apologia pro vita sua)—not just "old" chronologically but consciously enshrining an enduring tradition capable of sustaining the high hopes of World War II-era philosophers for a new, democratic constitution for persons living in freedom.

John Hittinger is showing that the same is true in our post-cultural revolutionary era at the dawn of the twenty-first century, for our civic tradition cannot be correctly understood—and probably cannot survive—unless it is reconnected to classical metaphysics and Judeo-Christian revelation.

—John A. Gueguen Jr.
Illinois State University (emeritus)

Dreadful Conversions: The Making of a Catholic Socialist

John C. Cort

New York: Fordham University Press, 2003 (355 pages)

John Cort died in mid-2003 after nine decades of an active and concerned life, soon after publication of his autobiography. Cort was converted to Catholicism when an undergraduate at Harvard College. He early became involved in the Catholic Worker Movement led by ex-Communist Dorothy Day and French personalist Peter Maurin, whose work centered around Hospitality Houses for the homeless and a newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*.

Peter Maurin had been a Christian Brother, teaching in elementary schools in Paris, but after conscription in the French army, he did not take final vows but joined a Christian youth movement. Looking for leadership from Christianity, Maurin had a profound distrust of coercive entities from trade unions to the welfare state. Peter Maurin was said by the editor of the Jesuit magazine, *America*, Father Wilfrid Parsons, to be the best-read man he had ever met. Maurin was inspired by authors devoted to individual freedom and decentralized political society: Nicholas Berdyaev, Peter Kropotkin, Hilaire Belloc, Jacques Maritain, and Christopher Dawson.

The Catholic Worker Movement has inspired many young idealists, such as John Cort, as well as Catholic clergy, although not many bishops until Cardinals Terrence Cooke and John O'Connor of New York, the latter of whom proposed Dorothy Day for canonization (1997). Dorothy Day died November 29, 1980, at the age of eighty-three. Peter Maurin died in 1949; a successor was Ammon Hennecy, who lived and lectured on their shared ideals of pacifism and decentralism.

John Cort writes: "I was convinced of the truth of Lord Acton's aphorism about the corrupting effect of power, and surely there could be no greater concentration of power in the world than a U.S. government.… Here, again, I clashed with Peter. His gentle but rugged individualism could accept the spiritual discipline of the Catholic Church but not the temporal discipline of a trade union." John Cort came from a post-Christian Social Gospel culture very different from the profoundly Catholic culture of Maurin's study.

Cort recalls his enriched education at Harvard. He was influenced by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, as well as by Alfred North Whitehead. An important influence was the political philosopher C. H. McIlwain, due to his emphasis on Thomas Aquinas, Robert Bellarmine, and Francisco Suarez regarding individual rights and popular representation.

Cort became involved in the U.S. labor movement at the point when it underwent a major division. John L. Lewis began to organize unskilled workers in contrast to the skilled workers of the American Federation of Labor headed by Samuel Gompers and William Green. Many of the skilled workers were republicans, such as the Carpenters and Joiners led by Big Bill Hutcheson. Lewis's Congress of Industrial Organizations was encouraged by the Democratic party. Cort was involved in Catholic labor groups seeking to counter the dominating influence of the Communist party in CIO politics. Much of this book details his efforts. It would have been useful had Cort addressed the work of Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (2000).

Cort became active in newspaper guilds in New York and Boston. In that role he observed the demise of many daily newspapers, which he attributes to the rigidity of the labor leaders. Boston was down from seven dailies in 1950 to two in 2003; in New York, *The Sun*, *World-Telegram*, *Journal American*, *Mirror*, *PM*, *Star*, *Herald-Tribune*, and *Brooklyn Eagle* have disappeared. Cort's proposal for labor agreements that would permit newspapers to survive financially was rejected by higher-ups. Cort writes: "Where is union security and where is job security if the paper folds? We don't like to be obvious, but if the paper folds, there is no union and no jobs—period."

Cort acted as a bridge between Catholic intellectuals and Harvard faculty. Harvard government professors were surprised to find that their counterparts at Boston College supported the ideas of their hero, Adlai Stevenson. Stevenson had quoted Saint Francis of Assisi in 1952 when he was first nominated for president in Chicago. Cort introduced Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) leader, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., to Father Robert Drinan, S.J., later dean of Boston College law school, U.S. congressman, and president of the ADA.

Cort ran for a legislative seat near Boston and came close to winning. With the formation of the Peace Corps, he was nominated to a leadership position in the Philippines. Sargent Shriver heard from Cort's opponent with high recommendations; the old-line democrats were glad that the Kennedy administration provided jobs for Democratic reformers outside the United States. On returning from the Peace Corps, Cort became involved in the War on Poverty and Model Cities program in Massachusetts. (Many of the old-line Democrats who were glad to ship reformers to foreign lands suffered primary defeats when the reformers returned with intensified opposition to the Vietnam War.)

Working with the Catholic Worker movement and Catholic labor groups led to his contribution to the role of the laity in Catholic thinking, especially through his contacts with Cardinal John Wright.

Cort has written a pleasing and engrossing narrative interlacing his long life and the religious and social movements of his time.

—Leonard P. Liggio
George Mason University

In Defense of Human Dignity: Essays for Our Times

Robert P. Kraynak and Glenn Tinder (Editors)
Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003
(252 pages)

At the beginning the twenty-first century, people around the world are reexamining the last century's commitment to human rights and political liberalism. The Cold War's end vindicated key elements of liberalism, but globalization and international terrorism challenge them once again. Using new conceptual resources, some thinkers defend liberal institutions, while others condemn them for promoting individualism and atheism. Many Christians find liberalism philosophically problematic but are simultaneously committed to its ideals. Recognizing this intellectual and political climate, this book focuses on the nature and source of human dignity. Its best essays carefully analyze why liberalism presents difficulties for Christianity. Others, however, rely on philosophically vague concepts of religion and demonstrate considerable ignorance of contemporary Christian thought. The result is a flawed but important book that should interest both scholars and citizens.

Robert P. Kraynak and Glenn Tinder solicit contributions from excellent scholars, including Glenn Tinder, Susan M. Shell, Robert P. Kraynak, John Witte Jr., Timothy P. Jackson, David Walsh, John Rawls, and Kenneth L. Grasso. The Tinder and Rawls essays have been published elsewhere, but others appear here in print for the first time. Protestant and Catholic authors explore the problematic relationships between Christianity and democracy. They also discuss Dostoevsky, Kant, Pope John Paul II, and Martin Luther, providing exegesis and constructive commentary. Finally, the book features a discussion of abortion and euthanasia (Timothy P. Jackson, "A House Divided Again: Sanctity Versus Dignity in the Induced Death Debates"), which I recommend to anyone working in applied ethics.

David Walsh contributes by far the best essay in the volume ("Are Freedom and Dignity Enough? Reflections on Liberal Abbreviations"). Liberalism, he notes, finds itself in a strange situation; theoretical challenges have exposed its conceptual weaknesses while, at the same time, countries all over the globe clamor to adopt liberal institutions. Walsh responds by adeptly using Michael Oakshott's idea that political language consists of abbreviations for more extended knowledge. Human rights discourse is appealing, he argues, because it is an abbreviation for minimal consensus, the dignity of the person, and the way that the political order depends on spiritual tradi-