



A journal for restless minds

A REASON TO THINK

Why bother?

ON MORAL GROUND

Sailing against the wind

A NEIGHBOR SUCH AS YOU

Won't you be my neighbor?

ET QUOD HOC...

This and that...

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 Reason To Think

Why bother?

There are moments when a memory collides with a current thought and a new insight begins to form in the mind, moiling at first, then gradually becoming a vortex, inexorably pulling all thought toward a central point.

A recent 3-panel comic strip initiated just such a vortex. The first panel showed three men climbing a steep hill. The next panel depicted a fork off to the right and down from the path they were traveling with two signs: one pointed straight up and read "Truth and Enlightenment" while the other pointed to the right and down and read "Celebs Without Makeup". The third panel displayed an old bearded guru sitting on the top of the hill saying "It's sure been lonely up here lately."

This brought to mind an uneasy realization of the casualness to which *truth and enlightenment* have been tossed aside,

replaced by banal trivia and crude nonsense for no other reason than that the latter requires no effort or thought.

It is enough to make one think or to cause one to kneel in supplication — or at the very least it should.

What coincidental memory came to mind was of a song from years ago, which sang of a silly old ram who thought he'd punch a hole in a dam. The refrain went:



*But he's got high hopes,
he's got high hopes.
He's got high apple pie,
in the sky hopes.*

*So any time your feelin' bad
'stead of feelin' sad
Just remember that ram
Oops there goes
a billion kilowatt dam.*

God made us in his image and likeness; he gave us free will and the ability to reason and to think beyond the instinctual habits of all other living things. We are free to choose to do nothing, know nothing, think nothing, be nothing—but that isn't what God had in mind. If that were the case why would he have bothered to make us at all? Think about it.

On Moral Ground

Sailing against the wind

Two-hundred forty years ago a new nation was born. A nation expressly created under the aegis of Almighty God, in whom those who founded it pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Some would argue that this country is no longer and never has been a *Christian* nation and to those who would so argue I must, to a limited degree, stand in agreement. While our fundamental documents unequivocally declare allegiance to and a belief in a Creator God there is nothing in them which so boldly claims the nation to be a *Christian* one.

The First Amendment to the Constitution forbids the establishment of a state religion and grants all citizens the right to freely exercise their own religious beliefs. Whether Christian, Deist, Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Pagan, or of another faith or a non-believer, the state (government) can neither interfere with, mandate nor legislate adherence to a particular religion. The First Amendment does not restrict or deny individual citizens the right to live and act in according to their conscience and their religious beliefs.

In his book *Christianity and the Constitution: The Faith of Our Founding Fathers*, John Eidsmoe contends *“that at least 51 of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention were members of Christian churches, and that leading American political figures in the founding*

era quoted the Bible far more than any other source.”

He continues *“... the ideals on which they framed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution — that man is subject to the laws of nature and of nature’s God, that God created man equal and endowed him with basic unalienable rights, that human nature is sinful and therefore government power must be carefully restrained by the Constitution — are ideals that they derived, directly or indirectly, from the Bible. Some of these ideals may be shared by those of other religious traditions. But the Founding Fathers, with few exceptions, did not read the Koran, or the Upanishads, or the Bagavigita. They read the Bible, and they heard the Bible preached on Sunday mornings.”*



Thus while it may be true that our nation is not a *Christian* nation, it remains true that it was framed and constituted upon a deep and abiding devotion to the one God, the author of the Christian and Jewish Bible.

George Washington, our nation’s first president noted that *“It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor.”*

John Adams, the second president of the United States went so far as to

firmly state that our constitution was conditioned on the necessity for a moral and a religious devotion; that it could not effectively govern without God. *“We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”*

Our third president, Thomas Jefferson wrote *“and can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”*

When the Constitutional Convention became deadlocked over congressional representation, Benjamin Franklin, who was eighty-one at the time, addressed the delegates with a plea for daily prayer in which he said *“I’ve lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—That God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that, ‘except the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it.’ I firmly believe this,—and I also believe that without His concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.”*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

The United States Supreme Court in their unanimous decision in the case of *Vidal v. Girard's Executors* 43 U.S. 2 How. 127 (1844) wrote: "Why may not the Bible, and especially the New Testament, without note or comment, be read and taught as a divine revelation in the college [a public school for orphans] — its general precepts expounded, its evidences explained, and its glorious principles of morality inculcated? What is there to prevent a work, not sectarian, upon the general evidences of Christianity, from being read and taught in the college by lay teachers?"

