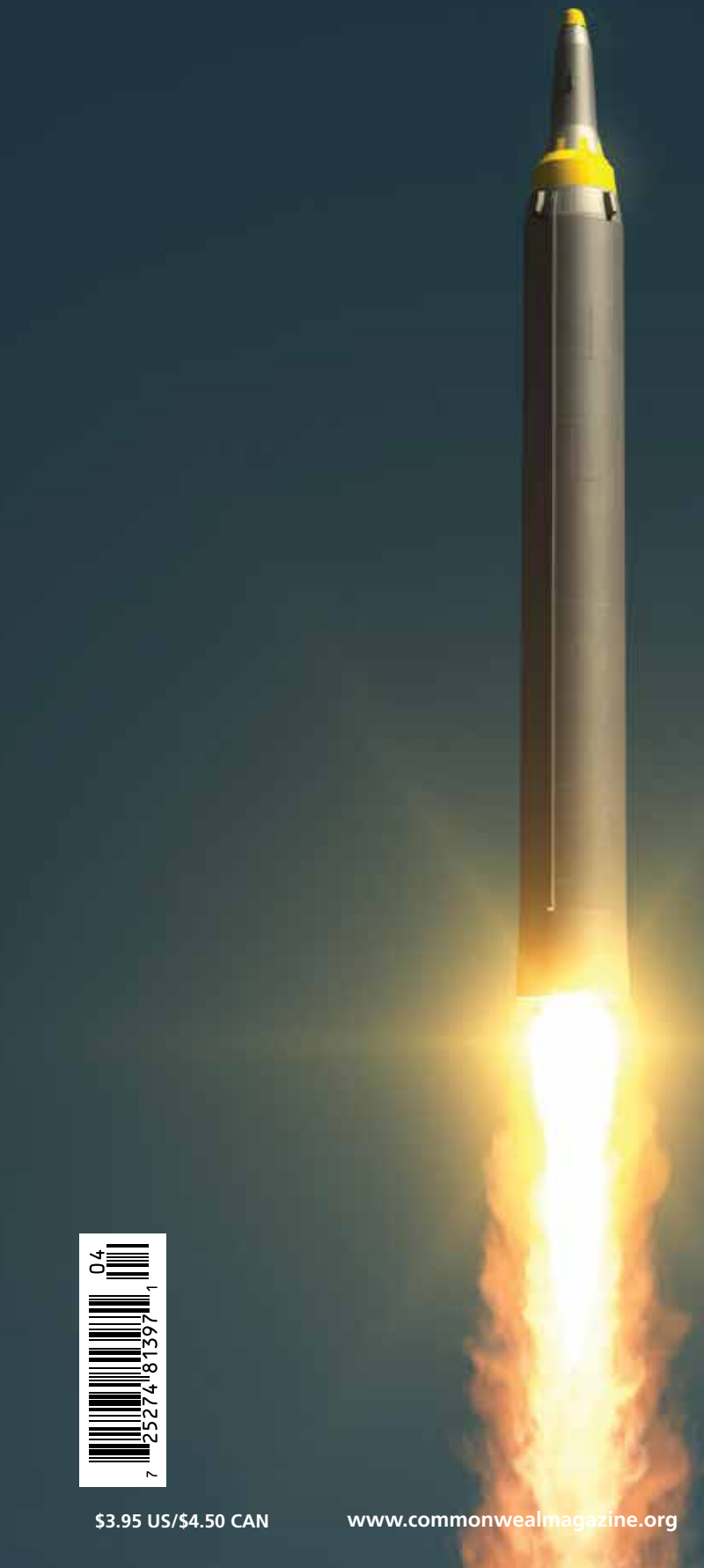
A Review of Religion, Politics & Culture

Commonweal

FEBRUARY 23, 2018



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ON EZRA POUND

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LETTERS

Open Communion, Trump's wickedness, etc.

SUSTENANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

As a Catholic married to an Anglican, I greatly appreciated Cristina Traina's article, "Until All Are Welcome" (December 15). Both my wife and I have entered into Eucharistic fasts in those situations when comments were made at Mass saying only Catholics could receive. If one half of a married couple is unwelcome to receive, how can the other half truly be considered welcome?

However, I question Traina's use of the term "hospitality." My understanding is that hospitality is always toward the "other," never for someone who is "one of us." I think that's one of the problems that led us to this point.

We all too readily see people from different Christian traditions as being "other," when we should instead see them as true brothers and sisters in Christ, and therefore "one of us."

Various Catholic documents have spoken of *fratres sejuncti*, inappropriately translated into English as "separated brethren" when a more appropriate term could be along the lines of "estranged" brothers (and sisters). Our unity is imperfect, because the connective tissue between parts of the body of Christ has been damaged. But that imperfect unity is still real. There is no "separation," no part of the body that must re-attach itself to the torso before it can be fed.

I believe we have to move beyond seeing our brothers and sisters in other Christian churches as "other" (to whom we might consider extending Eucharistic hospitality), and begin instead to recognize them as "one of us," with whom we may practice Eucharistic sharing. The imperfection in our unity is, after all, not on the level of being truly brothers and sisters, but on the level of estrangement between true brothers and sisters. And, if we are going to move forward on the journey to unity, we all need to be fed for that journey, or die along the way.

RAY TEMMERMAN
Winnipeg, Manitoba

GET REAL

I have thought long and hard about the issue of sacramental ordination, validity of sacraments, etc., and wanted to share my thoughts after reading Cristina Traina's article, "Until All Are Welcome." Life experience has taught me much, including about the issues surrounding ordination in Old Catholic, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches, and how those churches understand the Eucharist. At some point I have received Communion with all of them.

One could come to the conclusion that the claims of all these churches are tainted, that the history of Christianity shows enough bloodshed and persecution on the part of church authorities to make any claim of authenticity essentially inauthentic—a case of *mauvaise fois*, or "bad faith" as Jean-Paul Sartre put it.

While I may be a believer, I also have to confess that the behavior of Christians in history is so shocking I am bound by conscience to question the claims made by the various congregations, including any monopoly by clergy on sacramental ordination. My conclusion is that these claims are arbitrary. Any believer with the indwelling Holy Spirit is a priest, and, if conscience will allow, he or she may serve in a sacramental capacity without any formal approval from any religious authority whatever.

I realize this idea is not new. George Fox of the Quakers would agree while doing away with the necessity for sacraments altogether; some Protestant ministers recommend one have Communion services at home. The difference here is that I see the idea of ordination as a "necessary evil."

The fruit of pride and ego must die with Christ at Calvary. The clerical vocation should be one of service, including training in many of those skills gained by candidates for a master's degree in social work as well as, of course, a theological background. But as far as having a unique magical power, such an understanding of ordination should go the way of the Inquisition and the auto-da-fé, witch trials, and the murder of "heretics."

Canon law is arbitrary; for conscience's sake one may obey it or not. Whether one does or not, one has made a choice. If one

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assumes responsibility for the choice, one is acting in "good faith," as the existentialist would have it. We might wish for more Kierkegaards or Bonhoeffers, but in reality we most of all need more mensches, real people who refuse to hide behind the mask of comfortable conformity.

I am inspired by the protest Traina describes in her article. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. She has taken a first step. I hope many will also be inspired to follow.

ROBERT HELFMAN
Hurley, N.Y.

UNSTABLE?

When I finished reading your editorial, "What Now?" (December 15), I was disturbed by your attitudes regarding our president. You may not like him personally or how he speaks or tweets, but to say that he is an "unstable, wicked man" is too much. He may not be what we are used to in a president but I believe that, of the choices we had, he was the lesser threat to our country. What has been going on for so long in Washington and within both parties is wrong and we are just now beginning to see the corruption that is there. I don't need to tell you this information because, if you are honest, you can see it yourselves. As you state, this is "a season of unveiling and revelation, when what lurked in the darkness is brought into the light and what quietly festered becomes fully known." I believe what Pope Francis says, that "divine mercy is the foundation of Christian hope." God is still in charge and with his grace transformation and healing is possible. Let's do our best to make the United States the compassionate country that God wants it to be.

JOANN COOPER
Portland, Oreg.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

William M. Shea's proposal could not be more clericalist ("Imagine There's No Clergy," January 26). In ascribing so much responsibility for the historical mistakes of the church to the clergy, Shea undermines the laity's capacity for agency and participation in the life of the church. He reinforces the clergy's historical tendency to abuse authority by denying it the gifts of forgiveness and transformation through the Holy Spirit. We, the laity, do not need just more sacramentality, as David Cloutier argues in his reply, but creative and invigorating proposals that will keep both laity and clergy alive in their symbiotic relationship. It is the very distinction and variation in how we are called to holiness as laity and clergy that enriches the church. Shea's inability to see how the ministry of the sacraments makes the church more sacred than institutions like Congress and the Supreme Court, which he gives as examples, suggests that perhaps he would be better off running for office. The clergy is essential to the extension of the "enchantment" that Cloutier discusses. My brief proposal as a member of the laity is that it falls on us, too, to discern and foment the attitudes and visions of the clergy. To promote the social and sacramental life of the church, our energies and our receptivity to the work of the Holy Spirit must be directed to where it can flourish and transform rather than perish. How can we, as the laity, cultivate the sacred together with the clergy? How can we turn the relations between clergy and laity into sources of growth? These are the kinds of questions that, when asked and answered in collective practices, will create space for the Holy Spirit to work in the expansion of the experience of the sacred. Cloutier did an amazing job in responding to Shea's proposal with the idea of super-sacramentality. The clergy doesn't need to be abolished. It needs to be truly converted. I believe the laity can help.

DENEB KOZIKOSKI VALERETO
New York, N.Y.

COURAGE

Thank you so much to Amanda C. Knight for her courageous and deeply personal article ("Be Such as God Made You," January 26). I'm sure it was not easy to write, but her insights were incredibly valuable. She has an immense amount to offer! I don't have any daughters, but I will invite my sons to read what she has written. I also have an "adopted" daughter who, I feel, would really benefit from Knight's reflections.

ROBERT STEWART
Melbourne, Australia

From the Editors

A Time to Judge

From the moment Pope Francis first stepped out onto the balcony above St. Peter's Square, he's shown a gift for the seemingly impromptu gesture and unscripted comment. Referring to himself simply as the bishop of Rome, he looked out at the crowd and said, "I would like to give the blessing, but first—first I ask a favor of you: before the bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me." It was an unexpected, even endearing beginning to his pontificate, a sign that he might conceive of the office in a way that was different from that of his predecessors.

And for the most part, Francis really has struck a contrast with the professorial Benedict XVI and the larger-than-life John Paul II. This pope's freewheeling style is, at its best, a complement to his emphasis on mercy and calls to reach out to those on the margins. Francis's embrace of a man disfigured by boils has become one of the iconic images of his papacy. His off-the-cuff remarks to the press on the papal plane reliably generate both praise and controversy. It was during one such session that he proclaimed, "Who am I to judge?" From the simplicity of his dress to his description of the church as a "field hospital," he is not one to obsess over rules and formalities.

But as Francis's papacy nears its five-year mark, the limits of this approach have become apparent. On his January trip to Chile, Francis faced questions about his controversial appointment of Juan Barros as bishop of Osorno. The pope has long defended Barros, who has been credibly accused of covering up the sexual abuse of minors by his mentor, Fr. Fernando Karadima, and this time was no different. "You, in all good will, tell me that there are victims," Francis said, "but I haven't seen any, because they haven't come forward." Without proof, he dismissed the charges as "calumny."

This was a shocking, incredible statement. Karadima was sanctioned by the Vatican in 2011, and victims testified to Chilean prosecutors that Barros and others had witnessed the abuse and done nothing. It was only because of the statute of limitations, the judge made clear at the time, that Karadima was not convicted and sentenced—not because the accusations against him were suspect. When Francis named Barros a bishop, it was over the protests of the Chilean bishops' conference.

An Associated Press story reported that Francis "seemed completely unaware of the details" of the scandal, raising troubling questions about the information he's receiving and his approach to governing the church. The same story noted that Francis "has created an informal, parallel information structure that often rubs up against official Vatican channels" and speculated that he might be relying on "instinct" and his own network of informants rather than on "the high-quality briefings befitting a world leader." The pope reportedly keeps his own visitor's schedule and makes his own phone calls, all from the more accessible Santa Marta residence, not the Apostolic Palace. It is a system that makes accountability difficult and that substitutes Francis's own temperament, judgment, and knowledge for real, structural change.

Further questions, even more disquieting, are raised by another AP story revealing that Francis "received a victim's letter in 2015 that graphically detailed how a priest sexually abused him and how other Chilean clergy ignored it"—clergy including Barros. Members of the pope's Commission for the Protection of Minors sent a delegation to Rome, where they hand-delivered the letter to Francis's top adviser on sexual abuse, Cardinal Seán O'Malley, who then gave it to Francis himself.

These reports reveal the shortcomings of Francis's impatience with established procedures and the unglamorous business of steering a sclerotic bureaucracy. No issue threatens the church's witness and credibility like its ongoing response to the sexual-abuse crisis, and it's inexcusable that Francis responded the way he did. That all this comes so soon after letting the Commission on Protecting Minors lapse is further cause for alarm.

The letter that Francis received in 2015 directly contradicts his claim that no victims had come forward in Chile, and makes it difficult to believe that he was defending Barros out of ignorance. Francis's election, with its promise to return a real measure of authority to local churches, gave new life to the reform agenda of Vatican II. But when it comes to the crisis that has devastated the church, it increasingly looks as though Francis is only offering more of the same—or worse. He might not be inclined to judge, but the church and the world are watching, and will not hesitate to do just that. Francis has demanded accountability from priests and bishops, and now must be held to account himself. ■

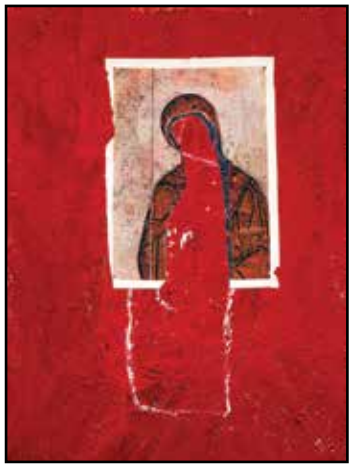
February 6, 2018

Paul Baumann

Strike 3?

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER ANGRY LETTER

Over the years, I have received my fair share of intemperate letters. One hesitates to respond, let alone to respond in kind. Within reason, readers have a right to blow off steam. Many of these writers accuse *Commonweal*, absurdly, of being pro-abortion. Others, just as obtusely, indict us for being anti-Catholic, often with the added advice to get out and find a home in the Episcopal Church, or some other "failing" Protestant denomination. I recently received an especially aggrieved missive warning that, for my failings, I already had "2 strikes" against me. The author began by stating, as most such letter writers do, that his comments were not for publication. He just wanted me to know about his growing disappointment with *Commonweal*. I will defer to his wishes. I will not publish his letter, but out of respect for his opinions I will respond to it.



The author was particularly incensed by a solicitation for *Commonweal*'s American Catholic in the Public Square Award, which will be given to Sr. Carol Keehan, president of the Catholic Health Association, this October in New York City. Because of the price of tickets and tables the average person cannot afford to come to the dinner, the writer complained. That is true. That Sr. Keehan is a very deserving recipient of this award is something that we are proud to announce—but not only announce. The dinner to honor her is also a *fundraiser*. Held every two years, the event is designed to attract and engage potentially philanthropic-minded supporters of the magazine and increase *Commonweal*'s visibility. I'm not ashamed to say that we need the money. We really do. (Attendance at the dinner for *Commonweal* editors and staff is subsidized.) We do other events that are quite affordable. We also put out a magazine that costs twice what we charge for it! But I suspect that despite his complaints about the costs, his real objection to the dinner is our honoring of Sr. Keehan, who broke with the U. S. bishops and supported the passage of President Obama's Affordable Care Act. In that light, I was not surprised when my irritable correspondent ended his opening salvo by charging me with the sort of "liberal elitism" that supposedly doomed "Hillary's" campaign.

He went on to complain about *Commonweal*'s Christmas card, judging it "disrespectful" and "insulting," an "abomination" that revealed how "isolated from normality" *Commonweal* is. This came as something of a surprise, since we thought the card, a depiction of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Christian artist Alfonse Borysewicz, was striking and beautiful. My correspondent thought its somewhat abstract design a defacement of Mary. When it comes to art, of course, opinions differ, but the card, while not a stereotypical rendering, was hardly disrespectful, let alone insulting.

In his concluding paragraph, the letter writer gets to the heart of his discontent. *Commonweal* is too critical of Trump. He claims not to have voted for Trump, but neither would he stoop to vote for "Hillary." More to the point, he could appreciate Trump's populist appeal, something an "elitist" like yours truly "would never understand."

Well, the letter writer is right about one thing; I did not and still do not fully understand Trump's so-called populist appeal. And as one calamity after another piles up in the White House, I suspect a good many people who did vote for Trump are asking themselves how they could have been taken in by such a transparent fraud. Talk about being isolated from normality! Hatred of Clinton or of "liberalism" was no excuse for allowing this man to become president. Any complacency about Trump is a grave sin of omission. As an editor, when it comes to politics I have been hesitant to draw lines in the sand, but now is the time to draw one. I'm sorry my correspondent doesn't understand that.

