



A journal for restless minds

THE SPIRIT IS WILLING

The flesh is weak

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.

The Spirit Is Willing

The flesh is weak

There are phenomena common enough among the human species which confound and perplex the most sagacious of minds and yet, without fully understanding their cause and effect, provide great insight as to why we humans so often disagree on just about everything imaginable.

Phenomena #1: Back in February 2015 a photograph of a dress worn by the mother of a bride was posted on Tumblr and subsequently BuzzFeed, Facebook and Twitter. Viewers were asked whether the dress was white and gold or was it blue and black; some reported it to be white and gold while others claimed it to definitely be blue and black. I will confess that to my eyes it looked white and gold—and it still does—but the dress, sold for 50 pounds at Roman Orig-



inals, a British retailer has definitively been proven to be blue and black.

Phenomena #2: The current rage spreading across the Internet, social media and even radio and television is a brief recording which asks the listener what they hear: "Yanney" or "Laurel." Once again, there are those who hear "Yanney" and those who hear "Laurel." To my ears I find myself in the latter camp.

While there are no doubt all manner of theories, studies, conjectures and research available to explain such phenomena, what must be of far greater import lies in what it reveals concerning human perception. Or, as is often the case, our misperception of what we believe we see or hear and our subsequent behaviors that inevitably result. Is it any wonder why we seem so often to disagree with one another? Our physical senses betray us, as Jesus said to those

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

disciples he found sleeping on the night he was betrayed. *"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"* (Matthew 26:41).

Such proclivities for misperceptions are further amplified by our individual exposures to environmental, sociological, cultural, educational, familial, religious, and other non-biological factors. In short, each of us owns a unique perspective of our surroundings, forged and tempered by the uniqueness of our character; there is no common mold from which we are formed, no cookie-cutter template from which we are stamped.

God has created each of us as one-offs; there will never be another you. And yet, unique though we may be, we are alike in our self-same humanity, we are each made by God in his image and likeness.

Faith necessarily colors that which we perceive and believe to be good and true. Those whose faith is lacking or misdirected to something or someone other than to the love of God will be like strangers to those who love God. Saint Augustine spoke of those who do not love God as *"strangers and antichrists. They might come to the churches, but they cannot be numbered among the children of God. That fountain of life does not belong to them. A bad person can have baptism and prophecy. ... A bad person can receive the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, for it is said, 'All who eat and drink unworthily, eat and drink judgment on themselves.'* [1 Cor 11:29] *A bad person can have the name of Christ and be called Christian. ... To have*

*all these sacraments is, as I say, possible even for a bad person. But to have love and be a bad person is impossible. Love is the unique gift, the fountain that is yours alone. The Spirit of God exhorts you to drink from it, and in so doing to drink from himself."*¹

Our misperceptions are compounded and, need I say, confounded by the source and substance of what we choose—or not choose—to read, view or hear. Studied ignorance provides no good excuse for misguided thought, an all too prevalent condition for many these days. Such idled ignorance ought not prove license for the ignorant to speak with self-professed authority; what so offends the ears is for such risible commentary to be permitted broad public notice without dissent, demurral or correction.

Fame, fortune, and power all claim authority to speak without thought or reason, to pontificate vociferously absent any and all forbearance, and to give credence to the easily discredited; truth and knowledge are granted no authority, permitted no rebuttal, disenfranchised of the opportunity to be heard. Speech is *free* except when it offends; what offends is as firm as the wind, as solid as the sea, as constant and unchangeable as the weather.

Each is equal in the eyes of God, no one finds ill-favor in his sight for each is his creation and he loves all that he has made equally, without condition. No matter the color of our skin, the depth of our intelligence, the language we speak, or the conformity of our physiques to human notions of perfection, God loves each of us the same. Any per-

ceived imperfections in thought, word, or deed belong solely to ourselves, not to God.

Saint Augustine, speaking of love quotes John who wrote: *"This is how the love of God is shown among us." "The reason why the writer exhorts us, is so that we may come to love God. Could we love him, unless he first loved us? Though we were slow to love, let us not be slow to love in return. He loved us first. We do not even love in the same way as he. He loved the unrighteous, but he took away the unrighteousness. He loved the sick, but he visited them to make them whole. Love, then, is God. "This is how the love of God is shown among us: God sent his only Son into the world, that we may live through him." As the Lord himself said: "No one can have greater love than this: to lay his down his life for his friends." [John 25:13] This proved Christ's love for us, the fact that he died for us. How is the Father's love for us proved? By the fact that he sent his only Son to die for us. As the apostle Paul says, "He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will he not freely give us all things?" [Rom. 8:32] Notice how the Father delivered up Christ, and so did Judas. Does it not seem that they did the same sort of thing? ... There was a delivering up by the Father; a delivering up [of himself] by the Son, and a delivering up by Judas. The thing done is the same, but what is it that sets their actions apart? This: the Father and the Son did it in love, but Judas did it in betrayal. So you see that we need to consider not what a person does but with what mind and will he does it. Why do we bless the Father and detest Judas for doing the same deed? We bless love and detest wickedness. ..."*