Now it may well be asked what is there in all this which is positively enjoined, inconsistent with the spirit or truths of Christianity? Are not these truths all taught by Christianity, although it teaches much more? Where can the purest principles of morality be learned so clearly or so perfectly as from the New Testament? Where are benevolence, the love of truth, sobriety, and industry, so powerfully and irresistibly inculcated as in the sacred volume?"

In *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States*, 143 U.S. 457 (1892) the U.S. Supreme Court in another unanimous decision held that:

"If we pass beyond these matters to a view of American life, as expressed by its laws, its business, its customs, and its society, we find everywhere a clear recognition of the same truth. Among other matters, note the following: the form of oath universally prevailing, concluding with an appeal to the Almighty; the custom of opening sessions of all deliberative bodies and most conventions with prayer; the prefatory words of all wills, "In the name of God, amen;" the laws respecting the observance of the Sabbath, with the

general cessation of all secular business, and the closing of courts, legislatures, and other similar public assemblies on that day; the churches and church organizations which abound in every city, town, and hamlet; the multitude of charitable organizations existing everywhere under Christian auspices; the gigantic missionary associations, with general support, and aiming to establish Christian missions in every quarter of the globe. These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation. In the face of all these, shall it be believed that a Congress of the United States intended to make it a misdemeanor for a church of this country to contract for the services of a Christian minister residing in another nation?"

"There is no dissonance in these declarations. There is a universal language pervading them all, having one meaning. They affirm and reaffirm that this is a religious nation. These are not individual sayings, declarations of private persons. They are organic utterances. They speak the voice of the entire people."

This case is famous for the statement made by Justice Brewer that "These, and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation." Justice Brewer would later explain in his 1905 book, *The United States: A Christian Nation*:

"But in what sense can it be called a Christian nation? Not in the sense that Christianity is the established religion or that people are in any matter compelled to support it. On the contrary, the Constitution specifically provides that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' Neither is it Christian in

the sense that all of its citizens are either in fact or name Christian. On the contrary, all religions have free scope within our borders. Numbers of our people profess other religions, and many reject all. Nor is it Christian in the sense that a profession of Christianity is a condition of holding office or otherwise engaging in public service, or essential to recognition either politically or socially. In fact, the government as a legal organization is independent of all religions. Nevertheless, we constantly speak of this republic as a Christian Nation—in fact, as the leading Christian Nation of the world. This popular use of the term certainly has significance. It is not a mere creation of the imagination. It is not a term of derision but has substantial basis—one which justifies its use."

It should be noted that significantly, while the 1892 court cited dozens of court rulings and legal documents as precedents in arriving at their unanimous decision, no such precedent was used in 1962 when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down voluntary prayer in public schools.

Clearly, the political winds have blown far astray from what was conceived as a new nation under God. John Adams warned us of the Achilles heel inherent within the Constitution. *We, the People*, have lost sight of what Adams said of the weaknesses inherent in the Constitution, that it was made only for a moral and religious people. *We, the People*, have allowed, with often careless disregard, those who are neither moral nor religious to circumvent the intent of the founders and the will of the people to take unwanted liberties and unwarranted advantage of the inherent inadequacies of the Constitution. God help us.

A Neighbor Such As You *Won't you be my neighbor?*

Long ago, while not so distant such that it should be forgotten, yet well before the present age of technology-induced catatonic stupor, there were to be found oddments strewn hither and yon which were identified strangely enough as *neighborhoods*. Not 'hoods mind you, but *neigh-bor-hoods*, where everyone knew their neighbor and their neighbor's neighbor, doors were but an impediment for pests and foul weather, and help was never more than a shout away.

Now this is not a fairy tale or parable to be told for some good purpose; it is nothing but the honest truth, for I know the truth of it because I lived both then and there. I grew up in such a time and place; and, before you ask: no, it was neither Utopia nor Eden nor any other idyllic spot. It was simply home and we knew our neighbors and they knew us.

It amazes to now consider how quickly news did travel then, long before the umbilicus was severed and the tooth was colored blue. Yet faster than a speeding bullet every moment of our lives would fly across the grapevine with far more accuracy in the telling and retelling of it than today.

