of Assisi that "you don't know what you have not practised." (23)

Having accounted for his early years in teaching, the second thing we must consider about these Paris years is the influence his friends may have had upon him. When he states that he "was not influenced by" Charles Péguy, Peter Maurin probably means that he did not frequent Péguy's bookshop, that he did not know Péguy personally. Certainly he was influenced in his thinking by Péguy's writings, very frequently recommending those writings to his own followers. (24) In the *Easy Essays* Péguy is referred to and quoted, demonstrating clearly a spiritual and intellectual affinity. In another sense, too, Péguy's influence is suggested, for an obvious similarity of structure obtains between the blank verse of the poet and the phrased essays of the propagandist. This similarity, it is true, may be purely coincidental but it does not escape our attention; in

fact, it invites comparisons. This matter will be treated in some detail in Chapter III.

The philosophical influence of Marc Sangnier (who differed politically with Peguy) and others of the Sillon group is, if not more readily traceable, likely more important. It remains for scholars to study and elucidate this relationship, for it probably had a deep and lasting effect on Peter Maurin's thought. This much is certain: though Peter Maurin was not, strictly, on the staff of Le Sillon, he did attend meetings of the group, at least as an interested listener. What Peter Maurin's brother says on this matter -- even if it is not the "final word" -- is surely of interest:

... surtout après son année de service militaire Aristide Pierre Maurin, réfléchit plus profondément, l'essai avait montré qu'il se trompait de voie. Dès cette époque il commence à faire de la politique et à soutenir des idées très avancées sur l'organisation sociale et le pacifisme, idées courantes aujourd'hui, mais qui à l'époque paraissaient subversives de l'ordre établi. Son cerveau travaillait plus qu'il ne fallait pour son milieu et d'accord avec ses supérieurs, libre de tout engagement, en Décembre 1902 il quitta définitivement la congrégation.

Alors il s'engagea et fonda dans le Sillon, mouvement fondé par Marc Sangnier.

Les idées émises et propagées par un tel mouvement allaient en plein à Aristide Pierre Maurin et répondaient à ses intimes aspirations. Il fut sillonniste en vue de produire un effort d'apostolat méthodique et tenace. Et aussi pour multiplier les vrais chrétiens et les démocrates s'inspirant des principes de l'Evangile et de la tradition catholique; son illuminisme mystique ne l'entraîna pas vers un faux Evangile mais le garda dans la droite ligne, celle de l'Eglise.

Il en revenait toujours au programme de paix: paix religieuse, paix sociale, paix internationale.

Il resta fidèle à l'âme du mouvement qui comprenait de nombreuses œuvres utiles: ligues, comités, revues, journal, imprimerie, hôtel-restaurant de Foyer, restaurants populaires, maisons de repos et de vacances ...

Par ailleurs le but du Sillon était de montrer à la démocratie que le concours des forces religieuses et morales lui est indispensable pour réaliser ses aspirations légitimes, pour christianiser cette démocratie par la formation d'une élite sociale de jeunes catholiques rayonnant sur la masse par les instituts populaires, les réunions publiques, l'action syndicale et coopérative, l'action civique enfin. Le dynamisme interne de Pierre Maurin était si fort qu'il ne pouvait qu'exploser. (25)

In our study of his propaganda technique, we must observe that Peter Maurin was deeply impressed by the militant Catholicism of the Sillonists and their efforts to be articulate, even though he disagreed with some of their policies. (26) His desire -- fully realized about thirty years later -- may have been to develop his own policies and to give them verbal expression and a formal outlet: if so, Le Sillon showed him ways to do this -- newspapers, public agitation, discussion and study groups.

Just how long Peter Maurin's informal association with these leaders of the French Catholic revival lasted is not known. Nor do we know how intimately he was associated with those intellectuals, how frequently or how consistently or in exactly what capacity he was in contact with them. The main reason for such uncertainty is the paucity of written information on Peter Maurin's activities during this "Paris period" (especially from December 31, 1902, when he left the Christian Brothers) until he emigrated to Canada in 1909. Exactly how our propagandist spent those years-- what work he pursued, how he earned his living -- is still largely a mystery. Three writers (27) suggest that for some time, dates not specified, Maurin may have peddled tea, coffee, and cocoa in southern France; if so, this may have been before he went to Paris to study. The propagandist's brother, one who might be expected to know, is unaware that he ever engaged in such work. (28) No other writer indicates any specific knowledge of such work either.

In any event, "in his youth," declares one commentator, "Peter Maurin played a modest part in Catholic intellectual groups ..." Though subjectively this apprenticeship (if it may be called that) may have had some impact upon Maurin's life and the program he drew up a quarter of a century later; objectively, modest may be the operative word, for the apprentice apparently had little or no influence upon the masters with whom he was then on friendly terms. (30) Just how modest Maurin's role with the Sillonists probably was may be surmised from this suggestion offered by the propagandist's brother:

Personnellement je ne pense pas que Peter Maurin ait écrit dans l'Eveil Démocratique. Son rôle dut se borner à la propagande; il habitait alors une pauvre chambre et passait sa journée à crier le journal dans les rues et les réunions publiques. Comme seules les idées l'intéressaient et que celles exprimées dans ce journal l'avaient conquis il voulait à tout prix les répandre et les faire adopter par un grand nombre. (31)

Unfortunately, this is all the information we have been able to obtain.

About Peter Maurin's six years sojourn in Paris, therefore, we are told very little directly. Some latter-day friends assume, however, that during this period he read widely and took an active interest in discussions among some intellectuals, thus storing up the seeds he would later sow in the stubborn soil of Manhattan. Long before the Catholic Worker movement existed in fact, states one writer,

... its complete theory existed in the mind of Peter Maurin and on the scraps of paper which expressed his ideas in his own special Easy Essay style. Before he came to America from France, Peter has been a student of new and radical ideas "so old that they seemed like new." (32)

His Parisian friends were fervent Frenchmen who had gone down into the street to talk things over and to stir up some activity. A quarter of a

century later, in his own "crazy way", Maurin was doing the same thing in North America, agitating and indoctrinating all across the continent. If he followed their lead, he did so in his own manner; inspired perhaps by them, he did not -- technically speaking -- "imitate" them.

In retrospect, it may be said that these were formative years for Peter Maurin; but, as his later peculiar vocation was probably not then clear to him, we can hardly say that these were years of conscious specialized training or of deliberate preparation. Many years, and varied experiences, were yet to contribute to his development.

Tracing Peter Maurin's young manhood we have discussed briefly his career in the Christian Brothers and the subsequent "hidden" years he spent in Paris. Mainly because it does not appear to have contributed directly to Maurin's technique (whatever it may have contributed to his thought), we have not in this résumé considered in any detail the year 1898. According to documents cited earlier, this was the year of his compulsory military service. If we may now be permitted a rather lengthy parenthesis, we must strongly affirm that Peter Maurin did indeed serve a year in the French army. Such emphasis would be unnecessary were it not for two sets of circumstances: first, in his later life Peter Maurin was an outspoken Catholic Pacifist; and second, several writers appear to be misinformed on this topic.

There is nothing necessarily incongruous in stating that the pacifist of the 1930's actually served a compulsory term in the army some thirty years earlier. Unfortunately, conflicting opinions concerning Maurin's military service have tended to obscure this fact. Rt. Rev. L. G. Ligutti,

a personal friend of Maurin's, recalls that the ardent pacifist several times spoke of his compulsory service in the army. (33) another close friend not only confirms that truth but even attempts to capture the possible spirit of that service:

Peter ... served a compulsory period in the Army. When asked if he would shoot anyone, he said he would fire into the air. "But what if someone attacked you?" I once inquired.

"I would say to them: you may shoot me but I will not shoot you," he replied, holding out his arms in the form of a cross. (34)

On the other hand, Dorothy Day has maintained that Peter Maurin suffered from an enlarged heart and therefore was not accepted for military service; or -- she qualifies --if indeed he were in the army, it must have been for a short period. (35) Add to this Rev. H. A. Reinhold's unqualified statement that "Pierre Maurin ... came to America thirty years ago, fleeing from French conscription," (36) and it is evident that this particular issue demands clarification. Dorothy Day's belief is not totally unfounded, for in later years Maurin apparently suffered from a heart ailment; and Father Reinhold's assertion may conceivably be a statement of fact, too, as far as it goes, but it is incomplete.

To establish with certainty the facts of the case, we cite an official document -- a photostatic copy of Peter Maurin's military career -- procured from the French Secretary of State for War:

This document (37) informs us that Peter Maurin served in the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the French Army, from November 4, 1898 to September 20, 1899, as soldat de 2^e classe. He was awarded a certificate of good conduct when he completed this period of service and was sent into la disponibilité on the latter date.

Two other brief periods of military service are noted under the heading "Dans la disponibilité ou dans la réserve de l'armée active": He served a first period in the 142nd Infantry Regiment of Mende from August 22 to September 8 in the year 1904; and a second period with the same regiment from December 2 to December 20 in the year 1907.

The same document indicates that Peter Maurin probably lived in Paris most of this period, at least until March 1909. Entries under the heading "Localités successives habitées" include: July 19, 1904, Rue de Saintonges, Paris; June 6, 1907, Rue Veucanson, Paris; and March 11, 1909, Avenue Naves (presumably in Paris).

Though this document certainly clarifies one thorny issue, it incidentally presents a slight problem. There is a discrepancy between the dates of Peter Maurin's military service officially recorded by the governmental authorities and the year noted for that service in the records of the Christian Brothers. This discrepancy, however, may be regarded -- at least as far as the object of the present essay is concerned -- as trifling.

Having treated the first thirty years of Peter Maurin's life, we may now turn our attention to the American phase of his biography.

The next series of glimpses we have of Peter Maurin are less like clear snapshots than kaleidoscopic fragments. The variegated assortment of facts when sorted carefully gives us several selected dates upon which to work.

1909. Homesteading in Western Canada

1911. Entered the United States

1927. Career of active agitation begins

1932. Met Dorothy Day

1933. Started the Catholic Worker movement

1949. Died on May 15

Before filling in the details concerning these dates, perhaps we should answer this question: Was Peter Maurin ever married? The answer: No, he was a bachelor. This is significant, for had Maurin assumed the normal responsibilities of husband and father, it is extremely unlikely that he could have even approximated the type of life and experiences described in the following pages.

For about thirty-five years he travelled extensively about North America -- in his early years as a labourer; in his later years as an "apostle on the bum" (38) carrying his message to any and all who would listen to him. This period (1909-1945) may be conveniently divided, the first eighteen years being for the most part a time of preparation and orientation, the remainder of his active life witnessing the gradual fulfillment of his chosen work.

Due perhaps to a combination of his dislike for the slums of Paris, his possible aversion to the prospect of further military service, and a hopeful desire to settle in the fertile farmland of America, Peter Maurin emigrated to Canada. (39)

In 1909 he began homesteading with a partner in Saskatchewan. (40) When, two years later, his partner was killed in a hunting accident Peter Maurin gave up the homestead and went to work in the wheatfields of Alberta. This is the beginning of a very long and involved odyssey covering tens of thousands of miles, over thirty years, and a score of assorted jobs. He worked with the Canadian Pacific railroad, dug sewers in Alberta, quarried stone in Ottawa, before illegally crossing the New York State border into

the United States sometime in 1911. (41)

For the next fifteen years he travelled like a solitary nomad, working on railroads, on farms, in steel mills, in coal mines, in offices. Joseph A. Breig has assembled very admirably (and, presumably, accurately) the dozens of pieces that comprise what at first seems like a hopeless jig-saw puzzle. This account contains rich details and apt anecdotes and therefore is quoted here at length:

His first chore in the United States was at Ogdensburg, New York, where he tore down concrete forms. From there, with a little money, he went to New York, and quickly was penniless. So he went on the bum. He begged his way to Baltimore, to Washington, to Cumberland, and across the Maryland border into Pennsylvania. In the Keystone State, he was arrested for vagrancy. He tells it:

"I wanted a drink of water. I knocked on a door. The woman tried to open it, but it was stuck with the frost. I started pushing to help her. The neighbours thought I was trying to break in. So, to please the neighbours, the chief of police put me in jail. Two days later -- to please the neighbours -- he let me go."

Years later, Peter Maurin was to write:

People who are in need
and are not afraid to beg
give to people not in need
the occasion to do good for goodness' sake.
Modern society calls the beggar
bum and panhandler
and gives him the bum's rush.
But the Greeks used to say
that people in need are the
ambassadors of the gods.
Although you may be called bums
and panhandlers
you are in fact the Ambassadors of God.

At the moment, however, Peter was not writing. He was too busy living. From the jail, he made his way to the coal regions of western Pennsylvania. Near Brownsville he got a job with the H. C. Frick Coal and Coke Company. That was the winter of 1912. Peter got \$1.50 a day, and lived in a coke oven with a Negro. He liked it, he says, because "the Negro was a gentleman." There was no housework to do.

"The next-door oven was in operation," he recalls. "The heat from it kept us warm. It was a simple life. All you had to do was crawl in and lie down, and you were at home. What did we sleep on? The bricks, I suppose. I think the Negro did the cooking. Maybe that was what I liked about it."

Death brushed Peter at Brownsville. He was digging a ditch to keep a hill from sliding, when a boulder broke loose and thundered

past within arm's reach. Peter sighed, and resumed his digging.

Doubtless he did some thinking. Few things are more conducive to it than the ranks of coke ovens, flaming as luridly as the outposts of hell. And mysticism feeds on the mountains of slag, burning inside, which in daylight are drab and smoky, but at night flicker with eerie fires like those on Mount Alvernia where St. Francis was impressed with the stigmata.

Peter now had a taste of luxury. He "rode the blinds" to Akron, Ohio, and got a job at \$2 a day with a building contractor. But wealth palled, and he moved to a paint shop in Chicago. Soon he was back on the railroad.

But, "they sent us to the rock pile at the Galena lead mines. The rocks were pretty heavy, and they cut our wages from \$.17¹/₂ to \$.17 an hour. So I quit. I started back to Chicago on the Great Western Railroad. I was riding I. O. U. I couldn't pay until I got to Chicago to collect my wages. But the railroad detectives couldn't see it that way. I was arrested again."

Released, Peter hired out as a freight handler on a boat plying between Chicago and Muskegon, Michigan. He quit because "there was too much boss. I like to use my own judgment." He went to Detroit and worked in the yards of the Michigan Railroad. He slept in a box car, and "it made me sick. It wasn't warm like the coke oven. So I quit." He could have worked for Ford, but "Ford wasn't paying \$5 a day then." He tried a lumberyard, but was laid off when work got slack. Then, for three months, he laboured in a sawmill near Kalamazoo.

He returned to Chicago, and borrowed a ride by rail to Decatur, Illinois, where jobs were available. But, "I didn't like the job, so I didn't take it." He hopped a freight to St. Louis, and took another railroad job at his accustomed wage -- \$1.50 a day. In St. Louis, he says, he got acquainted with the hillbillies, and liked them. But he didn't like the boss, so he quit. In Peoria, he worked "bout two months" in a syrup factory.

Back in Chicago, he worked as a janitor's helper in an apartment house. The basement, where he slept, was warm and dry, so he stayed six months. Then he became a full-fledged janitor for an upholsterer, and remained three months. He came perilously close to settling down in a dry goods store on Chicago's South Side. "I stuck it out for two years and a half. They were fine gentlemen. They were Jews. But I thought I ought to have a raise, and I wouldn't ask for it. So I quit."

The next time, he was fired after two years as janitor in a North Side apartment-house. Then came the war, and opportunity knocked. Teachers of French were needed. Peter opened an office. He taught for eight years, and then went to New York at the request of a pupil. After a winter, he moved to a writers' and artists' colony at Woodstock. There, "I gave up the idea of charging for lessons. The whole world had gone crazy, and I decided to be crazy in my own way. They didn't let me starve."

All this time Peter had been reading. He was familiar with Marx, but was never attracted to Communism. "I was much more inclined to anarchy." (42)

That takes us to 1927, and a turning point in Maurin's career. For several years various laborious jobs had numbed his hands; but at the same time, extensive reading had further enlightened his mind. (43) So wide, and so well assimilated, was his reading that the Jesuit educator, Wilfred Parsons, is said to have called him "the best read man I have ever met." (44) Peter Maurin studied because he wanted to learn, and to educate; but teaching the French language did not satisfy him -- he had a message not restricted to a limited territory or particular tongue.

He himself regarded that decision made about 1927 --not to charge a fee for his lessons -- as of great significance in the success of his vocation. (45) At Woodstock, New York, where he taught French to a colony of artists and writers, his method of teaching his native language was quite simple: he believed in repeating the lessons over and over again in conversation, rather than by relying heavily on a textbook. His students were to learn by doing, by practicing rather than by theorizing. Because he was not achieving the results he desired, apparently, he struck upon the idea that was to be a basic principle with him from that time forward. Instead of teaching for a set salary he thereafter taught for an honorarium. Allegedly, his success as a teacher increased, he achieved better results. Even while working -- for very little pay -- as a manual labourer at a boys' camp at nearby Mount Tremper, Maurin continued to give French lessons, "on the side, as much for company as anything else,

and because he was a born teacher." (46) Though he gave up teaching French two years later, Peter Maurin was never again a salaried worker; instead he was a man with a mission, accepting charitable offerings to sustain himself.

While at Woodstock, besides teaching, he engaged in some charitable works characteristic of his later career, such as the one related in the following anecdote:

"...one evening he came in quietly jubilant. He had been frequenting during the winter a little lunch room under the railroad track, called the subway lunch, where hoboes often came in to beg for food. He conceived the idea of tacking a box upon the wall, with the sign on it, 'If you have any money to give, put it in, and if you need money, take it out. No one will know.'" That last touch showed the delicacy of Peter's charity.

Strangely enough, the box succeeded. Many men had coffee at the subway lunch, and many men put money in the little box on the wall. This went on through the winter. Then one evening, Peter came to give his lesson very downcast. What was the matter? Twenty-five dollars had disappeared from the box! A fortune. The bank had been robbed. Man had again succumbed in Peter's Eden. He had not passed the test, the simple little test of love.

Nothing was said about the box, which continued to function in a small way. Then another evening came, and Peter arrived at Julia Leacycraft's home, beaming. The money had been restored. The twenty-five dollars was back, and more, too, with a note. Someone had been down and out, needed bus fare and had taken the money. Someone who had merely taken the sign at its word. He had taken what he needed, and now he had been able to restore it. Peter's faith had been confirmed. "It works," I can hear him cry joyfully, seeing as he always did, Christ in his brother. (47)

During this period of experimentation Peter Maurin also attempted to arouse interest in social problems. He apparently won some interest in his theory of a "Green Revolution," and delivered oral "Easy Essays" wherever he was invited. Possibly, some of these essays were mimeographed; but there is no evidence to verify such speculation. It is safe to assert, however,

that until 1933 Maurin's propaganda efforts were not notably fruitful on any large scale. (48)

With those events the background of Peter Maurin's career as a propagandist is almost complete. At this juncture perhaps we should call attention to the fact that Peter Maurin went through a period of moral difficulty if not intellectual denial. Referring to those years Maurin spent tramping about the country, one writer states:

Through these years he had not been working overtime at his religion, but when everything else failed to produce an answer to the problems he was mulling over in his big peasant's head, he turned back to his boyhood religion and found the answer in Christian charity. (49)

That statement is confirmed by Maurin's closest associate:

...he and I were talking about fallen-away Catholics once. I was reproaching him for not understanding the non-Catholic or for being harsh to the fallen-away, when something caught me in the expression of his face.

"Peter, were you ever out of the Church?" I asked him.

He admitted he was, for some ten years.

"Why?" I wanted to know.

"Because I was not living as a Catholic should." He ventured nothing more and there was a finality about his answer that kept me from questioning him further.

So I understood from that that his difficulties had not been intellectual but moral. He "was not living as a Catholic should," so I could only suppose that he was living as most men do in their youth and following their desires.... (50)

Peter Maurin apparently emerged from these moral difficulties cognizant of the futility of worldliness, for the years of his "public life" were certainly marked by heroic personal piety. However, before taking up the several remaining strands of the story, we should review how these eighteen⁸⁰ years contributed⁸⁰ largely to Maurin's approach as an agitator and propagandist.

A gandy-dancer and industrial worker himself, Maurin knew the problems of the itinerant labourer and the factory worker; a devoted student, he learned that the solution was ultimately spiritual. As a propagandist

Maurin was concerned with communicating ideas; as a teacher, he learned to express and impress his convictions in terms his audience, ranging from hood carriers to university dons, understood; as an impassioned agitator, he went down into the street to stir up action. A lay follower of St. Francis, personally exemplifying his own teachings, Maurin could be "on the level" with the suffering and the poor; a bum and beggar himself, he could bring the works of mercy to the "Ambassadors of God," the destitute habitués of the flop-houses along the Bowery. Peter Maurin had discovered the work to which he devoted the remainder of his life.

That work we should see in its proper historical setting. In so doing, we do not necessarily intend to "date" his labours, but rather to account for the situation which inspired his particular application of the timeless message of Christianity. The United States in the late 1920's was in the throes of a severe economic depression. Approximately ten million unemployed served as fertile ground for the seeds of atheistic communism when Peter Maurin started his counter-propaganda, appealing to the unorganized mob, the leaderless, hungry assemblages of idle men. He knew them, for he had eaten, slept, worked and prayed with them for many years. Now they were in danger of being misled by what he considered false doctrines and fake panaceas. Perhaps they would listen to him. He would try.

His vast storehouse of learning, of varied personal experience in fields and factories, and of prayerful poverty of spirit was opened to all in need. Almost indispensable to his efforts, it may be seen, was this eighteen-year period of working and wandering just reviewed,

for it made the propagandist one with his proletarian audience. He had a message for them; he would now express that message in vernacular terms they would really understand. Furthermore, to reach them he would, unlike most professional social workers, embrace voluntary poverty. His followers would do the same.

This direct-action approach, coupled with the fact that 1933 was the bottom year of the depression, gave the Workers a crusading appeal that struck fire in certain Catholic circles, especially among young priests, students in theological seminaries, and some of the more enlightened members of the laity. (51)

All that Peter Maurin needed now was a formal outlet for his program. That came several years later, with the appearance of a penny newspaper, The Catholic Worker. Till then he was a prophet without prestige.

His personal propaganda campaign, of course, was actually launched before 1933. Exactly how much earlier is uncertain, but we do know several facts about the semi-final preparatory years, some already mentioned, others which it would be well to consider now. Dorothy Day tells us:

Peter had sheaves of essays in his pockets when I met him. He had spent years in study and writing, and much of his work was done before I met him. (52)

Moreover, wherever Maurin went he engaged in conversations with strangers. That was always his way. He talked with people in the city streets and the country roads, on the New York subway, on cross-country buses, on freight trains, in quiet parks and at mass labour demonstrations. These talks were not casual. They were deliberately designed to arouse interest in special principles; they were deftly distilled digests from the writings of eminent social thinkers, popes and saints. In these talks, he was not only making points for the benefit of his listeners, but

also at the same time clarifying thoughts and sharpening points in his own mind. Talking was not sufficient, though, he later learned; he had to write. Many people would not listen, he complained; perhaps they would read.

So Maurin began to compose his series of "Easy Essays" at least as early as 1927, and to deliver them orally at every opportunity. The first one, presumably, was delivered before the Rotary Club of Kingston, New York.

"One of the Rotarians," Peter relates, "thought he'd have a good laugh, so he invited me to address the club. I told them this:

"The other fellow says
that I am queer:
and that is normal.

When he says that I am queer
he means I am queer
to him.

I may be queer to him
but he is queerer to me,
and he being queerer to me
than I am queer to him,
he hasn't a chance
to make me normal.

So I am trying to make him queer
so we can both
be normal!"

Peter told the Rotarians something else. "Watch out, fellows! If you put too much money into business, you are going to put business out of business!"

"And they did," Peter adds, "so now they call me the prophet of the depression in Kingston." (53)

By 1929 he had given up teaching French, and had returned to manual labour, at Father Joseph B. Scully's boys' camp at Mount Tremper, New York, where for several years he worked as handyman. "His most constant companion," writes Dorothy Day, "was an old horse and from the way Peter talks, I believe he shared the barn with him." (54) He quar-

ried stone and cut ice and performed a dozen other tasks without pay; but when he went to New York City the camp director gave him one dollar a day to live on. Father Scully referred to Peter Maurin as "my man Friday" and the propagandist always showed sincere deference for the "dean of education." (55) At the camp, apparently having access to the priest's library (as well as the public library), he continued to study, reading everything he could procure. There many of his Easy Essays and digests were allegedly written. During that period, making frequent visits to New York City, he was actively engaged in his particular form of street preaching in Union Square and Columbus Circle. In public he was defending a traditional Catholic position against the atheistic tirades of Socialist and Communist speakers, and fervently advocating Distributism, Pacifism, and Personalism.

In the early 1930's, it is believed, his Easy Essays were sometimes mimeographed and distributed by a young man who heard Maurin speak in Union Square; he duplicated several of the essays on broadsides, and handed them out to the motley audience. This young man may be regarded as one of Maurin's first real disciples; today he is a Jesuit priest, teaching at a college in New Jersey. (56)

Often Maurin wrote out his Easy Essays and digests in pencil on typewriter paper folded in eighths, or on loose-leaf pages in a binder. These manuscripts he sometimes left at the offices of magazine editors and educators. (57)

An itinerant prophet, Peter Maurin agitated vocally wherever he went -- in restaurants, at universities, at Church auxiliary meet-

ings, in public squares -- but his effectiveness was hampered by his not having the prestige of an official published organ. Not a sensitive artist or litterateur, but a blistered, calloused workman who spoke and wrote from personal experience and hardship almost as much as from his extensive reading, publishers were not greatly interested in his simplified syntheses. He may have been slightly despondent -- none of the clergymen or the Catholic publishers whom he visited with his essays showed sufficient interest -- but he continued his campaign alone.

...when he could not get people to listen, he wrote out his ideas in neat, lettered script, duplicated the leaflets and distributed them himself on street corners, a single apostolate. (58)

Then in December 1932, he found, at last, somebody who would carry out his program -- a free lance writer named Dorothy Day. Together they started The Catholic Worker. Up to that time (as he might have phrased it himself) he had had the "stuff and the push"; now he had the "prestige."

Intellectually, Miss Day and Maurin hit it off right from the start. Maurin had a program -- "a Utopian Christian communism" -- all thought out; Miss Day had the journalistic experience, the practical approach, and the talent for leadership needed to give reality to his vision.... (59)

Late in 1932 Peter Maurin had come upon two articles, one in The Sign, the other in The Commonweal, written by Dorothy Day. Those articles revealed a kindred spirit. Furthermore, "a redheaded Irish Communist in Union Square" (60) referred him to Miss Day. So he hastened to New York, to the office of The Commonweal editor, George N. Shuster, from whom he obtained Miss Day's address. She was in Washington, D. C., at the time, reporting a communist-conducted Hunger March;

but when she returned to New York, Peter Maurin was waiting at her East 15th Street apartment for her. He was armed with Father Vincent McNabb's Nazareth or Social Chaos and the papal encyclicals on St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis de Sales. (61)

What, in brief, was the plan Peter Maurin presented to Dorothy Day? (62) It was a four-point program of social reconstruction calling for: (1) a labour paper, (2) houses of hospitality, (3) round-table discussions, and (4) farming communes. The movement was to be characterized by the willing acceptance of personal responsibility as exemplified in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy; and by the voluntary acceptance of holy poverty. This program was the product of Maurin's varied experiences, extensive reading, and intense spiritual motivation. In various essays the Catholic worker program of action is more fully stated and explained by the founders and by other writers; but for a concise outline this synopsis, printed four years after the founding, should suffice:

- I. Clarification of Thought through
 - 1- The Catholic worker; Pamphlets, Leaflets.
 - 2- Round Table Discussions.
- II. Immediate Relief through
 - 1- The Individual Practice of the Works of Mercy.
 - 2- Houses of Hospitality.
 - 3- Appeals, not demands, to existing groups.
- III. Long-Range Action
 - Through Farming Communes providing people with work, but no wages and exemplifying production for use, not for profit.

ALLIED MOVEMENTS

- 1- Cooperatives
- 2- Workers Associations (Unions)
- 3- Maternity Guilds
- 4- Legislation for the Common Good
- 5- Distributism. (63)

For five months Peter Maurin "indoctrinated" the recent convert, Dorothy Day. She notes:

I needed a Catholic background, he said, having been educated in a State University, so his aim was to give me a Catholic outline of history by means of daily conversations which began around three o'clock in the afternoon and continued until ten or eleven o'clock at night. (64)

From their very first meeting he urged her to start a newspaper, and practically every day after that he brought her books, papers and digests that would provide what he considered the needed, thoroughly Catholic background, often slanted toward social reconstruction:

Always he was bringing me sheaves of paper on which were neat digests of what he had been reading and studying. The first of these digests I can remember was Kropotkins's Fields, Factories and Workshops. (65)

Originally Maurin wanted to call the newspaper The Catholic Radical, but with her Communist background, Dorothy Day insisted upon calling it The Catholic Worker. (66) There were many difficulties; for instance, she tells us:

...while Peter read aloud his inspired lines on hospitality we had as yet no office. I had worked on the first issue of the paper on the kitchen table after supper, at the library, sitting in the park in the afternoon with Teresa. (67)

Moreover, they started the paper without any money. (68) The first edition was printed and circulated among the malcontents and unemployed in Union Square on May Day, 1933. The paper sold (to those who could afford to pay) for one cent per copy; many copies were handed out gratis. The first issue numbered 2, 500 copies, and it dealt with such questions as co-operatives, the Negro labourer, trade unions, unemployment. Peter Maurin included one of his Easy Essays on the topic "Institutions vs.

Corporations." Seven months after the Catholic Worker movement was born, its official publication carried this candid statement of policy:

The purpose of a paper is to influence the thought of its readers. We are quite frankly propagandists for Catholic Action.

"You may think you are newspaper editors," Father Parsons, the editor of America, said a few months ago in friendly comment. "But agitators is what you really are." (69)

Expansion was rapid. within six months the circulation was about 20,000; and within a year, over 35,000. Despite temporary setbacks the circulation rose to 100,000 by the middle of 1935, with subscribers in several countries. (70) Still later the circulation increased considerably, only to decline again during the war years, the circulation vacillating, apparently, according to the popularity of the editorial policies. More significant than the paper's circulation is its influence, its honesty, and the fidelity of the staff. The phenomenal zeal of the Catholic Worker staff may be illustrated by contrasting the fact that, to ^{help} pay the bills for the first edition of the paper the editor had to sell her typewriter, with this item appearing in the paper less than a year later:

What we very optimistically called the first step towards a daily Catholic Worker was taken last month when we bought a mimeograph machine with the money supplied us by a friend of the paper and started to issue daily leaflets which are distributed from Twelfth to Sixteenth Street every day by one of our willing helpers.

The leaflet which we call brazenly The Daily Catholic Worker supplements the monthly edition for this parish at any rate. It begins with an excerpt from the liturgy of the day, quotes from the speaker of the night before at the Catholic workers' School, comments on the speaker's views, and ends with a bit of an essay by Peter Maurin. (71)

The co-founder (72), Peter Maurin, had been shuttling between Mount Tremper and New York City until September, 1933, when he

joined the staff permanently. He was not the editor -- that was Dorothy Day's responsibility -- but a contributor who devoted most of his time to the other points of his program.

Maurin's writings and conversation inspired Dorothy Day to open the first House of Hospitality, a rented apartment for women, in December 1933. (73) Many others followed, of course, through the years and across the country in two dozen cities, but St. Joseph's House in New York was the pioneer. Fifteen years ago their purpose was stated by Dorothy Day:

Houses of Hospitality will bring workers and scholars together. They will provide a place for industrial workers to discuss Christian principles of organization as set forth in the Encyclicals. They will emphasize personal action, personal responsibility in addition to political action and state responsibility. They will care for the unemployed and teach principles of co-operation and mutual aid. They will be a half-way house towards farming communes and homesteads. (74)

We should note at this point that while the many Houses of Hospitality scattered across the continent may seek guidance from the New York "headquarters", each unit is completely autonomous. Self-government, not centralized organization is the ideal practiced here, even though self-government is not made any easier by the highly cosmopolitan backgrounds of the guests. (75)

In March 1934 the Workers' School held its first session, at which a lecture was given by historian Carlton J. H. Hayes. The lecturers at the Catholic Worker School that year alone would constitute a faculty very few universities could even hope to assemble: Ross Hoffman, Parker Moon, Rev. John Corbett, Dr. Hudson Oliver, James Vaughan,

Harry T. Carman, Joseph Calderon, Robert H. Connery, Rev. Joseph McSorley, Rev. Wilfred Parsons, Harry Lorin Binsee, Rt. Rev. John A. Ryan, F. J. Sheed, Dr. James Walsh, and Jacques Maritain. Lectures and discussions, of course, are still an important feature of the Catholic Worker movement. Though effects from such "schools" are rarely tangible, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists is said to have originated in a Catholic Worker discussion group. (76)

May 1934 witnessed further expansion. Maurin and his associates opened a branch office in Harlem. They hoped in this way to bring their message of Christian Social Justice directly to the Negro. Street meetings were held three nights a week along Lenox Avenue, and the works of mercy extended to the needy. Dorothy Day gives us a memorable picture of pioneer conditions in that Harlem office:

Father LaFarge paid a call on Peter Maurin at our new branch headquarters up in Harlem. There has been no money to turn on the electricity, nor yet money for candles, so Peter receives callers who come in the evening in the dark, or rather, with just the light of the street outside. Father LaFarge said that all he could see in the encircling gloom was Peter's forefinger, motioning in the air as he was making points. (77)

Despite constant activity in other forms of agitation, indoctrination, and education -- under the heading of "culture" -- Peter Maurin was able to divert some of his energy to a group project under the heading of "cultivation": a communal farm on the Benedictine plan, located in Staten Island. The first Catholic Worker farm, as Miss Day has written, started very humbly:

We are beginning the farm as humbly as we began The Catholic Worker which started with no staff, no headquarters, no mailing

list and no money. But this small beginning is part of our propaganda. St. Francis says you cannot know what you have not practiced. From now on when we write about the land movement as a cure for unemployment we will be writing about a small group of people who are on the land and who, without funds and by making real sacrifices, are trying to build another way of life for themselves. (78)

In this setting, Maurin believed, scholars could be workers and workers could be scholars. That was one of his ideals. Today that ideal is being realized, though admittedly on a very small scale, by some of his disciples on several farms in various sections of the country.

Such a cursory treatment of Peter Maurin's program will not satisfy the intellectually curious, the politically radical or the spiritually acute; for their use, the bibliography provides sources of fuller information. In summation, however, we may arrive at a deeper understanding of the movement Peter Maurin (with Dorothy Day's energetic co-operation) started if we keep this in mind:

The clearest and most significant expression of the meaning of his vocation was an occasion when he described the synthesis which he strove to incarnate into a living ideal. It was explained at the time with a piety, simplicity, gentleness and charm that was deeply moving. His program, Peter said, was made up chiefly of four elements: The "easy conversations about things that matter," adapted from the life and labours of St. Philip Neri; the clarification of thought or intellectual approach, according to the method of St. Dominic; the ideal of manual labor as exemplified in the life and teachings of St. Benedict; and voluntary poverty, adapted from St. Francis of Assisi. He worked to realize this ideal with a singlemindedness, intensity and concentration which astounded all who knew him. (79)

If, in retrospect, we regard Peter Maurin's life up to 1927 as years of general preparation; and the period from at least 1927 through 1932 as a time of more intense, conscious, specialized activity; we pass, in 1933, from the period of preparation to the period of achieve-

ment. The next dozen years (1933-1945) especially were, for Peter Maurin, years of fulfillment. During this period -- while the movement grew, the paper increased in circulation and influence, Houses of Hospitality mushroomed across the land, Catholic Worker cells formed in dozens of localities, and farming communes were attempted in various places -- Peter Maurin the propagandist was most active.

The following chapters will give greater details about his public speaking activities, and analyse the rhetorical aspects of his writings; up to now we have been trying merely to paint a clear backdrop against which we may properly view the work of this radical Catholic propagandist.

It is now quite apparent how the first fifty years of Peter Maurin's life contributed so largely and so particularly to the events of the last twenty. The movement he and Miss Day started was to a great extent shaped in his image; that is, it was based largely upon that long and varied series of experiences and cultural influences we have already enumerated, and rounded off by the demands and exigencies of the more recent social changes. Fundamentally the same ideals inspire the Catholic Worker movement today as in 1933, though, understandably, policies for carrying out the original principles may change somewhat; for instance, the emphasis may have been placed differently during the war years than during the depression years, but pacifism and distributism have always been equally important tenets of the Catholic worker. Indeed, the emphasis may have, on occasion, been misplaced; the followers may have, on occasion, drifted slightly from the path of their

leader. Sincere critics sometimes make such claims; ardent disciples usually deny them. It remains for an objective study other than the present essay to evaluate such statements.

But, besides conceding the possibility of technical mistakes or errors of judgment, Dorothy Day herself admits:

If we have deviated from Peter's ideas it is in this -- too much activity, too little study and thought and prayer.

I keep emphasizing Peter's not doing active things in the movement, practical things, because we were always in haste to do, to act, to start something and Peter was always the agitator, the teacher, the indoctrinator....

It fell to me to do all the active work -- I was the Martha. But Peter actually was afraid of too precipitant activity which would draw people away from prayer and study. His idea was "if you get people thinking differently, they will act differently." So he wanted the main emphasis on indoctrination. (80)

For Peter Maurin the years from 1945 to 1949 were tragic, for he was in failing health, often in severe pain, suffering from a hernia and from cardiac asthma. In her book, On Pilgrimage, Dorothy Day has written poignantly and tellingly about those last years. (81) The wry, homely smile that had characterized Peter Maurin for so many years disappeared as his mouth was now twisted with pain and it became increasingly difficult for him to speak. His eyes now revealed agony and bewilderment, and he, suddenly a worn old man, hobbled about awkwardly. The once bounding troubadour spent his last four years in painful inactivity. He did not sing because he could no longer think. The American poverello was truly destitute.

An ironic form of justice may be seen in those last years. A man who once had led a vigorous, strenuous life now had to be cared for like a helpless child; a man who had influenced the minds and hearts of

thousands now had to be talked to as though he were a simpleton. The apostle of poverty had surrendered his most cherished possession, his mind. Yet, we are told:

...even then, in his old age, uncaring, crippled in mind and body, he still had the power to attract, to seize the imagination. At Mass in the chapel at Maryfarm he would sit quietly in his seat by the window, seemingly oblivious, an old man, thickset, whose shoulders were still bowed with the heavy yoke of peasant muscle, but at the Sanctus he would rouse and force himself, unaided to his knees. It was excruciating to watch, but an object lesson in spiritual discipline not easily forgotten. An old man, who all his life and now with his age upon him and in great pain did not fail to render homage to his God. (82)

Peter Maurin died on May 15, 1949, the feastday of St. Jean-Baptiste de la Salle. At the Catholic Worker Maryfarm near Newburgh, N.Y., he had been tendered loving care to the very end, and had received the sacraments. Furthermore, he had the satisfaction of knowing that his work was being carried on. He had dug the furrows, and his followers would tend to the sowing, that later generations might reap the harvest: a society in which it would be easier for the average man to be good. (83)

His shroud was a castoff suit. To his simple wake in the Mott Street office came thousands of mourners. Many were seen "quietly, almost secretly pressing their rosary beads to Peter's hands. Some bent down and kissed him." (84) Many believed that Peter Maurin was a saint.

The funeral took place on May 18 at the neighbouring Salesian Church of the Transfiguration. Burial was in St. John's cemetery, Long Island, in a grave donated by a Dominican priest.

One slender volume of phrased essays is the principal written testimony we have of that poor man's thoughts -- only one small parcel out of the storehouse that was his mind. But that one volume is sufficient to establish his place among the leading Catholic social apostles of recent times; and, what is more important, to assure him the paradoxical form of success that is the failure of the saints. (85)

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Martin Paul, "A Man of the Soil," Peter Maurin, Christian Radical. Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 13-15.

"From the Mail Bag," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVII, No. 9, March 1951, p. 5, Cols. 1-4.

J. Curran, "I Am a Peasant," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XIII, No. 4, May 1946, p. 5, Cols. 4-5.
2. Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1939, p. xvii.
3. Arthur Sheehan, "A Man Called Peter," The Candle (no volume or pagination provided in this mimeographed publication).
4. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, F.S.C., correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
5. Dorothy Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 319.
6. Joseph J. Bagiackas, "New Apostle to the Gentiles," Christian Social Action, Vol. V, No. 5, May 1940, p. 154.

Luigi d'Appolonia, "Peter Maurin, R.I.P.," Relations (Montreal), Vol. IX, No. 103, July 1949, p. 185.
7. Arthur Sheehan, "'Honest to God' -- That Is How He Spoke," The Candle.
8. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, F.S.C., correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
9. Dorothy Day, The Long Loneliness, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1952, pp. 176-177.

See also: Peter Maurin, Catholic Radicalism, edited and foreword by David Mason, introduction by Dorothy Day, Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1949, introd., pp. ii-iii.
10. Maurin, op. cit., p. 196.

Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
11. Interview with Dorothy Day.

12. Maurin, op. cit., p.22
 13. Rev. Brother Agnel Isidore, F.S.C., correspondence with the present author. See Appendix I.
 14. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 177
 15. Interviews with Dorothy Day, Edward Willock, Arthur Sheehan.
 16. Ibid.
 17. Rev. Brother Agnel Isidore, correspondence with the present author. See Appendix I.
 18. See: The Conduct of the Schools of Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, translation and introduction by F. de la Fontainerie, McGraw-Hill, New York and London, 1935.
 19. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
 20. Interview with Edward Willock.
 21. Maurin, op. cit., pp. 193, 195.
 22. Dorothy Day, "Peter Maurin, Agitator," Blackfriars, Vol. XXX, No. 354, September 1949, p. 411.
 23. Dorothy Day, correspondence with the present author.
 24. Interviews with Dorothy Day, Edward Willock, Arthur Sheehan, and Thomas Sullivan.
- See also: Donald Gallagher, "A Man Dedicated to Truth," Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, p. 25.
25. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
 26. Maurin, op. cit., p. 164.
 27. Sheehan, "A Man Called Peter," The Candle.
- Joseph A. Breig, "Apostle on the Bum," The Commonweal, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, April 28, 1938, p. 9.
- Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 177
28. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, correspondence with the present

author. See Appendix II.

29. Dwight MacDonald, "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- I," The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 33, October 4, 1952, p. 46.
 30. The present author, seeking explicit information, wrote to M. Sangnier's daughter. She referred the letter to Mlle J. Caron, a graduate student at the Sorbonne, currently preparing a doctoral thesis on Le Sillon. Mlle Caron, in a letter of Jan. 10, 1954, said that none of the members of the Sillon group whom she had contacted recalled Peter Maurin.
 31. Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, correspondence with the present author. See Appendix II.
 32. Julian Pleasants, "Personal Responsibility," The American Apostolate, edited by Leo Richard Ward, C.S.C., The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1952, p. 83.
 33. Interview with Rt. Rev. L. G. Ligutti.
 34. Sheehan, "A Man Called Peter," The Candle.
 35. Interview with Dorothy Day.
 36. H. A. Reinhold, "The Catholic Worker Movement in America," Blackfriars, Vol. XIX, No. 222, September 1938, p. 639.
- While on this topic it is significant to note that Brother Norberto Bautista mentions his brother's early interest in pacifism (Appendix II). Peter Maurin's views on pacifism, says Dorothy Day (in correspondence with the present author), were based upon his concept of man's freedom. She continues: "I know Peter hated to see the emphasis placed on pacifism rather than Freedom. Man's freedom, his free will, was the great point to Peter. Man must be responsible; he must freely choose, not be forced."
37. Photostatic copy of the military service record of Pierre Joseph Aristide Maurin.
 38. Brieg, loc. cit.
 39. See: Day, The Long Loneliness, pp. 177-178.
 40. Brieg, loc. cit.
 41. Dorothy Day, correspondence with the present author.
- "The Poor Man," Time, Vol. LIII, No. 22, May 30, 1949, p. 54.

