

Evangelical and Catholic Vampire Hunters Together: Cultures of Death and Life in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*

David P. Deavel

ABSTRACT: The Urtext of modern vampire fiction and film, Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, departs notably from modern neutral or heroic views of the vampire. Stoker's vision has a distinctly Christian vision both of evil and of the conditions to fight evil that displays and illuminates what many have described as a culture of death and a culture of life. The vampiric culture of death displays the combination of sexual anarchy, aggression, and unconcern for life that so characterize our times. The international band of vampire hunters led by the Protestant Mina Harker and the Catholic Van Helsing display the combination of natural and supernatural knowledge and gifts that are needed to fight monstrous evils successfully. Law, science, scholarship, technology, and capital are combined with Christian knowledge, faith, and piety to give modern day advocates for life a working model of the tools and attitudes needed for a culture of life.

WHY IS THE IMAGE of the vampire so popular? And why should the pro-life movement think about vampires? I think that the answers to these two questions are fundamentally the same. Vampires are popular and important because they are freaks and monsters. And the monster, a word derived from the Latin verb *monstrare* ("to show") does indeed show us something.

In her essay "On Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," Flannery O'Connor observed: "To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man." Southerners, she famously insisted, were, if not Christ-centered, at least Christ-haunted, and this accounts for their fearful sense of having been made "in the image and likeness of God" and for their interest in just what that means.

“Ghosts can be very fierce and instructive,” she continued. “They cast strange shadows, particularly in our literature. In any case, it is when the freak can be sensed as a figure for our essential displacement that he attains some depth in literature.”¹ After the Fall every human experiences at some level the effects of being “east of Eden” and thus “displaced” from the state of our first parents who experienced unbroken relationship with God, each other, the Creation, and themselves. We suffer from displacement: the sense that we should be at home and whole but are not.

I believe that what O’Connor said of the South can perhaps be applied to all of Western culture, but certainly to the United States. Even as a sort of militant secularism seems to proceed from strength to strength, there is still a Christ-hauntedness that pervades this country. As the late Father Richard John Neuhaus used to say, America is “incorrigibly and confusedly Christian.”

In twenty-first-century America we are still obsessed with the vampire, that freak and monster who says something important to us about our world. Our Ur-source for this figure is Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel *Dracula*.² While Stoker was not the first to mine the vampire for artistic use, his novel *Dracula* has become perhaps the main source for the modern legion of imitators, sequels, and versions of the myth. I contend that this is because Stoker’s version reveals the vampire as precisely a figure for our modern displacement. In Stoker’s Count we see enfleshed various threats to human life from a kind of hypersexualized humanity that has lost its soul but that would like to keep on going in perpetuity by taking the lives of others. In *Dracula* the vampire represents the culture of death, urbane and indeed kindly at times, yet sexually anarchical and ultimately deadly to individuals and to culture.

Stoker did not just provide us with a vivid symbol and incarnation of the culture of death. He also provided us with a model of how such a threat must be fought in the form of a group that some have called “the Army of Light,” or as one critic calls them with less romance, a “committee of the forces of good.”³ They include the lawyer Jonathan

¹ Flannery O’Connor, *Mystery and Manners* (New York NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1969), p. 44.

² I will be using the revised Penguin edition of the novel with notes and introduction by Maurice Hindle and preface by Christopher Frayling (New York NY: Penguin, 2003). Citations from the novel will be parenthetical throughout.

³ Christopher Frayling, from his preface, p. vii.

Harker; his fiancée, the schoolmistress Mina Murray (who marries Harker midway through the novel); Dr. Seward, the warden of an insane asylum; Arthur Holmwood (later Lord Godalming), an aristocratic businessman; Quincey Morris, an American cowboy; and most importantly, Abraham Van Helsing, a Dutch physician and scientist. The novel itself is epistolary, with the narrative composed by the letters and memoranda of several of these figures.

The vampire hunters in this novel vividly depict the kind of alliances and tools that are necessary for those in the fight against the culture of death. That the tools are not simply material but spiritual as well is indicated by my title: “Evangelical and Catholic Vampire Hunters Together.” I intend here an allusion to the movement for Christian unity led by Charles Colson and Fr. Richard Neuhaus that arose in large part out of the “trenches” in the various cultural battles that have been raging in the west, the battle for the protection of innocent human life being most prominent among them. There is today just as much need for an Army of Light as there is in the novel. Stoker illuminates much that needs to be understood about the role of modern scientific knowledge and technology, religious and spiritual knowledge and practice, and the place of women in the fight for life.

