The Social Vision of Ed Willock

A Selected Study

by

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Introduction

Someone has called Ed Willock "a gentle prophet." He had the prophet's peculiar vision of what life should be, and the prophet's burning desire to share his insight with others. And he was gentle, though he loved a lively exchange of ideas and admitted once--and only half in jest--that he could start an argument about anything.

Ed Willock's vision was of a social order that would guarantee human dignity. He had witnessed the unemployment of the thirties, the brutalizing effects of industrialization, and the paralysis born of urban life. He was convinced that these problems of society had no solution except a radically Christian one. His study of the Papal Social Encyclicals had led him to believe that the summons of the Popes, particularly of Leo XIII and Pius XI, was to personal sanctity as a necessary foundation for the reform of society. This personalist approach to social problems placed the burden of social reform on the family as the basic unit of society, and in his writings Ed Willock came near to developing a theology of family life.

With Carol Jackson as co-editor, Willock launched Integrity Magazine in October, 1946. During the next decade, the magazine was to be a sounding board for an ardent group of young Catholic writers who believed, as Ed and Carol did, that religion must be integrated meaningfully into daily life and made operative in social reform. In a publishing field

crowded with second-rate religious writing and shoddy art, Integrity was that rare commodity--a Catholic magazine of consistently high quality.

Some readers of Integrity were critical of its outspoken editorial policy and its penchant for controversy, but as many more admired its courageous stand on issues of the day. Its voice on an issue was never uncertain. If Integrity spoke at all, then its message was clear and decisive. "We did not present both sides of our subjects because we didn't think there were two sides on the level we were discussing them. We were searching for the essential truth of their operation in the light of Christian norms."[1]

One influential critic of Integrity was Reverend John F. Cronin, an authority on social questions and the author of a book on the Catholic's role in social reform.[2] Cronin deplored the influence of Integrity and accused its writers of unwarranted dogmatism and impractical radicalism. He labeled Integrity the "gad-fly of the American conscience" and suggested that its contributors, imitating the faith of the Saints but not their humility, were too ready to pass judgment on their fellow Catholics.[3] The accusation was not

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[1]Carol Jackson, "Integrity: the Beginnings," Catholic Press Annual, Vol. III(1962), 32.

[2]John F. Cronin, Catholic Social Principles (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1950), p. 691.

[3]Ibid.

without some truth. In early issues, Integrity's writers occasionally let their zeal for Christian living lend a tone of stubborn severity to their indictment of American social institutions, but Integrity's defensiveness lessened as the decade of the fifties wore on. "We do not intend to hide the truth about what is wrong lest we be accused of being uncharitable, but we do realize that all our criticisms of existing conditions, all our wrath against hypocrisy and mediocrity, must proceed from the indignation of love."[4]

From the vantage point of 1969, it is tempting to dismiss the Integrity era. Vatican II has given a larger recognition to the voice of the Catholic layman, and it is easy to forget that the Integrity venture represented an early lonely effort by laymen to say something meaningful about the role of religion in solving the problems of society. From the articles and book reviews which Ed Willock contributed to the magazine during the ten years of its publication, there emerges the outline of a program for social reform that emphasizes personal sanctity and dedication to the common good. Essentially, Willock's approach to social reconstruction found its philosophical roots in the Catholic Worker Movement and its inspiration in the writings of men like Peter Maurin and Eric Gill. Willock felt that the existing social structure was inherently evil, and he differed sharply with those who thought that the principles of Christianity could be

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[4] "The Spirit of '53," Integrity, VII (May, 1952), 2.

applied to the structure and eventually transform it. Under several headings this thesis will examine Willock's writings in Integrity as representative of a particular position in Catholic social thought. This position has not prevailed. More even than in Willock's day, the forces of technology have come to rule our society. If Christianity is to say something to modern man, it would seem that its truths must reach him in the factories and in the crowded streets of our cities. Willock's ideas are deserving of study not because they have found universal acceptance but because they offer an alternative to what we have perhaps mistakenly chosen.

Chapter I

BEGINNINGS

Ed Willock was growing to maturity during the worst depression the United States has ever faced. He could see its effects in Boston where, in summer, hundreds of jobless men wandered the streets or gathered on the sun-streaked Common to wait out the hours of identically idle days. At night they slept in the shelter of those few old tombs that remained on the Common; in the morning they shaved in the waters of its pond. From noon until midnight they were the restless audience of that strange grab-bag of orators who regularly went to the Common to proclaim some gospel of social reform. Socialists, Communists, Coughlinites, Trotzkyites, and Catholic Actionists were attracting listeners there during the depression years, and they offered half a hundred solutions to society's ills.[5] In winter months an icy wind tore across the Common and discouraged anyone from lingering. The promise of a warm meal drew many of the men to 328 Tremont Street where a Catholic Worker House of Hospitality had been opened in 1935. The Tremont Street House was modeled on the Catholic Worker House in New York. It maintained a soup line; it distributed clothing; it provided temporary shelter without close scrutiny of means or need. Within a year of

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[5]Arthur Sheehan, Peter Maurin: Gay Believer (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 154.

its opening the Tremont Street House was serving four hundred meals very day. Like its counterparts in other cities, the Boston House attracted a staff of enthusiastic workers. By day they ladeled soup or washed floors, or listened to discouraged visitors. In the evenings they gathered to argue about cures for the depression, about the merits of labor organizations, about the philosophy of the Catholic Worker Movement. The Workers might be young or old, educated or illiterate. They came from different social and ethnic backgrounds. They were divided on nearly every social question. What they shared was a loving concern for the poor and a deep dedication to the ideals of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin who had founded the Catholic Worker Movement in 1932.

When Ed Willock graduated from Boston's Mission High School in 1934, plans for the Tremont Street House were being made. He had been working with the hospitality group which formed the nucleus of the House, and he was among the first of its volunteers. Even as a young man he had a deep sympathy for the poor. In later years he was to say that the greatest disgrace a New Englander could experience was to be without means of supporting his family.[6] Ed's father had lost his job during the midst of the depression and had known that struggle. In the face of every man who came to Tremont Street Ed Willock saw reflected the fear and the helplessness that he had seen in his father's face. So that there would be

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[6] Dorothy Day, "In Memory of Ed Willock," Commonweal, LXXIII (February 24, 1961), 550.

one less mouth to feed at home, Ed often stayed the night at Tremont Street, finding a place to sleep in some corner not already claimed by one of the many wanderers who drifted in and out. In the morning he was up early, serving in the breadline, struggling with a furnace that wanted constant attention, or talking to the men who waited in long lines for a piece of bread and a cup of coffee.

His graduation from high school marked the end of Ed's formal education, but his wide reading and constant curiosity were unlimited resources for learning. It was during the enforced idleness of those depression years that Ed discovered the Papal Encyclicals.

> Confronted as we were in those days by a world which had no place for us, unemployable, useless (though we were at the peak of vitality and idealism), made to sit for uneasy hours in hiring halls awaiting half-heartedly for jobs we didn't want, resented at home for eating food we couldn't earn, chased from the corners by police who regarded us as nuisances, we searched everywhere for an answer to our predicament. In the newspapers, in the local public library, and in the eye of our parents we sought an explanation. . . . Those were the mid-thirties and we had just emerged from high school. It was then that we discovered the Pope not just as dogma but as a leader.[7]

The 1930's were a turbulent time for the Church in America. The teaching authority of the popes was widely accepted, but there was much disagreement about the correct application of papal thought to a society caught in the throes of depression. One point of view leaned toward collective bargaining and union organization as a first step in

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[7] "The Pope is With Us," Integrity, VII (June, 1953), 11.

correcting the weaknesses of an industrial system that threatened to engulf the worker. Supporters of this view, men like Right Reverend Monsignor John A. Ryan of the National Catholic Welfare Council, believed that the Christian social order called for in the Encyclicals could evolve within the framework of an industrial society. Other students of papal social thought regarded personal conversion as a first condition of social reform. They believed that a new social order would come about when many men began to practice the fundamental virtues of Christianity. Peter Maurin was one of those who thought that charity was the touchstone of social reform and that Catholic social action would be effective in direct proportion to the sanctity of its agents.[8] Peter's attitudes shaped the philosophy of the Catholic Worker Movement, and his example had a profound effect on Ed Willock. Peter directed Ed toward an interpretation of the papal encyclicals that rejected any kind of accommodation with technology.

> At Integrity we believe that a social framework which springs from too great a concern for the things of the world will produce poverty of materials and an impoverishment of spirit. Industrialism robs men of virtue because it makes the individual a tool oriented to production and consumption.[9]

Like Peter, Ed felt that personal spiritual renewal was the foundation of social reform, and he shared Peter's distrust

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[8]David O'Brien, "Catholics and Organized Labor in the 1930's," Catholic Historical Review, LII (October, 1966), 327.

[9]Edward Willock, Review of Catholic Social Principles, by John F. Cronin, Integrity V (January, 1951), 40.

of any plan that would attempt to "Christianize" the existing social order on any other basis. They were suspicious of unionization, for example, because they felt that organization became a too easy substitute for the quest after personal goodness that alone could bring permanent reform. Unions might be necessary or useful, but the first duty of the union man was to perfect himself; in doing so, he best contributed to the bettering of the society in which he lived.

Peter Maurin's influence on Ed Willock is not surprising. In his lifetime this dynamic French peasant had changed the direction of many lives. Peter was a native of Languedoc, a small village in the south of France. In 1895 at the age of 18 he joined the Christian Brothers and after his training began to teach, but he left the order soon afterwards to pursue a new interest. A group of young Catholic students had formed the Sillon study-club movement and had begun to seek a wider reign of social justice through a program of peace--religious, international, and social. Peter joined the movement and remained with it for several years. Its purpose was to Christianize democracy "by the creation of a social elite of young Catholics who would affect the masses."[10] Peter was to carry this aim with him when he drifted away from the Sillon Movement and was to make it part of the Catholic Worker philosophy. In 1909 Peter Maurin left for Canada. In the years that followed, he did every kind of manual labor in all

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[10]Sheehan, p. 59.

parts of Canada and the United States. Essentially he was an intellectual, but he learned, during those years of hard work, to bridge the gap that separates the intellectual from the worker.