I am often puzzled when *Commonweal* is accused of being "elitist." If *Commonweal* has any influence among the movers and shakers it is almost certainly hard-earned and indirect, achieved through our influence among a dedicated community of thoughtful Catholics and other readers concerned about the relationship between faith and public life. I have never been to Aspen or Davos. Despite my petitions, Bill and Melinda Gates never call. No politician has asked for my advice. Another definition of "elitist," of course, is a belief in rule or domination by an elite. Whatever their populist rhetoric, it is clear that Trump and the Republican Party are committed to rule by the upper ranks of wealth and corporate power. They assure us that the rich are so very much smarter, so very much more productive than we are. *Commonweal* has long opposed such rule from above, either by the wealthy or by technocratic or bureaucratic experts. Yes, we ardently believe in the good that government can do, because we believe in democracy. That used to be a populist idea. ■

ALFONSE BORYSEWICZ, *FULL OF GRACE*, 2015–2017

Mollie Wilson O'Reilly

Santo? Dubito

TOO MANY POPES ARE BEING CANONIZED

Dear Pope Francis, I have an idea. You know how you keep advancing the sainthood causes of all your predecessors? What if you stopped doing that?

That's my idea. It's pretty simple: Just stop making every pope a saint. Instead of canonizing Paul VI this year, as you are reportedly planning to do, I suggest…not doing that.

As you know, in 2014, a year after you became pope (and not even ten years after the death of John Paul II), you canonized Popes John XIII and John Paul II on the very same day. And now I read in the paper that Paul VI is on the docket for 2018, and my first response is to joke, "Who's next, St. John Paul I?" But it turns out I can't make that joke, because you officially recognized John Paul I as "Venerable" just a few months ago.

Is it possible you're getting a little carried away?

It's not that I have anything against these men as individuals. Who am I to judge? It's just that it seems like a pretty big coincidence for all of the popes since Pius XII—ahem, *Venerable* Pius XII—to have been men of uncommon heroic virtue. You must agree that, in theory, a non-saintly person could become pope. I will go so far as to say that it has happened before. So, if the modern church really has managed to elect an unbroken string of papal saints in the past century, well, that's impressive, but considering that the pope is the one who gets to make that call, it's also a bit...suspect.

The thing about popes is that they are already in the Catholic hall of fame. They are prayed for by name at every single Mass while they are alive. When they die, they are buried in the crypt beneath St. Peter's. Their writings are hosted on the Vatican website. The faithful can venerate them very easily whenever they are so moved. Making past popes saints and giving them feast days feels like gilding the lily. And you, Pope Francis, are not usually a lily-gilder.

A floral banner featuring Popes John Paul II, Francis, and John XXIII is carried outside St. Peter's Square.

CNS PHOTO / PAUL HARING

If I may indulge in a little self-promotion (which, under the circumstances, seems reasonable): I contributed a chapter to a new book from Liturgical Press, *A Pope Francis Lexicon*, in which I wrote about your use of the term "worldliness." You have warned in very strong words about the dangers of "spiritual worldliness," which you define as seeking "human glory and personal well-being" under the guise of piety. In *Evangelii gaudium*, you quoted Jesus scolding the Pharisees: "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?"

I'm not saying that the current pope canonizing all the other popes is necessarily an example of this. But it isn't *not* an example of it, either. And it's definitely not an example of what you prescribe as an antidote for worldliness: "making the church constantly go out from herself" to seek Christ at the margins of society. You advocate leaving our comfort zones, expanding our ideas of where and how God is working in the world.

Naming new saints can be an excellent way to promote that shift in perspective. Your record proves it. You have advanced the cause of Oscar Romero (it's about time) and declared the Algerian monks of Tibhirine to be martyrs. These are inspiring, challenging examples of holiness. At your direction, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints could shift its focus to elevating other overlooked models of discipleship, especially those belonging to groups underrepresented in the official roll: women, laypeople, married people, parents.

But do we need more popes? There are an awful lot of sainted popes already. The first thirty popes, in fact, are all saints. They also all died in defense of the faith. And while it's definitely a good thing that popes are no longer automatic martyrs, I'm not convinced that it's a good thing for them to be automatic saints. And so, Your Holiness, I hope you won't take it the wrong way when I express my earnest hope that you will ultimately be neither. ■

Gerald O'Collins & John Wilkins

English Is Not Latin

POPE FRANCIS REOPENS A DEBATE ABOUT TRANSLATION

English-speaking Catholics like us have never given up hope that we may be able, one day, to celebrate Mass in our own native language. Despite our efforts, we have never been able to take to our hearts the halting, clumsy word-for-word translation from the Latin imposed by the rulings of a peremptory 2001 Vatican document—titled *Liturgiam authenticam*—that overturned thirty years of meaning-for-meaning creative work.

Until that point, we had felt that ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy) was getting there ,as it tackled the huge job of translating hundreds of liturgical texts from the Latin. The translators had proceeded in accordance with the 1969 "Instruction on the Translation of Liturgical Texts," issued in six languages and named *Comme le prévoit* after the original French edition. This instruction specified that "the 'unit of meaning' is not the individual word but the whole passage." Hence "a faithful translation cannot be judged on the basis of individual words." Pope Paul VI had read the instruction and made minor corrections to it.

Of course, translators have to be faithful to the words of the text on which they are working. But as Pope Francis has now underlined, true faithfulness in translation goes further. It must include faithfulness to the language into which the translation is being made—the receptor language. And it must be faithful to the cultural sensibilities of the congregations that will use it, so that they can participate fully with understanding as Vatican II and Paul VI prescribed.

Translated texts will fulfil these functions if they have cadence and rhythm—if they sing. These qualities are not optional extras. They are essential if a translation is to fulfil Francis's wish that it should become the voice of the church in its time and place. Measured against these criteria, the 1998 translation approved by all the eleven bishops's conferences of ICEL but spurned by the Vatican succeeds; the 2011 Missal, in use today, fails. Here are sample passages for comparison, chosen at random:

The Christmas Day "Prayer over the Gifts," from the 1998 rejected Missal:

Lord,
on this solemn day accept the offering
which has brought us reconciliation and perfect peace
and is the full expression of our worship.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

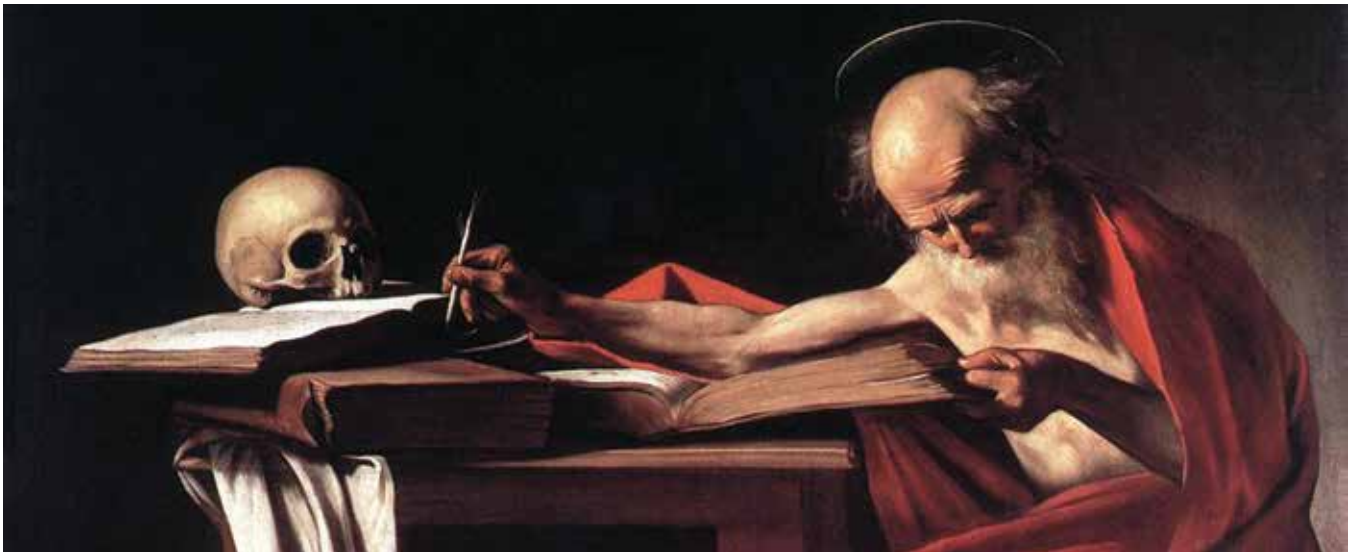
Compare this with the "Prayer over the Offerings" from the 2011 Missal:

Make acceptable, O Lord, our oblation on this solemn day,
when you manifested the reconciliation
that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight
and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine worship.
Through Christ our Lord.

Another example: "Prayer over the Offerings" from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

First the version from the 1998 rejected Missal:

In your goodness, Lord, receive the sacrifice of salvation which we offer on the feast of the immaculate conception. We profess in



St. Jerome *by Caravaggio, 1606*

faith that your grace preserved the Virgin Mary from every stain of sin; through her intercession deliver us from all our faults.

Now the version from 2011 Missal:

Graciously accept the saving sacrifice which we offer you, O Lord, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and grant that, as we profess her, on account of your prevenient grace, to be untouched by any stain of sin, so through her intercession, we may be delivered from all our faults.

English-speaking Catholics who felt discomforted by the 2011 Missal therefore felt hopeful when they learned early in 2017 that Francis had established a commission to revisit *Liturgiam authenticam*. And they breathed a sigh of relief when Francis issued his *motu proprio Magnum principium* last September. The "great principle" of the title led the pope to give the bishops back their prerogative over the Mass texts that *Liturgiam authenticam* had removed. Now at last, perhaps, the hugely superior 1998 Missal could be taken off its Vatican shelf and put to use. This missal was dumped because Rome had moved the translation goal posts. With consultative revision, and some additions, such as celebrating recently canonized saints, it could surely therefore now be brought forward as a new text.

A letter to presidents of bishops' conferences sent from the Congregation for Divine Worship (CDW) in September under the signature of the undersecretary, Corrado Maggioni, advised that the pope's *motu proprio* "does not have retroactive force." But the *motu proprio* itself says nothing of the sort.

The bishops of England and Wales concluded too hastily that the CDW letter meant that the 1998 translation could not be revisited. The U.S. bishops, on the other hand, took time to consider, then in December released the text of their response to *Magnum principium* through their committee on divine worship. Twice the committee stated, without any ambiguity, that the U.S. conference "has the right to propose revisions to the translation of the Missal." The CDW letter, the committee said, means that bishops' conferences do not need to make changes to texts prepared according to *Liturgiam authenticam*, such as the current Missal; but it does not forbid them from doing so if they think it opportune (see Rita Ferrone's column, "What Did I Just Pray," Feb. 9).

The prefect of the Vatican congregation is Cardinal Robert Sarah, whose attempt to interpret *Magnum principium* as changing nothing was quickly and publicly corrected by the pope himself. It is clear that he and Sarah are not on the same page.

Yet only the New Zealand bishops have so far taken a public lead. In a joint statement last October, they welcomed *Magnum principium*. "Like many priests and parishioners," they said, "we share in the frustration concerning some aspects of the current translation of the Roman Missal and we reiterate our desire for beauty, comprehensibility, and participation in and through the sacred liturgy."

They promised they would work collaboratively with English-speaking bishops' conferences around the world "as we seek to explore prudently and patiently the possibility of an alternative translation of the Roman Missal and the review of other liturgical texts."

A look at the history of translation into the vernacular shows that the 1998 translation shelved by the Vatican was in tune with tradition, whereas the version in use today in the 2011 Missal is not.

World Christianity has known no translator of biblical or other texts who was more significant than St. Jerome (d. 420). He performed a monumental service for Western Christians by translating the Hebrew and Greek Bible into a contemporary vernacular—Latin. Both liturgically and otherwise, his "Vulgate" translation enjoyed an enduring impact. He was deeply aware of the challenges facing any translator. Critics could, he knew, accuse him of "betraying" the original text when, to express its meaning, he had to move beyond a literal, word-for-word translation.

An older contemporary whom Jerome admired for his keen intelligence, Evagrius of Antioch, translated from Greek into Latin a life of St. Antony of Egypt. In a letter to

AFTER ASHBERY

For Olivia

Sky blushes upward like Whiffenpoofs or shirred
eggs weeping the gold-leafed hair of Venetian friars
as I accumulate Italy through texts: You craning to sip
espresso on the Ponte Vecchio in last season's City
Pedal Pushers, your neck's "Meanwhile" eliding
eight years' sorrow as this sky sieves cream off plums
like some Master rouging bottoms in a hamam
or girls troubling over which clouds to call horsetails;
Rome, Amsterdam, and God filtering through a pastor's
meme: Shia Laboeuf rawring JUST DO IT, illuminating
His Most Holy Name upon the pearl ceiling of all
we're capable of feeling here, in the latest Millennium
of cirrus wiggling rum-warm, orange-foiled bellies
across gaps in the Brutalist carpark as I round and brake,
round and brake down seven levels into New Haven.

—Danielle Chapman

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a friend that formed the preface for the translation, Evagrius wrote: "A word-for-word translation from one language into another conceals the meaning and strangles it, even as spreading couch grass strangles a field of corn." He advised: "Let others go hunting after letters and syllables; do you seek for the meaning."

In a letter to Pope Urban IV that formed the prologue for *Contra errores graecorum*, Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of medieval theologians, stated that it was "the task of the good translator, when translating material dealing with the Catholic faith, to preserve the meaning but to adapt the mode of expression, so that it is in harmony with the idiom of the language into which he is translating."

In his 1866 *Letter to Pusey*, John Henry Newman included a passage on Marian devotion and doctrine that contains quotations from Justin, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. He added in a laconic footnote that "I have attempted to translate literally, without caring to write English." Here, he distinguished between literal translation, which can aid the reader in exceptional contexts, and proper English that he would normally write. What would Newman, himself a master of English style, think of a missal that set out to translate word for word, without caring to write real English?

Another notable, if controversial, translator, Ronald Knox, spoke of the accusation of "sitting too loose to the originals." Yet he converged with Jerome, Evagrius, Aquinas, and Newman: if "literalness" is "accepted as our rule, dullness is the result." "In the long run," he emphasized, "the meaning is what matters."

George Steiner, the Cambridge University polymath, summed up the task of translation as producing a "faithful but autonomous restatement." He specified: "The translator closely reproduces the original, but composes a text that is natural to his own tongue, which can stand on its own."

From Evagrius of Antioch to George Steiner, there is unanimity that a genuine translation must communicate well. This aim was completely ignored by Cardinal Jorge Medina Estévez, a Chilean who was shifted to Rome, in his decree to accompany the third, "typical" edition of the 1970 *Missale Romanum*, issued in the year 2000. The new vernacular versions of this Missal should be "faithfully and accurately" prepared, he insisted. But *Liturgiam authenticam* defined that aim too narrowly. Many (not all) English-speaking Catholics felt their hearts sink as the implications emerged. Not a word was said about the translations needing to be intelligible and clear in a way that would encourage a supreme aim of Vatican II's *Constitution on the Liturgy*: the full and active participation in worship by all those present.

Here and there *Liturgiam authenticam* did state that translators should produce texts that can be easily understood so as to facilitate the participation of all those assembled for worship. But even these articles heavily qualified such intelligibility with provisos. Article 20, for instance, mandated an exact translation, free of omissions, additions, paraphrases, and glosses. What the instruction called translating "most accurately" (*accuratissime*) meant a turn toward word-for-word translation. *Liturgiam authenticam* prescribed retaining from the Latin source as much as possible of the syntax (for example, the relative and subordinate clauses), vocabulary, and even capitalization.

The instruction wanted a "sacral style" (*stylum sacrum*), which could differ from current speech and even sound strange and "obsolete." It dreamed of a "sacred language" (*lingua sacra*) with its own "vocabulary, syntax, and grammar," which might have its impact on "daily speech." Where current English and other languages have moved toward "inclusive" speech, the "sacred language" should not follow suit. The gendered language of Latin was not to be altered. "Pray, brethren," excluding half the human race, is in accordance with the instruction, whereas "Pray, brothers and sisters" would not be.

The combination of the search for a "sacral style" and

word-for-word translation produced some disconcerting results. For example, in the 2011 Missal, Jesus does not take a "cup" at the Last Supper, though this is what the word *ποτήριον* means in the biblical Greek (Mk. 14:23; Mt. 26:27; Lk. 22:17; I Cor. 11:25). No; he takes a "chalice," gives the "chalice" to his disciples and says, "This is the chalice of my blood." The emergence of clericalism at the heart of the Last Supper, distancing congregations from the Hebrew Passover, is astonishing.

Liturgiam authenticam occasioned many negative reactions. The most authoritative and careful critique came from a chant historian formerly of Princeton University, now of the University of Notre Dame, Peter Jeffery, who places himself well on the conservative end of the Roman Catholic spectrum—"as conservative as one can get without rejecting Vatican II." In four articles in the quarterly periodical *Worship* in 2004, he accused the people who wrote the instruction of being "seriously misinformed about the historical development of the tradition they call on us to preserve." *Liturgiam authenticam* is simply "full of misstatements about the Roman liturgical tradition," he stated.

For example, the Vatican instruction speaks of a sacral vernacular created in the past by the Roman Rite. Jeffery asked: "When and where did liturgical translation of the Roman Rite create a sacral vernacular that even shaped everyday speech?" On the contrary, "what historical documents reveal is quite unlike *Liturgiam authenticam*'s picture."

