of the *Iliad*, which might be described as patriarchal love, the love of a father for his son, a son for his father; the love of a friend for his comrade, of a husband for his wife. All the violence and destruction and death in Homer's poem is ultimately redeemed by its affirmation of this fundamental human value. If his translation of the *Iliad* makes the experience of patriarchal love meaningful to its readers Herbert Jordan will have served admirably both the cause of art and the needs of modern times.

Portugal's Hiroshima

R. J. Stove

Wrath of God: The Story of the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 by Edward Paice (London: Quercus Publishing, 2008)

The greatest natural calamity ever to befall Europe started shortly after 9:30 a.m. on November 1, 1755. At that moment, Lisbon began to tremble, and it continued trembling for two minutes, as if with an irrepressible fever. Then came a second quake, lasting six minutes. And then, the third and worst quake, now known to have measured between 8.75 and 9 on the Richter scale. Territories as far afield as Scotland and Finland felt the aftershocks. Within an hour of this third onslaught, the Tagus River reared up into a relentless succession of three tidal waves, pounding all in their path, like the fists of giants. Over most of the next week, fires consumed whatever water spared. When the crisis passed, nine-tenths of Europe's fourth-largest city lay waste, a necropolis of rubble and ash. At least 40,000 persons perished, whether crushed, drowned, or incinerated. Some reports give a body count of 80,000. However computed, the figures are too great to register on our emotions. Nature's rage anticipated Stalin's jocund dictum: "One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic."

Edward Paice, whose previous publications include a travel guide to (of all places) Eritrea, has devoted his fascinating new book to Portugal's days of anguish. (One mass grave of more than 3,000 disaster victims was uncovered only six years ago.) After the destruction's full extent became known abroad, from late November onwards, diagnoses abounded. Certain English Protestant controversialists had a simple explanation: they regarded the earthquake as divine punishment on Catholics for being Catholics. Meanwhile, Catholics regarded the earthquake as divine punishment on themselves for not being devout enough. Spaniards, traditionally hostile to their western neighbors—who from 1580 to 1640 had also been their western subjects—condemned them as *pocos y locos*: "few and mad." Paice's descriptions show that when every allowance has been made for foreign critics' biases, eighteenth-century Catholicism in Lisbon must be called dire. It lacked nothing in numbers ("one in six of Lisbon's adult population was a *religioso* of

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some description"), but much in dignity: the locals "talked, laughed, flirted and even ate and drank in church." Too often the nation's upper clergy took their moral tone from King João V (r. 1706–50) who unleashed most of his carnal appetite on nuns, and who allegedly took his confessor with him to his conventual assignations, thereby ensuring the successive dichotomous ecstacies of sin and penitence. One patriarch amassed an encyclopedic collection of "pornography and snuff-boxes with pictures of naked women on them"; another "kept a gambling house"; a third "was imprisoned after trying to run away with an Irish prostitute." (Note to lachrymose American Catholic bloggers: the American clerical sex abuse scandal was *not* the defining world-historical event of the last two millennia.)

John Wesley, who rushed into print a pamphlet on the topic, announced that the earthquake signified God meting out justice not "to the small vulgar, but the great, to the learned, rich, and honorable heathens, commonly called Christians." This ingenious interpretation failed to explain how Lisbon's own "small vulgar" had been killed in such huge numbers, while wealthy and libidinous clerics lived to fornicate another day. Dr. Johnson, who by temperament needed no reminding as to his Creator's wrath, refused for six months to believe that the earthquake had ever occurred. By such disbelief alone could he hang onto his sanity. Others found the earthquake all too credible, all too confronting, and all too destructive of their religious faith. In 1955 historian Charles Boxer likened the earthquake's international impact to "that which the explosion of the Atomic Bomb at Hiroshima has had on the world recently." Voltaire—flushed with that superhuman ethical authority which he derived from making his niece into his concubine—became the best-known among the earthquake's intellectual casualties. He turned the catastrophe into the setting for *Candide* (which went through at least seventeen editions in 1759 alone), as well as into the basis for his earlier, 180-line *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbonne*. More concise was Goethe's verdict: "the Demon of fear had never so speedily and powerfully diffused his terror over the earth."

