

# Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

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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.

## From The Ashes

*No peace, a sword of violence*

Whether Aristotle ought to be credited with saying "Tolerance and apathy are the last virtues of a dying society" may be arguable; it matters not to the dead. But the words without argument ring true, more so today than anyone of that ancient age could have possibly imagined.

Some two-millennia later, in 1931, then Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen penned an essay on the frequent and unfortunate misappropriation of the word "Tolerance"

AMERICA, IT IS SAID, is suffering from intolerance. It is not. It is suffering from tolerance; tolerance of right and wrong, truth and error, virtue and evil, Christ and chaos. Our country is not nearly so overrun with the bigot-

ed as it is overrun with the broad-minded. The man who might make up his bed, is called a bigot; but a man who cannot make up his mind, any more than he can make up for lost time, is called tolerant and broad-minded.

A bigoted man is one who refuses to accept a reason for anything; a broad-minded man is one who will accept anything for a reason —providing it is not a good reason. ... Today, no one

advances even a poor argument to prove that there is no God, but they are legion who think they have sealed up the heavens when they have used the word "anthropomorphism." This word is just a sample of that whole catalogue of names which serve as the excuse for those who are too lazy to think. One moment's reflection would tell them that one can no more get rid of God by calling

Him "anthropomorphic" than he can get rid of a sore throat by calling it "streptococci." ... Not only does the substitution of words for argument betray the existence of this false tolerance, but also the readiness on the



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## Flesh Or Spirit

*Whom do you serve?*

**S**eldom have I found much use for opinion polls or surveys. First and foremost because they are neither objective nor fact but, by definition, the collected opinions of a supposedly random sampling of those who just happen to have an opinion, which excludes absolutely no one at all.

For if there is a thing which every human being—man, woman, or child—shares in vast overabundance it is opinion. That is not to suggest that opinions are either right or wrong, good or bad, but rather that they are personal. Opinions, like fingerprints, eyeballs, and earlobes, are each unique, mined and forged from the ores of experience, personal taste and hearsay; not necessarily—if at all—based on proven fact, reasoned knowledge or objective truth.

Being of a personal nature, most opinion is benign and appropriate for a given situation, such as choosing which color to paint a bedroom or what type of flooring to install. Such decisions are made not on facts but on opinion. There is, after all, no one color to paint a bedroom, just as there are many choices in flooring from which to choose. Such opinions are of the kind suggested by the proverb, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” or the old saying, “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure;” perfectly benign and decidedly personal. It matters not in the slightest

whether others might hold a different view—unless of course, their opinion matters a great deal to you.

There is a different flavor to opinion polls, often too acidic or oversalted, over-the-top sweet or bitter to the tongue. Polls and surveys presuppose opinion, otherwise known as groupthink, providing a carefully crafted selection of ingredients so as to bake a “popularity cake” to serve the gullible and the ignorant.



**F**or anyone under the age of 50 this may be hard to believe, but there was a time—before the mid-1970s—when the majority of people were of the mind that God and faith and religion were as essential as breathing and as normal as eating dinner together or sitting down to watch “Life is Worth Living” on Sunday evening, presented by then Archbishop of New York, Fulton J. Sheen.

**C**atholicism and God were for one full hour broadcast live on television and were welcomed into American homes of all faiths and beliefs. And no one found it strange or abnormal or harmful or disgusting or bigoted or hate speech!

In 1974, Archbishop Sheen began one of his shows with these words:

First of all, we are at the end of Christendom. Now not Christianity, not the Church. Remember what I am saying. Christendom is economic, political, social life as inspired by Christian principles. That is ending—we’ve seen it die. Look at the symptoms: the breakup of the family, divorce, abortion, immorality, general dishonesty. We live in it from day to day, and we do not see the decline. We take it for granted—we get used to things, and almost accept them as the rule. ... the press that we read, the television that we see, is in no instance inspired by Christian principles. As a matter of fact, there is, on the part of many of us, the tendency to go down to meet the world—not to lift the world up. We are afraid of being unpopular—so we go with the mob.

Implied in his opening statement are two points which we heard in today’s readings to which I will address my remaining remarks.

Upon the death of Moses, Joshua was appointed by God to lead the people of Israel across the Jordan into the promised land. When he had grown old he called the people together and recalled to them all the promises made and fulfilled by God. He warned them in Chapter 23 that if they transgressed

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and broke their covenant with God by worshiping and bowing to other gods, the Lord's anger would cause them to perish from the land which he had given them.

**T**oday's first reading comes from the final chapter, Chapter 24. We hear but a small portion of it; left out is the Lord recounting all that he has done for his chosen people. Joshua then says to the people starting with verse 15: "If it does not please you to serve the Lord, decided today whom you will serve, ... As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

"We will serve the Lord." Hold on to that thought. I will return to it in a moment. In the Gospel we heard many of Jesus' disciples grumbling "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" and as a result many returned to their former way of life. Does that sound at all familiar to you, today?

