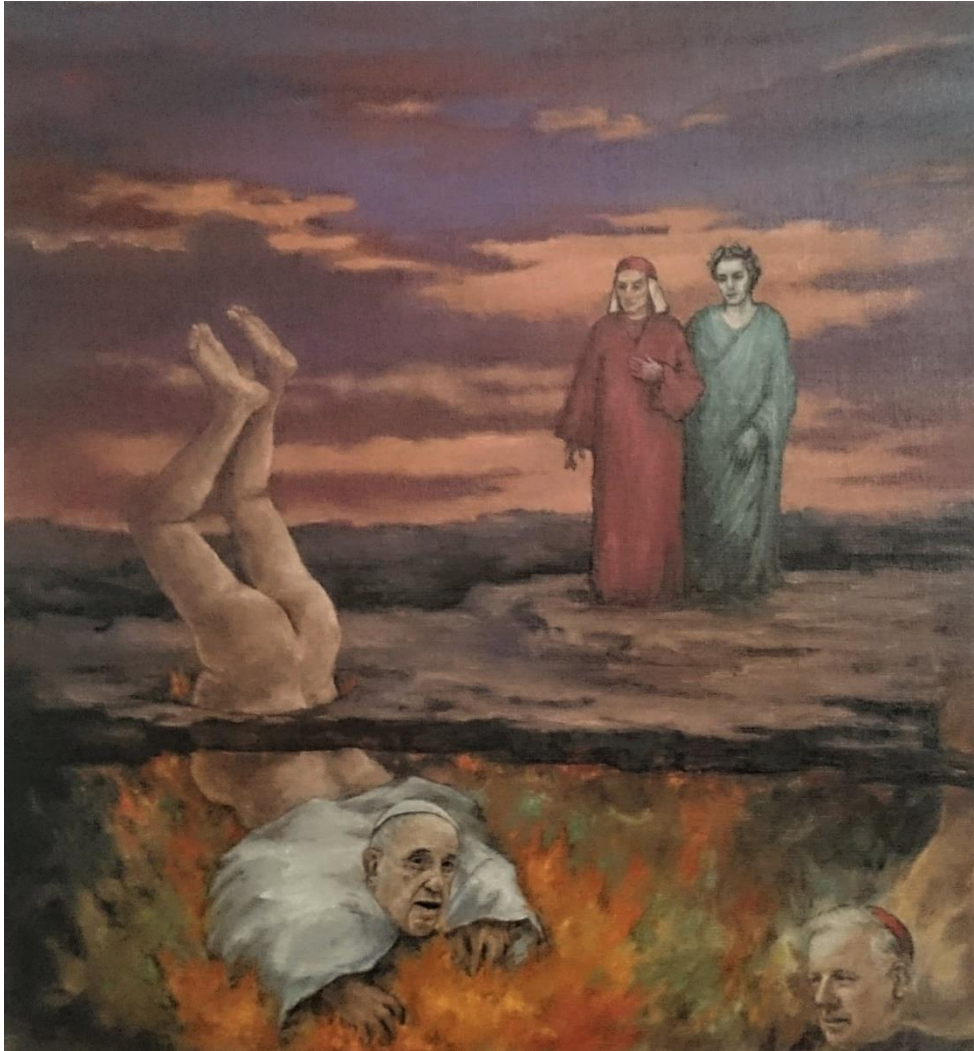


Dante Discovers Bergoglio in Hell

(being a footnote to the painting and thoughts on 'a new pseudo-enlightenment')



Oil on canvas 26 x 24 inches. 2018

It would be a poor argument to blame the collapse of the Roman Empire simply on 'lead pipes'. Similarly, 'Political Correctness' might appear a silly epithet to attach to the collapse of a civilisation. But there is a perverse need for compliance in human animals, drawn as they are, even to annihilation, by conformity.

'PC' is now an overlaid cliché, however the underlying philosophy behind the drive for righteous compliance dominating the west is called 'Relativism' and is described by the Italian philosopher Marcello Pera as;

*'an epidemic.... It believes that all cultures are equivalent. It refuses to judge them, thinking that to accept and defend one's own culture would be an act of hegemony, of intolerance that betrayed an anti-democratic, anti-liberal, disrespectful attitude toward the autonomy of other populations and individuals.'*¹

This applies particularly in the world of art where value judgements are no longer made. Of course, art critics may give expression to prejudice, but it is a prejudice within a postmodern conformity; what the artist does is art and therefore inviolable. Prodigies of compliant words defend this position, complemented by prodigies of self-referential works, the result being an art not drawn from any well-spring of 'Truth' or 'Beauty' (concepts long since debunked) but from a malodourous stream of blather.