In 1932, Maurin travelled to New York where George Shuster, editor of Commonweal Magazine, suggested that he meet Dorothy Day.[11] There was an immediate bond of sympathy and understanding between the two. Dorothy had long been active in the cause of the working man. She had been a journalist on the Socialist Call and on the New Masses before her conversion to Catholicism, and during those years of newspaper work had spoken out sharply and often against the abuses suffered by the common laborer. When Maurin met her in 1932, Dorothy was looking for a way to put her skill as a writer at the service of a new-found faith. Maurin urged her to start a newspaper which would bring Catholic thought to the working class. Dorothy raised all the practical objections to such a venture, and Maurin met each objection with a combination of logic and stubborness that defied resistance. In May of 1933 the first issue of the Catholic Worker was printed, and 2,500 copies were distributed on May Day at New York's Union Square. Within a year 110,000 copies were being printed.

Peter was somewhat disappointed with the first editions of the Catholic Worker. Most of what it contained reflected Dorothy's preoccupation with the working man. There were

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[11] Ibid., p. 94.

articles on wages and hours. There were protests against the sweatshop and against the employment of children. There were calls for strikes. There was not, however, a great deal about the philosophy of work, one of Peter's favorite topics. Philosophy would not sell papers even at a cent a copy, but Peter was nonetheless disappointed that so much space was given to such unimportant items as strikes. "Strikes don't strike me!"[12] he would say, and his listeners knew that he considered any strike a poor effort to improve an industrial system that ought to be entirely discarded.

Peter agreed to write for the Catholic Worker, but he wanted it clearly understood that his program was his own and that it presented a radical solution to social questions. He asked that his name be withdrawn from the editorial board, and his contributions to the paper were always signed.

Publication of the Catholic Worker was half of Peter's reform program. Even more important to its success was the operation of houses of hospitality in every large city. Peter hoped that readers of the Catholic Worker would provide houses rent-free for six months so that a start could be made. He thought that workers could be recruited among those who would first be drawn to the houses by the series of round-table discussions that he had outlined. The Catholic Worker houses of hospitality were destined to become centers of charity, but this was not the reason for their foundation.

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[12]Dorothy Day, Loaves and Fishes (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), p. 20.

In the lilting style so uniquely his own Peter described the importance of the houses of hospitality. When Peter's "easy essay" was printed in the Catholic Worker, something of its poetry was captured.

> We need Houses of Hospitality
> to give to the rich
> the opportunity to serve the poor.
>
> We need Houses of Hospitality
> to bring the Bishops to the people
> and the people to the Bishops.
>
> We need Houses of Hospitality
> to bring back to institutions
> the technique of institutions.
>
> We need Houses of Hospitality
> to show what idealism looks like
> when it is practiced.
>
> We need Houses of Hospitality
> to bring Social Justice
> through Catholic Action
> exercised in Catholic Institutions.[13]

Peter's first concern in establishing the houses was the sanctification of those who came to serve as Workers. It was important that the poor be fed and clothed, but it was more important that the Workers be given an opportunity to serve Christ in the poor. The ultimate reform of society would come about when men in sufficient numbers had reformed themselves. Peter's priorities were reflected in Ed Willock's attitude toward the houses of hospitality.

> During every moment of its existence the Catholic Worker has collided head-on with the criticism: "What good do you do these bums, these drunks?" The only answer in the light of the Catholic Worker philosophy

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[13]Dorothy Day, House of Hospitality (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1939), p. XXIII.

> is that the House of Hospitality exists not to "do good" to its guests but to feed, clothe and house them. It exists before this for the moral reform of those who voluntarily live among and serve Christ in His poor. Unlike most workers among the poor, the volunteers in the Catholic Worker movement feel no divine compulsion to convert the down and out, to reassimilate him into the elect society from which he has become alienated due to his nastiness. They feel no conviction that they are the ambassadors of the good life bringing Jesus to the Bowery. On the contrary, the Bowery brings Jesus to them.[14]

Maurin was often in Boston after the Tremont Street House was opened. He lectured at many places in the city, but he had a peasant's love of the outdoors, and he was most at home when he spoke on the Common. Ed Willock often joined the crowd that stood--sometimes for hours at a time--listening to Peter as he outlined a phase of church history or made some telling point against the capitalistic system. After his talk, Peter would return to Tremont Street, and remnants of the crowd would follow, still asking questions and trying to catch Peter's replies as he hurried along Park Square.[15] Much of Ed Willock's philosophy took shape during the hours that he spent with Peter Maurin on the Common or in the rambling old store-front building on Tremont Street.

During his high school years Ed had injured himself in a football game and had lost a year of school while he recovered from the resulting kidney damage. Afterwards he was never entirely well and was plagued by periods of high blood

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[14]Edward Willock, "Catholic Radicalism in America," Catholicism in America, ed. George Shuster (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1953), p. 135.

[15]Sheehan, Gay Believer, p. 154.

pressure and by chronic weakness. In his first years in the Catholic Worker Movement he worried that the physical demands of the life would force him to give it up, but when a new house was opened at Worcester, Massachusettes, in 1938, Ed was in charge. He was just twenty-one years old. He brought to the task the same qualities of enthusiasm and good humor that had made him popular at Tremont Street, and he assumed the role of leadership with a quiet humility that won the loyalty of his staff. The Catholic Worker farm at Upton, Massachusetts went into operation at about this time, and Ed assisted at the farm whenever he could be spared from the work in Worcester. The establishment of a farm community was an integral part of the Catholic Worker philosophy, and the farm at Upton had its counterparts in New York and Pennsylvania. Their impact was largely symbolic. Hope for a large-scale agrarian movement never took deep root among the Workers, but the very existence of the farm gave substance to one of Peter Maurin's fondest dreams. In this, as in so much else, Willock accepted Peter's basic contention that urban life robbed man of his dignity, and in later years Ed would attempt a unique experiment of his own in rural community living.

The house of hospitality in Worcester attracted many young volunteers from nearby colleges. Among the girls who came to help out between classes or on weekends was the future Mrs. Willock. Dorothy Brophy was working on a master's degree when she and Ed began to date and to think seriously of marriage. The difference in their educational backgrounds

must have caused some to wonder about the wisdom of the match, and an uncle warned Dorothy against involvement with anyone whose health was as precarious as Ed's. The uncle was ignored, and the educational differences never mattered, for Dorothy was convinced that Ed's mind was far superior to hers, and it was she who made the first efforts to bring Ed's work to the attention of editors and artists.

For several years after their marriage in 1940, Ed and Dorothy Willock continued to live in Boston. To support a growing family, Ed worked as a shipping clerk, but he helped out at a new Catholic Worker House on Rollins Street whenever he could, and he often attended meetings there. He was determined to prove that the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood did not have to put an end to his participation in Catholic Action. In his spare time he wrote articles and did cartooning, but he hesitated to submit his work for publication. Dorothy Willock finally sent several of Ed's drawings to The Torch, a Dominican magazine edited by Reverend Francis Wendell, O.P. Ed's cartoons and articles became a regular feature in the magazine and attracted a good deal of comment from its readers. One of those who read Ed's work with more than passing interest was Father Wendell's secretary, Carol Jackson, a graduate of Wellesley College and a convert to Catholicism. Carol was anxious to start a magazine that would be the work of laymen rather than religious, and she felt that Ed Willock would share her enthusiasm for such a venture. Carol visited the Willocks in Boston, and she and Ed discussed the possibility

of his moving to New York. Carol had four hundred dollars to use in launching the magazine, and she had found a printer who was willing to take a risk with an operation that had nothing to offer in the way of financial security. Carol had no office and no experience beyond what she had learned as secretary to Father Wendell. She had no idea how Ed Willock was to be paid or what he would do about finding a house in New York where the housing shortage was acute. Faith in Providence and enthusiasm for the project prevailed over the obvious gaps in planning. This was the kind of apostolic work that appealed to Ed, and he was as sure as Carol was that the practical difficulties would be solved. The decision to go to New York was made in 1945, and during the last months of that year Ed spent every free moment planning for the magazine which he and Carol would co-edit. Late in the summer of 1946 Ed and Dorothy Willock and their four children left for New York. The first problem was housing; Ed tackled it with characteristic straight-forwardness by placing an ad in the paper. "Undesirable tenant wishes to rent apartment. Have four children and will probably have more."[16] There was one response to the ad, and though the available house was at the edge of the New York city limits and badly in need of repair, the Willocks rented it.

The first issue of Integrity Magazine was put together in the front half of a coal cellar on York Avenue and Eighty-

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[16]"Marriage for Keeps," Integrity, Vol. V (October, 1950), 20.

Second Street. Carol Jackson rented the building for $20 a month, and she and Ed used it as an office for the next two years. A visitor to the Integrity office describes the atmosphere of those early days

> You opened the door and walked in, and everything seemed "right," plain, austere, even poor and worn. The walls were flat white with a touch of blue enamel somewhere, and there was a "liturgical" crucifix . . . .
>
> I was led into the inner office--the back of the store. It was a large room with an old kitchen table in the center. Around the periphery were desks and filing cabinets and bundles of back issues and a stove and kitchen sink. Ed's studio-office was in a corner under a stairway, or maybe it was a converted closet. Anyhow, he was working on a cartoon. He was of middle height, slender, strong and sensitive. Humor-darts from his blue eyes were always at the ready. He had on a frayed sweater and unpressed pants, and the sleeves of his worn shirt were turned back two folds. He once said that the proper dress for Christians was old clothes . . . .[17]

The same writer furnishes interesting insight into the characters of Carol Jackson and Ed Willock:

> Then I was asked to lunch with editors, staff, and visitors, the community. There was Carol Jackson, slim, young, immaculately groomed and well, "spiritual looking". . . . The conversation was serious but not dour. The crockery chipped and cracked and unmatched. The coffee a little thin. Carol seemed to be the dominant personality at table. Ed sat back comfortably, taking full part, ready for quiet mirth and manifesting no need to prove anything.[18]

Frank Sheed of Sheed and Ward Publishing Company provided Carol and Ed with a mailing list for advance promotion, and this first publicity effort yielded 1,100 subscriptions at $3 a year. At its peak, Integrity"s circulation ran to 15,000 subscriptions with about 50% of these going to priests

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[17] John Stanley, "In Memory of Ed Willock," Commonweal, LXXIV (April 14, 1961), 80.