42. Brieg, op. cit., p. 10
43. See: Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 46, 48.
44. "The Poor Man," loc. cit.
45. Interview with Arthur Sheehan.
46. Dorothy Day, correspondence with the present author.
47. Dorothy Day, "On Pilgrimage," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVIII, No. 14, October 1952, p. 7, Cols. 2-3.
48. In correspondence with the present author, Dorothy Day is very skeptical of the accuracy of some of Mrs. Julia Leaycraft's recollections as recorded in Appendix III, particularly those pertaining to a pre-1933 "Catholic Worker." It is obvious that some of Mrs. Leaycraft's recollections are "mixed up".
49. C. J. McNeill, "The Strange Work of Peter Maurin," The Irish Monthly, Vol. LXX, No. 832, October 1942, p. 400.
50. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 343.
51. Dwight Macdonald, "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- II," The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 34, October 11, 1952, p. 37.
52. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 17.
53. Brieg, op. cit., p. 11
54. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 139.

See also: Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 178.
55. Day, correspondence with the present author.
56. Sheehan, "A Man Called Peter," The Candle.
57. Interview with Arthur Sheehan.
58. Day, unpublished manuscript.
59. Macdonald, op. cit., pt. II, p. 42.
60. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 169.
61. Day, "Peter Maurin, Agitator," p. 412.

62. Day, House of Hospitality, p. xxxv.
63. The Catholic Worker, Vol. V, No. 2, June 1937, p. 4, Cols. 1-2.
64. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 5.
65. Ibid., p. 14.
66. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 175.
67. Day, House of Hospitality, p. xxvi.
68. Day, correspondence with the present author. Miss Day contributed money she received for her free lance writing; and a few people made other monetary contributions; thus the expenses of the first issue were paid.
69. "Technique of Action," The Catholic Worker, Vol. I, No. 7, December 13, 1933, p. 2.
70. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 182.
71. The Catholic Worker, Vol. I, No. 10, April 1, 1934, p. 5, Col. 4.
72. Every issue of The Catholic Worker, in its list of staff members (p. 2), acknowledges Peter Maurin as the "founder".
73. Day, correspondence with the present author.
74. Day, House of Hospitality, p. 238.
75. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
76. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 220.
77. Day, House of Hospitality, p. 65.
78. Ibid., p. 138
79. Cyril T. Echele, "An American Poverello (1877-1949)," Social Justice Review, Vol. XLII, No. 4, July-August 1939, p. 117.
80. Day, correspondence with the present author.
81. Dorothy Day, On Pilgrimage, Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1948, pp. 84-87.
82. "Poverty's Progress, Lament for a Chief," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1939, p. 3, Col. 4.

83. Day, The Long Loneliness, pp. 273-281.
84. Dorothy Day, "Peter Maurin," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1939, p. 2, Col. 3.
85. Robert Ludlow, "Eternal Man," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1949, p. 6, Col. 5.

Chapter II

THE PROPAGANDIST

Though avowed propaganda is not the only way to spread ideas, it has always been one plank in the Catholic Worker program. The originator of that program, Peter Maurin, was by inclination and intention a propagandist.

What is propaganda? For the purposes of this particular thesis we may define the term propaganda as any deliberate program or concerted movement designed to spread (by word and/or by works) a particular doctrine, set of ideas, or principles. A propagandist, strictly speaking, is an individual who is consciously, deliberately, engaged in such activity.

In a general sense all worthy Christians are -- in effect, if not in intention -- propagandists. But here we recognize that some men are more consciously and deliberately dedicated to such activities, and these -- this specific minority -- we designate with the particular title of "propagandists". Now, these conscious propagandists may pursue their work in many ways. Many means are at their disposal, many established techniques may be employed and new techniques attempted, many combinations of means may be directed toward the particular end in view. The end in view may be, objectively good or evil; regardless of the morality of the end, propaganda is the publicity for that end.

The propagandist we are studying had specific, morally good ends in view and he employed various techniques -- some old, some new --

as morally acceptable means toward those ends. The American Catholic Who's Who (1) calls him "an apologist" -- a defender of the truth. In his own way, he took to heart the Divine injunction, "Go teach ye all nations....," propounding his ideas in a manner that suited his temperament, his experience, and his segment of society.

Peter Maurin enjoys an affinity with other propagandists in the history of American Catholicism: with a few score writers for Catholic publications; with several dozen outspoken lay apostles in the labour movement and in agricultural organizations; with articulate clerics like Virgil Michel, Daniel Lord, J.J. Tompkins; with many scholars and professors scattered across the continent. One with them, yes; yet different. Peter Maurin had his own synthesized and simplified message, and his own methods of communicating it. His message involved some of the more radical parts of the same vast orthodox tradition shared by his fellow Christians; but ^{his} methods of disseminating that message were -- judged by the more conservative criteria -- somewhat "unorthodox".

As a propagandist Maurin was both a writer and an orator.

Journalists, he believes, should not merely report history, but make history by influencing the time in which they write. In other words they should be propagandists and agitators as he himself has always been. He started to write, he says, because he could not get enough people to listen to him... (2)

Both his writing and public speaking were decidedly utilitarian, subservient to the spreading of his studied concepts of an improved society. We are separating the two for the sake of clarity, while admitting that for Peter Maurin they were often in intention and in practice quite the same thing, and always both were means to the ultimate end of spreading

truth. This chapter, therefore, is concerned mostly with the propagandist as public speaker; the next chapter with the propagandist as writer.

1. Three Difficulties

I. One journalist, in a partly-misleading, though well-intentioned, article on Peter Maurin has stated:

Peter always denied being an organizer, a teacher or a writer. He had a name for himself. He said he was an agitator. The papers were wrong when they said that Peter was a writer. Peter never wrote anything. His Easy Essays were spoken. (I have watched listeners spellbound by Peter's recital of them in the little room at Mott Street, walking along the Bowery on a winter day and in an extremely sophisticated New York penthouse.) and then written in their published form by other members of the Catholic Worker group. (3)

If we are to avoid the first pitfall that would obscure our understanding of Peter Maurin as a propagandist, the first sentence of the above passage must be greatly qualified, one part at a time.

A. True, Peter Maurin was not an organizer, for he could not -- or, at least, did not -- grapple with organizational details; his concern was with general planning. "He never took part in any of the paper, except to turn in each month half a dozen 'easy essays', many of which he insisted that we repeat over and over again." (4) He did not even pretend to have the practical knowledge needed to publish the newspaper he inspired: "'I enunciate the principles,' he declared grandly." (5) At the Newburgh farm, however, he actually engaged in some physical labour and wrestled with some practical problems; he was in his own element -- he loved to work. For some time at the Newburgh farm this was his daily horarium:

5 to 7	Work in the Field
7 to 9	Mass
9 to 10	Breakfast
10 to 11	Lecture or Discussion

11 to 2 Rest or Study
 2 to 3 Lecture or Discussion
 3 to 4 Cold Lunch
 4 to 5 Lesson in Handcraft
 5 to 8 Work in the Field
 8 to 9 Dinner
 9 to 5 Sleep (6)

That was his method of "organizing": the personal example he set for the other workers. In the city, however, "There was not much in the way of manual labor he could do around Mott Street excepting help keep the fires going and mending chairs." (7)

B. In the formal sense (except for his French tutoring) he was not a teacher; that is, his lectures were not subject to traditional academic and disciplinary restrictions. But a dozen passages from associates and other writers refer to him as specifically and definitely as a teacher. Here is one:

Peter was a teacher and undoubtedly it is proof of his genius that he left much for people to find out for themselves by their own reasoning. He held a high ideal, and was not disillusioned when his fellow workers reached only half way. At any rate they had made a start. He leaped as it were from crag to crag of thought, expecting his listeners to think and fill in the gaps. (8)

An unusual type of teacher, some of his methods are admittedly difficult to understand. Even Dorothy Day confesses:

...I did not understand Peter Maurin. I did not understand, for instance, why he talked about the things he did to the people he did. Why, for instance, given an opportunity to talk to a group of striking seamen during the 1937 waterfront strike, he should pick out the subject of Andre Gide and his reactions to Soviet Russia, and discourse on that for two hours. Perhaps he recognized a Communist in the audience and spoke only to him. (9)

Still, he never passed up an opportunity to make some point.

Peter used to say when we covered strikes and joined picket lines, "Strikes don't strike me." Yet he took the occasion to come out on the picket line to distribute leaflets upon which some single point was made. "To change the hearts and minds of men," he said. "To give them vision -- the vision of a society where it is easier for men to be good." (10)

This matter resolves itself into a question of terminology. Actually, "teacher", "agitator", and "indoctrinator" are interchangeable terms for Peter Maurin.

C. He certainly never regarded himself as a "writer" in the belletristic sense of being a creative artist. He was not noted for being an original thinker (which seems to be a prerequisite for a "writer"); but he did possess powers of assimilating, synthesizing, and synopsisizing, which he deliberately transferred from his mind to his manuscripts. And these syntheses and synopses are marked by a distinct -- though not "great" -- originality of expression. That Peter Maurin actually wrote is verified by at least one eye-witness:

These Easy Essays were truly chiselled out, word by word. Peter found it difficult to write although his mind was a torrent of ideas. He would sit upon his bed for hour after hour, pencil in mouth, pondering the next word to put in a line. That line might have only five words but Peter wanted the best of all possible five words. (11)

Though he apparently preferred direct personal contact, and "thought the role of teacher more effective than that of author," (12) he definitely was a writer. Many of his manuscripts are still extant.

His essays have the obvious pragmatic value of being easy to present orally, but, in addition, they have distinctive literary merits. It goes without saying that Maurin's essays are not in the

"literary" class of the oratory of a Newman, Bossuet, Burke, Churchill, or Lincoln; but they are examples of fairly effective propaganda writing, of writing with a deliberate, openly-professed didactic purpose: to win an audience of hearers or of readers to an interest in selected ideas. They are not flawless, but they were carefully wrought.

Those who maintain that the Easy Essays were exclusively oral compositions err; just as those who fail to realize, and to emphasize, that they were in reality ordinarily delivered orally, likewise err. The whole truth is that these essays were intended to serve both purposes, literary and oratorical. (13) One discipline, in short, complemented the other. Maurin's function was stated succinctly by

Dorothy Day in the early days of the movement:

He will come down for occasional round-table discussions and street speaking, but he is an agitator, not an editor, and his job will be to speak and to write. (14)

Furthermore, that Peter Maurin was single-minded, that he had confidence in his own essays, is evident; for, at the outset at least, he wanted The Catholic Worker to be his paper. Dorothy Day made this clear:

"Everybody's paper is nobody's paper," he said. And I realized that in his simplicity, in his lofty concept of his mission, he wanted nothing but his own essays to be printed, over and over, and broadcast throughout the country. He knew that he had a message. His confidence looked like conceit and vanity to the unknowing. He had a message, and he was filled with the glow of it, night and day. He lived for the work he was called to do, and the days were not long enough for research in the library, for the round-table discussions which took place wherever he happened to be, whether in coffee shop, on street corners, public squares, streetcar or bus. (15)

She further clarifies:

When Peter said, "everybody's paper is nobody's paper," when he protested the coverage of strike news, or the introduction of the personal element into the work by feature story, he was envisaging a sheet carrying nothing but his own phrased writings, regrouped, rewritten principles to apply to whatever situation came up, local, federal or world crisis. He had lived alone for so long, had for so long been a single apostle, that he did not realize how grim the struggle was going to be. (16)

To return to our original point: Peter Maurin was a personalist leader, not an "organizer" in the usual sense of that term; he was a public agitator and private indoctrinator, not a conventional "teacher"; he was writer of thought-provoking propaganda pieces, not a belles-lettrist.

So much for the first difficulty.

II. The second difficulty that may obstruct our understanding of Peter Maurin's work is the dual, at times almost contradictory, nature of the author. He is a troubadour as well as a propagandist; an entertainer as well as an agitator; a punster as well as a prophet. It may seem paradoxical to insist upon calling the dogmatic sociologist a diverting showman, but to separate the two is to lose the spirit of Maurin's technique. We distinguish here between the playful and the profound in Maurin only to account for the wedding of the two, not to demand a divorce. To attract and retain his outdoor audiences (usually there was strong competition from other soap-box orators), he resorted to unusual rhetorical devices, grammatical fireworks, physical gymnastics, and graceful humour. The means employed were always pure, never misleading or deceptive, never consciously compromising his ultimate purpose.

On the topic of "Personalist Leadership" Maurin wrote:

Thought must be expressed
in words and deeds,
and deeds speak louder
than words.
To be a Leader
requires thought
as well as technique.
The thought must appeal to reason,
and the technique
must be related to the thought. (17)

A. To appreciate the unity of Peter Maurin's technique we should recognize the validity of its several parts. First, we cannot deny his sense of humour. We need not agree with that humour wholeheartedly to see that he obviously delighted in word-play, in "catchy" phrases, in the American idiom, and in unusual applications of popular expressions -- as amusing, diverting, pleasing for their own sake, even though he made them serve his particular purpose. His fascination with the American idiom is explainable:

He learned English late in life and used to say that the good phrase "caught" him. He worked in all sorts of manual jobs, in the wheatfields, in coal mining areas, ditch digging, and others. Language is always richer where men struggle with nature to do their bidding. So when Peter chiselled out his Easy Essays, he carefully employed the phrase that "caught" him. (18)

Commenting on one such phrase -- that those who "invested in stocks got stuck" -- Dorothy Day observes:

Peter used to end triumphantly, his face beaming, thinking he had made a specially clever play on words. His puns and paradoxes used to make me blush, but they were as much a part of Peter as his clothes, so that I soon realized that intellectual disdain of the one was almost as bad as snobbish disdain of the other. (19)

And Rev. H. A. Reinhold offers this studied comment:

In spite of his amusing French accent and his linguistic firewords, his predilection for "jeux de mots" and alliterations, he is deadly serious and is taken seriously. (20)

His friends tell of the delight he derived (when he finally "caught on" to it!) from one of Dorothy Parker's gems: "Men seldom make passes at girls who wear glasses." (21)

In the next chapter we shall examine more closely Maurin's humorous tendencies in composition; here we wish to point out that his humorous manner was a distinct asset. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe his technique as abounding, specifically, in wit rather than humour. "His keen perception and wit always found the right phrase to express an idea." (22) Personally he had a disposition that was both pleasant and serious, mild and earnest; while his phraseology, his use of words, was witty -- that is, characterized by a seemingly instantaneous presence of mind that surprises and pleases through unexpected associations and attractive usages. With an easily-provoked, homely smile, and quick, flashing gray eyes, he appeared to be a cheerful, happy man.

He laughs delightfully at his own jokes and rejoices in applause, becoming intensely stimulated at what he takes to be a rejoicing understanding of his ideas. That it is sometimes himself that people rejoice over, never enters his head. (23)

Never, though he was often subjected to scourgings by the uncouth mob, did he give the impression of being a suffering martyr. A contemporary writes:

Certainly Peter with all his sureness as to the efficacy of his program for the new social order, is the most meek and submissive

of men. I've seen him again and again at meetings cut short by the chairman and with no sign of resentment, even when he has been stopped in the middle of a word, he will just say, "oh" in a little apologetic tone, and take his seat. He neither takes offense, nor bears resentment. He continues to bring his message to those who will listen. He is entirely unsuspicious, and never thinks ill of anyone. On the contrary, he sees their good points to so extravagant an extent that his friends say indulgently, "He has no judgment in regard to people." (24)

But there was at least this one drawback to his good-natured humour: the audience sometimes missed the point in his message because they were too taken up with his clownish antics and his rhetorical ingenuity. He delighted in being an entertainer:

If a thing is dull, it isn't Christian, he would say and his conversations and his adventures into the spiritual, as he called them, were full of humor. (25)

For him, his natural showmanship was simply another valid means to serve a good cause. His audience, however, sometimes mistook the means as an end in itself.

B. His chanted orations were purposeful, deliberately designed, carefully memorized, and constantly perfected in his mind, and he would not often be led off on tangents. To give his long-studied thoughts their full value -- though he considered with respect all worthy corollaries -- he seldom permitted divergent thoughts or tangents to detract from his central themes.

When Peter was asked questions, he answered them if he felt strongly enough about it. If the question was too obvious, if he felt that it was not in his sphere of ethics and morality, he said, "I am not a question box." (26)

Sometimes though, he did sprinkle his prepared essays with useful extempore illustrations and spontaneous anecdotes. But he "never answered

questions directly." (27) He maintained that everything had to be seen in its historical perspective; a rich background was necessary to cope properly with current issues; the prophets of Israel, the fathers of the Church, and papal encyclicals had to be studied. So he earnestly pursued his overpowering monologues, and was never known to descend to mere flippant conversation or small talk. Still, he tried to present his ponderous message in as light and attractive a manner as possible; and for that purpose his sense of humour was one of his most effective instruments. Both his sense of humour and his careful preparation were necessary and complementary.

C. Now, we must see Maurin's humour and his careful preparation not as things apart, but as two elements in a whole technique. The third element is "drama."

Peter was a modern St. Francis and he often spoke approvingly of the technique of the Assisian. "He was always seen in dramatic circumstances, illustrating a point," said Peter. (28)

That is the key that permits passage through the main gate: the prototype of Peter Maurin's dramatic technique is St. Francis; he frequently recommended the reading of Chesterton's biography of St. Francis; and he was himself, in many ways, truly "An American Poverello." (29)

Peter Maurin, too, is characteristically seen "in dramatic circumstances, illustrating a point." His oratorical technique was basically dramatic. It was mostly impersonal, objective, and theatrical. Aware that the success of an orator often depends less upon the

words than on the manner in which he employs them, Maurin's recitation of his essays was accompanied by appropriate gestures that spring spontaneously from the French peasant -- elaborate, vehement, exciting.

He would dramatize his speeches, even his passing conversations. It wasn't done from pride. He knew you first had to arouse interest in your ideas before they would sink in. St. Francis was his ideal. (30)

His gestures were dignified, graceful, never spasmodic, always free, without nervousness or weakness or awkwardness. Just as the voice appeals to the ear and to the mind, the gesture appeals to the eye and to the mind; so Maurin tried to "suit the word to the action, the action to the word." Some of his performances suggested, almost, a ballet.

He was intensely alive, on the alert, even when silent, engaged in reading or in thought. When he talked, the tilt of his head, his animated expression, the warm glow in his eyes, the gestures of his hands, his shoulders, his whole body, compelled your attention.... (31)

In attracting attention and holding his audience, his gestures were a serviceable accompaniment to his powerful voice and clever rhetoric.

Confident of the value of his message, he would perform for any audience that would listen to him.

In his naivete he thought everyone was anxious to listen, anxious to learn, anxious to participate in the apostolate that he was anxious to start. He could not conceive of anyone being indifferent to ideas. (32)

On one occasion, in fact, he volunteered as a contestant on an "amateur-hour" program in a neighbourhood theatre in New York. But when he began to recite one of his Easy Essays, the master of ceremonies stopped his act, telling him that his type of performance was not

the kind that interested amateur-hour audiences. Maurin was chagrined but not disheartened. Difficulties were to be found aplenty, but rarely discouragement. (33) "Discouragement is a temptation of the devil," he used to say. (34)

D. Another distinctive feature of his approach was that he did not prepare his audience; he usually plunged right into his lectures without the customary exordium; he shocked them. (35) He knew the importance of evoking wonder:

If we lived these truths, we would evoke wonder and people would say, "What's the big idea?" The first step, he said, was to evoke wonder. That was the right educational process. Chesterton was always praising it; Peter was explaining it. You had to raise questions in people's minds to make them ask questions. Then when they came to you, you gave them the answers. (36)

That was a salient point, the primary objective, in his method: to make people think. "'A crisis is good because it makes to think,' Peter always said, his English mixed up as usual when he became elated." (37) He lost no time over formalities and the usual oratorical amenities; he was not really impolite, though, just blunt, direct, forceful. His delivery was slow, deliberate, convincing, staccato -- like a carpenter driving nails. As he proceeded, he worked up to a crescendo. Ordinarily the climax was emphatic and dramatic, his arms in motion, his eyes fired with conviction, his voice booming. We shall discuss Maurin's "shock" tactics in more detail later in this chapter.

E. Earlier we referred to Peter Maurin as a troubadour. That appellation pleased him greatly, for that is what he intended to be. (38)

Though they are not to be classified as poetry, his phrased essays have a lyric quality in them that was especially apparent when he himself recited them. Actually, he chanted them. Their euphonic, musical quality then became quite clear and attractive, and his French accent under these circumstances, far from being a detriment, was a decided asset. His technique was truly attractive -- diverting and dramatic -- and nobody could copy it. In this sense, therefore, he had no direct influence on the street-preaching apostolate except in having set an example for originality, zeal, and courage.

As the Easy Essays are appropriately read aloud, at this juncture we should examine a sample of Maurin's oratorical method; in this way we may at least approximate the author's own style of delivery.

The markings used on the passages quoted here are quite arbitrary, and are intended to indicate accentuation and emphatic words. This legend may help to explain the markings used below:

- / indicates a short pause
- // indicates a long pause
- ~~~~ indicates a trill or special nuance given a word
- indicates an emphatic word
- == indicates a very emphatic word
- / indicates a strong or unusual accent

The two selections which follow are found in Catholic Radicalism and were recorded by Peter Maurin before his incapacitating illness.

When the Irish were Irish/
 the Irish were scholars.//
 And when the Irish were scholars/
 The Irish were Greek scholars.//
 And when the Irish were Greek scholars
 the Irish spoke Greek
 as well as Irish./
 And when the Irish spoke Greek
 as well as Irish
 Greek was Irish
to the Irish.

But now

Irish is Greek/
 to the Irish.//

Now they shout with the Anglo-Saxons:

Service for profits//)
 Time is money//)
 Cash and carry//)
 Business is business//)
 Keep smiling//)
 Watch your step//)
 How you making out?//)
 How is the world treating you?//)
 The law of supply and demand//)
 Competition is the life of trade//)
 Your dollar is your best friend.//)

Each of these slogans
 ends on a "rising"
 note.

(39)

After the fall
 of the Roman Empire,
 the scholars,
 scattered all over
 the Roman Empire,
 looked for a refuge
 and found a refuge
 in Ireland,
 where the Roman Empire
 did not reach/
 and where the Teutonic barbarians
 did not go.//
 In Ireland,
 the scholars formulated
 an intellectual synthesis/
 and a technique of action.//
 Having formulated
that intellectual synthesis
 and that technique of action,
 the scholars decided to lay
 the foundations of medieval Europe./
 In order to lay the foundations
 of medieval Europe.

the Irish scholars
 established Salons de Culture
 in all the cities of Europe,
 as far as Constantinople,
 where people could look for thought/
 so they could have light.
 And it was in the so-called Dark Ages/
 when the Irish/
 were the light./
 But we are now living
 in a real Dark Age,
 and one of the reasons why
 the modern age
 is so dark,
 is because
 too few Irish
 have the light.//
 The Irish Scholars established
 free guest houses/
 all over Europe/
 to exemplify
 Christian charity.//
 This made
 pagan Teutonic rulers
 tell pagan Teutonic people:/
 "The Irish are good people
 busy doing good."//
 And when the Irish
 were good people
 busy doing good,
 they did not bother
 about empires./
 That is why we never heard
 about an Irish Empire./
 We heard about
 all kinds of empires,
 including the British Empire,
 but never about
 an Irish Empire
 because the Irish
 did not both about empires
 when they were busy doing good./
 The Irish Scholars established/
 agricultural centers
 all over Europe/
 where they combined
 cult --
 that is to say liturgy --

with culture --
 that is to say literature --
 with cultivation --
 that is to say agriculture./
 And the word America
 was for the first time
 printed on a map
 in a town in east France
 called Saint-Die,
 where an Irish scholar
 by the name Deodad
 founded an agricultural center. (40)

A rhythmic pattern is suggested by the frequent and almost regularly spaced pauses. We have already noted that the Easy Essays were "chanted", some passages (as, the several consecutive slogans in the fragment quoted above) suggesting a chorus or refrain.

Supplementing the "chant" to give Maurin's recitals added singularity are at least the following peculiarities: (a) almost invariably the "r's" are rolled; (b) the letter "e" is often sounded as an "a" (as "when" becomes "whan" and "step" becomes "stap") and vice versa (as "making" becomes "mak'ing" and "Anglo-Saxons" becomes "Englo-Sexens"); (c) sometimes letters or syllables are dropped (as "fran'" for "friend", "you'" for "your" and "lit'ature" for "literature"); (d) sometimes words are improperly accented (as "re-fuge'" for "ref'-uge") or mispronounced (as the word "business", which should be pronounced "biz'-nes" is pronounced instead "beez'-nuss"); (e) occasionally striking, appealing, plaintive notes (as on the words "scholar" and "good") were sounded. Even though it "was difficult to become accustomed to his accent," (41) all these elements conspired to impress some listeners with the speaker's love for his thoughts. But orators often

are very critical of their own work, finding their reward not in winning the acclaim and applause of the audience but in attaining their own personal standards of excellence. Maurin's satisfaction came from pleasing, and awakening, others -- by the use of techniques and thoughts of his own choosing.

F. Though his ideas were so well assimilated that regardless of where he started, he would almost inevitably get on to the same key themes -- education, liturgy, farming communes, hospitality, the works of mercy -- customarily he dealt with the problems and interests of his immediate audience. When speaking to Irish audiences, for instance, he often dealt with themes from Irish history, usually "needling" the complacent modern heirs of that rich tradition. He dealt with themes on Communism, ordinarily, when speaking before Communists. He spoke about the lethargy of modern Jews only when speaking before predominantly Jewish audiences. Yet he never intentionally gave offense. He was, in a word, a gentleman.

He sought to teach his concepts without alienating anyone of good will. The technique of an agitator which he developed was one of the things which made him great. (42)

Peter Maurin was a gentleman -- a "gentle personalist"; but the rough edges of his peasant manners often fell far short of Emily Post's standards.

It was not only that he was single-minded; actually... he did not have what the world calls manners. He was oblivious of the little things. He was a French peasant, and if he found himself in a drawing room it was because he had something to say. Manners were not important, and he would precede others through the door, forget to take off his hat, not give up his seat to an old woman

unless told, nor say thank you when given anything. He was unconscious of the need for such courtesies. Or perhaps he did not have the habit of them. He was not self-conscious about his lack of manners either. To him "a gentleman was one who did not live off the sweat of someone else's brow." (43)

Our attention is called, though, to one very understandable defect in his character:

The only fault we ever saw in Peter was an occasional impatience with the young intellectual who was the conservative in the wrong sense, whose mind was closed, who would not listen, but was just thinking of what he was going to say next when Peter talked to him. (44)

Though he was an agitator, Maurin was not an aggravator. Though many disagreed with Maurin, few became angry with him. Though he was a teacher, he was not -- in the popular "religious" sense -- a preacher. The Easy Essays give ample evidence of the truth of this statement by Dorothy Day:

I like to emphasize the quality in Peter -- that he was always talking about our needs in this life. Although he emphasized as a technique the practice of the works of mercy as a way of showing our love for our brother, and reaching him to change his heart and mind, still one could never call him a preacher. He was diffident and reserved about his spiritual life and that of others. He himself went to daily Mass and Communion, and if there were communal prayers such as prime and compline, or the rosary, he was always there; he was never in any sense a manager -- he left that to others to do. (45)

Again the same writer tells us:

...he did not even converse on spiritual things, for instance. He never preached. He never talked about the spiritual life as he did the life of the world around him. He was an apostle to the world, as Joan of Arc was an apostle to the world of her day, and St. Vincent Ferrer of his. (46)

Peter did not talk subjectively about religion. He brought to us quotations and books and ideas that by stimulating the mind to know would encourage the heart to love. (47)

So much for the second difficulty.

III. It is quite apparent that many of the qualities Peter Maurin possessed were at the same time advantageous and detrimental, that the principles he practiced were to some attractive, to others repulsive. This is strikingly obvious when we consider the third, and dual, difficulty: the propagandist's appearance and presentation.

He looked like a tramp, a vagrant, a wanderer, a hobo. His equals, the unemployed, the gnarled labourers, the destitute, the struggling proletariat, may not have been scandalized -- nor were they edified -- by his unkempt appearance. But the bourgeois mentality (regardless of economic status) scorns a shabby appearance; the bourgeois are so repelled by rage that they fail to look beneath them for the admirable persons rags often clothe.

Now, it so happened that this twentieth-century Franciscan was often invited to speak before such "respectable" groups; and they were frequently unfavourably shocked by his tattered clothing. Such a reaction was especially common before his reputation, his "prestige", was widely established. In truth, he had only one suit (second-hand at that), and because he usually rolled up the trousers at night to use as a pillow, and wrapped the jacket around his feet, his one suit was understandably and honestly wrinkled. Sometimes it was dusty too: on one occasion in Boston, for instance, after stoking a stubborn furnace and covering himself with ashes and soot, he nonchalantly fulfilled a public-speaking engagement. Appearance meant little to him; but, unfortunately for him, it meant a great deal to many of his audiences.

particularly the women. Dorothy Day tells about a typical incident that took place when

...he went up to Rye, or New Rochelle, or some Westchester town to make a morning address to a woman's club. He always went where he was asked. An hour or so later we received frantic calls. "Where is Peter?" People always called him Peter. Sometimes they were even more familiar and called him "Pete." Since I put him on the train myself, I told them that he had left on the train designated, that he must be in the station.

"There is only an old tramp sitting on one of the benches asleep," was the reply. We knew it was Peter, and it turned out to be so. (48)

Even his own disciples are not immune to this common prejudice, as Dorothy Day so graphically relates:

The well-dressed man comes into the office and he is given respect. The ragged, ill clad, homeless one, is the hobo, the bum. "Get in line there. Coffee line forms at six-thirty. Nothing to eat until four. No clothes today."

Peter Maurin visiting our Buffalo house one time showed his face inside the door and was so greeted. "Come back at five, and have soup with the rest of the stiff's." And then the comment, "One of those New York bums came in this afternoon, said he was from the New York house."

One of the friends of the work in laughing at the incident that evening said, "Where did you go, Peter?" "I went to see 'Grapes of Wrath'." Peter was always meek, obedient to all. His speech with everyone he was not indoctrinating was always Yea, yea, nay, nay. (49)

Once this initial prejudice against Maurin's clothing took hold, even his foreign accent -- which might have been regarded as pleasant and attractive in a "well-groomed" gentleman -- was regarded as a fault, another serious flaw, in the hobo.

To add to Maurin's difficulties, the truth he was proclaiming was so novel (because it was so old and neglected), so radical, the vast majority -- who had little knowledge (let alone an orderly synthesis) of cult, culture, and cultivation -- did not really understand him.

Bishop Hugh C. Boyle apparently understood him, and so did Fathers Virgil Michel, John LaFarge, Wilfred Parsons, and J. J. Tompkins; but the average bank clerk or manual labourer, or advertising promoter, or salesman -- regardless of college training -- missed a great deal of his message, simplified as it was. The vast majority were unprepared for his prophecy, but his appearance and accent often militated against their becoming seriously interested in his propaganda.

In later years, Peter was to speak in seminaries and colleges and be given modest offerings, and have his fare paid from place to place. If he had worn a dress suit, carried a suitcase, stayed at a good hotel, the offerings would have turned into fees, and the respect accorded him would have been greater.

I write these things, not with bitterness, but to make the point that Peter often made, that poverty should be respected, that we should see Christ in every man, regardless of clothes. Peter's intelligence and sanctity were apparent to many, thank God, in spite of clothes. His old suit, a cast-off of someone else, his dollar suitcase full of books and pamphlets to supplement and give authority to his "points", his beaming, radiant, serene face, these all came to be loved in many a circle around the country. (50)

Despite the difficulties he personally encountered, the wisdom in Peter Maurin's four-step plan of action is apparent: 1. Investigate (observe, think); 2. Cogitate (judge); 3. Agitate (arouse interest); 4. Instigate (act). That plan resembles, of course, the Jocist procedure, except that an extra (the third) step is added. (51) Maurin realized that a favorable climate of opinion was necessary before revolutionary ideas such as he advocated would take root. He was preparing the way; he was furrowing, educating, agitating. He preferred that provocative title -- "agitator" -- and once, in 1934, he was detained at the Canadian border for stating that as his occupation. The immigration officers were "shocked." He was permitted to cross the border

only when the bishop whom he was going to visit vouched for his reliable character. (52)

The fact that he was a layman attempting to clarify Catholic ethics and traditions made a favourable impression on some people; many, though, not regarding such attempts at teaching and clarifying as a practical function of the Catholic laity, felt that such matters were properly left to the ordained ministers of religion. (53)

Not only was he often misunderstood, Peter Maurin was sometimes mistreated. His appearance, his accent, and the novelty of his message were usually responsible; or perhaps the blame should be placed on the ignorance and prejudice of his fellow-men. He tells of having been evicted from a Knights of Columbus meeting (54) -- for which offense the responsible official later apologized. And Dorothy Day tells of the upstate New York pastor who "demanded his money back which he had sent Maurin for car fare" because his invited guest turned out to be "a Bowery bum, and not the speaker he expected." (55) On another occasion, a Columbia University professor's wife "thought he was the plumber and ushered him into the cellar." (56) Incidents of mistaken identity (or ignorant assumptions) are sometimes amusing though; for instance,

Another tale is told of his going to speak at a mid-west college where the door brother was known for his great charity. At the very sight of Peter, the brother ushered him down into the kitchen and sat him down before a good meal which Peter gratefully ate. As the time for the lecture drew near, the harassed fathers were telephoning and hunting all over the college, finally finding him in the cook's domain, having a discussion there. (57)

At various other meetings, however, he was rudely silenced before he could even "make his point." Sometimes members of his audience walked out in the middle of his talks. (58) Not knowing who he was, some people were not courteous enough to listen to the radical ideas of this thickly-accented tatterdemalion, unless some polite and unprejudiced listener came to his rescue. We are told of such an instance:

Once he was attending a Rural Life Conference in Rochester, New York, and was moved to disagree strongly with some of the other delegates. In English thickly accented, Peter made some pungent observations about getting people back on the land. He was misunderstood, perhaps as much because of his unprepossessing appearance as because of his broken English. The delegates took him for a Bolshevik, or at least an intruder, and wished that he might depart.

But there was present Bishop Hugh C. Boyle of Pittsburgh, who does not quail before ideas. He intervened, and led a stimulating discussion. At its conclusion, when all heads were nodding agreement, he waved a plump hand toward Peter and said: "That's what this man has been trying to tell you!" The Bishop did not know "this man." But Peter, so the tale goes, was introduced, and was chided by His Excellency for concealing thoughts so good under an accent so bad. (59)

We do not wish to emphasize unduly this "defect" in Maurin's platform personality, but, on the other hand, to ignore his strong French accent would be to do him an injustice. His accent was a striking feature in his make-up and, for those who loved him, it made him even more lovable. But, Arthur Sheehan, one of his closest friends and a frequent travelling companion, astutely admits:

It took me dozens of conversations to become attuned to Peter's way of speaking. When people tell me, as they often do, that they heard him only once or twice and found his words difficult to grasp, I can well sympathize with them. His language was full of accent -- a foreign accent -- and he gave to many English words a twist that caused laughs, as when he used to call the encyclicals something faintly resembling "encyclics". The phrase Alcoholics Unanimous was always attributed to him. (60)

The third difficulty, then, we have attempted to explain is one that was encountered by those who witnessed Maurin's spoken -- personal or public -- indoctrination. The difficulty was real; and it was dual: A troublesome accent coming from a shabby, unprepossessing, gnome-like peasant. It may be summarily stated as the widespread failure to heed the old adage, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Maurin's "cover" -- vocal and sartorial -- was not very attractive except to those who had the patience and the good sense to discover the challenging contents of the "book".

Having surmounted these three difficulties -- Peter Maurin's personalist manner of leading and teaching, and the twofold outlet (oratorical and literary) of his propaganda; the dual nature of the propagandist himself, and some aspects of his seriousness and his humour; and the double impediment of his unkempt appearance and heavily-accented presentation -- we are prepared to study in more detail the propagandist's oratorical practices.

2. In New York

To arrive at a better understanding of Peter Maurin's propaganda techniques we shall now study several revealing descriptions of him in action. First, we shall consider his activities in New York City, where most of his agitating centered; and then we shall review some of the highlights of his activities "on tour". His work divides itself into (a) his agitation campaign in the public forum, and (b) his more personal indoctrination through round-table discussions and informal conversations.

Actually all of Maurin's performances were, more or less, premeditated in the sense of his having over the years prepared his thoughts and his techniques; but many of them occurred on the spur of the moment, without invitation or introduction. Such "impromptu" public performances were most frequent in Union Square and in Columbus Circle, in New York City; but he also held forth at Harlem street corners, in public parks, and along the Bowery. Of the first two open-air forums mentioned, we may make this somewhat arbitrary distinction: Union Square is usually the site where economic and political issues are informally disputed; whereas Columbus Circle is usually the arena where various philosophical and religious ideologies are fervently argued. In either place, informality is the keynote.

Though his message was always consistent, Maurin's stage tactics varied somewhat depending upon the needs of the moment. In one editorial we read:

Personal indoctrination was Peter's mission in life. His pedagogy was unique. He would loudly question a sleeping bench-warmer in Union Square until a crowd arrived. (61)

Another writer tells us:

Maurin does not employ a soap-box. From audiences, he questions Socialist or Communist speakers and defends the position of the Catholic Church. Or he will initiate a discussion with one or two or three by-standers, gradually collect a crowd and address it although ostensibly talking only to the original listeners. (62)

And a third glimpse of the tactics he employed in his desire to stir up thinking among the people is found in this anecdote:

There was a night in New York's De La Salle Auditorium in Advent, 1938 -- Manhattan College's Alumni Catholic Action Group was discussing Communism. Just before the main speaker began, small shabbily-dressed Peter entered and took a seat in the rear. During the discussion that followed the address Peter stood up and explained the only method of dealing with the Reds. "Attack them with their own fire." was his suggestion (although it took fully fifteen minutes to explain it). (63)

Sometimes his impulsive suggestions or voluntary contributions produced the desired effect of stimulating thought and discussion; sometimes these "shock" tactics met with rebuff:

Like Paul who was dragged into the council room at Jerusalem only to call the high priest a "whited wall," Peter charges into capitalist mansions and cries "injustice." Several years ago he walked into an office on Wall Street and offered to solve a financial magnate's difficulties for him.

"I wanted to show him 'the way out', but he showed me the way out," explains Peter. In spite of opposition, however, Peter's emphasis on justice has gone a long way. One employer, in Pittsburgh, was so deeply moved by Peter's logic in economics that he immediately raised the wage scale of his laborers. There are others, but Peter does not wish to talk more about them -- his sole aim is to bring about justice, to solve difficulties. (64)

The above anecdote (with reference to Wall Street) may not be entirely inaccurate, but it surely is not typical. It was not in keeping with Maurin's normal character for him to "charge in" or "break in" where

he was not welcome. Furthermore, as Dorothy Day explains,

He was on most friendly terms with Mr. Thomas Woodlock and Mr. John Moody of Wall Street. They listened to him always most courteously, and both donated generously to the work. (65)

Peter Maurin himself once said:

...I intend to be above all
a man of contacts
And I want my contacts
to set people thinking. (66)

In the very next sentence, he confided to Dorothy Day:

I want you to tell me
how you like my technique of agitation
I may be quite rough sometimes
and overreach the mark.

Later in the same letter though, he clearly states the essential spirit of his contact with his fellow-men:

Harmonious contacts
is what makes man human to man
Frictional contacts
is what makes man inhuman to man.

His contacts with his fellow-men were generally characterized by that "harmony" of which he speaks. But even in these "harmonious contacts" there was room for intellectual argumentation.

Though the time element was seldom so specified, the following incident is quite typical, illustrating the magnetism of his oratorical method:

One night about five of us went with Peter to Columbus Circle. He had an allotted time to appear on the stand, or dignified soap-box one might call it. Not many minutes were allowed for each but Peter made good use of his, and we were pleased to see listeners from the other half-dozen or so speaker's groups there in the park move over into ours, when this spirited little man began talking. An eager-faced Jewish boy talked to him afterward, and Peter urged

him to come to Mott Street for further "clarification." (67)

He was always looking for opportunities to indoctrinate and agitate, and took advantage of every chance to speak. (68) Toward that end, his "shock" technique was a real attention-getter.

Possessing a very loud voice, Peter Maurin has no difficulty in making himself heard. When he rises to speak the volume of tone and the apparent absence of connection between what others are talking of and what Peter has to say produces bewilderment.

In a conference, let us say, on social surveys or some other finely graduated thesis, when discussion begins to languish, Peter stands up -- not very high and conspicuously inconspicuous -- and without further prelude tells the audience that....

(Here we may quote from almost any of the Easy Essays.)

From which the audience may conclude what they like. If he is then requested to keep quiet, Peter will sit down, for Peter is as positive about stopping as about starting. But he has left something extremely definite to think about. (69)

If he did not deliver one or more of his memorized essays, he gave substantially the same thoughts in different words. Unstinting in his devotion, his zeal and energy seemed boundless. For example, during the early years of the Catholic Worker he wanted to hold meetings for the colored people in Harlem every night, and obtain the services of outstanding lecturers and scholars. That wish was not fulfilled, though he himself lectured a few times each week up and down Lenox Avenue, speaking on into the night as long as an audience remained. (70)

Besides these "unscheduled" harangues, Maurin arranged many orderly organized public meetings (71), several of them (in the early years) at the Manhattan Lyceum Hall. The Lyceum, it may be noted, was then regarded as a Socialist and Communist stronghold. Ordinarily the

audience was made up of some Communists along with many "neutral" unemployed and indigent, union members, and a smattering of "politically-minded" businessmen and university students. The Communists frequently lashed out against the ideas of the speaker, and this condition fired many Catholic workers with the desire to become articulate defenders of the Church's program of social reconstruction. Such debates helped to clarify thought and engender strong conviction. (72)

Sometimes Maurin announced his lectures in advance, as in the following notice from The Catholic Worker of December 1933:

To Our Readers

NOTICE!

Round Table Discussion

Again we meet in the Manhattan Lyceum, 66 East 4th street, on Sunday, Jan. 7, at 2 p.m.

To these meetings I invite Clergymen and Communists --
That is to say, everybody is welcome.

To a commercial industrial economy
I am opposing a cultural agronomic economy
-- cultural implying cult plus culture
plus cultivation; that is to say, liturgy plus
literature plus agriculture.

To systematic selfishness
I am opposing systematic unselfishness.

To the sociology of Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin
I am opposing the sociology of Saint Francis of Assisi,
Blessed Thomas More and Leon Harmel.

To the technique of Dictatorship
I am opposing a technique of Leadership.

To a dictatorial Pagan Communism
I am opposing Utopian Christian Communism.

To Bolshevik Action
I am opposing Catholic Action.

Knowing that you are deeply interested in the subject
I am inviting you to attend the meeting.

Your presence would be a great encouragement for me

And I hope of much profit to you.
 There will not be any collection at the meeting
 but if you would care to contribute
 I will gladly accept what you can afford.
 Your contribution will be used
 to help the House of Hospitality for Catholic unemployed.
 Hoping to see you at the meeting,
 I am.

Your co-worker in Christ's Kingdom,
 Peter Maurin. (73)

Dorothy Day explains (74) that the propagandist issued that statement and rented the Lyceum ballroom in a burst of optimism, but when only twenty people responded -- and they were all "political minded" -- he was disappointed. For the next few Sundays he rented a smaller room, but the small attendance forced him to give up this project. (75)

The school conducted every night the first winter at the original headquarters of the Catholic Worker movement (436 East 15 Street) was more successful. When they moved to Charles Street near the North River weekly forums were held, with Harry McNeil, a Fordham teacher, as chairman. Campaign Propaganda Committee meetings were also held, but Peter Maurin was not very interested in them because he disliked^d pressure groups. (76)

Not all of his public performances were "one-man shows." For a time Peter Maurin made use of the forensic talents of an anarchist friend whom he had met at the Municipal Lodging House. (77) As a team, they conducted "set" dialogues, Maurin taking his usual stand and Steve Hergenhan (the other gentleman) providing the opposition -- one night as a Bolshevik, the next as a Fascist, another as a Liberal, etc. Dorothy Day tells the story:

When he came to us, Peter begged him to consent to be used as a foil. Steve was to present the position of the Fascist, the totalitarian, and Peter was to refute him. They discoursed at our nightly meetings, in Union Square and Columbus Circle, and in Harlem, where we had been given the use of another store for the winter. They were invited to speak by Father Scully at a Holy Name meeting, and a gathering of the Knights of Columbus. How they loved these audiences in the simplicity of their hearts. Steve the German, Peter the Frenchman, both with strong accents, with oratory, with facial gesture, with striking pose, put on a show, and when they evoked laughter, they laughed too, delighted at amusing their audience, hoping to arouse them. "I am trying to make the encyclicals click," Peter used to say joyfully, radiant always before an audience. They never felt that they were being laughed at. They thought they were being laughed with. Or perhaps they pretended not to see. They were men of poverty, of hard work, of Europe and America; they were men of vision; and they were men, too, with the simplicity of children. (78)

These Platonic Dialogues, though short-lived, illustrate further Peter Maurin's desire to instruct and propagandize in an effective and entertaining manner.

More typical, however, were the lectures and discussions held regularly and frequently at the Catholic Worker headquarters on Mott Street. Holding discussions for the clarification of thought was simply fulfilling one of the primary functions of the House of Hospitality. Peter Maurin was one of dozens of lecturers who spoke before Catholic Worker audiences. Under this roof not only was charity dispensed in the manner of Frederick Ozanam, but also social doctrine in the tradition of Saint Paul. The works of mercy and ethical indoctrination went hand in hand, the ultimate aim being to revolutionize the social order, to change society and make it more human, more Christian.

Besides the regularly scheduled meetings at the House, extempore discussions were liable to mushroom at any time. Dorothy Day give us an insight into one such informal session.

We have meetings every Thursday night in the two big offices, but Friday night there was an impromptu meeting which lasted until twelve. Everyone seemed to drop in at once, visitors from half a dozen other cities, members of other groups, and our own crowd. We started at the dinner table, continued through the dish-washing, adjourned to the office and everyone had his say. We discussed the relationship between the corporative, the co-operative, the distributist and the communitarian movements. Some talked of the need of a positive program, others said that anyone who claimed to have a solution to world problems was a liar. Some talked of the educational approach and others the spiritual. Peter talked of the need of injecting the spiritual into the material.

The discussion was heated, as it usually is, everybody speaking with vehemence and bobbing up and down from the floor. One of the visitors, not acquainted with Peter, said he thought we were giving too much attention to the material. He criticized the disorder of our surroundings, our lack of efficiency, and advocated the liturgical life, which to him meant recitation of Prime and Vespers and Compline and a dialogue Mass every morning (the attendance of all at these hours being obligatory).

When he said that Peter paid too much attention to the economic side of things, I jumped to my feet and protested that "you can't preach the gospel to men with empty stomachs" (Abbe Lugan) and that if they had been down to the Municipal Lodging House and seen 12,000 men being fed at South Ferry, they would decide that it was necessary to put some emphasis on the material. Which convinced our critics that I was an externalist, I am sure. (79)

In addition to the indoctrinating lectures Maurin gave at the Mott Street headquarters, and the Lyceum series of discussions, and the "impromptu" orations in the open air forums -- all of which embodied the same ideas fundamentally as are found in the Easy Essays, and largely in the same style -- Maurin prepared what may be called "formal" lectures. These formal lectures were simply selected Easy Essays carefully prepared and memorized, and preferably given as a series. University groups, Catholic Action organizations, women's clubs, etc., often invited the co-founder of the Catholic Worker to address them; and ordinarily he would pick for his topic one or more of his Easy

Essays appropriate to the group and the occasion. Actually these groups witnessed the same performance and heard the same radical ideas as the audiences in Mott Street, or in the Lyceum, or in Columbus Circle -- they heard selected Easy Essays; and their reactions were just as varied, the most favourable response usually coming from young college men. In these lectures as in all of his talks, the matter was deeply intellectual, and the manner was attractively emotional. A sample announcement of these "formal" lectures is to be found in the May 1937 issue of The Catholic Worker.

SIX LECTURES
by
Peter Maurin
on the
GREEN REVOLUTION

1. How Did We Get That Way,
According to Arthur Penty.
 2. Protestantism and Capitalism.
According to Max Weber.
 3. From High Ethics to No Ethics.
According to R. H. Tawney.
 4. The Social Worth of Christianity.
According to Nicholas Berdyaev.
 5. Can We Go Back?
According to Arthur Penty.
 6. Marx or Christ.
According to Peter Maurin
-

The foregoing titles represent lectures that have been prepared by Peter Maurin of "The Catholic Worker" staff. Mr. Maurin's services are available for either the whole series or any part. Interested groups should write directly to Mr. Maurin at "The Catholic Worker," 115 Mott St., N.Y.C. (80)

The propaganda activities we have been reviewing up to now have

been mostly of a public nature, but private indoctrination, too, was an important part of Maurin's program. He liked to catch people "alone, serious, and ready to think." (81) Even his most casual remarks were significant, but as his interest lay in objective truth, not in subjective whims, he never descended to idle chatter. He found many opportunities and ways to convey his syntheses to others. For instance, Dorothy Day tells of the way Maurin hounded her in the early months of 1933, before the first issue of the paper appeared:

I was doing some research then on peace, for a women's club, and was in the library until three every afternoon. And every day when I got home I found Peter waiting to "indoctrinate" me. He stayed until ten when I insisted he had to go home. He followed Tessa and me around the house indoctrinating. If we were getting supper, washing dishes, ironing clothes, or washing them, he continued his conversations. If company came in he started over again from the beginning. (82)

Dorothy Day and her sister-in-law were not his only "students" that winter. When Dorothy Day's daughter became ill with the measles,

...Peter followed the doctor around, commenting on the news of the day, hopefully looking for a stray apostle. He approached the plumber, the landlord when he came to collect the rent, the grocery clerk. When he had to stay away because so small a house had to be kept in peace and quiet during sickness, he spent his time at the Rand School, making a digest of Kropotkin's Fields, Factories and Workshops for me. (83)

Maurin's energetic devotion to his mission is further illustrated in another of Dorothy Day's anecdotes:

Peter always overestimated people's capacity for learning. His indoctrination might begin at three o'clock in the afternoon, but by nine one was ready to listen to a concert.

We begged him. "Peter, a symphony! Just an hour. Do sit quietly."

He did his best, but sooner or later, his face started working, his eyes lit up, his nose twitched, his finger began to mark out

points in the air before him. Usually he'd take out a notebook and start jotting down points.

Finally, when he could bear it no longer, he looked at me wistfully, and then, seeing my adamant expression, turned to Tessa. I remember that night especially because he went over and knelt down by her chair and began whispering to her, unable to restrain himself longer.

Peter liked singing folk songs, but was decidedly not interested in symphonies or operas.

That evening he had come to tell me about seeing Father Orchard. "He wants you to come and see him," he stated.

"You can arrange it. Go see two or three people at once. Yesterday I saw three people, Carlton Hayes, Father Orchard and Jean Kennedy. I was giving them my latest outline of history. Carlton Hayes being a historian, I wanted to read it to him, and then I read it to his wife, and after that I took it over to Father Orchard and read it to him, and I went to see Jean Kennedy. She is a convert and so she is interested in getting a Catholic point of view...." (84)

His indoctrination comprised more than talk:

He brought also not only conversation but the books he thought people should be using; also, when they would not read the books, a digest of them, a series of phrased writings, containing the essence of the books. We have his notebooks now with all of Eric Gill's works synopsisized and phrased. But it was Kropotkin that he began my education with -- Kropotkin, Fr. McNabb and some of the Papal encyclicals.

Even this was too much for many of his chosen students, so then he started what he called his synthesis, Cult, Culture and Cultivation. From the nearest stationers' shop he purchased his pad of paper, and then in pencil he neatly headed three sheets. The first Cult, the second Culture and the third, Cultivation. Then on each of these sheets he would phrase some thoughts from authors to fit under these headings. For instance, the first page would contain some quotations from Bede Jarrett on faith, the second from Eric Gill on art and work and the third from Kropotkin...

If he found the listeners, he would read them these three pages and invite discussion. Or he would leave the pages for his pupils to read.

When Larry Heaney, one of our early workers, was living on our Easton Farming Commune, Peter used to send him three pages a day from New York to tack on the bulletin board for all on the farm to read and ponder. Peter would have liked a formal discussion to be going on in connection with his synthesis, for though he hated what he termed organization, he dearly wished people would organize themselves to study together. (85)

Another time Peter Maurin read a letter President McCracken of Vassar had written to Dorothy Day, and this was his immediate reaction:

"Now here they are talking about this luncheon of the National Conference of Christians and Jews given for one hundred and eighteen American writers. Of this number only a few attended, I see. Archibald McLeish, Leonard Bacon, Henry Seidel Canby, Edna Ferber, Doran Hurley, Matthew Josephson, Oliver LaFarge, Emmett Lavery, Kenneth Leslie, Percy McKaye, Albert Maltz, John P. Marquand, Martha Ostenso, Muriel Rukeyser, George N. Shuster, Stephenson Smith, Lyman Beecher Stowe, Carl Van Doren, Margaret Widdemar, Thornton Wilder. And you. Now you get all the rest of the names and we will send material to them on personalism. Send them The Catholic Worker first until they get used to that. (86)

The variety of people exposed to Peter Maurin's personal indoctrination had been suggested by Dorothy Day. Soon after The Catholic Worker was founded the poor of the neighbourhood descended upon the editorial office.

Some of them came to live with us. There was the Armenian anarchist who wrote poetry. There was the French teacher from Montreal. There was the German carpenter who loved discussion as much as Peter did. We had to rent an additional apartment for men and one for women within the year. It was in 1936 that one of our readers offered us the use of 115 Mott Street...

Families in the neighborhood who were being evicted came to get our help in moving, and we borrowed horse and wagon and push cart and with the help of the neighborhood helped people move. We saw at first hand the actual destitution there was behind the closed doors all around us. Why did people have to live so? Peter's excerpts on the land movement gained more weight with us every day, though what impress we were going to make on a city of seven million, we did not know.

At the same time that he brought these notes on the land, a chapter a day synopsis, he brought a series of quotations from Father Bede Jarrett, trying to meet the objections of our Godless friends.

1. In his *Summa Theologica*
 Saint Thomas Aquinas allows only two
 possible objections to the existence of God,
 and one of these is the existence of evil.
2. How can we, he suggests, suppose God to be omnipotent

if we find things in this world that spoil His plan;
and if God is not omnipotent,
how can He be God at all?

3. The answer of Saint Thomas can be very briefly given for it is nothing else than a quotation from Saint Augustine.
4. If evil and sin, says Saint Augustine, spoil the plan of God,
He would clearly not be omnipotent, would not be God,
but if He is so powerful
that He can make even sin
fit into the working out of His design
then the whole objection fails.
Out of evil He brings forth good.

This quotation Peter had hopefully presented to the poor who had lost their faith.

"Why bring that up," is probably what they thought, but their courtesy getting the better of them they listened with attentive respect and cordiality as one must always listen to a benefactor.

"But perhaps this will make it clearer," Peter went on to explain, reading aloud from his vantage point in the middle of the floor.

1. To see what it means
we must first of all remember the old truth
that the mysteries of God are above reason.
2. Therefore it is as well to begin
by insisting that there is no answer,
and the religion that would suppose
that it had at last discovered the way through
would stand itself condemned.
3. But granting all this,
there is still much that a Catholic can see
to help him to bear patiently
the evils of this present life.

He went on reading to us, but realizing that we were perhaps more intent on the eviction which was impending, he pressed the pages of quotations upon us to read at our leisure.

It was inconceivable to Peter that anyone should be uninterested. That is part of the secret of his charm and of his success. He had a gentle insistence, and enthusiastic generosity, an assumption that one was intellectually capable of grasping the most profound truths and was honestly ready to change one's life to conform thereby. I have seen him buttonhole an acquaintance on a street corner, engage a casual friend in conversation, start propounding to casual acquaintances in coffee shops; and being no respecter of persons, though, of course, with a recognition of hierarchy and spheres of influence, he was quite as happy talking to workers on the Bowery as to Bishops.... (87)

That Peter Maurin was "no respecter of persons" is evident from the written accounts Dorothy Day has provided. Among his friends, she tells us, were "John Moody, Thomas Woodlock, Michael Shaughnessy, Myles Connelly, Richard Reid, George Shuster and other eminent Catholics." (88) Also among his friends were gentlemen like Messrs. Dolan and Egan, two lean wayfarers - "Typical of the comic strip tramps that come to the back doors of houses for a meal" - whom he had met in Union Square. (89)

Through the years he conversed with thousands -- priests, scholars, editors, union organizers, labourers, farmers, hobos. (Among the most interesting accounts -- were it possible to obtain it -- would probably be that of the late Father J. J. Tompkins, a pioneer of the Antigonish movement; for it is said that he and Peter Maurin conversed on one occasion for 72 hours with practically no interruptions.)

While it is true that a great many of his hearers rejected him, some of them accepted him. It is impossible to estimate the ferment he is believed to have started, but "By now, Catholic Worker alumni and alumnae are numerous, and their ideas have acted as a leaven on the American Catholic community." (90) His personal contacts and his writings have influenced the thinking of hundreds of priests and lay leaders of Catholic Action, at least a score of university professors, several editors and journalists, at least two labour leaders and two artists, and even Hollywood was touched by him in the person of a writer who once wrote a drama column for The Catholic Worker. (91) In addition, many others who never met Peter Maurin himself are in active sympathy with his ideas, having come in contact with them

through the newspaper or his books, or through his many articulate disciples. Catholic Worker activities carried his most articulate followers

...from one end of the United States to the other, speaking at meetings of unemployed, strikers, sharecroppers, rural workers, union meetings, colleges, seminaries, church groups of all denominations. Groups have been formed in about twenty-seven cities and many of these groups have started propaganda headquarters where the Works of Mercy can be carried on. (92)

Of these thousands of people, it is probably safe to say, very few agree in toto with what Peter Maurin advocated. In any event, he certainly has stirred up discussion of his themes among the intellectuals, among whom are found some of his most ardent and articulate partisans. Several of them are, of course, quoted in the body of this essay.

This inestimable ferment is ample testimony that his personal conversations, coupled with his more public propaganda and his writings, were instrumental in achieving, in some instances and to some extent at least, the desired results.

Now, we may ask, when was the most advantageous time for such provocative conversations? The most effective time for conversational indoctrination, he maintained, is at meal time; the place, the dining table. (93) He did a great deal of his indoctrinating during and after the evening meal.

Maurin's supper-table conversation was often ardent and fiery, always thought-provoking. "A piece of your mind and a piece of my mind and a piece of the other fellow's mind and we'll all have peace of mind," Maurin believed. (94) He was a good listener as well as an earnest talker. One kitchen-helper confessed that tears came to her eyes

whenever she listened to MAURIN talk. (75) Several written accounts of his table talks -- to lengthy to be quoted here -- are available for our perusal; perhaps the best lengthy sample is found in House of Hospitality, where we may read several consecutive pages of interesting monologue. (96) This brief commentary on Maurin's effectiveness as an informal talker, coming from a person deeply affected by his ideas, represents one reaction:

About ten of us had supper together. This was where Peter was at his best, in a small group. I was electrified by the flash of intellect that did not seem separate at all from the man in the way it does separate in the classroom. I had so many questions to ask. and not one of them did he fail to understand though as you can imagine they were so out of the distorted fibre of my being they were all but incoherent. I remember especially we talked on work. Let the worker be a scholar and the scholar a worker, said Peter. Dancing and singing and playing all day long belong to the cherubim. (97)

The policy of reaching people's minds at mealtime suggested to Maurin another propaganda device. (98) He thought of recording his Easy Essays and having the records played over an amplifier for the benefit of the hungry standees outside the Mott Street soup kitchen. Usually hundreds of men were patiently waiting their turn in the bread-line three times a day, and Maurin saw in that situation another opportunity to indoctrinate them. Less extreme minds prevailed, however, and this rather far-fetched scheme was never effected. Far-fetched or not though, it certainly indicates, again, Maurin's constant occupation with means of propagandizing. Then, there was his plan, which Dorothy Day frankly admits she did not understand, to popularize the scholars:

He wanted to pick out one hundred European exiles whom he called traditionalists, interview them, get digests of their message, which, in turn, he would bring to the columnists to popularize, so they, in turn, could bring them to the men of action (the men of action being politicians).

Peter said, "The men of action don't think, and the men who think don't act." So, he would begin with Tillisch, the symbolist, Westbrook Pegler, the columnist, and James Farley, the politician. (This was a plan of 1939.) What they have in common, what effect Tillisch's thought might have on Farley's action, was hard to say. But when Farley was approached with Tillisch's ideas on symbolism, he was doubtless going to be surprised and perhaps moved to action; such as politely throwing Peter's emissaries out of his office. And Peter entrusted these ventures to emissaries. In this case, to Arthur Sheehan, Carl Bauer and Marjorie Crowe. Once having conceived the idea, got the ball rolling, so to speak, he could meditate on a new idea; launch a new project. This one never got further than Dr. Tillisch, who is at present teaching at Union Theological Seminary.

Then there is his idea of the troubadors of Christ, five of them preferably, who would go about the country, from city to city, begging their way, chanting the praises of God and the rebuilding of the social order. In order to cover this vast country, Peter was quite content to use a machine, a car and a trailer....Of course, there was the expense, though not for us, of supporting five troubadors on the road. We could not use the money sent in for the House of Hospitality or the bread line for such a project. Peter admitted that, but neither did I believe that our friends and readers would supply five healthy appetites with food and the car and trailer with gas. It seemed too much to expect. Besides we did not have a car or trailer. So the idea of the five troubadors never was worked out. (99)

Though many of his plans were never realized in practice, he went on as usual, apparently unperturbed by such setbacks, always propagandizing and indoctrinating in such ways as appeared suitable for the various circumstances under which he laboured.

Peter Maurin's usual itinerary in New York City further illustrates that preoccupation. His schedule followed, more or less, this pattern: He arose about 11 a.m., and attended noon-day Mass at St. Andrew's Church. Mass was an essential element in his personal program.

Discussion would continue late into the night but the next morning there was always Mass and Holy Communion. They were the true sources of the green revolution which Peter wished to spread. (100)

After Mass he ordinarily took a hearty meal (vegetable soup or stew) at an Automat or a skid row restaurant, not infrequently finding somebody there to indoctrinate. (101) Afternoons he often spent at the headquarters, entertaining guests and visitors who descended upon the office by the dozen nearly every day. These visitors had questions to ask; and Peter Maurin was ever ready to answer, in his own manner. This prompted what came to be almost a regular ritual:

When Margaret beats on a pan lid at 6 p.m. that means supper and the redoubled beating means that Peter Maurin is downstairs holding up the eating by a discussion. He is probably in the middle of making a point. (102)

When he was not detained at the House he went off for the remainder of the day to stir up thought and discussion wherever he could, returning at unpredictable hours of the night or morning, for several hours rest. (103)

There was no stopping Peter; he went on night and day. He slept until noonday Mass and was filled with energy for the nights when the workers were free. He could talk with vigor until two or three in the morning. (104)

3. On the Road

So far, we have attempted to depict Peter Maurin in some of his most characteristic work "at home", in New York. Now let us turn our attention to several revealing glimpses of the propagandist "on the road".

Arthur Sheehan, who was a frequent travelling companion and "tour manager" for Maurin, recalls:

I remember one trip when John Magee, founder of the Upton Catholic Worker farm, and I went with Peter in John's car, without any money, from Worcester to Athol, Mass., on to Rutland and Burlington, Vt. and back again to Worcester. There were four days of continual speech-making, each day eighteen hours long. Peter never seemed to tire from early morning when he arose for Mass until the last visitor had departed. I believe he spoke to nearly every person in Rutland on that trip. (105)

Distance meant little to Maurin; the whole continent was his back yard. Frequently he went on those extended trips without sending even a card to the New York headquarters. Once he travelled over 23,000 miles, in six months, speaking almost constantly; and during that period he sent only one message, a postal card, to his worried friends at Mott Street. Other friends in distant places, who knew of Maurin's independence and of his associates' concern, sometimes wrote to The Catholic Worker telling of the propagandist's whereabouts and activities. Here is one such revealing letter:

The Union Register
830 - 16th Avenue
Seattle, Wash.

Dear Editor:

Peter was with us here in Seattle from last Saturday until Tuesday evening -- or more correctly -- Wednesday morning, when we saw him off to Portland, Oregon, on the 12:15 a.m. stage. Marty Paul of the Chicago Catholic Worker was with him. Thought you might be interested to know Peter's whereabouts because, as we read in the paper, he is a hard man to keep track of. However, we found this out ourselves, first-hand. Saturday morning we got Peter lodged with the Jesuits. Saturday evening we went out there to see him, but no Peter. Where had he gone? Nobody knew. So we went downtown to the hotel where he had stayed the night before. No Peter. Sunday evening, about 9:00 p.m. Peter appeared at the Jesuit house. Where had he been? Oh, down on the Skid-row on his mission to the bums.

Sincerely yours,
 Thomas L. Scanlon, Jr.
 (106)

Maurin travelled by bus mostly, for that is the least expensive means of public transportation, and he depended on the generosity of friends to pay his fare. While travelling on these cross-country buses he often spoke in a very loud voice to the person sitting beside him. This he did deliberately, of course, for he was "making points" and wanted as many as possible to hear him. He never wasted time; his mind was always working. Martin Paul, who once journeyed with him from Chicago to Spokane, records:

Often as I sat in the bus looking out at the scenery, I would glance at Peter alongside of me and see his fingers moving in a manner of one speaking. He was making "points" as he used to express it. "Get the point." "Point," he would say swallowing "get the" in his anxiety not to have one miss the opportunity. His mind was ever active thinking up new ideas or hashing over old arguments to present. (107)

Besides enabling him to "indoctrinate" sympathetic listeners from coast to coast, this extensive travelling enabled him to learn first-hand what people were thinking and doing in various parts of the country. He made use of this information, acting as a kind of personal

liaison for Catholic activities between East and West. We find illustrated in the Easy Essays the following remarks made by Martin Paul in which he describes techniques Peter Maurin applied at a West coast Catholic Rural Life Conference convention:

We looked up a priest who was waging a losing battle against the Associated Farmers and their factories in the fields, the Editors of Catholic papers, social thinkers and writers. They would tell him what they were doing and Peter in turn would encourage them by relating what others were doing for the Green Revolution. "John Thornton, a convert from Anglicanism, is starting a farming commune in Wyoming," "Martin Paul, Lutheran convert, is running a House of Hospitality in Minneapolis." With these examples he would make them feel more acutely their presence in the Mystical Body and a sense of unity with others who were also striving for a more Christian social order. (108)

Maurin attended the annual meetings of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference almost every year; he visited as many of the Houses of Hospitality across the country as he possibly could; he sought out prestigious persons -- magazine editors, professors, labour leaders, clergymen, bishops -- in various cities and exchanged ideas with them; he lectured at seminaries and at universities (for example, Notre Dame in Indiana; Assumption in Ontario; Yale in Connecticut; Bennington in Vermont; St. John's in Maryland) and at Catholic Action gatherings wherever he was asked; and he fanned every spark he discovered along the way.

One of Peter Maurin's dreams involved the setting up of Houses of Hospitality in the vicinity of the secular universities. In this way, he hoped, Catholic thought might infiltrate into the "factories". He himself tried to shell the secularist citadel at

Harvard University, not without some success. Briefly, this is the story. Maurin had prepared six lectures on Liberalism, and Arthur Sheehan was to make arrangements for that series of lectures in the vicinity of Harvard. Despite the apparent hopelessness of such an effort, a twofold reason prompted this particular project: (1) Harvard was then taken up with the Liberalism of the Manchester economists and Maurin wished to expose their folly; and (2) Etienne Gilson, an eminent Catholic philosopher, had just concluded a series of lectures on "Medieval Universalism", and Maurin's strategy was to follow up this original spearhead. But no auditorium was available near the University. Undismayed, Maurin decided to lecture anyway, to the students of the "outdoor" university.

Peter gave his lectures on Boston Common and there was something tremendously appropriate about this, for the Common, to Peter, symbolized a society where some lands were held in common, where the poor could grow their gardens, hunt and fish and so keep themselves out of the poorhouse. (109)

