



A journal for restless minds

A RESTLESS HEART

Searching for truth

AN INSATIABLE CURIOSITY

Turning back, looking forward

CONVERSATIONS AT TABLE

To See Through All Things

A GOD OF OUR MAKING

Infinity cannot be measured

STICKS AND STONES

In the beginning was the Word

DEACON'S DINER

Food for a restless mind

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

A Restless Heart

Searching for truth

Saint Augustine began his Confessions acknowledging the greatness of God. Further on he wrote: *"You stir us*

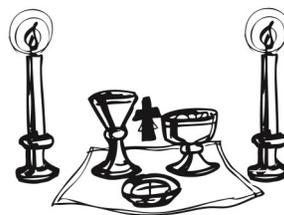
so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in you." Augustine had a restless mind and was ever searching for truth, remarking at a later point: *"O*

Truth, Truth, how the deepest marrow of my mind ached for you!"

Socrates also taught of a restless mind, a mind so restless that it would question and examine the self, thus laying the foundation for scientific and spiritual advancement. Augustine went further by stating that *"If you would attain to what you are not yet, you must always be displeased by what you are. For where you are pleased with yourself there you have remained. Keep adding, keep walking, keep advancing."*

Sadly we have become all too pleased with where we are—we have

ceased adding, walking, or advancing. Our minds have become moribund masses of mindless mediocrity, all too easily pleased with ourselves, satisfied with what we think we know, not at all restless to question or examine the truth or fullness of it.



Indeed we have been heavily sedated, conditioned to *not think* of matters that carry any weight at all. Matters such as objective truth, reason, morality, sanctity, love, chastity, and God have been so denigrated and disparaged

it is easy to come to the realization that we have lost the ability to think at all.

Colloquī is the present infinitive of *colloquor*, Latin for *to talk, to discuss, or to converse*. Colloquī is for restless minds, minds that ache for the truth, the objective truth. As the name implies, each issue will offer food for thought, for discussion, and conversation. As it is written, *"Come now, let us reason together"* (Is 1:18) so together let us journey toward the One Source that is all Truth.

An Insatiable Curiosity

Turning back, looking forward

Curiosity is a curious thing or as Alice cried “*curiouser and curiouser*”. To some degree everyone has come across a thing or two that intrigues, that tickles the mind to understand, although curiously no one is ever so curious as to determine the source of their curiosity. Most of us I suppose just aren’t curious enough to expend any significant amount of effort in pursuing why they find themselves with an itch they feel the need to scratch.

Age and time of course do tend to alter our perspective and change the degree to which we are curious about a great many things. Along the continuum that we call life we see the world through different lenses, lenses that color the mind with an ever-changing kaleidoscope of images and visions of what is real and objectively true.

Looking at the world through the unknowing but awestruck eyes of a child is quite different from seeing through cataracts, lenses now become cloudy and poor yet still seeing all that has come from a lifetime of experiences and memories that are indelibly etched upon the soul.

Each of us suffers various forms of mental vision impairment. At times we find ourselves intellectually myopic, living only for the moment, unable or unwilling to see beyond what

stands before us, to anticipate the future and what may or may not be; at other times we develop mental hyperopia, losing sight of the now while living beyond this time and place, living a dream but only within the confines of the mind.

Somewhere along the way many find themselves suffering from absent-minded presbyopia, finding it increasingly difficult to focus, lost and uncomfortable with what they have or don’t have, with what they have accomplished or have failed to obtain.

As with most of what ails us there are remedies for each dysfunction: simply provide corrective lenses for the mind’s eyes. Carefully nurtured by an appetite for objective truth and fed by an insatiable curiosity we can turn back the hands of time, defy the ravages of age, while looking forward to what is yet to be.

The decline in mental acuity has been intentionally inculcated, with objective truth the primary target. Without question—with no obvious curiosity on our part—we have bought into the skeptic’s declaration that there can be no objective truth, a statement so easily refuted yet bought into hook, line, and sinker by those who should know better.

