

with skilful fingers send electric messages around the world. In galleries of art, the grandeur of nature and the greatness of humanity are immortalized by them on canvas, and by their inspired touch, dull blocks of marble are transformed into angels of light. In music they speak again the language of Mendelssohn, of Beethoven, of Chopin, of Schumann, and are worthy interpreters of their great souls. The poetry and the novels of the century are theirs; they, too, have touched the keynote of reform in religion, in politics and in social life. They fill the editors' and the professors' chairs, plead at the bar of justice, walk the wards of the hospital, and speak from the pulpit and the platform.

Such is the widespread preparation for the marriage feast of science and religion; such is the type of womanhood which the bridegroom of an enlightened public sentiment welcomes to-day; and such is the triumph of the wise virgins over the folly, the ignorance and the degradation of the past as in grand procession they enter the temple of knowledge, and the door is no longer shut. . . .

APPENDIX

... The real difficulty in woman's case is that the whole foundation of the Christian religion rests on her temptation and man's fall, hence the necessity of a Redeemer and a plan of salvation. As the chief cause of this dire calamity, woman's degradation and subordination were made a necessity. If however, we accept the Darwinian theory, that the race has been a gradual growth from the lower to a higher form of life, and that the story of the fall is a myth, we can exonerate the snake, emancipate the woman, and reconstruct a more rational religion for the nineteenth century, and thus escape all the perplexities of the Jewish mythology as of no more importance than those of the Greek, Persian, and Egyptian.

Source:

Clark, E., Richardson, H., eds. / Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought, 1977, pg. 225-238.

18. Women and Marriage, Vatican Style: The Casti Connubii

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The pronouncements of the papacy within the last century concerning women and sexuality were made in response to a variety of factors. The Vatican since the time of Leo XIII (1878-1903) had attempted to bring the Catholic church more into dialogue with the society of its time than Leo's predecessors had seen fit. Many social changes had taken place by the late nineteenth century concerning woman and her role. In some countries, such as England and America, the suffrage movement had made great strides. Thousands of females had joined the work force outside the home; they were spending part of their lives in a "man's world," with all the attendant privileges and responsibilities, not the least of which was earning their own money. In addition, various developments in contraception had taken place which gave to women (and men) greater control over their reproductive faculties than had been possible earlier.¹ And as the 1920s dawned, the movement toward sexual freedom for women, accompanied by a revolution in female dress, brought a new consciousness and style of life to young women.

For traditional Catholicism, these developments were unsettling. From Leo XIII to Pius XI, popes repudiated the Marxist critique of traditional marriage as a bourgeois institution. They expressed uneasiness at women's entrance into the world of professions and politics with the accompanying desertion of the home as the center of her existence, and appeared scandalized by the lack of modesty

in female dress.² But the decisive shock to Catholic thinking came in the summer of 1930 when Anglican bishops meeting at Lambeth Palace issued a statement sanctioning the use of birth control for members of the Church of England. Their pronouncement was a blow to Catholics who felt that the Anglican communion, of all the Protestant denominations, was the one closest to their own. In response, Pius XI thought the time was at hand for a clarification of Catholic views on marriage.

The *Casti Connubii*, Pius's famous encyclical³ on the subject, is structured around Augustine's analysis of the threefold "goods" of marriage. Under the first purpose of marriage as described by Augustine, offspring, Pius discussed the issues of birth control (forbidden as "against nature" and "intrinsically vicious"), abortion ("the direct murder of the innocent"), and sterilization. The second of Augustine's "goods," conjugal fidelity, was taken by Pius to exclude any kind of extramarital sexual experimentation. And the "sacramental bond" was interpreted by the pope, as it was by Augustine, to mean the prohibition of divorce except in very rare cases. Thus the church of the 1930s portrayed itself as retaining the same ideals of sexual morality upheld by the bishop of Hippo over 1500 years before.