A few Harvard students heard these open-air lectures and were favourably impressed; later that same year Arthur Sheehan was invited to Harvard to explain Maurin's program, and still later Dorothy Day "spoke at Harvard in a meeting that was positively electric with excitement." (110) Though it was his cohorts, and not Maurin, who actually invaded the precincts of Harvard, it was the propagandist's long-range shelling that made such an invasion possible at that time.

The effectiveness of Maurin's forensic talents (on one occasion at least) is related in this eye-witness account of one of his Boston Common lectures:

... on one day, a Sunday, the crowd stayed for over five hours listening to him analyse the need for a new approach to the problem of education. His essays were interspersed with stories and the crowd was loathe to let him depart. The rest of our group were dead tired and hungry and the meal at the house of hospitality was calling to our stomachs in a very painful way. As Peter came down from the platform, he was buttonholed time and again before he reached Tremont Street. (111)

Maurin spoke on many other occasions in Boston. One interesting experience, for instance, is related in this fragment of dialogue between Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day:

"How did you make out at the Socialist meeting at Boston?"

"All right," said Peter. "The other speaker tried to bring a philosophy of private property from the Pope's encyclicals. I gave him the philosophy, the essence of it. Of course, they would only give me 20 or 25 minutes, so I had to keep it short."

"Do you remember which essays you gave?"

"I only took a few. Of course, I had to select here and there to give the essence. I started with the idea of Folk Schools. Then Logical and Practical, Real Man, Better and Better Off, Big Shots and Little Shots, Two of a Kind, Tug of War. I told them I am the son of a peasant who could neither read nor write and so I am pre-capitalistic. Yes, I am pre-capitalistic and I don't like Socialism, which is the child of capitalism. That is father and son. I don't like the father and I don't like the son."

"How many were there at the meeting?"

"Not many. They didn't advertise it."

"That's good. We don't like advertising."

"That's all right. I told them about the fallacy of saving and the wisdom of giving -- He Left So Much, The First Christians, Self-Organization, On the Farming Commune, Firing the Boss. Then The Land of Refuge, Free Guest House, Rural Centers in Ireland, The Irish Scholars, and I told them they don't have to keep up with the Irish politicians. They can keep up with the Irish scholars, and go in for Irish Communism."

"That's a good, positive program for Boston." (112)

Excerpts from a friendly letter written to The Catholic Worker also reveal something of the effectiveness of Peter Maurin's public oratory. That letter reads (in part) as follows:

Dedham, Mass.,
19 June - 1935
5 School Street.

Dear Editors:

Well, Peter "Came, He Saw and He Conquered." I had the great pleasure of spending three afternoons and evenings in his company. Truly we consider him to be one of the great outstanding characters that we have ever met. After securing the necessary permission from the hostess, I lost no time in piloting Pierre to historic Boston Common, - part of which appears to be the meeting place for Radicals. I succeeded in placing him right in their midst, and, of course, - on account of being accustomed to handling our radical friends - it was no time before he was the star performer, - the center of attraction. And did he make the most of his opportunity! I stood on the outside rim of the circle, - on a park bench - in order to get the reaction from the expression of their eyes and faces. Peter literally "ran with the foxes and chased with the hounds", utterly routing them and leaving them in bewilderment and confusion. Especially so, when he made the statement that the better parts of Communism were Christian in origin, and the bad parts were Bolshevism. He might just as well have thrown a "monkey wrench into the machinery", - that is, - judging by the effect created, if one judged the meaning as expressed on their faces. It appeared that they were at a loss to know his back-ground, - the confusion was so great. They were most polite and courteous to him. In fact, when leaving, two of them expressed their admiration and one offered his hand. I have heard it stated that Pierre is considered to be the most outstanding character yet to visit historic Boston Common. At a meeting of a local club which was held on Monday evening, - composed of both radicals, socialists of various hues, et. al., Peter talked to them for the better part of two solid hours without interruption. He held their attention to a man; all eyes seemed to be riveted on him. In fact, one semi-radical, with a Lutheran religious background, who sat right next to him, appeared to literally devour him with his eyes; every time Peter's head would move, either to the left or to the right, this radical's head would move in unison. After the meeting, I questioned the man in order to get his reaction confirmed, and he told me that he considered Pierre to be the most remarkable character that he had ever met. They were all anxious to hear what P. had to offer, and wanted to hear more, but as the hour was getting late, and a heavy rain falling, - we felt obliged to postpone the meeting until later. This same radical came to the general meeting which was held on Tuesday nite... I trust it will not be long before we are favored with another visit from Pierre. He has certainly left all

with something to think about....

Your fellow worker in Christ,

C. Walter Leavitt. (113)

Peter Maurin was more than a mere propagandist; he was an informal educator. He did not simply spread the ideas he had discovered; he wanted his audience to discover the value of these ideas for themselves. He showed them the founts, but they had to do the drinking. He planted the seeds, but they had to do the cultivating. In other words, he stimulated thought, aroused interest, and recommended reading; but never did he permit or encourage blind acceptance. He did not wish to lead his audience so much as he wanted them to lead themselves; he did not wish to teach so much as he wanted his pupils to learn. He himself wished to clarify thought, it is true; but it is equally true that in the highest pedagogical tradition he wanted others to clarify thought too; and he tried to show them how, by leading them to some sources of significant thought, and by simplifying and synthesizing the key ideas of scores of great minds. To him education was an active, not a passive, process.

Deep in every man, said Peter, there is a mission. He tried always to discover that mission or foster it in some way. That was why he was continually handing out books to people. Not just books at random but specific ones for specific persons and specific missions. Because he had read nearly everything, he was never at a loss to help integrate this present life with the ideal, implicit in Christianity. (114)

Instructing the ignorant and counselling the doubtful meant, finally, showing the ignorant and the doubtful how to help themselves.

Even the most inexperienced reader realizes that the Easy Essays are compendious fragments and digests that rather whet one's appetite than satiate it. The intellectual gourmet will want the full course. That was Maurin's intention, his fond wish: he wanted, ultimately, his hearers and readers to become scholars. A contemporary account explains:

Here and everywhere is Peter Maurin, the guide, the teacher, the agitator. He has no office and shares his room with Joe and Gerry. He has a book case but no desk. He carries on his indoctrinating wherever he happens to be, in the office, on the street corner, in the public square or on the lecture platform. These past eight months he has been travelling constantly throughout the far west and the south, and when the winter comes he will set out again, "stirring up the people". People are not the same, after meeting Peter. They read his book, Easy Essays, which is made up of many of his writings for The Catholic Worker, -- or they hear him speak and he stirs them to think, to read and to act. He never stirs them to unthinking action. The new social order with him is based on the knowledge and practice of the teachings of the Church and the study of the Gospels, history, and tradition. (115)

Toward this worthy end he often appended to the essays as they appeared in The Catholic Worker short lists of recommended readings; and among his personal friends he was "always making lists of books for people to read..." (116) One of his friends tells us that,

In Peter's terse and precise manner of giving one everything in as few words and as little time as possible he would often use the expression, "If you want to know how things got that way, read 'Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism' by Amintore Fanfani. If you want to know how they are, read 'Land of the Free' by Herbert Agar. If you want to know how they should be, read 'Social Principles of the Gospels' by Alphonse Lugan." (117)

He could speak about books and authors with great familiarity and quote, paraphrase or synopsise aptly to suit almost any need or to

propose general solutions for almost any problem. All books he read carefully, underscoring (in those he possessed himself) the key ideas and numbering in the margins the ideas contained on each page: these numbers indicated the "points" the author had made, and the best of those points Maurin might see fit to weave into the pattern of his own synthesis. He frequently copied out in his careful script whole pages, even complete chapters, of works he regarded as superb; some of Eric Gill's books (several volumes in manuscripts) he rendered in his phrased style, in toto.

We may note in this connection that one of Maurin's most beneficial possessions, after his assiduity and physical stamina, was a very remarkable memory. Besides memorizing all of his own compositions, he memorized hundreds of favourite passages from his wide reading. So retentive was his memory, it is said, that he could (and did) resume unfinished private discussions or arguments at the exact place he had left off even after a lapse of several months. (118)

Up to now we have reviewed Peter Maurin's propaganda activities as a public speaker and as a discussion leader in New York City and in other localities across America. A summary evaluation of his techniques is now in order, an evaluation of his powers of persuasion.

It is apparent that his approach, psychologically, had both merits and defects. A fair summary should account for both. We have already dealt with Maurin's shabby appearance and thick accent on the one hand, and easily-memorable, witty-phrasing and attractive dramatic presentation on the other -- the more obvious attributes. Now, in

retrospect, we shall consider the less obvious attributes of his oratorical method.

While it is true that the "agitator" was not an "aggravator", no doubt Maurin unintentionally antagonized some of his opponents -- an obstacle to success that the tactful orator tries to avoid. But his antagonism was due more to the content of his philosophy than to his presentation. Certainly he did not compromise on his principles. Some thoughts furthermore, may be best presented bluntly: that was his "shock" technique, which proved effective on many -- though certainly not on all -- occasions. (119) To air one's views was a cardinal purpose of the round-table discussions he advocated; hence, Maurin did not flee from possible arguments. On the contrary, he resolutely stated his case as forcefully as he could. Such an approach, of course, was bound to annoy some people. At the same time, he was most respectful of the considered opinions of others, and was never deliberately offensive in his presentation of his controversial views.

If he seldom admitted he was wrong, if he seldom made concessions, if he never compromised -- as some more "practical", more "diplomatic" men are often wont to do -- perhaps it was because he believed, firmly and fully, that he was right. Such is the usual manner of prophets. Yet this attitude -- "I told them so." "I warned them." "They wouldn't listen to me." -- smacks of pride and therefore sometimes detracted from his effectiveness. (120) The truth is that he was not subjectively proud, in the sense of being vain; but he was

dogmatic, that is, he believed in certain objective dogmas and insisted that they were true. This uncompromising absolutism and confidence, in an era of relativism and uncertainty, though it won him many admirers, it also cost him many potential followers.

Public argumentation, it is true, seldom convinces individual opponents of a contrary point of view; in fact, it often has the undesirable effect of making them implacably defensive. Peter Maurin's utter objectivity in presenting his views, and his sincere and exemplary practice of his principles, obviated to some extent this danger that traps so many controversialists. In public debates the platform antagonists rarely give ground, but the audience usually take sides and may be won over completely by the persuasive powers of either debater. Knowing that, Peter Maurin was not ordinarily trying to win over from the public platform just one individual; he was trying to arouse the interest of many. Particular individuals he then indoctrinated more personally in private conversation, through individualized reading programs, and at round-table discussions. But Peter Maurin was certainly aware of the power of public oratory as a means to create the original spark, and by constant repetition of his views he gradually won over some people.

He repeated his ideas not only from the public platform but also in his newspaper, in conversation, and in round-table discussions. The spoken word, however, without the underlying idea would be useless noise. Though to many Peter Maurin's underlying ideas were repulsive, to some others these same ideas were deeply appealing for a variety of

reasons. The way of life he was advocating was certainly nobler than that actually pursued by most of the people in his audience; the challenge inherent in his message, the call for heroism, was another strong appeal; the unrelenting logic of his convictions was, for some, overwhelming; and the sincere dramatic presentation of these views was still another asset, calling attention to the loftiness of his ideals. Furthermore,

Peter made you feel a sense of his mission as soon as you met him. He did not begin by tearing down, or by painting so intense a picture of misery and injustice that you burned to change the world. Instead, he aroused in you a sense of your own capacities for work, for accomplishment. He made you feel that you and all men had great and generous hearts with which to love God. If you once recognized this fact in yourself you would expect to find it in others. "The art of human contacts," Peter called it happily. But it was seeing Christ in others, loving the Christ you saw in others. Greater than this, it was having faith in the Christ in others without being able to see Him. Blessed is he that believes without seeing. (121)

However, that which was viewed as a noble challenge, and therefore accepted, by a few was looked upon as an impractical dream, and therefore rejected, by many. The rhetorical logic that so strongly appealed to a few, hardly stirred the wills of many. The few looked on and listened and were enlightened; the many looked on and listened and were merely entertained. Still others looked on and listened and were neither enlightened nor entertained, so they walked away.

Habitually Maurin praised persons or movements that seemed to be good, and thus he won many sympathizers. Habitually he encouraged persons or groups in their efforts to realize their apostolates, and thus he earned their gratitude. Habitually he was friendly, humble, gentle, willing to listen and to learn from others who were thereby

honoured by his friendship and his deference. When he was uncertain in any matter, he said so. In answer to worthwhile questions he habitually referred questioners to known authorities or suggested reading special books. Though his ideas never knew the shade of the proverbial bushel, he himself did not ordinarily obtrude. Nor did he ever talk about his neighbour in any derogatory way. (122)

His friendly, winning smile was not deceptive, for he was notably understanding and sympathetic in his personal dealings with people. His charity, his love for God and for his fellow men as creatures made in the image and likeness of God, prompted all the heroism of his life. Not a go-getter, not a self-seeker, not a social-climber, he was heroically unselfish. Such persons are so extraordinary they are bound to attract some attention, and even to win over a few followers whose hearts have not already become too hardened. Those who have benefitted from the help Peter Maurin offered are not likely to forget him, especially if the aid he offered satisfied their intellectual or spiritual hunger.

This propagandist dealt with problems plaguing society in general, problems that therefore in some degree touched practically every individual. In this sense his appeal was at the same time universal and personal. But it was personal in another sense as well: he strongly advocated, in an era of centralized institutionalism, the willing acceptance of personal responsibility. Probing a problem is one thing; getting others to accept the proposed solution is another. The difficulty is squared when the solution calls for great personal

sacrifices. Peter Maurin's solutions call for that. Hence there were those who "found his saying a hard saying" and walked out.

Underlying our evaluation of Peter Maurin's persuasiveness should be this basic understanding: He did not expect the fulfillment of his plans in his own time. He was furrowing, that others might reap the harvest. He was trying to arouse interest, to evoke questions, to encourage rational action. The results here and now are not as important to the prophet as to the more utilitarian type of orator. The immediate results, though, that Maurin sought -- Houses of Hospitality, farming communes, and various instruments for the clarification of thought -- he to some extent actually saw realized. The long-range results, however, are finally more important, and therefore later generations will have to determine the extent of his practical failure or success. This generation simply records that he made a persistent effort, an effort that in some ways has been rewarded with apparent failure.

That effort was embodied in a refreshing, simple, attractive, animated presentation of some traditional Christian views, and the correlation of those views with contemporary secular problems. Like an early Christian, Peter Maurin spoke of the familiar in an unfamiliar way; and, too, he spoke of the unfamiliar in a familiar way.

Now, to suggest for even a moment that Peter Maurin's oratorical techniques would please without reservations an exacting teacher of public speaking, would be a gross misrepresentation. Very few public speakers have ever achieved that ideal; many are, nevertheless,

notably effective. In Maurin's case it may be said that his defects appeared as heavy shadows, while his good qualities were as brilliant lights.

He had, at the outset, three motives generally regarded as necessary for effective oratory: 1. the motive of justice -- he truly believed in the rightness of his cause; 2. the motive of destination -- he had a definite aim, to transform society and make it more Christian; and 3. the motive of beauty -- he tried to please while he instructed. His technique followed from his intention.

But all the attributes of eloquence and perfect reasoning combined are not sufficient to hold the prolonged attention of an audience unless the subject matter itself is controversial or inspiring enough to arouse enthusiasm. Peter Maurin's oratory, whatever else it lacked, did not lack elements of controversy and inspiration. His themes were timely, dynamic, urgent, provocative, radical, revolutionary.

We know, too, that the truth is further embellished when the person advancing his doctrines does so at a great personal sacrifice. This was eminently true in the case of our particular propagandist.

He himself always followed the program of the works of mercy. He did this so consistently over so many years that we used to think he spent himself too profligately, that he cast his pearls before swine, to use the brutal words of the Bible. (123)

Personal conviction and personal sacrifice punctuated every sentence Peter Maurin uttered. Those who saw the fire of conviction, witnessed his spirit of sacrifice, and felt his love for his ideas did not recoil

from the shabby clothes, did not despair over the thick accent, did not miss the philosophy wrapped up in the fun. For them, Peter Maurin's unswerving faith in God and respect for his fellow men made the truth dynamic.

The propagandist's devotion to God is poignantly illustrated in a verbal snapshot in which Dorothy Day tells of making a visit to a church in New York City. She entered the church and

There was Peter, the only other one besides myself in the church at that moment, and he did not see me come in, but sat there, before the Blessed Sacrament, motionless, quiet, absorbed, gazing altarward. Every now and then I saw his forefinger rise, count off a few points, and then stillness again. (124)

There is no denying that Peter Maurin's personal goodness and social apostolicity attracted and affected many followers.

4. Co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

Peter Maurin's most outstanding achievement as a propagandist was his agitation for and promotion of what is now known as the Catholic Worker movement. This movement, which has established his fame, would not have come into being except for his propaganda activities. On the other hand, one cannot correctly speak of the Catholic Worker movement exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of Peter Maurin: for the simple reason that the central figure in this movement over the years has unquestionably been -- not the propagandist but his most articulate disciple -- Dorothy Day.

In her own right Dorothy Day has been a very influential writer and speaker, and an outstanding leader in the Catholic Worker movement. Were it not for her zeal and talent, the Catholic Worker movement would probably have collapsed long ago; in fact (as Chapter I indicates), without her co-operation the movement Peter Maurin envisaged might never have had a tangible existence.

The co-operative efforts and complementary talents of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day have been summarized by one writer in the following manner:

One of Maurin's dreams was the setting up of Houses of Hospitality in cities all over the country, in which the needy could be fed, clothed, and lodged without regard to race or creed. Today, the Catholic Workers maintain such a house at 223 Chrystie Street, and keep a benevolent eye on the operation of fourteen similar houses in twelve other cities. Maurin also advocated a back-to-the-land movement, and while if he were alive he would doubtless feel that the organization still has a long way to go in this respect, the Workers do have eight farms in various parts of the country...

where indigent wayfarers are given shelter and city dwellers who are down on their luck are sent for rehabilitation. Neither of these objectives, rural or urban, would ever have materialized had it not been for Miss Day's gifts as an organizer and her ability to get on with people; it is she who, through the years, has recruited the staffs of young Catholic volunteers who run the houses and farms, living in common poverty with the people they help, and it is she who has raised the funds that keep the Workers going. (125)

But she was not alone in this work: others, Peter Maurin prominent among them, also contributed their talents to the Catholic Worker movement. Outstandingly, "Maurin's idealism and Miss Day's intensity and drive" inspired the Catholic Workers to become "agitators among the people." (126)

In brief: one of Peter Maurin's slogans -- "Man proposes, woman disposes" (127) -- is certainly applicable to the Catholic Worker movement. "The fact is that the Catholic Worker, paper and movement, was born from the union of Peter's vision with Dorothy's generosity." (128) Even though Peter Maurin is designated by the official organ of the movement as its "founder", it appears more correct to speak of him and Dorothy Day as co-founders. Peter Maurin was the father of the Catholic Worker movement; Dorothy Day was the mother.

But, great as it has been, Dorothy Day's contribution to that movement is not our primary concern in this particular essay; her influence upon that movement -- and indeed upon American Catholicism generally -- deserves special treatment that cannot be adequately accorded it here.

We are not now attempting to analyze the Catholic Worker

movement, with its many controversial facets; that is, obviously, a study in itself. However, we would be remiss if we did not indicate Peter Maurin's part in that movement -- even if in so doing we run the risk of exaggerating his importance or of leaving the unintended impression that his role was necessarily more important than the roles played by others, particularly Dorothy Day.

The concept and program of what is now the Catholic Worker movement was originally Peter Maurin's. He gave the idea to Dorothy Day (among others), and she (more than the others) carried it out. He outlined the four-point program, and she filled in the outline. He enunciated the principles, and she did most of the practical work. Judging from the evidence already presented in the present essay, his contribution to the movement did not end there.

The propagandist was not in his own right entirely ineffective nor insignificant, but the Catholic Worker, paper and movement, multiplied his audience and increased his prestige. Through the Catholic Worker he won wide recognition, and established his reputation. It is true, then, that the Catholic Worker, paper and movement, helped to "make" Peter Maurin; but it is also true that he made important, indeed essential, contributions to both. His Easy Essays have always been a popular feature in the paper; and his presence in the movement strengthened it.

We have already indicated by means of exposition and illustration that Peter Maurin was an idea-man, a propagandist, an agitator

and indoctrinator. It was in this capacity that he made his mark on the lives of the Catholic Worker personnel. The movement attracted many young people, particularly college students and graduates. (129)

In this connection Dorothy Day writes that she recalls the words of Paul Claudel, "youth demands the heroic," and then continues:

...Peter was always quoting that line to us. And it is appropriate to insert it here, for we believe that Peter inspired more of the Catholic youth than any other lay leader. Peter was the man who always held before them a vision. He always saw all that was good in people. He was almost naive in his enthusiasm for youth and zeal, and his encouragement sent many young men off on a career of writing and study, inspiring them to become propagandists and agitators for the Christian cause, as he himself was. (130)

Within the Catholic Worker movement Peter Maurin kept up a steady campaign for the clarification of thought. Others, through the paper and the regular discussions, were active propagandists, too; but Maurin's efforts, particularly, were such as to prompt Dorothy Day to write that

...when people come into contact with Peter Maurin, they change, they awaken, they begin to see, things become as new, they look at life in the light of the Gospels. They admit the truth he possesses and lives by, and though they themselves fail to go the whole way, their faces are turned at least toward the light. And Peter was patient. Looking at things as he did in the light of history, taking the long view, he was content to play his part, to live by his principles and to wait. (131)

As people of like mind and temperament came into contact with Dorothy Day, Peter Maurin, and others of the pioneer group -- whether that contact was through personal acquaintance with one or more of them; through actual sharing in the work of the House of Hospitality; through reading The Catholic Worker itself or reading about the

movement in other publications-- they formed other Houses of Hospitality or started communal farms or held round-table discussions on important issues. As the movement spread, and encouraging it to spread, Peter Maurin went from unit to unit, from person to person, agitating and propagandizing. Hence, Dorothy Day was able to write several years ago:

He has been a great leader, and his writings still inspire. And now significantly enough, many young people all over the country are trying to put into effect his ideas, both in publishing, in running centers of training, in establishing themselves on the land, and here these discussions are being continued. If you cannot find enough people around Mott Street to talk to about these ideas, and books that Peter has recommended, one can go to John Straub or Walter Marx in Washington, or the Center for Christ the King at Herman, Pennsylvania, or to Loveland, Ohio, where there are a number of families, as well as the great school of the apostolate for women, THE GRAIL. Or there is a center at Brookfield, Conn., where there are four families on the land. Everywhere, the discussions, started by Peter, are going on. The candle he has lit has been lighting many another candle and the light is becoming brighter. (132)

Peter Maurin's "leadership" was the free-rein -- the personalist -- type, not the autocratic type; and his propaganda efforts were certainly more along ideological than organizational lines; both of which conditions obviate pin-pointing his achievements in more than a few instances.

Because the original idea was his, because he indoctrinated others with that idea, and because he encouraged in his own way those who tried to live that idea, Peter Maurin must be credited here with having had an important hand in the formation of the Catholic Worker movement. Consequently, the attendant influence of that movement

redounds in some undefinable measure upon him, too. To be sure, his function has been overshadowed by Dorothy Day's, but his influence was effectively present nevertheless. It still is.

He not only had a direct influence on the Catholic Worker movement itself but he also had, as a result, at least an indirect influence on some other groups. Again, this influence because it is largely intangible defies precise definition. Yet several writers in various publications declare that it exists. (133) And several groups and many individuals admit varying degrees of indebtedness to Peter Maurin. (134)

Among those who have to date written about Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker movement there is no shortage of sweeping claims in his behalf. Dorothy Day not only calls Peter Maurin "the prime mover in the distributist movement" (135) in America, but she also says he "has changed the life of thousands of people." (136) Another journalist declares, in his opening sentence, that "Peter Maurin is one of the most important men in modern America." (137) And a magazine editorial states: "If history goes in the right direction, it is more than likely that Peter Maurin will be revered as the father of the lay apostolate in America." (138)

Even if such claims strike us as extravagant, they at least serve this useful purpose: they suggest that there must be some basis in fact for making them. As objective charity requires that we credit the writers with subjective honesty, we believe that these statements

(though offered by writers who may in most instances be called "partisans") are not deliberate falsifications or distortions. The present study reveals that at least they are not without foundation. At worst they are exaggerations springing from an understandable enthusiasm on the part of the writers.

Nevertheless, in view of what we have seen in this study about the poor man and his simple methods; in view of his obvious limitations and defects as a propagandist; in view of the fact that he was not an original thinker nor a great writer; it seems to many almost incredible that he should have merited even the enthusiasm that has prompted such high praise or that he should have even approximated the prominence attributed to him.

If a fully satisfactory explanation for this phenomenon (and others) is to be found, searchers will have to look beyond the realm of mere technique; for, obviously, this study of the propagandist's technique gives only a part of the reason for Peter Maurin's success, and only part of the reason for his failure.

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74. Day, correspondence with the present author.
75. See: Day, "I Remember Peter Maurin," p. 37.
76. Day, correspondence with the present author.
77. Day, House of Hospitality, pp. 48-49.
See also: Day, The Long Loneliness, pp. 193-200.
78. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 194.

79. Day, House of Hospitality, pp. 129-130.
80. Peter Maurin, "Six Lectures," The Catholic Worker, Vol. III, No. 1, May 1937, p. 1, Col. 3.
81. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 201.
82. Day, House of Hospitality, p. xxvii.
83. Ibid., p. xxviii.
84. Day, unpublished manuscript, pp. 29-30.
85. Ibid., p. 26.
86. Ibid., p. 66.
87. Ibid., pp. 22-26.
88. Ibid., p. 22
89. Ibid.
90. Dwight Macdonald, "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- I," The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 33, October 4, 1952, p. 37.
91. Interviews with Dorothy Day, Edward Willock, Arthur Sheehan, and Thomas Sullivan.
92. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 114.
93. Interview with Arthur Sheehan.
94. Arthur Sheehan, "Peter Maurin and the Community Idea," The Candle.
95. Day, House of Hospitality, p. 45.
96. Ibid., pp. 71-75.
97. McMenamy, op. cit., pp. 17-18.
98. Interview with Dorothy Day.
99. Day, unpublished manuscript, pp. 26-28.
100. Sheehan, "Conversations with Peter," The Candle.

101. Dorothy Day, "Background for Peter Maurin," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XI, No. 8, October 1944, pp. 3 and 6; and Vol. XII, No. 1, February 1945, pp. 3 and 7.
102. Day, House of Hospitality, p. 222.
103. See: Day, "I Remember Peter Maurin," p. 36.
104. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 28.
105. Sheehan, "A Man Called Peter," The Candle.
106. The Catholic Worker, Vol. VII, No. 3, November 1939, p. 5. Col. 5.
107. Paul, op. cit., p. 14.
108. Ibid.
109. Arthur Sheehan, "Peter Maurin and Alger Hiss," The Candle.
110. Ibid.
111. Sheehan, "Conversations with Peter," The Candle.
112. Day, "Background for Peter Maurin," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XII, No. 1, February 1945, p. 3, Cols. 3-4.
113. C. Walter Leavitt, correspondence with the editor of The Catholic Worker.
114. Sheehan, "Peter Maurin and Personalism," The Candle.
115. Day, House of Hospitality, p. 269.
116. Ibid., p. 239.

See also: Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 201.
117. Paul, op. cit., p. 15.
118. Interview with Arthur Sheehan.

Day, "I Remember Peter Maurin," p. 34.
119. See: Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 267.
120. Interview with Dorothy Day.

121. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 171.
122. See: Ibid., p. 169.
123. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 24.
124. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 174.
125. Dwight Macdonald, "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- II," The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 34, October 11, 1952, pp. 42. and 44.
126. Ibid., p. 37.
127. Day, The Long Loneliness, p. 175.
128. Julian Pleasants, "Personal Responsibility," The American Apostolate, edited by Leo Richard Ward, C.S.C., The Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1952, p. 83.
129. Day, The Long Loneliness, pp. 183 and 202.
130. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 315.
131. Ibid., p. 358.
132. Dorothy Day, "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of Our Fifteenth Year," The Catholic Worker, Vol. XIV, No. 3, May 1947, p. 2, Col. 5.
133. Pleasants, op. cit.
 MacDonald, op. cit.
 "The Catholic Worker," The Commonweal, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, May 1, 1953, p. 89.
 Ed Willock, "Catholic Radicalism," The Commonweal, Vol. LVIII, No. 26, October 2, 1953, pp. 630-633.
134. Day, On Pilgrimage, pp. 77-78.
Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, publisher's preface.
135. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 14.
136. Day, House of Hospitality, p. v.

137. C. J. MacNeill, "The Strange Work of Peter Maurin," The Irish Monthly, Vol. LXX, No. 832, October 1942, p. 399.
138. "Editorial," Integrity, Vol. III, No. 9, June 1949, p. 2.

Chapter III

THE EASY ESSAYS

Peter Maurin's writings were given the title "Easy Essays" by John Day, a brother of Dorothy Day. (1) Always an attractive and popular feature of The Catholic Worker, some of these Easy Essays have been reprinted in various publication in America, England, Australia, India, and Hungary; and some have been translated into such diverse tongues as French, Lithuanian, and Chinese. Two collected editions have been published in America, and a commentary on the Catholic Worker movement (with the Easy Essays as its basis) has been published by the Dominican order in Belgium.

In the present chapter we examine ten principal elements that make the literary style of the Easy Essays distinctive. Before entering upon this detailed study, however, a number of preliminary remarks are necessary. At the outset we shall clear away certain bibliographical difficulties, and then provide a brief general introduction to the detailed analysis that comprises the bulk of this chapter.

In our study of Peter Maurin's literary technique we have the choice of referring to the Easy Essays as they appear in the various issues of The Catholic Worker, or of referring to the same essays as they appear in the posthumous collection entitled Catholic Radicalism. For convenience we choose the latter; but that choice is made with complete confidence that the authenticity of the original essays has been preserved. Extant samples of the original manuscripts indicate

that the format and phraseology have not been altered, except for occasional minor, indeed trifling, discrepancies which we shall discuss presently. The chronological order of their original publication has been followed, "with a few minor exceptions," in the collected essays. The order of original publication, however, does not necessarily give us the actual or even approximate dates that these essays were composed. Many were certainly composed and delivered orally (and some mimeographed as well) several years before the newspaper was even founded. For our purposes, though, the dates of actual composition or of original publication are of little or no consequence, for Peter Maurin's literary technique -- except for the few changes we shall note from time to time in the body of this chapter -- retained the same characteristics from the first published essays to the last; once the essays were consigned to publication in the monthly journal there is no significant stylistic progression.

Were such research necessary, dates could be assigned to many of these essays, on the basis of either internal evidence (when an essay deals with local or current events) or external evidence (when an editor's note states explicitly the date of oral delivery, or other evidence by authoritative witnesses suggests possible dates of composition). Such a laboured investigation and exposition of the dates of composition, however, seems superfluous for our particular study.

The arbitrary division of the collected essays as they appear in Catholic Radicalism into six "books" may be helpful for general

readers who may wish to have the main themes spot-lighted. The first essay in each book deals significantly with a different particular phase of Peter Maurin's message -- sociology, labour conditions, agrarianism, pacifism, racism, economics -- though the other essays in each book are not necessarily on the same theme, except indirectly. A seventh book in Catholic Radicalism is comprised of several interviews with Maurin. Such an arrangement on the part of the editor is permissible, and it in no way affects the present study of the author's style.

The editor tells us of another liberty that he has validly taken:

It has been necessary to omit from this collection some essays published in the Catholic Worker which were composed of several paragraphs taken from other essays and grouped under a new title. One such essay which may be cited as an example will be found in the issue of July-August, 1941, Vol. VIII, No. 9, on page 1, under the title "Let's Be Charitable for Christ's Sake." There are five paragraphs in this essay, each of which may be found in one of several other essays. Such repetition serves a good purpose in journalistic publication, but it would be unjustifiable in a book. There are a number of similar examples in the files of the paper, none of which will be found in this volume.

Some paragraphs appear repeatedly in the published essays, either unchanged or with slight variations. Repetition of some of them is desirable, and in such instances they have been retained. In other instances the repeated paragraphs have been omitted, the omission being indicated by a figure and four asterisks (** 1 **). Reference to the list on page 206 will show where the omitted paragraph may be found elsewhere in the book. This method of indicating omitted paragraphs was adopted for the convenience of those students of Peter's writings who have need of a more nearly complete text than is required by a general reader. The omitted paragraphs should be included whenever essays are copied from this book for reprinting. (2)

We may note at least these two minor discrepancies between the

essays as they appear in The Catholic Worker and as they appear in Catholic Radicalism. First: slight, finally unimportant, variations in typography occasionally occur in the two publications. For instance, two issues (July-August 1933, and September 1933) of the newspaper depart from the usual phrased format. Maurin's essays in those two issues appearing in a regular sentence (rather than phrase) form; the same essays appearing in the book (3), however, follow the usual pattern of Maurin's essays. This indicates that the newspaper version, due to an oversight on the part of the editor or the typographer, is not correct.

Second: we observe, especially in the first year's issues of The Catholic Worker (and again in some recent issues containing reprints), that the "points" made in each essay were -- ordinarily but not always -- successively numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., at the beginning of each sentence. In his manuscripts the author often, but not always, followed the same procedure. (4) Yet, the editor of the collected essays preferred to omit these numbers, inasmuch as they had already been omitted in practically all the later issues of the paper. It is true that, in speaking, Maurin sometimes like to enumerate his "points"; but apparently he did not insist upon this device in writing, otherwise he probably would have seen to it that it was followed consistently in the newspaper. Likewise, if these numbers in the left-hand margin were truly essential, the editors, who were intimately acquainted with Maurin's technique, would hardly have omitted them.

Now, the next question that may occur to us is this: Does Catholic Radicalism contain all of Peter Maurin's writings? Dorothy Day's reply is very definite:

We wish to emphasize here that though he synopsisized hundreds of books for all of us who were his students, and that meant thousands of pages of phrased paragraphs, these essays were his only original writings, and even during his prime we used them in the paper just as he did in speaking, over and over again. (5)

In answer to the same question, the editor, David Mason, adds his own authoritative and clarifying comment:

A mistaken belief that Peter Maurin wrote many essays which were never published has been expressed in recent years. To correct this impression, it is necessary to state emphatically that everything written by Peter which he considered worthy of publication appeared in the Catholic Worker in his lifetime. It is true that he filled many notebooks with condensations and even complete books of other writers, which he copied in his beautiful manuscript style in the distinctive form of his own essays, but these were in no sense Peter's compositions; he did not even paraphrase such writing, but reproduced them in the exact words of their authors. Some of these condensations and excerpts were printed in the Catholic Worker, but they do not belong in a volume of his collected essays. The only essays composed by Peter which remain unpublished are those which he did not reduce to writing, and they were for the most part variations of those which have been published, variations attributable to particular circumstances attending their oral delivery. (6)

The above statement was provoked by one of Maurin's associates who stated that "only a few of the thousands of essays he wrote have been published," and added, "At one time he handed me eight volumes he had written out in longhand on the thought of Eric Gill." (7)

Maurin did indeed "arrange" in the phrased format excerpts, and even complete volumes, from the works of Longfellow, Goldsmith, Don Sturzo, Cardinal Innitzer, Gill, et al. But such copying is not to be considered original work. Only about 120 published Easy Essays

(those appearing in Catholic Radicalism) bear the stamp of Peter Maurin's peculiar genius.

Notwithstanding the insistent assertions of Miss Day and Mr. Mason, it must be admitted that Maurin may⁴ have written and distributed in his pre-Catholic Worker days some essays that are not included in the official publications of the movement he helped to found. But members of the Catholic Worker staff, despite a prolonged search, have not been able to locate any of these alleged "unpublished essays". Four recently discovered essays, it is true, are found in the December 1953 issue of The Catholic Worker; but these appear to be variations of essays printed earlier in Catholic Radicalism. It is safe to assume that Catholic Radicalism contains most, if not all, of the essays Peter Maurin wished to have published, even though he may have written many other essays -- or variations of those he had published -- which do not appear in print.

Those typographical and bibliographical difficulties disposed of, we may safely pursue our study of Peter Maurin's literary technique, using Catholic Radicalism as our handbook.

How Maurin may have acquired his particular manner of expression is not known for certain, but his purpose in employing that particular style may be explained by reference to two passages in Catholic Radicalism. He himself tells us:

Father Bede Jarrett says:
 "The truths of a generation
 become the platitudes
 of the next generation."

Henrik Ibsen says:
 "Thought must be rewritten
 every twenty years."
 That is to say
 eternal principles
 must at all times
 be presented
 in the vernacular
 of the man on the street.
 Emerson says
 that the way
 to acquire the vernacular
 of the man of the street
 is to go to the street
 and listen
 to the man of the street.
 The way to become dynamic
 and cease to be academic
 is to rub shoulders
 with the man on the street. (8)

And again:

Sound principles
 are not new,
 they're very old;
 they are as old
 as eternity.
 The thing to do
 is to restate
 the never new
 and never old principles
 in the vernacular
 of the man of the street.
 Then the man of the street will do
 what the intellectual
 has failed to do;
 that is to say,
 "do something about it." (9)

Henrik Ibsen's dictum that "thought must be rewritten every
 twenty years" was often on Peter Maurin's lips. (10) Presently we
 shall see how the propagandist tried to achieve his aim of restating
 old principles in the new vernacular, and why the following words he

addressed to Father Daniel Lord, S. J., may be appropriately applied to the author himself:

...you have the knack
of getting at the core of things
and of presenting your findings
in a vivid and dynamic form. (11)

Peter Maurin wished to have an audience ranging from illiterate tramps to editors and publishers become aware (or more aware) of selected social teachings and traditions of Christianity. But his interest spread in directions other than that of mere sterile scholarship; for, as he said himself, "The sin of the intellectuals is to let the good ideas stay in their heads." (12) In his optimism he hoped that the heart would be moved by what the mind discovered, that sound ethical principles would be carried over into practice, that society would eventually be transformed, restored to Christ, and that "the Catholic Church might again become the dominant social dynamic force." (13) Such was Peter Maurin's ultimate intention.

Now that we have hurdled some of the most formidable obstacles to an understanding of Peter Maurin's style of writing, and have briefly stated the immediate and ultimate aims that motivated his particular literary technique, we are almost ready for a detailed analysis of that technique. The following pages should reveal how cleverly and consistently and consciously the author pursued the aims of his writing considered above.

Furthermore, the following pages should reveal that Peter Maurin was a writer, not just in the narrow sense of one who per-

sonally and deliberately transferred thoughts from his mind to paper, but also in the deeper, truer sense of one who made something distinctive -- though not "great" -- in the literary order: The Easy Essay. The Easy Essay has been partially defined by one writer as consisting of

...a theme with variations; it is a sort of verbal fugue, consisting of repetition and counterpoint, in short, stylized lines. The effect is soothing, hypnotic, and droll, like that of a child talking to himself; it is often unexpected, too, for, like a child, Maurin took words and phrases literally and investigated them painstakingly, turning them around in different lights until fresh meanings flashed out.... (14)

As we have already noted, Maurin disclaimed any credit for the thoughts in his writings, declaring that he "didn't get them," they "got" him. Still, he was "original" in this sense: he did not merely agglomerate the ideas he accepted from others, but he sifted, assimilated, arranged, co-ordinated, simplified and synthesized them for his own particular purposes. He selected what he considered to be needed to improve the conditions of his time, and adopted and adapted what he considered the best means and best ideas for satisfying those needs, always drawing upon his own personal knowledge and wide experience, and always infusing into the finished product his own peculiar spirit.

His literary purpose is strictly utilitarian, and his style is stripped of the ornamentation usually associated with literary productions, yet, not only did he achieve an original juxtaposition of the ideas of others, but also he rendered those thoughts in distinct phrasing -- that is, vernacular phrasing readily comprehensible

to the man in the street. Even if he did not employ such conventional figures of speech as similes, metaphors, personifications, hyperboles, and other stylistic features used so successfully by most of the famous orators and prose writers, he nevertheless selected and deftly employed his own devices to accomplish his own ends.

Now, before we consider in detail those devices there is one other point to be considered, a point that must be firmly grasped lest we leave ourselves exposed to a probable misunderstanding of the Easy Essays. This point has already been partially suggested by David Mason's statement (previously quoted) that the Easy Essays were frequently altered to suit circumstances attending their oral delivery.

The point, then, is this: The Easy Essays are probably as complete as the propagandist wished to make them, and yet they are admittedly incomplete. What they lack is that complementary "give and take" of discussion which the author so loved and which his essays are designed to evoke. In other words, those who read the Easy Essays are expected to think about them and to discuss them; and to read and discuss the vast body of literature that should fill in the deep valleys skipped over by the propagandist in his leaping from peak to peak. Many times in the body of this chapter we shall have to remind ourselves of this point, for failure to accept it virtually means failure to understand the Easy Essays.

Though he himself knew some of his shortcomings as a writer and welcomed criticism of his technique, though he himself knew that

the battle for the minds of men was not so simple, so "cut and dry" as some of his essays may lead unwary readers to believe, Maurin the propagandist simply had to write and he had to publish his essays in order to make people think, then talk, then think again, and finally (it was hoped) act in accordance with sound reasoning.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the study of those devices that Peter Maurin combined in his essays with some facility and distinction, viz., phrased format, simplicity, popular diction, conciseness, repetition, definitions, orderliness, authorities and witnesses, recommended reading, and humour.

Each of the following sections of this chapter will attempt to provide a satisfactory explanation of the device under consideration, how and why Peter Maurin used it, and some of its advantages and disadvantages as a propaganda instrument.

1. Phrased Format

The first and most obvious characteristic of Peter Maurin's literary technique is the phrased format he always employed. That is, the typographical arrangement of his essays followed a simple and more or less consistent pattern calling for the presentation of one important word, phrase, or idea to each line of type. By "phrase", therefore, is not necessarily meant that grammatical part of speech consisting of an introductory word -- a preposition, a participle, a gerund, or an infinitive -- plus an object and whatever modifiers may be present; rather, for our purposes, by "phrase" is meant an idea that may, grammatically, be part of a sentence (word, phrase, clause, or any other fragment) or a whole sentence composed of a few to several words. The author uses his own judgment to determine what constitutes an idea of sufficient importance to merit a special line of type. A sample from his writings illustrates and clarifies this definition:

Writing about the Catholic Church,
a radical writer says:
"Rome will have to do more
than to play a waiting game;
she will have to use
some of the dynamite
inherent in her message."
To blow the dynamite
of a message
is the only way
to make the message dynamic.
If the Catholic Church
is not today
the dominant social dynamic force,
it is because Catholic scholars
have failed to blow the dynamite
of the Church.

Catholic scholars
 have taken the dynamite
 of the Church,
 have wrapped it up
 in nice phraseology,
 placed it in an hermetic container
 and sat on the lid.
 It is about time
 to blow the lid off
 so the Catholic Church
 may again become
 the dominant social dynamic force. (15)

We observe that there are few grammatical rules governing the phrasing, though there is a logical standard: one idea, ordinarily, to each line. Every sentence begins on a new line; but after that the lines may be introduced by any part of speech -- noun, verb, preposition, conjunction, etc. -- as long as the phrase contains an idea, great or small, extraordinary or commonplace. That idea may be a single word, two words or more (but seldom exceeding six or seven words), a whole sentence or a mere fragment of a sentence. Among the earlier published essays are several containing longer "phrases" than are ordinarily found in the essays of later publication. In most instances, common sense seems to dictate just what constitutes a "phrase", the requirements of emphasis determining what words and how many words appear on distinct lines. The author's own tendency to study fragments as well as complete statements, and his own arbitrary decisions as to what constitutes an important idea, are other factors. The author had to use his own judgment not only in the selection and in the wording of his thoughts but also in the framing of those thoughts on paper.

Peter Maurin always employed this linear arrangement. Even his meticulous verbatim copying of excerpts (or whole works) from the writings of Don Sturzo, Cardinal Innitzer, Eric Gill, et al., followed the same basic pattern. "All his writing," says Dorothy Day, "even his letters to me, were in phrased sentences, broken up to look like free verse. (16) Two such letters appear among the collected essays (17) and two others are included in Appendix IV of the present study.

The first rule of criticism is to judge a work of art for what it is intended to be. Understandably, the format, not the content of his essays, has led some to think of Maurin as a poet in the sense of versifier. A quick glance at the typographical arrangement does suggest the work of a versifier. Furthermore, the Easy Essays do contain a kind of free rhythm like some verse, a natural "swing" that suggests a type of free verse. Indeed, Peter Maurin "liked to consider himself a troubadour of Christ, singing solutions to the world's ills." (18) But the natural rhythm and the occasional rhyme do not appear to have been as predetermined or binding as in the products of the conventional versifier. There is no evidence of a consistent metrical plan or rhyme scheme, though both are occasionally found. Here are a few typical examples of his rhyme:

To foster a society
 based on creed
 instead of greed,
 on systematic unselfishness
 instead of systematic selfishness,
 on gentle personalism
 instead of rugged individualism,
 is to create a new society

within the shell of the old
with the philosophy of the new... (19)

To bring religion
into the profane
is the best way
to take profanity
out of the profane.
To take profanity
out of the profane
is to bring sanity
into the profane.... (20)

...the age of reason
of the eighteenth century
was followed
by the age of treason
of the nineteenth century. (21)