Simply ask yourself whether it is true there is no truth and you will realize the inherent fallacy promulgated by those who tell you otherwise. If

objective truth is unknowable then all that is left for us is our feelings, leaving objective reality and truth to individual subjective rationalization.

Where has our natural curiosity flown? Peter Kreeft suggests that it hasn’t gone anywhere, rather we have simply turned into passive couch potatoes. “*Watching TV and movies is replacing reading books in our lives, and as this happens, images replace words and passivity replaces active thinking. When we read words, we have to actively create the images with our own imagination. But when we watch a movie we are more like a baby in a womb. (Indeed the comfortable, darkened theater is very like a womb.) Life has become a spectator sport, a large TV screen. Life and TV have become inverted: instead of TV being in life, life is on TV.*”¹

Objective truth has been replaced by ideology, a system of ideas created not by God but by man, subjective rather than objective, invented rather than discovered. If we cannot know objective truth then how can we know moral truths? If morality is just subjective feelings and not objective truths then anything goes.

God gifted us with free will, the ability to make choices, but he also gifted us with the ability to know the truth, the objective truth, so that we might love him. God wants us to know him and to love him, not as fawning sycophants but as those who thirst and hunger for him because they *long* for him.

1. Peter Kreeft, *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions*, p. 129, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Servant Books, July 7, 2011.



Conversations at Table

To See Through All Things Is the same as not to see

A reader recently took me to task for not delivering on a promise to complete the discussion concerning the conquest of Nature and C. S. Lewis' prophetic warning of the dangers such conquests will inevitably bring. To that reader I must offer my sincere gratitude for reminding me of that promise for I confess it had slipped my mind.

In his reply to a letter writer concerning an opinion piece on Marquette University¹, Mickey Mattox wrote: *"Without doubt the retreat from Catholic realism as reflected in the natural-law tradition has wreaked havoc in Western, Catholic universities. If nothing is given, not even ourselves, then nature itself becomes merely the inchoate 'matter' we shape to serve ends determined solely by desire and techne². The logic that undergirds the movement for 'marriage equality' is itself post-natural in this sense. It leads inevitably toward the unreason of transgender 'rights,' and from there to a trans-humanist movement that promises self-transcendence without the transcendent God."*

What Mattox says serves to support and validate exactly what Lewis so prophetically wrote nearly three-quarters of a century ago:

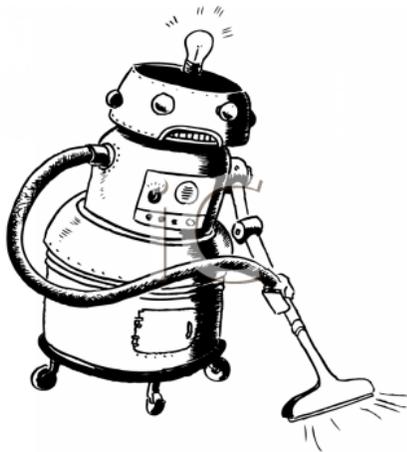
"The real objection is that if man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be: not raw material to be manipulated, as he fondly imagined, by himself, but by mere appetite, that is, mere Nature, in the person of his dehumanized Conditioners."

We have been trying, like Lear, to have it both ways: to lay down our human prerogative and yet at the same time to retain it. It is impossible.

Traditional values are to be 'debunked' and mankind to be cut out into some fresh shape at the will (which must, by hypothesis, be an arbitrary will) of some lucky few people in one lucky generation which has learned how to do it. The belief that we can invent 'ideologies' at pleasure, and the consequent treatment of mankind as mere ... specimens, preparations, begins to affect our very language. Once we killed bad

men: now we liquidate unsocial elements. Virtue has become integration and diligence dynamism.... Most wonderful of all, the virtues of thrift and temperance, and even of ordinary intelligence, are sales-resistance."

What Lewis prophesied and what Mattox has confirmed ought to be alarming to us all, but tragically it barely gets a ho-hum response or even a *'whatever.'* Perhaps it is too late to halt the progress, to stop the madness that lives by the credo, *"What God intends man amends."* We can only hope such is not the case.