The Sexuality of Vampires as Symbolic of the Culture of Death

Dracula is a remarkable symbol of the culture of death that we face. Aristocratic, otherworldly, and wealthy, he stands above the run of ordinary people and he knows it. He takes life from their very lives. While the thirst for drinking blood that is the chief danger that vampires present to the living, it is their sexual nature that is so alluring to the modern world. Many feminist and queer theorists have alternately scored and applauded Stoker for his placement of sexuality at the heart of the vision of Dracula. Feminists have usually criticized it for linking female sexual behavior with vice. Gail B. Griffin, for instance, observes: “Though it draws on ancient myths of femininity, Stoker’s gothic is quintessentially Victorian: the worst horror it can imagine is not Dracula at all but the released, transforming sexuality of the Good Woman.”⁴ Of course, what is being objected to by such critics is often the depiction of

⁴ Gail Griffin, “‘Your Girls That You Love Are Mine’: *Dracula* and the Victorian Male Sexual Imagination” (1980), cited by J. P. Riquelme, “A Critical History of *Dracula*” in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula: A Documentary Volume*, vol. 304 of *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Elisabeth Miller (Detroit MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), pp. 358-75 at p. 367.

not only the three “brides of Dracula” whom Jonathan Harker encounters but also Mina’s friend Lucy Westenra, who is bitten and eventually killed as one of the undead by the “Army of Light” when it becomes clear that she has become transformed beyond hope.

Harker, who meets Count Dracula on a business trip to Transylvania, records in his diary the fear welling up within him while staying in Dracula’s castle. Dracula has mysteriously warned him not to write to any friends or acquaintances about anything except business while staying with him, but also not to fall asleep anywhere other than his own room during his stay. Eager to disobey the count, Harker decides to sleep in a different room in the castle but awakens to find three young women with “brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips” – lips for which Harker admits that he had “a burning desire” to kiss. The “deliberate voluptuousness” of the fairest of the three was to Harker both “thrilling and repulsive.” As she arched her neck, she actually “licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth” (45). The young woman, of course, is about to bite Harker, but even though he senses danger, the temptation is too much: “I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited – waited with beating heart” (46). Harker is only saved by the entry of the Count, who immediately declares that they have disobeyed him: “This man belongs to me!” To their complaint that the Count “never loved; you never love,” Dracula says that he “too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so? Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will” (ibid.).

Not only is the malice of the vampire brides and of Dracula himself very sexual in nature, but Stoker makes it clear that their nature is such that it makes them devour not just adult males but children as well. When one of the brides asks if they are “to have nothing tonight” while gesturing at a bag that Dracula had thrown on the floor upon his entry, Dracula nods his head: “If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and a low wail, as of a half-smothered child” (47). The women seemingly vanish, but Harker is overcome by the sight and falls unconscious. When Dracula departs from the castle, leaving him to the brides, Harker barely escapes.

Though not all critics see the vampire brides as models of “transforming sexuality,” it is quite common to point to Lucy Westenra, one of the main characters, who gloats about having received three wedding proposals in one day and whose wanderings outside at night

expose her to the danger of Dracula. Writing of Lucy, Erik Butler says that it is her “promiscuity” that makes Lucy available to Dracula.⁵ Of course, receiving three proposals is not the same thing as sexual promiscuity, but scholars also point to Lucy’s question to Mina: “Why can’t they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it” (67). To use this kind of casual comment as evidence for actual sexual activity or a genuine desire for polyandry strikes me as a bit too much within the context of her letter; she is simply sad that she has to turn down her other two suitors, Dr. Seward and Quincey Morris.