Such passages as the above indicate that he could create rhymes, but Maurin was not really dedicated to the art of prosody. In this sense, at least, he was not a poet. Though he loosely employed a few elements characteristic of conventional verse, he certainly never regarded himself as a poet. The trappings alone do not make poetry; yet it is the trappings, not carefully studied but quickly viewed, that lead some readers to think of him as a poet.

True, the natural rhythm of his lines facilitated the oral chanting of the essays, yet he was not known to measure and scan in the painstaking manner of the labouring versifier; and the modest number of rhymes would hardly be sufficient, considered alone or in conjunction with the other utilitarian devices he employed, to warrant calling him a poet. Actually, he was striving only to effect an eye-catching, ear-appealing, mind-awakening form of writing that would satisfactorily synopsise his philosophy in a manner easy for him to

deliver and easy for his hearers and readers to comprehend.

If, in short, Peter Maurin's thoughts had been rendered in the conventional manner of the prose writer, it is doubtful that the title of poet would ever suggest itself in regard to him. It is largely, if not exclusively, because he renders his prose and the prose of others in this phrased format that, at first sight, his writings appear to resemble versified poetry.

One virtue of the phrased format is that it attracts attention. Another is that it renders piecemeal many sentences and paragraphs that otherwise appear too heavy, too cumbersome, to be easily understood by all. But along with these virtues is this concomitant defect: some readers believe that such a technique makes for discontinuity, that it is too "choppy".

Though some readers regard this as a form of intellectual "spoon-feeding", it was the propagandist's intention to simplify difficult or complex passages for the benefit of the man in the street. By virtue of the phrased format method of writing each "point" stands a fair chance of receiving its own mental chewing. Consider, for instance, how much easier the following passage seems in the phrased format, as compared with the original text:

Cardinal Newman says:
 "If the intellect
 is a good thing,
 then its cultivation
 is an excellent thing.
 It must be cultivated
 not only as a good thing
 but as a useful thing.

It must not be useful
 in any low,
 mechanical,
 material sense.
 It must be useful
 in the spreading
 of goodness.
 It must be used
 by the owner
 for the good
 of himself
 and for the good
 of the world. (22)

The reverse process, too, is quite revealing. Even Peter Maurin's writings -- simple as the diction is -- often appear more difficult (sometimes, indeed, awkward) when presented in the conventional sentence and paragraph form. For instance, the sample quoted earlier in this section might be written as follows:

Writing about the Catholic Church, a radical writer says: "Rome will have to do more than to play a waiting game; she will have to use some of the dynamite inherent in her message." To blow the dynamite of a message is the only way to make the message dynamic. If the Catholic Church is not today the dominant social dynamic force, it is because Catholic scholars have failed to blow the dynamite of the Church. Catholic scholars have taken the dynamite of the Church, have wrapped it up in nice phraseology, placed it in an hermetic container and sat on the lid. It is about time to blow the lid off so the Catholic Church may again become the dominant social dynamic force.

Dorothy Day has aptly summarized the practical, and threefold, function of the phrased format:

He used this device to compel attention, to make for more reflective reading but also because some of his writings had a swing, a rhythm like verse. (23)

We have already mentioned (in Chapter I) that a somewhat similar technique was employed by Charles Péguy -- but chiefly for poetic aims -- and that Peter Maurin may have based his technique on

that of his compatriot. While it is not absurd to suggest that the phrased stanzas of the Easy Essays derived their basic structure from Péguy's poetry, other writers have also used a similar "phrased" style of presentation -- the May 1934 edition of The Catholic Worker featuring a very good example. (24) The style is not exactly "new", having been employed not only by many recent journalists and pamphleteers but also by earlier men whose writings were familiar to Peter Maurin -- especially St. Augustine and Proudhon. But Maurin's closest associate tell us:

...his writing was influenced, technically at least, by the works of Charles Péguy, who also wrote in short phrased lines. St. Augustine has used this technique in writing his meditations, finding it a help to break up the sentences into phrases that catch the eye. (25)

We may cite here just a few dozen lines of Péguy's verse to illustrate this contention:

There was only respect for her.
 For her grief. --
 They didn't insult her.
 On the contrary.
 People refrained from looking at her too much.
 All the more to respect her.
 So she too had gone up.
 Gone up with everybody else.
 Up to the very top of the hill.
 Without even being aware of it.
 Her legs had carried her and she did not even know it.
 She too had made the Way of the Cross.
 Were there fourteen stations? --
 She didn't know for sure.
 She couldn't remember.
 Yet she had not missed one.
 She was sure of that.
 But you can always make a mistake.
 In moments like that your head swims....

Everybody was against him.
 Everybody wanted him to die.
 It is strange.
 People who are not usually together.
 The government and the people. --
 That was awful luck.
 When you have someone for you and someone against you,
 sometimes you can get out of it.
 You can scramble out of it.
 But he wouldn't.
 When you have everyone against you.
 But what had he done to everyone?

I'll tell you.
 He had saved the world. (26)

That selection merely suggests the technical aspects of Maurin's Easy Essays. The two writers are alike in that they both employed short sentences, and both used remarkably simple, vernacular diction. In at least one other respect is Maurin's style reminiscent of Péguy's: both writers were keenly aware of the rhythmic power of repetition.

If what, in many cases, has been said about Charles Péguy might almost have readily have been said about Peter Maurin, many passages written by Péguy might, likewise, have been written by Maurin. That Charles Péguy and Peter Maurin were kindred spirits, however, does not prove that the latter derived his ^{literary} technique from the former. All Maurin himself offers on the matter is his statement that "people say I write like him." (27)

Though the influence of his careful reading of Péguy may be as correct an explanation as it is easy to arrive at, exactly how Maurin "hit upon" this structural form is not certain. As Maurin habitually indoctrinated orally in much the same way as he wrote -- that is, in pithy phrases -- he may have arrived at the phrased essay approach

quite independently of any external literary influence at all. But this is mere speculation. The facts are that the propagandist left no explicit information on the matter himself, and no really definitive statement is available from other sources.

Regardless of the many possible sources from which he might conceivably have drawn the idea for the phrased format, Peter Maurin has come to be known as its "inventor" because of his exclusive and distinctive use of that style of presentation, a style employed and implied by others in their own ways and for their own purposes. Though all rights to it have not been reserved to him, the phrased essay has come to be Peter Maurin's trademark.

2. Simplicity

The second characteristic of Peter Maurin's style of writing is simplicity.

His simplicity is shown in at least three ways:

1. He simplified a profound synthesis by emphasizing several fundamental principles upon which he based the Catholic Worker movement. His own personality coloured to some extent the movement he co-founded. "It is a bold and naive simplicity which is its distinguishing mark..." (28)

Maurin's thinking, like his life, was stripped of extraneous luxuries -- nuances, subtleties, complexities. He was a simplifier, a sort of abstract artist of ideas whose specialty was eliminating the superfluous, a man whose speech was yea, yea and nay, nay, and who was so thorough-going an absolutist that Einstein's law of relativity made him uncomfortable. (29)

A simple man? A simple program? A simple literary style? Yes. But also profound, complex, ingenious. The truth about Peter Maurin is that

He was a man of tremendous ambition, in spite of his simplicity, or perhaps because of it. He wanted to make a new synthesis, as St. Thomas had done in the Middle Ages, and he wanted to enlist the aid of a group of people in doing this. He was no more afraid of the non-Catholic approach to problems than St. Thomas was of the Aristotelian. (30)

2. His considerable learning was synopsisized into about 120 short essays in which he presented his ideas in a simplified form suggesting a *skeletal* outline.

He was a great simplifier. The scholastic scaffolding of St. Thomas' Summa came tumbling down as Peter outlined in his blank verse "Easy Essays" the medieval teaching on the importance of

Big Shots and Little Shots.

He simplified everything.... (31)

Maurin's essays suggest the heavy, decisive lines of black-and-white drawings rather than the fulness and precision of detail of Renaissance murals.

3. His diction, too, was basically simple, free from ornamentation, as unpretentious as the man himself. Consider the utter simplicity of diction in this typical passage:

A personalist
is a go-giver.
not a go-getter.
He tries to give
what he has,
and does not
try to get
what the other fellow has.
He tries to be good
by doing good
to the other fellow.
He is altro-centered,
not self-centered.
He has a social doctrine
of the common good.
He spreads the social doctrine
of the common good
through words and deeds.
He speaks through deeds
as well as words,
for he knows that deeds
speak louder than words.
Through words and deeds
he brings into existence
a common unity,
the common unity
of a community. (32)

The simplicity, forcefulness, and economy of his diction suggest that Peter Maurin was not merely a man of words -- yet he certainly was that! -- but also a man of action. Further study would reveal that he

was, in addition, a man of deep intellect, whose eloquence (power to persuade) springs not from a vaunting of his learning, but -- in part, at least -- from the utterly simple techniques we are studying in this chapter. In a word, his eloquence springs from his deep charity.

"Charity and intellect go hand in hand," as one critic remarked about Charles Peguy's writings, "intellect always ready to efface itself before charity which is, after all, nothing but a superior form of understanding." (33)

Having literally given the shirt off his back to the poor, he wished also to share -- to give away -- his greater wealth: ideas. To make these ideas attractive and acceptable, he simplified. Furthermore, in so doing he exemplified Cardinal Newman's dictum "that that humility which is a great Christian virtue has a place in literary composition." (34) Charity and humility, virtues that the propagandist possessed to an unusual degree, infused themselves into the simplicity of his writing. The style is indeed the man himself.

One of his main objectives, as we have seen, was the clarification of thought. But this eventual clarification had to be the result of a long process, the first step in which is the arousing of interest. First, people's interest had to be won; study and discussion would then follow; and finally some intelligent action, based on clarified thought, should normally take place. Though the propagandist was variously engaged in all three steps, his pedagogical methods that concern us at the moment involve primarily the first: winning people's interest. This meant, to a large extent, simplifying

issues and simplifying terminology so as to encourage his frequently-unlettered and intellectually undisciplined audience to grapple with their problems in a rational, responsible manner. "Action," he insisted, "must follow ideas." (35)

Just as, to attract attention, he used the phrased format, so to arouse interest in his radical ideas, Maurin simplified them. In so doing, he did not intend that they should necessarily be left in the same simplified state by his hearers and readers, but rather that they should be studied, developed, discussed, and permitted to influence the will.

Whether or not such an attitude was a conscious carry-over from his early normal training with the Christian Brothers (36), Peter Maurin apparently believed that simplicity of expression need not render the truth less true; but it should make ideas more attractive to the uninitiated. Peter Maurin was in effect attempting to apply in a modified form some common classroom methods to the street-corner apostolate. The street-corner audiences, not to mention many of the university elite, were not unlike pupils in the elementary and secondary grades as far as Maurin's concept of a new society is concerned. So this approach appears admirably suited not only to the propagandist's personality, but also to his purpose.

Though not an esoteric writer, Peter Maurin was style-conscious. He knew from personal experience how to talk to the so-called "low-brows", for they had been his comrades as workers and hoboes and bowery tenants. Therefore he sought after, sometimes

struggled for, the exact word, to transpose his thoughts into the language of the man on the street. One could easily be deceived into thinking that the Easy Essays were quickly dashed off; but the contrary is true; Peter Maurin laboured at his craft, which required great perseverance, careful preparation, much reading and meditation, precise wording, and then some refurbishing.

His deliberation notwithstanding, the element of simplicity in Peter Maurin's propaganda technique had both advantages and disadvantages; it accounts both for much of the attractiveness of the Easy Essays and for some of the difficulties they pose. Maurin's efforts, we know, were not always crowned with the success he desired. Public reaction was varied.

On the credit side of the ledger we find:

1. Maurin's simplicity of expression is in keeping with one of the requisites of eloquence. A minimum of mental effort is needed to grasp at first sight his ideas in their unpretentious skeletal form. Those who study and discuss these ideas, however, come to see that they are indeed less simple than they at first appear. Eventually such students see fit to accept, reject or modify them. In any event, they have to think. If some people go just that far -- to the thinking stage -- Maurin's efforts were not, by his own standards, entirely in vain. We are told:

The very naked simplicity of Peter's schemes provoke thought, as well as astonishment. Certainly conflicts result from his ideas. How many a conflict, for instance, over that little phrase -- "Workers should be scholars, and scholars workers."

There are phrases that still throw the friends of the movement all over the country into a furor of discussion. These phrases are simple ones but packed with dynamite. "Fire the bosses." "Work four hours daily." "Eat what you raise, and raise what you eat." "Love God and do as you please." The last, in case our reader doesn't recognize it, is Saint Augustine's, but the rest are Peter's.

Peter loved to fling out catchy slogans, and then watch the fur fly. On every farming commune, in every House of Hospitality, the conflict went on for years.

"It makes for clarification of thought," said Peter, happily. (37)

2. Peter Maurin was considerate of his audience. For the most part his appeals went out to men of limited learning, sometimes illiterate, seldom well-read. To reach them the propagandist simply had to speak and write simply. But there was another segment of Maurin's audience as well: the intellectuals, the university students, graduates, and professors. They, too, were given the same serious message in the same simple way. Many of the intellectuals reacted favourably; realizing the profundity of the thoughts Maurin expressed, they studied them and some even acted upon them. For some at least the agitator's thoughts did not lose their power just because of their simple expression.

But there is as well a debit side to the ledger.

1. It is true that some thoughts may suffer from plainness of expression, just as others may assume higher qualities. Even some of Peter Maurin's admirers (38) believe that he, in his laudable attempt at simplifying, actually over-simplified. As a consequence, many -- including publishers and professors as well as the poorly educated -- ignored him. It is admitted that

His teaching was simple, so simple, as one can see from these

phrased paragraphs, these Easy Essays, as we have come to call them, that many disregarded them. (39)

Still, one bishop is said to have termed the Easy Essays "clear to the simple and truly learned." (40)

Is there actually a serious flaw in the form of these essays? The validity of this question is recognized by Dorothy Day, for she admits: "The trouble was that he (Peter Maurin) never filled in the chasms, the valleys, in his leaping from crag to crag of noble thought." (41)

Indeed there are many gaps; the propagandist did not fill in the chasms; and this is regarded by many as a serious defect. However, this charge may be diminished if not dismissed by explaining that Peter Maurin did not intend to fill in all the gaps and chasms himself. He wanted this to be done by his readers and hearers if they deemed his basic ideas (the peaks) worthwhile. Once they were attracted to the key ideas he expounded, he "wanted men to think for themselves." (42) This being the case, no doubt intellectual laziness in some instances prompts people to disregard him: given a basic plan, they can neither envision the complete work nor apply themselves to the task of completing it. Understandably, such people set aside the Easy Essays. There are others, however, who feel that the basic plan itself is incomplete, or impractical, or inferior to other plans; they, too, usually after some consideration, set aside the Easy Essays.

2. The second disadvantage to Peter Maurin's simplicity of style is somewhat akin to the first: some well-read people regard

the Easy Essay manner of writing as something bordering on "spoon-feeding". Though this charge may often be the quip of the pseudo-intellectual dilettante, it is not to be cast aside as entirely unjustifiable. No doubt, many sincere students have discarded Maurin's essays with the feeling that they had outgrown such writing as his. This reaction to many of the Easy Essays is surely understandable.

Again, however, some necessary observations tend to lessen the derogatory implications of this "spoon-feeding" assertion. In the first place, the Easy Essays (we repeat) were intended to be more like synoptical outlines than full-length treatises. These outlines were phrased in a manner intended to arouse interest among the least privileged -- educationally speaking -- without offending the most privileged. To some extent, in fact, they have succeeded.

In the second place, who would say that Peter Maurin's recommended reading program, to which his essays were in a sense but an introduction, should be classed as "spoon-feeding"? The works of G. K. Chesterton, Christopher Dawson, Jacques Maritain, Eric Gill, et al., can hardly be called "easy" reading. Books like Fanfani's Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism, Cory's Emancipation of a Free Thinker, and Carrel's Man the Unknown serve as a challenge to even the most enlightened minds. These and similar works influenced the thoughts simplified in the Easy Essays. The Easy Essays, in this sense, may be looked upon as but a table of contents to a vast library.

At this point it may be illuminating to consider the reaction

of one reader:

Years ago, when I first read an essay of Peter's I laughed and tossed it aside and the second time in impatience and the third time in anger. Did the man think he was talking to idiots? Did he actually believe anyone with the sense God gave a chimpanzee would spend their time reading such drivel, much less acting upon it? You would have to use better bait than that to fish for the minds of our time, minds that had slipped through the nets of prose cast by the masters of the art, not once but many times, without effort. And yet, and yet....

He was speaking to fools, to minds weighted down by the dross of our time, the big ideas shouted from radio and forum, from newspaper and magazine, book and newsreel until the brain was dulled, surfeited, corrupted, unable to tell gold from glitter. The total of Peter's writing showed the same poverty that stamped his life; there is scarcely enough to fill a slender volume. Peter left as a legacy no weighty, hernia creating tomes to be carried about by the future students of social action, no ponderous, inflexible terminology, merely a handful of ideas; but ideas of value, capable of buying many hours of reflective thought. (43)

Many, no doubt, agree with those sentiments. Many others, though, are just as strong, and just as sincere, in their disagreement.

A summation of our remarks on the second element in Peter Maurin's literary style, simplicity, is now in order.

Peter Maurin, in his charity and humility, provides his readers with a simple précis of a profound synthesis. Some regard his essays as a mere outline; others see in them a great body of thought in condensed form.

Maurin had hoped to clarify thought for the masses. First, though, he had to arouse interest in his ideas. Toward that end, he deliberately simplified everything. Not only did he himself seek to clarify thought, but also he sought to have others do likewise. In this sense the Easy Essays are merely outlines or introductions to study and discussion.

Though to some extent he doubtless succeeded in clarifying thought for the masses and in winning interest, there are drawbacks to his technique. The principal defect in his work is that he oversimplified, leaving out too much and consequently incurring the disregard of many people.

His simple diction, moreover, which was intended by the author to render his ideas more readily understandable, has proved in many cases to serve as an impediment. Much of his popularity, however, is attributable to this same characteristic of his work.

Whatever his limitations, Peter Maurin escaped the webs of modern "Jungle English" and will always be known for his disarming simplicity in an age grown accustomed to governmental gobbledygook.

3. Popular Diction

Peter Maurin apparently appreciated the teaching psychology of Jesus Christ. In some ways his methods suggest those of his Master. A case in point is the use of popular diction: diction that was not only simple, but idiomatic.

The parables of Christ were expressed in the imagery of the farmers and fishermen of His time. The doctrines of the Faith were stated in terms that the rural people of Galilee could understand.

Peter Maurin used somewhat the same technique. He expressed his principles in terms that the man in the street could understand. His audience consisted not of Galilean country folk but of twentieth-century American city-dwellers from various walks of life. Maurin spoke to these people not in parables but in their own idiom.

Peter used to say that the language of our theology should be re-written every twenty years. Not that the content should be changed, but the meaning should be explained in phrases attuned to the time, meaningful to the man in the street....

He tried to demonstrate in his own Easy Essays how to do that. He used sharp, simple sentences, ones that would draw you up short when he uttered them for he had seen something in our language which enabled him to use it with dramatic effect.... (44)

It is especially understandable that Maurin should have been fascinated by the American idiom. As an immigrant who learned English comparatively late in life, he was attracted to phrases that "caught" him -- the slang and slogans, the puns and profanity of the common man. In his Easy Essays Maurin's literary ideal is clearly indicated and illustrated: to state eternal principles in the vernacular of the man in the street.

Even if he had not stated his literary objective so explicitly, it would be obvious to most readers that Maurin was trying to reach the man in the street. He spoke the language of the common man. Profound as his ideas are, and seriously as they are taken by many scholars, his choice of words was anything but highfalutin.

When he said,

Business men
are not in business
for their health.
They are in business
to make money..., (45)

he was speaking in terms the workingman understood. Likewise, when he wrote the following verse the poor and unemployed hardly misunderstood his words - even if they had difficulty absorbing the whole idea.

There is a rub
between the rich
who like
to get richer
and the poor
who don't like
to get poorer.
The rich,
who like
to get richer,
turn to the Church
to save them
from the poor
who don't like
to get poorer.
But the Church
can only tell the rich
who like
to get richer,
"Woe to you rich,
who like
to get richer,
if you don't help the poor
who don't like
to get poorer." (46)

Then there is (to select but one) this perplexing little essay:

The C. I. O.
and the A. F. of L.
help the worker
fight the boss.
But the worker
must have a boss
before the C. I. O.
and the A. F. of L.
can be of help
to the worker
in fighting a boss.
If it is a good thing
to be a boss,
it is a good thing
to help the worker
to be his own boss.
If it is a bad thing
to exploit the worker,
it is a good thing
to help the worker
exploit himself.
"Fire the boss
and be your own boss"
is a good slogan
for the worker. (47)

Surely, most people would understand the propagandist's words but it is doubtful that many would care to -- or know how to -- follow his advice.

No doubt, many of the men in the street (and in the universities) -- delighted in -- even if they did not realize the total implications of -- such catchy lines as the following:

And when religion has nothing to do with either
education, politics or business,
you have the religion of business taking the
place of the business of religion. (48)

The best kind of apologetics
is the kind of apologetics
people do not have
to apologize for. (49)

We believe that religion
 is the hope of the people,
 not the dope of the people.
 We believe that the world
 would be better off
 if people tried
 to become better
 and that people would
 become better
 if they stopped trying
 to become better off. (50)

...everybody
 wanted to cash in
 on the future prosperity.
 So stock promoters got busy
 and stocked people with stocks
 till they got stuck. (51)

It may well be that such lines as the above upset some of the cherished notions of the common man, if he was not already disillusioned by the economic depression. In any event, they were lines that expressed important ideas in a way designed to attract the attention of the common man, ideas stated in terms that the common man could understand.

It is clearly evident that Maurin often expressed himself with "American slickness." (52) That is, he was not averse to using common slang in communicating his uncommon ideas. "Business is the bunk," (53) he said, and could cite eminent writers to strengthen his belief. He spoke of "the push" and "the stuff" (54) almost in the same breath as citations from the Summa Theologica. He wrote about "big shots" and "little shots" (55) and offered "the dynamite of the Church" (56) as the answer to the problems of both. The slang of the American depression era spices his expression of important ideas. Here are several samples of his writing that capture the

richness of the American idiom:

Adam Smith
expounded the theory
that everything
would be lovely
if everybody took in
each other's washing
and got paid for it. (57)

Germany and Italy
are now on the level
of France and England.
Germany and Italy
cannot be expected
to be on the level
when France and England
are not on the level. (58)

Agnostic intellectuals
lack faith
in Christ the Redeemer
as well as
in God the Omnipotent.
And now
they are losing faith
in the power of man
to pull himself up
by his own bootstraps. (59)

Why not let
bourgeois capitalists
dig their own graves? (60)

All the sins of the father,
the bourgeois capitalist,
are found in the son,
the Bolshevik Socialist.
He is a chip from the old block,
and the old block
is a blockhead
who has not learned
to use his head. (61)

Nor was Maurin averse to coining expressions of his own
occasionally. To him is frequently attributed the term "Alcoholics
Unanimous." (62) In his collected essays we find reference to

"the Futilitarian Economists of the Manchester School" (63) and to "rugged collectivism." (64) But such coined expressions are rather exceptional in his writings.

Slogans, however, abound. Slogans are catchwords or concise sayings popularly associated -- for better or for worse -- with persons, organizations, movements or conditions. Maurin made use of many of the slogans of his day. Moreover, he coined some of his own.

Here is an example of his serious use of a humorous slogan:

Boloney is boloney,
no matter how you slice it,
and rebellion is rebellion
no matter when it happens,
whether it is
the religious rebellion
of the 16th century
or the political rebellion
of the 18th century
or the economic rebellion
of the 20th century. (65)

In at least two essays the irony in his use of political slogans of his day is evident. We now cite those two examples:

Shortly after the war the Bishops of America
formulated a Program of Social Reconstruction
largely based on co-operation.
But the Bishops' Program failed to materialize
for lack of co-operators.
Catholic laymen and women were more interested
in a laissez-faire economy.
So Catholic laymen and women
went back to Normalcy with Harding,
they tried to Keep Cool with Coolidge
and now they try to see Rosy with Roosevelt. (66)

Because they were confused
modern Catholics
listened to modern economists
who were telling them
that the time had come,

at least in America,
 for a two-car garage,
 a chicken in every pot,
 and a sign "To Let"
 in front of every poorhouse.
 And when the depression came
 they believed with everybody
 that prosperity
 was just around the corner. (67)

There was piercing irony, too, in his stringing out of the bourgeois bromides:

"Service for profits,
 Time is money,
 Cash and carry,
 Keep smiling,
 Business is business,
 Watch your step,
 How is the rush?
 How are you making out?
 How is the world treating you?
 The law of supply and demand,
 Competition is the life of trade,
 Your dollar is your best friend." (68)

He often applied such common slogans as "passing the buck" (69),
 "pie in the sky" (70), and "Let George do it" (71) to the practices
 of many modern Christians.

Among his original slogans is an attractive twist given to
 another slogan popular among the religious bigots of his day:

Someone said
 that the Catholic Church
 stands for rum, Romanism and rebellion.
 But the Catholic Church
 does not stand for rum, Romanism and rebellion.
 The Catholic Church stands
 for Rome, Reunion, and Reconstruction. (72)

We are already familiar with his slogans "Fire the bosses," and "Workers
 should be scholars and scholars workers." Here is another:

What is not logical
 is not practical
 even if it is practiced.
 What is logical
 is practical
 even if it is not practiced. (73)

Slogans, because of their conciseness and their generally accepted connotations, appeal to the man in the street. We are not surprised, therefore, to find so many in the Easy Essays. Maurin, however, insisted upon an understanding of the full meaning behind his aphorisms and catchwords; he was not satisfied with unthinking acceptance of them. In this he certainly differed from most of the secular propagandists, politicians, and other slogan-makers of his day.

Another of Maurin's charms was his delight in word-play. (74) Even the poor and unemployed could indulge in and enjoy this luxury. His inspired punning enhanced the propagandist's popularity. It behooves us, therefore, to examine this phase of his technique.

We have already seen his play on the words "stocks" and "stuck". His version of the saying "Two's company, three's a crowd" is classic:

The Communitarian Revolution
 is basically
 a personal revolution.
 It starts with I,
 not with They.
 One I plus one I
 makes two I's
 and two I's make We.
 We is a community,
 while "they" is a crowd. (75)

Here are a few other typical samples of his punning:

General Johnson says
that the NRA
was like a horse
trying to pull
in different directions.
At the head of the horse
stood Recovery,
at the tail of the horse
stood Reformation.
The tail wanted to be the head,
and the head did not want
to be the tail,
and the Supreme Court
could not make
head or tail
out of it. (76)

I am a radical
of the right.
I go to the right
because I know
it is the only way
not to get left. (77)

The aim of Canon Law
is to enable the good men
to live among bad men
by teaching the good men
to carry their cross
and not to double-cross. (78)

Maurin so freely used this humorous device we are led to believe that his "man in the street" appreciated puns as much as did Shakespeare's "groundlings".

His use of profanity was not uncommon either. Yet, in another sense, it was uncommon. He frequently made use of the profane expressions of the street, but he made use of these expressions as they are infrequently used in the street. That is to say, just as he used such terms as "radical" and "communist" in a truer sense than most

people, so, too, he attached proper meanings to terms that others profaned.

One may be mildly shocked at first coming upon such essay titles as "For God's Sake" (79), "Let's Keep the Jews for Christ's Sake" (80), or "Let's Be Fair to the Negroes for Christ's Sake." (81)

He saw that much of our phraseology has its roots in a Catholic theology but the meanings have become secularized. The Communist, blasting religion, uses the name of Christ to curse it. The man in the street will tell you to go to Hell even when he isn't at all sure it exists!

"For Christ's sake, let's keep the Jews," he would say, and many a gentle listener, hearing this for the first time, would almost bless herself in reparation before she caught the real deep meaning of the words. (82)

But the opposite of scandal is given by such statements when their true meaning is understood. Almost always there is more or less of a shock produced by his correct use of commonly profane expressions.

For instance, he concludes one of his verses with the question:

So why not give to the poor
for business' sake,
for humanity's sake,
for God's sake? (83)

In another case we find the propagandist capitalizing on the famous statement of General Sherman, "War is Hell":

Bolshevist Socialists
as well as
bourgeois capitalists
give us hell
here and now
without
leaving us the hope
of getting our pie
in the sky
when we die.
We just
get hell.

Catholic Communism
 leaves us the hope
 of getting our pie
 in the sky
 when we die
 without
 giving us hell
 here and now. (84)

By using not only simple but also popular diction in all these ways -- by using in his own ways the slang and slogans, puns and profanity of the man in the street -- Peter Maurin hoped to reach the common people with his synthesis of Christian social ethics. At the same time, of course, he also hoped to reach people in the universities, seminaries, rectories, religious and secular organizations and societies.

For the present-day reader there is inherent in this phase of Maurin's technique what some critics regard as a defect: his language in many instances is definitely "dated". He realized that himself, and had his answer: significant ideas should be restated every generation. Truth should be preserved, but the expression of it should be changed to suit the needs of the people. Even though he did not always make the best use of the devices he selected, Maurin demonstrates in the Easy Essays one way this may be done.

There are also practical difficulties to this phase of his technique. Many readers do not "go for" his popular diction. Many astute critics believe that sacred ideas should not be expressed in common slang. Other readers, especially those who are accustomed to being comforted by the slogans of advertising agencies, are often

disturbed by Maurin's provocative slogans -- too shaken by the shock to remain with him. Some, too, are annoyed rather than pleased by pugs. And, of course, there are readers who disapprove of even his correct use of expressions that are commonly used in a profane manner.

In defense, some who admire Maurin's style of writing ask:
Has any writer ever developed a style that has won universal approval?

But, ultimately, it is not merely a question of style!

It must be emphasized that the difficulty in trying to turn workers into scholars goes deeper than mere terminology. There is also the difficulty of concepts -- a much greater barrier than that of language. The untrained mind often encounters tremendous difficulty in grappling with abstract truths, no matter how simplified and popularized the phraseology. Granting that, however, it should be easier for the untrained or semi-trained mind to grapple with concepts and principles and abstract truths when they are expressed in terms that are at least understandable. Peter Maurin's statement of selected Christian concepts appears in a language that was indeed simple, popular ("of the people"), vernacular, in the hope that these truths would thereby be reasonably comprehensible to the masses of men, not only to the intellectual aristocracy.

The content of the ideas Maurin expressed is formidable; his audience is subject to natural limitations; but his style was designed to overcome as far as possible some of the difficulties that the common man is bound to encounter in his search for truth.

4. Conciseness

Conciseness -- the expression of a great deal in a few words -- is an oratorical and literary virtue that Peter Maurin exemplified. "He read, studied constantly," says Dorothy Day, "and he took the meat out of the hard shells and nourished us, constantly teaching, constantly giving us the fruit of his research." (85)

We have already observed that, for the sake of simplicity, Maurin paraphrased selected thoughts of writers who influenced and appealed to him; now we observe that, for the sake of brevity, he rendered those thoughts in a highly condensed form.

Such a statement is not to be construed to mean that he literally laboured through the exacting grammatical processes of making strict paraphrases and precis of texts on hand -- though sometimes he actually did this too -- but rather that usually he had so absorbed and assimilated his material, had so "made it his own", that when he expressed it in his own words it was both ^asimplified and synoptical restatement of the original sources.

Furthermore, he was free not only to sift and select but also to apply in his own way (to suit the circumstances of his particular mission) the principles that appealed to him. He discovered one basic idea here, and another there; he took a sentence from this writer, and a paragraph from that writer; he incorporated an important fragment from this philosopher, and a whole theory from still another, in his own synthesis. Then he simplified and condensed the whole

collection of ideas of varying importance and from various sources to form a highly controversial, notably Christian synthesis in the material order.

Any of the Easy Essays quoted in the present dissertation would reveal that most of the sentences are short, uninvolved, containing very few modifiers, and very little qualification; and most of the "verses" are short, too, usually containing less than a score of phrased lines.

Such time-saving essays appear quite suited to a "rushing" era. Nevertheless, the laconic style of the Easy Essays was attended by certain disadvantages. In his effort to capture the quintessence of thought, the author sacrificed many relevant details. Many of these desirable details he could, and did, supply in his private conversations, but in his concise writings these details are often lacking. This is a source of some annoyance to thorough truth-seekers. Consider, for example, the following excerpt:

The Catholic Worker
stands for co-operativism
against capitalism.
The Catholic Worker
stands for personalism
against socialism.
The Catholic Worker
stands for leadership
against dictatorship.
The Catholic Worker
stands for agrarianism
against industrialism.
The Catholic Worker
stands for decentralism
against totalitarianism. (86)

There is no denying the accuracy and conciseness of the statements,

but it would not be impertinent for a reader to ask for an explanation of such terms as "co-operativism", "capitalism", "agrarianism", etc., inasmuch as those terms are subject to various interpretations. As we have already noted, the charge of over-simplification cannot be ignored. Especially is this so because it is possible to so simplify and so reduce a set of theories as to produce confusion instead of clarity. For some readers at least this has been one effect of the *Easy Essays*.

At the same time it is necessary to reiterate that Peter Maurin was furrowing -- breaking the ground, arousing interest, trying to get people to think. Surely, he must have known that even while he said a good deal, he left a good deal unsaid. But he certainly did not prohibit anyone else from giving body and colour to his sketch; on the contrary, he sought and encouraged that very thing. His advocacy of Houses of Hospitality and Agronomic Universities is a case in point. He advocated such institutions, but he himself supplied only the barest general principles pertaining to them. He wanted people to found hospices where they might perform the works of mercy and hold serious discussions, and he hoped for Christian farming communes where people could live and work and study. But he wanted these institutions to grow organically. Perhaps he himself did not know exactly where they would lead. The truth is that the Catholic Worker hospices and farms vary from place to place. Though they accept the general principles enunciated by the founder, they are not forced to submit to a rigid organizational system. Peter

Maurin started a movement, not an organization.

It may therefore be reasonably argued that criticism of Maurin's failure to provide a fully detailed synthesis is not always or wholly justifiable, for the simple reason that his essays were not intended -- by themselves -- to answer all the valid questions that such essays would understandably elicit. If his essays are cursorily dismissed as puerile compositions, his methods might correctly be termed unsuccessful. If, on the other hand, questions and consequent discussions and eventual enlightenment ensue, then his essays must be termed at least partly successful. Looked at from this point of view, Peter Maurin's economy of words, far from being a necessary defect might, conceivably, be a definite virtue.

While considering the conciseness of the Easy Essays perhaps we may attempt an admittedly imperfect illustration:

The ordinary introduction to theology is the catechism. But the catechism, though it may be noted as much for its accuracy as for its simplicity and conciseness, does not render unnecessary theological tomes. The enquiring mind seeking after fuller explanations than are given in the catechism may search through the tomes. Having found such fuller explanations in the tomes, the understanding mind will return with a greater appreciation of the catechism. Some people have had a parallel experience in their study of Peter Maurin's Easy Essays.

It does not always work out so neatly though. It often happens that the enquiring mind denies the philosophical and theological

validity of some of Maurin's ideas, discovers inaccuracies in Maurin's simplifications, disagrees with the juxtaposition of ideas in the Catholic Worker movement, doubts the practical value of the movement itself. But, for all that, the understanding mind should still be free to evaluate Maurin's simplified, cogent manner of popularizing his philosophy.

Though many readers believe that Peter Maurin was too extreme in his application of it, conciseness of expression may be an effective technique. The general admonition against verbosity, at any rate, Maurin surely heeded in his essays, for they are generally stripped of excessive verbiage, free from common ornamentation. This desire for conciseness, however, did not prevent him from indulging in frequent repetitions.

Despite these repetitions (a characteristic we shall consider later) none of the individual essays is very long. It would take the average reader but several minutes to peruse the longest of them. Even when the author grouped several essays to form one "long" composition (as he often did), the product seldom exceeded several average-sized printed pages. The quotations he incorporated into his published essays were ordinarily very brief, usually one complete sentence. His definitions, too, were ordinarily very succinct, sometimes epigrammatical. Conciseness, then, is undeniably a characteristic of Peter Maurin's literary style.

A plethora of examples from the collected Easy Essays could be cited to bear out our remarks on Peter Maurin's conciseness of

expression. One more representative selection, though, may suffice to illustrate this literary virtue and its concomitant defects. We quote the essay entitled "Catholic Action":

Our Business

Catholic bourgeois
used to tell the clergy
"Mind your own business
and don't butt in
on our business."
Catholic bourgeois
by keeping up
with non-Catholic bourgeois
have made a mess
of their own business.
And now the Holy Father
tells Catholic bourgeois
"The Bishop's business
is your business."

The Bishop's Voice

The Bishop's business
is to teach
the Christian Doctrine.
The Holy Father
appoints a Bishop
to a seat (a cathedral)
so people may hear the truth
that will set them free.
Clergy, teachers, journalists
are the amplifiers
of the Bishop's voice.
Fathers and mothers
must also be
the Bishop's voice.
Bishop O'Hara
is fostering the teaching
of Christian Doctrine
by fathers and mothers.
Everything connected
with the teaching
of Christian Doctrine
can be called
Catholic Action No. 1.

Works of Mercy

But the Bishop,
 although he is a Bishop,
 cannot teach
 an empty stomach.
 Some people
 are Bishop-shy
 because they are hungry,
 shivering or sleepy.
 So the Bishop
 asks the faithful
 to feed the hungry,
 clothe the naked
 shelter the homeless
 at a sacrifice.
 Feeding the hungry,
 clothing the naked,
 sheltering the homeless
 at a sacrifice
 was the daily practice
 of the first Christians.
 The daily practice
 of the Works of Mercy
 is what we can call
 Catholic Action No. 2.

Social Reconstruction

We are asked
 by the Holy Father
 to reconstruct
 the social order.
 Reconstructing the social order
 means the creation
 of a Catholic society
 within the shell
 of a non-Catholic society
 with the philosophy
 of a Catholic society.
 Catholic bourgeois
 made the mistake
 of trying to keep up
 with non-Catholic bourgeois.
 Catholic reconstructors
 must create
 a Catholic technique
 in harmony
 with Catholic thought.

Social reconstruction
by Catholic laymen and women
is what we can call
Catholic Action No. 3.

Three Kinds

Catholic Action No. 1,
or the teaching
of Christian Doctrine,
must be carried out
with the Bishop's supervision.
Catholic Action No. 2,
or the daily practice
of the Works of Mercy,
can be carried out
with or without
the Bishop's supervision.
Catholic Action No. 3,
or the reconstruction
of the social order
through the foundation
of new Catholic institutions,
must be left
to the initiative
of Catholic men and women.
The function of the Bishops
is to be
not directors
but moderators.
Political action
is not to be considered
as Catholic Action. (87)

"An admirably concise explanation of Catholic Action," some say. "An over-simplified, sketchy treatment of profound and involved ideas," others say. Either or both may be correct. An essay such as that, when read to a group, is almost certain to provoke thought, to arouse interest, to stimulate discussion and argument. From the clash of issues often springs forth the truth.

In view of our observations so far, is it ridiculous to suggest that the Easy Essays may be as complete as the author wished

them to be, even though they are not as complete as some of his readers would like them to be? Is it unreasonable to suggest that the limitations we have discussed are inherent in the very thing he was trying to do? A short story is not intended to be a novel. Neither are the Easy Essays intended to be extensive treatises. Finally, the question becomes this: As simplified and synoptical creations intended to stimulate (and eventually clarify) thinking under the circumstances of an extraordinary apostolate, do they succeed?

The answer is that the Easy Essays have had qualified success. A precise estimate is, of course, impossible. Furthermore, in attempting to gauge Maurin's effect upon the man on the street, many other factors must be considered besides the propagandist's technique. Without going into the many factors, though, we may declare that the reaction was by no means uniform.

Some have disagreed bluntly with the Catholic Worker program, in whole or in part. Many have been apparently indifferent to the whole thing. But others have certainly listened and read, thought and judged, agitated and acted as the propagandist hoped they would.

Peter Maurin died in 1949, but the Easy Essays have lost little of their dynamic power. Still the arguments are heard, the discussions go on, opposition is raised, agreement is voiced. And above the conflict stirred up by his Easy Essays it is not difficult to imagine the propagandist saying, "It makes people to think."

5. Repetition

Peter Maurin was an agitator trying to draw people out of their secularist lethargy, and to arouse in them a dynamic interest in Catholic Action. This purpose we have variously stated several times. Likewise, we have already observed that the people he was dealing with were often abysmally ignorant of the concepts and principles he wished to inculcate. He once wrote:

I was told
by the dean of a Catholic college
that Catholic professors
of Catholic colleges
have neither
the knowledge nor the courage
to bring Catholic social thought
to the man of the street. (88)

If that were true of *many* educators, it was certainly true of the uneducated too. The propagandist, therefore, had to start at the very beginning, to prepare the ground to receive the seeds that someday would fructify in a variety of forms of vital Catholic activity. Four of the literary techniques he personally used for this furrowing process on the minds of his fellow men we have already discussed. We must now examine the fifth technique pervading his literary productions, viz., repetition.

Most teachers, surely, are aware of the importance of repetition in the communication of ideas. Peter Maurin, whether or not he learned the technique from his normal training with the Christian Brothers (89) or from his later experiences, certainly resorted to constant repetition. Referring to the *Easy Essays*, Dorothy Day says:

Peter believes in repetition, and many a time he gives us the same essays for the paper, grouped differently with perhaps a few new essays added to make a new point....

In going over all of Peter's Essays and weeding out his duplicated essays, I found that he had written very few on Houses of Hospitality. What he had written he used again and again. (90)

Furthermore, one of Maurin's pupils writing about his manner of teaching French in his pre-Catholic Worker days tells us that "his lessons...consisted of monotonous drilling and repetition of verbs and other grammatical forms." She goes on to say:

Yes, he used the same kind of insistent rhythmic repetition in his "Easy Essays" as in his lessons. It was almost like the rhythmic intensity of a Litany. I have an idea that just as he was pounding his French language into the ears of his students, he made his moral points in his aphorisms.... (91)

In both speaking and writing, then, Peter Maurin practiced the recommended teaching technique of repetition. This he did in two general ways: first, by "internal" repetition (that is, by writing over and over again a particular phrase or idea within the same essay); and second, by "external" repetition (that is, by citing again and again whole essays, or by reproducing favourite passages, sometimes with slight alterations, in a variety of combinations in several essays).

Let us consider, first, what we have called the "internal" type of repetition. We may begin by citing a typical example:

Because John Calvin legalized
money-lending at interest,
the State has legalized
money-lending at interest.
Because the State has legalized
money-lending at interest,
home-owners have mortgaged their homes.
Because the State has legalized
money-lending at interest,
farmers have mortgaged their farms.

Because the State has legalized
 money-lending at interest,
 institutions have mortgaged their buildings.
 Because the State has legalized
 money-lending at interest,
 congregations have mortgaged their churches.
 Because the State has legalized
 money-lending at interest,
 cities, counties, States
 and Federal Government
 have mortgaged their budgets.
 So people find themselves
 in all kinds of financial difficulties
 because the State has legalized
 money-lending at interest. (92)

In the above selection, entitled "Legalized Usury," we observe that the author starts with a key idea to which he is opposed. With each repetition of the phrase "Because the State has legalized money-lending at interest," he gives a different bad effect -- five in all -- of the practice which he opposes. An introduction and a conclusion complete this particular selection.

Substantially the same technique is employed in the selection entitled "What St. Francis Desired":

According to Johannes Jorgenson,
 a Danish convert living in Assisi,
 St. Francis desired
 that men should give up
 superfluous possessions.
 St. Francis desired
 that men should work with their hands.
 St. Francis desired
 that men should offer their services
 as a gift.
 St. Francis desired
 that men should ask other people for help
 when work failed them.
 St. Francis desired
 that men should live
 as free as birds.

St. Francis desired
that men should go through life
giving thanks to God for His gifts. (93)

Six times in nineteen short lines the author repeats the phrase "St. Francis desired", each time adding a new idea to the key phrase. In this selection, of course, Maurin is treating ideas of which he strongly approves.

The repetition of a key phrase in each of several related sentences helps to achieve a balanced construction that characterizes many of the Easy Essays. The effect of counterpoint appeals to the ear. The rhetorical desiderata of clarity and emphasis and unity are abetted by such a technique. And the key idea is more likely to "catch hold" after it has been hammered home with several even strokes. All of these advantages of internal repetition are found in the following passage:

When religion
has nothing to do
with education,
education is only
information:
plenty of facts
but no understanding.
When religion
has nothing to do
with politics,
politics is only
factionalism:
let's turn the rascals out
so our good friends
can get in.
When religion
has nothing to do
with business,
business is only
commercialism:
let's get all we can
while the getting is good. (94)

Usually the repeated phrase precedes the varying phrases; sometimes, though, we find the repeated phrase succeeding in each instance the changeable element. This reversal of form is found, for example, in the selection entitled "Personal Sacrifice":

To be our brother's keeper
is what God wants us to do.
To feed the hungry
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To clothe the naked
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To shelter the homeless
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To instruct the ignorant
at a personal sacrifice
is what God wants us to do.
To serve man for God's sake
is what God wants us to do. (95)

Another good example of the same procedure is found in this passage:

To give and not to take,
that is what makes man human.
To serve and not to rule,
that is what makes man human.
To help and not to crush,
that is what makes man human.
To nourish and not to devour,
that is what makes man human.
And if need be
to die and not to live,
that is what makes man human.
Ideals and not deals,
that is what makes man human.
Creed and got greed,
that is what makes man human. (96)

Whether the "refrain" serves as an introduction or as a conclusion to each line in a series of related statements does not seem to matter very much. The arrangement was apparently determined by the whim and

wit of the author. At times we even find a combination of "refrains" at both the beginning and end of each statement in a related series.

Here is one example of that combination:

The unemployed
need free rent;
they can have that
on a Farming Commune.
The unemployed
need free fuel;
they can cut that
on a Farming Commune.
The unemployed
need free food;
they can raise that
on a Farming Commune.
The unemployed
need to acquire skill;
they can do that
on a Farming Commune.
The unemployed
need to improve their minds;
they can do that
on a Farming Commune.
The unemployed
need spiritual guidance;
they can have that
on a Farming Commune. (97)

In addition we find in the Easy Essays a simpler type of internal repetition. Two brief passages will illustrate it:

Because the State has legalized
money-lending at interest,
in spite of the teachings
of the Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church,
home owners have mortgaged their homes,
farm owners have mortgaged their farms,
institutions have mortgaged their buildings,
governments have mortgaged their budgets.
So we are where we are
because the State has legalized
money-lending at interest
in spite of the teachings
of the Prophets of Israel
and the Fathers of the Church. (98)

The second example:

Everything has been secularized,
 everything has been divorced from religion.
 We have divorced religion from education,
 we have divorced religion from politics,
 we have divorced religion from business. (99)