Lewis concludes:

"...you cannot go on 'explaining away' forever: you will find that you have explained explanation itself away. You cannot go on 'seeing through things forever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to 'see through' first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To 'see through' all things is the same as not to see."

1. Mickey L. Mattox, Professor of Theology at Marquette University; *Marquette's Gender Regime*, First Things, April 2016.
2. Philosophical term often translated as craftsmanship, craft, or art.
3. Letters: Marquette, First Things, June/July 2016.
4. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 1943.

Another Observation

"If someone from a mere 10 years in the past, let alone 50, were dropped forward into our time, he would conclude that we as a world population had lost our minds or become delusional, denying the obvious reality right before our very eyes."

Our time traveler, unaffected by recent errors in thinking, would make the (once) commonsense assessment that an obviously male person who thinks he is actually a female needs psychological help and healing. He needs our sympathy and offer of help, not our encouragement of his delusion. Our time traveler would marvel at the shocking and collective delusion of a culture that so widely approves of, and even celebrates, such sad confusion."

National Catholic Register
Msgr. Charles Pope
May 15-28, 2016

A God Of Our Making

Infinity cannot be measured

Each year Catholics observe the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity on the Sunday immediately following Pentecost. We believe in one God in three Persons, "*the one infinite source of all that is: eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, uncreated, uncaused, perfectly transcendent of all things and for that very reason absolutely immanent to all things.*"¹ All that is, was, and ever shall be has been created, exists and sustained in its existence by God.

It is perhaps our greatest challenge as creatures made in his image and likeness to comprehend his nature for God cannot be deciphered, circumscribed, or captured through human thought. So in a very real way we cannot hope to ever understand the Trinity of Persons that is God.

Yet, Lord help us, we try.

And we walk away from the effort, always with more questions than answers, wondering if we will ever truly know who and what God is, knowing that the answer to that question lies not in this lifetime but in the next.

Our humanity prevents us from comprehending the transcendence of God and so we make God into our own image and likeness. Images of the Trinity are most often presented as an old man (the Father), a younger man (the Son), and a white dove (the Holy Spirit.)

That is how we see God, isn't it?

Yet when we make God in our own image we lose sight of the very awesomeness of God, for God is so much more than any one of his creatures. So for a moment let us turn away from imagining a God so limited and imagine who and what God must be who caused all that is, to be. Rather than trying to explain God, let us take a look at his handiwork and all that he has made to see just how big is our God.



Only a few are familiar with the theory of "*the primeval atom,*" first proposed by the Belgian physicist Georges Lemaitre², although most would recognize it today as the *Big Bang*.

Even less well-known is that Lemaitre, in addition to being a physicist of some renown, was a Catholic priest, who in the 1930s was often seen strolling through the campus of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California alongside Albert Einstein, usually in deep discussion over the cosmic consequences of their respective theories. Although Lemaitre was an early supporter of Einstein's theory of gravity, Einstein was initially skeptical of Lemaitre's. By 1933 however, Einstein had become an enthusiastic proponent of Lemaitre's theory of an expanding universe, stating that it was one of the most "*beautiful theories*

he had ever heard."³

Scientists have since been able to determine that there exists a common point of origin for all that the universe contains, and that there was indeed a moment, a singular instant when all the mass of the universe was compressed into such great density that it was smaller than a single atom. Imagine, all the substance (stars, planets, etc.) of the universe compressed into a microscopic particle of lint that lay resting somewhere upon a finger of God.

"Then God said, '*Let there be light,*' and there was light."⁴ God caused the universe to come into existence with a single thought, filling it with light, in what Lemaitre called his "*hypothesis of the primeval atom*" or the

"*Cosmic Egg*" and what has since become widely known as the *Big Bang* or the *Standard Model*. According to theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate in Physics Steven Weinberg:

"In the beginning there was an explosion. Not an explosion like those familiar on earth, starting from a definite center and spreading out to engulf more and more of the circumambient air, but an explosion which occurred simultaneously everywhere, filling all space from the beginning, with every particle of matter rushing apart from every other particle.