A clearly formulated notion of the position of women is also present in the encyclical. Although Pius was aware that women in contemporary society were permitted more civil and legal rights than they had formerly enjoyed, he wished women to use these in such a way that the traditional idea of the female role, especially the function of wife and mother, was not overturned. Women are reminded that, despite the rights now granted to them, they are to be in "ready subjection" to the chief of the family, the husband. Husbands and children are to be the center of their existence. Activities in the larger world outside the home are sanctioned only insofar as they do not interfere with the calling of motherhood and do not injure the modesty and fragility of the "female temperament." Pius saw the feminist movement as offering women a false freedom and he condemned it. The liberty offered women under the feminist banner is considered to be "debasement" to the female character. Catholics are also warned against enthusiastically espous-

ing the relaxation of the divorce laws; greater freedom of divorce is seen as not only damaging the family structure, but also as lowering the position of women, leaving them helpless and undefended in a ruthless male world. And in a section not included in the following passages from the encyclical, the state is called upon to aid the church by forbidding abortion and sterilization, and by helping to ensure youthful modesty.

The views of the *Casti Connubii* set the tone for Catholic attitudes in the years following. Various Vatican pronouncements clarified and developed the themes of the encyclical. Starting in the middle 1940s, Pius XII delivered a number of speeches on women's roles in which he stressed the spiritual equality of men and women and acknowledged the new social role of women, but upheld, in addition, the more traditional attitudes toward family life.⁴ Perhaps the most important of these statements was "The Apostolate of the Midwife," issued in 1951, which, although it championed the church's stand against abortion and contraception in general, did permit the use of the "rhythm" method of birth control in some circumstances.⁵

In light of the rapid development and improvement of methods of contraception, many lay Catholics were hopeful when Pope Paul VI, in response to discussions concerning marriage and sexuality which took place at the Second Vatican Council,⁶ set up a special commission to study the problem of contraception. Catholics throughout the world thought that perhaps there would be a change in viewpoint on the issue of contraception. Although the Majority Report of the Pope's commission recommended a relaxation of the church's strict attitude in view of newer understandings of "human nature," the personal values present in the marriage relationship, and the changed place of women in society, it did not meet with the Vatican's approval.⁷ In response, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968, which once again strongly condemned all forms of contraception except for the "rhythm" method and announced that even "rhythm" should be employed only in distressed circumstances.⁸ The restrictiveness of this encyclical prompted a sharp response from Catholic laity and the more liberally minded clergy alike, and precipitated a

crisis of confidence in the church with which Catholics are still dealing.⁹

On Christian Marriage

Encyclical Letter *Casti Connubii*, December 31, 1930

(10) Now when We come to explain, Venerable Brethren, what are the blessings that God has attached to true matrimony, and how great they are, there occur to Us the words of that illustrious Doctor of the Church whom We commemorated recently in Our encyclical *Ad Salutem* on the occasion of the fifteenth centenary of his death: "These," says St. Augustine, "are all the blessings of matrimony on account of which matrimony itself is a blessing: offspring, conjugal faith and the sacrament." And how under these three heads is contained a splendid summary of the whole doctrine of Christian marriage, the holy Doctor himself expressly declares when he said: "By conjugal faith it is provided that there should be no carnal intercourse outside the marriage bond with another man or woman; with regard to offspring, that children should be begotten of love, tenderly cared for and educated in a religious atmosphere; finally, in its sacramental aspect that the marriage bond should not be broken and that a husband or wife, if separated, should not be joined to another even for the sake of offspring. This we regard as the law of marriage by which the fruitfulness of nature is adorned and the evil of incontinence is restrained."

(11) Thus amongst the blessing of marriage, the child holds the first place. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself, Who in His goodness wished to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life, taught this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents, and through them to all future spouses: "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth." As St. Augustine admirably deduces from the words of the holy Apostle

From Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* ("On Christian Marriage") in *The Church and the Reconstruction of the Modern World: The Social Encyclicals of Pius XI*, ed. T. P. McLaughlin, Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Image Books, 1957).

St. Paul to Timothy when he says: "The Apostle himself is therefore a witness that marriage is for the sake of generation: 'I wish,' he says, 'young girls to marry.' And, as if someone said to him, 'Why?' he immediately adds: 'To bear children, to be mothers of families.'" . . .

(13) But Christian parents must also understand that they are destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshipers of the true God, but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up fellow citizens of the saints, and members of God's household, that the worshipers of God and Our Saviour may daily increase.

(14) For although Christian spouses, even if sanctified themselves, cannot transmit sanctification to their progeny, nay, although the very natural process of generating life has become the way of death by which original sin is passed on to posterity, nevertheless, they share to some extent in the blessings of that primeval marriage of Paradise, since it is theirs to offer their offspring to the Church in order that by this most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of Baptism unto supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ, partakers of immortal life, and heirs of that eternal glory to which we all aspire from our inmost heart. . . .