[18] Ibid.

and religious.[19] Carol and Ed contributed to nearly every issue of the magazine during the years in which they served as co-editors. Beyond this, they looked mostly to unknown writers for articles. They could not have paid the price demanded by established writers; they felt, moreover, that many of the popular authors already suffered over-exposure in the Catholic press.[20] By seeking out new talent, Integrity brought a freshness of approach to its pages, and at the same time gave several young writers their initial taste of success.[21]

Integrity's theological orthodoxy was guaranteed by the assistance of Reverend James Mark Egan, a Dominican priest who would later serve as head of the theology department at St. Mary's, Notre Dame. Writing in later years of Father Egan's contribution to Integrity, Carol Jackson made this comment: "He was the ideal censor; a superb theologian who knew exactly what doctrine or principle was relevant to a problem . . . . People used to tear their hair at the things that appeared in Integrity, but nobody ever convicted us of doctrinal error, nor could they.[22]

Integrity carried on a running feud with the Catholic

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[19]Jackson, Catholic Press Annual, III, 1962, 32.

[20]Ibid., p. 31.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., p. 28.

Press Association. As a matter of principle Carol and Ed had refused to join the association because they felt that it leaned too heavily on cheap commercialism in promoting Catholic newspapers and magazines, and both deplored the "worldliness" of its annual convention. In return, the Catholic Press Association systematically ignored Integrity. Writing in 1962, Carol Jackson remarked with some asperity that Integrity's quarrel with the association had prevented Ed from receiving any awards for his cartooning although he was probably the best artist at work in the Catholic press.[23]

Integrity ceased publication with the June issue in 1956. Five years earlier Ed Willock had been forced by poor health to leave the work of editing to Carol Jackson, but he had continued to write articles for the magazine. His last contribution, an article on the lay apostolate, was printed in May, 1956. Carol Jackson left Integrity in 1952, and Dorothy Dohen, who had worked with Ed and Carol from the beginning, served as editor until 1956.

Carol and Ed had launched Integrity with much hope but with little experience and little capital. Financial difficulties plagued the magazine from the outset. By 1956 the publishing field was crowded with new magazines ready to compete with Integrity for the same market and better prepared, in many instances, to attract needed advertising support.

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[23] Ibid., p. 34.

Integrity had always been sharply critical of the advertising media and had resisted the temptation to ease its financial problems by opening its pages to advertising. That position, however laudable in principle, simply proved untenable in the face of mounting financial strain. During a full decade Integrity had spoken for the Catholic layman. Not all the battles had been won, but by 1956 it was time for other voices to be heard.

Chapter II

LETTING THE LAITY IN

Although it attracted many, the Catholic Worker Movement remained in Willock's day what it had been from the start--a loosely organized movement that left wide scope for individual initiative and responsibility. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin had resisted the temptation to impose an unyielding structure upon the movement and had thus made it possible for men of widely divergent opinion to call themselves Catholic Workers. The time spent at the Catholic Worker houses in Boston and Worcester had formed Willock in the spirituality peculiar to the movement, convincing him that social reform was brought about by the individual whose personal conversion was followed by a reaching out towards his neighbor. Willock, however, came to place more and more emphasis upon the need for group action. He saw the excessive individualism of the Catholic Worker Movement as a deterrent to reform.

> Its very adhorrence of organization is a guarantee of a certain ineffectuality in social areas where organized cooperation is of the essence. Some of these are the family, the school, the community, the productive enterprises, and the political order. An over-preoccupation with personal autonomy . . . can blind one to the essentiality of an organized social order and subsequent loyalties to authority and the common good. Integrity, though a magazine rather than a movement, while rejoicing in the radical tradition, has placed most of its emphasis on the relation between personal virtue and the demands of social co-operation.[24]

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[24]Willock, Catholicism in America, p. 140.

Willock believed that the right balance between personal sanctity and social responsibility was achieved by participation in Catholic Action at the parish level. He thought that the moment had come for Catholic laymen to step forward and to offer their services to the parish priest in the performance of meaningful acts of justice and charity. Always there was insistence upon the need for corporate effort. "There is a shared moral responsibility to do something about social justice . . . . It seems to me if a Catholic carefully reads the social teachings of our modern Popes, he will feel obliged to join some group actively concerned with social reform."[25] Willock felt that in certain areas of the social apostolate the efforts of the clergy were unavailing and that in these areas Catholic laymen could better serve the cause of the Church. He saw Integrity's role as one of defining the layman's task and of providing the encouragement needed in a revolutionary effort.

Integrity's readers were not likely to forget that the magazine was intended as a guide in the work of Catholic Action. The masthead of every issue bore the same message: "Integrity is published by lay Catholics and dedicated to the task of discovering a new synthesis of religion and life."[26]

In several Integrity articles Willock discussed in some detail the formation of lay leaders in the parish, and the

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[25] "Group Action versus Individualism," Integrity IX (January, 1955), 4.

[26] Integrity, frontispiece.

difficulties that any potential lay apostle might expect to meet as soon as he rejected the carefully defined neutrality of the Holy Name Society in favor of outspoken commitment to social justice. The initial problem in most parishes was the total indifference of most of its members to their responsibilities as Christians. Too many Catholics, Willock maintained, wanted to blend quietly into the colorless background of their social environment rather than step forward into positions of leadership in the Church.[27] Willock had small patience with such reticence. In their anxiety to move unobserved and unchallenged into the mainstream of middle class American society, such Catholics were sacrificing all principle. Willock believed that the proper role of any Catholic was to confront every un-Christian attitude and to resist it no matter at what cost to the niceties of polite society. "It is not charitable to avoid speaking of adultery to an adulterer. It is not neighborly to let your neighbor's children run riot under your nose for the sake of keeping peace. It is not humility to understate your inmost convictions."[28]

Another fundamental problem in the formation of lay apostles in the parish was the resistence of the clergy to an articulate, determined, and apostolic laity. Willock thought that the parish structure would have to be "shaken up" before

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[27]Willock, "Hints for Converting America," Integrity, I (July, 1947), 43.

[28]Ibid.

Catholic Action could be effective.[29] Most clergymen, he contended, did not want the assistance of the laity to reach beyond the services rendered by the parish organist or the sodality matrons, and on those rare occasions when they sought the advice of the layman, most priests were looking to the wrong segment of their parish for the needed help.

Willock had a deep conviction that the sources of authority in our country had been eroded because the rich and the powerful had abused their privileges and had forfeited the respect of the mass of the people. He suggested that the truly influential Catholic of the parish might well be a factory worker or an office girl, yet the majority of parish priests continued to take their cue from a day when secular power and wealth were held in high esteem. Whenever a layman's opinion was deemed worthy of a hearing, such priests invariably sought out the richest business man or the highest-placed politician among their parishioners. Willock suggested that the ordinary worker who shared in the difficulties of his fellow laborers was a better instrument of Catholic Action. "Christianizing influence will not flow down through a vertical pyramid of leaders until the day that a new hierarchy of leaders has been established, leaders who have authority because they are right, leaders who are trusted because they are one with their followers."[30]

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[29] "Spiritual Birth Control," Integrity, III (June, 1949), 8.

[30] "The Pastor and the Influential Catholic," Integrity, II (March, 1948), 22.

In later Integrity articles, Willock made the assumption that a working relationship between priest and lay apostle had been achieved. He then went on to point out the pitfalls to be avoided in organizing a group of Catholic Actionists. It was the action of a group and not that of the individual that was always his chief concern. "It is my conviction that the apostolate to which Catholics have been called--a reform of the person and of society--takes place in the group because that is the effective point of contact between the person and society."[31] He dealt in particular with three problems that were likely to arise in the formation of an apostolic lay group in the parish: the selection of leaders within the group; the determination of its size; the direction of its energies.

Willock regarded as crucial the choice of leader that would be made within a Catholic Action group. In an article entitled "Freedom in Cooperation," he described two types of individuals who would be attracted to the lay apostolate, and he suggested that the right kind of leadership blended the best qualities of both types. To lean too far in the direction of either the Individualist or the Collectivist was to risk the destruction of the group. Willock described the Individualist as self-sufficient and resentful of all authority not vested in himself. The Individualist was almost invariably a hard worker, eager to effect worthwhile social change, but

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[31]"Freedom in Cooperation," Integrity X (August, 1951), 9.

he resisted group efforts, and found it difficult to participate in any endeavor that was not under his supervision. Willock characterized the Collectivist, on the other hand, as a follower, a man at home in a mob. While he felt that the Collectivist was incapable of the independence required of a leader, Willock regarded the Individualist as a far graver threat. Willock felt that individualism made Christian community impossible. The Individualist had two plays for avoiding commitment to group action. He answered, "Mind your own business," to any invitation to join in a community endeavor, or he uttered a definitive, "I quit," if he happened to find himself accidentally enmeshed in some project that demanded group cooperation. Willock condemned individualism, calling it "fundamentally immoral, inhuman and essentially anti-Christian."[32] Leadership in the lay apostolate had to be entrusted to the person who combined in himself the Individualist's independence of judgment and the Collectivist's willingness to work with his fellow Christians. Willock was convinced that the Individualists and the Collectivists in the lay apostolate could find a balanced leadership. If they failed to do so, their efforts in any apostolic work were marked for failure. "Instead of a strong community to extend Christianity throughout the social order, we shall offer nothing to the Church, but an unruly, opinionated, quarrelsome crowd of individuals or else a mob competent in nothing but coercion and pressure

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[32]"Group Action versus Individualism," IX, 3.

tactics."[33]

A second problem to be dealt with in the formation of a parish lay organization was the determination of its size. Willock warned his readers against any mistaken notion that the effectiveness of the group could be measured by the number of people who could be enlisted in its ranks. The parish apostolate should, he felt, begin small and measure its progress by the degree of charity and justice practiced by the members.[34] Willock's insistence on the quality of lay leadership had found expression earlier in the writings of Pius XI. "Precisely because of this absolute need for training, it will be essential to begin, not with great numbers but with small well-trained teams, who will act as a sort of evangelical leaven to transform the whole mass."[35] Those engaged in the work of Catholic Action needed to be on constant guard against the temptation to follow the dictates of advertising as they attempted to reach others with the Christian message. Madison Avenue techniques always called for something better packaged and bigger. Willock felt that the urge to conduct a membership campaign, or build a bigger headquarters, or redesign the stationery could be dangerous signs that materialism had crept into what ought to be a

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[33]"Freedom in Cooperation," X,14.

[34]"Hints for Converting America," I, 42.

[35]Pius XI Letter "Quamvis Nostra," October 27, 1935. The Lay Apostolate; Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1961, 367.

spiritual endeavor.

