

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

A Modern Heresy

One-way thinking

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 Modern Heresy

One-way thinking

Perhaps my parents are to blame for my contempt for it was they who did insist on living in a town no larger than a postage stamp. A small rural community owns both a blessing and a curse—although the blessings far outnumber any curses.

One curse absent small communities are one-way streets, a sure and certain harbinger of urban obesity and mental decay; nothing screams “Nightmare on Elm Street” more than having traveled north on Elm to get somewhere to be then compelled to travel south on Maple in order to return. The worst is perhaps the necessity of turning left three times to effect a right or to travel a one-way street that quite abruptly changes direction.

There is no logic to such perversity, only the smug satisfaction of a nameless bureaucrat who saw no need of bi-direction. Such narrow single-laned urban blight increasingly covers more ground than mere city streets; such Machiavellian affliction has long spread far beyond asphalt and concrete.

Like kudzu, an Asian import originally introduced to control soil erosion—which to much dismay and consternation did quite the opposite—, such single-mindedness has narrowed and fossilized the mind to one-way thinking. Reasoned discourse is futile for such minds have been thoroughly assimilated; the somewhat arcane cold war

term “brainwashed” is likewise apropos.

Yet more than protracted brainwashing has ossified normal fecund minds; something else



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has caused gray matter to dissolve into dark matter as if to put the lighted lamp (reason) under a bushel or a bed, staved the eye with logs (hypocrisy and hate), thrown pearls (wisdom) to swine and the holy (spirit) to mongrel dogs.

God created man not to be sycophantic creatures but to be free to have dominion over all which God had created and to be fruitful and multiply. God made all things and because He was Good declared all that He had made to be good. And then he rested giving man free reign to make a complete mess of all that goodness. Satan, cunningly smooth and ever politically correct, led Adam and Eve down a one-way street—going the wrong way—, enticing them to eat that which was not good for them, to become like gods. And so the mortal game began with just six little words: “The devil made me do it.”

Down through the ages man has lost neither the thirst for that which is not his to drink nor the hunger for that which would make him god; Satan’s assurances that man can be like god have never ceased to lead souls to hell. As Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote (c. 1150), “L'enfer est plein de bonnes volontés et désirs” which is commonly interpreted as “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.” One-way streets are undoubtedly the result of good intentions but they are most assuredly paved by the devil.

No matter how well-intentioned we may be the results in acting on any well-meaning intent are seldom if ever

quite as good or as beneficial as our imperfect nature would design. Shallow thought coupled with emotional angst are recipes for disaster on most any level. Satan wins every time emotion plays its game; overriding reason and objective truth with feelings, assuming self greater than God, demanding “my way or the highway” are sure and certain signs that one is on the devil’s turnpike straight to hell.

Some have asked the sources of my scribbling and while I could offer many the truth is there are far more than many from which to glean a nugget, so many that I often find it overwhelming. As for this brief essay there are plenty but I will mention but a few.

A dear friend recently sent a quick note expressing her disgust after reading an article with the catchy headline “Abortion Activist Quits Catholic Church, Walks Out of Mass Because New Priest is Pro-Life.” After reading the article written for LifeNews.com and the referenced article written by an abortion activist for Salon I discovered a darkness so deep I doubted Light could ever penetrate. And yet, I know that God, the Creator of all that is—including demonic creatures who would be like God—loves all which he has made. And yes, that includes Satan and all his minions. He made them and loves them; he did not cause them to do evil which He does not love or condone, but he gave spirits and humans free will and so will never interfere or deny their wrongdoing.

The essay written by Mary Elizabeth Williams for Salon begins with the headline: “I don’t know how to be Catholic any

more : The fight for abortion means finding a new place in my faith.”

If read no further one could suck the marrow of the full essay. Williams begins by writing:

My relationship with my Catholic faith is a lot like my relationship with social media. Both are a source of community, inspiration and activism. And both are also full of terrible old men saying awful things. I’ve spent years trying to manage that tension, trying to hold on to the good and filter out the worst. But this past Sunday, for the first time in my life, I walked out of church in the middle of mass.