Did we disagree? Often, yet not as often as we would agree. Did we like our neighbor? There were days when we did and there were those when we did not. Did we hate our neighbor? There was never any need to go that far. Did we love our neighbor? With-

out a doubt, for each was dependent upon the other and each relied on the goodwill and love of their neighbors. Did we love and have faith in God? God was at the center of our lives, never religion. Where neighbors chose to worship was of no import for we were neighbors and knew what it meant to be so.

Living in such a neighborhood required an openness to honesty un-



heard of in this age of transparency. To this point I do recall an event which occurred toward the end of my Junior year of High School. Eager to obtain summer jobs, two friends and I excused ourselves from afternoon classes (I forged the notes for the three of us.) I drove the twenty miles to a larger town where we applied for several jobs, which as I recall, we never heard from again.

Later that afternoon as I *sped* homeward, I was abruptly curtailed by a rather intimidating red light flashing atop a highway patrol vehicle and summarily summoned to appear before a magistrate for far exceeding the posted speed limit.

When I arrived home and as I walked through the door there was absolutely no thought in my head of avoiding an admission of my wayward behavior. There were three compelling reasons for doing so:

- 1) I had been taught from the earliest age to tell the truth, no matter what the cost or penalty might be.
- 2) All traffic citations were posted each week in the local newspaper of which my mother was an employee.
- 3) Yet the overwhelming reason for such ready admission was that the news of my delinquency had preceded my arrival home, no doubt by a passing neighbor as I was engaged in conversation with the patrolman who, as luck would have it, was also a neighbor.

Being a good neighbor doesn't mean always liking your neighbors but it does mean loving them, caring for them, helping them when they are in need, treating them as you would have them treat you.

Yet...the question remains, most often unspoken, but lingering softly among the tendrils of the mind: just "*Who is my neighbor?*" And while the answer lies buried deep within our hearts it is the living of it that does betray us, for no matter how often we might hear the parable of the Good Samaritan we still cannot refrain from asking the question.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

It is, in a sense, a form of self-denial, for we continue to want to circumscribe precisely whom to call our neighbor. We want to place limits on who should be allowed to reside in our neighborhood.

Surely Jesus doesn't mean for us to be neighbors to the homeless or the derelicts that live and sleep on the streets, does he? Surely he doesn't mean for us to be neighbors to those holding signs at street corners asking for money or food, does he? Surely he doesn't mean for us to play nice to that unpleasant person down the street who is always complaining about something and anything, does he? Surely Jesus isn't asking me to accept 'that' person or 'that' family as my neighbor, does he?

The truth is—yes; Jesus does indeed expect you to recognize and acknowledge each of those as your neighbor and to love them as you would love yourself and to act upon that love of neighbor by whatever means you might have.

Reflecting upon his own experience with this question, Father John Kavanaugh writes:

"How well I know the excuses, myself a teacher and priest. It was such as I who passed the broken man on the road to Jericho. And I have done the same.

An armless and legless beggar rolling in a Calcutta gutter could not move me to act. I had things to do. He might be part of a racket (what cost he paid for such a ruse!). He will only want more. Others will expect as much from me. My help will only perpetuate his helpless condition. My

pittance will do nothing in the long run. to do to get into heaven?"

So I, the priest and teacher, passed him by, trying not to notice. It was not the first time. Nor was it the last.

My seeming inability to be a neighbor is hard to reconcile with my professed desire to follow Christ. The will of God still draws close and clear, nudging my heart. And yet I seem at a loss as to the doing of it. The peace I seek is beyond my reach, exceeding both my virtue and my will.

Do these words, then, absolve me of the struggle? No. But they do remind me that I will never want to approach the throne of Jesus. I—the lawyer—pleading my case. Let the unrest continue, so that, as journeys to Jericho recur in my life, I realize that the only times I will find my neighbor are when I am generous enough to become one."¹

Saint John Paul wrote that:

"One's neighbor is not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her."²

We should not altogether ignore the question that preceded the discussion of neighbor for there is implied in it no small amount of subtlety that ought to be addressed. A scholar of the law (a lawyer) asked Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What is nuanced by his question is this: "What is the minimum necessary, the least I have

Jesus wisely turns the question back onto the lawyer who responds with the correct response: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all you mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Consider for a moment that what this truly means is that the least you have to do, the minimum necessary, is *everything*. You must love God with *everything* you have and your neighbor as yourself.