Some scholars point to her post-natural-death behavior and rightly see a connection between sexuality and evil. Dr. Seward, for instance, records the visit to her tomb by Professor Van Helsing, Quincey Morris, himself, and Arthur Holmwood, the man whose proposal Lucy had accepted. Suspecting that Lucy’s natural death had not ended her existence, Van Helsing had opened her coffin two nights earlier, only to find it empty. Now, returning to it with a Eucharistic Host that he uses to block the vampire’s way, Van Helsing and the others see Lucy Westenra, now un-dead:

When Lucy – I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape – saw us, she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares; then her eyes ranged over us. Lucy’s eyes in form and colour; but Lucy’s eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. As she looked, her eyes blazed with unholy light, and the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile. Oh, God, how it made me shudder to see it! With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone. The child gave a sharp cry, and lay there moaning. There was a cold-bloodedness in the act which wrung a groan from Arthur; when she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile he fell back and hid his face in his hands. (225-26)

Lucy the vampire does not give up, and with a “languorous, voluptuous grace,” calls out to Arthur that her “arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband come!” (226). Of course, it is not the case that female sexuality is itself at issue here, but a kind of

⁵ Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film* (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2010), p. 116.

sexuality that does not care for the good of others. Like the brides of Dracula, the kisses with which the vampire Lucy is about to kiss her husband-in-life are of the sort that will kill him. Also like the brides, Lucy is devoid of maternal sentiment.

For the un-dead there may be a sex instinct of some sort, but it is utterly detached from procreation and from care for others, or even from a commitment not to harm them, including children. And it is not surprising that danger is combined with sexuality, given what was known about sexually transmitted diseases and their effects then, and even now in a vastly different medical climate. Vampirism reflects what happens to sexuality when it is untethered by morals.⁶ No one doubts that such behavior has temptations even for those who are aware of its dangers. At the end of the book Van Helsing himself sees the image of one of the vampire brides and notes how “full of life and voluptuous beauty” she is, and how easy it would be for men to fail at the task of killing the vampires because of such attractions (393).

Queer theorists, quite often operating with psychoanalytic frameworks, have similarly detected Stoker’s interest in homosexual behavior, which they often consider to have been sublimated and transferred to the women. J.P. Riquelme, for instance, cites Christopher Kraft’s famous 1984 essay “‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” as typical of the interpretations whereby homosexual desire among the main characters is somehow “displaced onto a heterosexual structure because of the fear of homosexuality.”⁷ While there does seem to be something homoerotic about Dracula himself, particularly in the line “This man is mine!” and in the fact that he is gazing at Jonathan Harker’s face as he tells the brides that he has loved them, the idea that there is a response of homosexual desire in Harker or the others does not really strike me as very likely, despite attempts such as Kraft’s to find it displaced onto women or the efforts of others to find *roman à clef*-type clues by which to link Stoker’s tale to the trial of Oscar Wilde that was proceeding as

⁶ Carol Senf, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism* (New York NY: Twayne, 1998), pp. 49-50, cites several critics linking the kind of “contagion” of vampirism in the novel with the threat of disease especially from the large contingent of prostitutes in urban areas in Victorian England.

⁷ Riquelme, “A Critical History,” pp. 367-68.

he wrote *Dracula*. As Carol Senf notes concerning a scholar who claims that Dracula's secrecy, nocturnal life, and absence of servants means that he is homosexual, such signs as secrecy "would have been involved in any kind of nonmarital sex."⁸ If there is a case to be made, it is more likely that Dracula represents a kind of pansexuality that is linked to violent aggression and casual disregard of life, like the sexual aggression of his brides and of Lucy.

There are more recent interpretations of Dracula that have tried to normalize vampires. Countless books and movies have sought to make the vampire either a neutral character or a hero, out of concern for the connection between the vampire and anarchic sexuality. Carol Senf noted that after 1970 there has been "an increasing emphasis on the 'positive' aspects of the vampire's eroticism and on his or her right to rebel against the constraints of society."⁹ That such emphases would not have met with Stoker's approval is all but certain, but for the person who wants a culture of life, the more important thing to note is that they miss what Stoker had understood: that so-called sexual freedom, disdain for others, and even cruelty are quite often tethered together. Maurice Hindle quotes Leonard Wolf's claim that the literary power of *Dracula* comes largely "from the intensity with which Stoker evades what he guesses – while he decks it out in the safer Christian truths he repeats."¹⁰ Hindle asks – but doesn't actually answer – his own question of what it is that Stoker evades. He hints that it is a desire for homoerotic encounter or a fear of it or both. But it is only by assuming that Stoker does not believe these "safer Christian truths" that Wolf and Hindle can claim that he evaded anything. A fair reading of the novel is that Stoker understands a number of different sexual temptations, but maintains a view of the normal human person and what constitutes sexual behavior that is destructive of it. In this regard, a culture of life will have to

⁸ Carol Senf, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, p. 60, with discussion of various theories along these lines on p. 59 as well.