The third problem area in the organization of the lay apostolate concerned the right ordering of means and end. Willock felt strongly that the apostolic layman could not wholeheartedly support any end that was even partly marred by unchristian values. Secular colleges, political organizations, chambers of commerce, cultural societies and even nominally Catholic organizations had to be regarded with suspicion, for while each professed laudable purpose, each could and sometimes did compromise with the forces of secularism. The apostle must not become so absorbed in the institutions he was trying to reform that he lost sight of his first duty--that of perfecting himself. Willock chose union organizations as an example of the kind of secular institution that, in the guise of a greater good, could countenance certain unethical practices. This compromise with imperfection was, Willock insisted, the reason that the Catholic who belonged to the union could rarely give unqualified support to any union activity.[36] The Catholic unionist was not a union member primarily for the sake of unionism itself. He joined the union and remained in it in order to direct it towards ends that demanded a higher loyalty: the extension of the Faith, the salvation of souls, the common good of society. In all things, the spiritual had primacy.

> Social justice can only come as the fruit of charity. Good working conditions, frugal comfort, even the ascetic

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[36]"Hints for Converting America," I, 39.

> life do not automatically produce better men. It would be better to leave the Negro in slavery then to arouse envy in his heart. It would be better to leave the worker to exploitation than to foster hate for his boss.[37]

It would be unfair to conclude from Willock's statement that he had no feeling for the sufferings of the Negro or the plight of the workingman. What he wanted to say, and as strongly as he could state it, was that misguided efforts to bring about social justice sometimes destroyed the spirit of a man. Where charity was neglected in the search after social justice, a man might become materially prosperous but could lose his soul.

There were some endeavors in which Willock felt that the lay apostle had no place whatever. Some enterprises could not be saved for restoration to Christ and ought not to be. In Willock's opinion, purely profit-making organizations served no good purpose, and the apostolic Catholic wasted his time in joining them even with the legitimate aim of improving their ethics.

> It is questionable prudence for an apostle to jeopardize his own soul to save the souls of those who chose deliberately to participate in such enterprises. What boon does society enjoy from the contributions of pagan self-seeking dehumanizing corporations that could not better be accomplished by men getting together with Christ in their midst working hard in charity.[38]

In another article Willock made a similar point. While he did not advocate the violent destruction of property, he did believe

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[37] Ibid., p. 40.

[38] Ibid.

that the lay apostle could undermine the power of profit-making enterprises by refusing to join them and by attempting to find work that emphasized creative achievement rather than spiralling wages and attractive fringe benefits. Where a radical solution was possible, Willock had no patience with half measures.

> There is small justification for busying ourselves with improving the conversation, habits or working conditions of our fellow workers if it lies within our power to displace the entire system of which they are (sometimes happily) the victims.[39]

The last article that Ed Willock wrote for Integrity was published in May, 1956. Like the first, published just ten years earlier, it dealt with the lay apostolate. If there is an edge of dissatisfaction in this last article, it is explained only in part by Willock's disappointment with the slow development of an apostolic laity. The frustrations of a long illness and the losing battle to continue the publication of Integrity must also be read in its pages. Nonetheless, there is a perceptible difference in Willock's later approach to the lay apostolate. In 1946 he had written enthusiastically that the layman was ready to go to work in the Church, to become active in the propogation of the Christian message. He believed then that the old social order was rapidly decaying and that in its place, an apostolic laity could erect a society built on Christian principles. "Change is going on. Call it evolution or revolution . . . . We must

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[39] Ibid., p. 41.

be intensely militant. Nothing short of revolution can restore the world to Christ. The time to start was yesterday. Today is the eleventh hour. Tomorrow is the judgment.[40]

Ten years later Willock was ready to admit that the layman's emergence had scarcely begun and that the decade had witnessed only the painful beginnings of development. In his last Integrity article Willock again reminded his readers that the challenge of the social encyclicals was a challenge to the lay Catholic, but he recognized now the enormity of the task, and he had learned to temper his impatience. The mistakes of a decade had convinced him that the layman must be carefully prepared for work in the apostolate. "It is not an effort expected of laymen in the past. The layman is unprepared. One should expect therefore that the initial stage (and we are not beyond it) will be characterized by awkwardness, failure, imprudent zeal."[41]

In an editorial published after Willock's death in 1960, Ave Maria Magazine commented that Ed Willock deserved the title, "Father of Lay Catholic Action."[42] Ed would have dismissed the title with a smile, but no tribute could have pleased him more.

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[40]"The Cross and the Collar," Integrity, I, (October, 1946), 46.

[41]"Response and Responsibility," Integrity, X, (May, 1956), 35.

[42]Ave Maria, XCIII (January 14, 1961), 16.

Chapter III

THE DREAM OF DISTRIBUTISM

Ed Willock's enthusiasm for the agrarian movement can be traced directly to the influence of Peter Maurin. Peter led Willock to see the value of a peasant economy in which men were dignified by hard work and by pride of ownership of their land. The establishment of farming communities was part of Maurin's program for the Catholic Worker Movement, and Willock had helped to establish the farm at Upton, Massachusetts. Still, Maurin and Willock viewed the agrarian movement differently. Dorothy Day noted this difference in an article written after Willock's death. "Peter thought in terms of the apostolate, the single man and woman, the workers and scholars on a farming commune. Ed Willock thought in terms of family and community."[43] In this, as in all matters of controversy, the Catholic Worker Movement made room in its ranks for men of every opinion. Distributism as an answer to the mal-distribution of the world's wealth was a favorite topic for argument in the houses of hospitality. The idea of a re-distribution of capital was by no means new. Anarchists and Popes alike had advocated some form of distributism as a remedy to the economic ills of the world.

The distributist of the 20th century could trace his

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[43]Day, "In Memory of Ed Willock," Commonweal, LXIII, (February 24, 1961), 550.

lineage to the anarchists and utopian socialists of the 18th and 19th centuries. The French Revolution and the growing challenge of industrial society had produced the setting from which all manner of social reform movements would spring after 1800, and many of these had a foundation in the distributist philosophy.

The theories of Henri de Saint Simon formed a link between the 18th and 19th centuries, between the idealists who dreamed of perfect communities and the idealists who attempted to form them. Recognizing the growing pervasiveness of industrialism, Saint Simon wanted to reorganize society along lines that accepted the realities of industrial life. He looked upon industrialism as a blessing to mankind, and he suggested that the government of society ought to be entrusted to the leaders of industry. Though he was vague in details, Saint Simon thought that capital was best used when it was held in common to be drawn upon by each man as his needs dictated.[44]

Charles Fourier, a contemporary of Saint Simon was born in 1772. Like Saint Simon, he lived through the years of revolution in France, and he shared Saint Simon's distrust of violence. Fourier set about inventing a social system that would prevent the recurrence of revolution and at the same time relieve the appalling conditions of the poor through the re-distribution of capital wealth. His criticism of society

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[44]Mark Holloway, Heavens on Earth (London: Turnstile Press, 1951), p. 103.

was not merely that its wealth was badly distributed. In a larger sense, he felt that man's whole environment must be redirected towards the harmony that had prevailed at the moment of creation.[45]

Fourier suggested that a spontaneous association of workers was the ideal basis of a new society. Groups of workers, numbering seven or eight, would join other similar Groups to form a Series. Several Groups in each Series would engage in the same work, and the competition among Groups would stimulate production. A number of Series, finally, formed a Phalanx, the largest unit in Fourier's scheme. A phalanx would ideally number between 1600 and 1800 individuals.[46]

Fourier's ideal society embraced a notion of community that was to serve as the basis of the numerous experiments in community living that were undertaken in Europe and America during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Fourier did not live to see any practical applications of his ideas; perhaps it was a kindness of Providence that prevented him from witnessing the repeated failure of men to fulfill his hopes for peace-filled community life.

Like Saint Simon, Fourier recognized and accepted the prevailing industrial system. He felt that machines served to relieve men of the monotonous aspects of labor, making it

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[45] Ibid., p. 104.

[46] Ibid., p. 103.

possible for them to pursue their own interests at the end of a shortened working day.

Fourier and Saint Simon believed strongly in the essential goodness of man, and they shared an unfailing optimism in the ultimate perfectibility of society. Both felt that men freed of economic and social constraints would move naturally and in a direct line toward cooperation with their fellows.

The anarchists, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Peter Kropotkin, differed from the utopian socialists only in the means they would use to effect the re-distribution of wealth. Proudhon was a self-educated peasant, but his scholarship was firmly established by the time he published "What is Property," in 1840.[47] Proudhon placed all reliance on the worker in society. He regarded work as the essential characteristic of man. To restore the direct relationship between man the producer and man the consumer, he advocated the abolition of wages, of financiers, and of banks. Throughout his writings can be found a peasant's love for the land, and like so many anarchists after him, from Kropotkin to Peter Maurin, Proudhon extolled the virtues of a simple agricultural society as it existed before it was corrupted by machines and money.[48]

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[47]James Joll, The Anarchists (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), p. 62.

[48]Ibid.

Proudhon insisted that any form of property was theft since the proprietor appropriated what was the possession of all. In place of property, Proudhon would have common possession and use of goods. The only condition of use was that a man have contributed through his labors to the common fund.

Finally, the 20th century distributist had to feel kinship for Peter Kropotkin, the gentle anarchist. Unlike Proudhon, Kropotkin who was born in 1842, came from a family that ranked high in the Russian nobility. He revolted against the discipline of court life and renounced his appointment to the Corps of Pages in favor of an assignment to a remote post in Siberia where he made a careful study of Proudhon's writings. After his return to St. Petersburg in 1873 Kropotkin became active in the populist movement, and in 1874 was imprisoned for subversive activities.[49] He escaped to England two years later and lived there until his return to Russia in 1917.

In England Kropotkin befriended radicals of every sort though his own inclinations were leading him to discard violence as an instrument of social change. For Kropotkin the law of nature was a law of mutual assistance and cooperation, and he was almost naive in his faith that men could build an ideal society if only there existed an economic order that promoted man's good instincts and denied latitude to his faults.[50]

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[49]Peter Kropotkin, Memoirs of a Revolutionist (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), p. 224.

[50]Joll, The Anarchists, p. 157.

Kropotkin envisioned a society in which all capital was held in common, the wage system was abandoned, and men willingly worked to the full extent of their capacities because they saw that the fruits of their labor benefitted their fellowmen and themselves.

There are surprising parallels between the theoretical anarchism of Kropotkin and the social thinking of the Catholic Church as it is propounded in the Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI. While the Church has stoutly maintained the sanctity of private ownership, it has recognized, as have the anarchists, that the inequitable distribution of the world's wealth must, in justice, be righted. The Church's position differs from the anarchist's not on the question of the need for change, but only on the ultimate goal. Rejecting Proudhon's notion that property is theft, the Popes consistently argued that the possession of property by the worker could go far toward alleviating the evils of industrialism.