In translating the Creed, the 1998 ICEL version followed the plural "We believe," used in the original Greek text framed at the Council of Nicaea and confirmed at the Council of Constantinople. *Liturgiam authenticam* asserts that this rendering violates "the tradition of the Latin Church." But, Jeffery pointed out, it is "simply untrue" to claim that "not only the Roman Rite, but the broader Latin Church as a whole shares a uniform tradition in favor of 'I believe,' as if 'we believe' were essentially an Eastern tradition."

Jeffery gave examples: "The plural 'we' form was cited by Pope Leo the Great, and in early Roman collections of canon law." For good measure, he added that the Mozarabic Rite of Spain "has always said 'we believe,' both before and after Vatican II. Even in the Roman Mass there was a minority tradition that used 'Credimus' instead of 'Credo.'"

Jeffery pressed on to illustrate how other "inaccuracies, misrepresentations, and contradictions abound" in *Liturgiam authenticam*. As noted above, the instruction, in the name of being true to the patrimony of the Roman Rite, outlaws omissions, additions, paraphrases, and glosses. Jeffery objected that, in fact, the Roman Rite "did not insist on integral and exact textual renditions, while it did make use of omissions, additions, paraphrases, and glosses."

He sharply criticized the instruction's tone: "What it lacks in factuality it makes up with naked aggression. It speaks words of power and control rather than cooperation and consultation, much less charity."

One indication of this attitude is the instruction's rejection of ecumenical texts—the Gloria, the Creed, and the Sanctus—agreed between the Christian Churches. *Liturgiam authenticam* warns that "great caution is to be taken to avoid a wording or style that the Catholic faithful would confuse with the manner of speech of non-Catholic ecclesial communities or of other religions, so that such a factor will not cause them confusion or discomfort." How could it have happened that a Vatican congregation could so disregard Vatican II as to dismiss other Christian believers baptized in the name of the Trinity as "non-Catholic ecclesial communities" and group them with "other religions"?

Jeffery, who subsequently brought his four articles together in a book titled *Translating Tradition*, believes that *Liturgiam authenticam* misconceives the true nature of the challenge. The Vatican instruction, he says, talks as though the Roman Rite was like a jewel safely catalogued and stored in the Vatican museum. But in fact, he writes, the Catholic liturgical tradition is more like a huge garden, full of tall trees and beautiful flowers but also weeds, all growing together in rich profusion and bursting with potential. He describes *Liturgiam authenticam* as "the most ignorant statement on liturgy ever issued by a modern Vatican congregation," and says it "should be summarily withdrawn."

Other scholars widely criticized the Vatican instruction for requiring translators to practice verbal equality with the original Latin, and to follow its grammar and syntax. Such strict adherence to the Latin original ignores the fact that English—to cite the vernacular we are concerned with—does not have a Latin structure in its sentences. Contemporary English does not indulge, for instance, in the long sentences of Ciceronian liturgical Latin. The guidelines from *Liturgiam authenticam* would not produce a recognizably English vernacular but Latin texts transposed into English words, which regularly sound more Latin than English.

The conclusion follows that *Liturgiam authenticam* could never claim to stand in the tradition of Jerome, Evagrius of Antioch, Aquinas, and others who advocate a meaning-for-meaning rather than a word-for-word translation. In his *motu proprio* Francis told translators to follow guidelines but only where they prove to be "useful" (*utilia*)—a polite way of implying that *Liturgiam authenticam* no longer enjoys obligatory status.

But can Francis's objectives be achieved without a rewriting or withdrawal of *Liturgiam authenticam*? This is the key question underlying the overdue discussion that is now happening. Weighty judgments about the language of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life, will rest on the bishops' shoulders. What will they recommend?

Inertia is a powerful force in human affairs. Many of us English-speaking Catholics will plead: please, bishops, seize the opportunity that Pope Francis has given you. ■

This essay has been adapted from Lost in Translation: The English Language and The Latin Mass *(Liturgical Press) by* **Gerald O'Collins, SJ,** *with* **John Wilkins**.

No More Nukes?

An Exchange

Michael C. Desch & Gerard F. Powers

Michael C. Desch

Speaking to attendees of the Vatican's November conference on "Perspectives for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Development," Pope Francis "firmly condemned" even "the very possession" of nuclear weapons. In short, he judged not just nuclear war but also nuclear deterrence anathema. Supporters of his view hailed the pope's statement as "historic" and a "big hit" to the efforts of nuclear powers such as the United States to stop the global momentum swelling behind last summer's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. With 122 votes in support of the treaty in the United Nations, and the pope's imprimatur, are we at last on the eve of the postnuclear millennium?

Despite the overwhelming enthusiasm for the repudiation of nuclear deterrence among other conference participants, which included Nobel Peace Prize laureates such as Jody Williams (who has campaigned against landmines and cluster munitions), Mohamed ElBaradei (former director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency), and Beatrice Fihn (of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), I came away from the event skeptical that the pope's condemnation will change the international nuclear game.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with deploring the state of a world in which the best we can hope for is a cold peace based on nuclear deterrence. But the hope that we can change this through what Francis calls "integral" nuclear disarmament will not get us out of our nuclear predicament or solve the world's other problems. Indeed, it is not clear to me that a non-nuclear world would be a more peaceful or just one.

I do not offer these criticisms as another *dubia* posed to this reformist pontiff by an unreconstructed Cold Warrior. Most proponents of nuclear deterrence, like me, share his view that the actual use of nuclear weapons raises serious just-war concerns given the horrific human and ecological consequences of even limited nuclear war. The use of nuclear weapons can hardly be discriminate, and it is hard to imagine scenarios in which attacks on civilians could be a proportionate response.

Pope Francis's recent statement was actually not a radical departure from what previous popes have said. In his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII noted "that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust." He further concluded that "nuclear weapons must be banned." While subsequent pontiffs varied in their sense of urgency about how quickly nuclear weapons should be abolished, all shared the view that they were an unmitigated evil, and that deterrence based on fear needed to be replaced by a new mode of relations among states based on "mutual trust."

Despite the church's more than half-century of consistent antinuclear sentiment, from *Pacem in terris* through the U.S. bishops' 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, we still live in a world of nuclear weapons. Why haven't the nuclear or near-nuclear powers heeded the call to abolish the balance of nuclear terror?

There are a number of reasons. Beginning with *Pacem in terris*, the Vatican has conflated nuclear deterrence and mutual assured destruction (MAD) with actual nuclear use. The moral rationale for this conflation was articulated more than thirty years ago by John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, and Germain Grisez, who called into question the notion that you could, in good conscience, threaten to use nuclear weapons to retaliate against an enemy's civilian population, given that to actually do so would clearly be immoral. But Finnis, Boyle, and Grisez made two errors in their influential critique of nuclear deterrence.

First, nuclear deterrence is *not* a theory of nuclear war, but rather of nuclear peace. It is not about the use but rather the purposive non-use of nuclear weapons. It operates less in the realm of *jus in bello* (how to wage war justly) and more in the realm of *jus ad bellum* (when it is right to wage war). And in this latter realm, deterrence theory is not at all far from the church's increasingly pacifist position: it aims to prevent rather than wage war. Which is why the French bishops rightly observed that "the threat of force is not the

Pope Francis poses with Nobel Peace Prize laureates during an audience with attendees at a Vatican conference on building a world free of nuclear weapons, November 10.

use of force. It is the basis of deterrence, and this is often forgotten when the same moral qualification is attributed to the threat as to the use of force."

In 1946, nuclear strategist Bernard Brodie famously limned the central feature of great power politics in the nuclear age. For much of history, in his view, military force had been a useful instrument of statecraft. But with the advent of nuclear weapons, only the threat of force remained available to statesmen, because the actual use of nuclear weapons by two nuclear-armed states would be mutually catastrophic. "Thus far, the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars," he explained, but "from now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose."

Brodie's prediction about the impact of the nuclear revolution on the relations among nuclear powers seems to have been borne out by history. Twenty million people lost their lives in World War I. In World War II, deaths exceeded 60 million. Remarkably, the nuclear age has suffered no World War III, and there were very few deaths associated with nuclear weapons once the two superpowers reached parity. The long peace of the Cold War may have been overdetermined, but the mutual realization that the next great-power war would likely be the last one is surely a big part of the non-story of the Third World War.

Second, critics of deterrence misunderstood U.S. nuclear doctrine, supposing that MAD and countervalue targeting was the guiding principle of American nuclear-war plans. But as historians have shown convincingly, since the 1950s the United States has never targeted civilians in the way MAD would advocate. Rather, U.S. strategy has always been some version of counterforce, damage-limitation targeting. Few strategists could promise that there would be no civilian collateral damage in such strikes. But defenders of the morality of contemporary U.S. nuclear doctrine, such as Kennedy-era Defense official Alain Enthoven, were at least on firm ground in disclaiming the "city-swapping" that critics of MAD deplored. From Kennedy's "Flexible Response" through Carter's PD-59, which enshrined the "countervailing strategy" of nuclear counter-force doctrine, MAD has simply never guided U.S. nuclear-war planning. Indeed, for a variety of reasons, both moral and strategic, the U.S. military has been loath to embrace the sort of attacks on civilians that Finnis, Boyle, and Grisez rightly deplore.

Other Catholic critics of nuclear deterrence dismiss it, as Bishop Oscar Cantú does, on the grounds that to be credible "one has to intend to do what is morally reprehensible." But this mischaracterizes what makes nuclear deterrence credible. As Nobel laureate Thomas Schelling famously observed, deterrent threats "do not need to depend on a willingness to commit suicide in the face of a challenge." Rather, the unintended risk of escalation reinforces mutual deterrence between two nuclear powers.

The notion that the mere possession of nuclear weapons makes their use inevitable is another staple of the antinuclear camp, from the secular *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*' Doomsday Clock to John the XXIII's fear that a nuclear "conflagration could be started by some chance and unforeseen circumstance."

Admittedly, the Cold War was replete with horrifying accidents and other crises that understandably stoked fears of atomic Armageddon, prompting anti-nuclear sentiments not only in Rome but throughout the world. These near-misses have been widely recounted but no one has done a better job of cataloging them than Stanford University political scientist Scott Sagan. His book *The Limits of Safety* is a cautionary tale about the fragility of even "high reliability organizations," in which efforts to ensure that no accidents occur occasionally fail spectacularly; sometimes, these failures are even caused or compounded by steps taken to prevent them.

I recall attending a seminar Sagan gave early in this project

in the mid-1990s. The first or second nuclear accidents he described really scared me. But as he recounted more and more near-misses, my attention gradually shifted from the "near" to the "miss." We had lots of accidents but no catastrophe. Of course, even one accident could be potentially catastrophic. But the more accidents that occurred without spinning out of control, the greater my confidence became that nuclear control and safety were more robust than I had imagined.

The relative safety of nuclear systems is not just an American characteristic; other nuclear states—Mao's China during the Cultural Revolution and the Soviet Union during its disintegration—weathered serious internal instability and near civil war without nuclear accidents or unauthorized use. Rather than stoking nuclear alarmism, the Cold War record should inspire confidence that nuclear accidents are rare and manageable, even in otherwise chaotic situations.

There were also a handful of crises between the superpowers before they achieved relative nuclear parity in the mid-1960s, but after that point, such crises became fewer and markedly less intense. The most serious nuclear confrontation was the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. The United States and the Soviet Union found themselves eyeball to eyeball after the Soviet Union surreptitiously based nuclear missiles in Cuba. But as subsequent accounts by participants on both sides make clear, it was precisely the realization of what nuclear war entailed that led both President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev to blink and scramble for a negotiated settlement. Even President Trump, who publicly tweets about responding to North Korea with "fire and fury," seems to be placing far more emphasis on diplomacy, particularly with China, as the only realistic option.

Rather than stoking nuclear alarmism, the Cold War record should inspire confidence that nuclear accidents are rare and manageable, even in otherwise chaotic situations.

A third element leading Pope Francis to issue his condemnation of even the possession of nuclear weapons is his frustration that little progress has been made toward nuclear disarmament. Previous popes were willing to sanction nuclear deterrence as a temporary evil with the understanding that the international system's eventual trajectory would lead to disarmament. But today we are still living under the thermonuclear Sword of Damocles, with new actors threatening to join the nuclear club. In view of this prospect, the pope's patience has apparently run out, leading to his demand for nuclear disarmament.

Francis's frustration, however, misses the mark in two respects. To begin with, there has been significant reduction in the world's nuclear arsenals since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, from a high point of 65,000 nuclear warheads in 1985, the total number in the world's arsenals is estimated to be around 10,000 today. An 85-percent reduction is certainly a big deal, even if the remaining arsenals could still wreak unimaginable damage on the earth.

By the way, these reductions came about thanks to the easing of great-power tensions after the end of the Cold War. Nuclear weapons are acquired as a result of conflict among states; they are not the cause of such conflict. Consequently, eliminating nuclear weapons will not bring about relationships of mutual trust and love. Nevertheless, the Holy See rejected this logic in 2014, arguing that "reliance on a strategy of nuclear deterrence has created a less secure world."

The Holy Father and other critics also worry about new states joining the ranks of the nuclear powers. Of course, concern about the next nuclear power has been long-standing. In the early 1960s, the United States and the Soviet Union fretted about Mao's China pushing for membership in the nuclear club, even conniving to use military force to "strangle the baby in the cradle." Soviet and American hysteria about the Red Guards getting the go-codes seems quaint now that the Middle Kingdom has become a model nuclear citizen, maintaining only a small nuclear force designed exclusively to deter nuclear use against it.

And the fact that only nine countries have crossed the nuclear threshold, when many more could do so if they so desired, suggests that what is surprising is not that there are a handful of proliferators but rather the existence of a much larger number of abstainers. At least twenty-three other countries have mastered the nuclear-fuel cycle and perhaps some forty others could if they wanted to. Almost as many states have walked away from weaponized programs (South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil, and Argentina) as have run toward them in recent years.

But what is novel and most dubious about Pope Francis's approach to nuclear disarmament is his holistic view of the problems nuclear weapons cause. Not only do they threaten to cause mass casualties and grievous environmental dam-

age, but such weapons also perpetuate poverty, underdevelopment, and non-nuclear conflict across the globe. The Holy Father's embrace of what he calls "integral" nuclear disarmament follows from the concept of Integral Human Development, first articulated by Pope Paul VI in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum progressio*. Cardinal Peter Turkson, head of the Vatican's new Dicastery for Integral Human Development, defined the concept concisely as the notion that "everything is connected."

Integral nuclear disarmers maintain that it will take disarmament to bring about the peace they envision as the basis for integral human development. But even if the nuclear powers were to scrap their weapons tomorrow, as the Holy See and the other 121 countries who voted in favor of the Nuclear Weapons Treaty fervently pray, it is doubtful that they would save all that much money. U.S. nuclear forces take up around 15 percent of the U.S. defense budget. And there is no guarantee that they would divert even modest savings to foreign aid. Even before the Trump administration took office, the American public had been notoriously stingy about overseas handouts. While the church has been consistently critical of high levels of defense spending around the world, reducing expenditures on conventional weapons and personnel—a far greater share of global military expenditures—has proved even more elusive than downsizing nuclear stockpiles.

Nor would such a capacious framework provide much analytical insight into the world's other serious problems. Given that the church has long been in the forefront of dealing with poverty and injustice, I doubt the notion of nuclear disarmament as a silver bullet is widely shared among clergy and laity, who have grappled with these issues for years. In other words, it is hard to see clear connections between the nuclear programs of nine countries (most of which are shrinking or already pretty small) and the grave political, economic, and social problems plaguing the developing world.

The more serious problem the church faces is that in taking such an unrealistic stance on nuclear disarmament, it risks marginalizing its moral voice in important policy debates. The problems of underdevelopment and instability in the Global South are real and worthy of sustained attention from the international community. Continuing leadership from the Vatican is essential. But by linking these problems to the persistence of nuclear deterrence, as Francis did pointedly in 2014 when he maintained that "the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price" for the money "squandered" on nuclear weapons, he both misses the real causes of poverty and instability (they are a lot more complex) and undermines the church's credibility as a source of moral and intellectual leadership.

The pope admits that "a world free of deadly instruments of aggression" would be "utopia," but he is not daunted by an impossible goal. However, the case of a former nuclear-disarmament visionary should give the pope pause. In 2009 President Barack Obama began his administration taking an antinuclear stance similar to Francis's to "seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," only to change course by 2016, proposing the $1.2 trillion dollar nuclear modernization program that his successor Donald Trump has since fulsomely embraced. Obama's about-face was the result of his lofty ideals giving way to the harsh reality of world politics, in which nuclear disarmament would be a recipe for blackmail by rogue states or even renewed great-power conflict. Given that we still live in such a world, integral nuclear disarmament is not only infeasible—it could also make the world safe for major war yet again.

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Gerard F. Powers

The pope's November statement condemning not only the use but also the possession of nuclear weapons has met with expected praise from Nobel Peace Laureates, church leaders, antinuclear activists, and nations that signed the nuclear-ban treaty this past July. Michael Desch's article is a cogent example of the expected realist critique: that the pope's statement is naïve and utopian, and risks marginalizing the Holy See on this urgent issue.

On two important points I agree with Desch. First, he correctly notes that the pope's condemnation of the use *and even possession* of nuclear weapons is not a radical departure, as some have claimed. This claim deserves some elaboration. Since Hiroshima, the Holy See has sought to marginalize and delegitimize nuclear weapons, and has insisted on the need for progress toward nuclear disarmament. As part of that broader agenda, in 1982 Pope John Paul II articulated an "interim ethic" on the specific issue of nuclear deterrence. "*In current conditions*," the pope said, "'deterrence' based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable" [italics added]. Pope Francis has now made a prudential judgment, based on his reading of today's very different signs of the nuclear times, that the strict conditions for the moral acceptability of deterrence are not being met. He has not abandoned his predecessor's formula but has applied it to current conditions and come to a different prudential judgment.