Consider the famous 'Piss Christ' (a crucifix in a glass tank of urine) that the Guardian art critic enthused over as 'a wet dream of self-promotion for an "iconoclastic" artist'². It is in this realm of advertisement that postmodern, especially conceptual and installation art, finds meaning.

Now if we try to compare such a work with say, Michelangelo's sculpture of the 'Pieta' in the Vatican we will be lost for the appropriate words. Because in the contrast between the virtuoso performance of a sculptural genius with that of an undistinguished artist pissing on a bought crucifix, we simply cannot imply that one art might be superior to the other. We cannot compare artworks in terms that would offend this new spirit of relative righteousness.

The popular art critic, Sister Wendy Beckett observes that a crucifix in urine might engender in her, a 'deep desire of reverence'. After all, she says, the work is 'what you make of it'.³ This indeed is the relativists' credo, which might also be expressed as 'feeling something in my waters'. Yet it shows the all-pervasive reach of the doctrine of conformity that can seep odourlessly (one presumes) even into what used to be the most thoughtful of nunneries; the 'contemplative' order.

As Marcello Pera puts it; 'The adjective "better" is forbidden. Even "preferable" is suspect.' And if you don't conform to this equalisation of cultures, then 'you can forget about winning any book prizes or being invited to speak at a conference or a symposium.'

Replying to Pera's ideas (published as an interchange of letters) Pope Benedict XVI noted that relativism is 'becoming a new dogmatism';

Political correctness, whose constant pressures you have illuminated, seeks to establish the domain of a single way of thinking and speaking. Its relativism creates the illusion that it has reached greater heights than the loftiest philosophical achievements of the past. It prescribes itself as the only way to think and speak-if, that is, one wishes to stay in fashion. Being faithful to traditional values and to the knowledge that upholds them is labelled intolerance, and relativism becomes the required norm. I think that it is vital that we oppose this imposition of a new pseudo enlightenment, which threatens freedom of thought as well as freedom of religion.

By a very suspicious co-incidence, the pontifex maximus of the new pseudo enlightenment is Jorge Mario Bergoglio, now Pope Francis. He even has his own slippery maxim on questions of morality; 'who am I to judge?'

Christianity has never been more persecuted in world history (mostly under Islamic regimes).⁴ Christian communities in the lands of its origin are enduring genocide by jihadi who, in their defence, are at least being true to the word and spirit of their religion. Islam suffers, in this case, like all great religions in that only a minority practice it seriously.

Yet the failure of Bergoglio to defend persecuted Christians in the middle east (other than with trite words and puerile gestures like auctioning a car) is truly astonishing. One can hardly blame western media for their failure to report this genocide in any meaningful way because that would carry an implied criticism (or value judgement) of the offending culture.

Bergoglio however was eventually goaded into a response; when an elderly priest in France was beheaded at the altar, he finally explained his reticence to defend his own mistreated flock:

'If I'm talking about Islamic violence, I have to talk about Catholic violence'.⁵

This is an example of what Marcello Pera called *'The relativism that preaches the equivalence of values or cultures [that] is grounded not so much in tolerance as in acquiescence,'*

Bergoglio has demonstrated little interest in European culture perhaps due to some post-colonial distain. By culture I mean the literary, musical and visual tradition exemplified by such as Edmund Burke, Monteverdi or Titian, to take three from a thousand. Islamic sharia values are intolerant of enlightenment ideas, abhors Christian sacred music, while figurative religious art is specifically prohibited.

However, his embrace of the demise of the culture of Europe by an antithetical culture is more than acquiescence in this case. It is based on a Modernist theology that sees human progress as an inevitable divine imperative.

All religious differences, all religions even, will dissolve in progress towards divine assimilation, as romanticised by the Jesuit priest, Teilhard de Chardin. Primordial matter evolves towards consciousness (man), and onwards towards a divine super-consciousness, eventually reaching an 'Omega Point' thus becoming one with god. The supposed super-consciousness, the 'Thinking Layer' unfortunately just turned out to be the internet.

De Chardin is referenced and countenanced in Bergoglio's Encyclical *Laudato Si*⁶ and this new paradigm from the Vatican has a consanguinity with both Marxism in theory and globalism in practice. Fundamental to this Modernism, condemned by his predecessor popes, is that truth when 'de-constructed' is not immutable but contingent.

If ever the west cried for a defender of the faith, or for a defence of the nature of truth like Pope Benedict attempted in his address at Regensburg, it is now. Coincidentally or providentially, when my brother was recently teaching in the same university where Benedict gave his speech, we attended early morning mass at Regensburg's awe inspiring Gothic Cathedral of St Peters. There were six officiating clerics including a mellifluous bishop and this number was equalled by the size of the congregation.