What Augustine goes on to say speaks to the heart of what is directly *en pointe* to much of today's public discourse. He writes, "*What I have said so far applies to actions that are similar. When they are different, we find people made fierce by love; and by wickedness made seductively gentle. A father beats a boy, while a kidnapper caresses him. Offered a choice between blows and caresses, who would not choose the caresses and avoid the blows? But when you consider the people who give them you realize that it is love that beats, wickedness that caresses. This is what I insist upon: human actions can only be understood by their root in love. All kinds of actions might appear good without proceeding from the root of love. Remember, thorns also have flowers: some actions seem truly savage, but are done for the sake of discipline motivated by love. Once and for all, I give you this one short command: love, and do what you will. If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good. ...*"

Distilled to its essence, it is the absence of love—true love, *Agape* (ἀγάπη, *agápē*) love, the highest form of love, the love of God for man and of man for God—which denies us the right judgment to know what is good and what is bad. We have lost the ability to distinguish between those whose words and actions are made "fierce by love" and those which are "by wickedness made seductively gentle."

We have listened for far too long to the voices made seductively gentle,

unwilling to choose the righteous blows delivered out of love, rejecting the gentle caresses of the wicked. Augustine understood that true love, *Agape* love, often demands harsh truths. Just as God sent his only Son into this world to be cruelly broken and crucified. He did it out of Love. Jesus suffered the foulest cruelty without complaint, because of love.

The devil offered soothing caresses to Jesus in the desert, tempting him with bread to satisfy his hunger, caressing his ego, and offering him empty promises. It was all so tempting; why would anyone refuse such temptations? What would it hurt? What would be the wrong in choosing the more pleasant, the more inviting, the more gratifying of choices? To do so would be to choose falsity rather than truth, to choose the caresses of wickedness rather than face the harsh realities of love.

With the most recent horrendous and horrifying school shooting in Texas, we mourn the tragic and needless loss of so many precious lives. Yet loveless voices cry out demanding justice against the just, caressing those who are now in pain with false promises and misplaced sentiment. As Paul wrote: "*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*" Perhaps love might just change the world; it did once before, didn't it?

1. Saint Augustine, *Sermon on 1 John 4:4-12*. Abridged, modernized and introduced by Stephen Tomkins.

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.

BOOKS

The Closing of the American Mind
Allan Bloom
Simon & Schuster
19877, 402 pages.

The Demon in Democracy
Ryszard Legutko
Encounter Books
2016, 182 pages.

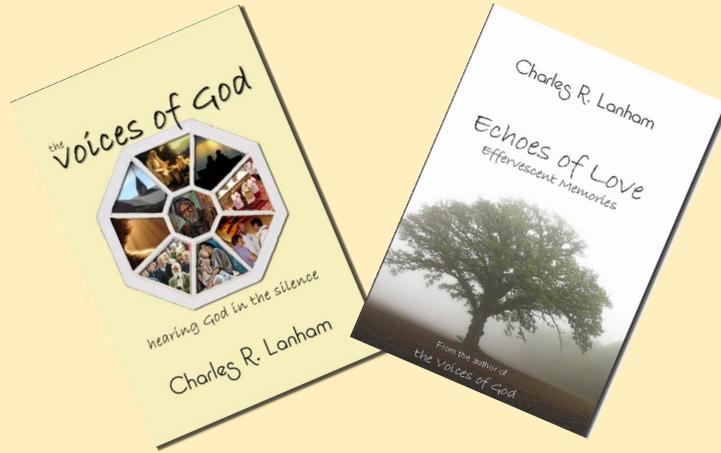
Strangers in a Strange Land
Charles J. Chaput
Henry Holt and Co.
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things
Institute on Religion and Public Life
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

Catholic Answers Magazine
Share the Faith, Defend the Faith
Editor: Tim Ryland
Bi-Monthly.
www.catholic.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**.

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.

Deacon's Corner Publishing

4742 Cougar Creek Trail

Reno, Nevada 89519