The distributist movement attracted a number of articulate and enthusiastic advocates in Britain after 1900 and especially in the 1920's. Because most of them were Catholics, they tended to cite the Papal Encyclicals as the bulwark of their argument for a redistribution of capital. Here again, however, there were sharp differences of opinion about what was to be distributed and what was to be altogether abandoned. Father Vincent McNabb and the artist Eric Gill represented a minority opinion that rejected industrialism as evil in itself. Hilaire Belloc and Gilbert K. Chesterton,

on the other hand, presented a more moderate version of the distributist position.

Hilaire Belloc elaborated his position in two books on distributism. In The Restoration of Property, Belloc described the steps to be taken in restoring man to a position of ownership. In The Servile State, Belloc described the alternatives to industrial capitalism and again presented his argument in favor of distributism.

Belloc differed with anarchists over the place of government in the ideal society. For Belloc, the state was necessary as the guardian of property. When the redistribution of capital took place, the state would be invoked to protect the property of the many as it was invoked, under the capitalist system, to safeguard the property of the few.[51]

The natural drift of a capitalistic society, however, was in the direction of collectivism rather than distributism. In the capitalistic system nearly all property was in the hands of a few while the vast majority of men were free to labor for wages. In the collectivist society towards which England was heading, property was taken even from the few men who had it and vested in the state. In a collective economy, all men worked because the law obliged them to work, but the state assured them of benefits and security that they did not enjoy under industrial capitalism. Because the state assumed total care of the worker, pensions, unemployment insurance and other relief measures were necessary in a collectivist society.

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[51]Hilaire Belloc, The Restoration of Property (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 35.

The argument that such measures already existed in England under capitalism was simply proof to Belloc that collectivism was at hand and that it might already be too late to reverse the trend in the direction of distributism.

In The Servile State Belloc described how the world had fallen from the ideal economic freedom of the Middle Ages into the capitalistic slavery of the 20th century. He called the economic system of the Middle Ages "an excellent state of affairs." The medieval economy, Belloc maintained, was an example of distributism at work, the happy culmination of centuries of growth in Christian living. The seizure of church lands under Henry VIII represented, for Belloc, the beginning of industrial capitalism, the moment when the property of many men passed into the hands of an already wealthy few.[52]

By 1700 not one man in two in England inhabited a house of which he had sure possession. After 1700 when the industrial system arose, the base upon which it built was already capitalistic. Had the industrial revolution occurred in a land where people were economically free, it would have taken a cooperative form. The capitalistic system grew out of the seizure of church lands and as an economic system it was already well established when the industrial revolution began.[53]

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[52] Hilaire Belloc, The Servile State (London: T.N. Foulis, 1913), p. 57.

[53] Ibid., p. 69.

Belloc suggested that redistribution of wealth could yet take place in England. As a first and essential step, men would have to change their philosophy. At the root of capitalism's hold on England was an attitude of mind that accepted the notion that the majority of men were destined to be without property. Until this attitude was changed, any economic system based on distributism would not find acceptance.[54]

The distributist must call for practical changes even as he attempted to alter his philosophical notions about property. Belloc advocated the restoration of the small cultivator, the small distributor and the craftsman. He suggested that necessarily large enterprises should have shared ownership, and he repeated his earlier contention that the state should protect any changes enacted in the direction of distributism.

G. K. Chesterton was, like Belloc, a concerned critic of England's industrial economy. In The Outline of Sanity, published in 1927, Chesterton made his own case for distributism. He felt that number of people in England who were dissatisfied with industrial capitalism was larger than supposed. Chesterton was optimistic in his belief that the English could return to the "one man, one field" style of life and could bring about a just distribution of land if only they set themselves to the task.[55]

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[54]Belloc, The Restoration of Property, p. 63.

[55]Gilbert K. Chesterton, The Outline of Sanity (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1927), p. 249.

Father Vincent McNabb set forth a more radical doctrine of distributism than that advocated by Chesterton and Belloc. Father McNabb and Hilaire Belloc had begun a life-long association in 1911. The two men were similar in character--clear-sighted, stubborn, and articulate.[56] In 1911 when McNabb made his first contribution to Belloc's weekly paper, The Eye Witness, his notions about distributism were not very different from those of Chesterton and Belloc, but by 1926 McNabb had drifted from his earlier moderation into a position that rejected industrialism as inherently evil. He believed industrialism to be incompatible with the Providential order and of its very nature destructive of all the best qualities in men.[57]

McNabb felt that machinery was a poor substitute for land in any economic order, and he made use of every opportunity to drive his point home.

> So simple and subtle is Nature that no man-made device can be her equal in meeting fluctuations of workers and work. No machine will depreciate so little if left standing idle. No machine can deal so successfully with a sudden influx of workers. The machine has only a limited capacity both in accommodation and in function. It cannot employ more than a small group, unless the shifts are shortened. It cannot undertake other than the specialized operation for which it was designed. But a tract of land in England can exist with a handful of workers, or can keep a worker or two for every acre.[58]

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[56]Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., Father Vincent McNabb, O.P. (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1955), p. 133.

[57]Ibid., p. 135.

[58]Vincent McNabb, The Church and the Land (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1926), p. 182.

Peter Maurin and Ed Willock were indebted to Chesterton, Belloc, and McNabb for the philosophical outlines of their belief in the agrarian movement. Carol Jackson, in a 1962 article, made note of Willock's admiration for Chesterton. "It is not too much to say that his mind was actually formed by G.K. Chesterton, even to his style of writing."[59] Willock acknowledged his debt to Belloc in an article entitled "Belloc and Other Things" which was published in Integrity in November, 1953. Willock believed that Belloc's notions on distribution of land and property were far in advance of their time.

> While they labeled him "medieval" he remained contemporary with such distributive trends as Roosevelt's "Share the Wealth," the co-operative movements of Rochdale, Scandinavia, and Nova Scotia . . . . He realized (as any fool must realize) that distribution of wealth must be a post-capitalistic phenomenon. Either the distribution will be accomplished by force of government (bringing inevitably a Welfare State) or else it will be accomplished at grass-roots levels by the little people (as in, for example, the co-op movement).[60]

The criticism most often levelled against Belloc and Chesterton was that they were turning back to the Middle Ages to find solutions to modern problems. Willock conceded that some ideas developed in the agrarian revolution were based on a study of the guild system of the Middle Ages, but he stoutly maintained that Chesterton and Belloc looked back only so that they might discover the foundations of a Christian economy. Willock thought that much could be learned from this kind of

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[59]Jackson, Catholic Press Annual, III, 1962, 28.

[60]"Belloc and Other Things," Integrity, VIII (November, 1953), 23.

backward glance.

> In the Middle Ages men knew where they were going. They knew that they lived in, for, and by Christ . . . . History also records the interesting fact that industrial capitalism in its early formative years had to destroy one by one the laws, customs and habits of peoples oriented to Christ before they could inaugurate institutions, laws, customs, and habits oriented to profit.[61]

The distributist movement in England never moved far beyond the realm of intellectual debate. Chesterton, Belloc and McNabb were great distributist writers, but all of them were too busily engaged in defining and defending the principles of distributism to produce the kind of utopian community which they envisioned. There were shades of opinion among distributists about the place of the machine in the distributist state, and this argument alone was enough to keep Chesterton forever bound to the task of the theoretician. In her biography of Chesterton, Maisie Ward offers an apt criticism of the distributist movement in England.

> I cannot help feeling that it would have been better if the majority of Leaguers had done some bit of constructive work towards a Distributist world and sweated out of their system the irritability that found its vent in some of their quarrels . . . . The main body of Distributists would have learned their own principles better by trying to act them, and been far more effective in conveying them to others.[62]

While she worked on her biography of Chesterton, Miss Ward travelled widely. Everywhere she looked for some prac-

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[61] "Toward Peace in the Lay Apostolate," Integrity, III (December, 1948), 18.

[62] Maisie Ward, Gilbert Keith Chesterton (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1943), p. 520.

tical implementation of the ideals of distributism. In Australia and in Canada, she thought she found a blending of theory and practice taking shape in co-op movements. The influence of distributism was less well defined in the United States, but she saw stirrings of an awakening in the efforts of the Catholic Rural Life Conference, and there were a number of independent projects underway.

> I did begin to make a list of vital movements beginning with the Jocistes and the American Catholic Worker, roving over the world and trying to estimate in each movement I had met, the proportion of Chesterton's influence, and again the extent to which one movement is in debt to another--but I gave it up in despair. One can only say that certainly there has been a great stirring of the waters in every country.[63]

Miss Ward's biography of Chesterton was published in 1943, several years before Ed Willock founded the Marycrest community, but the author visited Marycrest during the difficult first years of its existence and was pleased with the efforts made there to fulfill Chesterton's dream. She was eager to help the struggling community with its financial problems. "The first four houses were built with loans from people who believed in the ideal as Ed wrote it up. Mrs. Sheed (Maisie Ward) financed two families after a visit to our house. I was ashamed of its unfinished state but she was impressed and offered to help the next two families."[64]

In order to understand what Ed Willock wrote about the

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[63] Ibid.

[64] Letter from Mrs. Edward Willock, August, 1968.

agrarian movement, a distinction must be made between distributism and decentralization. Distributism is an economic theory based on the philosophical notion that man has a natural right to the fruits of his labors. Willock defined distributism for his readers in an article published in 1948.

> The distributists ask for a more widespread distribution of productive property (not bathtubs or video sets) so that as people are redeemed from the irresponsibility of subdivided work they will have their own tools with which to be responsible. This does not mean that everyone will have his own shop or farm, but that new ventures will be started, oriented to Christ and the Common Good, and that these will not exceed a size wherein an individual worker can apply human responsibility to satisying work.[65]

Decentralization was a means to the end. Urban congestion made it impossible for most men to claim property in the city. If the ideals of distributism were to be realized, men would have to move out of the city; this "moving out" was decentralization.

> To reconcile oneself to city living is to reconcile oneself to perpetuation of mass propertylessness . . . . For a Catholic to desire to influence social affairs he must possess an area over which he has control. If his family is now and forever beholden to a landlord, a boss, a government, subjected always to whatever secular whim may move them, in what fashion can he incarnate Christian ideas of ownership and behavior? . . . Decentralization is the logical step toward rebirth of human community, parish, town.[66]

In the June, 1947, issue of Integrity, Willock reviewed a book by Willis Dwight Nutting which described a plan of decentralization. Nutting contended that a return to the land

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[65]"Toward Peace in the Lay Apostolate," Integrity, III (December, 1948), 19.