Now consider once again the question of neighbor. The lawyer really wanted to know what the minimum number of people he must count as neighbors with whom he must love, didn't he? And isn't that what we try to do as well?

And we can see now that Jesus isn't having any of it, is he? There are no minimums to be considered in order to gain entry into God's loving embrace; there are only maximums. You are called by Christ to love everyone you meet and in doing so everyone you love becomes your neighbor.



Homily for
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C
Deuteronomy 30:10-14
Colossians 1:15-20
Luke 10:25-37

-
1. John Kavanaugh, S. J., *The Word Embodied: Freedom on the Journey*, The Sunday Website of Saint Louis University, liturgy.slu.edu.
 2. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 1987: 40.

Et quod hoc...

This and that...

Much has been written concerning the content and appropriate interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation. If the secular media were to be believed *Amoris Laetitia*, "The Joy of Love" represents a radical departure from the teaching and practice of the Church in regard to marriage and the family.

What should be recognized before all else is what *Amoris Laetitia* is not, and for this we should rely upon Pope Francis who makes clear, from the very beginning, that the post-synodal apostolic exhortation is not an *act* of the magisterium.

In an article written for National Catholic Register (May 1-14, 2016, pp. 11-12 and in response to an opinion letter, NCR June 26, 2016) Cardinal Raymond Burke stated that "*Amoris Laetitia* is written in a very different way from magisterial documents. The pope himself says that the document contains his reflections after the experience of the synod, and those reflections are personal. The Holy Father indicates clearly his own reflections by his use of the first-person singular. ... The Church has never held that everything that the Pope says or all of his reflections are part of the magisterium. ... To teach authoritatively in the Church is a very serious matter, in which one understands that he is not speaking personally, not in the first-person singular, but as the Successor of St. Peter. And so this document

has to be read as containing the Holy Father's personal reflections. All of the above being said, it must be added that, while Amoris Laetitia is not a magisterial document, it has an effect in the life of the Church. As a writing which follows upon the synod of bishops and is proposed by the Roman pontiff as 'an aid to reflection, dialogue and pastoral practice,' it will have significant effect upon those who read it and study it."



Archbishop Charles J. Chaput O.F.M writes: "*The abortion conflict has never simply been about repealing Roe v. Wade. And the many pro-lifers I know live a much deeper kind of discipleship than "single issue" politics. But they do understand that the cornerstone of Catholic social teaching is protecting human life from conception to natural death. They do understand that every other human right depends on the right to life. They did not and do not and will not give up – and they won't be lied to."*



Allan Carlson, writing for the editors of Touchstone magazine (July/August 2016, pp. 3-4) takes note of a strange war, "*...an ongoing war on children, certainly less bloody than in the abortuaries, but showing a related form of social and emotional violence. By any honest accounting, young people are the primary victims of contemporary Western culture. This war began fifty years ago, in*

the context of the sexual revolution, when adult desires and passions swept away attention to the young. Curiously, it now enjoys the support of the great corporations—Google, Facebook, Target—which combine advocacy of the LGBTQ agenda with indifference toward the existence and welfare of potential future customers. Media products such as Modern Family twist reality to undermine further the prospects of children, while a string of U.S. Supreme Court decisions—from Griswald in 1965 to Obergefell in 2015—have dismantled legal protection of the procreative family.

The West's war on its own children is strange indeed. Christians in contemporary Africa, for example, are baffled by the self-sterilized pagans who now occupy the old cities of Christendom. The Christians of Eastern Europe, having thrown off Communism, were left bewildered by the anti-child sentiments that dominated the lands-of-the-free. Future historians will puzzle over the bio-cultural suicide chosen by these materially prosperous peoples. Even Mr. Darwin, if he were to be resurrected, would express astonishment. In the animal kingdom, adults make every effort to produce and protect their offspring. What could explain such a vast and deliberate denial of a species' young?

Some find the flaw deep in the soul of modern liberalism. After all, it was Thomas Hobbes who, in 1642, rejected the Aristotelian argument that 'man is a creature born fit for society.' The quest for personal gain or glory, not love or cooperation, actually drove the human creature, he said. This search for power

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

even extended into the family, where selfish mothers claimed 'dominion over the infant' and the honor show parents by their children was 'nothing else but the estimation of another's power.' In Hobbes's telling, even the infant's smile was but a silent plea to the mother that she not kill it."