I’ve always been more of Stephen Colbert Catholic than a Paul Ryan one. I grew up with guitar playing, “Day by Day” singing masses in parishes that put an emphasis on community service. My spiritual practice as I have always understood it teaches that Christianity means tolerance, forgiveness, unselfishness and simplicity. I fail at this a lot, but that’s where I set the bar, and that bar was built by my Catholicism.

Calling one’s self Catholic does not make anyone Catholic. Being Catholic means being a member of the Body of Christ in full communion with his Church; it is not a membership to a social club or being in a relationship with social media. Her “faith” was built on sand and when the rains came her “faith” crumbled and all she knew to do was walk away and take her fourteen year-old daughter with her.

Further on she writes that her family and she are all “pro-Jesus” while noting that each expresses it differently which is code for disassociation

from organized religion over issues (Protestant husband), a daughter who attends church on holidays and refers to herself as Catholic but is otherwise uninvolved, and then the fourteen year-old and herself who love the ritual and the order, the storytelling and the values (???) that are represented.

She goes on to describe two diametrically opposing views of Catholicism.

We live near a small parish run by a Capuchin Franciscan order. Franciscans, along with Jesuits like Pope Francis, place a strong emphasis on service, social justice and the needs of the poor. In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, my parish organized cleanup and relief efforts. It conducts services in English and Spanish, has a food pantry, is home to a Girl Scout troop and stays visible in the fight against discriminatory housing practices and economic displacement in our lower income neighborhood. This is the Catholicism that I believe in and fight for, one spirituality rooted in real world action, one that speaks out from the pulpit against greed and violence.

Then there's the other kind of Catholicism. We recently had a new priest join the parish, and the message has been changing. A few weeks ago, when the new priest was conducting services, my daughter and I both flinched when he spoke of "traditional" marriage, which can "only be between a man and woman."

We know the Vatican's official stance on marriage equality. We also know that just a few months ago, another of our parish priests echoed Pope Francis in pointedly stating that God makes us who we are and loves us as we are. This

new message was an alarming contrast.

Then this weekend, the same priest got up and began to speak on the culture of respecting life. Last winter, we heard a similar sermon from a different priest. The theme then was mass shootings and gun violence.

This time, the new person stood up and condemned women who "kill their babies for convenience." I sat rooted in my pew for a moment, a flurry of thoughts racing around at once.

One final excerpt from Williams:

I don't expect any parish to contradict the church's official stance on key issues. I also don't expect someone who has never faced that choice — or likely even spoken honestly with someone who has — to stand up and speak authoritatively on the motivations of women with regard to their own bodies.

Strikingly absent from her self—described "Catholicism" is any acknowledgement of its *raison d'être*, the essence and essential reason for the existence of the Catholic Church, Christianity, its doctrine, dogma and apostolic tradition. It may come as a complete and utter revelation to she and other like-minded souls that the Catholic Church is not hers or theirs to slice and dice to fit comfortably within their self-defined "spirituality". The spirit is not theirs but Christ's; the doctrine is not theirs but Christ's; the Truth is not theirs but Christ's; the Church is not theirs but Christ's and his alone.

While we are members of the Body of Christ, members of his Church; we are members, not the head. Christ is the head, the teacher, our Lord and

Master. We are but his disciples, followers. Jesus has told us: "*Via et veritas et vita.*" "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Those who believe truth is of their own understanding, who choose to hold their own will before the will of Christ cannot lay claim to membership in the Body of Christ; for as Christ confessed to his heavenly Father "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). To champion otherwise is to play the fool, to join Satan's raucous chorus singing bawdy tunes while marching straight into the everlasting fires of hell.