Both of these quotations are, of course, abbreviated forms of selections quoted earlier in this section. They are cited here not for that reason but to illustrate a very simple type of internal repetition commonly found in the Easy Essays, namely, the repetition of a particular phrase several times within the same sentence. In the first example the words "...have mortgaged their..." are found four times in the same sentence. In the second example the words "We have divorced religion from..." are found three times in the same balanced sentence.

Now that we know that Maurin made extensive use of internal repetition, it behooves us to offer some remarks on that characteristic of his style.

Obviously, the repeated or "key" phrases are not in every instance more important than the varying phrases. Sometimes the repetition, serving somewhat like a counterpoint, sets off to advantage the varying phrases in the series; more often the repeated phrases, because of the emphasis due to repetition, seem to win attention to themselves. In this connection we should consider a few passages quoted above: for instance, in the very first, the repeated words "Because the State has legalized money-lending at interest" appear to be the idea the author wishes us to "catch" and think about; whereas in the second quotation the repeated words, "St. Francis desired," may not be so

important as what he desired; and in the third, it would be difficult to say with certainty that the author was placing more emphasis on the works of mercy themselves than on the element of personal sacrifice, or on the repeated assertion that "God wants us to do" them. It may be seen, therefore, that Peter Maurin used repetition for a variety of effects.

No doubt some readers find the frequent internal repetitions annoying. Some readers may say that in some cases these repetitions belabour the obvious, that they are unnecessary. Other readers, though, find this technique attractive. Certainly the refrains enhanced the rhythm of the lines for oral delivery, which surely was one reason why Maurin used the technique so much. Orderliness, too, results from repetition. Sometimes the repetitions seem to serve as pauses, enabling the reader to assimilate ideas one at a time. Apparently the author believed that his extraordinary ideas required such repetition so that they might be understood more easily; at the same time he did not make such exaggerated use of internal repetition as to destroy the variety of sentences in his phrased essays.

Having examined representative examples of internal repetition in the Easy Essays, we may now turn to a consideration of what we have termed "external" repetition: that is, the incorporation of selections from earlier essays into later essays, such transpositions being more or less verbatim.

Early in this section we cited a selection entitled "Legalized Usury". That selection is taken from the essay entitled "Is Inflation Inevitable?". Somewhat the same idea as is found in the selection we

have already quoted is also found in another of Maurin's essays entitled "A Rumpus on the Campus". (100) But, in the latter essay the author's ideas on usury (also already quoted) are expressed in a slightly altered, more condensed form.

Now, this type of repetition of favourite ideas in two or more essays is quite common in the writings of Peter Maurin. Often he slightly recasts -- condenses or expands -- the earlier phrasing of the idea, sometimes to spotlight a different aspect of the problem. In other instances he does not recast the original phrasing of the favourite ideas at all, but transplants them verbatim into various settings or applications. To make this clear it appears necessary to illustrate the practice by citations from the collected essays. Therefore, let us take this example:

People who built the Cathedral of Chartres
knew how to combine
cult, that is to say liturgy,
with culture, that is to say philosophy,
and cultivation, that is to say agriculture. (101)

That cult-culture-cultivation "burden" was one of Maurin's favourite ideas. We see it repeated practically verbatim (though in slightly different format), in another essay of later publication, applied in the latter instance not to the cathedral builders of Chartres but to the early missionaries of California:

By combining cult,
that is to say liturgy,
with culture,
that is to say literature,
with cultivation,
that is to say agriculture,
the Spanish Franciscans

who went to California
succeeded in making willing workers
out of the Indians. (102)

The same idea, phrased in practically the same way, he used in other essays in reference to the people "of some Dalmatian Island" (103) and to the scholars of medieval Ireland. (104) The same "catchy" statement, then, that summarizes the synthesis Maurin personally tried to achieve is variously applied in several of the Easy Essays.

Another of Maurin's favourite repetitions is found in this statement:

The Catholic Worker believes
in creating a new society
within the shell of the old
with the philosophy of the new,
which is not a new philosophy
but a very old philosophy,
a philosophy so old
that it looks like new. (105)

In the collected essays we find that statement applied to the Catholic Worker movement no less than five times. In a sixth essay the meaning of the statement is at least partly explained, in the following words:

To be radically right
is to go to the roots
by fostering a society
based on creed,
systematic unselfishness,
and gentle personalism.
To foster a society
based on creed
instead of greed,
on systematic unselfishness
instead of systematic selfishness,
on gentle personalism
instead of rugged individualism,
is to create a new society
within the shell of the old

with the philosophy of the new
 which is not ...
 a new philosophy
 but a very old philosophy,
 a philosophy so old
 that it looks like new. (106)

The same aim is attributed in other essays to the Communitarian Movement (107) and to the type of communism Maurin opposed to "Karl's Marxism". (108) On two other occasions he recommended the ideal embodied in this oft-repeated passage (a) as the basis of a new society "while the bourgeois capitalists dig their own graves" (109), and (b) as the means to usher in "The Age of Order". (110) In every essay, of course, it is quite evident that though the introductory remarks vary the quotation refers to the general aim of the Catholic Worker movement.

The point we have been attempting to establish in citing the various external repetitions of two of the most frequently repeated passages -- on "cult-culture-cultivation" and on "creating a new society within the shell of the old" -- is that Maurin sometimes applied favourite passages in slightly different ways as he transferred them from one essay to another.

Moreover, Maurin recited his essays in whole or in part time after time, and had them time after time reprinted in whole or in part in The Catholic Worker. Oral repetition, printed repetition; internal repetition, external repetition: such was one of the techniques of Peter Maurin. No wonder then that Dorothy Day should comment on the Easy Essays:

...even in his prime we used them in the paper just as he did in

speaking, over and over again. He believed in repeating, in driving his point home by constant repetition, like the dropping of water on the stones which were our hearts. (111)

That statement expresses an underlying reason for the propagandist's use of this particular technique. Many people have a tendency to resist new ideas. Maurin's ideas, though very old, looked (to many) like new ideas. But by dint of repetition, which made his ideas more familiar, and clearer too, he hoped that resistance to them would eventually be broken.

The Easy Essays are still being repeated. Maurin's essays continue to be reprinted in The Catholic Worker just as they were before the propagandist's death. And the thoughts these essays contain are just as dynamic and controversial today as they were when they first appeared in their Maurinesque style over two decades ago.

6. Definitions

One of the most attractive features of the Easy Essays is Peter Maurin's manner of defining his terms. Definition of terms was an integral part of his whole propaganda campaign of clarifying thought. Because of his unusual ideas and outlook it was particularly necessary. How he defined his terms in his orderly, unified literary technique is therefore worthy of our attention.

When we say that Maurin "defined" terms we mean that he fixed a meaning to selected words, that he explained and interpreted them in an attempt to make his use of them definite and clear to his audience. True, his meanings, explanations and interpretations were often "his own", and therefore quite arbitrary. But if we are to understand his synthesis we must at least tentatively -- "for the sake of the argument," as the saying is -- accept his definitions.

As an introduction to this phase of his technique we should consider his customary method. His definitions were usually accompanied by remarks elaborating upon, or at least having some bearing upon, the term in question. These auxiliary remarks variously preceded, or sandwiched, or followed the concise definition couched in words understandable to the man in the street.

The first of these approaches, a definition preceded by a commentary, is illustrated in the following selection:

When the worker sells his labor
to a capitalist or accumulator of labor
he allows the capitalist or accumulator of labor
to accumulate his labor.

And when the capitalist or accumulator of labor
 has accumulated so much of the worker's labor
 that he no longer finds it profitable
 to buy the worker's labor
 then the worker can no longer sell his labor.
 And when the worker can no longer sell his labor
 he can no longer buy the products of his labor.
 And that is what the worker gets for selling his labor
 to the capitalist or accumulator of labor.
 He just gets left
 and he gets what is coming to him.
Labor is not a commodity
to be bought and sold --
labor is a means of self-expression,
the worker's gift to the common good. (112)

The key term is labor, Maurin's definition of which we have italicized.

All that precedes the last four lines may be regarded as a relevant introduction to the definition itself.

The second method Maurin employed quite regularly too. An oft-repeated definition is found in the following context, centered between pertinent auxiliary remarks:

Everybody
 looks for a leader
 and nobody
 likes to be dictated to.
 Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin
 try to be at the same time
 leaders and dictators.
A leader is a fellow
who follows a cause
in words and deeds.
A follower is a fellow
who follows the leader
because he sponsors the cause
that the leader follows.
 Read "Leadership or Domination,"
 by Paul Piggors.
 Paul Piggors
 makes a case for domination
 in times of crisis,
 and in this he is wrong.

Domination is not the way
to create order
out of chaos.
Leadership is always the way
to create order
out of chaos. (113)

Actually, above, two terms are defined, with relevant remarks coming both before and after the central passage which we have italicized.

Finally, an illustration of the third common form in which Maurin's definitions appear, the brief definition followed by apposite comments:

A politician is an artist in the art
of following the wind
of public opinion.
He who follows the wind
of public opinion
does not follow
his own judgment.
And he who does not follow
his own judgment
cannot lead people
out of the beaten path.
He is like
the tail end of the dog
trying to lead the head.
When people stand back
of politicians
and politicians
stand back of the people,
people and politicians
go around in a circle
and get nowhere. (114)

The foregoing illustrations represent the three common forms into which the Easy Essay definitions are cast. The apparently intended effects, too, vary. These effects are due to the style and content, however, not to the place of the definitions in the text. Sometimes the definitions are "catchy", other times thought-provoking. Most of Maurin's

definitions are very compact, but some are comparatively fully developed. Though he seems to have preferred presenting definitions one at a time, several consecutive definitions in a single essay is not an uncommon procedure.

By studying representative selections, let us consider how the author achieved this variety of effects.

First, some of his definitions may be described as "catchy". That is to say, they tend to win our attention by their surprising, witty phraseology. His definition of a "bourgeois" is a case in point:

A bourgeois is a man
who tries to be somebody
by trying to be like everybody,
which makes him a nobody. (115)

Here is another definition that is catchy and epigrammatical:

A Communist community
is a community
with a common unity.
A common belief
is what makes the unity
of a community. (116)

A third example may be cited. What is a communitarian? Maurin's answer is simple and memorable:

A Communitarian is a fellow
who refuses to be
what the other fellow is,
and choses to be
what he wants
the other fellow
to be. (117)

Such definitions as the three just cited require comparatively little intellectual effort to grasp. They tend to appeal immediately. They catch hold of the imagination. Because of their witty expression, one

may be even more or less inclined to accept them without question. Though there is a latent seriousness behind these definitions that may be discovered upon closer scrutiny, the point is that they tend to appeal to us very strongly because of their surface brilliance, at our very first meeting with them.

Other definitions, however, demand much more concentration. That is to say, they do not necessarily have the immediate appeal or "catchy" quality we have just seen; rather, they seem to demand more mental attention, more prolonged thought before being accepted or rejected.

Maurin's definition of "a person", for instance, though concise is not so witty as the definitions previously examined:

As an animal,
man is an individual.
As a reasoning animal,
man is a person.
The difference
between an individual
and a person
is the power of reasoning. (118)

This definition involves deeply philosophical distinctions: individuality and personality, matter and spirit. The terminology is simplified, not so abstruse or technical as is often the case in texts on philosophy, yet the statement is profound. Some concentration is certainly demanded if we are to grasp the full meaning of this definition.

The same may be said for his definition of sociology:

Sociology is not a science,
it is an art.
The art of sociology
is the art

of creating order
out of chaos. (119)

Most people probably regard sociology as a science dealing with the origin, development and constitution of society. Such people would, no doubt, be forced to pause and think as they come upon Maurin's definition. It is a definition that goes contrary to that which is generally accepted; furthermore, it has distinct merits.

His definition of secularism is likewise thought-provoking:

"What ails modern society
is the separation
of the spiritual
from the material,"
says Glenn Frank.
That separation
of the spiritual
from the material
is what we call
secularism.
"Secularism is a pest,"
says Pope Pius XI.
Education without religion
is only information.
Politics without religion
is only factionalism.
Business without religion
is only commercialism.
Religion is good
for weekdays
as well as Sundays. (120)

Maurin's definition of secularism as "the separation of the spiritual from the material" is not original, of course; it is generally accepted; but this does not make it any less profound. It is particularly thought-provoking in view of his elaboration upon the defined term and its application to existing institutions.

Such definitions as those just examined, then, for one reason

or another, open up avenues of thought. These avenues must be carefully travelled and re-travelled if we are to justly evaluate not only the definitions themselves but also, ultimately, the whole synthesis that Peter Maurin offers for our consideration. Unlike the witty epigrams previously examined, no hasty acceptance of these latter definitions is expected; they tend, instead, to solicit our prolonged study.

Up to this point the definitions we have had occasion to cite have been notably concise. Rather than give a misleading impression, we now hasten to interject that while most of Maurin's definitions, stripped of their accompanying context, are indeed quite brief, some are comparatively lengthy. Three examples, it is hoped, will suffice to demonstrate this.

In the first, Maurin defines the personalist communitarian:

A personalist
is a go-giver,
not a go-getter.
He tries to give
what he has,
and does not
try to get
what the other fellow has.
He tries to be good
by doing good
to the other fellow.
He is altro-centered,
not self-centered.
He has a social doctrine
of the common good.
He spreads the social doctrine
of the common good
through words and deeds.
He speaks through deeds
as well as words,
for he knows that deeds
speak louder than words.

Through words and deeds
 he brings into existence
 a common unity,
 the common unity
 of a community. (121)

Several qualities or characteristics of behaviour distinguish the personalist communitarian from other people. These Peter Maurin enumerates one at a time, thus elaborating upon a briefer definition quoted earlier in this section. The latter, longer definition is probably the more satisfactory as it is the more precise and the more informative.

A second example of well-developed definitions is found in the following, rather lengthy excerpt:

The bourgeois capitalist
 believes in rugged individualism;
 the Bolshevik Socialist
 believes in rugged collectivism.
 There is no difference
 between the rugged individualism
 of bourgeois capitalism
 and the rugged collectivism
 of Bolshevik Socialism.
 The bourgeois capitalist
 tries to keep
 what he has,
 and tries to get
 what the other fellow has.
 The Bolshevik Socialist
 is the son
 of the bourgeois capitalist,
 and the son
 is too much
 like the father.
 All the sins of the father
 are found in the son.

The bourgeois capitalist
 calls himself conservative
 but has failed to conserve
 our cultural tradition.

He thinks that culture
 is related to leisure.
 He does not think that culture
 is related to cult
 and to cultivation.
 He believes in power,
 and that money
 is the way to power.
 He believes that money
 can buy everything,
 whether it be labor or brains.
 But as the poet Emerson says,
 "People have only
 the power we give them."
 When people will cease
 selling their labor power
 or their brain power
 to the bourgeois capitalist,
 the bourgeois capitalist
 will cease being
 a gentleman of leisure
 and begin being
 a cultured gentleman.

The Bolshevik Socialist
 is the spiritual son
 of the bourgeois capitalist;
 he credits bourgeois capitalism
 with an historic mission
 and fails to condemn it
 on general principles.
 The bourgeois Socialist
 does not believe
 in the profit system
 but he does believe
 in the wage system.
 The bourgeois capitalist
 and his spiritual son,
 the Bolshevik Socialist,
 believe in getting
 all they can get
 and not in giving
 all they can give.
 The bourgeois capitalist
 and his spiritual son,
 the Bolshevik Socialist,
 are go-getters,
 not go-givers. (122)

The technique effectively applied above is that of comparison and contrast, normally a good agent of clarification. In this way Maurin offers his conception of two bourgeois types. We need not accept everything that he states in this essay, but at least his views are quite clear. Though his statements are rather general, his definitions are fairly well developed.

As a final example of the comparatively lengthy definition in the Easy Essays, we may consider part of an essay entitled "Non-Catholic Catholics":

Non-Catholics say
that Catholics
are led by the nose
by the clergy.
Real Catholics
are not led by the nose
by the clergy.
Real Catholics
follow their consciences.
I must admit
that some Catholics
are led by the nose.
These Catholics
who are led by the nose
are not led by the nose
by the clergy.
They are led by the nose
by non-Catholics.
These Catholics
who allow themselves
to be led by the nose
by non-Catholics
ought to be called
non-Catholic Catholics.

Non-Catholic Catholics
tell us
that one cannot lead
a Catholic life
in a Protestant country.

The protestation
 of Protestants
 is not a protestation
 against the Catholicism
 of non-Catholic Catholics.
 It is a protestation
 against the lack
 of Catholicism
 of non-Catholic Catholics.
 Non-Catholic Catholics
 are giving to Protestants
 a wrong view
 of Catholicism.
 To give to Protestants
 a wrong view
 of Catholicism
 is not the right way
 to make Catholics
 out of Protestants.

Protestants
 have principles
 but Catholics
 have more principles
 than Protestants.
 But principles
 must be applied.
 To have principles
 and not to apply them
 is worse
 than not having any.
 Non-Catholic Catholics
 fail to bring
 Catholic principles
 to Protestants
 because
 they do not dare
 to exemplify
 those Catholic principles
 that Protestants
 do not have.

Non-Catholic Catholics
 like to tell
 their Protestant friends,
 "We are just as good
 as you are."
 They ought to tell
 their Protestant friends,

"we are just as bad
 as you are."
 Their Protestant friends
 ought to tell
 non-Catholic Catholics,
 "you are not
 just as bad
 as we are;
 you are much worse
 than we are
 for you are
 our imitators,
 you are not yourselves." (123)

By briefly contrasting "real" and "non-Catholic" Catholics, and then proceeding to elaborate upon the latter by telling us what they do, Maurin's meaning is perfectly clear. Even if we were to disagree with some of the ideas expressed above, we would probably concede that they are at least understandable. By giving us a common Protestant view of those people whom he terms "non-Catholic Catholics", Maurin further helps us to understand what the paradoxical term signifies.

Up to this point we have established (a) that brief definitions may appear at the beginning, middle, or end of any of the Easy Essay verses, these definitions being invariably accompanied by complementary comments; (b) that many of Maurin's definitions are noted for their "catchy" phrasing; (c) that many other definitions lacking the immediate appeal of the epigram require more serious consideration on the part of the reader; and (d) that while most of Maurin's definitions are very concise, selected terms are also treated in a much more detailed manner.

Next, we wish to note that while these definitions customarily paraded in single array, they also appeared in battalions. That is to say, we quite frequently find a series of definitions lined up in an

orderly, balanced sequence rather than simply standing alone. This phalanx effect was achieved in several ways, which we shall now examine.

In one of his early essays Maurin included a verse entitled "Five Definitions". As this verse exemplifies the technique of grouping several definitions in one unit, it is quoted here:

A Bourgeois
is a fellow
who tries to be somebody
by trying to be
like everybody,
which makes him a nobody.
A Dictator
is a fellow
who does not hesitate
to strike you over the head
if you refuse to do
what he wants you to do.
A Leader
is a fellow
who refuses to be crazy
the way everybody else is crazy
and tries to be crazy
in his own crazy way.
A Bolshevik
is a fellow
who tries to get
what the other fellow has
and to regulate
what you should have.
A Communitarian
is a fellow
who refuses to be
what the other fellow is
and tries to be
what he wants him to be. (124)

Allowing for a few slight changes, some of the definitions grouped in the above selection are already familiar to us from quotations appearing earlier in this section. In this particular case, a shuffling of the order of presentation might improve the effect of the verse by clarifying

the interrelation of terms defined; a relationship, sometimes loose, sometimes close, exists among the five terms briefly defined in this selection. The definitions individually are concise and "catchy". Interesting to note, too is the fact that this selection is neither preceded nor followed by any explanatory or complementary remarks; the definitions alone, stripped of auxiliary comments in this instance, are offered for our consideration.

In the following selection we find a series of distinctions that seem to move toward a definite conclusion. There is a kind of progression in this grouping:

Humanists believe
 with Robert Burns
 that "a man is a man
 for all that."
 Theists believe
 that God created the world,
 that He is our Father,
 and that we are all brothers.
 Protestants believe
 that God, our Father,
 sent His only begotten Son
 to save the world
 from sin.
 Catholics believe
 that Jesus Christ
 established a Church,
 and that this Church
 is the Catholic Church.
 Humanists
 are just Humanists.
 Theists are Humanists
 plus Theists.
 Protestants are Humanists
 plus Theists
 plus Christians.
 Catholics are Humanists
 plus Theists
 plus Christians
 plus Catholics. (125)

However sketchy the distinctions may appear to some critical readers, the logical progression is evident. The grouping in this instance is quite effective, leading up to a significant "point".

Though in some cases it may be justly charged that these grouped definitions and distinctions suffer from excessive brevity, that charge is not always equally applicable. In a least two instances Maurin devotes a whole Easy Essay to a series of definitions: one is an analytical treatment, an historical explanation, of "Five Forms of Capitalism" (126); the other, entitled "Five Definitions", deals with the respective political tenets of four party spokesmen plus the views of the Catholic Worker. The latter is quoted here:

What Communists Say They
Believe

Communists believe
that the capitalist system
has reached the point
where it does no longer work.
Communists believe
that when the workers
come to the realization
of the downfall of capitalism
they will no longer tolerate it.
Communists believe
that the capitalist class
will resort to all means
that may be in its power
to maintain its existence.
Communists believe
that the Communist Party
knows how to assure
the production and distribution
in an orderly manner
according to a predesigned plan.

What Fascists Say They
Believe

Fascists believe

in a national economy
 for the protection
 of national and private interests.
 Fascists believe
 in the regulation of industries
 so as to assure
 a wage for the worker
 and a dividend for the investor.
 Fascists believe
 in class collaboration
 under State supervision.
 Fascists believe
 in the co-operation
 of employers' unions
 and workers' unions.

What Socialists Say They
Believe

Socialists believe
 in a gradual realization
 of a classless society.
 Socialists believe
 in the social ownership
 of natural resources
 and the means of production
 and distribution.
 Socialists believe
 in a transition period
 under democratic management
 between two economic systems,
 the system of production for use
 and the one of production for profits.
 Socialists believe
 in freedom of the press,
 freedom of assemblage,
 freedom of worship.

What Democrats Say They
Believe

Democrats believe
 in universal suffrage,
 universal education,
 freedom of opportunity.
 Democrats believe
 in the right of the rich
 to become richer
 and of the poor

to try to become rich.
 Democrats believe
 in labor unions
 and financial corporations.
 Democrats believe
 in the law of supply and demand.

What the Catholic Worker
Believes

The Catholic Worker believes
 in the gentle personalism
 of traditional Catholicism.
 The Catholic Worker believes
 in the personal obligation
 of looking after
 the needy of our brother.
 The Catholic Worker believes
 in the daily practice
 of the works of Mercy.
 The Catholic Worker believes
 in Houses of Hospitality
 for the immediate relief
 of those who are in need.
 The Catholic Worker believes
 in the establishment
 of Farming Communes
 where each one works
 according to his ability
 and gets
 according to his need.
 The Catholic Worker believes
 in creating a new society
 within the shell of the old
 with the philosophy of the new,
 which is not a new philosophy
 but a very old philosophy,
 a philosophy so old
 that it looks like new. (127)

Evidently the tactical purpose in aligning several successive definitions -- whether sketchy or comparatively detailed -- is to compare and contrast various points of view or various modes of conduct, and either by logical progression or by implication to urge readers to a certain preference or attitude. In this the Easy Essays are invariably

quite effective. The distinctions are clear-cut, and the presentation is well-balanced. In addition, the qualities and ideas defined are treated in a manner that is rhetorically effective: that is, they tend to persuade the reader to look with pleasure or favour upon the propagandist's point of view. This is achieved by presenting the good and true as desirable and the imperfect and erroneous as undesirable in essays treating single definitions, and by contrasting the two in essays containing a series of definitions.

We must insist, however, that our discussion of Peter Maurin's technique of defining his terms in no way implies that his definitions are always and absolutely binding. Far from being guilty of such a gross impertinence, we readily grant that an obvious drawback to his method of definition is that many people are bound to take issue with his statements, that many thoughtful people are bound to look upon many of his definitions as incomplete or otherwise unsatisfactory. Still, granted the circumstances of his work and granted the purpose of his propaganda program, many "defects" appear almost unavoidable.

A review of the definitions cited in this chapter should indicate why objections are sometimes raised to them. Some are incomplete; some could be improved upon in content; some may be too glibly expressed. In other words, some of Maurin's definitions are unsatisfactory even though they may be exactly what he, after much meditation, wanted them to be.

Granting that Peter Maurin was not infallible and that exception has been taken to some of his definitions, why and how he defined

his terms fits neatly into his whole technique. Because of his unusual ideas, and his unusual insistence upon their value, definition of terms was a duty incumbent upon him. If he wished to clarify thought, he had to define his terms. But, at least for the sake of formal unity, he had to define his terms in a manner that conformed with the other elements in and the immediate purposes of the Easy Essays. His definitions, simply, had to be "easy". Some of the definitions which are defective are so because of the limitations inherent in what Peter Maurin was trying to do: simplify, condense, popularize, attract attention, arouse interest. In terms of what he intended to make them, they are more or less acceptable. Once that is said, we agree that it is the privilege of the readers to take issue with what he intended to make them or to criticize his achievement within the given purpose.

Peter Maurin did not define all the controversial or obscure terms he used, nor did he satisfactorily explain all those terms he chose to define. Had he done these things to the complete satisfaction of exacting scholars his Easy Essays would have ceased to be "easy".

7. Orderliness

A statement may be simple, concise, adequately defined, attractive, and emphatic, and still lack a certain orderliness -- a certain harmonious arrangement of parts -- which could contribute to its clarity and to the reader's pleasure. Naturally, either the writer or the reader (or both) may be at fault if a statement appears to be unclear: both are subject to that darkness of intellect that is a limitation of man's earthly nature. But, after he has meditated to the best of his ability on the ideas he wishes to communicate, all the writer can do is strive for clarity of expression by employing wise judgment in the selection of such devices as he deems appropriate for his work, and by employing consummate skill in his use of them.

That Peter Maurin exercised good judgment and skill is at least partly verified by the fact that practically every one of the *Easy Essays* is in its own way neatly wrought. From a technical point of view a kind of formal unity is found in these essays. But even while his essays are more or less orderly, Maurin's methods were not so strictly systematized as to admit of no variety. As we have already seen, a series of quotations of approximately equal length, a balanced series of definitions, a rhythmic repetition of selected phrases -- all of these contribute to the formal unity of various *Easy Essays*.

There are other factors as well that contribute to the unity, and therefore to the clarity, of the *Easy Essays*. These factors, the concern of this section, further designate the propagandist as a man

whose thoughts were well ordered, controlled, subjected to the discipline of logic, and respectful of some of the demands of rhetoric. His art is characterized by an orderly arrangement of parts, a rhetorically effective presentation of ideas, serving the ends he had in mind.

Let us consider, for instance, the essay entitled "Christianity and Democracy". This essay is but one of many -- "On Personalism" (128), "The European Mess" (129), and "why Pick on the Jews" (130) to mention but a few -- that could be cited for their formal unity, for their orderliness. It begins with the statement of a basic principle:

On several occasions
Pope Leo XIII
wrote on the legitimacy
of several forms
of government.
In the encyclical
"Diuturnum Illud"
we find this sentence:
"Nothing prevents the Church
from giving its approval
to the government
of one man
or several men
as long as the government
is a just government
and applies itself
to foster the common good."

To clarify somewhat that basic principle, an example of its application is given:

In a letter
condemning the "Sillon"
Pope Pius X
takes up that doctrine.
"The 'Sillon'," says Abbe Leclercq
editor of La Cite Chretienne
"was a Christian
democratic movement
founded by Marc Sangnier."

It was full of enthusiasm
and generosity
but lacked deep thought.
It had allowed itself
to present democracy
as the only political regime
in conformity
with Christianity."
"Denounced in Rome,"
continues Abbe Leclercq,
"it was condemned
for the preceding reason
as well as imprudences
in thought and language."

Next, the original principle is partially and indirectly restated by
recourse to another quotation:

Freda Kirchwey,
editor of The Nation,
has an article
on Religion
and Democracy.
"Democracy," she says,
"may be Christian
or it may be Jewish.
It is related
to whatever culture
or whatever religious
or non-religious ideas
flourish in the society
that breeds it."
"Democracy," she continues,
"has nothing on earth to do
with any particular faith."

The propagandist, having cited his authorities, sums up the whole
issue in his own words:

The editor of The Nation
agrees with Leo XIII
as well as Pius X
in the contention
that Christianity
is not tied up
with any particular form
of government.

Don Sturzo
 attacks Fascism
 and several Bishops
 are defending it.
 A government
 can be autocratic
 or aristocratic
 or democratic.
 The duty of a government,
 whether it be
 autocratic
 or aristocratic
 or democratic,
 is to foster
 the common good.

He then goes off on one aspect of the original theme:

The common good
 is not common,
 because common sense
 does not prevail.
 In a good autocracy
 the common good
 is incarnated
 in a good autocrat.
 In a good aristocracy
 the common good
 is incarnated
 in the good aristocrats.
 In a good democracy
 the common good
 is incarnated
 in the good democrats.
 The good democrats
 are democrats
 with the democratic spirit.
 They are the elite
 in a democracy.

Relating this issue to the form of government that particularly concerns
 his audience, the propagandist deals with one of the practical problems
 it involves:

Jules Beranger
 followed Jusserand
 as French Ambassador

in Washington.
 Beranger was an agnostic
 who could not conceive
 of a democracy
 without a cultural elite.
 The elite in a democracy
 is imbued
 with what we call
 the right spirit.
 The democratic elite
 is the spearhead
 of a democratic society.
 The democratic elite
 is recruited
 from all classes
 of a democratic society.
 The democratic elite
 is not moved
 by greed for wealth
 or greed for power.
 It is moved
 by clear thinking.

His conclusion, a Christian point of view on the issue in question,
 consists of relevant, if not strictly proven, generalizations that may
 be seen to follow from a study of the preceding principles:

Agnostic intellectuals
 lack faith
 in Christ the Redeemer
 as well as
 in God the Omnipotent.
 And now
 they are losing faith
 in the power of man
 to pull himself up
 by his own bootstraps.
 Faith in Christ the Redeemer,
 hope in the life to come,
 and charity toward all men
 are motivating forces
 in the fostering
 of a democratic elite --
 without which
 a democratic society
 becomes the laughing-stock
 of totalitarian societies. (131)

We may say of the essay "Christianity and Democracy" what applies to dozens of other essays by Peter Maurin: even though, in content, it is not so complete an exposition of an important issue as most readers desire, nevertheless, from a technical point of view, it demonstrates the propagandist's discipline and freedom: it is orderly without being mechanically rigid; it is logical without being strictly syllogistic.

The orderliness of Maurin's writings is effected in another way in several essays -- among them "From Richelieu to Hitler" (132), and "In the Light of History" (133) -- that depend for their clarity on a chronological approach. More or less typical of this approach is the essay entitled "For a New Order". In this capsule history of modern philosophy, the propagandist treats of four ages, beginning with "The Age of Reason":

In the seventeenth century
 a Frenchman
 by the name of Descartes
 discarded Thomistic philosophy
 and formulated
 a philosophy of his own.
 St. Thomas' philosophy
 starts with Aristotle
 and helps the reason
 to accept revelation.
 For St. Thomas Aquinas
 reason is the handmaid of faith;
 not so for Descartes.
 The eighteenth century
 became known
 as the age of enlightenment
 or the age of reason.
 An American
 by the name of Thomas Paine
 wrote a book entitled
 "The Age of Reason."

The propagandist proceeds by declaring that certain developments led to what he terms "The Age of Treason":

The use of reason
was discarded
by the intellectuals
of the nineteenth century.
Romanticism,
positivism,
pragmatism,
one after another,
became the fashion
in the nineteenth century.
In a book entitled
"The Treason of the Intellectuals"
Julian Benda,
a French Jew,
says the intellectuals
gave up the search for truth
and consented to become
paid propagandists
of nationalists
as well as capitalists.
So the age of reason
of the eighteenth century
was followed
by the age of treason
of the nineteenth century.

That takes us to the present century, "The Age of Chaos":

And we are now
in the age of chaos.
In an age of chaos
people look
for a new order.
What makes for chaos
is lack of order.
Because people are becoming aware
of this lack of order
they would like to be able
to create order
out of chaos.
The time
to create order
out of chaos
is now.

The germ of the present
 was in the past
 and the germ of the future
 is in the present.
 The thing to do
 is to give up old tricks
 and start to play new tricks.

Having synopsised modern history -- that is, some recent philosophical trends -- with a bold quick sweep, the propagandist then suggests his concept of "The Age of Order":

If we make
 the right decisions
 in the age of chaos
 the effect of those decisions
 will be a better order.
 The new order
 brought about
 by right decisions
 will be functional,
 not acquisitive;
 personalist,
 not socialist;
 communitarian,
 not collectivist;
 organismic,
 not mechanistic.
 The thing to do right now
 is to create a new society
 within the shell of the old
 with the philosophy of the new,
 which is not a new philosophy
 but a very old philosophy
 a philosophy so old
 that it looks like new. (134)

Peter Maurin's treatment of history is too sweeping, his assertions in the field of philosophy are too glib, too undeveloped, to satisfy the exacting scholar; but the clear, orderly arrangement and presentation of his views may still please the student of rhetoric.

If we may for the moment think of history as represented by a

horizontal line, the chronological approach as used by Peter Maurin breaks that line into several segments, each verse treating a different segment. Somewhat similar to the chronological approach just cited is another method Maurin used to achieve an orderly presentation of ideas. This method we may imagine as consisting of several vertical columns, or separate pillars in a common structure, rather than as segments of a horizontal line. Briefly, it involves treating, one at a time, several phases or facets of one basic problem. Clarity and coherence ordinarily result. Found in such essays as "Pax" (135), "Revolutions" (136), and "Wreckers of Europe" (137), it is exemplified in the essay entitled "For Protection's Sake".

Let us briefly examine this last essay. The key word in it is the word "protection", for that is the word that links one verse to another and it is also the underlying concept treated in this essay. Each verse treats of a different phase of the basic idea, and each verse contributes something to the attitude the propagandist would have us consider. The keynote, carried by repetition through the whole composition, is struck in the very first sentence:

The French believe
in protection.
To protect French citizens
residing in Algeria
they took the country
from the natives.
To protect Algeria
they set up a protectorate
over Tunisia
with Bismarck's approval.
To protect the Senegal
they took Dahomey.

To protect Indo-China
 they took the Tonkin.
 To protect Reunion
 they took Madagascar.
 They did not want the English
 to take Madagascar.
 When the English
 take something
 they are called grabbers
 by the French,
 who consider themselves
 good patriots.

In each of the five succeeding verses quite the same over-simplified criticism is levelled at England, Japan, Russia, Italy, and Germany, respectively. Finally comes the relevant concluding verse:

Each nation thinks
 that what it needs
 is to be protected
 against other nations.
 But the fear
 of other nations
 does not take the place
 of the fear of God.
 If we had
 the fear of God,
 we would have less fear
 of other nations.
 Humanity
 is not protected
 when people
 cut each other's throats
 for fear of each other.
 God may ask us,
 as he did of Cain:
 "Where is thy brother?"
 Will God be satisfied
 if we answer Him:
 "I am not
 my brother's keeper"?
 Is not the fear of God
 the best protection
 that humanity can have? (138)

Questions pertaining to the matter expressed in this or similar essays aside, the general form into which it is cast has the merit of

being fairly easy to follow. The essay as a whole is integrated, but for clarity its several parts are treated with a reasonable distinctness.

In fact, speaking now of the Easy Essays collectively, even if the structural pattern sometimes appears to be a little loose and uneven, much more often it is very neat and orderly. Whether the individual pattern depends upon definitions or quotations in a series, repetition of one or more elements, logical progression of ideas, chronological order, balance and parallelism, or comparison and contrast -- always it is relatively simple, relatively easy to follow. The content of the Easy Essays, however, obviously presents greater difficulties than the form. The technical form, therefore, is intended to serve as an aid to the understanding of the philosophical content.

It remains for us in this section of our study of the technical aspects of the Easy Essays to discuss the orderliness of form illustrated in Maurin's use of comparison and contrast, and in his use of logical progression of ideas.

The use of comparison and contrast is pithily exemplified in this quotation:

Soldiers rely
on the power
of the sword.
Scholars rely
on the power
of the word. (139)

This device was part of what has been termed Maurin's "shock" technique. Ordinarily he accomplished this by first stating his views on things as they are, then following or countering with a more or less parallel

statement of his views on things as they should be, or vice versa.

From the clash between the two, presumably, clear thinking is to emanate.

We see this technique demonstrated in such a succinct verse as the following:

Bourgeois capitalism
is based on the power
of hiring and firing.
Fascist Corporatism
and Bolshevist Socialism
are based on the power
of life and death.
Communitarian Personalism
is based on the power
of thought and example. (140)

The same balanced arrangement of contrasting ideas is found in this longer verse:

In the first centuries
of Christianity
the hungry were fed
at a personal sacrifice,
the naked were clothed
at a personal sacrifice,
the homeless were sheltered
at a personal sacrifice.
And because the poor
were fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice,
the pagans used to say
about the Christians
"See how they love each other."
In our own day
the poor are no longer
fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice
but at the expense
of the taxpayers.
And because the poor
are no longer
fed, clothed and sheltered
at a personal sacrifice

the pagans say about the Christians
 "See how they pass the buck." (141)

Finally, we should like to observe this same orderly method of contrasting ideals, now however presented in two verses. The first of these deals with "When Bankers Rule":

Modern society has made the bank account
 the standard of values.
 When the bank account
 becomes the standard of values
 the banker has the power.
 When the banker has the power
 the technician has to supervise
 the making of profits.
 When the banker has the power
 the politician
 has to assure law and order
 in the profit-making system.
 When the banker has the power
 the educator trains students
 in the technique of profit making.
 When the banker has the power
 the clergyman is expected
 to bless the profit-making system
 or to join the unemployed.
 When the banker has the power
 the Sermon on the Mount
 is declared impractical.
 When the banker has the power
 we have an acquisitive,
 not a functional society.

This verse is immediately followed by a parallel treatment of the contrasting topic, "When Christ is King":

When the Sermon on the Mount
 is the standard of values
 then Christ is the Leader.
 When Christ is the Leader
 the priest is the mediator.
 When Christ is the Leader
 the educator
 trains the minds of the pupils
 so that they may understand
 the message of the priest.

When Christ is the Leader
 the politician
 assures law and order
 according to the priest's teachings.
 When Christ is the Leader
 the technician
 devises ways and means
 for the economical production
 and distribution of goods.
 When Christ is the Leader
 the administrator administrates
 according to the directions
 from the technicians.
 When Christ is the Leader
 we have a functional,
 not an acquisitive society. (142)

The psychological effect of this simple arrangement of conflicting
 ideals is impressive. It tends to make the reader think. It shocks.
 The balanced, orderly, virtually parallel arrangement of contradictory
 principles -- like opposing armies poised for battle -- helps one to
 see issues quite clearly and instantly, and makes it difficult for the
 observer to remain neutral. Such effects intended by the propagandist
 could hardly have come about were his manner of presentation confused
 or disorderly. Both the content and the form, then, co-operate in
 arousing interest and clarifying thought.

It has been said that in writing, clarity is a duty, emphasis
 a responsibility, and pleasure an ideal. The balanced structure char-
 acterizing so many of the Easy Essays is certainly an effective aid
 to all three. In addition there is the requirement of unity. Technical
 unity in the Easy Essays is not always so apparent as in the examples
 cited in this section. However, even if it is occasionally necessary
 to strain our minds a little to discover the inter-relation and

correlation of ideas as they are strung out over several verses, in the vast majority of cases it will be found that, finally, "it all goes together."

That brings us to an examination of the final form of orderliness that recommends itself to our special attention.

Many of the Easy Essays are noted for a kind of logical succession of generalizations. In the following short essay, for instance, an orderly, correlated succession of general statements is offered for our consideration.

When the bank account
is the standard of values
the class on the top
sets the standard.
When the class on the top
cares only for money
it does not care
for culture.
When the class on the top
does not care
for culture
nobody cares
for culture.
And when nobody cares
for culture,
civilization decays.
When class distinction
is not based
on the sense of noblesse oblige,
it becomes clothes distinction.
When class distinction
has become clothes distinction
everybody tries
to put up a front. (143)

True, the propagandist does not attempt to prove his generalizations, for which neglect he is sometimes regarded as "dogmatic". But, for those who do not see eye to eye with him, he set up no barriers against

speculation upon his ideas. Rational disagreement, he believed, could help to clarify thought.

The same technique as is found above is also found in individual verses in longer essays. We cite here a verse from each of two distinct essays. The first is sub-titled "The Fallacy of Saving":

When people save money,
they invest that money.
Money invested
increases production.
Increased production
brings a surplus
in production.
A surplus in production
brings unemployment.
Unemployment brings a slump
in business.
A slump in business
brings more unemployment.
More unemployment
brings a depression.
A depression
brings more depression.
More depression
brings red agitation.
Red agitation
brings red revolution. (144)

The second is sub-titled "The Wisdom of Giving":

To give money to the poor
is to enable the poor to buy.
To enable the poor to buy
is to improve the market.
To improve the market
is to help business.
To help business
is to reduce unemployment.
To reduce unemployment
is to reduce crime.
To reduce crime
is to reduce taxation.
So why not give to the poor
for business' sake,
for humanity's sake,
for God's sake? (145)

Once again it is obvious that the propagandist is offering for our consideration and argumentation two theories. These theories, consisting of a series of thought-provoking general statements, are meant to be discussed. His clear, orderly presentation of his theories should lead to precise definition, followed by thoughtful agreement, qualification, or disagreement. Controversy should bring forth the truth. The general matter to be debated the propagandist presents in a neat, orderly manner; we must take it from there.

This procedure of lining up in an orderly fashion, in selected verses or in short essays, a concatenation of more or less reasonable generalizations leading toward a "point" or attitude, then, is another of the several tactics used by Peter Maurin that are noteworthy for their orderliness. A source of intellectual stimulation for some readers who revel in the contemplation of such generalizations, this method is a source of annoyance to others who may prefer to have issues pinned down more neatly and convincingly in the form of a syllogism. Of course, it is in the Thomistic tradition to work toward a point, toward a conclusion; and this Maurin did, even if he did not use the exacting procedures of the schoolmen.

We must make allowance for the probability that thoughtful readers will openly question the validity of some of Maurin's generalizations, that others will point out that Maurin frequently left out steps in the reasoning processes, that still others will declare that not all of Maurin's conclusions are necessarily binding. Even so, other thoughtful readers will be able to find sufficient truth in

Maurin's generalizations to substantiate many of his theories and to justify many of his conclusions. The process of discovering these things is part of the process of clarifying thought. Though his ideas are incomplete and over-simplified, Maurin's orderly presentation of those ideas certainly facilitates the striving toward that end.

Still, partly because they are under-developed and over-simplified, and despite all the clarifying devices used with varying degrees of effectiveness by the propagandist -- despite the attractiveness, simplicity, popular phraseology, conciseness, repetition, and orderliness of the Easy Essays -- the ideas of Peter Maurin remain for many readers an enigma.

8. Authorities and Witnesses

A valuable contribution to the study of Peter Maurin's work would be a thorough, scholarly exposition of the sources of his published ideas. He did not sufficiently annotate his essays, nor did he provide bibliographical footnotes. He did, however, make use of authorities and witnesses in a less formal, less academic manner. This eighth characteristic of his style, his reference to authorities and witnesses, we shall now consider.

At the outset we must distinguish between authorities, people whose views in their special fields Maurin deemed reasonably trustworthy, people whom he therefore quoted or paraphrased; and witnesses, people whose activities Maurin deemed praiseworthy, people whom he therefore cited either to illustrate his own ideas or to lend encouragement to their efforts. Both he used with some effectiveness.

First, we shall consider the witnesses.

Dorothy Day was correct in saying that Maurin "liked to illustrate his ideas by calling attention to people who exemplified them," (146) even though she seemed to be contradicting her earlier statement that "he did not use incidents or personalities to illustrate his ideas. He tried to do that...in the Catholic Worker..." (147) True, Maurin did not make very extensive use of witnesses in the Easy Essays (not as much, at any rate, as he did in conversation), nor did he fully develop illustrative incidents; but he did, as we shall see, use both to limited advantage.

For instance, in 1934 in reply to a letter from a reader, Maurin wrote in part:

Edward Koch, of Germantown, Illinois,
publishes a magazine entitled The Guildsman;
You ought to get in touch with him. (148)

Now, Edward Koch, along with men like Frederick Kenkel, Joseph Mott, and Adolph B. Suess, was one of that small band of Catholic agitators of the 1930's, whose activities met with Maurin's hearty approval. In conversation, he frequently spoke of Koch and the others as examples of men who were trying to do things that needed to be done. We are not surprised, then, to find him signifying similar approval in his essays.

In another letter, dated December 28, 1938, Peter Maurin named a number of sympathizers of the Catholic worker movement, whom he had met in his cross-country travels:

They intend
to start a Catholic worker group
in Minneapolis.
It is also a question
of a farming commune.
Father Le Beau
of St. Thomas College,
Father Loosen
at St. Mary's Hospital,
Sister Helen Angelica
of St. Joseph's Hospital
are great boosters
of the Catholic Worker.
Dr. John Giesen
is actively connected
with a Mexican center.
Dr. Bauer,
a German sociologist,
is now at St. Thomas
and is eager to co-operate
with the Catholic Worker.
Before leaving St. Paul

I made a short trip
to Eau Claire
and La Crosse.
The pastor of Eau Claire
agrees with us:
the youth needs a cause.
A Y. M. C. A. secretary
in La Crosse
is very much in sympathy
with the idea
of an Unpopular Front
on Personalist Democracy.
I found the reaction
to the Catholic Worker propaganda
is very favorable.... (149)

These were among the hundreds of "contacts" Maurin made in his journeys:
people who sympathized (at least in part) with the Catholic Worker,
people who in their own way were contributing to the improvement of
society.

In citing witnesses, however, Maurin did not limit himself to
people whom he knew personally, nor did he restrict himself in the
matter of nationality, as is obvious from the following excerpt:

Communitarianism
is expounded every month
in the French magazine Esprit.
Emmanuel Mounier,
the editor of the magazine,
has a book entitled
"La Revolution Personnaliste et Communautaire."
Raymond de Becker
is the leader in Belgium
of the Communitarian Movement.
Dr. Kagawa,
the Japanese co-operator,
is truly imbued
with the Communitarian spirit. (150)

Occasionally in his essays Maurin singled out an individual
witness and dealt with him at some length, as in the case of Carl
Schmitt:

Carl Schmitt the artist
 plans to go to some Dalmatian Island
 where people still combine
 cult, that is to say liturgy,
 with culture, that is to say literature,
 with cultivation, that is to say agriculture.

Carl Schmitt the artist
 does not want his ten children
 to be super salesmen,
 he wants them to be
 cultured peasants.

Carl Schmitt the artist
 is far from thinking
 that all America needs
 is a good five-cent cigar
 as Vice President Marshall
 was in the habit of saying.

Carl Schmitt the artist
 thinks that America
 needs to be revitalized
 with healthy peasant blood
 from those parts of Europe
 where the rugged individualism
 of bourgeois commercialism
 has not yet penetrated.

Carl Schmitt the artist
 is not interested
 in any kind of New Deal;
 he is interested
 in the old Catholic game
 of the Seven Corporal
 and Seven Spiritual
 works of Mercy.

Carl Schmitt believes
 that Catholicism
 has the solution
 of all man's problems.

Carl Schmitt believes
 that the Catholic religion
 is the hope of the people,
 not the dope of the people.

Carl Schmitt believes
 that the mysticism of the faith
 should not be separated
 from the mysteries of the faith.

Carl Schmitt believes
 in ascetic theology

as well as he believes
 in dogmatic theology.
 Carl Schmitt believes
 in a functional society
 and he does not believe
 in an acquisitive society.
 Carl Schmitt believes
 in a democratic aristocracy
 and he does not believe
 in a plutocratic democracy. (151)

Maurin evidently had found somebody who agreed with many of the ideas he himself cherished and propagated. Moreover, that man was prepared to live and act according to those beliefs; he bore witness to their efficacy.