⁹ Carol Senf, *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green Univ. Popular Press, 1988), p. 163. For a survey of Dracula's literary and film life in some relatively recent contexts, see Margaret Carter, "Revampings of Dracula in Contemporary Fiction," and Elisabeth Miller, "Dracula: the Ever Widening Circle," both reprinted in *Bram Stoker's Dracula: A Documentary Volume*, pp. 337-41 and pp. 341-49, respectively.

¹⁰ Hindle, "Preface," p. xxiv.

follow Stoker's lead, and not the modern critics and re-makers of the Dracula legend.

The Army of Light as Culture of Life

It is not just in vividly symbolizing and depicting the threats to life that Stoker helps us. It is in depicting their defeat – at least temporarily, for in life and in the novel, there is never a full defeat of evil – at the hands of a group of people who represent a wide variety of fields of knowledge and strengths. The narration itself, combining the different voices of the Army is important, says Carol Senf, because “it represents the collective wisdom of the late nineteenth century – male and female, Catholic and Protestant, science and law.” It is ultimately a “history of those who conquer the vampire, a history that celebrates the collective power of present law, science, scholarship, religion, technology, and capital against the lonely primitive who is finally tracked back to his lair and destroyed.”¹¹

Jonathan Harker the lawyer, John Seward the doctor, Quincey Morris the American explorer and cowboy, and Lord Godalming (Holmwood) all have their parts to play. Within the story, Harker's legal gifts come in handy in tracking Dracula down in England, where he had purchased fifty estates under the name Count De Ville in order to store the coffins and earth he has shipped from Transylvania, all in order to avoid being trapped. Dr. Seward's scientific knowledge is useful in identifying Renfield, a mental patient obsessed with blood, as being under the power of the vampire and thus a resource for understanding and tracking Dracula. Quincey Morris, perhaps least important to the plot, at least provides daring. He is ultimately the one who will plunge a bowie knife into Dracula's heart and cause him to crumble. Along with Lord Holmwood, he funds the long search for the vampire. This latter note, so often obscured in popular adventure stories, is celebrated explicitly by Mina:

And, too, it made me think of the wonderful power of money! What can it not do when it is properly applied; and what might it do when basely used. I felt so thankful that Lord Godalming is rich, and that both he and Mr. Morris, who also has plenty of money, are willing to spend it so freely. For if they did not, our

¹¹ Senf, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, pp. 32 and 33.

little expedition could not start, either so promptly or so well equipped, as it will within another hour. (378)

It costs money to fight battles against evil, especially when your enemy is wealthy enough to purchase fifty houses for himself.

The money is, of course, useful not just for travel and keeping the band fed but also for technological marvels, including advanced communications. Erik Butler claims that the real hero in the book is the “data relay system” that allows the Army of Light to track the vampire down.¹² There is some truth to this claim. The use of shorthand by Jonathan and Mina Harker, a typewriter by Mina, and a phonograph by Dr. Seward all take their place in the story, making it in 1897 an up-to-date tale of the newest gadgets and information technology. All of these this-worldly gifts are important to the story, but what Stoker gives us as the ultimate force for fighting the battles is not just scientific, but religious.

This point is difficult for many modern readers to take seriously. In my library copy of Carol Senf’s *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, a previous patron had underlined “religion” in the sentence about “the collective power of present law, science, scholarship, etc.” and written “I don’t agree.” And yet a fair reading of the novel will show that it is religion that is the decisive factor. This was recognized immediately by some readers, such as a reviewer in the *Spectator* who complained that all the contemporary technology “hardly fits with the medieval methods which ultimately secure the victory for Count Dracula’s foes.”¹³

While all the characters and all the fields mentioned by Senf have their place in the plot, it is particularly important for our purposes that we recognize that the two most important characters in the team of light are ultimately Abraham Van Helsing and Mina Harker, not only because of their own skills and intelligence but also because they are those whose “medieval” faith is the beating heart of a story where “medieval methods” secure the victory.

¹² Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire*, pp. 120-21.