Francis's statement is significant because he is the first pope explicitly to condemn nuclear use *and* possession, but his statement is not a significant departure from previous statements of the Holy See. In the 2006 World Day of Peace Message, Pope Benedict said that the view that states need nuclear weapons for their security is "not only baneful but also completely fallacious." In a talk at Georgetown Univer-

sity in 2010, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's permanent observer to the UN, concluded that "it is evident that nuclear deterrence is preventing genuine nuclear disarmament. Consequently, *the conditions* that prevailed during the Cold War, which gave a basis for the church's limited toleration of nuclear deterrence, *no longer apply*" [italics in original]. In a similar vein, a 2014 Study Document released by the Vatican argued that since the disarmament condition for the moral acceptability of deterrence was not being met, "the very possession of nuclear weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic." These and many other official Vatican statements have long made it clear that the nuclear powers could take no more comfort in the Vatican's position on nuclear weapons before the pope's statement than they can now.

Second, Desch rightly notes that counterforce targeting is not morally superior to countervalue targeting, or city-busting. Deterrence poses a fundamental challenge to Catholic morality because most theories assume that a credible deterrent requires a threat (i.e. conditional intent) to do that which it would be immoral to do. Targeting policies based on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) exemplify this moral paradox. Desch rightly rejects the contention that this moral conundrum is largely resolved by the fact that U.S. nuclear doctrine is now based on "discriminate" targeting of military assets rather than cities. Even with counterforce targeting, any use of nuclear weapons would likely be indiscriminate and disproportionate and would seem to make the world safe for nuclear war.

I would quibble, however, with Desch's suggestion that the Holy See does not acknowledge the fact that U.S. targeting policy has changed from MAD to counterforce targeting. The Holy See has not offered a detailed analysis of the varieties of deterrence, but some Holy See statements do seem to assume that nuclear deterrence is invariably based on threats of indiscriminate and disproportionate use. While U.S. policy might not be based on such threats, the Holy See is addressing the policies of all nuclear powers, some of which still rely on MAD. The seminal church document on U.S. policy—the U.S. bishops' 1983 peace pastoral—did consider deterrence in detail, including counterforce targeting. The bishops came to the same conclusions as Desch: that even counterforce targeting raised serious concerns about discrimination and proportionality given the sheer number of military targets, including in cities, the destructive power and radiation risks associated with the use of even the smallest nuclear weapons, and the risk of escalation.

Now to my main discomfort with Desch's article. First, his criticism of the Holy See's approach to deterrence overestimates its efficacy. According to Desch, the Vatican has failed to recognize that "nuclear deterrence is *not* a theory of nuclear war, but rather of nuclear peace." Its purpose is to avoid nuclear use and a Third World War—and, as the Cold War demonstrates, it succeeded. And it succeeded, he argues, even in managing, sometimes amid chaos, the "rare" nuclear accidents. Whether it was nuclear strategy, the safety of nuclear systems, political restraint, pure luck, or a combination of these and other factors that kept the Cold War (mostly) cold, the best that can be said for it is that it was a highly unstable "peace of a sort." Today, the risk of global nuclear war is far lower than during the Cold War, but the risk of nuclear use is higher. North Korea and 9/11 are emblematic. According to the 2014 Vatican Study Document, "the structure of nuclear deterrence is less stable and more worrisome than at the height of the Cold War" due to continued nuclear proliferation, the increased risk of nuclear use by terrorists and unstable states, and the fact that deterrence is less effective against these actors. Even if the risk of use is not greater than during the Cold War, it is naïve to rely on, in the words of the Study Document, "a precarious ethics focused narrowly on the technical instruments of war." A peace based on nuclear deterrence risks catastrophe. It depends on the rather idealistic hope that the "logic" of deterrence, "fail-safe" systems, and "rational" actors will always overcome human frailty, ignorance, miscalculation, and sinfulness. As they say on Wall Street, "past performance is no guarantee of future results." The bottom line: the Holy See does not share Desch's confidence in the stability of a negative peace based on deterrence and realpolitik.

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Two other aspects of Desch's criticism of the pope's statement deserve a response. First is the "all-things-are-connected" argument, especially the linkage Desch finds most dubious: between "integral nuclear disarmament" and "integral human development." Desch acknowledges that the church is in the forefront of addressing poverty and conflict throughout the world, but asserts that the pope

misunderstands the complex nature of these problems. Even a cursory review of papal pronouncements and Catholic social teaching shows that the church's approach to conflict and development is anything but simplistic. Obviously, disarmament does not automatically lead to development, but the two are related. South Sudan is a failed state for many reasons, but one is that it wasted its oil resources on weapons and war instead of development. When the pope talks about "squandering" money on nuclear weapons, he is referring to real opportunity costs—and they are not just tradeoffs for the poorest of the nuclear club: North Korea, Pakistan, and India. The $1.2 trillion or so the United States is currently spending on modernizing its nuclear arsenal is being paid for by deficit spending, as well as cuts in development aid and domestic antipoverty programs. If, as Desch claims, the church loses some moral credibility by highlighting these guns-versus-butter trade-offs, that will not be a reflection on its moral leadership. It will be further evidence of the moral myopia associated with an unbending commitment to nuclear superiority (not to mention the power of the military-industrial complex).

Hiroshima after the first atomic bomb

EVERETT COLLECTION HISTORICAL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Second, Desch is impatient with the pope's impatience with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. Desch is right to note the deep cuts in nuclear arsenals since the end of the Cold War, a moral achievement that, like the end of the Cold War, could not have been imagined three decades ago. He's also correct about the overall effectiveness of the non-proliferation regime. But his impatience is rooted in his realist perspective, which is quite different from the church's cosmopolitanism. The Holy See has welcomed the progress that has been made, but is convinced that the nuclear powers have not done enough to deliver the "peace dividend" that should have come with the end of the Cold War. The stalled arms-control agenda, the massive nuclear-modernization programs, and other failures have led the Holy See to conclude that nuclear deterrence has not been used, as John Paul II's 1982 statement insisted it should be, as a step toward disarmament. Rather, it has become an end in itself, a principal impediment to disarmament.

The Holy See will never be satisfied with Desch's "harsh reality of world politics" in which integral nuclear disarmament is "not only infeasible...[but] could also make the world safe for major war again." Without being naïve (and with the end of the Cold War now as Exhibit A), the Holy See has always had a more positive vision of what is possible in international affairs. Even if Desch is correct about the efficacy of the nuclear status quo, the Holy See would not be content with a negative peace based on deterrence. It might take a generation—or several—but the Holy See has long argued that nuclear weapons need not always be with us. This vision has gone mainstream, now promoted by a global chorus of prominent military and political figures, led by former nuclear "hawks" such as George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn. The nuclear-ban treaty is about delegitimizing nuclear weapons. It will have to be followed by a long series of arms-control measures that will ultimately lead to a verifiable and enforceable global treaty on nuclear disarmament. But much more will be needed. Desch is absolutely correct that nuclear disarmament is a function of politics. That is why the Holy See's disarmament appeals are always married to a much more ambitious agenda of developing a new system of cooperative security grounded in a global ethic of solidarity.

And this is where Desch's critique should be taken as a call for further reflection. On nuclear issues, the church is what political scientists call a "norm entrepreneur": reframing the narrative to ensure that morality is not an uninvited guest at an exclusive party dominated by realists. The pope's recent statement at a high-profile Vatican conference is part of a strategy to contribute to the momentum generated by the nuclear ban treaty and its long-standing efforts to delegitimize nuclear weapons. The continued success of this strategy will depend on filling a two-pronged ethical gap. Further reflection is needed on the policy and pastoral implications of the church's non-nuclear ethic, as well as the new moral challenges that will arise if the world moves toward global zero. But that is for another article. ■

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We Cannot Accept This

A Response to Romanus Cessario's 'Non Possumus'

Kevin J. Madigan

"Non Possumus" is the title given to Romanus Cessario's recent defense, in the February issue of *First Things,* of the June 1858 abduction in Bologna of the young Jewish boy Edgardo Mortara, and his justification of the refusal of Pope Pius IX to return the child to his family. The title reveals much. To those who implored Pope Pius IX to return Edgardo, who had been secretly baptized by his Catholic nanny when the boy was seriously ill, the pontiff responded: "Non possumus" ("We cannot"). Almost fifty years later, when Theodor Herzl sought the support of the Vatican in his effort to secure a homeland for Jews, Pope Pius X offered the same unsympathetic words, "Non possumus." These identically pitiless papal responses link the two incidents not only linguistically but also theologically. They are connected by prejudice against the Jews—that is, by anti-Semitism.

According to the most reliable sources, young Edgardo made the trip to Rome in tears and yearned to go home. The abduction of her young son drove Edgardo's mother, Marianna, to an insane grief that almost took her life. Still, Pius refused the desperate pleas of the Mortara family, not to mention the outraged protests of hundreds of intellectuals, religious figures, and journalists, many of them Catholic. A half-century later, Pius X instructed Herzl that he could not sanction the move of Jews to Jerusalem. After all, the Holy Places had been "sanctified by the life of Jesus Christ." Since the Jews, he went on, had not "recognized our Lord," he could not "recognize the Jewish people," whose religion, he declared, was "superseded by the teachings of Jesus Christ." As to conceding Judaism any further "validity," Pius responded with familiar words: "We cannot."

Non possumus. Those are words that, for most Catholics, should live in ignominy. Fr. Cessario's choice to link his review of Vittorio Messori's *Unpublished Memoirs of Edgardo Mortara* (St. Ignatius Press) with that expression is, therefore, most regrettable. This is especially so as his article at once praises Messori's translation and, more gravely, attempts to justify Pius IX's decision to abduct a young non-Christian boy. Although Pius is reliably reputed to have declared that he could not have cared less about public opinion, Cessario declares, in a breathtaking sentence, that "piety, not stubbornness, explains this response." Piety? Actually, Pius was likely moved to act—or not to act—by traditional Catholic supersessionism. For this reason, Cessario, whatever his intention, has opened himself to the charge that his apology for Pius IX is itself an ongoing expression of Catholicism's millennial teaching of contempt.

We should also note that Cessario abdicated his responsibility as a reviewer by praising Messori's profoundly flawed and ideologically driven translation of Edgardo's memoirs, written three decades after his abduction. In a paper given at the most recent annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies (December 2017), David Kertzer, author of the authoritative *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (1997), documented the ways in which Messori interpolates his own language (sometimes entire paragraphs) and bowdlerizes or excises Edgardo's language as a way of justifying the pope's ill-considered decision. Messori also minimizes or omits Edgardo's own testimony, which faulty memory and a desire to hallow Pius IX had made imperfect, and he denies the degree to which an ecclesiastical agenda transformed a tragic story of abduction into a providentially choreographed narrative of salvation. Messori also minimizes the extent to which Edgardo, because of the trauma of being taken from his family at an early age, later suffered from physical and psychological ills, including depression and other neuroses. The data here are so clear that these omissions cannot reasonably be attributed to casual mistakes; they give every appearance of being intentional sleight-of-hand alterations, intended to vindicate the pope and minimize the afflictions with which Edgardo's childhood ordeal plagued him for the entirety of his adult life.

Quite clearly, it was not Cessario's intent to review the book. Instead, he aims to vindicate Pius IX by explaining

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to outsiders (read: Jews) and reminding insiders (liberal Catholics) how baptism works. Cessario seems blithely indifferent to the reality that an understanding of the metaphysics of baptism is unlikely to persuade a non-Christian of the justice of Pius's abduction, which most, quite reasonably, regard as monstrous. Here, in explaining prevailing theories of baptism, Cessario lapses into patrolatry. Not surprisingly, Cessario explains Augustine's theology of baptism with great clarity, emphasizing correctly the Augustinian conviction that the ritual imposed an indelible, invisible character on the soul of the baptized. He is right to emphasize that trained Catholic priests at the time of the abduction would have grasped this understanding of baptism. But, importantly, such priests might also have reasonably concluded that the case failed to satisfy the conditions required under canon law. It is telling, for example, that the 1917 *Codex iuris canonici* specifically requires the consent of at least one of the parents if he or she is still living (Canon 750 §2). It is not clear that the servant's belated testimony satisfies the conditions stipulated in the prior subsection. Thus, in the canon law, there is the issue of sacramental liceity, which Cessario does not address.

The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara *by Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, 1862*

Even more obviously, though, contemporary Jews would not have understood it. Even if they had, their understanding would have been irrelevant, as European Jews were not clamoring to be baptized. Cessario is also historically correct to emphasize that all legitimately baptized children required catechetical instruction. Yet in accepting that Edgardo had been legitimately baptized, Cessario assumes precisely that which most European and American thinkers reacting to the Mortara case profoundly doubted or denied. It was emphatically not, as Cessario suggests, their ignorance of the invisibility of the baptismal mark or the effects of baptism that caused Edgardo's family, "the Jewish community of the time," and much worldwide Gentile opinion to interpret Edgardo's "relocation"—a more evasive euphemism for his abduction and forced removal to Rome can hardly be imagined—as an act of "unjust religious and political hegemony." It was natural revulsion for a heartless, shocking outrage orchestrated by one regarded by many as the custodian of the moral and natural law who remained, despite Cessario's denial of papal inflexibility, ever more stubbornly deaf to the pleas of the Mortara family and the international community.

Augustine (354–430) formed his theology of baptism in the North African struggle with the Donatist Church, as Cessario notes. Yet this historian of Christian thought, charged with training seminarians in Boston's diocesan seminary, omits an important element in the struggle. Since the two churches were locked in a century-long stalemate, Augustine's fellow North African bishops proposed that the imperial forces, then sympathetic to the Catholic Church and impatient with Donatist inflexibility, use their powers to coerce the Donatists—to return them to Catholic orthodoxy. Although Augustine eventually acquiesced, he did so only reluctantly and only after state force proved harshly effective. His initial position, against the pragmatic arguments-from-effect of his fellow North African bishops, was that compelled baptisms would be feigned, merely nominal—in a word, a sham. The Donatists might masquerade as Catholics, but forced conversion would, Augustine initially argued, generate countless merely theatrical conversions. In fact, the Donatists simply continued to practice Donatist Christianity until Muslim expansion wiped them—along with Catholic Christianity—from the map of North Africa.

Yet, even were Augustine's later teaching univocal and authoritative, it does not follow that it was without flaw or infallible. Cessario himself admits that, at the time of the kidnapping, Catholic theological opinion on baptism was not unanimous. Late-antique and medieval theologians pushed back vigorously against aspects of Augustine's thought, and none—including Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), who felt deeply the weight and authority of patristic teaching—accepted the notion that the opinion of any church father, even the greatest, was without error. Cessario practically makes an idol of Augustine in ways that would have troubled Thomas—ironically, like Cessario, a member of the Dominican order.

The mention of Aquinas leads us to ponder Cessario's even more serious errors. Cessario rehearses Thomas's essentially Augustinian position on the indelible character of baptism. Critically, though, he fails to mention Aquinas's arguments against the forced baptism of Jewish children. In the *Summa Theologiae* 3.68.10, Aquinas directly addresses the question, "whether Jewish children should be baptized against the will of their parents." Here, ironically, he quotes a sermon written—of all people—by Augustine

(Sermon 169), which concludes that such a baptism would be inefficacious. Thomas also quotes a point of canon law, one with roots deep in the patristic period, that no Jew "be forced to believe." Thomas's strongest point, perhaps, is that forced baptism would violate not only divine but also natural law, which puts the child in the care of his parents. "Therefore," Thomas concludes, "it is not the custom of the church to baptize the children of unbelievers against their parents' will." To baptize a Jewish child would be to violate natural justice.

Crucially, Thomas had also argued earlier in the *Summa*, in a text that goes straight to the issue of abduction, that no civil prince could ever take a child from the custody of his parents, or do anything to a child that opposed the parents' wishes. Once a child reaches the age of reason, he may consent to be baptized, even against the wishes of his parents, but only then. Even the subjection of Jews to the civil power "does not exclude the order of natural or divine law." It is, Thomas concludes, for the parents "to dispose of the child in all matters relating to God" (*Summa* 2a2ae.10.12).

Against the weighty opinion of Thomas, Cessario contends that, because the Papal States (which included Bologna in 1858) united religious and civil powers in the person of the pope, the latter was justified in resorting to force to educate Edgardo in the faith into which he had, in Cessario's view, been baptized, even if secretly. Yet the unparalleled authority within the Catholic Church of Thomas Aquinas—who in turn relies upon Augustine, canon law, and the natural law—argues against Cessario. Indeed, Cessario seems not to notice how Thomas's theological views—named officially by Pope Leo XIII as authoritative for the Catholic Church—subvert his attempted vindication of Pius IX. Unctuous observations like "Except for the solicitude of Blessed Pius IX, the Mortara child may never have learned of his baptism" may not have seemed as creepy to Thomas as they do to us. But Thomas certainly would have disapproved. Cessario seems oddly blind to how his most cherished authorities fundamentally undo his entire case.