As to her expectations what should be of our own mind to such dishonest hypocrisy? She does not "expect any parish to contradict the church's official stance on key issues" as if she sits upon the throne in final judgment. I do not mean to demean, yet am compelled to ask with sincere humility whether "to contradict" falls within the purview of "parish?" I, for one, have never had the pleasure of meeting *parish* while enjoying a cup of tea.

Of what church she refers would be well worth further inquiry for there are little "c" churches but one big "C" Church which is Christ's. The "official stance" of the Catholic Church is the truth revealed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Church (big "C") cannot contradict the Word of God for the Church is Christ's earthly instrument and Christ is the fullness of Truth which can never be contradicted.

What “key issues” are at the heart of Ms. Williams’ protestations are left for the reader to infer (an easy task at that: how does one say “a woman’s right to choose abortion”); this to escape the tottering confines of her own heresy. She wears her umbrage well without admitting to her nakedness; she is a shrew who would issue forth a mighty roar if only she had the voice for it.

Her heresy is in claiming the church a vending machine where one can purchase what one desires and ignore the rest. Her heresy is indeed a common one—yet a heresy nonetheless—, that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given” (Matthew 28:18) to her to decide what to believe or not, which commandments to obey or not, what rules to follow or not. It must be a heady feeling to sit upon the throne of God; small wonder so many wish to believe it has been sized a perfect fit in the shape of their own posterior.

Flannery O’Connor, whose writing reflected her Roman Catholic faith, frequently examining questions of morality and ethics, once wrote,

What people don’t realize is how much religion costs. They think faith is a big electric blanket, when of course it is the cross.

Too many choose the immediate warmth and comfort derived in wrapping themselves in a big electric blanket; too few choose to carry the cross all the way to Calvary.

Too many, like Williams, see themselves as owners rather than renters; their bodies are property which they own and may do with as they will. That is, of course, what they believe until full and final payment is demanded of them by the One who holds the lien.

A woman’s (or a man’s) body is not hers (or his) to own; such a notion is nothing less than slavery whose master is a fool. To claim a work of art—a sculpture by Michelangelo—owns itself would be dismissed as sure lunacy; what difference then the madness demonstrated by those who would own title to themselves? If all are slaves then who can say they are free? If none are free then where resides the will. A slave must do the master’s bidding, jumping when told to jump, obedient to every task demanded, no order refused, no choice but to blind obedience. What then when slave and master are one and the same?

Everything in life comes with a price tag; not all things are paid for with cash. There is a price to pay if you want to make things better, a price to pay just for leaving things as they are. Everything has a price. The higher the price the more precious the treasure. Cheaper things are rarely treasured; most are purchased for utility, then discarded when inconvenient, no longer useful, unwanted or quite simply thought unpleasant or embarrassing refuse.

At its core, Christian doctrine as revealed by the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—says that human life is sacred.

2258 *Human life is sacred* because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.¹

Only God, the Author and Creator of all life can establish value for human beings.

Human life is sacred because God is inestimably sacred and he made us in his image and likeness; we are thus of inestimable value to God and must acknowledge as much by our respect for every human life no matter at what stage that life may be. It should be obvious that human slaves are simply not within our price range. We cannot afford to own our bodies, all we can afford is the rental. The agreement requires the body be respected and kept in as good condition as originally conceived, built and delivered. On deposit is the soul.

Ms. Williams is of a different opinion. She holds herself to be the sole arbiter of her body and no one, especially a church “full of terrible old men saying awful things” is allowed to inform her otherwise. She is wrong of course as are many others but when you say something loud enough and often enough, you will eventually convince yourself if no one else of the truth of it. Once convinced there can be no unconvincing for then the truth turns inside out and the truth of the lie is revealed for all to digest.

Williams finds abhorrent the very notion that anyone who neither has nor could find themselves faced with making “that choice” might have the temerity

to stand up and speak authoritatively on the motivations of women with regard to their own bodies.

Maybe if he’d just left it at that one line, I’d have stayed. But the priest continued, quoting Mother Teresa’s edict that “The greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself.” That’s when I leaned over to my daughter and whispered, “I have to go.”