Whether he cited in conversation, in personal letters, or in published essays an individual like Schmitt, or H. Hergenhan (152), or Paul Chanson (153), or a group like the Jesuits in Paraguay (154), some German Benedictines (155), or the Missionaries of the Holy Trinity in Washington, D.C. (156), Maurin was often in effect saying: "Here is somebody who has the right idea; here is somebody who is doing something good."

Sometimes these allusions were very vague; seldom were they fully detailed and developed. In fact, to illustrate particular points in his philosophy, Maurin sometimes saw fit to refer to anonymous individuals. In an essay entitled "Two Reds" (157), for example, Maurin related how it was necessary for "a Russian Red" to explain some of his ideas to "an Irish Red". The latter agreed with Maurin's ideas, but expressed doubt that the Catholic Church was a friend of the workingmen.

In another essay, entitled "Communist Action in Schools a

Challenge to Catholics" (158), Maurin relates that "a young Puerto Rican" told him of Communist activity in his school's study club, while the teacher was an "interested listener". On the other hand, Maurin adds by way of contrast, "the dean of a Catholic college" told him that Catholic educators lack the knowledge and courage to bring Catholic social thought to the common man.

In a third essay, "On Specialization" (159), Maurin tells of "a Negro student", a minister's son, who tried to get a correlated knowledge of theology and science at a modern university, but did not succeed.

In each instance the "point" Maurin wished to make is quite clear, even though the persons involved are not identified.

If in some essays the individuals referred to remain anonymous, the propagandist was in other essays quite specific in naming persons who illustrated or exemplified important concepts. Here is one example:

A Dutch convert
used to say:
"When one is not a Socialist
at twenty,
there is something wrong
with his heart;
but if one is a Socialist
at forty
there is something wrong
with his head."
Dorothy Day,
Grace Branham
and Marguerite Gage
were Socialists
at twenty.
And they did not
wait to be forty
to give up Socialism.
So there is nothing wrong

either with their hearts
or their heads. (160)

It may not be amiss to cite another, longer example of the same technique. In the essay "Judaism and Catholicism" the propagandist names a number of individuals who bear witness to some of his own favourite ideas. That essay is quoted here:

Jacques Maritain

General Franco's
brother-in-law
accuses Maritain
of being a converted Jew.
Maritain says
that he is a convert,
but not
a converted Jew.
He adds that if he were
he would not be
ashamed of it.
He would, on the contrary,
be proud,
as his wife is proud,
of coming from a people
who gave the Blessed Mother
to the world.

Mrs. Maritain

Mrs. Maritain
is a convert
from Judaism.
Mrs. Maritain
thinks that Catholicism
is Judaism plus.
In becoming Catholic
Mrs. Maritain thinks
that she has kept
her Judaism
and added to it
what Catholicism has
that Judaism
does not have.
Mrs. Maritain thinks
that she is now
100% Jewish.

Dr. Herbert Ratner

Dr. Herbert Ratner,
 of the University of Chicago,
 became a Catholic
 two years ago.
 His father, a Russian Jew,
 gave him the name Herbert
 in the hope
 that he would keep up
 with Herbert Spencer.
 He tried to get
 what modern liberals,
 including Herbert Spencer,
 had to offer.
 He was not satisfied
 with what modern liberals
 had to offer.
 Now he says:
 "We are not
 attracted to the Church
 by Catholics;
 we were pushed
 into the Church
 by non-Catholics
 who did not have the stuff."

Father Arthur Klyber

Father Arthur Klyber,
 a Redemptorist,
 was born on the East Side.
 After a few years
 in the Navy
 he became a Catholic
 in Los Angeles.
 The good example
 of Catholics
 from Los Angeles
 brought Father Klyber,
 an East Side Jew,
 into the Church.
 The Catholic friends
 were always friendly
 to Klyber, the Jew,
 because they did not allow
 the poison of anti-Semitism
 to poison
 their human relations.

As a result
 Father Klyber is now
 a Catholic priest.

Six Other Priests

Six other converts
 from Judaism
 are now
 Catholic priests
 in the United States.
 If they had remained Jews
 they might have become
 Rabbis.
 As Rabbis,
 they would be commenting
 on the message
 of the Jewish Prophets.
 As priests,
 they announce
 the good news
 that the Messiah
 announced by the Prophets
 died on Calvary.
 As priests of Christ
 they again offer
 Christ's sacrifice
 on the altars
 of the Catholic Church. (161)

Besides dealing with personalities, Maurin sometimes related, however sketchily, incidents and personal experiences that helped to illustrate points he was trying to clarify. One example of that technique is found in the following quotation:

Two years ago
 I went to see Professor Moley,
 former head
 of President Roosevelt's Brain Trust,
 and said to him:
 "I came here to find out
 if I could make an impression
 on the depression
 by starting a rumpus
 on the campus.

But I found out
 that agitation is not rampant
 on the campus.
 Only business is rampant on the campus,
 although business is the bunk,
 May be," said I,
 "history cannot be made
 on the campus."

And turning toward his secretary,
 Professor Moley said:
 "That's right,
 we don't make history
 on the campus,
 we only teach it."
 And because history is taught
 but not made
 on the campus of our universities,
 the Catholic Worker
 is trying to make history
 on Union Square,
 where people have nothing to lose. (162)

Another example of the propagandist's relating a personal experience
 to illustrate a point is found in this anecdote:

I was once thrown out
 of a Knights of Columbus meeting
 because, as the K. of C. official said,
 I was radical.
 I was introduced as a radical
 before the college students
 of a Franciscan college,
 And the Franciscan Father added,
 "I am as radical
 as Peter Maurin."
 Speaking in a girls' college
 near St. Cloud, Minnesota,
 I was told by Bishop Busch,
 "Conservatives
 are up in a tree
 and you are trying
 to go down to the roots." (163)

It is clear, then, that Peter Maurin sometimes did, in his Easy Essays,
 illustrate his ideas by calling attention, first, to people who

exemplified them, and second, to incidents that pointed them up.

We may observe now that the propagandist sometimes alluded to persons and movements for another reason: to encourage them, and simultaneously to foster his own ideas. This may be seen from some of the foregoing selections as well as from the following one:

Catholic Houses of Hospitality
should be more than free guest houses
for the Catholic unemployed.
They could be vocational training schools,
including the training for the priesthood,
as Father Corbett proposes.
They could be Catholic reading rooms,
as Father McSorley proposes.
They could be Catholic Instruction Schools,
as Father Cornelius Hayes proposes.
They could be Round-Table Discussion Groups,
as Peter Maurin proposes.
In a word, they could be
Catholic Action Houses,
where Catholic Thought
is combined with Catholic Action. (164)

In connection with the above selection, Dorothy Day's comment is very apt:

Perhaps Peter mentioned priests by name in this way hoping that they would get under way some of these hospices so dear to his heart. But aside from the hospice at Graymoor, New York, run by the Franciscans, another hospice in St. Louis run by Father Dempsey and his successors, and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality which we started in Pittsburgh and which was taken over later by Bishop Hugh Boyle, there has not as yet, after these seventeen years, been any action on the part of the parishes or the dioceses throughout the country. The general tendency is still toward state responsibility for the needy. Bread lines have been initiated but no shelters. (165)

Fathers Corbett, McSorley and Hayes had something in common with Maurin, so he wished to indicate his agreement with them and lend some encouragement to them. Two open letters to Father Daniel Lord, S.J., (166)

are even more obvious examples of essays signifying approval and offering encouragement.

Now let us consider how Peter Maurin made use of authorities.

As we turn our attention to this matter of authorities, we are reminded of one of Dorothy Day's observations about Peter Maurin:

He quoted authorities to bolster his ideas, men of prestige, he used to say, recognizing humbly that he was not a man of distinction. (167)

It is our responsibility to explain by illustration and by commentary that statement.

To begin, we admit the obvious fact that Maurin had his favourites, that is, influential men whom he quoted and referred to quite frequently. They were among the men who expressed ideas that "got" him. Many others who also helped to form Maurin's outlook, many others whom he frequently mentioned in conversation, are not mentioned explicitly in the Easy Essays. The essays clearly reveal, however, that among the men whose ideas he deemed generally trustworthy were Mortimer Adler, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, G. K. Chesterton, Christopher Dawson, St. Francis of Assisi, Eric Gill, Jacques Maritain, Rev. Vincent McNabb, O.P., Archbishop John T. McNicholas, Emmanuel Mounier, Arthur Penty, Pope Pius XI, Pierre Joseph Proudhon, R. H. Tawney, and Thorstein Veblen. It may be taken for granted, of course, that Peter Maurin did not necessarily agree with everything that every one of the aforementioned persons said, for among those listed there were points of disagreement as well as areas of agreement.

It is also obvious that most of his favourite authorities were -- judging solely from the Easy Essays -- Catholics. This is not to be construed to mean that Maurin was narrow-minded or simply sectarian in his search for truth. Far from it. He regarded many non-Catholics as authorities in their special fields, and quoted them as such. He even took care that the views with which he disagreed were authoritative by quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing leading spokesmen for the opposition. It happens, though, that many of the Easy Essays deal with strictly Catholic matters, or with secular matters seen from a distinctly Catholic point of view; so that the "authorities" in most instances would, almost of necessity, have to be Catholics.

Some authorities he quoted directly (though not always with the strictest accuracy), some indirectly. Some of the quotations in the Easy Essays are famous, a few so common that school children can often identify them; others, the majority, are not so well known. Besides quoting, he liked to paraphrase and summarize. Each of these tendencies we shall consider in turn.

First, he liked to quote. Sometimes, no doubt, he took his quotations directly from published works, at the time of his own composing; other times he apparently relied upon his memory. How accurate are all the quotations he attributed to the people he cited we are not prepared to say; this because of the obscurity of the sources in so many instances. This much we can safely assert: though discrepancies may be found, say, in the exact wording and punctuation, the substance is probably reasonably accurate.

For instance, in an essay on the topic of money-lenders, Maurin attributes to Archbishop McNicholas the following statement:

"We have been guilty
of encouraging tyranny
in the financial world
until it has become
a veritable octopus
strangling the life
of our people." (168)

In another essay we find this passage:

Archbishop McNicholas says:
"Governments
have no fixed standards
of morality
and consequently
no moral sense.
They can scarcely settle
the question of war
for Christians.
Christians see and know
the injustice
of practically all wars
in our modern pagan world.
There is the very practical question
the informed Christians
who acknowledge the supreme dominion
of God.
Will such Christians
in our own country
form a mighty league
of conscientious non-combatants?" (169)

No further information is given in the printed essay. The propagandist does not tell us where we may, if we wish, find complete texts of the Archbishop's alleged remarks. He simply quotes him as having said what is contained within the quotation marks. Presumably, the fragmentary quotations are accurate; presumably, too, they capture the spirit and intention of the authority's meaning. For the propagandist's purposes, at least, they were apt. The ideas are powerful; their author was a

renowned prelate. The combination of a striking idea and a recognized authority is likely to make people think.

To the research scholar, however, incompleteness of desirable bibliographical data may sometimes be a source of some annoyance. One such selection follows:

"I understand Catholic apologetics
but I don't understand
Catholic sociology."

-- A Catholic Editor.

"Your stuff is new to us."

-- A Catholic Layman.

"There is nothing new about it;
it is Catholic doctrine."

-- A Catholic Priest.

"You are an idealist
and I am a materialist,
but I like to listen to you."

-- A Communist. (170)

Even though the idea in each case is of primary importance, of secondary interest (in some cases, at least) is the identification of the people who made the statements, as the persons involved may have some bearing on the way we judge and evaluate the statements. Understandably, in the minds of readers Maurin's perfunctory treatment of sources and authorities detracts from the value of some of the essays.

We hasten, however, to interject this note: Maurin was not always so careless about bibliographical data. Sometimes, indeed, he was fairly precise, as in the following selection:

On several occasions
Pope Leo XIII
wrote on the legitimacy
of several forms
of government.

In the encyclical
"Diuturnum Illud"
 we find this sentence:
 "Nothing prevents the Church
 from giving its approval
 to the government
 of one man
 or several men
 as long as the government
 is a just government
 and applies itself
 to foster the common good." (171)

Next, we observe that Maurin made use of quotations in a variety of ways, perhaps the most outstanding of which involved a series of short quotations. This is illustrated in a selection entitled "Listening to the Pope":

Lincoln Steffens says:
 "The political problem
 is not a political problem;
 it is an economic problem."
 Peter Kropotkin says:
 "The economic problem
 is not an economic problem;
 it is an ethical problem."
 Thorstein Voblen says:
 "There are no ethics
 in modern society."
 R. H. Tawney says:
 "There were high ethics
 in society
 when the Canon Law
 was the law of the land."
 The high ethics of the Canon Law
 are at the base
 of the Pope's encyclicals.
 So as George N. Shuster says:
 "It is a case
 of listening to the Pope
 or listening to nobody."
 For nobody but the Pope
 dares to talk ethics
 in terms of economics. (172)

Several brief "authoritative" statements, followed by his own concluding

remarks, to form a point: that is the technique used in the above selection, a technique found many times in the collected essays.

In some instances Maurin simply quoted a series of short, authoritative statements on one topic, without adding any remarks of his own. This is demonstrated in the phrased quotations comprising a selection on "The Third Order", as follows:

"We are perfectly certain
that the Third Order of St. Francis
is the most powerful antidote
against the evils that harass
the present age."

-- Leo XIII.

"Oh, how many benefits
would not the Third Order of St. Francis
have conferred on the Church
if it had been everywhere organized
in accordance with the wishes of Leo XIII."

-- Pius X.

"We believe that the spirit of the Third Order
thoroughly redolent of Gospel wisdom,
will do very much
to reform public and private morals."

-- Benedict XV.

"The general restoration of peace and morals
was advanced very much
by the Third Order of St. Francis,
which was a religious order indeed,
yet something unexampled up to that time."

-- Pius XI. (173)

Possibly the propagandist felt that in this case, and others, his own remarks would be unnecessary, the weight of the evidence and the prestige of the men quoted being conclusive enough. In other instances, as in the essay "Back to Christ -- Back to the Land!" (174), he made use of somewhat longer quotations, variously adding his own comments

or letting the quotations stand alone on their own merits.

Some rather famous quotations, too, Maurin found his own uses for: Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" (175); General Sherman's "war is hell" (176); Mirabeau's "There are three ways to make a living; stealing, begging and working" (177); Rousseau's "when a man dies he carries in his clutched hands only that which he has given away" (178); and Voltaire's "If God did not exist He would have to be invented" (179): all are well-known, but Maurin gives them his personal twist as he weaves them into his own synthesis.

Many times Maurin quoted authorities indirectly. One citation should suffice as an illustration:

An English Catholic,
Henry Sommerville,
says that those who want to find out
the intellectual errors
from which England is suffering
ought to read the book
of R. H. Tawney,
a non-Catholic,
entitled "Religion
and the Rise of Capitalism." (180)

At other times the propagandist used the words of well-known authorities, without acknowledging their exact source in any way.

Here, for instance, he adapts a sentence made famous by G. K. Chesterton:

The Communists say
that Christianity is a failure,
but it is not a failure
for the very good reason
that it has not been tried. (181)

And here he makes use of one of R. M. Hutchins' statements:

Colleges and universities
give the students

plenty of facts
 but very little understanding.
 They turn out specialists
 knowing more and more
 about less and less. (182)

In neither case does he credit the original authors of the expressions he adapted for his own purposes. Perhaps the offense -- if it may be called an "offense" at all -- is not grievous; it is at least unacademic. It must be remembered, though, that the Easy Essays were prepared for oral delivery as well as for publication, and it is a common practice of lecturers to make use of words and ideas of others without burdening the audience with oral footnotes, even though in writing the footnotes and paranthetical annotations may serve a very useful purpose. Minor infractions of accepted methodology notwithstanding, Peter Maurin did indeed demonstrate the truth of the statement that he,

...a humble man, liked prestige as well as point. He liked to quote authorities for his ideas, none of which he claimed were original with himself. (183)

Maurin also liked to paraphrase. Frequently he gave credit to the authorities whose ideas he had summarized and phrased in his own words. He paraphrased St. Thomas Aquinas:

According to St. Thomas Aquinas,
 man is more
 than an individual
 with individual rights;
 he is a person
 with personal duties
 toward God
 Himself
 and his fellow man. (184)

He paraphrased Christopher Dawson:

As Christopher Dawson says,
culture
has a lot to do
with religion. (185)

He paraphrased in series:

Harold Laski,
and English Jew,
says that liberals
have endorsed
bourgeois capitalism
in the name of liberalism.
Julien Benda,
a French Jew,
says that liberals
have given up
the search for truth
and consented to become
paid propagandists
for nationalism
as well as capitalism.
Mortimer Adler,
an American Jew,
says that liberals
are sophists
and not philosophers. (186)

Maurin's paraphrases seldom comply with the strict requirements of the common high school grammar text. They were not intended to. Actually, the propagandist first condensed the thoughts of others. These condensed thoughts he then ordinarily rendered in more popular phrasing.

Some of these summary-paraphrases he composed in a rather offhand, unscholarly manner. We cite one specific example:

I agree
with seven Bishops
that the criticism
of bourgeois capitalism
by the Communist Party
is a sound criticism.
I agree
with seven Bishops
that the main social aim

of the Communist Party,
 which is
 "to create a society
 where everyone works
 according to his ability
 and gets
 according to his needs"
 is a sound social aim.
 I agree
 with seven Bishops
 that the means used
 by the Communist Party
 are not sound.
 They are not right means,
 they are wrong means.
 The means used
 by the Communist Party
 are class struggle
 and proletarian dictatorship. (187)

Now, we should not be at all surprised to learn that seven Bishops hold the beliefs ascribed to them, nor that other Bishops may hold the same beliefs. Without necessarily raising doubts as to the propagandist's honesty of statement or intention, the point is this: some readers would like to know who those seven bishops are, and what they said in toto. The failure to specify sources, therefore, must be regarded as a defect. From the point of view of scholarship, not to mention the convenience of his readers, it is unfortunate that the writer did not supply more complete documentation. Here is where the "give and take" of conversation could be of great help -- if the sources were known. The need for a completely annotated edition of the Easy Essays is manifest.

To conclude our review of Peter Maurin's use of witnesses and authorities in the Easy Essays a summary of our findings may be in order.

Sparingly and with limited effectiveness, the propagandist illustrated his ideas by referring to people who exemplified them. An additional purpose, at times, in citing witnesses was to encourage both those who were already doing good work and those who were searching for outlets for their good intentions. Some witnesses and contacts he simply mentioned; others he treated at greater length. The propagandist recalled personal experiences and incidents, too, but these anecdotes were usually very sketchy; in conversations and in interviews he was, in this respect, much more generous than in his writings. It is clear that, as a writer, Peter Maurin was much more preoccupied with abstract ideas than with concrete illustrations.

Authorities more than witnesses, therefore, appealed to him strongly. He cited authorities in various ways. Some men he quoted directly, others indirectly; some ideas he paraphrased, others he summarized and paraphrased. But, inasmuch as his handling of authorities disregarded the recommendations of precise scholarship, it served his purpose as a furrowing propagandist only in a very limited way.

An outstanding defect of this phase of Maurin's propaganda technique is that frequently he was vague in specifying sources of his ideas. Nevertheless, one effect of his quotations and allusions is this: despite their disarming simplicity, his essays have something about them that may be termed "the ring of authority." There is no way of knowing how many people may have been on the verge of casting aside these child-like essays, only to have been suddenly held back by such expressions as, "St. Thomas Aquinas says...", "Dawson tells

us....," or "Maritain believes...."

Indeed, the name may often be the eye-catcher, the attention-getter; but it is the idea, finally, that is the mind-winner. In the case of the Easy Essays -- as always in the case of the propagandist himself -- what counts most, most of the time, is not the personality of the proclaimer but the idea itself. To be sure, there are times when we get the impression that Peter Maurin is saying in effect, "Such and such is true because so and so said it." Such an impression may at times be perfectly right and proper. Just as often, though, we get the impression that Peter Maurin is saying in effect, "Such and such is true and so and so has said it." This second impression has its obvious merits too. Authority, in either case, is recognized. The truth, in either case, is affirmed.

Some readers are impressed by the variety and scope of Peter Maurin's sources. As one writer, commenting on the propagandist as a conversationalist, observed,

Any number of sources, quotations and books were available from Peter's Encyclopedic mind. His suggestions were more often than not from non-Catholic sources. Although he was always ready to use the thought of Gill, Chesterton, Belloc and Vincent McNabb. (188)

Allusions culled from the New Testament and the Papal Encyclicals, from The Communist Manifesto and from Das Kapital are woven into an orderly pattern with quotations from men of letters like Cardinal Newman, T. S. Eliot, and Henry Adams. Social scientists like R. H. Tawney and John Maynard Keynes are represented along with philosophers like Mortimer Adler and Jacques Maritain, and educational leaders like

John Dewey and R. M. Hutchins. Catholic apologists G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc mingle with non-Catholic spokesmen John Haynes Holmes, Albert Jay Nock, and Aldous Huxley. People with whose theories Maurin fundamentally disagreed -- Karl Marx, Harold Laski, Martin Luther, Adam Smith, Margaret Sanger, to name several -- are permitted to expose some of their principal views.

Peter Maurin drew upon the distant past, the recent past, the present. The famous in his essays rub shoulders with the obscure. Authors from the British Isles, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and America congregate in some 200 pages of Easy Essays. The propagandist referred to Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas as well as Robert Burns, Padraic Colum and Robert Louis Stevenson. Popes and prelates are represented, and the Gospels, too, have their place in the Easy Essays.

We have tried to demonstrate in this section that one of Peter Maurin's propaganda techniques was the citation of witnesses and authorities. In our attempt to indicate why and how he employed this technique, the functional aspects have necessarily demanded most of our attention. But the technique is not so separated, so divorced from the man who employed it that we are unaware of an underlying explanation for his use of witnesses and authorities: the overflowing of the personality of the maker himself into the thing made. As one of his admirers once wrote:

Outstandingly I remember his humility. He was always ready to say, "Maybe you are right." "Go to see Father So and So, he is an authority in that field, I do not know it...." and in fact his regular custom of quoting from others in his Essays is evidence of that humility. (189)

9. Recommended Reading

Advisedly we treat Peter Maurin's technique of recommending reading under its own heading because it was a phase of his propaganda method quite distinct, though not entirely separated, from the others.

In the immediately preceding section of this chapter we reviewed the propagandist's use of authorities and witnesses. In the course of our study we observed how those authorities and witnesses were frequently cited to lend weight to, or to strengthen and bolster, the author's own assertions, and in some cases to acknowledge sources of his statements.

At the outset of this section we agree that Maurin sometimes cited books and recommended a good deal of reading for much the same reasons as he cited authorities and witnesses: that is, to validate his assertions, to indicate agreement or disagreement with well-known writers, or to acknowledge the sources of his ideas. There were other, and perhaps more important, reasons as well.

It is clear that Peter Maurin used this technique of recommending reading in three ways. First, he frequently appended to his Easy Essays as they appeared in The Catholic Worker lists of suggested reading. (190) These lists, however, did not necessarily have any direct relation to the essays to which they were appended. The editor of Catholic Radicalism, for this very reason, saw fit to omit such lists in the body of the book and to provide instead at the end of the collection of essays a compilation of those books "recommended repeatedly

by Peter Maurin in reading lists appended to his essays." (191)

While the recommended reading lists that were merely appended to the essays (but that are not essential to the subject matter of the essays to which they were "accidentally" appended) were a significant part of the propagandist's over-all program of indoctrination, they cannot be considered as part, strictly speaking, of his literary technique. Consequently, it seems unnecessary to comment any further here on that particular phase of Maurin's propaganda efforts.

Besides those lists of books that were merely appended, however, there are other instances of the propagandist recommending specific works of literature for the careful perusal of his readers -- and these latter instances may properly be regarded as integral parts of Maurin's literary technique. These allusions to important works are to be found incorporated within the individual Easy Essays, forming a real part of such essays, not being merely "tacked on" as an afterthought. The two ways Peter Maurin did this give us the second and third types of recommended reading lists that the propagandist used: within the Easy Essays themselves we often find the author (a) indirectly suggesting the reading of certain works, and (b) directly urging the reading of certain works. These constitute the main concern of this section.

We may observe, in the first place, that the Easy Essays do more than certify that their author was widely read. They arouse the interest of readers in the books and sources used by Peter Maurin. As an illustration, consider the following excerpt:

We Catholics have a better criticism
 of bourgeois society
 than Victor Considerant's criticism,
 used by Karl Marx.
 Our criticism of bourgeois society
 is the criticism of Blessed Thomas More.
 We Catholics have a better conception of Communism
 than the conception of Proudhon.
 Our conception of Communism
 is the conception of St. Thomas Aquinas
 in his doctrine of the "Common Good."
 We Catholics have better means
 than the means proposed by Karl Marx.
 Our means to realize the "Common Good"
 are embodied in Catholic Action.
 Catholic Action is action by Catholics
 for Catholics and non-Catholics.
 We don't want to take over the control
 of political and economic life.
 We want to reconstruct the social order
 through Catholic Action
 exercised in Catholic institutions. (192)

Anyone who is interested in more than merely scratching the surface of
 these significant social and ethical theories might be led to investi-
 gate the fuller treatments of the theories mentioned in the Easy Essay.
 The fragmentary outline of the Easy Essay serves in that case, as an
 inducement to further, fuller reading.

The same may be said of a large number of Peter Maurin's
 controversial essays. The enquiring mind will not stop with a consid-
 eration of the propagandist's theses as they appear in the simplified
 form of his own essays, but will be drawn to study the validity of
 such theses in the light of the fuller treatments available in the
 books and sources his essays suggest.

That this is what the author ultimately desired is clearly
 illustrated in the following excerpt from a published interview with

him. The interviewer's questions are in italics:

By cult do you mean liturgical prayer?

Yes, community prayer and the relationship of our work to it. For this study, I recommend Guardini's book.

What do you mean by culture?

There must be intellectual discussion, but it must come spontaneously, not be forced....

Have you any books along this line to recommend?

Yes, there is one by a Polish priest, "Is Modern Culture Doomed?"

And what about cultivation?

The private gardens needn't be so big. Then they will not take too much time for isolated work. More time can be spent in the fields together.

Have you a book that might interest along this line?

I would advise this book by Father McNabb, "Old Principles and the New Order." (193)

Though in the above interview he makes direct recommendations, the tendency of the propagandist to suggest indirectly the reading of books on important issues is more obvious in a passage such as this:

When in 1891 Pope Leo XIII
wrote his encyclical
on the condition of labor
he emphasized the lack of ethics
in modern society.
When in 1899 Thorstein Veblen
wrote "The Theory of the Leisure Class"
he emphasized the same thing.
R. H. Tawney, then an Oxford student,
learned that when the Canon Law,
that is to say, the law of the Church,
was the law of the land
there were high ethics in society.
So R. H. Tawney decided to study
how society has passed down
from the high ethics of the Canon Law
to the no ethics of today.
What R. H. Tawney found out
about the history of ethics
of the last five hundred years
is embodied in his book,
"Religion and the Rise of Capitalism." (194)

In that selection, the propagandist introduces each work with a brief,

key statement leading up to the book by R. H. Tawney, the one he apparently wishes particularly to stress.

Another example of how Peter Maurin tried to arouse interest in a particular book is found in the following passage:

Dr. Herbert E. Cory
is now dean
of the Department
of Liberal Arts
of the State University
of Washington.
The problem of specialization
used to worry him
when he was an atheist
and a Marxist.
With the help of a Jesuit
he found the solution.
And this led him
into the Catholic Church.
You can find the presentation
of the correlated knowledge
of Dr. Herbert E. Cory
in his book entitled:
"The Emancipation
of a Free Thinker."
Bruce, of Milwaukee,
is the publisher. (195)

Again we observe how Peter Maurin leads up to the title of a book by first providing brief, pertinent background information. In this case his recommendation is quite explicit.

Such methods have been persuasive for many of his readers. But the propagandist used other, more direct, methods to encourage the reading of works he regarded as important. The quotations we are about to cite seem to have more of the ring of a command than the passages already quoted. Sometimes, for instance, after treating a topic very superficially, he recommended books containing fuller

information, as in this passage:

The Catholic social philosophy
is the philosophy of the Common Good
of St. Thomas Aquinas.
Three books where this philosophy is expressed are:
"The Thomistic Doctrine of the Common Good,"
by Seraphine Michel;
"The Social Principles of the Gospel,"
by Alphonse Lugan;
"Progress and Religion,"
by Christopher Dawson. (196)

Or, again, in another essay in which the propagandist refers to the
works performed by the early Christians, he writes:

If you want to know more about it
read the two following books:
(a) "The Great Commandment of the Gospel"
by the Apostolic Delegate,
(b) "The Valerian Persecution,"
by Father Patrick Healy,
of the Catholic University. (197)

Sometimes, apparently to encourage reading, he threw out
challenging, provocative statements; these he followed not with an
explanation but with a plea -- indeed, almost a command -- to read the
books from which these thought-provoking statements were distilled.

Here is an example:

The machine
is not an improvement
on man's skill;
it is an imitation
of man's skill.
Read "Post-Industrialism"
by Arthur Penty.
The best means
are the pure means
and the pure means
are the heroic means.
Read "Freedom
in the Modern World"
by Jacques Maritain.

The future of the Church
 is on the land,
 not in the city;
 for a child
 is an asset
 on the land
 and a liability
 in the city.
 Read "The Church
 and the Land"
 by Father Vincent McNabb, O.P. (198)

Another example of the same approach may be cited. But in this passage the "introductions" are fuller and the reading of the books mentioned at the conclusion of each verse seems more compulsory:

Thinking is individual,
 not collective.
 Fifty million Frenchmen
 may be wrong,
 while one Frenchman
 may be right.
 One thinks
 better than two,
 and two
 better than two hundred.
 The national thinking
 of Benito Mussolini,
 the racial thinking
 of Adolph Hitler
 and the mass thinking
 of Joseph Stalin
 are not what I mean
 by thinking.
 Read "The Crowd,"
 by Gustave LeBon.
 Social power
 is more important
 than political power.
 And political power
 is not the road
 to social power.
 The road to social power
 is the right use
 of liberty.
 Read "Our Enemy the State,"
 by Albert Jay Nock.

Patrick Henry said,
 "Give me liberty,
 or give me death!"
 What makes man
 a man
 is the right use
 of liberty.
 The rugged individualists
 of the Liberty League,
 the strong-arm men
 of the Fascist State
 and the rugged collectivists
 of the Communist Party
 have not yet learned
 the right use
 of liberty.
 Read "Freedom in the Modern World,"
 by Jacques Maritain.

Everybody
 looks for a leader
 and nobody
 likes to be dictated to.
 Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin
 try to be at the same time
 leaders and dictators.
 A leader is a fellow
 who follows a cause
 in words and deeds.
 A follower is a fellow
 who follows the leader
 because he sponsors the cause
 that the leader follows.
 Read "Leadership or Domination,"
 by Paul Piggors.
 Paul Piggors makes a case for domination
 in times of crisis,
 and in this he is wrong.
 Domination is not the way
 to create order
 out of chaos.
 Leadership is always the way
 to create order out of chaos.

"A man is a man
 for all that,"
 says Robert Burns.
 To bring out
 the man in man,

such is the purpose
 of the Communitarian Movement,
 A Communitarian is a fellow
 who refuses to be
 what the other fellow is,
 and chooses to be
 what he wants
 the other fellow
 to be.
 Read "Easy Essays,"
 by Peter Maurin. (199)

we may note in passing that when Peter Maurin differed with a salient thought in a book he would otherwise endorse, he sometimes said so, as may be seen from the fourth verse of the passage just quoted. It goes without saying, of course, that he might well have taken issue with any number of ideas in the works he most highly recommended; but his first purpose in the Easy Essays was to try to awaken interest in those books; analysis and criticism would emanate from the careful reading and discussion that should normally follow. He did not clutter his simple essays with detailed analyses.

Nor was Peter Maurin reluctant to name authors and titles of books with which he fundamentally disagreed -- e.g., the writings of some of the atheistic communists -- for an understanding of their ideas was part of his own background. Such books, however, he did not in an approving way recommend to the public, but simply referred to them in contrast with the Christian viewpoint. (200) At the same time, he was not at all averse to drawing out true and good concepts from writings that are partly fallacious, for he realized that there is an element of truth in every heresy -- truth distorted, exaggerated, taken out of context, twisted, but still more or less discernible to

the man of wisdom. Maurin knew that goodness and truth are often found in unseemly settings, just as evil and falsehood often insinuate themselves into works and persons of great merit and virtue.

Having considered the "what" and the "how", we may now turn to the "why" of this aspect of Maurin's propaganda technique.

We need not dwell at length upon the place of significant literature in Catholic Action. Catholic Action groups generally recognize the importance of good reading; some draw up reading plans for members; others supply general lists; etc. Regardless of the policies of others, Peter Maurin, a pioneer in the American lay apostolate, placed great stress upon good reading for the purpose of "formation" of worthy -- spiritually and intellectually well-informed -- leaders. The fundamental point is aptly expressed in the Latin, Agere sequitur esse.

As we have already seen, one of Maurin's aims was the establishment of agronomic centers that might combine cult, culture, and cultivation: liturgy, literature, and agriculture. In striving for the "cultural" phase of this trivium, he used a variety of approaches.

An important part of his technique of private indoctrination was the drawing up of personal reading lists suited to the needs of the individuals whom he was instructing. In a more general way he introduced his followers to the works of Eric Gill, Hilaire Belloc, et al., through the frequent discussions held at the Houses of Hospitality. Even in a radio interview in 1937 the propagandist was prepared to recommend directive reading: to the question, "where will we

find the guiding principles of social reconstruction which will bring about this order based on justice and love?", Peter Maurin replied in his typical manner:

We will find them in the social teachings of the Catholic Church through the centuries. In recent years these teachings have been reiterated in the encyclicals, especially in those of Pius XI and Leo XIII, and in the writings of churchmen, sociologists and economists such as Cardinal Manning, Bishop Von Ketteler, Prof. Toniolo and the Marquis de La Tour du Pin. (201)

In view of these techniques he consistently employed in his oral propaganda, we are not surprised at a similar insistence upon purposeful reading in the Easy Essays.

Still, the question "Why?" remains only partly answered. A simple, direct answer is now in order: Peter Maurin wanted his hearers and readers to help reconstruct the social order. He wanted them to act. But he did not want them to act blindly. He wanted them, first, to think. Once, for instance, when asked if he wanted to get people on the land, he replied: "First, to get them thinking so that they will see that they should go on the land." (202) As a result of correct thinking, he hoped, people would become inspired to act, and -- what is more important -- become prepared to act in a beneficial way for the common good. He and others clarifying thought in their own ways would supposedly awaken interest; literature and discussion would enlighten the minds of the interested. He himself explains:

The idea...should start the will into action, and when it does, the soul is happy. Action must follow ideas. The sin of the intellectuals is to let the good ideas stay in their heads. They do not result in action, and, since they should be the leaders and are looked up to by the workers as leaders, this irresponsibility on their part is the reason why the workers turn against the intellectuals. (203)

Obviously, no teacher or propagandist could hope to cover by himself every detail in the reconstruction of the social order. No reformer could hope to achieve such a vast vision unaided. A fuller development of the scheme of reconstruction can be found in the combined writings of the great social thinkers; the job of the propagandist as a reformer was to lead people to wellsprings of significant social thought. This Peter Maurin attempted.

Now, in doing this, the propagandist realized that his readers might possibly be led to conclusions and plans quite different from his own. The largeness of his mind allowed for such an eventuality. He did not tremble before ideas and plans; he measured them with his understanding of the Gospel. He knew that the Catholic worker movement was not the only or the whole solution; he knew that the Catholic worker way of life was not the way everybody would or should adopt in all its practical details. Each person, he held, must be crazy in his own crazy way -- in the sense of being "fools for Christ." By means of purposeful reading he hoped to help people to realize more fully their individual capacities and their social obligations.

Furthermore, Peter Maurin was disturbed by the common tendency of the masses to accept ideas and programs at their face value. Demagogues were offering fake panaceas for the ills of society, and many of the uninformed were willing to accept them. To counteract such conditions, the Christian propagandist drew up a reading program that could make people more discerning in their judgment, better equipped to evaluate ideas, while at the same time providing ideas for a

Christian reconstruction of a crumbling society.

Maurin's recommended reading technique was part of a large scheme of propaganda designed to make the workers scholars and the scholars workers -- as far as that ideal could possibly be realized.

As he said himself:

The knowledge-for-knowledge-sake business is no good. It must be used for the common good. The worker often doesn't think, and consequently doesn't have the answers. If the intellectuals just talk, they make no impression on him. When the worker sees the intellectual putting his ideas into action, he says, "What's the great idea?" and he watches him. He sees that he reads books for enlightenment, and he is attracted to reading them, too, and that is what he needs, namely, to cultivate his mind. (204)

As Peter Maurin usually had to "catch" people "on the fly" -- in Columbus Circle, in Skid Row restaurants, on buses, at mealtime in the House of Hospitality -- he employed the time-saving device of recommended reading. One of his followers tells us:

In Peter's terse and precise manner of giving one everything in as few words and as little time as possible he would often use the expression, "If you want to know how things got that way, read 'Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism' by Amintore Fanfani. If you want to know how they are, read 'Land of the Free' by Herbert Agar. If you want to know how they should be, read 'Social Principles of the Gospels' by Alphonse Lugan." (205)

More than a time-saver, though, this technique is pedagogically sound.

Whereas the propagandist tried to awaken, the books he recommended were supposed to enlighten.

Peter Maurin was ever the humble teacher trying to lead his "pupils" to sources of truth, so that they would eventually help to transform the world and create the type of society in which it would be easier for the average man to be good. However laudable such an

objective may be, a purely intellectual approach is clearly insufficient in itself to achieve it: because ideas often win intellectual assent without stimulating people to act. Furthermore, the propagandist obviously over-estimated the average person's willingness and capacity for intellectual development.

The intellectual approach should be only part of any reasonable Christian program. Peter Maurin, despite his evident and excessive optimism, was not entirely unaware of this, nor did he neglect to emphasize (in his own way) the spiritual sources of personal development. Knowledge is one thing; virtue is another. Peter Maurin encouraged both.

10. Humour

Had Peter Maurin not had a winning sense of humour, all might have been lost.

We speak now of humour in the generic sense, but presently we shall be dealing with the several specific forms it took in his writings. Unfortunately, the *Easy Essays* do not reveal the fulness and depth of the propagandist's humour; they do not adequately reveal the kindly sense of the incongruous and the broad human sympathies that were evident in his extempore conversations. We tried in Chapter II to capture some of the warm charm his friends knew him to possess, but which his words in cold print do not always radiate.

Indeed, he was more noted for his seriousness, his earnestness, his sense of urgency. But a sense of humour, though it was not his most outstanding personal trait, was definitely a part of his personality. This humour, however, as we might expect, was not the ebullient, boisterous, back-slapping type; it was more refined, more genuine, more intellectual. Preoccupied though he was with the weightier problems of the world, Maurin was far from indifferent to the lighter side of life.

Moreover, his sense of humour -- in the form it took in his writings -- was such that it sharpened the contrast between things as they are and things as they should be. In this way his humour was an agent of clarification.

We are already familiar with a good deal of Maurin's "wise-

cracking phraseology" (206) -- his puns and neologisms, catchy phrases and witty definitions. In conversation, too, he could be very sharp and quick. A writer who had been subjected to his shock treatment once asked him what he thought of politeness. The propagandist smiled and quipped: "When a woman is too polite to another woman, you can be sure she is cutting her throat." (207)

One time while talking with three journalists, Maurin expressed the opinion that journalists should not only record but also make history.

"Have you ever worked in a newspaper office?" one of the men asked Peter and perhaps he was condescending.

"Yes, once in Chicago, I worked at the Associated Press," Peter said, "wielding a mop, not a pen." (208)

On another occasion somebody asked him what the relationship of football was to education. "Football has the same significance to education," he replied, "that bull fighting has to agriculture." (209)

That same mental alertness and ingenious, unexpected manner of expression, that same wit, appears in his published writings. We see it, for instance, in some of his rhymes:

Bourgeois capitalists
don't want their pie
in the sky
when they die. (210)

...it is the money-lenders' dole
that put Uncle Sam
into a hole. (211)

"I came here to find out
if I could make an impression
on the depression
by starting a rumpus
on the campus...." (212)

Such rhymes (as we have already insisted) were not a "poetic" requirement; they were simply clever turns of words.

We see Maurin's wit, too, in his use of alliteration: "cult... culture...cultivation," (213) "Rome, Reunion and Reconstruction," (214) and

To use property
to acquire more property
is not the proper use
of property.
It is a prostitution
of property. (215)

Then, of course, there is that witty combination of repetition, slang, and puns entitled "Big Shots and Little Shots":

America is all shot to pieces
since the little shots
are no longer able
to become big shots.
When the little shots
are not satisfied
to remain little shots
and try to become
big shots,
then the big shots
are not satisfied
to remain big shots
and try to become
bigger shots.
And when the big shots
become bigger shots
then the little shots
become littler shots.
And when the little shots
become littler shots
because the big shots
become bigger shots
then the little shots
get mad at the big shots.
And when the little shots
get mad at the big shots,
because the big shots
by becoming bigger shots

make the little shots
 littler shots
 they shoot the big shots
 full of little shots.
 But by shooting the big shots
 full of little shots
 the little shots
 do not become big shots;
 they make everything all shot.
 And I don't like
 to see the little shots
 shoot the big shots
 full of little shots;
 that is why
 I am trying to shoot
 both the big shots
 and the little shots
 full of hot shots. (216)

Maurin's wit is also seen in his paradoxes: statements that
 at first seem absurd or irrational but that prove on reflection to be
 true or at least highly credible. Here is a paradox of Christian
 charity:

When a man dies
 and leaves a lot of money
 the papers say:
 "He left so much."
 But they say:
 "He left so much."
 Why did he
 leave so much?
 Well, he did not know enough
 to carry it with him
 when he died
 by giving it
 to the poor
 for Christ's sake
 during his lifetime. (217)

And one of the paradoxes of pacifism:

We call barbarians
 people living
 on the other side of the border.
 We call civilized

people living
 on this side of the border.
 We civilized
 living on this side of the border,
 are not ashamed
 to arm ourselves to the teeth
 so as to protect ourselves
 against the barbarians
 living on the other side.
 And when the barbarians
 born on the other side of the border
 invade us,
 we do not hesitate
 to kill them
 before we have tried
 to civilize them
 So we civilized
 exterminate barbarians
 without civilizing them.
 and we persist
 in calling ourselves civilized. (218)

His contradiction of generally accepted views is a brilliant facet for
 the propagandist's wit. We cite one more of the many possible examples.
 Many people subscribe to the saying, "Two heads are better than one,"
 but Maurin says:

Thinking is individual,
 not collective.
 Fifty million Frenchmen
 may be wrong,
 while one Frenchman
 may be right.
 One thinks
 better than two,
 and two
 better than two hundred. (219)

If most of the examples of Maurin's humour — specifically his
 wit — so far considered seem to be on a more or less "intellectual"
 plane, we should now discover that he was not incapable of more popular
 jesting. First, here is a humorous selection with which he sometimes

needed his Irish audiences:

Three thousand years ago
 when a Jew
 met a Jew
 he asked him
 "What can I do for you?"
 Now, when a Jew
 meets a Jew
 he asks him
 "What can I get out of you?"
 Two thousand years ago,
 when a Greek
 met a Greek
 they started to philosophize.
 Now when a Greek
 meets a Greek
 they start a business.
 A thousand years ago
 when an Irishman
 met an Irishman
 they started a school.
 Now when an Irishman
 meets an Irishman
 you know what they start --
 I don't have to tell you. (220)

He poked fun at a contemporary government scheme, in a manner that
 had popular appeal:

Some one said
 that what is needed
 is a machine
 that could do the work
 of one man
 and would take ten men
 to run it.
 But as somebody else said,
 "We don't need it;
 we have it already:
 the WPA." (221)

And he made use of the words of a popular song, in a manner that is
 at once rather humorous and serious:

In the beginning of Christianity
 the hungry were fed

the naked were clothed,
 the homeless were sheltered,
 the ignorant were instructed
 at a personal sacrifice.
 And the pagans
 used to say
 about the Christians,
 "See how they love each other."
 Father Arthur Ryan,
 born in Tipperary,
 used to call
 this period of history
 "Christian Communism."
 But it is
 a long, long way
 to Tipperary. (222)

Peter Maurin was not a noted story-teller. But included among
 the Easy Essays are a few anecdotes that are both entertaining and
 penetrating. The first of these depends for its humour upon the slang
 phraseology, but the moral -- which the propagandist himself clearly
 draws from it for us -- is far from funny:

I was in a cafeteria
 in Greenwich Village.
 Two young fellows
 were talking.
 One said to the other,
 "Your father has the stuff,
 but he hasn't the push."
 And the other said:
 "And I have the push,
 but not the stuff."
 The father had the stuff,
 But he could not push it,
 and the son had the push,
 but he had nothing to push.
 Catholic journalists
 have the stuff,
 but do not have the push,
 and non-Catholic journalists
 have the push,
 but do not have the stuff. (223)

He also relates three "True Stories" in one essay. In the first of these

we see that he was not above poking fun at himself:

When I was in Spokane
 a Catholic Sister
 told me:
 "I have a little story
 to tell you
 and I think
 you will like it.
 I met an Indian woman
 who was carrying
 what looked like
 a white boy.
 I said to her:
 'You don't mean to tell me
 that you married
 a white man.'
 'Oh no,' she said,
 'Just a Frenchman.'"

The second "True Story," like the first, has an ironic moral to it:

An Englishman
 and an American
 were flying over
 the Egyptian Sudan.
 Under them
 was a stretch of houses
 four miles long.
 The American
 asked the Englishman:
 "What is the population
 of this town?"
 "Nine Englishmen,"
 answered the Englishman.

The third, continuing the "racial" theme, is quite incisive in its irony:

A German
 owned a fruit farm
 in British Columbia.
 He and his wife
 were considered
 as second-class citizens
 by the British element.
 His wife succeeded
 in inducing him
 to sell the fruit farm
 and go back to Germany.

She could not stand
 to be considered inferior
 by the British element.
 The English think
 they are superior
 to the Germans
 and the Germans think
 they are superior
 to the English.
 They cannot stand
 to be considered
 inferiors.
 They can give it
 but they cannot take it. (224)

The three stories just quoted form a unified essay. Each involves basically the same theme. Each contains an element of humour. Each is intentionally ironic. A kind of logical progression links them into a meaningful homily.

It is often difficult to classify Maurin's irony into either of the customary categories, "cutting" or "gentle". Penetrating is the right word for it most of the time. Here is an instance:

We put on our coins:
 "In God we trust."
 but persist in thinking
 that everybody else
 ought to pay cash. (225)

A sensitive person, an incongruous situation, an unexpected play on words, a flash of wit. But is that all? Does nothing at all remain after the laugh? Is the writer merely joking? Is it possible to miss the point? His ironic humour -- whether it is original or borrowed -- may begin with a pin-prick, but it usually penetrates far beneath the surface.

As a satirist, too, Peter Maurin was fairly effective. His

own feelings, though restrained and refined of course, colour his exposure of the follies and foibles of a spiritually rootless, economically ruthless society. His criticism of the progress-praising, divinity-denying bourgeois mentality among "big shots" and "little shots" alike is provocative and penetrating. A satirical and paradoxical selection, "On Being Crazy," is one example:

People went crazy for Democracy,
majority rule, mob rule.
Then they went crazy
for the War for Democracy,
trying to bring Peace through War.
Then they went crazy for Normalcy;
then they went crazy for Technocracy;
then they went crazy for the NRA
and they say that I am crazy.
They say that I am crazy
because I refuse to be crazy
the way everybody else is crazy.
For, if I tried to be crazy
the way everybody else is crazy
I know that I would be crazy.
So I persist in being crazy
in my own crazy way
and I am trying to make other people crazy
my way. (226)

And in the following selections the full powers of Peter Maurin's multifaceted humour -- at once charming, pleasing, and yet satirical, somewhat ironical -- conspire to penetrate to the roots of the folly he saw in the attitudes and conduct of men who had severed their ties with their cultural traditions:

When the Irish were Irish
a thousand years ago,
the Irish were scholars.
And when the Irish were scholars
the Irish were Greek scholars.
And when the Irish were Greek scholars
the Irish spoke Greek
as well as Irish.

And when the Irish spoke Greek
 as well as Irish,
 Greek was Irish
 to the Irish.
 Greek was Irish
 to the Irish
 and now
 Irish is Greek
 to the Irish.
 Irish is Greek
 to the Irish now
 and Hebrew is Chinese
 to the Jews.
 Now that Irish is Greek
 to the Irish
 and Jewish is Chinese
 to the Jews,
 they shout with the Anglo-Saxons:
 Service for profits
 Time is money
 Cash and carry
 Business is business
 Keep smiling
 Watch your step
 How is the rush?
 How are you making out?
 How is the world treating you?
 The law of supply and demand
 Competition is the life of trade
 Your dollar is your best friend
 So is your old man.
 So the Jews
 are no longer Jews.
 So the Irish
 are no longer Irish.
 So the Jews and the Irish
 are no longer green.
 And that is
 what makes the Reds
 Red. (227)