Historical analogies are normally misleading when not actively pernicious. (How many mothers' sons have been sent to their Serbian and Iraqi graves by Tony Blair's fear of resembling Neville Chamberlain?) Still, when confronted with Lisbon's collapse, the reader's thoughts turn inevitably to 9/11, and perhaps to the December 2004 tsunami as well. Looming over the debris stood Portugal's de facto prime minister, the Marqués de Pombal, who oversaw the cleaning-up process like a bewigged Rudy Giuliani. To Pombal is often credited the terse directive: "Bury the dead and take care of the living." Whatever Pombal's other crimes, he helped ensure, by his vigorous relief effort, that no epidemics broke out, that Lisbon recovered something of its former importance as a trading center, and that looters were swiftly hanged. Yet neither Pombal nor anyone else could expunge from men's minds the horrors they had beheld. "The banker Benjamin Harboyne, for example, 'became a raving lunatic' during the quake and had to be shipped home in chains to live out his days under the watchful eyes of a keeper at his home in Yorkshire." Richard Wolfall, a British surgeon, reported on the wreckage:

> The shocking sight of the dead bodies, together with the shrieks and cries of those, who were half-buried in the ruins, are only known to those who were eyewitnesses. It far exceeds

> all description, for the fear and consternation was [sic] so great, that the most resolute person durst not stay a moment to remove a few stones off the friend he loved most, though many might have been saved by so doing: but nothing was thought of but self-preservation; getting into open spaces, and in to the middle of streets, was the most probable security. Such as were in the upper stories of houses, were in general more fortunate than those that attempted to escape by the doors; for they were buried under the ruins with the greatest part of the foot-passengers: such as were in equipages escaped best, though their cattle and drivers suffered severely; but those lost in houses and the streets were very unequal in number to those, that were buried in the ruins of churches . . . all the churches in the city were vastly crowded, and the number of churches here exceeds that of both London and Westminster.

For such pusillanimous notions as the separation of powers, Pombal harbored a cynical contempt. He enjoyed the advantage of an utterly compliant sovereign: João V's son and successor, José I, in whom the earthquake inspired a lifelong claustrophobia and who viewed his royal function as that of doing anything Pombal wanted. (Since 1775 José's bronze equestrian statue has dominated Lisbon's chief plaza, giving his public image a machismo at complete odds with reality.) So frightened of further quakes that he spent most of his remaining years living in a wooden barrack, José piled honors on Pombal. After a purported assassination attempt against the king, Pombal abandoned even the pretense of subordinate status: he rounded up members of a leading aristocratic family and had them judicially murdered, without trial, but with every refinement of public torture. A London periodical, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, called Pombal "a destroying angel, scattering vengeance through the land." The "destroying angel" followed this coup by suppressing the Jesuits, by systematically weakening Portugal's economic dependence on Britain by nurturing local industries, and by crushing the nobility in general. When King José died in 1777, his daughter Maria became queen and almost immediately carried out her long-vowed plan to drive the septuagenarian Pombal from office. He endured far milder chastisement than he had ever inflicted on his enemies: nothing more onerous than house arrest. Five years after his downfall he died, a sufferer (or was this just foes' gossip?) from leprosy and contrite enough to receive the last sacraments.

Today, while remembrance of Pombal's reformist activity in the earthquake's aftermath is largely confined to scholars, the earthquake itself continues to haunt the national imagination. Curious to learn from Paice that most local sources for the disaster comprise, on the admission of Portuguese historian Gustavo de Matos Sequeira, little more than "a vast series of useless documents." Perhaps they really are as bad as this dismissal makes them sound; perhaps the scene was simply too heartbreaking for Lisbon's natives to view clearly. What is undeniable is that Paice has made of this tale an enthralling narrative, which surges forward at a cracking pace, and which cannot fail to inspire renewed interest in a tragedy too often overlooked of late by the rest of the world. Now all we need is the movie version.