At about one-hundredth of a second, the earliest time about which we can speak with any confidence, the temperature of the universe was about a hundred thousand million (10¹¹) degrees Centigrade. This is much hotter

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than in the center of even the hottest star, so hot, in fact, that none of the components of ordinary matter, molecules, or atoms, or even the nuclei of atoms, could have held together. Instead, the matter rushing apart in this explosion consisted of various types of the so-called elementary particles, which are the subject of modern high-energy nuclear physics.”⁵

The elementary particles to which Weinberg refers were electrons, positrons, neutrinos, and photons (light.) We look to the stars and see emptiness for the most part, yet within the first one-hundred thousandth of a second Weinberg explains *“the density of this cosmic soup at a temperature of a hundred thousand million degrees was about four thousand million (4×10^9) times that of water.”* Now that is some thick soup!

At the end of the first three minutes the universe was considerably cooler; having dropped to a balmy one thousand million degrees centigrade and the density was slightly less than water.

“Much later, after a few hundred thousand years, it would become cool enough for electrons to join with nuclei to form atoms of hydrogen and helium. The resulting gas would begin under the influence of gravitation to form clumps, which would ultimately condense to form the galaxies and stars of the present universe. However, the ingredients with which the stars would begin their life would be just those prepared in the first three minutes.”

Few would argue that the universe is vast, unbelievably so, and while much is known—at

least in theory—the fact is that we know with absolute certainty far less than we assume to be true concerning this enormous space in which we find ourselves. The observable universe is estimated to contain more than two-hundred billion galaxies, with galaxies ranging in size from a few thousand to 100 trillion stars, spanning distances between 1,000 to 100,000 parsecs⁶ in diameter separated by distances on the order of millions of parsecs. So enormous that it defies the imagination.

Now consider for a moment what these numbers truly represent. We live in one galaxy out of the more than two-hundred billion galaxies in the ‘observable’ universe. But no matter how large the observable universe is estimated to be, our own galaxy is so incredibly large that it tests our ability to imagine or comprehend. It is now thought that our galaxy, commonly called the Milky Way consists of a flat disk of stars, with a diameter of 80,000 light years and a thickness of 6,000 light years. It also possesses a halo of stars, with a diameter of almost 100,000 light years.

It is quite simply beyond our poor abilities, beyond our capacity to decipher how from a single thought it all came to be. When we consider that God made the universe out of nothing, creating everything by his will and through his word alone we can begin to see why we face such an impossible task whenever we attempt to corral God, to understand or to image God. God is outside of time and place; even the universe cannot contain all that is God nor can it define or circumscribe him, yet we can see what he has made and it is good.

So when asked *“How big is your God?”* you can easily answer, *“Bigger than anyone can imagine.”*

The power and glory of God cannot be understood yet we see his handiwork all around us and it should bring us all to our knees.



Homily delivered on May 22, 2016 on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity.

1. David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God*, Yale University Press, September 30, 2014.
2. Georges Henri Joseph Édouard Lemaître (17 July 1894 – 20 June 1966) was a Belgian priest, astronomer and professor of physics at the Catholic University of Leuven. He proposed the theory of the expansion of the universe, widely misattributed to Edwin Hubble. He was the first to derive what is now known as Hubble’s law and made the first estimation of what is now called the Hubble constant, which he published in 1927, two years before Hubble’s article.
3. John Farrell, *The Day Without Yesterday: Lemaître, Einstein and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*, Basic Books, October 5, 2005.
4. Gen 1:3.
5. Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*, Basic Books, August 18, 1993,
6. A parsec is approximately 3.26 light years in distance, equal to 31 trillion kilometers or 19 trillion miles

What’s in it for me?