Incidentally, those authorities also pose a weighty challenge to *First Things'* editor R. R. Reno's sheepish apologia ("Judaism, Christianity, and *First Things*"), a labored explanation of his decision to publish Cessario's piece. It was, Reno claims, his "purpose in bringing this episode forward...to confront us with the daunting force of God's irrevocable decrees" (here echoing Cessario's language about the "indomitableness of the divine initiative"). "God's covenant with us," Reno goes on, "establishes realities that we cannot redirect or reshape as we wish" (including forced baptism and child abduction?). Cessario's piece had, he explains, challenged his own complacent view that "natural moral sentiments" and "modern liberal principles" would "always happily correspond with the demands" of God. Yet, it was a fallible papal decision, and a pope's stiff-necked refusal to honor the natural law, not God's decrees, that are at stake here. No divine command decrees that a child be circumcised or baptized against the will of the child's parents. Aquinas recognized this; too bad Reno does not. Moreover, no thoughtful Christian doubts that our natural moral affections might, in certain circumstances, be in tension with the revealed will of God; it should not have taken Cessario's mistaken reasoning to awaken this possibility in the veteran Catholic theologian Reno's mind. Absurdly, Reno, whose children have been raised Jewish (his wife is Jewish), dares to compare his experience to that of Edgardo's parents: "In a certain sense, God kidnapped my children." In the end, it would have been better for the journal he oversees, for Jews, and for Jewish-Christian relations had Reno simply killed a review that justified an act most Christians and all Jews regard as outrageously immoral—and, crucially, one they so regarded at the time. Reno's apology fails to persuade, or to quiet the anxieties of those who have observed *First Things* take a troublingly reactionary turn under his watch.

It was not God's decrees but a pope's stiff-necked refusal to honor the natural law that is at stake here. No divine command decrees that a child be baptized against the will of the child's parents.

More disturbing still is Reno's willingness to give the *nihil obstat* to Cessario's evident nostalgia for the bad old days, well before Vatican II and *Nostra aetate*, when Jews were still the deicide people, subject to Vatican oversight and condescension, and viewed through the lens of the millennial teaching of contempt. That Pius IX chose to educate a Jew, and not an uncatechized baptized Catholic (of whom there were hundreds of thousands in Italy alone), practically proves that the pope was motivated by anti-Semitic feeling—a point Reno makes himself.

Far more troubling is that Cessario both explicitly and implicitly reflects these radically regressive views. Throughout the piece, Cessario chastises the victims of the church. He upbraids the Mortaras for hiring a Catholic servant, though it was then common practice, as observant Jews needed one to carry out tasks forbidden them on Shabbat. Would Cessario have preferred that the Mortaras have violated Jewish Law to honor the Papal? (Besides, the Catholic servant also broke the law. Why does this go unmentioned?) Cessario faults the family for not appreciating the Augustinian view that the baptismal character was invisible, veering dangerously close to the hoary slur that blindness prevented Jews from acknowledging the truth of Christianity. It was blindness, one supposes, that prevented them from perceiving the

inscrutable action of "divine Providence," which, unknown to all, was busy "kindly arrang[ing]" Edgardo's introduction "into a regular Christian life." (Regular? One presumes Cessario here is referring to Edgardo's later entrance into religious life.) If Providence was behind it all, the Mortaras were wrong to see the horror as an abduction.

Inability to see also explains why the family and the Jewish community (not to mention Gentile critics) failed to recognize that, once baptized, Edgardo was an "anonymous Catholic." For a Catholic priest to inform Jews that they are, in fact, secretly Catholic, is simply callous and condescending, a regrettable expression of church triumphalism. Cessario faults the desperate parents for not appreciating that the "articles of faith" obligated Pius to give their unwillingly baptized and soon-to-be-kidnapped child a Catholic upbringing. He blames the grieving mother for overreacting to a priest's "calm" explanation that she could not raise her son, now baptized, in the family household. Nor did she grow less anxious when the Inquisitor putatively encouraged her not to worry, as "little Edgardo would be under the protection of the pope himself." (Cessario reports this incident as true, but, as Kertzer has shown, the representation of the Dominican inquisitor, Fr. Feletti, as showing great solicitude for the Mortara family is pure invention.) And Fr. Romanus reproaches the family for refusing to accept the church's proposal to educate Edgardo in a Catholic boarding school in Bologna. Unfortunately, Cessario is unaware that this offer was another invention; it was never made.

Why refuse such magnanimity? Presumably Jewish stubbornness, then well known as a timeless mark of the people and race, as the Jesuit writers of *Civiltà Cattolica* were just then industriously stressing to the journal's wide readership. Also deplorable was the Mortaras' cleaving to the natural bond of family and thus failing to "render a higher honor to God above." Cessario is alluding to Jesus' warning that those who do not hate their parents cannot be his disciples (Luke 14:26). Yet why should the Mortaras, faithful Jews, have obeyed a command in one of the Gospels of which they were unaware? And how is service to God in Judaism to render God an inferior honor, unless one believes that the New Covenant superseded the Mosaic? Why—why on earth—ought the Mortaras, or any Jewish family, have accepted the view, articulated by Cessario, that "Christ's authority perfects all natural institutions," including the family?

Quite clearly, then, Cessario is still captive to the assumptions, rejected authoritatively by the decrees of Vatican II and by several popes, of classical Christian supersessionism. That captivity blinds Cessario to the possibility, indeed the certainty, that the Mortaras simply had not accepted the notion that the Second Covenant had superseded the First. For six decades now, many authoritative Catholic theologians have insisted that the New Covenant by no means abrogated the first. While God has given no man the authority to pronounce on such matters, Catholic theologians have insisted that the Law of Moses remains valid. The classical Christian teaching that the church is *verus Israel* or that Christians have replaced Jews as God's favored is, then, not only arrogant and triumphalist; it is epistemologically ludicrous. For who among us can claim to know the mind of God? Cessario might reply by insisting that supreme authority on such matters was vested by Christ in the successors of Peter.

If so, let me recommend that he review John Paul II's speech to the Jewish community of Berlin in 1980. In that address, the pope forcefully asserted that the Jewish community are the "people of the Old Covenant, which was *never revoked*" [emphasis added]. Will Cessario accept this papal pronouncement as authoritative? We must also ask why opponents of Vatican II, from the uninformed to the highly educated, trot out the most pernicious anti-Semitic canards to resist the reforms of the council.

Lest we still doubt that Cessario was moved, in part, by traditional Catholic anti-Semitic ideas, we might observe that the author declares that "prejudiced manipulation of the Mortara case has not disappeared." What can he have in mind? As an example, he reminds us that the (Jewish) Steven Spielberg is "currently preparing a film adaptation" of the (Jewish) David Kertzer's *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*. One wonders what supernatural powers have allowed Cessario to divine that the film, the shooting of which has not begun and the screenplay of which he has not seen, will manipulate audiences to the prejudice of the Catholic Church? Yet Cessario writes, according to his own testimony, to "forestall wrong and unwarranted interpretations" of the abduction and to explain to the uninitiated "a right understanding of baptism and its effects." It is thus, Cessario hopes, that Jews might now be brought to appreciate why young Edgardo had to be torn from the bosom of his family to acquire a Catholic upbringing. It is hardly likely, however, that Jews, having been properly instructed in the effects of baptism, will finally understand that Pope Pius's actions were not monstrous but simply required by the nature of things. Nor should they understand. Cessario seems himself unaware of the crucial sentence in Vatican II's *Nostra aetate*: "God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle (Romans 11:28–29)." Or does he simply reject it?

Finally, one will have noticed that Cessario insists on calling Pope Pius "blessed." This is because John Paul II beatified Pius IX in 2000. Cessario yearns for Pius IX to be sainted. Regrettably, in his view, the cause for his canonization has languished. Why? Because, perhaps, of the protests of those "who claim to speak for Mortara but ignore his own words." That cryptic reference, untangled, can only refer to Jews, still blind, incapable of perceiving the unmissable sanctity of the cruel and doctrinally confused kidnapper of Edgardo Mortara. ■

‘Cast a Cold Eye’

How to Think about Death

Terry Eagleton

One reason we fear death is that it seems to nullify all that we have been. Why bother to brush one’s teeth or set up as a small arms manufacturer when one will end up as a handful of dust? We are natural-born teleologists, for whom whatever cannot be laid up in eternity is likely to seem unbearably flimsy. It is hard to accept that what we do and feel has whatever value it has even though it will pass into oblivion—hence the attitude of the protagonist of Woody Allen’s film *Annie Hall*, who as a schoolboy refused to do his homework on the grounds that the universe is expanding and will one day break up entirely. Samuel Scheffler adopts a rather less apocalyptic version of this view in *Death and the Afterlife* (2016), arguing that the assumption that the human race will survive our personal death, at least for a reasonable period of time, is vital to our current sense of value.

It may well be the case that the stock exchange, along with cancer research, mortgage applications, and beginners’ lessons in ancient Greek, would collapse were we to know that the world was about to end; but Scheffler pays too little heed to the positive aspects of such a catastrophe. The historical document that most famously claims that the world is fast approaching its finale is the New Testament, but in its view the ethical implications of this belief are very different from having the stuffing knocked out of one’s sense of value. On the contrary, viewing the world in the light of Judgment Day is what allows true value to become manifest. Since there is no time to engage in property deals or the marriage market, to decimate the rainforests or invade other nations’ territories, all that matters is friendship and righteousness. The vision of the end of history liberates the self from the tyranny of temporality. “Pure” value—value in itself—is what stands free of consequence and circumstance, as in the slogan “Let justice be done though the world should perish.” The moral imperative implicit in this view is not “Act always with an eye to posterity,” but “Act always as if you and history were about to be annihilated.” For the Christian Gospel as for William Blake, eternity is in some obscure sense here and now, concealed in the unfathomable depths of the present. Eternity, as we have seen, is not to be confused with perpetuity. The central Christian event is not survival but resurrection—a radical transformation at odds with the consoling continuity of “living on.”

To act in fine disregard of an aftermath is to fold the end of time back into the present, and thus to create an abbreviated image of eternity. One thinks of the cowardly Hirsch of Conrad’s *Nostromo*, who, to the reader’s astonishment, suddenly spits in the face of his executioner in the knowledge that for him there will be no consequences of this act beyond an instant bullet in the brain. Those who make their deaths their own have faced down the worst of horrors, and thus enjoy a rare degree of freedom. The Jew who refuses to kill a fellow Jew when commanded to do so by the Nazis, and who is therefore beaten to death himself, is no doubt aware that nothing will come of his action—that his colleague will be murdered in any case, and that the genocide will roll on unabated. This is not to say, however, that he dies in some gratuitous act of defiance. Rather, he dies to affirm the truth that love and pity have not vanished from the world, and that the true catastrophe would be when such terms were no longer even intelligible. He also dies in order to claim his death as his own, retrieving it as a free act from the forces that would enslave him. “Our death,” writes Maurice Blanchot of an end to life freely chosen, “becomes the moment when we are most ourselves.”

On this view, one that sets its face against all historicist or evolutionist thought, one should strive to treat every moment as absolute, disentangling it from the ignominy of circumstance, standing in and out of history at the same time by living from the end-times rather than simply in them. This is what Paul has in mind when he speaks of us dying every moment, and what the Gospel means when

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it has Jesus refer to his death as his baptism. "The only philosophy that can be responsibly practiced," remarks Theodor Adorno, "is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption."

All human acts have an aura of deathliness about them, since for good or ill they cannot be undone. This is one of the rare ways in which the absoluteness of death finds an echo in everyday life. Otherwise, death is too drastic a deprivation for the *Lebenswelt* to accommodate. We are not accustomed in everyday life to such startling transfigurations as being borne shoulder-high into a chapel to the sound of an organ. Whatever magnificent achievements we are able to chalk up when alive, none can equal the sheer drama of disappearing forever and ever. Death is one of the few residues of the absolute in a secular age, and as such is at odds with its prevailing orthodoxies. Not to exist at all is far too surreal and extreme a state of affairs for the hard-nosed pragmatists who currently govern the globe, which is one reason why the prospect is so commonly disavowed. Only societies that maintain some notion of sacrifice, and thus some sense of death as the condition of life, are able to lift this repression.

Beheading of Saint Cosmas and Saint Damian *by Fra Angelico, ca. 1439*

There is a sense in which it is not normal to be dead, as though not to be around at all is to commit some unspeakable solecism. Death is the ruin of meaning, sheer brute facticity, yet at the same time too earth-shaking an affair for us not to feel that it must harbor some portentous significance. Perhaps the absolute nature of death is one reason why it has proved so alluring to artists, since it is the closest analogy we have to pure creation. To wipe something from existence seems scarcely less miraculous than to bring it into being.

Contemplating all things from the standpoint of redemption, one is bound to confess, is a mighty tall order. One might imagine that it could be left to the plucky band of stalwarts known as martyrs, were it not that, for Christianity at least, martyrdom is a condition to which everyone is in principle summoned. A certain extremism is thus commonplace. It is of the nature of class-history that the pursuit of justice may lead you to a squalid death at the hands of the political state, whether on Calvary or in the secret prisons of the intelligence services. Like tragedy, martyrdom is a way of reaping sense from what is otherwise a mere fact of Nature, turning one's mortality into a kind of rhetoric. Indeed, death as such couples the run-of-the-mill with the momentous in this way. Ernst Bloch yokes these twin features of it together when he remarks that "nothing is so strange and grim as the blow that fells everyone." Death is an entirely natural phenomenon that is rarely experienced as such, being at once unremarkable and inconceivable. The fact that everyone without exception must suffer this calamitous loss simply compounds its strangeness, as though one were to find Lears and Antigones loitering on every street corner. People die, comments a J. M. Coetzee character, it's human nature, you can't stop them. The inconceivable happens all the time. The most commonplace of moments secretes the most catastrophic of potentials, as the strait gate through which at any instant death might enter. There is a startling contrast between the quotidian nature of death in general and the distinctly non-quotidian nature of one's own.

Death exposes the mind-warping gap between the spiritual *quidditas* or uniqueness of a man or woman and his or her utter biological dispensability. As a matter of Nature, the event is inevitable; but the cultural form it assumes is not, and neither in general is the mode of its occurrence, which remains largely contingent. Like sexuality, which is similarly cusped between the domains of Nature and culture, it is difficult to avoid either overrating or underplaying it. As far as underplaying it goes, Tacitus records that the emperor Tiberias, seeking to placate the Roman populace for the scandalously meager obsequies he laid on for the death of Germanicus, reminded them that men are mortal and only the state is immortal. In similar spirit, Claudius points out to Hamlet with scarcely suppressed exasperation that death is part of a natural cycle, and that too plaintive a protest against it can be morbidly self-indulgent. This is true enough, but Hamlet is also right to regard death as excessive and intolerable. Whether it has value is another question. The most celebrated speech in the history of theater hesitates between a life without merit, in which one meekly endures one's afflictions, and a rather more heroic grappling with one's sorrows that will put an end to them, though only at the price of putting an end to oneself.

Death has an authority that is hard to dispute. In *The Death of the Heart*, Elizabeth Bowen observes of one of her

characters that her dying put her in a strong position for the first time in her life. Like love, death searches out what is most singular about a person, poignantly highlighting their irreplaceability. One of Plato's objections to tragedy is that by furnishing us with images of death it reminds us of our apartness, thus undermining political solidarity. For Hegel, death, like law, is a universal truth that nonetheless confronts us with our utter irreducibility as individual selves, at once leveling and individuating. Like the human body, it is both an external fatality and radically one's own, a mode of distinction but also a shared condition. If it is in one sense inalienably mine, it can also be as mass-produced as sausage meat. Primo Levi speaks of death in the Nazi concentration camps as a trifling, banal, bureaucratic affair, scarcely distinguishable from everyday life.

Like the Stoics, one can choose to highlight the humdrum nature of death, treating it in the manner of Seneca's *To Marcia on Consolation* not only as a fact to be accepted but as a power to be affirmed. Death on this estimate is squarely on the side of the dispossessed, emancipating slaves, springing lifers from their prison cells, releasing the anguished from their afflictions, replacing conflict with tranquility and canceling the inequalities between rich and poor. It would be hard to imagine a more potent revolutionary force. Far from being the ruin of hope, death in Seneca's eyes is the very image of it. It is true that those sprung from their cells or freed from their torment by death are not able to take pleasure in this enviable state of affairs, but the fact remains that Nature has considerately supplied us with the means (suicide) of putting an end to our sufferings at any moment. Where there's death, there's hope.

For the Stoics, there is an egalitarianism about mortality which W. B. Yeats, who speaks of death's "discourtesy," found hard to stomach. There is a touch of the mob about its relentless leveling. Yeats's call for men and women to come "proud-eyed and laughing to the tomb" is a typical piece of Ascendancy swagger, of a piece with the hair-raisingly blasphemous epitaph he pens for himself in "Under Ben Bulben": "Cast a cold eye / On life, on death. / Horseman, pass by." With magnificent hauteur, death is to be dismissed as beneath the dignity of the Anglo-Irish gentry. One deals with one's mortality by turning a cold eye upon it, rather as one deals with an insolent valet. One is not to rage against the dying of the light but to stare stonily through it. While Virginia Woolf is insisting on the need for a room of one's own, Rilke, another spiritual aristocrat of Yeatsian breed, observes in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* that a death of one's own is becoming increasingly hard to come by. One must protest in the name of an authentic demise against the shop-soiled, off-the-peg variety of the event that modernity has on offer like so many reach-me-down goods. Even death has been hijacked by the rabble. "Ignorance of death is destroying us," comments Charlie Citrine in Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift*, a judgment that Rilke would no doubt have endorsed. What might sound like consolation to some—the fact that if I die, then so does everyone else—is for Rilke sheer petty-bourgeois impertinence.

