

Introspection is a necessary element of the new evangelization, even if it is a rare commodity these days. Somehow, someday, the secularist's sights must be set beyond himself to see that there is more to his satisfaction than meets the eye. There is no magic move on our part to lead to that. We do well to start with the initiatives Benedict proposed, but we must also have confidence that, since the desire for God is written in the heart of every human being, at some point the self-satisfied secularist can realize that there is a greater satisfaction transcending this world – and He invites everyone into His company.

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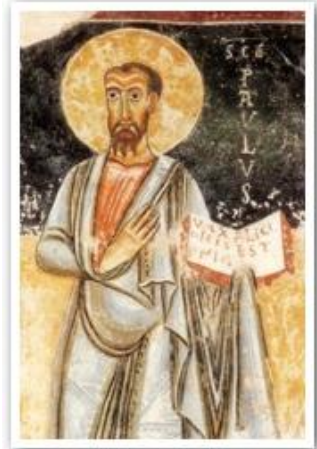
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On editing, and editing the Bible
FATHER GEORGE W. RUTLER

Few tensions are as taut and bitter as that between a writer and his editor.

Authors find it difficult to be objective about their writing and tend to react to edits like a parent whose baby is not adored by a third party. Few tensions are as taut and bitter as that between a writer and his editor. Mark Twain said "I am not the editor of a newspaper and shall always try to do right and be good so that God will not make me one." There are calmer writers who would quietly agree with Adlai Stevenson's definition of an editor: "One who separates the wheat from the chaff and keeps the chaff." For all his monumental flaws, Pontius Pilate did one good thing when he refused to let the mob edit the sign he had posted over Christ on the Cross. "Quod scripsi, scripsi." "What I have written, I have written." What he wrote was: "Jesus of Nazareth – King of the Jews."



In 1818, an English physician named Thomas Bowdler unwisely decided to operate on Shakespeare by removing the unseemly parts of the plays to produce "The Family Shakespeare" suitable, as they say in Hollywood, for "General Audiences." Ophelia accidentally drowns instead of committing suicide, and Lady Macbeth does not use cuss words. The eponym "bowdlerize" is not generally received today as a compliment.

If editors are not sent from God, they sometimes do a godly work, like sports coaches and dieticians, even if their advice is as unwelcome as it is prudent. But that prudence has its limits when it involves cherry-picking the Author of all things. Thomas Jefferson did a fine job with the Declaration of Independence, whose draft copy was only lightly edited (he should have heeded Adams' advice not to call the King a tyrant), but he was out of his realm when he bowdlerized the New Testament, leaving out the bits he thought unacceptable to eighteenth-century men who had learned about gravity and oxygen. In this he was like twenty-first-century legislators who would delete the adverb "not" as an inconvenient interpolation in some of the Ten Commandments.

I have noticed that when the present Lectionary occasionally proposes a "Shorter Form" for one of the Gospel readings, the lines edited are something Our Lord said that comfortable people would rather He had not said. The "Shorter From" of the Parable of the Wedding Garment remarkably leaves out the wedding garment. It is like dropping the last chapter of an Agatha Christie novel. I cannot imagine how any congregation would be so rushed that it could not find time for the thirty seconds it takes to read that warning about coming to the nuptial feast of the Eucharist unclothed in baptismal virtue, without sins confessed. If that is not suitable for the general audience, there is something wrong with the general audience.

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Father George William Rutler. "On editing, and editing the Bible." *From the Pastor* (October 16, 2011). Reprinted with permission of Father George W. Rutler.

THE AUTHOR: Father Rutler received priestly ordination in 1981. Born in 1945 and reared in the Episcopal tradition, Father Rutler was an Episcopal priest for nine years. He was received into the Catholic Church in 1979 and was sent to the North American College in Rome for seminary studies. Father Rutler graduated from Dartmouth, where he was a Rufus Choate Scholar, and took advanced degrees at the Johns Hopkins University and the General Theological Seminary. He holds several degrees from the Gregorian and Angelicum Universities in Rome, including the Pontifical Doctorate in Sacred Theology, and studied at the Institut Catholique in Paris. In England, in 1988, the University of Oxford awarded him the degree Master of Studies. From 1987 to 1989 he was regular preacher to the students, faculty, and townspeople of Oxford. Cardinal Egan appointed him Pastor of the Church of Our Saviour, effective September 17, 2001.

Since 1988 his weekly television program has been broadcast worldwide on EWTN. Father Rutler has published 17 books, including: *Cloud of Witnesses - Dead People I Knew When They Were Alive*, *Coincidentally: Unserious Reflections on Trivial Connections*, *A Crisis of Saints: Essays on People and Principles*, *Brightest and Best*, *Saint John Vianney: The Cure D'Ars Today*, *Crisis in Culture*, and *Adam Danced: The Cross and the Seven Deadly Sins*.

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FROM MAGGIE'S KITCHEN



The Spanish and French, in the past at least, have had a habit of attaching “Maria” or “Marie” to their sons’ given names: “José Maria”, “Jean-Marie”. Nowadays, even girls are unlikely to be named for the Blessed Virgin Mother of God. So it was a delight to have a “Mary” appear in grade one of the little school where I more or less teach music. Especially this Mary, a lively, smiling, interested-in-everything child with many brothers and sisters. Since there are at least two in her family younger than she, one might expect her to have been overlooked. Indeed, she arrived in September without many of the skills she might have acquired had she gone to kindergarten, but she is now quickly outstripping her classmates, and was

obviously in no way neglected physically, emotionally or spiritually, whatever her lack of academic preparation. I think of her as our “Little Mary Sunshine”.

November 1 is, of course, All Saints’ Day, the Feast of All Hallows. I had no idea until I opened *Butler’s Lives* that there were any other commemorations on that day. I knew that All Saints’ Day began its existence as the Feast of All Martyrs, honouring all martyrs, whether known or known only to God. As All Saints’ Day, it is even more inclusive. The Church, like little Mary’s mother, is eager not to let any of her children be neglected or forgotten, whatever deficiencies there may be in hard biographical data.

Among such potentially-overlooked November 1 Saints are several martyrs, logically enough. And among them is a Mary: St Mary, Virgin & Martyr of (possibly) the fourth century. Although (as is so often the case) virtually nothing is known for certain about her, a footnote in *Butler’s Lives* notes that two eminent scholars were “inclined to believe that some traces of an authentic story are preserved in the *passio* of this martyr.”