“God is not loved without reward, even though God should be loved without thought of reward. True charity cannot be empty, but it does not seek profit, ‘for it does not seek its own benefit’ (1 Corinthians 13:5). It is an affection, not a contract. It is not given or received by agreement. It is given freely; it makes us spontaneous. True love is content. It has its reward in what it loves. For if you seek to love something, but really love it for the sake of something else, you actually love what you are pursuing as your real end, not that which is a means to it.”

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Sticks and Stones

In the beginning was the Word

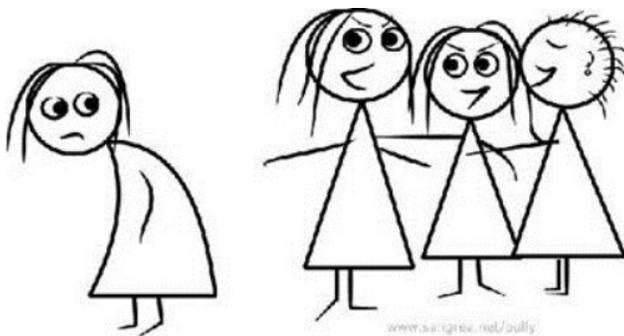
Ancient tradition held that language was more than sterile words, more than utile utterances. Peter Kreeft finds that ancient peoples “thought words were more than labels. They thought words were more than artificial, more than pragmatic, more than labels. They thought words were natural, for one thing; that although languages are man-made, language was not. Second, they thought of language as a sacred power, not just as a practical human tool. And third, they thought of words not as labels but as presences, incantations.”¹

What is key here is to recognize the distinction between language and languages. As Kreeft points out, languages are man-made; whether one’s native tongue is English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew, Swahili, or any one of the estimated 7,000 different languages spoken around the world, each has been constructed and developed by people over time through custom and by usage. Languages are the means by which people communicate with one another; they have form, meaning, and context.

While the singular for *languages* is *language*, such as the English language, that particular meaning is not what concerns Kreeft in this instance. Language has become secularized, high-jacked to subjective,

amoral ends, disconnected from morality and its sacred purpose.

Martin Heidegger, a twentieth century German philosopher wrote that “*Language speaks, it acquires a voice. Words and language are not wrappings for the commerce of those who write and speak. Rather, it is in words and language that things first come into being and are. It is for this reason that a misrelation to language, in the form of slogans or idle talk, must mean a misrelation to being.*”²



Kreeft reminds us that “*language is not just a part of the world, a thing in the world; rather, the world is in it. It is older than the world: ‘In the beginning was the Word.’*”

There is an old nursery rhyme that goes “*Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me*”³ which feels extraordinarily appropriate here. Originally intended to persuade children to ignore name-calling and other hurtful taunts, to refrain from physical retaliation, and to remain calm and good-natured, its persuasive effectiveness is certainly suspect to say the least. Likewise, it would seem, is the efficacy of the command enjoined by Christ to “*love your neighbor as yourself.*”⁴

If there is one virtue conspicuously absent in this world today it is *love* while sadly what appears to be in promiscuous overabundance is quite the opposite. Reasoned discourse, good manners, consideration for the views of others, moderation, a willingness to compromise, respect, a genuine fondness or love for neighbors are virtues no longer held in high regard, especially in the public square.

There is little if any consideration to dialogue, for dialogue requires an honest attempt to reach common ground, to depolarize the intransigent, and to accept the unacceptable. It would require recognizing that every issue ought not to be a question of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object.

What is perhaps most distressing is the deliberate and malicious high-jacking of the lexicon by those who wish to confuse, obfuscate, and distort in order to hide their true purpose.

Mathematicians enjoy the exacting detail upon which all mathematics depends. Two plus two must equal four under any and all conditions and circumstances. It can never equal any other value, no matter how much one might wish or desire it to be so. Linguistics, like mathematics, has defined rules and definitions, but unlike mathematics, its most important rule would seem to be that all rules are meant to be broken.

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Take the word “discrimination” which is defined as an act or instance of making a distinction, the ability to see fine distinctions and differences, subtle appreciation in matters of taste, or discriminating judgment. The original meaning which was first defined in the 1640s was “the making of distinctions” and from 1814 it meant “discernment.”

