

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

No Place Like It

Here he lies where he longed to be

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.

No Place Like It

Here he lies where he longed to be

Hearts dream of home no less the distance or the days; souls yearn to forever breathe in the love of God. It is within man's nature—as God intended—to know the good, to seek perfection, to love and be loved, and to live free of evil. Evil runs counter to man's nature and to God desires; evil is a negative, the absence of a good, a contradiction to that which God created and declared good.

Once there were earnest men—though of different creed and station—who together resolved “that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator ...”, not without regard but with the deepest respect and unwavering con-

viction to the truth. Each word of necessity demanded, none less than another.

And yet, so many object and move to strike or alter a word or two in deference to their preference. There are those with palates too easily offended who would strike much of it and make it bland and tasteless and (pun intended) unpalatable. No need for eleven words when a thing

can be said in five, they cry. That all persons are equal saves the stew by excising the ingredients which make it difficult to swallow.

Such pablum, so duplicitously contrived, removes the essential substance,

leaving but a bitter brew mixed with myrrh to hide the horrid taste of it. Sir Walter Scott penned “Oh what tangled webs we weave, when first we practice



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to deceive.”¹ No doubt he understood the progressive mind who twists the dial with force and vengeance to prove a lie a truth. Such base abridgement receives scant notice and yet, by default and lack of contest too often wins the argument.

The purpose of a liberal education had long been to learn the art and science of reasoned discourse, to exercise the mind to think rationally, and to honestly seek the truth. Conservative Protestant morality had long dominated the nation’s public schools and academic institutions. Beginning in the 1870s, however, that began to change. “A new secular university model emerged, supported by the rising titans of industrial capitalism. The academy focused increasingly on research rather than on character formation.”²

What now passes—and has passed for more than a half-century—for liberal education is but bad art and pseudo-science; students are indoctrinated not educated, shielded not challenged, told what to think not taught how to think for themselves. Logic, ethics, morality, reasoned debate and discourse are no longer a fundamental part of a liberal arts education. Free speech is for those who follow with unquestioning devotion; opposing views and dissenting voices are disavowed and vehemently denied legitimacy.

Great literature and unvarnished history have been banished from the halls of the academy; the past lies either buried or burned by those who would have nothing of it, unwilling to

allow a hint of reality or a tinge of objective truth despoil their ungodly view of paradise. They play the fool for simplicity; they fool themselves for comfort. What text they read is another’s tweet; more words are such a drudging bore and they take no interest in the chore.

Books have for the better part of my life—which is to say all but perhaps the first two or three days of it—been as essential as breathing and as necessary a habit as eating. I cannot begin to fathom the abject poverty of a mindless stone which knows nothing of itself, where it began or of the ground upon which it has lain for untold ages. How poor the stone never knowing that indescribable feeling which comes from breathing the fresh scent of morning or enjoying the sweet taste of food or drink which lingers long upon the tongue. A stone is but a rock and nothing more.

Our Creator God breathed life into the dust of man; no other creature capable of reason and abstract thought for no other did God gift a mind with the will to use it. And yet, so few appreciate the gift.

The yellowed parchment under glass hears but echoed footsteps fading fast. Fewer read with fervent prayer the words that have long been written there. Long have they been revered, held high and proud those precious words, those now forgotten treasured few.

Sad the state befallen man who has with insouciance relinquished thinking to someone better suited to the task. Thus, “man” or “men” have

been reduced for the grievous sin of gendermandering. That “man” or “men” have been common and well-accepted synonyms for any and all members—male or female, of any age, race, creed or color—of the human race for much of history is of no accord; it matters not, for the trifling words do offend and that is all that need be uttered.

The solution, which is the proverbial cure worse than the disease, is to employ the all-inclusive and gender-neutral amorphous “persons.” That “persons” may prove inadequate to some or objectionable to others is not worth a mention; that “men” finds disapproval among a disaffected few is all that matters.

What is deemed a person remains a question which science has of yet conceded. Some would bequeath personhood to only those ordained as worthy, others to those who reach the lofty age of four, still others to those who dare escape the womb. Then there are those whose religious zealotry commands that personhood begins at that seminal moment of conception. How then to deny the word of God: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,” (Jeremiah 1:5)?

To know a person is to acknowledge their personhood. Yet, those who take offense at “man” or “men” are not the least inclined to acknowledge or accept such foolish thoughts; they find comfort in the nebulous and the subjective for there they benefit, finding room to vacillate, to change the tune whenever convenience dictates or fancy moves them.

