





















# SARAH PLATT DOREMUS

(1802-1877)

## MOTHER OF MISSIONS



METZGER  
COLLECTION



### Life

Sarah Platt Doremus was born in New York City in 1802. She was an active member of the South Reformed Church. Her interest in missions began when her mother took her along to a prayer meeting for the evangelization of the world. After marrying the merchant Thomas C. Doremus in 1821, her wealth and social position enabled her to help people and promote the gospel, which she chiefly did by joining and founding various societies and charitable organizations. After a missionary spoke of Chinese women who pleaded for female missionaries to tell them the gospel, Doremus founded the Women's Union Missionary Society of America in 1860, which she presided over until her death in 1877. The society uniquely saw a vision for sending single female missionaries.

### Context

The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the great age of Protestant global missions as well as the age of European global Imperialism. The Second Great Awakening (c. 1790-1840) propelled an evangelical vision for social action, such as the abolition of slavery, temperance, and missions. Societies became the avenue of social change, and women became their champions. Society largely viewed women as frail and inferior, and relegated them to the private life – to care for their household and educate girls. The formation of societies, however, extended women's reach into public life.

### Significance

Doremus loved everyone and was quick to help anyone in need, leading her to establish several organizations, including ones that helped women prisoners return to society and ones that distributed Bibles. She also helped establish a children's hospital and a separate women's hospital. Most notably, Doremus has been hailed the Mother of Missions. She pushed against a context where women could only be involved in missions work through, and in support of, their husbands. As a result of her vision, by 1894 over 1000 missionary women were sponsored through 35 women's foreign mission boards. Women were no longer relegated to the sidelines of missions work. This shift arguably also prompted the feminist movement itself as a divide emerged between the opportunities and empowerment women experienced in the mission field over-and-against back home.



# DOROTHY DAY

(1897-1980)

## CIVIL RIGHTS RADICAL



### Life

Born to a culturally Episcopalian family, Dorothy Day grew up with a strong sense of morality and justice. After studying journalism, she became a writer for *The Call*, a prominent socialist newspaper, in 1916. While she was always interested in spirituality, she rejected organized religion until the birth of her daughter, Tamar Theresa. Despite the protests of her common law husband Forster Batchingham, Dorothy had Tamar baptized in the Catholic church and converted to Catholicism herself shortly thereafter, severing her relationship with Forster. In 1933, she cofounded the *Catholic Worker* magazine and movement with Peter Maurin, initially taking to the streets of New York to sell the paper herself. She dedicated herself to a life of voluntary poverty, serving the poor in solidarity, opening her own home and establishing Houses of Hospitality, and rallying in pacifist protests for political change until her death in 1980.

### Context

Dorothy's life was set within a period of extreme change. The suffragette movement, WWI and II, the Great Depression, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the Civil Rights movement, and the Cold War all occurred within her lifetime, and she rose to respond to these situations with exhortations to pacifism, social change, and personal sacrifice. Her voice of protest landed her in prison numerous times throughout her life – first at age 20 and last in her 70s. In terms of women's rights, she experienced changes in the right to vote, the right for married women to open bank accounts in their own names, and laws combating corporate gender discrimination.

### Significance

Despite her insistence that she never wanted to be a saint, there is a significant movement for her canonization. She personally helped thousands of people throughout her lifetime and influenced many more through her writing, speaking, and personal example. The *Catholic Worker* is still being printed, and there are 240 Catholic Worker communities serving today. In her own day she set out to “arouse the public conscience” and her radical witness continues to do so to this day.