¹³ “Review of *Dracula*,” *Spectator* 79 (July 31, 1897): 151. Cited in Carol Senf, *Bram Stoker* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 2010), p. 74.

Abraham Van Helsing, the Dutch doctor, lawyer, and professor¹⁴ surely represents the best of science and scholarship in the book, but it is also clear that his real strength is in his Catholic faith and knowledge of that faith. This can be, to the secular and modern reader, something of a turnoff. Jim Steinmeyer characterizes Van Helsing as “determined to fill the pages with his theories of the undead.”¹⁵ But it is in the theories and the practice of Van Helsing that Stoker essentially wrote the rules for modern vampires.¹⁶ While depending on quite a bit of folklore, these rules presupposed a lot of Christianity, particularly Catholic Christianity, to understand them. Conventions such as the use of garlic to ward off vampires, the inability of vampires to cross running water, and the dislike of sunlight might, among others, all come from folklore – and thus from Van Helsing’s historical research! – but it is the specifically religious aspects of the story that made reviewers say it was “medieval”: the use of the crucifix to ward off the vampire (when the garlic proved less helpful, one might note), the use of the Eucharist, and praying for the dead.

The use of the crucifix actually comes up in the story before Van Helsing arrives on the scene. As he had arrived in Transylvania, Jonathan Harker was handed a crucifix by an older woman who had ascertained where he was going. His initial reaction was skepticism: “I did not know what to do, for, as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse and the old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind” (11). But in the castle, after Harker cut himself shaving, the Count grabbed at his throat, accidentally touching the string of beads attached to the crucifix. The “fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe it was ever there” (33). Harker reflects later that “It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to regard with disfavor and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a

¹⁴ “M.D., D.Ph., D.Lit., ETC,” p. 123.

¹⁵ Jim Steinmeyer, *Who Was Dracula? Bram Stoker’s Trail of Blood* (New York NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2013), p. xv.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89. See also Part II: “The Vampire before *Dracula*” in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula: A Documentary Volume*, pp. 29-97 for information on the vampire legends and how Stoker used them.

medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort?" (35). But the rest of the medievalism is provided by Van Helsing. It is he who uses the Eucharistic Host to keep Lucy out of her tomb and then in it (224-27), and then arms the Army with parts of the Host when entering one of the English homes of Dracula (266). It is he who prays the prayers for the dead for Lucy from the Roman Missal as the others get ready to put a stake through her heart (230). All of these details have led some critics to think that Stoker's aim was to depict a group in conversion to Catholicism, or at least vindicate the Catholic Church's authority.¹⁷ Stoker, an Irish Protestant, himself never converted to Catholicism (unlike Oscar Wilde), so it is somewhat improbable to think that he had this sort of aim in mind in the story, but it is clear that he does make the Catholic Church the main source for spiritual understanding of how to fight vampires in the character of Abraham Van Helsing. And it is not only technical knowledge that he provides but a real, living faith as well. Comforting the infected Mina Harker, he observes that the group are "ministers of God's own wish: that the world, and men for whom His Son die, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame Him. He have allowed us to redeem one soul already, and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more" (340-41).

What Van Helsing has in terms of intellect and faith are the same qualities that mark out Mina as the key to the story. If Van Helsing is the staunch and informed Catholic anchor of the group, Mina is the Protestant counterpart, bearing both gifts of nature and grace. As Carol Senf says of her, she functions as a "symbol of the Good for which everyone has fought" and indeed symbolizes "progress, legal and scientific thought, and Christian tolerance – indeed the entirety of Western European thought in Stoker's time."¹⁸ By progress, legal, and scientific thought, Senf means that Mina has had a job in the outside world (as an assistant schoolmistress), that she values technology (having learned shorthand and typing), and that she sees herself as

¹⁷ For discussion of several such theories along with references, see Amanda Guilinger, "Religion and Superstition in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" in *Dracula: With an Introduction and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Eleanor Bourge Nicholson (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2012), pp. 513-28 at pp. 525-56.