(16) The blessing of offspring, however, is not completed by the mere begetting of them, but something else must be added, namely the proper education of the offspring. For the most wise God would have failed to make sufficient provision for children that had been born, and so for the whole human race, if he had not given to those to whom he had entrusted the power and right to beget them, the power also and the right to educate them. For no one can fail to see that children are incapable of providing wholly for themselves, even in matters pertaining to their natural life, and much less in those pertaining to the supernatural, but require for many years to be helped, instructed and educated by others. Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they

are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin. But in matrimony provision has been made in the best possible way for this education of children that is so necessary, for, since the parents are bound together by an indissoluble bond, the care and mutual help of each is always at hand.

(17) Since, however, we have spoken fully elsewhere on the Christian education of youth, let Us sum it all up by quoting once more the words of St. Augustine: "As regards the offspring, it is provided that they should be begotten lovingly and educated religiously,"—and this is also expressed succinctly in the Code of Canon Law—"The primary end of marriage is the procreation and the education of children." . . .

(26) Domestic society being confirmed, therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it that "order of love," as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience, which the Apostle commends in these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church."

(27) This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to a wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment, or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the proximate danger of ruin. For if the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love.

(28) Again, this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and

manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglect his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact. . . .

(53) And now, Venerable Brethren, We shall explain in detail the evils opposed to each of the benefits of matrimony. First consideration is due to the offspring, which many have the boldness to call the disagreeable burden of matrimony and which they say is to be carefully avoided by married people, not through virtuous continence (which Christian law permits in matrimony when both parties consent), but by frustrating the marriage act. Some justify this criminal abuse on the ground that they are weary of children and wish to gratify their desires without their consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties, whether personal or on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances.

(54) But no reason, however grave, may be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.

(55) Small wonder, therefore, if Holy Writ bears witness that the Divine Majesty regards with greatest detestation this horrible crime and at times has punished it with death. As St. Augustine notes: "Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of the offspring is prevented. Onan, the son of Juda, did this and the Lord killed him for it."

(56) Since, therefore, openly departing from the uninterrupted Christian tradition, some recently have judged it possible solemnly to declare another doctrine regarding this question, the Catholic Church, to whom God has entrusted the teaching and defense of the integrity and purity of morals, standing erect in the midst of the moral ruin which surrounds her, in order that she may

(abortion)

preserve the chastity of the nuptial union from being defiled by this foul stain, raises her voice in token of her divine ambassadorship and through Our mouth proclaims anew: any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin. . . .

(58) As regards the evil use of matrimony, to pass over the arguments which are shameful, not infrequently others that are false and exaggerated are put forward. Holy Mother Church very well understands and clearly appreciates all that is said regarding the health of the mother and the danger to her life. And who would not grieve to think of these things? Who is not filled with the greatest admiration when he sees a mother risking her life with heroic fortitude, that she may preserve the life of the offspring which she has conceived? God alone, all bountiful and all merciful as He is, can reward her for the fulfillment of the office allotted to her by nature, and will assuredly repay her in a measure full to overflowing. *(lets her live with more than the mother's)*

(59) Holy Church knows well that not infrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning, when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity, he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin. Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right in the proper manner, although on account of natural reasons either of time or of certain defects new life cannot be brought forth. For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial rights there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved.

(60) We are deeply moved by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children.

(61) However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There are no possible circumstances in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted. . . .

(63) But another very grave crime is to be noted, Venerable Brethren, which regards the taking of the life of the offspring hidden in the mother's womb. Some wish it to be allowed and left to the will of the father or the mother; others say it is unlawful unless there are weighty reasons which they call by the name of medical, social, or eugenic "indication." Because this matter falls under the penal laws of the State by which the destruction of the offspring begotten but unborn is forbidden, these people demand that the "indication," which in one form or another they defend, be recognized as such by the public law and in no way penalized. There are those, moreover, who ask that the public authorities provide aid for these death-dealing operations, a thing which, sad to say, everyone knows is of very frequent occurrence in some places.