Despite its bluster, Yeats's disdain for death has something to recommend it. From St Paul's "Where is thy sting?" to Donne's "Death, thou shalt die," there is an honorable tradition of deriding death, mocking its self-importance and cutting it satirically down to size. This is to repay it in its own coin, since it is a renowned debunker itself, and thus has affinities with comedy as well as tragedy. In the face of fervid convictions and vaulting ambitions, it insists that we all come to utter disaster. The Christian belief is that in tit-for-tat, handy-dandyish style, the Resurrection in turn brings death to nothing. Its intimidating power, like that of some ranting despot, is unmasked as bogus. No doubt there is something a touch too cavalier about Albert Camus' comment in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that there is no fate which cannot be surmounted by scorn; but it is true even so that wit, satire, and mockery are resources to be stored against one's mortal ruin. Like the Law, death is an imperious, enigmatic, implacable power that threatens to reduce the human subject to so much dross, confronting it with the paltriness of its own existence and violently breaching its identity and autonomy. If the Law, along with the sin it unwittingly fosters, are for St. Paul what brings death into the world, it is also an image of that mortality; and in the apostle's view the two are vanquished together in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus. The Resurrection of Jesus is death not abolished but transformed, reinterpreted, refashioned and so objectively no longer to be feared—however much, like children terrified by a bogeyman they know to be an illusion, we persist in doing so.

Christianity may debunk death, but it also regards it as an abomination. It is abhorrent because it involves an irreparable loss, and thus confronts us with too little; but also because it exposes us to an intolerable *jouissance*, and thus to too much. St. Paul has no doubt in his first epistle to the Corinthians that death is the enemy of humanity, one who is to be outflanked and defeated not by vigorous combat but by being boldly embraced. The theologian Herbert McCabe speaks bluntly of death as "an outrage." There is no way in which we can prove equal to its crazed immoderateness.

For the Christian Gospel, death is to be accepted but not endorsed. The philosopher Gabriel Marcel speaks of a "noncapitulating acceptance" of it. We should not allow its two-a-penny nature to blunt our sense of its importunity. It is violent, excessive, and unmannerly, tearing us from our loved ones and consigning our projects contemptuously to the dust. The fact that it is also natural—the way the species bears in the individual, as Marx comments—is no consolation. So is typhoid. If we ought freely to submit to its indignity, it is not because there is anything in the least tolerable about it, but because to do so involves a form of self-giving, which is also the most estimable way to live. ■

WINTRY GRATITUDE, AN ODE

Seven Good Fridays Later

First *Triduum*, the Long Gospel of John,
you said you'd never heard me read that well,
fourteen minutes, the church under John's spell,
the horror that prefigures Easter dawn.

Cloaked in purple the crucifix of Christ,
next night the Vigil, candles in the dark,
then daybreak and the Gospel of St. Mark.
The clothes for which the Roman soldiers diced

cast off, the risen Lord in radiant white,
the rock rolled from the tomb, angel on guard.
Dear friend, I know your last five years were hard,
your Temple curtain torn in two each night,

but you lived to embrace Christ's revelation
from the *Via Dolorosa*'s final station.

Solemn Mass for the Dead

With *Dona eis requiem* we end
the *Agnus Dei* as we pray
the *Missa pro defunctis* for a friend
who spent decades astray,
a solemn way to spend
Timor mortis on a funereal day,

a day to wear my darkest chalk-striped suit
and polished wing-tipped shoes,
black vestments for the celebrants. A flute
joins in the *Kyrie*,
and every candle in the church is a lit fuse
to blow our daily certitudes away.

Ave atque vale, Hail and farewell,
Catullus called after his brother fell.

All Souls' Night

All Souls' Night, my favorite poem by Yeats,
spoken from memory once more last night
when Christ as every night casts down the Gates
of Hell to lead His people to the light:

five celebrants, all their silk vestments black
one day a year, save Masses for the Dead
where the departed seek their upward track.
Now seven years after our Savior led

Alan homeward to claim his last reward
for turning David's Psalms to English verse,
the Rainbow Bridge guarded by Michael's sword,
my loved translator trying to reimburse

our Savior for his final agony,
I offer Mass in Alan's memory.

Prayer to Alan

Now I live modestly, much like a monk
who sought no monastery when you died,
my gravest sin *Superbia*, the pride
taken in poetry. Now never drunk
I take dictation from the Holy Spirit,
go to confession and my daily Mass,
prayerfully hunt my puppy's prairie grass,
the high bar to salvation? Hope I clear it,
my summons home, pray that I daily hear it.

My dearest earthly comfort is my friends,
devoted few who fear how I grow fragile
unlike that boy bedded when I was agile,
tirelessly trekking to the mountains' ends.
I trust you hear this prayer your lover sends.

Wintry Gratitude

Modest my martyrdom for poetry,
no slow roast on a spit,
only the play of wit
with metaphor, music and memory.

I hope to die singing two kinds of praise,
the world by which I'm awed,
the majesty of God,
both of which carry Murphy through his days.

The pole star of my soul is gratitude
for my deferring death,
drawing each day the breath
of cold in this high northern latitude.

Thanks too, All-Father, for the friend you gave
with whom I'll reunite beyond the grave.

—Timothy Murphy

Timothy Murphy's books include Mortal Stakes *and* Faint Thunder and Hunter's Log, *both from the Dakota Institute Press.*

Rand Richards Cooper

Monsters, Politics, Romance

'THE SHAPE OF WATER'

The Spanish director Guillermo del Toro is a one-of-a-kind talent among contemporary filmmakers. Skipping nimbly among genres—sci-fi, horror, fantasy, action, superhero—he's less a shape-shifter than a master combiner, arrantly blending genre elements according to his own creative vision, and overcoming a viewer's resistance by inundating him with strange and potent admixtures.

Del Toro's early efforts include two films based on comic books, *Blade II* and *Hellboy*, and *The Devil's Backbone* (2001), a gripping tale of the haunting of an orphanage in remote Spain during the Spanish Civil War. That film, in which worldly pain receives otherworldly retribution, served as a rehearsal for the director's masterpiece, *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006). *Pan* is the kind of film that defies summary. Set in Spain in 1944, it took up the harsh experiences of a young girl whose father has died and whose mother marries a brutal captain in Franco's army, head of a unit tasked with annihilating a band of armed partisans hiding out near the unit's remote forest outpost.

Pan's Labyrinth juxtaposed a granular portrayal of the cruelest political reality with a sumptuous escape into fantasy, and filtered it through the imagination of childhood. Even as the girl, Ofelia, agonizes over the plight of her mother—deep in a difficult pregnancy and subject to a sadistic husband—she gains entry into a fairy-tale world, accessed via a mysterious, crumbling stone labyrinth in the forest. There she encounters a giant faun, who leads her through a series of challenges simultaneously designed to help her counter her wicked stepfather even as she fulfills the dictates of an ancient fable in which she plays a central role, and whose events unfold in a mysterious subterranean realm, the voiceover tells us, "where there are neither lies nor pain." Got that? The difficulty of summarizing the film speaks to the brilliant melding of opposites that del Toro pulled off: kindness and cruelty, beauty and ugliness, enchantment and terror, the surreal and the all-too-real. A remarkably audacious film, *Pan's Labyrinth* is one of the most ambitious and moving cinematic experiences to come along in recent decades. Drenched in vivid hues that include great crimson splashes of blood, it was a kind of *Alice in Wonderland* meets *The Killing Fields*; when all was said and done—and sung, and bled—what it offered was catharsis of a high order.

Del Toro followed *Pan's Labyrinth* with a *Hellboy* sequel, an excursion into a big-budget action film (*Pacific Rim*) and a gothic romance (*Crimson Peak*). And now he returns to magical realism with *The Shape of Water*. As in *Pan's Labyrinth*, modes of fantasy are deployed to outline, and ultimately to combat, a dark politics of exploitation and fear, while invoking the same duality—the imagination that soars and the body that suffers.

The story takes place in 1962 Baltimore, where Elisa (Sally Hawkins) works as a cleaning lady at a top-secret government research facility. Traumatized by a childhood injury, Elisa is both a mute and a loner, a gentle soul whose only two friends are her co-worker, Zelda (Octavia Spencer), and her neighbor in her apartment building, Giles (the always excellent Richard Jenkins), a closeted gay man who works as a magazine illustrator in a Norman Rockwell–like mode. At the film's outset, Elisa stumbles onto a government plot, in the form of a top-secret "asset" being kept chained in a water tank at the research center—an amphibious creature, part man, part fish, captured in the Amazon and brought back so that medical research conducted on it might disclose ways to optimize

Sally Hawkins & Doug Jones in The Shape of Water

FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

human survival in space (and keep up with the Soviets). The experiments are overseen by the program manager, Strickland (Michael Shannon), who is this film's Captain Vidal, his fascistic bent expressed via an electric cattle prod he carries with him. Strickland is never happier than when using this handy tool of pain to taunt and terrorize the captive creature.

And so we proceed, with one suffering fish-man and a trio of marginalized heroes: a black woman; a mute survivor of unspecified childhood trauma; and a gay artist who spends his days portraying the mythic American family to which he can never hope to belong. Depicting these figures of marginalization buffeted by the callousness of Cold-War American life, del Toro sets up for us an uninsistent civic lesson on otherness and acceptance.

Among other things—many other things. *The Shape of Water* is all at once a sci-fi monster movie, a cautionary political parable, a spy drama, a romantic tribute to old movies (Elisa's apartment is above a grand old theater, the Orpheum), and, most of all, a love story. In conceiving the film, del Toro was guided by childhood memories of watching the 1954 cult classic *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and iconic scenes of the creature diving with Julia Adams in its arms are replicated in similarly dreamy moments here, as del Toro brings the implicit romance of the earlier film to the surface, as it were, of his new one.

Like *Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Shape of Water* relies on brilliant camera work to convey a texture of enchantment. Guillermo Navarro won the Oscar for cinematography in *Pan's Labyrinth*, where he crafted a world of flickering motes and saturated golds and greens. And although del Toro has switched cameramen, the new film is similarly lavish to look at, its visual poetry facilitating the effortless shift between realism and fantasy. Dan Laustsen's camera performs variations large and small on the leitmotif of water—from the stunning opening dream sequence, in which we see the contents of Elisa's apartment floating lazily underwater, to the crescendoing rain that plays a role in the film's plot, to the runaway faucet that turns a bathroom into a kind of super-aquarium, to a closeup pattern of raindrops on a bus window, which collect and combine in a whimsical dance that seems briefly to suggest sperm and egg. Frequently the film reminds us how fully the director has made surprise his hallmark; both its look and its plot are sufficiently novel that we never know where we're about to go.

The Shape of Water has emerged as an early Oscar favorite, and it's not hard to see why; the movie is clearly the work of a creative genius purveying such stuff as dreams—and nightmares—are made of. That said, to my mind it represents a falling-off from *Pan's Labyrinth*. Take, for instance, the character of Strickland. Michael Shannon is a superb character actor who has gotten pigeonholed into playing borderline psychotic characters and/or control-freak authoritarians whose moralistic rigidity belies a predictable sadomasochism. In *The Shape of Water*, these tendencies are pushed into caricature, and the note of smirky exaggeration betrays something unsatisfying in the film's conception. Strickland's is a throwaway villainy; compared with the cold violence exuded by Captain Vidal in *Pan's Labyrinth*, it approaches frivolity.

With its lush period look and a soundtrack of romantic ballads from the great American songbook, *The Shape of Water* takes the magical realism of *Pan's Labyrinth* and overindulges the magic at the expense of the realism, upsetting what was a perfect balance of dreaminess and dread. Is it churlish to blame a movie for good intentions? By substituting positive human motives—the longing for love, the desire to do right—for the earlier film's more primal drivers of suffering and fear, del Toro changes the underlying emotional calculus of his movie, and installs a fey sentimentality where before there was terror, grief, and redemption. The film launches the same astonishing flights of fancy. But when the stakes are lowered, the payoff shrinks. ■

Alan Wolfe

Loving the Amish

Why Liberalism Failed

Patrick J. Deneen
Yale University Press, $30, 248 pp.

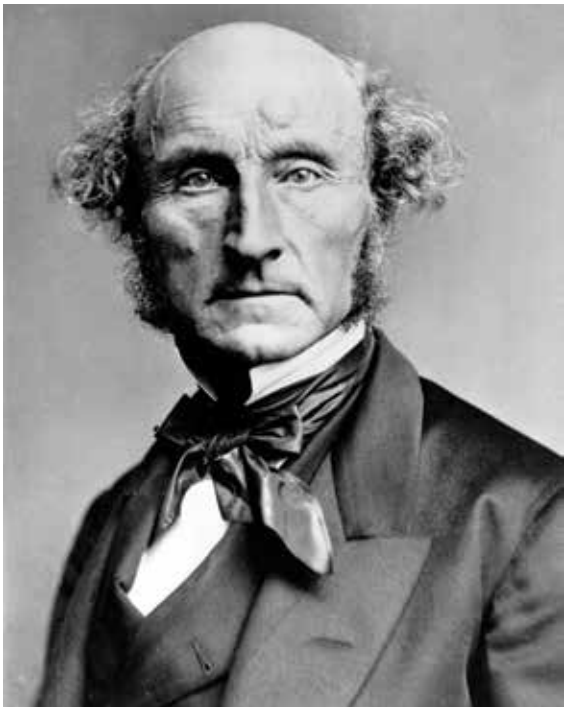
Patrick Deneen is a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame who is an adherent to a form of conservatism at war with modernity in all its forms. Just to be clear what this means, Deneen's conservatism has little in common with versions adopted by today's Republican Party, including, or so I surmise, the Trumpian one. To Deneen, much of today's conservatism—not only Paul Ryan's crush on Ayn Rand, but also the "American greatness" yearnings of William Kristol and David Brooks—is one or another form of liberalism. Unfortunately Deneen never tells us what genuine conservatism means, although there are hints ranging from twelfth-century conceptions of natural right to the agrarian writings of the contemporary neo-Rousseauian Wendell Berry. It would have helped this reader if Deneen had talked more explicitly about the conservatism against which liberalism was a reaction.

In spite of this conceptual neglect, I found myself surprised by the number of points on which Deneen and I agree. He claims, against both libertarians and welfare-state defenders, that the "classical liberalism" of free markets lies along the same path as the "modern" liberalism of active government involvement. That accords with my own position that Adam Smith and John Maynard Keynes belong in the same political camp. We both consider John Stuart Mill a liberal par excellence. Deneen argues, again I believe quite correctly, that the liberal arts in most colleges and universities have run their course and that few contemporary students ever receive full exposure to the glories of the humanities. Liberalism, in his view, prioritizes culture over nature; I agree. Liberalism's goal is to free human beings from artificial constraints that prevent them from realizing their full potential; I also agree with that.

In pursuing his argument, Deneen should have one advantage: unrestrained by any hint of academic caution, he writes in the style of an eighteenth-century pamphleteer, making dramatic claims and hoping that his eloquent prose will carry the case. Even with respect to this rhetorical approach, we are not that different. I also try to write in a style suitable not just to academics and I have been known to be a bit polemical. Reading Deneen, I found myself thoroughly engaged and I wish more books like this would come from the editorial offices of university presses.

The only major difference between us, alas a rather significant one, is that for Deneen liberalism is one of the great horrors of world history; its failure is so complete that it will soon (if it has not already) lose all its adherents while creating one disaster after another. I believe that liberalism, in spite of the rightwing nativism currently fashionable in one liberal democracy after another, still has a great deal to achieve before it runs its course, and that there is no existing alternative political philosophy that can rival its staying power.

Why Liberalism Failed, moreover, does have its share of problems. For a phenomenon alleged to be so destructive, I do not know precisely what Deneen means by liberalism. At times it means the ideas of great liberal thinkers. That is all well and good, but the ideas of thinkers have only a tangential relationship, at best, with what decision-makers carry out in their name. By themselves, liberals have not done all that much damage and I do not believe, although Deneen holds the opposing viewpoint, that divorce is common because John Locke argued that marriage is a form of contract or that "our default condition is homelessness" because liberals imagined a state of nature. I can think of only two exceptions, two liberals who had a direct impact on history. One is Keynes, whom Deneen ignores. The other is John Dewey and his writings on pedagogy, and while Deneen does discuss Dewey, he pays little or no attention to his views on education.



John Stuart Mill, ca. 1870

In contrast to liberals, Deneen is a fan of those writers who condemn the kind of lives most of us modern people lead. Deneen's reasoning runs like this: liberalism in theory worships science, technology, and profit; in the quest for all three, chemical companies have developed new ways of growing crops; the use of such artificial technologies has destroyed both the crops themselves along with the entire environment of family farms and holistic agriculture that once accompanied them; and if we do not stop soon, all human beings will become genetically modified organisms. There is thus a direct line from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberal writers to human cloning.

This chain of reasoning is not convincing, at least to me. Liberalism is indeed compatible with science and technology. Everything else is problematic: liberalism is generally sympathetic to free markets but not to monopolies such as chemical companies that rig the market; some liberals might defend genetically modified crops but nearly all liberals abhor them; one can find as many liberals active on behalf of local communities as conservatives, if not more ; and it is a giant step, and one most liberals would never take, to move from manipulating crops to manipulating DNA.

It only adds to the confusion that Deneen argues that what killed liberalism was, of all things, liberalism itself. If this sounds vaguely Hegelian, that is because it is. Like Hegel's student Karl Marx, Deneen believes in the dialectic. But unlike Marx, who praised capitalism as a prelude to denouncing it, Deneen only denounces liberalism without ever quite praising it. I should qualify that statement. After retelling one horror story after another, he writes toward the end of his book that, "like all human projects, liberalism is not without its achievements."