Creator and created belong to those who would continue inexplicably to believe the earth is flat; there simply is no rhyme nor reason to support such simple-minded lunacy. Everyone with half a brain knows all things evolved by random chance. They are dismayed at those who presume that one's existence demands a Creator, thus elevating the creature to more than common clay and dirty water.

This negates the narrative which denies the soul and the inestimable value of the human person. This of course will not do for value connotes a valuer who places value on what the valuer possesses. This in turn implies a certain relationship between the valuer and the valued which cannot simply be ignored.

No creator would create a worthless bauble of neither purpose nor value to its creator. All that exists has been created by an uncreated Creator for a reason; every created thing, every creature has a purpose:

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter under
heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plan, and a time to pluck
up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to
build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to
dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a
time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to
refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast
away;
a time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to
speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.
(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

Without a Creator there can be no created, so then to whom does man belong? This is thus the truth behind the lie, the reason for the condensation of what the Founders wrote.

"All men are created equal" does not claim equality solely among males nor does it imply or suggest that inequality exists between men and women. What is clearly stated and what the founders meant was this: each and every human person *created* (by God) is made in his image and likeness and loved equally (just as much as) by their Creator God. Each shares equally in his divine love; to each gifts are given which are not the same for everyone. Saint Paul said as much:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various

kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

Those who find such truth inconvenient to the cause for which they so stridently proselytize find fault where none exist knowing few will dare contest their casuistic argument. When challenged they deflect, when questioned they dodge. They are masters of the game; their favorites: Twisted Logic, Blame and Flame, and Profane Thy Enemy.

Like jackals, they feed on the carrion of atrophied minds. Fifty years ago the jackals howled while circling the administrative halls of academia demanding their right to unrestricted Freedom of Speech. As one professor wrote in 1965: "The first fact one must know about the Free Speech Movement is that it has little or nothing to do with free speech. ... If not free speech, what then is the issue? In fact, preposterous as this may seem, the real issue is the seizure of power."

Their ideology followed a familiar pattern: they were advocates for change—of what kind they would or could not say, just change. They dubbed themselves activists, radicals, or, as most preferred, organizers. As one student said, "At present the socialist world, even with all its problems, is moving closer than any other countries toward the sort of society I think should exist. In the Soviet Union, it has almost been achieved."

How little has since changed. The most obvious and significant change to ensue over the intervening fifty years has been the near immediate global dissemination of radical views vis-à-vis social media and a compliant and largely supportive news media. But make no mistake, the objective remains the same, the seizure of power and the control of human lives.

The genius of the American experiment came not from ideological zealotry, irrational thought, or an insane desire for power but from minds open to new ideas and the willingness to reason together. The American tapestry was conceived in minds steeped in the knowledge and the wisdom acquired throughout the ages—philosophy, metaphysics, logic, ethics, morality, Scripture, history. They knew—because they had read and thoroughly studied—the philosophies of the ancient Greeks: Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Democritus, Heraclitus, Epicurus, Diogenes, Archimedes, to name but a few. They differed in faith but all believed in man’s dependence and reliance upon the providence of a higher power; all were well-versed in Scripture. They had studied the theological works of Augustine, Aquinas, Irenaeus, Clement, Ignatius, Origen, Luther and Calvin, the moral and political philosophies of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Voltaire, Locke and Descartes.

They knew full well man’s deepest desire: to be free, the master of no one but one’s self; to be able to associate with others without fear; to speak openly, discuss and debate ideas,

agree or disagree, and to freely worship without fear or oppression.

They understood that there were laws above any human law: “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.”³ They knew that there were truths which could neither be denied or abolished by any government or ruler: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, ...”

Tragically, these truths are too often held in contempt, denied by far too many, parsed and twisted beyond all understanding. Truth is no longer truth. Truth is no longer self-evident but self-determined. Unalienable Rights are no longer limited to Life, Liberty and the *pursuit* of Happiness; rights are self-defined and limited only by imagination. The power to govern is no longer derived from the consent of the governed but from those who seek power by force rather than the ballot.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand” (Matthew 12:25) and again “If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mark 3:24-25). This truth has been restated many times since. Saint Augustine describes

his conversion experience as “a house divided against itself.”⁴ Thomas Hobbes wrote that “a kingdom divided in itself cannot stand.”⁵ Thomas Paine describes the composition of monarchy as having “all the distinctions of a house divided against itself ...”⁶ Abraham Lincoln in a speech “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”⁷ Sam Houston proclaimed “A nation divided against itself cannot stand.”⁸

America is a house divided, more so now than ever before. How much longer it will stand is a terrifying question. What are absent and of utmost necessity are voices of reason, statesmen not politicians, and a return to a government whose “*just*” powers are derived from the “*consent of the governed.*” Perhaps it is time we the governed give notice that our consent is conditional not automatically assured.