We may now summarize our findings.

Though the full powers of Peter Maurin's personal charm may
 not be in evidence very often, the propagandist's sense of humour does
 appear in several forms in his writings. The same wit that was one

mark of his table-talks is also found in his essays -- in his rhymes and alliterations, in his puns and paradoxes. Popular jesting, too, is occasionally found in his writings. Several mock-humorous "stories" afford the propagandist an opportunity to moralize with effect. Penetrating irony and satire are also among his strong points. Behind the humour of the *Easy Essays*, however, there is always a certain undeniable seriousness that is sometimes latent but much more often patent. Finally it is this seriousness, this earnestness and urgency, that pervades his writings; a seriousness relieved by light but significant touches.

Apropos of these remarks is Dorothy Day's observation concerning Peter Maurin's use of humour in his public speaking engagements:

It amused people to hear him talk about "making the encyclicals click." He tried desperately hard to use American slang so as to "reach the man on the street." He didn't despise puns, plays on words, the use of exaggeratedly big words to tickle the minds of his listeners, to poke fun at the college professors, or to flatter the vanity of the man on the park bench. He got people in a receptive mood that way. It was all in a spirit of fun and he laughed with them.... (228)

Though his humour was not always understood, though it caused some people to laugh at him, and though some people failed to see the philosophy wrapped up in the fun -- though, in short, his humour had its drawbacks -- in his personal contacts, the propagandist's humour was a distinct asset. In his writings his humour (allowing for the same qualifications mentioned above) has been an effective instrument for winning and retaining interest.

The product of both his natural disposition and conscious

cultivation, Peter Maurin's sense of humour was an attractive propaganda technique.

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35. Maurin, op. cit., p. 198.
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46. Ibid., p. 111.
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85. Day, unpublished manuscript, p. 14.
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217. Ibid., p. 172.

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220. Ibid., p. 55.

221. Ibid., p. 121.

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See also: Joseph A. Brieg, "Apostle on the Bum," The Commonweal, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, April 29, 1938, p. 12.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Introduction states the purpose of this essay, namely, to study the techniques employed by a twentieth-century propagandist named Peter Maurin. Clearly, no deliberate attempt has been made in these pages to analyse or evaluate the thought of Peter Maurin, though this may at times have been incidentally accomplished as a by-product. Not Peter Maurin as philosopher, but Peter Maurin as propagandist, has been the concern of this essay. Toward that end, the following plan was used:

Chapter I presents a biographical sketch of Peter Maurin. This sketch is the result of a compilation of data from published essays by a score of writers, an unpublished manuscript by Dorothy Day, personal interviews with several of the propagandist's closest associates, correspondence with one of his relatives and several friends, and official documents and records.

Chapter II depends upon similar sources as the previous chapter for a brief review of Peter Maurin's activities as an orator and agitator, both in New York City and "on the road". In this chapter glimpses of his characteristic methods as a public speaker and as a private indoctrinator are presented. An explanation of his collaboration with Dorothy Day in the founding of the Catholic Worker movement is also offered. His tactics as a speaker actually tie in with his techniques as a writer.

Chapter III consists of an analysis of ten outstanding

characteristics of Peter Maurin's literary technique as embodied in his Easy Essays. Treated under separate headings are these characteristics of his style: Phrased Format, Simplicity, Popular Diction, Conciseness, Repetition, Definitions, Orderliness, Authorities and Witnesses, Recommended Reading, and Humour. This chapter, though it draws upon several authorities, is largely original work.

This essay is fully documented throughout, and contains as well an annotated bibliography and several appendices.

We have treated in this essay the work of an unforgettable and lovable person, a remarkable man who discovered some radical Christian ideas and, rather late in life, took upon himself the responsibility of restating those ideas in the language of the man on the street. The frightening circumstances of widespread spiritual beggary and material privation, and the explicit papal call for Catholic Action, impelled Peter Maurin to go down into the street to spread in "his own crazy way" the radical ideas he had drawn from his varied experiences and extensive reading. He was correctly known as a troubadour, teacher, and agitator. In the opinion of many who knew him Peter Maurin exemplified the ideas he propounded as a personal indoctrinator and public speaker.

We have discussed in these pages many of the techniques Peter Maurin employed as an agitator and essayist. But we have not maintained that he always selected the most effective techniques; we have merely commented upon those he did select. We have not maintained that he achieved perfection in the use of the techniques of his choice; on the

contrary, we have, whenever warranted, called attention to defects. We have not maintained that Peter Maurin was a "great" writer, though we have submitted that his Easy Essays are distinctive and fairly effective for the purposes he had in mind.

Two noticeable weaknesses in Peter Maurin's propaganda program we have repeatedly mentioned. First, he over-simplified the profound and complex ideas which obsessed him, and thus is partly responsible for some of the misunderstandings, difficulties, and inconsistencies of that scattered and variegated movement which his propaganda helped to inspire and promote. Second, he over-estimated the average human capacity for study and the average human willingness to act according to right reason.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the end Peter Maurin sought to achieve -- the promotion of Catholic Action -- is good; and the technical means he used as propagandist for that cause, though indifferent in themselves, are, as he used them, valid and pure. That he might have been a more effective propagandist had he done "this-or-that" is a matter of speculation; that he was not entirely ineffective is a matter of fact.

His message did "take" among some very zealous, articulate Catholics who over the years and in widely separated localities established over a score of Houses of Hospitality, several communal farms, and an unknown number of Catholic Worker cells. He did succeed in some very important instances in "making his point", so that today hundreds of individuals and several organizations and publications

admit varying degrees of indebtedness to him. Allowing for the revolutionary character of his synthesis, and the hardened secularism, indifference and unpreparedness of most of his audience, his propaganda tactics did to some extent "work". Though he did not transform society, he did "make contact" with many people who are now attempting in their own ways (which is what he wanted) to reconstruct the social order. Under the leadership of Dorothy Day, the movement he conceived has had an undeniable influence on American Catholicism. Some fruits of Peter Maurin's furrowing efforts are in evidence today. What the future may yield will depend upon the fecundity of that soil and the adroitness of other labourers.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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An editorial on the occasion of the founding of the Catholic Worker and the appearance of the first issue of the newspaper. This editorial recognizes the significance and timeliness of the Catholic Worker, movement and paper.

-----, "The Catholic Worker," editorial in The Commonweal, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, May 1, 1953, p. 89.

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-----, "Editorial," in Integrity, Vol. III, No. 9, June 1949, pp. 1-2.

A panegyric editorial on "the father of the lay apostolate in America." This editorial shows a deep appreciation of Peter Maurin's paradoxical way of life, and hails him, in clever understatement, as a most influential Catholic apostle.

-----, "Fools for Christ," an article in Time, Vol. LI, No. 22, May 24, 1948, pp. 56-57.

This article quotes one of the Easy Essays and provides a brief biographical sketch of Peter Maurin, with an account of his partnership with Dorothy Day in leading the Catholic Worker movement. This article confirms for a general audience what is common knowledge to followers of the Catholic Worker movement.

-----, "For Christ the Worker," article in Time, Vol. XXXI, No. 16, April 18, 1938, pp. 46-47.

This article summarizes the main facts concerning the founding, aims, and activities of the Catholic Worker movement, featuring the two leading personalities, Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. It confirms ideas found in other essays.

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This obituary on Peter Maurin declares that he and Cardinal Suhard were kindred spirits. It acknowledges the debt the liturgical movement in America owes to Peter Maurin.

-----, "Peter Maurin," editorial in The Commonweal, Vol. L, No. 7, May 27, 1949, pp. 164-165.

This is a brief editorial on the occasion of Peter Maurin's death. It praises his achievements.

-----, "Peter Maurin: Impressions by One of His Fellow Workers," The Catholic Worker, Vol. VII, No. 8, May 1940, p. 11, cols. 1-3.

A character sketch of Peter Maurin drawn by a member of the Catholic Worker staff. It gives us a few good glimpses of the agitator and propagandist in action.

-----, "Peter Maurin, R.I.P.," editorial in America, Vol. LXXXI, No. 8, May 28, 1949, p. 280.

An editorial tribute to Peter Maurin. It comments upon the simplicity of his essays, and the originality of his propaganda techniques.

-----, "The Poor Man," article in Time, Vol. LIII, No. 22, May 30, 1949, pp. 54-55.

This obituary summarizes the background and some of the ideas of Peter Maurin. It is, for a brief summary, very good as it takes into account his function as a teacher and some of the basic principles he wished to inculcate.

-----, "Poverty's Progress: Lament for a Chief," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1949, p. 3, cols. 4-5, and p. 6, col. 5.

A staff member's lament on the occasion of Peter Maurin's death, it indicates the esteem held by his fellow workers for the founder of the Catholic Worker movement.

-----, "Fifteen Years of the Catholic Worker," editorial in The Commonweal, Vol. XLVIII, No. 7, May 28, 1948, pp. 152-153.

This editorial praises the personnel of the Catholic Worker movement, and indicates sympathy for the tenets of distributism and pacifism. It is important as a testimonial to the Catholic Worker staff and as a sympathetic understanding of the movement's criticism of modern industrialism and opposition to war.

-----, "Preoccupations," editorial in Blackfriars, Vol. XXX, No. 355, October 1949, pp. 449-454. Also condensed: "Two Modern Prophets," essay in Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Plo Decimo Press, 1950, St. Louis, Missouri, pp. 27-31.

A commentary on the Catholic Worker viewpoint on four modern preoccupations: property, the family, authority, and peace. A true and sympathetic understanding of the ideals of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day on these four issues.

-----, "Worker's Paper," article in column "Note and Comment," America, Vol. XLIX, No. 6, May 13, 1933, pp. 124-125.

This is a brief comment on and review of the first issue of The Catholic Worker. It recognizes the need for a Catholic newspaper for the workers.

Bagiackas, Joseph J., "New Apostle to the Gentiles," article in Christian Social Action, Vol. V, No. 5, May 1940, pp. 153-155.

Peter Maurin is here regarded as a modern St. Paul for his performance of the works of mercy among the poor. It contains several interesting anecdotes that describe Peter Maurin's attempts at indoctrination and propaganda, but it does not capture his true spirit. This essay is partly inaccurate and apt to be misleading.

Brieg, Joseph A., "Apostle on the Bum," article in The Commonweal, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, April 29, 1938, pp. 9-12.

This is a biographical sketch of Peter Maurin. One of the best outlines of Peter Maurin's life and wanderings in America, it features several good anecdotes on his propaganda efforts.

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Cogley, John, "Store-front Catholicism," article in America, Vol. LXXIX, No. 20, August 21, 1948, pp. 447-449.

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d'Apollonia, Luigi, "Peter Maurin, R.I.P.," article in Relations (Montreal), Vol. IX, No. 103, July 1949, p. 185.

This is a good brief obituary in which Peter Maurin is compared with St. Francis of Assisi.

Day, Dorothy, "Background for Peter Maurin," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XI, No. 8, October 1944, pp. 3 and 6.

This article describes the Mott Street setting, gives an account of the author's meeting with Peter Maurin, and provides a summary of Maurin's pre-Catholic Worker life. Here a start was made on an authentic biography of Peter Maurin; much of this "chapter" is found in The Long Loneliness.

-----, "Background for Peter Maurin," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XII, No. 1, February 1945, p. 3, and col. 5, p. 7.

This installment of what was to be a biography of Peter Maurin contains the dialogue of a conversation between the author and Peter Maurin which took place in a typical Skid Row restaurant. It contains revealing glimpses of the agitator in action as a public propagandist and as a conversationalist.

-----, From Union Square to Rome, The Preservation of the Faith Press, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1938, pp. x-173.

The autobiography of Dorothy Day, giving the background of the editor of The Catholic Worker.

-----, House of Hospitality, Sheed & Ward, New York and London, 1939, pp. xxxvi-275.

Absolutely necessary for insights into the personality and activity of Peter Maurin, as well as for an understanding of the Catholic Worker movement generally, seen through the eyes of the editor of the paper. This is the story of the Catholic Worker Movement during its early years.

-----, "I Remember Peter Maurin," article in Jubilee, Vol. 1, No. 11, March 1954, pp. 34-39.

This is a very good short account of Peter Maurin's activities by the person who knew him best. This essay, the most recent on the subject by Dorothy Day, contains a few notes not found in her earlier writings.

-----, "Letter to Our Readers at the Beginning of our Fifteenth Year," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XIV, No. 3, May 1947, pp. 1-4.

This article summarizes the achievements of the Catholic Worker movement, indicating how Peter Maurin's program had taken root after fourteen years.

-----, The Long Loneliness, (Illustrated by Fritz Eichenberg), Harper & Brothers, New York, 1952, pp. 286.

An autobiographical account of the philosophy and experiences of Dorothy Day. Essential for all students of the Catholic Worker movement, its leader and editor, and its co-founders. It contains some very interesting comments on the life and personality of Peter Maurin.

-----, Manuscript (unpublished), pp. 350 (approx.).

An attempt at an authentic biography of Peter Maurin, this manuscript, though it is somewhat disorderly, contains a wealth of details on Peter Maurin's personality and activity, and a large number of his Easy Essays.

-----, On Pilgrimage, Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1948, pp. 175.

Experiences, reflections, meditations of Dorothy Day as a leader of the Catholic Worker movement, this book is essential reading for all students of the Catholic Worker movement; additionally valuable for insights into the personality and activities of Peter Maurin.

-----, "Personalist Peter Maurin," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XIX, No. 10, May 1953, p. 1, col. 3, and p. 2, col. 2.

This article is a brief summary of Peter Maurin's personalist teachings. It suggests his influence on his disciples and indicates how he led them to sources of significant thought.

-----, "Peter and Women," article in The Commonweal, Vol. XLV, No. 8, Dec. 6, 1946, pp. 188-191.

This article shows Peter Maurin's Christian philosophy on womanhood.

-----, "Peter Maurin, Agitator," article in Blackfriars (Oxford), Vol. XXX, No. 354, September 1949, pp. 409-415.

A biographical sketch of Peter Maurin, particularly important as it traces the broad outline of his life and summarizes The Catholic Worker program.

-----, "Peter the 'Materialist'," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XII, No. 7, September 1945, p. 6.

This article treats of Peter Maurin's Franciscanism, his philosophy of work, and the need for practicing principles that will improve the social order. It contributes to the understanding of some of Peter Maurin's ideas.

-----, "The Story of Three Deaths," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1949, p. 1, cols. 2-4, and p. 2, cols. 1-5.

An account of the last years, death and burial of Peter Maurin, this is a clear statement of his last years' agony, and a detailed account of his death and funeral.

-----, "Without Poverty We Are Powerless," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XV, No. 3, May 1948, pp. 2,7.

A commentary on Peter Maurin's life, this article contains several very good anecdotes on his poverty, and a moving description of him in his waning years.

Echele, Cyril T., "An American Poverello (1877-1949)." article in Social Justice Review, Vol. XLII, no. 4, July-August 1949, pp. 117-119. Reprinted in the booklet, Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 5-9.

An essay on Peter Maurin and his most fruitful years (1933-1945), this is a deeply appreciative appraisal of the man and some of the propaganda techniques he used.

Fitzsimons, John, "Houses of Hospitality," book review in Blackfriars, Vol. XXI, No. 242, May 1940, pp. 310-318.

This book review is a good summary of the Catholic Worker movement, based largely on House of Hospitality by Dorothy Day. It suggests the importance, scope and influence of the Catholic Worker movement, and treats very sympathetically its aims.

Fremantle, Anne, "The Work of Dorothy Day in the Slums," article in The Catholic World (New York), Vol. CLXX, No. 1,019, February 1950, pp. 333-337.

A sympathetic, understanding statement on the efforts of Dorothy Day (and the Catholic Worker movement generally) among the poor, this article contributes to our general understanding and appreciation of the charitable works of the movement; it points out the Catholic Worker's affinity with some of Gandhi's ideals, and its appeal to young apostles.

Gallagher, Donald A., "Personalist Mission of the Catholic Worker," article in The Historical Bulletin (St. Louis), Vol. XXV, May 1947, pp. 75-76, 84-85. Reprinted in The Catholic Mind, Vol. XLV, December 1947, pp. 721-728. Reprinted in condensed form as "A Man Dedicated to Truth," Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 23-26.

This article treats of Peter Maurin's example and teaching as an influence on the lay apostolate in America. Peter Maurin's personal dedication to truth, and the influence he had upon others as a result, is here evaluated by a Catholic philosopher.

Gauchat, William, "Helping the Hobo to God," article in Orate Fratres, Vol. XV, No. 9, July 27, 1941, pp. 385-389.

This article treats of the liturgy-mindedness of the Catholic Worker movement and its aid to the poor and neglected. It is an evaluation of one phase of the work of the House of Hospitality by a leader in the Catholic Worker movement.

Hillenbrand, Reynold, "House of Hospitality," book review in The Commonweal, Vol. XXXI, No. 6, December 1, 1939, pp. 138-139.

This is a rather lengthy book review of House of Hospitality by Dorothy Day. It shows a sympathetic understanding of the Catholic Worker movement.

Hughes, Emily, "Latter-Day Saints," article in The Irish Monthly (Dublin). Vol. LXX, No. 825, March 1942, pp. 89-94.

This is a sympathetic summary of the founding of the Catholic Worker movement and the work it does among the poor. Here a European writer pays tribute to the Catholic Worker movement, showing its kinship with the efforts of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Don Bosco.

Kothen, Robert, La Revolution Verte, preface by Canon J. Cardijn, Editions Ramgal, Thuillies, Belgium, 1939, pp. 171.

An evaluation of the commentary upon Peter Maurin's life, ideas, style, and some propaganda techniques, this book is the first lengthy commentary on Peter Maurin's "Green Revolution". It treats many phases of Maurin's work and ideas somewhat sketchily. It is written by a Belgian priest.

Ludlow, Robert, "Eternal Man," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. XVI, No. 2, June 1949, p. 5, cols. 3-5 and p. 6, col. 5.

A rather deep discourse on death, this article gives a clear summary of Peter Maurin's "failure".

Macdonald, Dwight, "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- I," article in The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 33, October 4, 1952, pp. 37 ff. Continued in "Profiles: The Foolish Things of the World -- II," The New Yorker, Vol. XXVIII, No. 34, October 11, 1952, pp. 37 ff.

This is an essay on the Catholic Worker movement, featuring the personality and work of Dorothy Day. It is not a penetrating study throughout, but does contain some interesting insights into the activities of the Catholic Worker movement, particularly its leader, Dorothy Day. It also contains some worthwhile, but not "new", notes on the life of Peter Maurin.

McMenamy, Mignon Virginia, "A Man of Charity," article in the booklet Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 16-22.

This is a tribute to Peter Maurin by a person who was deeply influenced by his integrity. It contains several anecdotes that

reveal some of the propaganda techniques and the personality of Peter Maurin.

MacNeill, C. J., "Strange Work of Peter Maurin," article in The Irish Monthly, Vol. LXX, No. 832, October 1942, pp. 399-403.

This is a short essay on the character of the founder of the Catholic Worker movement and the work attempted by the movement. It indicates the high regard some European writers have for Peter Maurin.

Maurin, Peter, Easy Essays, with designs by Ade de Bethune, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1936, pp. 112.

This book contains selected essays by Peter Maurin, but it is not complete.

-----, Catholic Radicalism. Phrased Essays for the Green Revolution, edited and foreword by David Mason, introduction by Dorothy Day, with drawings by Ed Willock, Catholic Worker Books, New York, 1949, pp. vii-207.

This is the "official" collection of Peter Maurin's essays, but it may not be complete. It contains reprints of practically all the essays that appeared in The Catholic Worker, and therefore is the handbook for all students of Peter Maurin's work. It also contains several interviews.

Mooney, Erwin, "Peter Maurin Begins Summer School," article in The Catholic Worker, Vol. VII, No. 10, July-August 1940, p. 3

This account of classes held at a farming commune is a fairly detailed first-hand commentary on one of Peter Maurin's attempts to promote study and discussion.

Paul, Martin, "A Man of the Soil," article in the booklet Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 13-15.

This essay treats mainly of Peter Maurin as a peasant, but it takes in other aspects of his personality as well. It contains several interesting anecdotes on Peter Maurin's propaganda techniques, told by an eye-witness.

Pilgrim, The, (pseudonym), "Peter the Agitator Quotes the Prophets of Israel," article in America, Vol. LV, No. 17, August 1, 1936, p. 395.

This is a very brief essay on one of the propaganda attempts of Peter Maurin. It is a good snapshot of the agitator in a typical pose.

Pleasants, Julian, "Personal Responsibility," essay in The American Apostolate: American Catholics in the Twentieth Century.

edited by Leo Richard Ward, The New Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1952, pp. 298.

This essay discusses the place of the Catholic Worker movement in the American apostolate, its contribution to Catholicism in America. It is one of the most reasonable evaluations of the aims, importance and influence of the Catholic Worker movement written to date.

Reinhold, H. A., "The Catholic Worker Movement in America," article in Blackfriars (Oxford), Vol. XIX, No. 222, September 1938, pp. 635-650.

This article states the aims of the Catholic Worker movement and provides some notes on Peter Maurin. It indicates an appreciation of the personality and achievements of Peter Maurin and the spirit of the movement he co-founded.

Shaw, J. G., "Among Ourselves," column in The Ensign (Montreal), June 4, 1949, p. 5, col. 1.

This is an obituary tribute to Peter Maurin. A writer who was apparently influenced by Peter Maurin expresses his appreciation for the propagandist. This article, however, is slightly misleading in part.

-----, "Among Ourselves," column in The Ensign (Montreal), June 18, 1949, p. 5, col. 1.

A sequel to the preceding article, this relates the story of the founding of the Catholic Worker movement. This is a good summary of the story already told by Dorothy Day in House of Hospitality.

Sheehan, Arthur, "Conversations with Peter," essay in the booklet Peter Maurin, Christian Radical, Pio Decimo, St. Louis, 1950, pp. 10-12.

This short essay deals with the author's impressions received from various conversations with Peter Maurin. It reveals a sound appreciation of several of Peter Maurin's propaganda techniques, especially his "shock" treatment.

-----, "Conversations with Peter," essay in The Candle, a mimeographed newsletter, published by Arthur and Betty Sheehan, P. O. Box 109, Washington Bridge Station, New York 33, N. Y. Neither the pages nor the editions are numbered or dated.

This short essay contains personal recollections of significant conversations and incidents by a writer who refers to Peter Maurin as his "spiritual father". These first-hand anecdotes, fairly detailed, contribute much to the picture of Peter Maurin's activities and ideas.

-----, "'Honest to God' -- That Is How He Spoke," essay in The Candle.

This essay comments on Peter Maurin's use of slang and other common expressions. Peter Maurin's manner of speaking -- and the ideas behind his technique -- are treated here. In conjunction with other essays by Sheehan and other writers this article contributes quite significantly to the study of the propagandist and his techniques.

-----, "A Man Called Peter," essay in The Candle.

This is a good brief summary of the life of Peter Maurin, his personality and his work.

-----, "Peter Maurin and Alger Hiss," essay in The Candle.

A close associate recalls in some detail an excursion he and Peter Maurin made to Harvard University in 1937. This is a good brief commentary on some of Peter Maurin's views, and a good account of the background of the propagandist's attempt to make an impression on Harvard University.

-----, "Peter Maurin and Personalism," an essay in The Candle.

This essay contrasts the ideals of Peter Maurin with the influence of politics, gangsterism, and night-life in Boston. Though brief, it is a good discussion of Peter Maurin's propaganda techniques, his indebtedness to St. Francis of Assisi, and his ability to evoke wonder.

-----, "Peter Maurin and the Community Idea," an essay in The Candle.

This essay treats of Peter Maurin's concept of the community, "the common unity of a common purpose." It discusses Peter Maurin's objective of clarifying thought, an ideal that may best be realized in a "community".

Synott, Finbar, "Easy Essays," a book review in Blackfriars, Vol. XIX, No. 217, April 1938, p. 315.

A book review of Easy Essays, with a brief note on Peter Maurin's style of writing. The reviewer seems to appreciate the phrased format, simplicity, and slang of Peter Maurin's essays.

Vishniewski, Stanley, "Peter Maurin," article in Our Sunday Visitor (Huntington, Indiana), Vol. XXX, No. 12, July 27, 1941, p. 5, cols. 1-4. Abridged in The Catholic Digest (St. Paul, Minn.), Vol. V, No. 11, September 1941, pp. 56-57.

This is a very brief biographical sketch of Peter Maurin. It contains appreciative, but not completely accurate, notes on Peter Maurin's life. The author seems to understand the propagandist's combination of wisdom and simplicity.

-----, "Peter Maurin to Lead Classes at Easton Farm," news item in The Catholic Worker, Vol. VII, No. 9, June 1940, p. 8, cols. 4-5.

This news item announces the coming event signified in the title. It contains a couple of amusing anecdotes and some serious comments on Peter Maurin's recent itinerary, and announces plans for the first Catholic Worker summer school.

Willock, Ed, "Catholic Radicalism," article in The Commonweal, Vol. LVIII, No. 26, October 2, 1953, pp. 630-633.

An early follower of Peter Maurin here contributes an excellent article on the influence the Catholic Worker movement has had in America, and how that movement views contemporary problems in terms of the person rather than institutions. His personal debt, and that of the magazine (Integrity) he co-founded, to Peter Maurin is acknowledged. A clear snapshot of Peter Maurin "making a point" is provided.

Woods, Will, (pseudonym), "Hostesses Wanted," article in Ave Maria, Vol. LIII, No. 5, February 1, 1941, pp. 144-148.

This article reviews the work undertaken by the Houses of Hospitality, particularly the contribution to be made by women. It indicates the need for more women in this apostolate.

-----, "Mass-Hands," article in Orate Fratres, (Collegeville, Minn.), Vol. XVI, No. 7, May 17, 1942, pp. 320-322.

This article treats of the importance of prayer, particularly the Mass, in the work of the Houses of Hospitality. It suggests the source of strength and achievement of the Catholic Worker movement.

APPENDIX I

In reply to a request by the present writer for information concerning Peter Maurin's service in the Institute of the Christian Brothers the following letter was received:

CASA GENERALIZIA
Del Fratelli delle Scuole Christiane
C. P. 99 B. -- Telef. 569.101
ROMA

Rome, li 23 aout 1952.
Via Aurelia. 476

Monsieur,

En réponse à votre lettre du 12 courant, voici les renseignements que j'ai pu rassembler:

- 1 - Aristide Pierre MAURIN a été en effet membre de l'Institut des Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes.
- 2 - Il a pris l'habit religieux au Noviciat de Paris, (ancienne Maison généralice, 27, rue Oudinot), le 4 septembre 1893.
- 3 - Il a obtenu son diplôme d'Instituteur à Paris, le 25 septembre 1895.
- 4 - Pendant sept ans (1895-1902), il a été employé à l'enseignement, dans des écoles élémentaires, excepté sa première année d'apostolat où il fit une petite classe au grand pensionnat de Passy, en 1895-96.
On le trouve ensuite à:
 - Issy (St Nicolas) le 18 novembre 1896;
 - Charonne (Paris) 1896-97.Il fait un an de service militaire 1897-98 puis reprend l'enseignement à:
 - Neuilly près Paris, 1898-99;
 - Versailles St Louis, 28-9-1900 - 29-1-1901;
 - Vaujours (Ecole Fenelon), 29-1-1901 - 31-12-1902.

Ces nombreuses mutations, et ses brefs séjours en ces cinq établissements, font pressentir que le jeune maître n'était pas dans sa voie, sans qu'on eut cependant de notables reproches à lui faire. Il avait émis des Voeux temporaires en 1895 et les avait renouvelés depuis lors régulièrement, jusqu'en 1902. A cette date, il ne voulut pas se lier de nouveau et, libre de tout engagement, il se retira de notre Institut.

Depuis cette date, nous manquons de renseignements sur ses voyages et activités...

Deux de ses frères entrèrent aussi dans notre Congregation. L'un, Celestin MAURIN, né en 1878, mort à Athis-Mons, près de Paris, en 1948, a exercé l'apostolat dans notre province de Paris d'abord, puis au Mexique de 1907 à 1914, puis de nouveau à Paris, où il est mort en bon religieux.

Le plus jeune, Julien MAURIN, en religion Frère Norberto Bautista, vit encore et exerce l'apostolat dans une de nos écoles de la région parisienne:

Ecole St. Nicolas, BUZENVAL par Rueil (Seine-et Oise), France.

Nous avons été heureux d'apprendre par la presse que Pierre MAURIN s'est dévoué efficacement dans les oeuvres de charité en Amérique du Nord.

En souhaitant plein succès à vos efforts en vue de faire ressortir le bon travail qu'il a fait aux Etats-Unis, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, mes sentiments dévoués.

(signed) Fr. Agnel Isidore

Visiteur Général

APPENDIX II

Following are excerpts from several letters written to the present author by Rev. Brother Norberto Bautista, F.S.C., who is a brother of Peter Maurin. The first was postmarked October 6, 1952.

Quelques renseignements concernant PETER MAURIN

Aristide Pierre Maurin naquit en l'an 1877 à Oultet, petit village de la Commune de St. Julien du Tournel, diocese de Mende.

Le département de la Lozere est très montagneux de sorte qu'on a pu l'appeler le département des Sources (de nombreuses rivières y naissent mais aussi de nombreux enfants qui vont ensuite à travers la France et le monde prêcher la bonne nouvelle et répandre des idées qui mènent le monde.

L'aïeul de Peter Maurin vécut son enfance en pleine période révolutionnaire. Il fit sa première communion dans une grange en 1793; il avait une prédilection pour la Bible et lisait assiduellement; tous les soirs de Carême il récitait, en esprit d'expiation le psaume Miserere,....

La Mère de Peter Maurin fut une jeune fille, pieuse, modeste, d'un excellent caractère, très portée vers les nécessiteux.

Se sentant appelée à l'état du mariage, elle s'unit vers 1876 à Jean-Baptiste Maurin. Elle vécut en très bonne intelligence avec ses beaux parents, s'oubliant pour penser et se donner aux autres. Dans des souffrances atroces, elle mourut en mettant au monde son 5ème enfant. Elle laissait trois orphelins, l'un de 8 ans, l'aimé, devenu le célèbre Peter Maurin, ce journaliste original, réalisateur de la "Révolution verte" aux E. U., le cadet, Celestin qui traca un et durable sillon dans l'Institut des F F des E. N chrétiennes, mort le 26 Mai 1948, et une soeur mariée plus tard à un Ingénieur Belge et morte en 1942.

Après deux ans de veuvage, Jean-Baptiste Maurin épousa en secondes noces Rosalie Bousquet, une jeune fille de 18 ans, celle-ci fut pour les trois orphelins une bonne maman. Mais de cette seconde union naquirent dix-neuf enfants.

Il fallait faire vivre le nombreuse famille. C'est que dans ce pays, très pauvre, la possession de terres a beau être étendue, elles ne rapportent pas. La famille Maurin possédait une ferme dont les

revenus étaient minimes. Aussi à la morte saison, pour accroître un peu ses modestes ressources de paysan, le père Maurin fréquentait les foires. Les trajets se faisaient à pied, les bêtes étant poussées devant. Le jeune Pierre accompagnait son père; peut-être garda-t-il de ces randonnées à travers, les Causses, les monts des Cévennes, d'Aubrac ou de la Margeride un souvenir ému; sans doute que, sa vie durant, Pierre se souvint des directives chrétiennes et des pensées de l'au-delà que lui inculquait son Père.

C'est que celui-ci était un rude chrétien. Il connaissait parfaitement les maximes évangéliques et il considérait comme un devoir pour lui de les transmettre à son fils. Souvent il parla à ses enfants de la folie des hommes qui pensent à la vie présente sans se soucier de la future; ils entendirent tous de sa bouche la parole du Maître: "Que sert à l'homme de gagner l'univers s'il vient à perdre son âme."

Ce père modèle exigeait que la prière se fit tous les soirs en commun devant une petite statue de la T. Sainte Vierge. Les soirs d'hiver, le chapelet se récitait à deux chœurs et lorsque le dimanche, à cause du mauvais temps la maisonnée ne pouvait aller à la messe, le père faisait lire les prières à haute voix ou les récitait lui-même sans le secours d'aucun livre.

Les pauvres connaissaient bien le chemin de la maison Maurin. Ils y étaient toujours bien accueillis, y logeaient, y prenaient leurs repas, et ne partaient pas sans un secours.....

C'est dans une telle ambiance que le jeune Aristide Pierre Maurin vécut ses quatorze premières années. Il grandit en alternant les occupations champêtres de la belle saison avec la fréquentation scolaire de la période hivernale.

Mais l'instruction d'une école de Village ne pouvait suffire à ce jeune avide de connaître. Aussi son père en l'année 1891, le mit-il à Mende, chez les Frères, pour y poursuivre ses études. Et le jeune homme voulut deux ans après essayer même de mener la vie de ses maîtres.

Il entra donc au noviciat de Paris 27, rue Oudinot le 4 Septembre 1893, obtint ensuite son diplôme d'instituteur le 25 Septembre 1895 et fut employé à l'enseignement dans différentes écoles de la capitale.

Mais, surtout après son année de service militaire, Aristide Pierre Maurin, réfléchit plus profondément, l'essai avait montré qu'il se trompait de voie. Dès cette époque il commence à faire de la politique et à soutenir des idées très avancées sur l'organisation sociale et le pacifisme, idées courant aujourd'hui, mais qui à l'époque

paraissaient subversives de l'ordre établi. Son cerveau travaillait plus qu'il ne fallait pour son milieu et d'accord avec ses supérieurs, libre de tout engagement, en Decembre 1902 il quitta définitivement la congrégation.

Alors il s'engagea à fond dans le Sillon, mouvement fondé par Marc Sangnier.

Les idées émises et propagées par un tel mouvement allaient en plein à Aristide Pierre Maurin et répondaient à ses intimes aspirations. Il fut sillonniste en vue de produire un effort d'apostolat méthodique et tenace. Et aussi pour multiplier les vrais chrétiens et les démocrates s'inspirant des principes de l'Evangile et de la tradition catholique; son illuminisme mystique ne l'entraîna pas vers un faux Evangile mais le garda dans la droite ligne, celle de l'Eglise.

Il en revenait toujours au programme de paix; paix religieuse, paix sociale, paix internationale.

Il resta fidèle à l'âme du mouvement qui comprenait de nombreuses oeuvres utiles: ligues, comités, revues, journal, imprimerie, hotel-restaurant du Foyer, restaurants populaires, maisons de repos et de vacances...

Par ailleurs le but du Sillon était de montrer à la démocratie qui le concours des forces religieuses et morales lui est indispensable pour réaliser ses aspirations légitimes, pour christianiser cette démocratie par la formation d'une élite sociale de jeunes catholiques rayonnant sur la masse par les instituts populaires, les réunions publiques, l'action syndicale et coopérative, l'action civique enfin. Le dynamisme interne de Pierre Maurin était si fort qu'il ne pouvait qu'exploser.

Comment vecut-il de 1902 à 1909? Nous ne l'avons pas su et je ne connais personne qui puisse nous renseigner. Vendit-il du café ou du cacao? Nous ne le savons pas; le plus clair c'est qu'il fut un propagandiste acharné de journal: l'Eveil démocratique fondé par Marc Sangnier voulant être un multiplicateur et faire pénétrer à tout prix ses idées dans tous les milieux.

Nous savons seulement qu'il s'embarqua pour le Canada en 1909. Probablement parce qu'il se disait que en Amérique ses idées seraient mieux comprises et qu'il pouvait les faire s'épanouir plus librement.

Buzenval
le 23 - 10 - 52

Cher Monsieur,

Je pense que vous êtes maintenant en possession des brouillons de notes que je vous ai fait parvenir. Peut-être n'ai-je assez insisté sur l'action profonde qu'ont eue sur sa pédagogie les ouvrages des F F des Ecoles Chrétiennes et en particulier le livre de Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle: La Conduite des Ecoles. Sans doute que ses procédés d'enseignement doivent à ce livre; évidemment comme pour tout le reste, il l'a fait sien et adapté à ses aptitudes et à sa tournure d'esprit.

Je joins à ma lettre son acte de naissance et celui de baptême. Si vous voulez être vrai et faire oeuvre d'historien, vous devez insister tortement sur la formation chrétienne de Peter Maurin.

Il fit un an de service militaire, mais jamais plus il ne voulut entendre parler de ce métier que, à tort ou à raison il aurait voulu voir disparaître. En avance de cinquante ans sur sa génération, il voyait déjà réalisés, mais de façon pacifique et diplomatique, les Etats-Unis d'Europe; par suite, à son point de vue, qui est aujourd'hui partagé même par les hommes d'Etat les plus en vue, il jugeait les armées inutiles et les guerres condamnables.

Je joins encore à ma lettre une copie de la revue "America" des R.R. P P Jesuites que j'ai reçue après la mort de Peter Maurin.....

(signed) Fr. Norberto

P.S. Il faut aussi vous documenter sur le Sillon; le développement de sa formation lui doit beaucoup.

Buzenval
le 18 - 6 - 53

Cher Monsieur,

Ce mot pour vous dire que j'ai fait des démarches auprès de Mlle Sangnier, fille de Marc Sangnier, le fondateur du Sillon. Elle habite au 36, Boulevard Raspail, Paris VII. C'est la personne la plus qualifiée pour fournir les documents en question. Mais je n'ai encore reçu aucune réponse à mes demandes.

Personnellement je ne pense pas que Peter Maurin ait écrit dans l'Eveil Démocratique. Son rôle dut se borner à la propagande; il habitait alors une pauvre chambre et passait sa journée à crier le

journal dans les rues et les reunions publiques. Comme seules les
idees l'interessaient et que celles exprimees dans ce journal l'avaient
conquis il voulait a tout prix les repandre et les faire adopter par
un grand nombre....

(signed) Fr. Norberto

APPENDIX III

Here is presented a letter from a former pupil of Peter Maurin, when he was teaching French at Woodstock, N.Y. The letter is followed by answers to a questionnaire submitted by the present writer. In some instances the questions as they appear below are slightly abbreviated, but the answers to them are quoted in full. Dorothy Day, incidentally, questions the accuracy of some of Mrs. Leaycraft's recollections, especially the last sentence of her answer to question 4, and -- most strongly -- the second paragraph of her answer to question 6.

Woodstock, New York
July 30th, 1953

My dear Professor O'Grady,

I must apologise to you for my long delay in answering your letter asking for information about Peter Maurin. It was forwarded to me, when I was still in New York, and I put off writing you until I should come to Woodstock, where I could contact other people who had known him there. I have had little success in this. Mrs. Alice P. Thompson, the Librarian here at that time, gave him a place to sleep in her barn, and her daughters took French lessons from him. I may be able to get one of the cards he used in teaching, and I will enclose it, if I do. Mrs. Thompson herself has had an illness, and cannot talk with me about him, but she expressed her deep regard for him.

Another friend, an accomplished musician, said that she and her husband studied French with him for several years. I gave her a copy of your questionnaire, but I have not heard from her, and think I should no longer delay my reply. She did say that when they both went to Paris, her husband, who had never studied French before Peter's lessons, found himself able to converse, but with the mid-France accent (not Parisian) which Peter had. She spoke of him as the most remarkable

man she had ever met, and I feel the same way about him....

Sincerely yours,

(signed) Julia S. Leaycraft

1. As Peter Maurin was at one time your French tutor, I should appreciate any account you may give of his tutorial methods.

The story of Peter Maurin's arrival at my door as given in the issue of the Catholic Worker for October, 1952, is essentially correct. He wanted to give me French lessons, but found I did not need his drilling in grammar and irregular verbs, so we just talked, -- conversation was really what I needed. I was, at the time very much interested in Hindu thought and mysticism, and was studying along this line, with particular reference to how the inner teaching had influenced the outer world through Gandhi and his followers. Since Peter was living according to his own spiritual beliefs, it proved a very interesting exchange. I have often thought that later, as he worked out his ideas they were almost as far reaching as Gandhi's.

I never heard him speak of teaching other subjects. My daughter and my son took his lessons, which consisted of monotonous drilling and repetition of verbs and other grammatical forms.

2. Dorothy Day once suggested to me that Peter Maurin may have made use of the Berlitz method of language tutoring. Could you comment on that suggestion?

I do not know the Berlitz method, so can make no comment.

3. Did Peter Maurin ever speak to you of Alouin or Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, or any other educator?

I do not remember his speaking of Alouin or any other educator.

4. Do you observe any similarities between Peter Maurin's tutorial methods and the literary techniques found in his Easy Essays?

Yes. He used the same kind of insistent rhythmic repetition in his "Easy Essays" as in his lessons. It was almost like the rhythmic intensity of a Litany. I have an idea that just as he was pounding the French language into the ears of his students, he made his moral points in his aphorisms. He had his "poems" in a small loose leaf note-book. He would read me any new one and ask for my comment, -- either as to meaning or technique. He said, "Madam, I do not wish to publish what I write. If you do this your work becomes crystallized, and you are to your readers what that book says. The only reason for writing is to

establish understanding between the author and reader. I wish personal contact with my readers, and can modify or change what I have written if I get a new slant from these conversations." Of course, later, he did publish his things, but I cannot help thinking he would have preferred to remain on a loose leaf basis.

5. One writer suggests that Peter Maurin was a French tutor from 1917 to 1927, at first in Chicago, later at Woodstock. Can you verify or correct this account? (Here excerpts from Joseph A. Brieg's article were quoted.)

I never knew before that Peter had been in Chicago. In fact, I knew nothing of his past except what he volunteered about his early life as a peasant in France. He was so austere in manner that any kind of personal query was impossible. Besides, I preferred to take him as he evidently wished to be taken, without reference to background.

6. During his time at Woodstock, did Peter Maurin attempt any projects (other than the one related in the October 1952 issue of The Catholic Worker) similar to or suggestive of the activities of the Catholic Worker movement?

I suppose you refer to the story of the box in the "Subway Lunch." This was in Kingston, the county seat about ten miles from Woodstock, and a city, not a rural community such as this. He also talked before the Rotary Club there, at one of their luncheon meetings, -- I could not help wishing I had been there to see how such a group of professed go-getters would take what he had to say. It was typical of him not to allow himself to "see differences" in people. I don't remember any other specific project such as the box in the lunch room. He was at this time feeling his way toward a practicing philosophy. He spent quite a lot of time at a camp about five miles from here, which was run by the priest of a poor parish in New York. I imagine he did menial jobs there. It was only after I had known him for a year or so, that he began talking about the "Green Revolution". He told me that he wanted to get people back on the land. He spoke of some well to do man who had offered him a farm, and, banker as he was, wanted to work on it.

He also told me about the priest of a large very poor parish in upstate New York who had Peter talk to his people. It was so helpful that the priest raised the money to print five hundred copies of the talk and other of Peter's writings, for distribution among his people. He told me he called the sheet the "Catholic Worker". Other parishes followed suit, and the circulation rose by leaps and bounds.

7. Did Peter Maurin ever try to "indoctrinate" you or any other pupils at Woodstock? Did he recommend any special reading program to you?

I always felt that our conversations were on a "give and take"

basis. I wouldn't say that he tried to indoctrinate anyone. Unless you can call his insistence on talking all the time, indoctrination. He never recommended any reading program to me.

8. To your knowledge, were any of the Easy Essays composed at Woodstock?

Yes, they were the ones he kept changing in the loose leaf book.

9. In what ways did Peter Maurin spend his time at Woodstock in preparation for the vocation (the Catholic Worker movement) for which he is famous?

I think he was in a period of testing his principles. He found that he could give what he had, -- a knowledge of teaching French, -- and receive in return, a living. In other words he adopted voluntary poverty. I have described the beginning of the paper. And my impression is that the "back to the Land" idea was precipitated by the offer of a farm. This, of course, tied in with his "houses of hospitality" plan.

10. Did Peter Maurin ever divulge to you anything at all about his early life in France, especially the years he spent in Paris? Did he ever speak of Marc Sangnier or Le Sillon? In what connection?

He did speak of his early life in the country. I don't remember his mentioning Paris particularly. He never mentioned the names you speak of.

11. Do you know anybody else who studied under Peter Maurin and who would be willing to answer questions similar to those I have directed to you? If so, would you kindly send me their names and addresses?

I have already spoken to two people who knew and studied with him. Before I send this letter, I will contact them both again.

APPENDIX IV

Following are two letters written by Peter Maurin to Dorothy Day previous to the publication of the first issue of The Catholic Worker.

Monday April 3 - 1933

Dear Sister Dorothy,

I have received a letter from O'Shaughnessy
He says that he was very glad to met you
and that you are an able woman.
He adds that he is very much interested in the scheme
of publishing a weekly paper
to put the Catholic viewpoint on Social Justice
before the unemployed
He thinks that it will save thousands
from deserting the Church
and going over to Communism.
In our movement,
we are bound to meet some discouragement
but also much encouragement.
But as Richard Reid said to me
we must not get discouraged.
As Father Parsons said to you
it will be a great adventure.
Father Scully, who has kept me on the shelve for a long time
says that I now write in a way
that takes the breath away
If we can write in a way that takes the breath away
then we are good agitators
But I intend to be above all
a man of contacts
And I want my contacts
to set people thinking.
I want you to tell me
how you like my technique of agitation
I may be quite rough sometimes
and overreach the mark.
With their natural intelligence,
women must sense those things better than men.
When human contacts
become commercialized contacts
they cease to be human contacts

O'Shaughnessy, Woodlock and Father McGowan agree in this
 that the basis of modern society
 is systematic selfishness
 If the basis of modern society is systematic selfishness
 then the basis of the new society
 must be systematic unselfishness
 Systematic selfishness
 has given us greed corporations
 systematic unselfishness
 will bring us back charitable institutions.
 There is a German priest in Ridgewood (N.Y.)
 who is very influential among German workers
 I will go to see him.
 Rousseau said that civilization is a matter of contracts
 (He wrote a book entitled "Le Contract Social")
 I say that it is a matter of contacts.
 Harmonious contacts
 is what makes man human to man
 Frictional contacts
 is what makes man inhuman to man.
 An artist from Woodstock
 says that he likes the directness of your style.
 I tried to see the friends of the Editor of the Red Book Magazine
 but they were in New York.
 I was thinking about setting our proposals
 in the next number
 but they tell me that it is better to let people
 guess what you are driving at.
 I think it is better to rely on your journalistic sense
 for the selection of my essays.
 Hoping to see you soon
 I am, your co-worker in Christ's Kingdom

Peter Maurin

Wednesday April 26 - 1933

Dear Dorothy,

Father Scully was here to-day and he says
 that he will bring me in New York next week
 I am going to Kingston
 trying to raise some money for our paper
 from Protestants
 I suggested to Father Scully
 that I alternate two weeks in New York
 and two weeks in Mount Tremper.

He intends to have forty boys every week end
 summer and winter
 combining craftsmanship with scholarly work.
 I asked him if he thought
 that the poor children of the rich
 could be educated
 He says that all children can be education
 if education is presented to them
 in the right manner.
 I said that experience has taught Meiklejohn
 that wealth can not be taught
 I added that the only way
 to educate the poor children of the rich
 is to take them from their environment
 and create a differend environment for them
 in company with the bright children of the poor
 that is to say to found a all year boarding school
 He said that eventually
 it would come to that.
 I want you to send me
 hundred copies of the paper
 and also a Telephone Book of Nassau County
 My friend from Mount Tremper
 will mark the names on it for me
 so I can send them the paper.
 When I am in New York
 I will try to find contributors among them
 They are all workers with money
 but very much attached to it
 I would like to start a House of Hospitality
 in Jamaica where those Catholic truch farmers
 could drop the vegetables and flowers
 they have failed to sell in New York markets
 I am sending you the appeal for funds
 and I think that you will like it.
 I saw State Senator A.H. Wicks
 and suggested a Round Table Discussion
 among his non-Catholic friends.
 He said that e would see Charles Tuttle
 and speak to him about it.
 H. M. Robinson and Hervey White
 intend to publish a magazine entitled The Ploughshare.
 They would devote each number to a personality
 somewhat like fifty pages.
 What do you think about allowing them
 to publish my essays?
 There is near Woodstock a cartoonist by the name of Harry Temple
 who draws a daily cartoon for the Cleveland Plain Leader.

I will try to see if it would be possible
to get some cartoons from him for the paper.
Remember me to all.

Your co-worker in Christ's Kingdom

Peter Maurin.

AN ABSTRACT OF

Peter Maurin, Propagandist

by Brendan Anthony O'Grady

As the Introduction states, this thesis purports to offer only one thing: an analysis of the propaganda techniques which Peter Maurin, the originator of the Catholic Worker movement, employed as a speaker and writer. Though a score of writers have touched upon various aspects of the material presented here, this is the first lengthy treatment of the topic.

Chapter I contains a biographical sketch of Peter Maurin, stressing those events in his life which appear to have had a bearing on his work as a propagandist, and bringing to light several hitherto-unpublished facts concerning the early life of the propagandist. Material for this chapter has been gleaned from several sources, none of which is complete in itself. As, to date, no definitive biography of Peter Maurin has been published, parts of this sketch are admittedly rather speculative.

The first chapter is offered mainly for its "background" value. The essence of the thesis is found in the following chapters.

Chapter II, entitled "The Propagandist", discusses Peter Maurin's career as a public agitator and private indoctrinator. Here several difficulties involved in the propagandist's public speaking approach are treated. Drawing heavily upon published accounts, this chapter then reviews Maurin's propaganda activities in New York City, where the Catholic Worker movement was started; and "on the road", for he was an inveterate traveller. Finally, an explanation of Peter

Maurin's contribution to the founding and promotion of the Catholic Worker movement is offered.

Largely original work, Chapter III attempts a detailed analysis of the literary techniques found in Peter Maurin's "Easy Essays". The collected edition of these essays, entitled Catholic Radicalism, is used as the reference book throughout. An introductory section disposes of certain bibliographical difficulties and clarifies the propagandist's intentions and aims in writing his "Easy Essays". Ten subdivisions of this chapter treat the outstanding stylistic features of Peter Maurin's essays, viz., phrased format, simplicity, popular diction, conciseness, repetition, definitions, orderliness, authorities and witnesses, recommended reading, and humour. Each of these stylistic features is explained in some detail, illustrated by citations from the collected essays, and commented upon for its merits and defects as a propaganda instrument in consideration of the circumstances attending the composition and delivery of the "Easy Essays".

No attempt is made in this thesis to evaluate the content of the "Easy Essays". Not Peter Maurin as philosopher, but Peter Maurin as propagandist -- specifically, the manner of his public agitation and private indoctrination, and the style of his writing, rather than the ideas Maurin attempted to popularize -- is the only subject under consideration.

This thesis is fully documented throughout, indicating greatest indebtedness to the published and unpublished writings of Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement.

An Annotated Bibliography comments briefly on the content and value of the several books and dozens of essays used in the preparation of this thesis.

The several Appendices consist of letters containing some hitherto-unpublished material on the life of Peter Maurin.

Presented in 1954 to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, this thesis, submitted in the Department of English in view of obtaining the doctorate in philosophy, contains viii-311 pages.

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