Despite this backhand compliment—praising liberalism in the negative—I was glad, finally, to see this apparent concession. What would be these "achievements," I wondered: the abolition of slavery, the rights of women, greater regulation of irresponsible capitalism? Liberal principles, after all, gave us the language of the Declaration of Independence, upon which Lincoln's arguments against slavery were based. Did liberalism fail because President Andrew Johnson, presumably a liberal under Deneen's capacious conceptualization, turned against Lincoln's ideals in giving former Southern slave owners by and large what they wanted? That makes no sense because liberalism cannot be both pro-abolition and pro-slavery at the same time. The abolition of slavery, let alone the advancement of women, hardly seem like ordinary achievements. In the whole scope of human history, liberalism, in fact, is responsible for one political miracle after another.

Instead of expressing genuine admiration for liberal achievement in the way Marx praised capitalism, Deneen returns to conservative boilerplate. Liberalism, he argues, rather than helping great liberal achievements along, stood firmly in their path. But this makes no sense. Our greatest conservative thinker, John C. Calhoun, although he changed his views over the course of his life, lacked any shred of liberalism; slavery was simply too important to him to advocate any idea that might lead to its abolition. (Calhoun does not figure in Deneen's book.) Who, except for Roy Moore and Joe Arpaio, could really doubt that our country was improved because Lincoln's ideas won out over Calhoun's?

We live at a time when populism and nationalism are attacking liberalism with renewed vigor. Under such conditions, there exist critiques of liberalism aplenty. Would Deneen be happy seeing his book embraced by ultra-right quasi-fascists or ultra-left Sanders-like populists? I hope not. But I cannot see in this book any path that would allow serious political thinkers to find fault with Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, or, it must be added, Donald Trump. Something tells me that if Trump were ever to read a book (an idea about which we need not worry) he might like this one.

The takeover of the Republican Party by Trump and his defenders has brought into the public spotlight a whole host of anti-Trump conservatives such as Jennifer Rubin, Bret Stephens, and Michael Gerson, and they are writing the best political commentary available today. Hopefully one of them will be tempted, when matters calm down, assuming they ever do, to explain the path that led them as conservatives to denounce the populistic immorality of the extreme right.

Along similar lines, we will need a passionate case on behalf of blending religion and politics, because what passes for the Evangelical case, if there even is one, is full of holes. As the Republican Party continues to swirl down the drain of immorality, the field is wide open for a conservative to let us know what the next step ought to be in making our society a tad bit more ethical. In the age of Trump, we know what liberalism is but we have no idea what conservatism is—or will be.

Deneen's form of conservatism can never serve such a crucial purpose. He rejects all politics and not just liberal politics. His arcadia of a small-producer economy has more in common with Woodstock than Washington. All is downhill in his account and all is bad. He loves, even as he misunderstands, the Amish. I am glad that there are so few of them.

The last time I wrote anything as angry as *Why Liberalism Failed* was when I was a radical leftist marching in opposition to the war in Vietnam and listening to Phil Och's classic satire "Love Me, I'm a Liberal." Fortunately I outgrew that phase and became a fairly mainstream Democrat in my political thinking. It is disturbing, I confess, to hear such counter-culture advocacy coming from the right. If the American right wants to copy all the flaws of the New Left, I guess the republic will survive. But it sure would be nice to have a conservatism that takes reality seriously. ■

Alan Wolfe *is the author of* Political Evil: What It Is and How to Combat It *(Knopf), among many other books.*

Paul Lakeland

The Habit of Seeing

Revelation and Convergence

Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition

Edited by Mark Bosco, SJ, and Brent Little.

CUA Press, $39.95, 242 pp.

You have to wonder what Flannery O'Connor would make of all the fuss the academy has made over her—all the hundreds of books, articles, and conferences exploring the work of a gifted author whose tragic early death entailed a severely limited *opera omnia*. Anyone who has read even a couple of the lectures O'Connor gave, or browsed in the matchless collection of her letters, *The Habit of Being*, knows that she did not suffer fools gladly, and also that she insisted over and over again that she was a storyteller, plain and simple. Disingenuous, perhaps; but then she did once write to a friend that she was instructing her agent to sell all her stories for musical comedies. "There ought to be enough tap dancers around to take care of them," she wrote in 1956, "and there's always Elvis Presley." O'Connor was not a woman to take herself too seriously, and she did not welcome the attention of others who did.

All this said, there is no question that the simple storyteller wrote out of a distinctive vision of life and that, strange as her world might sometimes seem, in her other writings she shows how consistent that vision is. And here is where the strength of this current collection comes into focus. The eight essays in *Revelation and Convergence* are not literary criticism in the strict sense; the reader will have to look hard for any actual valuation of O'Connor's work. What you find here instead is careful attention to how she absorbed her extensive reading in modern Catholic philosophy and theology into a profound and personal religious vision. What we could miss, if we are not careful, is the fact that however clear she was about the life of faith, that certainty did not extend into the work she produced as a storyteller.

In a lecture on "Catholic Novelists and Their Readers," O'Connor explored what a Catholic novel and a Catholic novelist might be, with insights that remain valid today. For a novelist, O'Connor asserts, the only access to the supernatural is through the natural. You have to write what you see, not what you want to see or think you ought to see. If you close your own eyes and try to see with the eyes of the church, "the result is another addition to that large body of pious trash for which we have so long been famous." The solution for a writer, O'Connor proposed, is not to abandon the eyes of the church, but to reach the point at which "the church becomes so much a part of his personality that he can forget about her." She defined a Catholic novel as "one that represents reality adequately as we see it manifested in this world of things and human relationships." Only by representing these things and relationships can the fiction writer "approach a contemplative knowledge of the mystery they embody."

Wary of "pious trash"

EVERETT COLLECTION HISTORICAL / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

As a Catholic novelist, O'Connor fits her own description remarkably well. But how did she come to know all this?

The starting point for *Revelation and Convergence* is the prayer journal that O'Connor kept over the course of a year at the University of Iowa, beginning in January 1946. Much of this journal records intensely personal prayer, full of a sense of personal unworthiness and a need for the grace of God. The twenty-one-year-old writer has already absorbed much from the writings of Aquinas, Rousseau, Léon Bloy, Georges Bernanos, and Charles Péguy. Nowhere in her fiction and rarely in her essays do any of these names appear; the intellectual world out of which they emerge, we might say, has become so much a part of her personality that she can forget about them. The essayists in *Revelation and Convergence* give skillful testimony to how much O'Connor was influenced by these and other Catholic thinkers. Many of her readers would insist that explaining a story as a reflection of the ideas of this or that influential thinker is not helpful, and thankfully that is not really what is attempted here. But to know more about a lively world of ideas that shaped the way O'Connor's Catholicism worked for her is enormously valuable.

One of the clearest of O'Connor's convictions was that the spiritual is encountered first and foremost in the sensible, and several of the essays explore this idea. Stephen Schloesser, SJ, designates it "the exegesis of the commonplace," linking O'Connor and the work of Léon Bloy, while Michael Murphy stresses the danger of disassociating religious ideas and practice. O'Connor, he thinks, reflects the ideas of Georges Bernanos and Henri de Lubac in her focus on the incarnational presence of the divine. Other contributors in their different ways show how the theological vision

behind O'Connor's creative works was influenced by other Catholic authors. O'Connor, we discover, read and learned from Jacques Maritain and François Mauriac (Stephen E. Lewis); Gerard Manley Hopkins (Mark Bosco, SJ); Friedrich von Hügel (Michael Bruner); St. Augustine (Andrew Garavel, SJ); and Evelyn Underhill (George Pigford, CSC). A final essay by Jessica Hooten Wilson makes a game if ultimately unpersuasive effort to approach O'Connor's incomplete final novel, *Why Do the Heathen Rage?*, as an account of a "post-conversion" contemporary saint. It is hard not to feel that this unfinished text is more didactic than O'Connor's published works, and to hope that had she lived to finish it, it would have become as hard-edged and barely tractable as the earlier work.

In the end, this excellent little collection helps us see two important truths about Flannery O'Connor. First, it places her in the great tradition of twentieth-century Catholic intellectual life, particularly continental European thought, and makes one wonder if, had she lived, she might have gone on to become a significant theologian. Europe had Romano Guardini and Jacques Maritain. America had Fulton Sheen. There was a gap there that O'Connor might have filled. But from a literary perspective the more important insight we gain from these essays is a look at how the intellectual pursuits and convictions of a fiction writer disappear into the stories themselves. And this in a strange way makes O'Connor's stories such valuable teaching tools. That the supernatural is revealed in the natural is an idea the writer gleaned from von Hügel. Her stories show this profound theological truth without ever actually stating it; intent on letting her readers learn through the narrative, she shrouds the thought in the action, lest she end up preaching a sermon instead of telling a story. ■

Paul Lakeland *is director of the Center for Catholic Studies at Fairfield University. His latest book is* The Wounded Angel: Fiction and the Religious Imagination.

Paul Johnston

In the Presence of Mystery

Fashion, Faith, and Fantasy in the New Physics of the Universe

Roger Penrose
Princeton University Press, $29.95, 520 pp.

As Jim and Huck float down the Big River at night, they lie on their backs and look up at the night sky. "It's lovely to live on a raft," Huck recalls, telling the story. "We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss whether they was made, or only just happened—Jim allowed they was made, but I allowed they just happened; I judged it would have took too long to *make* so many."

The basic question Twain puts in the mouths of his characters—were the stars *made*, or did they just *happen*?—is a question still discussed today, though not often with Jim and Huck's quiet friendliness in the presence of such beauty and mystery. Jim's position is a supernatural one, reflecting the belief that some power separate from the natural world created that world. Huck, on the other hand, takes a purely natural view, seeing no need for recourse to any creative force outside of nature. In today's debate, Jim's is the religious view, promoted by creationist Christians who have gained notoriety by arguing that their view should be included in high-school science courses. Opposed to them are the scientists who hold that the world we see and experience is a strictly natural phenomenon, one that came into being in a Big Bang without direction or purpose, and who oppose introducing supernatural forces into science classrooms.

A Nobel Prize–winning mathematician and physicist Roger Penrose challenges the confidence his fellow scientists have in Huck's theory that the stars came into being through chance alone, that they "just happened"—and manages to do so without turning to Jim's supernatural theory. Indeed, his reason for dismissing much of current thinking in physics is that it is too much like religious thinking, based more on faith than on observation. And faith, in Penrose's view, is "at odds with the procedures normally considered appropriate when applied to a search for the deep principles that underlie the behavior of our universe at its most basic levels." Yet though faith—like the fashion and fantasy of his book's lengthy title—is inimical to the scientific spirit, Penrose shows that all three are at work in contemporary scientific thought about the universe.

Perhaps the most contentious issue argued between creationists and physicists today is the anthropic principle. That principle declares that the universe must be exactly as it is for intelligent life to exist. But how did such a finely tuned universe come to be? For creationists, the answer is simple: God created it for us. For natural scientists, though, the problem is more challenging. What are the odds that such a universe "just happened"? Perhaps, as one currently fashionable theory proposes, our universe is just one of many, and given enough universes it becomes probable that one would turn out like ours. But how many universes would be enough? Just what *are* the odds that our universe came to exist simply by random chance? Penrose calculates them as one in 10^{123}. By comparison, the number of molecules in our universe is thought to be in the neighborhood of 10^{80}. Even one uni-

BISWARUP GANGULY

Roger Penrose, 2011

verse for each molecule in ours, in other words, would not significantly improve the odds of our universe coming into being. Believing in such an abundance as could truly produce our universe by chance is, Penrose declares, "a very sorry place for such a grand theory to have finally stranded us." Rather than ignoring the math and keeping faith in an all-but-infinite number of unseen universes, or else believing in some post–Big Bang event such as the oft-proposed cosmic inflation—itself also unseen—Penrose argues that another explanation must be sought. And it must be one that is testable by observation, as science requires.

The problem is just the opposite with another fashionable theory Penrose challenges: string theory. String theory seeks to describe a single basic element of the universe, a one-dimensional object out of which every component of the universe is built. Unlike the proponents of the multiple-universes theory, who ignore the math that makes their theory unlikely beyond all reason, string theorists cavalierly dismiss the observation fundamental to physics in favor of their mathematical models. For string theory's mathematics to work, our universe is required to be not four-dimensional—three spatial dimensions plus time—but *ten*-dimensional. Yet no observation substantiates the existence of these other six dimensions. With no evidence of their existence other than the need for their existence, string theory hardly differs from religion, whose God exists because he *must* exist in order for it to be true.

Quantum physics is the third scientific field Penrose examines. Quantum theory came into being partly with the observation that not only do elements sometimes behave as waves and sometimes as particles, but that they appear to change from waves to particles just by being observed. When elementary particles are made to pass through two slits in a barrier, they produce a pattern consistent with waves *unless* the two slits are watched, in which case they produce a pattern consistent with particles. Penrose doesn't question this duality, which is both experimentally well established and mathematically consistent, but he does question the role assigned to observation. In the original "Copenhagen Interpretation" of this phenomenon, Nils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg proposed that the wave is actually a *function*—not a physical wave, but a packet of possibilities that, upon being observed, collapses into the single particle that is observed. Why should this be so? Penrose asks. Why should merely observing something cause such an extraordinary event? For that matter, if the world at the quantum level is continuous with the macro-level world we live in, are we to think that the universe of particles we live in exists merely because it is observed? What would this even mean? And how are we to test such a theory through observation—as science requires—if it is a theory about observation itself? If the Copenhagen Interpretation, along with other theories subsequently proposed to explain wave/particle duality, can't be tested, is it a scientific theory at all? Or is it just a

fashionable theory, accepted on faith but really little more than fantasy?

Having rejected the place of both fashion and faith in scientific thought, Penrose turns to fantasy. Here he proves more receptive. The universe, he asserts, is "in various ways...something quite fantastical," and thus perhaps we are in need of fantastical ideas to comprehend it. In his view, the problem with cosmic-inflation theory, many-worlds theory, or other current theories—for instance, that the universe itself must be conscious in order to observe itself into being—is that they aren't fantastical *enough*. In a short final section, Penrose turns to a "new physics for the universe," whose centerpiece is something he calls twistor theory. His presentation of twistor theory, like much of *Fashion, Faith, and Fantasy,* is beyond the comprehension of the non-specialist. But his theory does have one thing in common with all of the hypotheses he rejects: it seeks to account for the world and all it contains, including us and our conscious minds, without recourse to supernatural explanation.

This is a crucial point. Unseen universes, unseen dimensions, observation that creates what it sees—all these may be unscientific, but they are not supernatural. Proponents of multi-universe theories adamantly reject comparisons between their debates over the number of hidden universes and the apocryphal debates of medieval scholastics over the number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin. Though both debate unseeable entities, the unseeable entities of the physicist are nevertheless completely natural and *material* entities. Any hypothesis proper for a science classroom must be natural and material, not supernatural. Natural-science classrooms unimpeded by supernatural religion have an essential place in human society; they assist us in understanding both what we can do for our material benefit and how what we do affects both ourselves and the world. While religion can inform our thinking about what is beneficial and what is detrimental, it does so in a wholly different manner, and so belongs in a different classroom—as well as at home and in church.

Nevertheless, scientific materialism does have one thing in common with the creationism it rightly seeks to keep out of the science classroom: both begin with the assumption that certainty about the deep principles underlying our universe—certainty about how we and the stars came to be—is both possible and desirable. In this sense, creationism ironically proves incompatible with religion, since to be religious is to dwell in the presence of mystery. Jim and Huck embrace opposite sides of the explanatory choices available—the superstitious Jim propounding the supernatural explanation, and the rationalist Huck the natural explanation. But finally neither explanation truly suffices; and Twain, himself hostile to Christians and their Bible, was enough of an artist to let the matter remain unresolved, leaving Huck and Jim to float down the river, marveling at the stars in all their beauty and mystery.

Those today who wish to remain with Jim and Huck, floating in the presence of that beauty and mystery, might well be more at home with Penrose and his fellow physicists than with the creationists. Even though those physicists resist religious explanations, *Fashion, Faith, and Fantasy* shows that they continue to live in the presence of mystery. To be sure, they believe that the universe can finally be demystified, and that a satisfactory theory of everything will eventually be found. Penrose concludes with the idea, shared by a growing number of physicists, that our universe will eventually peter out into near-nothingness, until some tiny event starts the process again: world not only without end but also without beginning, only the vast cycles taught by many non-Abrahamic religions. But in a certain fundamental sense, either hypothesis—that the universe came into being out of nothing, by divine fiat or not, or that it has always existed in some form—is equally impossible, and thus equally mysterious. For those today who seek not certainty but a truer relationship with the mystery of existence, following scientists as they work toward their elusive goal may be the better choice, deepening our sense of wonder and humility as we float with Jim and Huck on their raft, looking up at the stars in the night sky, pondering how they, and we, came to be. ■

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Thomas Noble

Canon Fodder

The Indissolubility of Marriage & the Council of Trent

E. Christian Brugger
CUA Press, $69.95, 312 pp.

With great energy and unblinking conviction, E. Christian Brugger, who is now professor and dean at the School of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Notre Dame, Australia, argues that the Council of Trent (1545–1563) taught unequivocally that marriage is indissoluble. The book prompts at least three questions. Why did the author write it? Is his claim true? What does, or might, his claim mean?