Now here is the rub. Based on these definitions no one, absolutely no one, is immune for we all discriminate in some form or fashion, from choosing what color to paint a room to which car to buy or what wine to drink. We all make distinctions and choices based on our own personal preferences and tastes. Quite simply, we discriminate every day and all the time.

Somewhere along the way “discrimination” has been high-jacked, conflating bigotry with discernment and obfuscating its true meaning. Discrimination has now become a derogatory, sufficiently opaque to blur and confuse even those most learned among us.

And there are so many other high-jacked words, words such as “fundamental”, “religion”, “faith”, “rights”, “values”, “love”, “life”, “freedom”, “choice”, “entitled” and “justice”. Our language has been skewered and betrayed, altered to give argument to those whose sole purpose is complete acquiescence and subjugation to their myopic point of view. It is an ethic based on and sup-

ported by hate, never by or for the love of God.

Kreeft contends “that our use of language determines our relation to reality, how much reality we know, how deeply we know it and how truly” to which I am in complete agreement. Too much of language has been trivialized, homogenized, and distorted.

The word ‘awesome’ use to recognize something that merited our awe but in today’s argot it is whatever turns you on. There used to be a clear understanding of the meaning of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ but today those lines have been blurred by those who say, “I’m so bad” meaning ‘I’m so good’.

Kreeft adds “Euphemisms blind us to reality. Death becomes merely ‘passing away.’ Killing unborn babies becomes ‘terminating a pregnancy.’ Copulation becomes ‘going to bed with.’ Genocide becomes ‘population control.’ Sin becomes ‘antisocial behavior.’ Change the language, and you change people’s perception of reality.”

Should we argue that all this is nothing more than semantics; that what difference does it make? Read George Orwell’s novel *1984*. When language loses its sacredness it loses its power to hold us accountable for our actions and we lose the moral high-ground.

1. Peter Kreeft, *Making Choices: Practical Wisdom for Everyday Moral Decisions*, Servant Publications, 1990.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, Dec 3, 2013.
3. Mrs. George Cupples, *Tappy’s Chicks: and Other Links Between Nature and Human Nature*, 1872.
4. Mk 12:31, Mt 22:39.

Deacon’s Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.



Bon Appétit!

The Confessions

St. Augustine, Maria Boulding

New City Press,

April 1, 2007, 416 pages.

Absolute Relativism

Chris Stefanick

Catholic Answers,

January 7, 2013, 59 pages.

Jacob’s Ladder

Peter Kreeft

Ignatius Press,

March 21, 2013, 154 pages.

A Refutation Of Moral Relativism

Peter Kreeft

Ignatius Press,

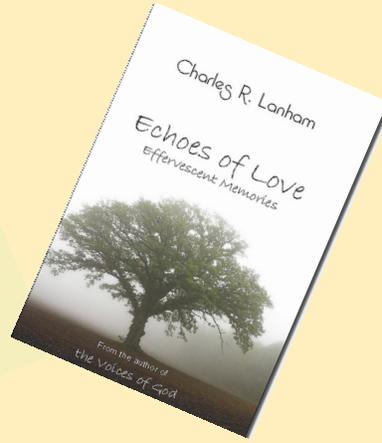
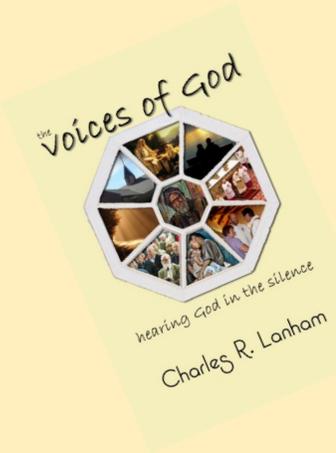
December 7, 2009, 188 pages.

10 Books that Screwed up the World

Benjamin Wiker

Regnery Publishing,

May 19, 2008, 273 pages.



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

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Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from

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