In speaking with her fourteen year-old daughter afterward she wrote:

We talked about what to do when our personal beliefs don’t match up with what someone in authority says we should do. Fortunately we have a role model in Christ, who knew a thing or two about running afoul of those in power. The moral compass is always clear for both of us – to affirm the dignity of loving relationships and to respect the health and privacy of women.

Where does one begin? The depth of her heresy is difficult to measure for with every step she takes the darker the tale. As to what motivated Ms. Williams to pack up her bag, corral her daughter and vamoose from the wayward authoritarian priest, I shall simply suggest that perhaps her heart was too congested to pump fresh warm blood through her cold clogged arteries. Perhaps.

I would however recommend she recalibrate her moral compass for it

appears to no longer be pointing northward to the Truth.

To use Christ as a role model for rebellious behavior—running afoul of those in power—is noteworthy for its twisted and pernicious view of God become man. It attributes wrongful criminal culpability to Jesus Christ and establishes such as conduct to be emulated.

What is true is that Jesus was often tested by those who were threatened by his words and actions, frightened that he might be who he claimed to be. Even the devil put him to the test, all to no avail. Jesus rebuked all those who would put him to the test. When the tempter (the devil) suggested him to create bread from stones, he answered, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). And when the devil said if he was truly God he could throw himself down and angels would keep him from harm he said, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (Matthew 4:7). And when the devil offered him all the kingdoms of the world if he would only worship him he said, “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’” (Matthew 4:10).

God has provided every soul with a moral compass calibrated to the Truth. He said as much at the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17), And again at the Transfiguration: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” (Luke 9:35) Jesus is a role model but not for rebel-

lion, for “running afoul of those in power.”

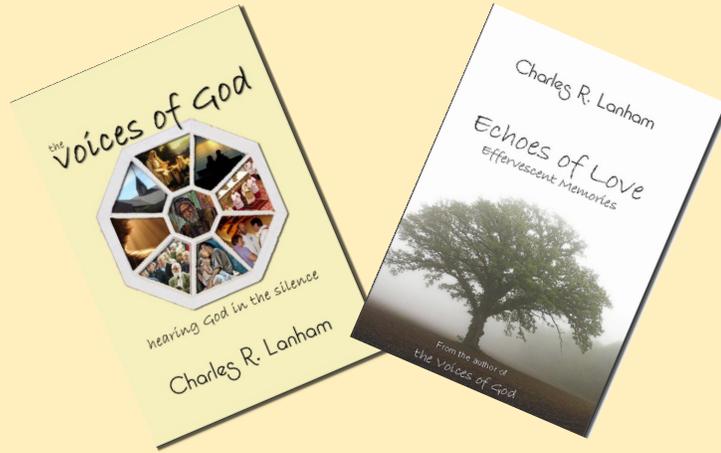
When Ms. Williams speaks of Jesus Christ as a role model she avoids the necessity of admitting his divine nature. All too many “Christians” too readily ignore the two natures of Christ. They are wont to deny that he is fully human and fully divine; by ignoring his divinity they escape the necessity of listening to his divine Word. He is just another man so they find no compelling need to listen to him.

Finally, there is the rather large elephant stuffed uncomfortably in the refrigerator. The question isn’t how to get it out but how it got in there in the first place. Ms. Williams and her like-minded supporters have an easy answer: just tug and pull and if necessary, chop it up in pieces. But then, might not the elephant object to such treatment. I certainly would if I were in just such a predicament. After all, I didn’t put myself in that tiny space, so why should I be mistreated in such a way?

Someone, I cannot or will not surmise, planted that large pachyderm in that small refrigerator. Should not that someone have given a moment’s thought to doing such a thing before all the pushing and shoving began?

The time for choosing is glaringly obvious should one wish to view this “clearly.” Alas, few are thinking clearly these days. Their moral compasses are pointing south toward warmer climes and passion fruit, where there is little thought of elephants in refrigerators.

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church, §2258.



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

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