¹⁸ Senf, *Dracula: Between Tradition and Modernism*, p. 29.

exercising a partnership in marriage that includes helping Jonathan in his legal work with said skills.¹⁹ She also symbolizes these things within the Army of Light itself. She is the one who gets the idea of collating and chronologically organizing all the material the group has about Dracula and then searching through it for clues as to where to find him.²⁰ It is indeed her leadership and her intellectual wherewithal that drives the narrative just as much as Van Helsing informs it: "...she is in many ways the unrecognized leader of the group even though the men do not always accept her wisdom. Not only does she put their papers in order so they can track Dracula's past movements, but she determines the most likely route for his return to his castle, and she manages to hold the group together even as she comes increasingly under Dracula's control."²¹ One aspect of her wisdom was in not wishing to be left alone while the men were off looking for Dracula; this was what left her alone and vulnerable to his attack in the first place.

But as with Van Helsing, what is notable about Mina Harker is not simply her skills or knowledge, but her real faith that is manifest in several different ways. While many critics do not like the fact that she looks forward to motherhood and in fact acts as a nurturer to the others in the group, Mina reflects the Christian conviction that motherhood, whether biological or spiritual, defines women even as fatherhood defines men.²² It is out of that sense of motherly nurturing that Mina can exercise what Senf is right in describing as her "Christian tolerance," for she is the only figure who manifests a sympathy for Dracula himself, who is, after all, one of God's creatures and presumably came by his evil state not wholly and perhaps not at all of his own accord (328-29). She is also right that Mina rejects the sexual aggression of the vampires, even as she might chafe at certain societal constraints about women being kept home and "safe" while the men are out searching for the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²² For a brief discussion of the "genius of women" and an even briefer discussion of men, see the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith document "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World," http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html.

monster.²³ Perhaps these first two characteristics are what allow some critics to complain about “a good deal of Victorian moralizing from sweet Mina Harker, the good woman....”²⁴ But a culture of life will need both sympathy for those who are caught up in evil with different levels of culpability and the strength to stand for traditional Jewish and Christian sexual morality even as others identify it as “moralizing,” “prudish” or “Victorian.”

Like Van Helsing, Mina’s Christian faith does not simply inform her but forms her. Jonathan Harker records in his journal that, after she had been forced by the Count to drink from blood from his chest, a crude parody of Christ nourishing his Church with his own blood besides an act of sexual aggression, Mina told him, “with the tears running down her cheeks, that it is in trouble and trial that our faith is tested – that we must keep on trusting; and that God will aid us up to the end” (308). Unlike Dracula, she herself acts in true self-sacrifice as she suggests that Van Helsing hypnotize her in order to exploit the psychic connection that she now has with the Count (348). She does not give up faith that God will help “up to the end.” As it is, when Mina believes herself to be close to death, she first asks that those around her would, if she is near to death and still infected, kill her and then release her by driving a stake through her heart and cutting off her head. She further requests her husband to read the Anglican Burial Service over her (351-53). Dr. Seward, who records this incident, says that Mina was “right in her instinct” since the reading of the prayers “comforted us much” and made her own silence as she got worse “not seem so full of despair to any of us as we had dreaded” (354). Her instinct was prayer, and prayer was the right instinct.

Conclusion: The Lessons

Vampire literature and film has quite often left behind Stoker’s own particular understanding that sexual aggression and violence often go together, particularly with regard to innocent children. Yet in looking back at Stoker’s own work, we can see that his depiction has power, perhaps power that can work even on those who profess the tenets of sexual “liberation.”

²³ Ibid., §55.

²⁴ Steinmeyer, *Who Was Dracula?*, p. xv.

Perhaps more important to our times are the lessons of Stoker's Army of Light. While they have technical and scientific skill in abundance, not to mention capital, it is clear that to fight great evils something more is needed. Evil cannot be driven out except by what is good. Mina and Van Helsing are the beating heart of the Army of Light, Evangelical and Catholic vampire hunters together, just as Evangelicals and Catholics together have been the beating heart of the pro-life movement. Although making a reasoned judgment against (or even fighting) abortion, euthanasia, and other attacks on innocent life do not necessarily require religious faith, religious faith gives both more reasons for reason to conclude correctly in matters of life and more strength to the will to fight against these evils. It is what gives those in the pro-life cause both the understanding of an evil that goes beyond the powers of technological prowess as well as the spiritual tools that go beyond evil – sacraments and prayer. It also gives, as Mina's own witness shows, a comfort and strength in hard times that would ordinarily lead to despair. That comfort and strength hold up those involved in the struggle whose faith is not as strong.