(64) As to the medical and therapeutic "indication" to which, using their own words, We have made reference, Venerable Brethren, however much We may pity the mother whose health and even life is gravely imperiled in the performance of the duty allotted to her by nature, nevertheless what could ever be a sufficient reason for excusing in any way the direct murder of the innocent? This is precisely what we are dealing with here. Whether inflicted upon the mother or upon the child, it is against the precept of God and the law of nature: "Thou shalt not kill." The life of each is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority, to destroy it. It is of no use to appeal to the right of taking away life, for here it is a question of the innocent, whereas that right has regard only to the guilty; nor is there here question of defense by bloodshed against an unjust aggressor (for who would call an innocent child an unjust aggressor?); again there is no question here of what is called the "law of extreme

necessity" which could never extend to the direct killing of the innocent. . . .

(65) All of which agrees with the stern words of the Bishop of Hippo in denouncing those wicked parents who seek to remain childless, and, failing in this, are not ashamed to put their offspring to death: "Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure sterilizing poisons, and if this fails, the foetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; if both are not party to these deeds, I make bold to say that either the one makes herself a mistress of the husband, or the other simply the paramour of his wife." . . .

(74) The same false teachers who try to dim the luster of conjugal faith and purity do not scruple to do away with the honorable and trusting obedience which the woman owes to the man. Many of them even go further and assert that such a subjection of one party to the other is unworthy of human dignity, that the rights of husband and wife are equal; wherefore, they boldly proclaim, the emancipation of women has been or ought to be effected. This emancipation, in their opinion, must be threefold, in the ruling of the domestic society, in the administration of family affairs and in the rearing of the children. It must be social, economic, physiological: physiological, that is to say, the woman is to be freed at her own good pleasure from the burdensome duties properly belonging to a wife as companion and mother (We have already said that this is not an emancipation but a crime); social, inasmuch as the wife being freed from the care of children and family, should, to the neglect of these, be able to follow her own bent and devote herself to business and even public affairs; finally economic, whereby the woman even without the knowledge and against the will of her husband may be at liberty to conduct and administer her own affairs, giving her attention chiefly to these rather than to children, husband and family.

(75) This, however, is not the true emancipation of woman, nor that rational and exalted liberty which belongs to the noble office of a Christian woman and wife; it is rather the debasing of the womanly character and the dignity of motherhood, and indeed of the whole family, as a result of which the husband suffers the loss of his wife, the children of their mother and the home and the whole family of an ever watchful guardian. More than this, this false liberty and unnatural equality with the husband is to the detriment of the woman herself, for if the woman descends from her truly regal throne to which she has been raised within the walls of the home by means of the Gospel, she will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery (if not in appearance, certainly in reality) and become, as amongst the pagans, the mere instrument of man.

(76) This equality of rights, which is so much exaggerated and distorted, must indeed be recognized in those rights which belong to the dignity of the human soul and which are proper to the marriage contract and inseparably bound up with wedlock. In such things undoubtedly both parties enjoy the same rights and are bound by the same obligations; in other things there must be a certain inequality and due accommodation, which is demanded by the good of the family and the right ordering and unity and stability of home life.

(77) As, however, the social and economic conditions of the married woman must in some way be altered on account of the changes in social intercourse, it is part of the office of the public authority to adapt the civil rights of the wife to modern needs and requirements, keeping in view what the natural disposition and temperament of the female sex, good morality, and the welfare of the family demand, and provided always that the essential order of the domestic society remain intact, founded as it is on something higher than human authority and wisdom, namely on the authority and wisdom of God, and so not changeable by laws or at the pleasure of private individuals. . . .

(85) The advocates of the neopaganism of today have learned nothing from the sad state of affairs, but instead, day by day, more and more vehemently, they continue by legislation to attack the

indissolubility of the marriage bond, proclaiming that the lawfulness of divorce must be recognized, and that the antiquated laws should give place to a new and more humane legislation. Many and varied are the grounds put forward for divorce, some arising from the wickedness and the guilt of the persons concerned, others arising from the circumstances of the case; the former they describe as subjective, the latter as objective, in a word, whatever might make married life hard or unpleasant. They strive to prove their contentions regarding these grounds for the divorce legislation they would bring about, by various arguments. Thus, in the first place, they maintain that it is for the good of both parties that the one who is innocent should have the right to separate from the guilty, or that the guilty should be withdrawn from a union which is displeasing to him and against his will. In the second place, they argue, the good of the child demands this, for either it will be deprived of a proper education or the natural fruits of it, and will too easily be affected by the discords and shortcomings of the parents, and drawn from the path of virtue. And thirdly, the common good of society requires that these marriages should be completely dissolved which are now incapable of producing their natural results, and that legal reparations should be allowed when crimes are to be feared as the result of the common habitation and intercourse of the parties. This last, they say, must be admitted to avoid the crimes being committed purposely with a view to obtaining the desired sentence of divorce for which the judge can legally loose the marriage bond, as also to prevent people from coming before the courts when it is obvious from the state of the case that they are lying and perjuring themselves—all of which brings the court and the lawful authority into contempt. Hence the civil laws, in their opinion, have to be reformed to meet these new requirements, to suit the changes of the times and the changes in men's opinions, civil institutions and customs. Each of these reasons is considered by them as conclusive, so that all taken together offer a clear proof of the necessity of granting divorce in certain cases.