[66]"Flight from the City," Integrity, VII, (January, 1954), 16.

and a rejection of the technological system was the only means of forestalling tyranny, and he suggested that man's innate love of freedom would spark an agrarian movement. Willock agreed with Nutting that the industrial system was enslaving the worker, but he concluded that the community proposed by Nutting would not succeed unless the self-denial, hopefulness, and altruism necessary for its foundation came from a supernatural source. "Mr. Nutting's Green Revolution integrated with 1947 Christianity is the social dish for our famished age."[67]

The distributist movement came under attack in the United States by critics who considered it a turning away from the very real problems of an industrial society. John F. Cronin in his Catholic Social Principles expressed a widely held belief that the arena for Catholic Action was the factory and not some bucolic paradise where the problems of urban living could be forgotten. "The idea of separate Catholic communities may not be condemned as wrong, but the greater need today is for movements like that of Jocism, which sends Catholic apostles into the factories and mines."[68] In another place Cronin gives an excellent summation of Integrity's position:

> The present social order is seen by this group as so hopelessly corrupt that it should be scrapped, replaced rather than reformed. As an economic system, they have embraced distributism. The city, the factory, the machine are not merely ugly, they are evil; social reform which

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[67]Ed Willock, Review of The Green Revolution by Willis D. Nutting, Integrity IX (June, 1948), 47.

[68]Cronin, Catholic Social Principles, p. 691.

is other than revolutionary involves reprehensible compromise.[69]

John Cort, who like Willock had been formed in the Catholic Worker Movement, also took a dim view of distributism. Cort had been active in labor organizations during his Catholic Worker years and was the founder of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. The aim of the A.C.T.U. was to Christianize industrial society by striving to better working conditions. Cort was convinced that labor and management could come to agreement and that out of their agreement could come better wages and the beginnings of a decent life for the worker. He saw no fundamental difficulty in reconciling Christianity with urban industrialization. In an article in Commonweal in 1948 Cort expressed concern because many young people were being "enchanted" by the notions of distributism and were turning away from an urban environment before they had made any real effort to Christianize industrial society.[70]

Willock challenged Cort in the December, 1948 issue of Integrity. Willock felt that industrial society was evil because the profit motive made it so. "To Christianize industrial society means to reorient society to Christ. Christ will not share his throne with Profit. Those who turn from profit-making are those who truly are attempting to Christianize

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[69] Ibid.

[70] John Cort, "Reform Begins at the Plant Level," Commonweal, XLVIII (October, 1948), 597.

industrialism.[71] Willock felt that any agreement between management and labor was a tacit admission that the profit system was good. He conceded that there was a place in the factories for apostolic minded men, that there was a need to work for better conditions, but he felt that these men should have in mind the eventual replacement of industrialism with some more Christian system of economics and should look upon their efforts in the factory as a temporary concession to the times.[72] Integrity's position was carefully set forth in an early editorial. Editorials were generally unsigned, but the Belloc influence suggests that Ed Willock was the author.

> Farmers, craftsmen and artisans have been forced into the propertyless masses and have lost their privilege of familial living because when the properties over which the Church had maintained a stewardship were confiscated and became the capital investments of landlords, man was reduced to the position of means within a technological process.[73]

In an article entitled "Flight from the City," Willock answered two criticisms frequently lodged against the notion of decentralization. The first criticism asserted that it was old-fashioned to live in rural areas at a time when the nation was becoming increasingly industrialized; the same

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[71]"Toward Peace in the Lay Apostolate," Integrity, III (December, 1948), 18.

[72]Ibid., p. 20.

[73]Editorial, Integrity, III (April, 1949), 1.

criticism implied that a move to the country could only result in lonely isolation for the family that risked it. In answer Willock invited skeptics to tour the countryside and observe the "epidemic" of building that was taking place. He maintained that the exodus from the city was a reality, but he went on to point out that the move to rural areas was being made by small families of average incomes rather than by large families in low income brackets. It was the large family especially that needed to escape the pressures of the urban environment. What he thought necessary was a program which would enable those families most in need of rural housing and property to finance a move out of crowded urban areas.[74]

The second criticism levelled at decentralization struck more directly at the role of a Catholic layman in the apostolate. The implication was that the layman who left the city was abandoning the apostolate. Willock maintained, on the contrary, that neighborliness and participation in the political and social life of the community was more likely to occur in a rural or semirural setting than in the city. "In the majority of cases an exodus from the city will not be a fleeing of one milieu but rather a discovery of neighborliness.[75] Willock saw the urban environment as one that dehumanized man and made him a stranger to those around him. "The city dweller is aware of people around him as fellow workers, fellow

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[74] "Flight from the City," Integrity, VII (January, 1953), 10.

[75] Ibid.

voters and fellow shoppers but not of their existence as neighbors.[76]

Willock's strongest defense of decentralization was voiced on behalf of children. He maintained that nothing in the urban setting was designed to foster the development of the child. A move to a rural community could provide a space for playing that was beyond the reach of irate landlords. In a rural community, founded on the Christian principle of love, children would be a blessing instead of a burden. "Call it escape if you will, but I prefer to look upon decentralization as the resumption of parental responsibility."[77]

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[76] Ibid., p. 12.

[77] Ibid., p. 15.

Chapter IV

MARYCREST

In 1946, when Integrity was launched, the country was in the midst of a housing crisis. Returning veterans added to a problem that had grown progressively worse during the war years when the pace of domestic construction had slowed to a near halt. Ed Willock blamed the shortage not on the war only but on the greed of both labor and management.

> The selfishness of labor unions and capitalists alike have [sic] contributed to this mess. . . . On the one hand the building trade unions placing wages before dignity, enforced ridiculous restrictions upon their workers. The inviolability of craft boundaries was carried to such fantastic extremes that the whole process of contract building became unwieldy, and the cost of building prohibitive . . . . The interest of the family was subordinated to the higher (and cleverly manipulated) law of supply and demand.[78]

Willock had faced the housing problem when he moved with four small children from Boston to New York. He had found a house, but his family was rapidly outgrowing it, and he was unhappy with the restrictions that an urban environment imposed on his children. He was certain that many others shared his dissatisfaction, and he hoped that the housing shortage of the postwar years might become the occasion for the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream--the creation of a Christian community built upon the precepts of distributism.

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[78]"This Gift is Ours, " Integrity, I (December, 1946), 37.

Willock saw the acute housing shortage of those postwar years as the occasion for the creation of a true community of families.

> The obviousness of this need might be a providential sign pointing the way to a better, more Christian social order. The house is a roof over a family. The family is the root of society. Perhaps in solving the problem of the house, society itself may be preserved.[79]

There is a measure of the idealistic in Willock's outline for parochial housing, but it is characteristic of him that he attempted to implement all that he suggested. Theory without practice was not Ed Willock's social program. In the sixth issue of Integrity, Willock outlines a theoretical approach to decentralization, but he was already looking about for others who would work with him in the task of implementation.

Willock felt that every city parish had within it the wealth, talent, and energy to solve the housing problem at that level. Some parishioners were skilled craftsmen; others had qualities of leadership and persuasion that would serve to sustain enthusiasm. Few families had all that they needed at every moment, but if each parish family added its possessions to a collective pool, each could then extract all it needed at any given time. Private property was good and so was thrift, but society would be destroyed if families let economic independence blind them to their neighbor's need. The pooling of money and talent was a kind of Christian com-

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[79] "To Be Specific," Integrity, III (March, 1947), 20.

munism that could eventually make it possible for vast numbers of men to become property owners. What Willock envisioned was the building of a new community that would allow men to break the ties that bound them to industrial society.

The site of the new homes, he suggested, must be on land that provided for gardens and the housing of productive tools. Ideally, a city parish would lend support and encouragement to a new rural community that would grow up outside the city limits beyond the reach of industrial contamination. Families would move to the new site as houses were readied for them. The place chosen for this parochial housing project must be in a rural area within commuting distance of the mother parish. All the work of building the new homes in the village must be the work of the parishioners themselves. Hopefully young men without dependents would be willing to accept low wages for their work or would accept compensation in land-titles with a view toward obtaining their own piece of land. The homes were to be designed for permanent use and would accomodate large families. Each family plot would include land for a garden as a further assurance of independence. Pasture and woodlands would be available and would be held in common by the parish families.

Raw materials for the housing project were to be obtained without recourse to competitive bidding or to any of the standard practices of contractors. Willock foresaw that some of the parishioners involved in the project might be builders by profession. He warned them to leave behind all the usual

methods of their trade, and he did not hesitate to suggest that these methods too often included graft and black-market dealing. Willock wanted to avoid the use of contracts wherever possible. Occasionally it might be necessary to contract for some work that no parishioner could do, but outside help was not to be sought until an exhaustive and fruitless search had been made within the parish boundaries for the needed skill.

Financing of the parish housing project was, of course, a prime consideration. Willock believed that bazaars and lawn parties were forms of extortion that implied a reluctance to give willing support. Willock hoped that donations would be freely contributed and that donors would be willing to leave the spending of their money to the discretion of those fellow parishioners who would be chosen to handle finances.

All decisions within the community were to be made after study, debate, and conference. A weekly public council attended by husband and wife would keep families informed of progress and of the necessary sacrifices that must be made for the common good. A private council, chosen by the parishioners, would settle particular problems as they arose and would report to the public council at weekly meetings.

The housing project was to be a strictly lay activity. The parish priest might rightly view the project as an apostolic extension of his own parish, but Willock felt that laymen should be in all decision-making positions.

Willock's theoretical approach to the creation of a Chris-

tian community was published in 1946 in one of the earliest issues of Integrity. During the next two years Willock talked about his ideas whenever he had occasion to address any gathering, and such invitations came frequently as the popularity of the magazine grew. However, it was not until 1948 that Willock's housing plan began to take definite shape. Much of what eventually was done in the formation of the Marycrest community coincides with the pattern that Willock had laid down two years earlier. In some particulars, Willock found that his theories could not be worked out. There were moments of triumph in the foundation of Marycrest, but there was an element of disillusionment as well.

In 1948 Ed Willock was introduced to a group of young couples who belonged to the Christian Family Movement. The group met at the Franciscan Church on 31st Street in New York City. Several members of the group had been conducting a door-to-door study of available housing in their neighborhood. The results were discouraging. It was impossible to find apartments for large families at rents that could be paid. When the results of this study were brought to Willock's attention, he suggested that the families move out of the city and erect a rural housing project.