Karl Keating recently wrote a short piece for Catholic Answers Magazine (July-August 2016, p. 8) where he reflected upon an answer he received by a priest with extensive contacts in Rome. Keating had asked "When the next conclave comes around, who is on your short list?" The answer he received was short and to the point: "There's only one name on my list," he said, "Robert Sarah."

Keating went on to write that "Most Catholics in America—and elsewhere, I suppose—have never heard his name. They ought to learn it, because there is a fair chance that he will be the next pope, if the conclave comes within five years or so. Cardinal Sarah will turn 71 in June."

For further insight and more information on the remarkable life of Cardinal Sarah, please see Colloqui issues No. 2 and 4. For a more complete understanding of his theology and thoughts read God or Nothing, Ignatius Press.



In many ways Thomas Jefferson was oddly unique in his thoughts and beliefs. He was first and foremost a Deist, who believed that reason and observation of the natural world were sufficient to determine the existence of a single creator of the universe while dismissing notions such as the Trinity, Biblical inerrancy, revelation, and the supernatural, especially miracles.

Among the many artifacts left of Jefferson's is his personal copy of the New Testament upon which he diligently employed a penknife to cut out passages that did not comport with his rational suppositions. This included any and all passages which spoke of miracles, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the Resurrection.

Anthony Esolen, writing for the editors of Touchstone Magazine (May/June 2016, pp. 3-4) opines that "A book full of holes is not long for the world. Jefferson retained the teachings of Jesus because he revered them. Our age has punched its holes in what Jefferson left intact, so that now, for most people, the New Testament is a couple of shreds in an American garbage dump.... And that's it. Jesus is not only forbidden to name himself and to heal the blind, the deaf, and the lame. He is not only forbidden to rise from the dead. He is forbidden to preach, unless he preaches what rebukes no one except those who still listen to what he preaches. He is a Jesus of the Subjunctive Mood, who would say what we want him to say, were he alive, which he is not. He is not the Jesus who did say what he said and who still says it."

Perhaps it is time we let Jesus speak in his own voice. Just saying.

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!

BOOKS

A Refutation Of Moral Relativism
Peter J. Kreeft
Ignatius Press
December 7, 2009, 188 pages.

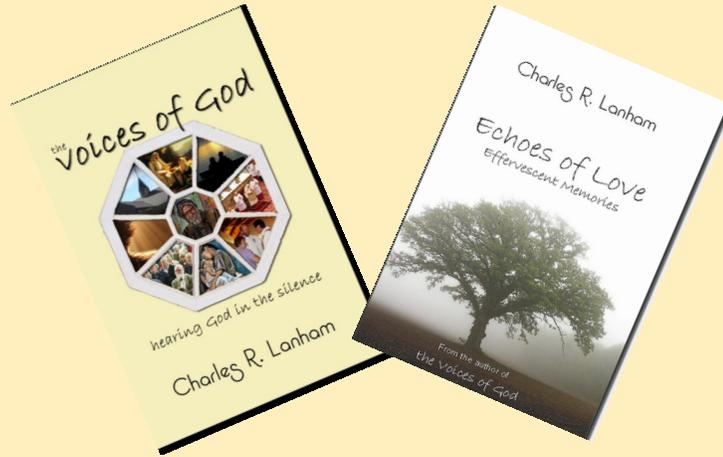
Old Errors and New Labels
Fulton J. Sheen
Alba House
(1931) May 30, 2007, 222 pages.

City Of God
Saint Augustine
Doubleday
February 1958, 551 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things
Institute on Religion and Public Life
Editor: R. R. Reno
Ten Issues per year.
www.firstthings.com

Touchstone
A Journal of Mere Christianity
Editor: James M. Kushiner
Bi-Monthly.
www.touchstonemag.com



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**.

He is the bulletin editor for Saint Albert the Great Catholic Church. He has written over 230 articles on religion, faith, morality, theology,

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

<http://deaconscorner.org>.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

deacon.chuck@deaconscorner.org

Colloquī is a weekly publication of **Deacon's Corner Publishing**.
Copyright © 2016 by **Deacon's Corner Publishing**. All rights reserved.
Produced in the U.S.A. **www.deaconscorner.org**

Deacon's Corner Publishing

4742 Cougar Creek Trail
Reno, Nevada 89519