(86) Others, taking a step further, simply state that marriage, being a private contract, is like other private contracts, to be left to the consent and good pleasure of both parties, and so can be dissolved for any reason whatsoever.

(87) Opposed to all these reckless opinions, Venerable Brethren, stands the unalterable law of God, fully confirmed by Christ, a law that can never be deprived of its force by the decrees of men, the ideas of a people, or the will of any legislator: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." And if any man, acting contrary to this law, shall have put asunder, his action is null and void, and the consequence remains, as Christ Himself has explicitly confirmed: "Every one that putteth away his wife and marieth another committeth adultery: and he that marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Moreover, these words refer to every kind of marriage, even that which is natural and legitimate only; for, as has already been observed, that indissolubility by which the loosening of the bond is once and for all removed from the whim of the parties and from every secular power is a property of every true marriage. . . .

(89) If, therefore, the Church has not erred and does not err in teaching this, and consequently it is certain that the bond of marriage cannot be loosed even on account of the sin of adultery, it is evident that all the other weaker excuses that can be and usually brought forward are of no value whatsoever. . . .

(90) To revert again to the expressions of Our predecessor, it is hardly necessary to point out what an amount of good is involved in the absolute indissolubility of wedlock and what a train of evils follows upon divorce. Whenever the marriage bond remains intact, then we find marriage contracted with a sense of safety and security, while, when separations are considered and the dangers of divorce are present, the marriage contract itself becomes insecure, or at least gives ground for anxiety and surprises. On the one hand we see a wonderful strengthening of good will and cooperation in the daily life of husband and wife, while, on the other, both of these are miserably weakened by the presence of a facility for divorce. Here we have at a very opportune moment a source of help by which both parties are enabled to preserve their purity and loyalty; there we find harmful inducements to unfaithfulness. On this side we find the birth of children and their tuition and upbringing effectively promoted, many avenues of discord closed amongst families and relations, and the beginnings of rivalry and jealousy easily suppressed; on that, very great obstacles to the

birth and rearing of children and their education, and many occasions of quarrels, and seeds of jealousy sown everywhere. Finally, but especially, the dignity and position of women in civil and domestic society are integrally restored by the former; while by the latter they are shamefully lowered and the danger is incurred "of their being considered outcasts, slaves of the lust of men." . . .

19. The Triumph of Patriarchalism in the Theology of Karl Barth

Karl Barth, the originator of what is often labeled "Neo-orthodox" theology, is considered by many to have been the most important Protestant thinker since Schleiermacher. Born in Basel, Switzerland in 1886, he received his theological education from such distinguished representatives of nineteenth-century German Liberalism as Adolph Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann. Protestant Liberalism of that era stressed the essential goodness of man's nature and his ability to assist God in bringing the Kingdom of brotherly love and peace to earth; in doing so, it underplayed the classical Christian understanding of God's mysterious Otherness and man's radical sinfulness.

Barth spent the years of the First World War preaching in the Swiss village of Safenwil. As he viewed the misery and anxiety of his war-weary flock, he came to see the impotence of Liberalism. He and his lifelong friend Edward Thurneysen turned for comfort and inspiration to the Bible, like "shipwrecked people whose everything had gone overboard."¹ In those years, Barth was beginning to understand the very point which "liberal theology had tended to obscure, namely, the fundamental discontinuity between God and man."² This dramatic shift in his thinking resulted in several editions of a theological exposition on Paul's epistle to the Romans. Barth's work on Romans, which is often cited as signaling the change from Liberalism to Neo-orthodoxy, emphasized the absolute disjunction between the Wholly Other God and man, upon whose sin God delivers a resounding "No!" The book made