The C.F.M. research team presented their study to the larger group of couples, and at the same time proposed Willock's theory of parochial housing as an alternative to the search for adequate housing in New York. There was little enthusiasm for the plan among most of the couples present. Several of the

men, however, had already become convinced that Willock had found the correct solution to their problem. These men and their wives broke with the C.F.M. group and became pioneers in the Marycrest venture. In severing their connection with the city parish, the group relinquished any hope of operating under the protection of an already established urban community. One of Willock's theoretical notions was thus abandoned at the very start, for he had seen his new community as the extension of a city parish.

The group moved quickly in buying land and beginning to build. Willock thought that too many good ideas got bogged down in endless discussion, and he was anxious to have results, however small, as an incentive to greater effort. Fifty-two acres of land were purchased in Rockland County, New York, and each of the ten men involved in the project contributed $600 toward the price of the land.

The work of editing Integrity and the task of founding a Christian community began to come into conflict after 1948. Willock's divided interests were a cause of tension at the Integrity office. In both ventures he gave himself generously, but both tasks demanded financial abilities for which no amount of good will could compensate, and both required much time. The members of the Marycrest community were expected to give every spare moment to building once the housing project was underway, and Ed Willock's presence was needed almost constantly during the first years when sheer physical exhaustion tempted some of the men to abandon the

venture.

Carol Jackson seems to imply that the involvement of Ed Willock at Marycrest was one of the reasons for Integrity's failure during the years when they served as co-editors.

> We gave Integrity the fruit of years of thinking, without having the leisure to keep the storehouse full. One result was tension between the editors, for we tended to opposite views .. . . . Subordinately, we got involved in practical affairs where our competence was limited or nil and which bred all sorts of dissensions. To provide housing and community for his by now much larger family, Ed joined with some other fathers to build Marycrest, a housing community on the other side of the Hudson. Unfortunately, Marycrest also started without capital of any sort, including know-how and group formation.[80]

In 1952, four years after the Marycrest experiment began, Ed Willock wrote about it in Integrity.[81] His pride and hope are evident in every word. Work was far from finished, but the original band had weathered all the difficulties of beginnings and had forged a spirit of community out of a common need. Not everyone who joined the group during those first four years could turn his intellectual enthusiasm for decentralization into the kind of courage required at Marycrest.

> One man, for example, gave up considerable middle-class prosperity as an insurance salesman and apprenticed himself as a carpenter; he had a degree from Fordham and must have been in his thirties at the time; he had become convinced of the virtues of manual labor and the evils of capitalism; and he acted. But he didn't make it. After a couple of years he was forced to give up this too-great effort.[82]

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[80]Jackson, "Beginnings," Catholic Press Annual, III, 1962, 32.

[81]"A Place to Live," Integrity, VI (July, 1952), 6-14.

[82]Stanley, Commonweal, LXXIV, 81.

When Willock wrote the Integrity article in 1952, the Marycrest community was in the process of building its fifth house. The decision about whose house was to be built first was made by a committee of men who wished to live at Marycrest but who were not immediately anxious to build. Families were ranked according to need, and priority was given to the first family on the list. Each house was built to fit the needs of the specific family for which it was intended. The finished house was plain, durable and made for a growing family. It boasted none of the embellishments of elegant suburban living, but the lack of wooden clap-boards, bay windows and landscaping was more than compensated for by the large yards where children, any number of them, could run freely.

Willock insisted that it required scarcely more skill to build a simple modern house than to operate an erector set. He acknowledged that house building required patience and care, but he thought that amateurs could succeed very well with a minimum of professional help. This minimum of professional help included the services of an architect and a master builder. Ambitious amateurs left without guidance, were too likely to design houses that were unnecessarily complicated and expensive. An architect could help, too, in the selection of materials that were serviceable without being prohibitive in price. Help from a master builder was also important at least at the outset of each successive step in the building process. He could begin such tasks as that of

brick laying, and could periodically check the work as it was continued by one of the men in the community. No one in the Marycrest community had any experience in building before the work began. Two of the first group were electricians, and they were the only two who qualified as tradesmen, yet the group built five homes in four years. Willock was certain that others could do as well.

Financing the Marycrest community was a problem. In his outline for the community Willock had been firmly against organized benefits, lawn parties, and bingoes. Initially, the group tried to borrow money from the Federal Housing Authority in Washington, but the Marycrest venture was so fraught with risk that the F.H.A. refused the loan. Willock came to regard this early disappointment as a kindness of Providence since a condition of the government loan was that the building be done by bonded professional contractors. The total cost of every house would have been doubled, and the whole concept of low-cost housing would have been destroyed. In the end, most of the money came from charitable people who simply responded to the evident enthusiasm and optimism of the group by extending building mortgages or by giving sizeable donations to the community.

When Willock reported on Marycrest in the 1952 issue of Integrity, work was far from finished. He did not minimize any of the difficulties that had been encountered.

> Discouragements have been plentiful. The half mile of road, built by all too human hands, is Marycrest's monument of misery. We can recall many a tired evening,

> when, having put our tools away, we found ourselves without a conveyance to take us to our bus. Many evenings we stood for twenty-five miles in the overcrowded bus, arriving home for Sunday dinner just before bedtime. Who can forget the endless days of laying 65lb. cinder blocks. How many shovelsful of soil have been moved from place to place? How many cars have been salvaged from mud-holes?[83]

A measure of antagonism from those outside the community had been expected and was therefore less difficult to cope with than were conflicts within the group. Ed once remarked that some visitors were repelled by the "runny-nosed, dirty-faced children at Marycrest." That kind of criticism was easily ignored. Marycrest was a place for children to run free, and they were entitled to get a little dirty in the process.

Disagreements within the community, however, had to be reckoned wtih if Marycrest were to survive. Surprisingly, conflicts arose where consensus might have been expected. At the outset the men did not agree upon the place that machinery should have in the work performed. There was disagreement over the measure of independence that should be aimed at by families who were new to any kind of farm life. Long discussions centered upon the division of labor and upon the priority to be given the many tasks at hand.[84] Decisions were reached by the community at their weekly assemblies. The procedure was slow and Ed Willock was impatient for movement but he waited and out of discussion

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[83]"A Place to Live," VI, 11.

[84]Stanley, Commonweal, LXXIV, 81.

answers finally came.

It was decided that large pieces of machinery would be jointly owned by the group and kept in old army barracks that the men had purchased at an abandoned army camp. The machinery was used to clear land for new houses and to build the Marycrest road. No ambitious attempts were made at large-scale farming. Most of the men had jobs in New York City that kept them away from Marycrest during the day and there was little time in the evenings for planting or harvesting large fields. Each family had a small garden for growing vegetables, and there was much hopeful discussion about expanding their efforts as the families gained experience.

The Marycrest community was not communistic. The aim of the families involved in the project was to acquire property and, as much as possible, to become independent of the industrial society around them. Marycrest was truly a total community, however, in social if not in economic terms. Common interest in the distributist movement and shared concern for one another's problems forged a permanent bond among the members.

The Marycrest community still exists. Writing in 1968, Mrs. Willock described it "as a better than average place to live." The community has become more pragmatic than in the first days when all the founding families were young and idealistic. Some acres of land have recently been sold to pay the cost of paving the Marycrest road that the men built at the cost of so much effort twenty years ago. The paved

road will be kept in repair by the city of Pearl River which has grown up around Marycrest. Ed Willock would have hated to accept even so small a compromise with the city, but the men who built Marycrest are in their fifties now, and each year the manual labor involved in the upkeep of the road becomes a little more difficult.

Some of the unifying force at Marycrest has been lost as its children mature and leave. In this, Marycrest shares the experience of every utopian community. The second generation, the children of the founding families, may appreciate the ideals of the community and may even carry these ideals with it into new and similar ventures, but the children are seldom content merely to carry on the work of their parents. New life has been infused into Marycrest, however, by the addition of four new families, and Mrs. Willock has expressed hope that the old enthusiasm can be revived through these young couples.[85]

It is difficult to judge whether Marycrest is a success or a failure. The community lacked leadership after Ed Willock's death in 1960. Had he lived, Willock would probably have attracted more families to the community. Ed's enthusiasm had a contagious quality that won strong allegiance and a kind of hopeful daring from otherwise cautious men.

Ed Willock recognized that the building of community is not an easy task. In one of the last issues of Integrity

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[85]Letter from Mrs. Edward Willock, August, 1968.

he wrote, "The rationalization and practice of community is complex and difficult . . . . It is the most challenging and demanding of all the arts."[86] The Marycrest community has known all the complexity of community life but has retained through two decades a measure of the vitality brought to it by its first members. Ed Willock's dream of distributism has been at least in some degree realized there.

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[86]"Group Action versus Indivisualism," IX, 6.

Chapter V

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Ed Willock believed that the changes that needed to be wrought in society as a whole had to come about in the first place within each family. He wrote many articles on marriage and family for Integrity, and much of what he wrote was reprinted widely or published in pamphlet form. He approached his subject with good-humored humility, claiming no expertise beyond that which came from being married and trying to provide for a family that finally included twelve children. The "Willock style" was a blend of common sense and profound faith in the goodness of God. "Christian marriage," he wrote, "is like nothing else, least of all like modern day co-habitation. It isn't two people making the most of an uncomfortable situation. It is an adventure with Christ."[87] Several themes recur constantly in Willock's writings on marriage. Underlying and uniting these separate themes is a kind of anxiety that Christian men and women should understand the vital importance of their mission as a Christian couple. The restoration of the Christ-centered family was, in Willock's opinion, the basic ingredient of a Christian social order.

> Integrity has stressed certain aspects of family life which were they to be generally adopted, would have a far more profound influence upon society and the spirits

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[87] "The Family Has Lost Its Head," Integrity, I (May, 1947), 42.

> of men than, let us say, the nationalization of steel or granting organized labor a share in management. One such would be, for example, the restoration by Catholics of the ideal of a large family. Another would be a restoration to the family father of a sense of Christian vocation. The first of these would have a profound influence in the direction of decentralization, living standards that would include children, domestic architecture, and the glorification of the matron rather than the model. The second would re-establish the family as a social entity at least as deserving of esteem and consideration as a business enterprise.[88]

Willock was convinced that the major weakness in American family life arose out of the husband's abdication of authority. In an early issue of Integrity he asserted that the average American home was becoming a matriarchy in which wives assumed responsibilities that their husbands either failed to recognize as their own or feared to accept. This abandonment of authority by the husband had robbed his wife of the essential dignity which she achieved automatically within the home. In modern marriage the woman assumed a degree of responsibility and authority for which she was unsuited. Her natural gifts of sensitivity and acquiescence had to be sacrificed for an aggressiveness that better suited her husband. Increasing numbers of women were competing in the masculine world beyond the reach of the family.