The Catholic Church has in Bergoglio an arrogant and duplicitous creature; a relativist ideologue given to gesture piety. No wonder he gets a good press.⁷

It certainly shows that the Holy Spirit can outdo the devil in black humour. Bergoglio's protection and indeed promotion of paedophile clergy, as in the case of Bishop Barros, not to mention his calumny of the victims, should have been his epitaph.

However, his memory will forever be associated with a particular heresy in a footnote to chapter eight of his Apostolic Exhortation; *Amoris Laetitia* (and here he has made cannon lawyers of the worst of us).

In this exhortation Bergoglio presents the novel idea that God may be pleased by immorality (in this case adultery) if one applies the appropriate 'discernment' to certain conditions. This discretely collapses the moral edifice built on the words of Jesus; who one must admit had some hard sayings.⁸

After the Enlightenment, which was a few dozen men in distant parts, exchanging letters, intellectual life gradually settled into the sinecures of college departments. The convulsed behaviour that today

anathemises value judgement, may be simply a symptom of the corralled nature of the modern university campus, where mental infections easily become viral.

Millions of students and hundreds of thousands of lecturers and professors squirming for virtue; originality; prominence. A demographic daemon finally reveals itself in De Chardin's *Omega Point; The Stupidisation of the West*.

Perhaps human intelligence cannot progress as a mass movement, or perhaps creative thought is an evolutionary aberration, or as Jordan Peterson mused; *'Perhaps Man is something that never should have been'*.⁹

All that we have now left of speculative thought that the Greeks initiated, is the comedy club. (I suspect this, though I have never been to one). Similarly, all that is left of the great tradition of figurative painting in the West are the doodles of cartoonists. This is all that remains of the Magisterium that was Christendom.

Social or political commentary, by way of caricature, has had a long history. Charlie Hebdo may have been a poor relation of Goya's *Los Caprichos*, but they are still part that same story. The murder of those artists marks an epoch's end, particularly considering the west's craven response. I predict Hebdo will not even be considered in the official 'Story of Art'.

And although this pope is given to a lot of daft un-papal pap, it was his reaction to the murders at the Charlie Hebdo offices that brings his infamy into the realm of art. His response, while grief-stricken relatives and friends were burying the dead was:

'You cannot insult the faith of others. You cannot make fun of the faith of others'... (If a friend of his) *'says a curse word against his mother, he can expect a punch. It's normal'*.¹⁰

This affects me personally; a godforsaken painter on an anti-Christian rock on the edge of a de-Christianising Europe. I do not paint certain works, because of a murderous judgement that Bergoglio would approve. Like Cato The Younger, I keep a sword at hand but alas I do not have his heroic character or choice of egress.

Still, it is a marvellous thing to be living at a time when the pope is a heretic. Being a heretic pope obviously does not make him unique. Bergoglio got elected through the machinations of the 'St Gallen mafia' of 'progressive' cardinals, partly coordinated by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor whose family come from Co. Cork, as do mine. Hence, he awaits the pope in my painting, the sub-title of which is 'And a Cork man put him there'.¹¹ Dante envisioned pope Boniface upside down in the burning pit in the 8th circle of hell among the fraudsters. It has been my privilege to do likewise with Bergoglio.

Eugene de Leastar

Lettergesh, Connemara.

29th June 2018.

1. *Without Roots. (The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam)*. Pope Benedict XVI and Marcello Pera. Basic Books, New York, 2017. The quotations from both authors are from this work.
- 2 Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian* April 2011
- 3 Sister Wendy Beckett interview with Bill Moyers, *BBC, YouTube*.
- 4 Bernadette Kehoe, *The Tablet* October 2017; 'The persecution of Christians is worse than at any time in its history, but it is being largely ignored by the United Nations and the international community, according to a new report from the Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)'.
- 5 Carl E. Olson, 'Francis and Fundamentalism', *The Catholic World Report*, August 2016.
- 6 Arnaldo Xavier da Silveira; 'Notes on the Unacceptable Philosophy and Theology' of *Laudato Si'* as published by tfp.org august 2017.
- 7 'The Dictator Pope' by Henry J.A. Sire for a more measured and scholarly approach.
- 8 Steve Skojec of onepeterfive.com oversees a comprehensive analysis of Bergoglio's heresy.
- 9 Jordan B. Peterson; *12 Rules for Life* Random House Canada.
- 10 Nick Squires; *The Telegraph* January 2015
- 11 'Tuo e colpevole' (you are to blame) a delighted Bergoglio said to Murphy-O'Connor; words he may yet repeat in the Inferno.