Every community whether large or small has boundaries, borders which define the limits of its domain. Communities have members who share some common bond which differs from other communities.

Saint Paul, standing in the middle of the Are-op’agus spoke to the “Men of Athens” of God’s providential ordering of different nations, each having its own boundaries. He said that God “made from one (man) every nation of men to live on the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him” (Acts 17:26-27).

Those who advocate for open borders and those who talk in terms of a global community may find Paul's words disconcerting; certainly the subjects of nations, national boundaries—and migration across those boundaries—are fuel and fodder for heated debates.

Political debates and ideologies seldom invite reflection on the nature of human beings. As Gilbert and Peter Meilaender note in a recent article⁹ for *First Things*:

... a little reflection on it makes clear why we cannot say only one thing about particular bonds and more universal duties. Human beings are living bodies. We have location. We inhabit particular places. Yet we are not rooted in place as plants are. Unlike or more so than any of the other animals, we can see, reflect upon, and desire things not immediately present to us; hence, we always to some indefinite extent transcend the place (and the community) that locates us. Indeed, we quite naturally yearn for what is more than human, what is divine.

If these simple observations are true of us, we would do an injustice to our humanity if we had no sense of special obligation to those closely connected to us by nature or history. There would be something inhuman about missing entirely the moral significance of the body as the place of our personal presence to others. But there would also be something inhuman—something not true to the sort of being we are, a being different from plants or the other animals—if we recognized no duties toward those with whom we have few special attachments, those whose chief connection to us is

simply the common humanity we share.

In short, to be human is to recognize a seemingly permanent tension between the particular and the universal in our loves, our loyalties, and our commitments. Recognizing the tension does not tell us how best to address it, but it should at least make clear to us that—however difficult the problem of immigration may be for us—we cannot make it go away by supposing that the borders of our community are unrelated to our peculiar and particular identity as a nation.

One final note:

A poem (*Requiem*) written by Robert Louis Stevenson offers a sentiment worthy of a few moments of reflection:

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me;
"Here he lies where he longed to be,
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill."

1. Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*, 1513.
2. Darel E. Paul, Ph.D., *Culture War as Class War*, *First Things*, August/September 2018, pp. 39-44.
3. Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.
4. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, Book 8, Chap. 8.
5. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chap. 18, 1651.
6. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776.
7. Abraham Lincoln, Address upon his nomination to the U.S. Senate, June 16, 1858.
8. Sam Houston, during the Senate debate on the Compromise of 1850.
9. Gilbert & Peter C. Meilaender, *Fences and Neighbors*, *First Things*, August/September 2018, pp. 21-25.

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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.

BOOKS

Thoughtful Theism

Fr. Andrew Younan

Emmaus Road Publishing
2017, 200 pages.

Coming Soon

Michael Barber

Emmaus Road Publishing
2005, 326 pages.

Strangers in a Strange Land

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

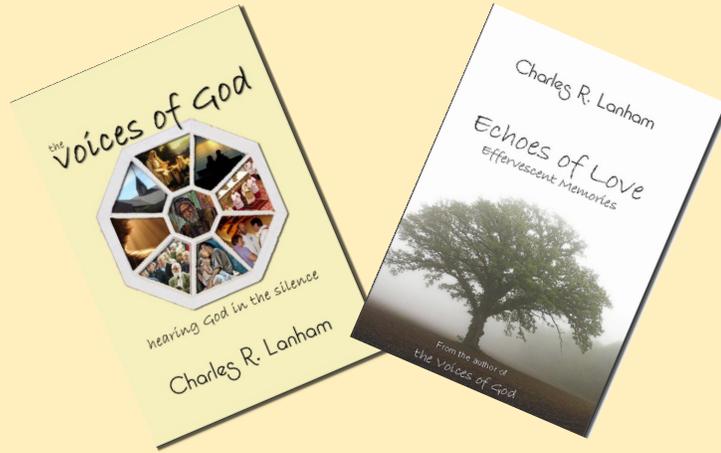
Institute on Religion and Public Life
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Ten Issues per year.
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Touchstone

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

Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
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Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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