> This country of ours at present is in travail, suffering the interminable eruption of women, wildly studying, buying, preening, dressing, organizing, trying to recapture the status which motherhood bestows immutably. Where husbands and fathers neglect their homes and community responsibilities, the same fever disrupts the

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[88] Willock, Catholicism in America, p. 141.

family.[89]

Willock believed that the husband's claim to authority arose directly from the physical and psychological differences between the sexes. The husband had the physical strength to provide leadership in the family and the psychological objectivity that equipped him for authoritative decision making. In consequence of his natural gifts the husband could introduce into right-ordered family life, a degree of firmness and direction that his wife would find difficult to match. Women were capable of objective decision-making, but their natural tendency was to act upon the intuitive sympathies of the heart. Willock insisted that the restoration of the man's authority in the home waited the recognition and the development of the fundamental differences between the sexes. He took issue with those experts who attempted to save marriages by urging couples to discover and concentrate on those qualities that they held in common. "The solution to divorce is not the marriage of likes, but marriage based upon a concept of life that finds order and beauty in diversity."[90]

Willock deplored the feminization process that he detected in the family and in society as a whole. Men and women who appreciated the differences between the sexes combined in the ideal Christian marriage their distinctly masculine and feminine traits. Children needed the example of

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[89]"The Expand-Parenthood Association," Integrity, III (April, 1952), 38.

[90]"The Family Has Lost Its Head," I, 38.

both parents if their Christian formation was to be balanced and complete. What Willock saw in modern marriage was the total neglect of masculine virtues.

> The masculine temperament, being objective, logical and direct, is a fitting occasion for the virtue of justice. This is the virtue most lacking in persons and their affairs today. We have evidence of charity, goodwill, emotional sympathy on the part of many people, all of which fail to compensate for the lack of justice. It is typically feminine to be sympathetic for the lot of the impoverished. It is typically masculine to crusade against the injustices which are the root causes of the deprivation.[91]

Female virtue was being practiced in the family and in the community in circumstances that demanded a masculine approach. The Church's part in the feminization process drew Willock's particular attention. Efforts to Christianize the father were, he thought, too frequently, an attempt to further domesticate him so that he became a docile helpmate to the woman in running the home.[92] Admonitions from the pulpit tended to reinforce the supremacy of female virtue, making it the standard by which Christian behavior was judged. Willock believed that this situation had its roots in the poverty and deprivation suffered by older generations of Catholics. He suggested that wives tended to have deliberative familial authority in any society in which men were denied economic opportunity. Such denial had been the rule in many Catholic countries and strongly matriarchal families had resulted. The

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[91] Ibid.

[92] "How We Lost Our Manliness," Integrity, IX (May, 1955), 38.

Church in these countries had unconsciously come to emphasize female virtue and to hold it up for imitation.

> That is why so many of us in this generation, descendants of the peasant and the poor of Europe, find ourselves in the peculiar position (whether we are male or female) of looking to our mother as one prototype of Christian behavior, and being left to wonder what precisely is a "Christian man."[93]

Willock contended that the behavior of the truly Christian man sprang from the militant active virtues of which little was heard in most parishes. "Virtues always seemed to be on the side of stability, domesticity, gentleness, sympathy, obedience, and a cautious concern for one's family.[94]

Willock indicted the Church at the parish level for its failure to recognize the need for masculine virtue. He reminded his readers that the social encyclicals encouraged a strongly masculine response to social problems. Men who believed in radical Christianity could know that in many instances their convictions coincided with the precepts of the Popes even when these same convictions were being ignored in Sunday sermons. It was the Father's task, he believed, to promote freedom, revolution, justice, and social consciousness. The good of every family, of society itself, depended upon the father's active, manly participation in the goal of reordering society.

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[93] Ibid., p. 16.

[94] "The Father in the Home," Integrity, VI (June, 1952), 10.

> One finds in many homes fathers wasting their time at children's games for fear or ignorance about how to exercise responsibilities in a changing world. Men should be organizing and agitating for revolution--responding to the call of Catholic Action.[95]

Parochial organizations--the Holy Name Society and the women's sodalities--came under attack because they had a feminine cast thinly disguised by an occasional sport night or smoker. Willock suggested that the best laymen in the parish, those most capable of contributing aggressive masculinity to its endeavors, probably did not belong to parish groups and remained part of the untapped potential of the American Church.[96]

If the husband had a domestic function to perform, it was in exercising foresight in planning for his family's needs. In any domestic situation in which there was no obvious solution, it was the husband's opinion that should prevail. Willock insisted, however, that the husband ought to concern himself primarily with the social order, with the "wilderness of politics" as he phrased it.[97] In well-ordered Christian marriage the husband concerned himself first and essentially with the common good of the community while his wife concentrated all of her energy and devotion upon her family. Social consciousness was the masculine trait that Willock saw as the counterbalance to the woman's total occupation with the family. The very existence of society de-

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[95] Ibid., p. 15.

[96] "The Family Has Lost Its Head," I, 42.

[97] "The Father in the Home," VI, 9.

pended upon the efforts of men to cement the bonds that united their family to the community at large.

> This relating of the family to the community is the root foundation of the married man's vocation. This is his field, his domain . . . . The man, if he is truly head of the family, realizes that his family's well-being depends upon the common good and thus will make the common good the first end of his work . . . . When called upon to do so, he will even jeopardize his family's welfare in order to serve the common good . . . .[98]

For Ed Willock, one of the tragedies of modern marriage was the husband's tendency to ignore the larger social needs and to operate within the narrow framework that belonged more properly to his wife. He saw this as a danger to society.

> The constant and endless regard of today's good husband for the well-being of his family, so that he saves from the time of their birth for the education of his children while his neighbor's children starve, or while his local political system grows corrupt, or his Faith goes unchampioned, or his brother is exploited, is a sign of the times. It is goodness measured by the standard of the wife, and thus she is the actual head of the family. This is not good headship measured by any objective standard. Such a father may leave an inheritance of wealth to his sons, whereas what they need most is masculine virtue lived out for their emulation. . . .[99]

Willock distinguished two causes for lapsed fatherhood. The first was the immodesty of women and the incontinency of men. The second was the intellectual irresponsibility fostered by modern methods of work.[100] Willock suggested that the sexual promiscuity which resulted from original sin had been intensified by the use of contraceptives. Previous to their

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[98] "The Family Has Lost Its Head," I, 41.

[99] Ibid., p. 42.

[100] Ibid., p. 43.

widespread distribution and use, women had encouraged male continence because they feared the social tragedy of illegitimate children. The manufacture of contraceptives removed the fear of unwanted pregnancy and changed the character of women. It became the prerogative to determine how many children they would have. They no longer stood as guardian of man's purity, and the male virtue of continence was ignored. Willock thought that the sexual emancipation of the woman had undermined male authority. "We would be astonished to discover how many kept women decide the policies of our nation, due to the judicious use of their wiles and the extreme vulnerability of incontinent men.[101]

The existing economic system also weakened the authority position of the husband in the home. Concentration of productive property in the hand of a few left the average man with no choice but to work at uncreative tasks where efficiency was the measure of worth. The factory or office worker in the modern economy had neither the tools nor the skill to produce a personally satisfying product. If there was little room to exhibit the masculine virtue of initiative at work, there was even less likelihood of its practice in the home. Unless a man had uncommon courage in resisting the tide of his daily routine, he would find himself following his wife's lead at home, doing tasks of her invention, assuming a subordinate role.[102]

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[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., p. 44.

Willock had two suggestions for restoring the position of the father as a figure of authority in the home. He suggested, first, that families meet to discuss a correct concept of Christian manhood. From discussion and personal meditation men would learn that their vocation in marriage was part of the Church's crusade to restore all things in Christ, and out of this conviction would come the determination to halt the feminization process. Willock suggested, secondly, that restoration of the dignity of the man might involve a change of job, a seeking after some work that would allow him to use his talents for something beyond the profits of the factory owner or the office manager. When a man had moved into a position of responsibility in his work, when he had retrieved something of the dignity that labor could bestow, the chances were that his restoration as head of the family would follow.

In several of his Integrity articles, Ed Willock merely touches upon a topic, sketching the outline of a position as though he would return to it in later writings. His articles on marriage, however, represent the fullest development of his thought and the focus of an effort to bring the Christian message to bear upon the daily lives of men and women. Ed Willock was most truly at home when writing of marriage and family, and it was through his writings on these subjects that his greatest influence was felt.

CONCLUSION

In 1951 Ed suffered the first in a series of strokes that would finally incapacitate him. For eight months he contributed nothing to Integrity. In the spring of 1952 he had recovered sufficiently to begin writing and drawing again, but the burden of editing fell to Carol Jackson. She left the magazine in that same year, and Dorothy Dohen who had worked with Ed and Carol almost from the beginning assumed the work of editor. Ed made a good recovery from his first stroke and his work became a regular feature in Integrity once again. In 1955 a final stroke ended his connection with the magazine, and a five year period of intense suffering began. Ed was unable to speak clearly and had to write messages on a slate. He had difficulty in swallowing and most of the time had to be slowly and patiently spoon-fed. When he felt well enough, he tried to write a little, but his hand responded so slowly to his thoughts that the effort exhausted him. He had written so frequently in the pages of Integrity that it was the duty of husband and father to provide for the material needs of the family; now he was forced to accept help from friends so that his family would not be in need. Dorothy Day writes of Ed's anguish:

> We all felt that Ed was suffering for us all. If one looks at all men all over the world as members, or potential members, of the Mystical Body of Christ, Ed had been chosen among those worthy to suffer, to lighten the load for others, to take some of the suffering of fam-

> ilies today upon himself, willing or unwilling though he might be.[103]

Acceptance of his illness did not come easily or soon. There were still so many things that needed to be written or said or done, and there were so many people who needed his guidance. But there came a time, finally, when the struggle with physical pain overwhelmed his anxiety for life, and when death came on December 18, 1960, Ed Willock met it with resignation and peace as he had wanted to. Paying tribute to Ed after his death, Dorothy Day caught in a single sentence the fullness of his life. "Ed was a man who lived, and loved, and died, and all he wrote was tried as though by fire, in the crucible of life itself."[104]

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[103] Day, "In Memory of Ed Willock," Commonweal, LXIII, (February 24, 1961), 551.

[104] Ibid.

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