In 2004 Kenneth Himes and James Coriden published a substantial article asserting that the church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage is "unrealistic, incoherent, and injurious" and furthermore that the teaching is neither *de fide* nor definitive doctrine. In 2011 Germain Grisez and Peter F. Ryan, SJ, published a refutation of Himes and Coriden that also addressed the work of the Belgian Jesuit Piet Fransen, on whom Himes and Coriden had based part of their argument. Fransen had built his case by exploring the canons of Trent. Accordingly, Brugger decided to investigate Trent's teaching for himself. Then in 2014 Walter Kasper, on the invitation of Pope Francis, gave an address to a group of cardinals, subsequently published in English with the title *The Gospel of the Family*. Kasper suggested that in certain circumstances divorced and remarried Catholics might be readmitted to the sacraments. There followed two Synods on the Family, which amplified the noise on all sides of this neuralgic issue. So, Brugger says, his modest scholarly exploration of one issue treated at Trent has become a big deal and merits a full study. I'll just add that almost since the end of Trent, the topic of the indissolubility of marriage had come up pretty frequently with answers on both sides of the question, albeit with the majority holding for strict indissolubility.

Trent left behind a voluminous record. Because of political and ecclesiastical strife in the sixteenth century the council met in twenty-five discontinuous sessions from 1545 to 1563. In the most widely used edition, that of Norman J. Tanner, SJ, the facing-page Latin and English text runs 139 pages of tiny print. Throughout the twentieth century, tireless scholars also published the verbatim records of the discussions held in the theological congregations and general sessions along with correspondence, occasional tracts, and other materials. Brugger worked through this material diligently. His actual text runs to 147 pages that are followed by 124 pages of appendices. One ("Authorities") assembles statements on marriage by theologians from the church fathers to Cardinal Cajetan and Desiderius Erasmus, by popes, and by councils; one quotes and tabulates in great detail the discussions in the General Congregations and sessions 23 and 24 of 1563; and one gives a concise schedule of all the meetings of the Council of Trent.

Brugger's focus on marriage needs a little framing timber. Marriage was

Session of the Council of Trent in Tyrolischer Adler *by Matthias Burglechner*

discussed in 1547 in Bologna. Fear of plague caused the council to move from Trent to Bologna, then to adjourn, and then to reconvene in Trent. Six canons on marriage were proposed but none was promulgated. In the council's twenty-third session in the summer of 1563, there was substantial discussion of marriage but no legislation. The council's twenty-fourth session in the autumn of 1563 promulgated twelve canons on the sacrament of marriage. Of these only two directly addressed indissolubility. I shall come to them in a moment. Session 24 also issued "Canons on the Reform of Marriage," arrayed in ten chapters, which addressed prohibitions on matrimony, polygamy, and concubinage. Brugger does not discuss these chapters. Some of them would tend to buttress his argument, but some do specify circumstances under which a marriage can be dissolved. All in all, marriage was not a key issue at Trent. Brugger admits that his argument is based entirely on Canon 7 of Session 24—seven lines out of seventy pages.

To understand Brugger's argument, it is necessary to look briefly at Canons 1 and 5 and closely at Canon 7. Canon 1 teaches that marriage is "in a true and strict sense one of the seven sacraments of the Gospel dispensation." Canon 5 says that "heresy, or irksome cohabitation, or continued absence" are not valid grounds for dissolution. These two canons are aimed directly at the Reformers who denied that marriage was a sacrament and allowed for divorce under at least the three specified circumstances. Most of the scholars who have read Trent on marriage less severely than Brugger claim that the council's fundamental aim was to defend the sacramentality of marriage and to protect the church's right to teach authoritatively on marriage. Canon 7 says, "If anyone says the church erroneously taught and teaches, according to evangelical and apostolic doctrine, that the bond of marriage cannot be dissolved by the adultery of one of the spouses; and that neither party, even the innocent one who gave no grounds for the adultery, can contract another marriage while their spouse is still living; and that the husband commits adultery who dismisses an adulterous wife and takes another woman, as does the wife dismissing an adulterous husband and marrying another man: let him be anathema." The question of adultery is important because of the "exceptive clause" in the Gospel of Matthew 19:9—"I now say to you, whoever divorces his wife (lewd conduct [Greek *πορνεία*, Latin *fornicatio*] is a separate case) and marries another commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." For the Orthodox, this verse opens up more than a dozen valid cases for legitimate divorce and remarriage, for the Reformers, at least three. Many scholars have also read the Matthean verse in such a way as to legitimize divorce, at least in cases of adultery, while acknowledging in principle that marriage is indissoluble.

For Brugger Canon 7 is unambiguous, based on Scripture and tradition, and focused on *matrimonium ipsum* (marriage itself, the very nature of marriage) and not on the Reformers. He does acknowledge the anti-Reformation emphasis of Canons 1 and 5. He builds his case partly from the text of Canon 7 and partly from a careful reading of countless pages of theological discussions pertaining to Canon 7 at Trent. His text and his tables show that views were not unanimous but they were pretty overwhelming. Some voices wanted to omit the anathema while a few others wanted an even stricter formulation.

The wording of Canon 7 is odd. The language proposed in session 23 began "If anyone says, that on occasion of the adultery of one of the spouses a marriage can be dissolved...let him be anathema." In August 1563 the Venetian delegation raised an urgent matter. Venice controlled many lands where the hierarchy was Catholic but much of the population was Orthodox. Because the Orthodox permitted divorce and remarriage for many reasons, the Venetians insisted that the strict wording of the proposed canon would unduly burden not only the Orthodox but also the Catholic prelates in Venetian territories. Thus the indirect formulation quoted above: the anathema shifted from anyone who claimed that adultery legitimated divorce to *anyone who claimed that the church errs* in teaching that adultery does not legitimate divorce. Brugger lays all of this out carefully and he cites the key sources in both Latin and English translation.

So, Trent taught that marriage is indissoluble and in doing so affirmed a tradition that reached back to Christ himself. Yet neither Brugger nor those who interpret Trent differently than he does are tendentious. There is room for disagreement. Conservatives like Brugger do not like to talk about the "spirit" of a council. They prefer a strict construction of a council's legislation. But Brugger builds his strict interpretation of Canon 7 on the foundation of his reading of the discussions in the congregations and sessions, on the spirit of Trent where matrimony was concerned. Charles de Guise, the cardinal of Lorraine, added the phrase "according to evangelical and apostolic doctrine" to the initial formulation of the canon in order to clarify the basis for the church's teaching. In 1972 Cardinal Walter Kasper said that Canon 7 was based on but not identical with the teaching of Christ. Understanding of Scripture has changed over time and might again in this instance. The indirect formulation of the opening of Canon 7 leaves the door ajar, albeit not wide open, to the possibility that the church might one day teach differently, with the clear implication that a rejection of the new teaching would be anathema. Brugger himself, in his *Capital Punishment and the Roman Catholic Moral Tradition,* showed that the Catholic Church can rethink and understand anew its own teachings.This, of course, is what John Noonan taught us all in his *A Church That Can and Cannot Change.* ■

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Eve Tushnet

A Poet Pleads Insanity

The Bughouse
The Poetry, Politics, and Madness of Ezra Pound
Daniel Swift
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27, 320 pp.

Daniel Swift runs his new book, *The Bughouse: The Poetry, Politics, and Madness of Ezra Pound*, like a shell game. Genres flash in front of your eyes: literary criticism, political journalism, biography, institutional history. But Pound himself is under none of the shells. The purpose of the game is to teach you that Pound, subjected to every kind of study and system, remains elusive—incoherent and undiagnosable.

The Bughouse centers on Pound's twelve years at St. Elizabeths, the federal government's mental hospital in Washington, D.C. During World War II, he had made propaganda broadcasts for the Italian fascists, which, since he was an American citizen, was an act of treason. An insanity plea saved him from facing the death penalty. He had to be diagnosable if he wanted to live, and so all his varied and conflicting diagnoses look a little bit like ploys.

Swift argues that terms like "fascist," "madman," "genius," and "traitor" can't capture Pound's complexity. He also suggests that the possibility Pound faked mental illness to avoid conviction is at odds with the claim that he was a great poet. But don't we all know by now that geniuses can also fake things? And do terrible things? And mentally ill people do still have political convictions, a few of which are as awful as the political convictions of the sane. How incoherent do your rants about "stockbrokers…'the kikes' and Tennyson" have to be before they count as a symptom?

Each chapter of Swift's book views Pound through a different set of eyes. Fellow poets, doctors, contemporary Italian neo-fascists all try to name what Pound essentially is. The profusion of texts, interpretations, and diagnoses has the effect of modernist collage, mirroring the weird mix of voices, registers, and genres in Pound's *Cantos*.

Swift's prose can get purple (although he also has some nice lines: "Center Building is as geometric as a bird"), he makes strange guesses about others' motives, and he hares off into weird cul-de-sacs, such as a section about an ancestor of Pound's who made a wireless telegraph. But because Swift examines Pound through such a variety of lenses, the book offers at least a couple of chapters to fascinate any reader. There's a scathing section on the genre of "Let me tell you how I, a true author, visited the great Pound on the psych ward"—or what Swift calls the "Tale of the Bughouse Visit." Features of this genre, in works by William Carlos Williams, W. S. Merwin, and a host of lesser-known writers, include the journey from the outside world into the mental hospital; a description of the door separating the two worlds; and a description of some third person who plays the role of the *real* crazy person. Elizabeth Bishop's nursery-rhyme poem "Visits to St. Elizabeths" deploys the genre markers of the door and the third person with complexity and gentleness. Her Pound is "tragic," "talkative," "honored"; "cranky," "cruel," "tedious." At the poem's delayed climax she names him as "poet," and in its denouement he is "the wretched man / that lies in the house of Bedlam." Unlike other examples of this genre, Bishop's poem doesn't show the speaker entering or leaving the ward. She is willing to stay—or to absent herself from her poem, and give her place as poet to another.

Swift finds a very different Pound when he visits CasaPound in Rome. The young men there call themselves "Ezra's boys." They're squatters who hold conferences on Jack Kerouac, Japanese tattoos, and "themes dear to Pound, such as money, housing and the sovereignty of nations." They remind Swift that Pound called himself "a fascist of the Left," and they have developed a plan for a "Social Mortgage" to provide affordable housing to low-income families (as long as they're Italian citizens). They praise vigilantism and clean bike paths. "I had also read about how in December 2011 a CasaPound supporter went on a shooting spree in a market in Florence and killed two Senegalese traders and wounded three more," Swift writes. In his introduction he promises to explore "the connection between experimental art and extreme, often illiberal political sentiment," but the anti-conservative elements and tastes of fascism don't get much play here. Swift notes the patchwork character of fascism, its ideology of no ideology. He doesn't quite see its godless mysticism.

St. Elizabeths was conceived as a place of healing for those damaged and made ill by modernity. Like modernist poetry, and like fascism, it was a secular response to modernity's losses. The solution St. Elizabeths offered was nature (sweeping vistas, avenues of trees), work, and classification. The building itself began as an example of the "Kirkbride plan," the imposing institutional design that features in countless haunted-asylum movies: an administrative core flanked by residential wings and surrounded by natural beauty. The calmest patients lived closest to the core, the most disturbed out at the edges. Classification offered the patients a place in the world, literally as well as figuratively.

Swift explains that Pound's case is only one example of the breakdown of St. Elizabeths' systems. The Kirkbride plan had been set aside long before Pound's arrival as the hospital struggled with overcrowding. New wards were added in separate cottages rather than ordered wings. Pound spent his first year in the ward for the criminally insane, two L-shaped buildings around

a courtyard, kept behind a concrete wall. Nature and manual labor were sidelined—the hospital's piggery closed in 1947, while Pound was in residence. The hospital was finally shedding patients, as new tranquilizers and antipsychotics meant that more people were treated in their homes. Chemical imbalances replaced modern socioeconomic changes as the most common explanation for insanity. Swift was not able to read Pound's full medical records due to patient-privacy law, but he found that Pound's diagnoses varied wildly from "narcissistic personality type… with behavioral reaction" to "psychotic disorder…with neurotic reaction," from "insane and mentally unfit for trial" to showing "no evidence of psychosis, neurosis or psychopathy…friendly, affable and cooperative."

The Bughouse is more about Pound-as-seen than about Pound's poetry. There is a poignant section on Pound's translations of the Confucian collection, the Book of Odes: "It was Confucius who taught him that historians used to leave blank pages in the history books, and in the first year at St. Elizabeths, Pound stood in what might have been a bare white page of his personal history.... Now Pound resolved to fill those blanks with song." There's a lovely comparison between the Confucian odes and the blues, with "their sad certainty that trouble rhymes, repeats across time." Swift finds passages where Pound incorporated the creatures and landscape of his hospital into his translations. An owl becomes a "Great Horned Owl," an American bird; "insects" become "boll-weevils." Swift finds Pound's own shirt in the translations and the "Moat" around the violent ward, and he suggests that one passage transforms "hospital visiting hours [into]…an ancient ceremony." There is almost a forgiveness here of Pound's constrained circumstances.

In an obvious defense of his own kaleidoscope approach, Swift argues that "Pound's poetry is marked—from early until late, this is his most powerful concern—by an anxious, repetitive worry at the distinction between history and its tellings. In the place of the past, his poems say, we have only documents, and our voices in the end are only versions. We may not, these poems whisper, ever know the past." In the translations we get something closer to T. S. Eliot's mandate in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," to write the presence of the living past. Instead of calling attention to our distance from these millennia-old poems, Pound's translations fit his own experiences into them, giving them a new life.

Eliot is the second great absence in *The Bughouse*, after Pound himself. Eliot visited Pound at St. Elizabeths but did not write his own tale of the Bughouse visit. Pound had helped shape Eliot's most famous poem, cutting the *The Waste Land* down to the haunting, fragmentary work we have today. *The Waste Land* is like the *Cantos* in its muttering, mockingbird voice, its elegiac patchiness and attention to quotidian detail. But where Pound sprawled, Eliot structured. Scraps of Pound are glinting things: "Learn of the green world what can be thy place." Or,

> Bah! I have sung women in three cities,
> But it is all the same;
> And I will sing of the sun.

Eliot kept reaching for the order and harmony that Pound's work deliberately evaded. (Even Pound's playful misspellings suggest an intentional disruption of order.) In "Tradition" Eliot speaks of "the necessity that [the poet] shall conform, that he shall cohere." Swift argues that conformity to (and coherence within) rational modernity is not possible. Pound is excellent evidence for that claim. Whether this means that poets have no duty to conform and cohere, or that they have a duty to something other than rational modernity is left as a question for the reader. ■

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Fra Angelico, The Forerunners of Christ with Saints and Martyrs, *(1423–1424)*

A Communion of Sinners & Saints

Jerry Ryan

I have no idea what, exactly, the Beatific Vision will be like. I cannot begin to imagine it. I can only desire it as a "mystery gift," a vague promise of something far beyond my experience. What I can imagine and look forward to is the revelation of what we call the "communion of the saints," this mysterious intertwining of destinies, our solidarity in salvation. In the Creed, our profession of the communion of the saints is followed by the affirmation of our belief in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting. I think that these all go together.

But before becoming a communion of saints we are first of all a communion of sinners. There is a sense of solidarity even in sin—a sense that, in making a pact with the evil within us, we make a pact with evil itself and thus become responsible for the sins of all—from the blood of Abel to the apostasy of the last apostate. To refuse this solidarity is, in itself, a sin against communion. We are asked to carry one another's burdens, including the burden of sin, and thus fulfill the law of Christ, who, being sinless, could assume all sin without being consumed by it. Of course, being sinners, we can do this only imperfectly. Sometimes our own burden of sin may seem like burden enough. But so long as we are members of one body, we cannot forget the other members. As St. Paul says in I Corinthians 12:26, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it."

The other side of this coin is that "when one member is honored, all the members share its joy." And when one member is pardoned, it affects the whole Mystical Body of Christ. Pardon is not a purely individual experience. By receiving mercy we become more merciful ourselves; the communion of saints is the communion of those who have become vessels of mercy. In *The City of God,* St. Augustine writes that "our righteousness in this life consists rather in the pardoning of sins than in the perfection of virtue." When Jesus first appeared to his disciples after the Resurrection, he breathed on them his Holy Spirit and empowered them to forgive sins (John 20:19–23). Ever since then, the pardon of sins has remained an essential element of the pilgrim church's mission, and it will always be linked to the resurrection of the dead, as it was on that first evening. The pardon of every sinner contributes to the general resurrection, to the death of death.

But mercy is not simply the forgiveness of sins. It is a participation in the very Holiness of God. The Kingdom of the Father is a household where all is held in common. St. Augustine has this remarkable comment: "Love is a powerful thing, my brothers and sisters. Do you wish to see how powerful love is? Whoever, through some necessity, cannot accomplish what God commands, let him love the one who accomplishes it and he accomplishes it in that other."

We are told that there are many rooms in the Father's house, but I doubt if they are all single-occupancy. I believe that, within the communion of saints, there are affinities of grace, that each of us is surrounded by a particular cloud of witnesses, whose quality of grace is in some mysterious way related to our own. Some of these witnesses are known to us; others are not. What I do hope to find in the Father's house—and try to imagine—is the restoration of all that is beautiful and pure in people and in their works, the fulfillment of old friendships known and the discovery of the discreet links that have made my own joy possible. That would indeed be life everlasting. ■

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Marguerite Barankitse

Melinda Roper, MM

Daughters of Wisdom: Women and Leadership in the Global Church

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Founding president of Maison Shalom network for orphans of Burundi's civil war
Inaugural recipient of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity

Melinda Roper, MM (Darién, Panama)
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