How often do we hear someone—even from our own thoughts—complain that some teaching, encyclical, doctrine, or dogma is too rigid, too restrictive, outdated, old-fashioned, unreasonable, or unpopular and therefore can rightly be ignored because it simply doesn't work for them, or us. How often do we hear public figures—ordained or laity—claim to be "Catholic" while openly supporting and promoting ideologies and life styles in direct contradiction to the teachings of Christ, the Church, and the magisterium?

How often do we choose to return to our former way of life? Do we serve

the Lord or do we worship and kneel before other gods? Why are we here? Are we here to give praise and thanksgiving to our Lord God and Savior or are we here to socialize, to be entertained, to meet new friends? Or as Archbishop Sheen said 44 years ago, have we gotten so used to the way things are that we have accepted them as the rule. Have we gone down to meet the world, no longer willing to lift the world up? Are we so afraid of being unpopular that we follow whatever is the most popular opinion?

Our faith, our "Catholic" faith, is not a label you can pin on your shirt and by doing so still call yourself "Catholic." Those who wear their catholicity so casually hold a high opinion of themselves, they believe in themselves, they worship none but themselves, they live solely for themselves.

Here, in this holy place, we should be here for one reason and only one: to serve the Lord by giving of ourselves to the One who gives us life, to the One who sent his only Son to save us from our brokenness, to the One who loves us despite our lack of faith.

If we are truly Catholic we will, we must, shout loud against the walls of Jericho: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." As we leave here today, we have the perfect opportunity to put our faith into action by signing up to serve the Lord through parish ministry. Are we ready to serve the Lord?

Homily #183

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Joshua 24:1-2A, 15-17, 18B

Ephesians 5:21-32

John 6:60-69

## Deacon's Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

**F**or 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  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

#### Touchstone

A Journal of Mere Christianity  
Editor: James M. Kushiner  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)

#### Catholic Answers Magazine

Share the Faith, Defend the Faith  
Editor: Tim Ryland  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com)

part of many minds to accept as an authority in any field an individual who becomes a famous authority in one particular field.

Religion is not an open question, like the League of Nations [precursor to the United Nations], while science is a closed question, like the addition table. It has its principles, natural and revealed, which are more exacting in their logic than mathematics. But the false notion of tolerance has obscured this fact from the eyes of many who are as intolerant about the smallest details of life as they are tolerant about their relations to God.

In the ordinary affairs of life these same people would never summon a Christian Science practitioner to fix a broken windowpane; they would never call in an oculist because they had broken the eye of a needle; they would never call in a florist because they had hurt the palm of the hand, nor go to a carpenter to take care of their nails. They would never call in a Collector of Internal Revenue to extract a nickel swallowed by the baby. They would refuse to listen to a Kiwanis booster discussing the authenticity of an alleged Rembrandt, or to a tree-surgeon settling a moot question of law. And yet for the all-important subject of religion, on which our eternal destinies hinge, on the all-important question of the relations of man to his environment and to his God, they are willing to listen to anyone who calls himself a prophet. And so our journals are filled with articles for these "broad-minded" people, in which every one from Jack Dempsey to the chief cook of the Ritz Carlton tells about his idea of God, and his view of religion. These same individuals, who would become exasperated if, in violation of a Watsonian fancy in education, their child played with a wrongly colored lollipop, would

not become the least bit worried if he grew up without ever having heard the name of God.

Another evidence of the breakdown of reason that has produced this weird fungus of broad-mindedness is the passion for novelty, as opposed to the love of truth. Truth is sacrificed for an epigram, and the Divinity of Christ for a headline in the Monday morning newspaper. Many a modern preacher is far less concerned with preaching Christ and Him crucified than he is with his popularity with his congregation. A want of intellectual backbone makes him straddle the ox of truth and the ass of nonsense, paying compliments to Catholics because of "their great organization" and to sexologists because of their "honest challenge to the youth of this generation." Bending the knee to the mob and pleasing men rather than God would probably make them scruple at ever playing the role of a John the Baptist before a modern Herod. No accusing finger would be leveled at a divorcee or one living in adultery; no voice would be thundered in the ears of the rich, saying with something of the intolerance of Divinity: "It is not lawful for you to live with your brother's wife." Rather would we hear: "Friend, times are changing! The acids of modernity are eating away the fossils of orthodoxy. If your noble sex-urge to self-expression finds its proper stimulus and response in no one but Herodias, then in the name of Freud and Russell accept her as your lawful wife to have and to hold until sex do ye part."

Belief in the existence of God, in the Divinity of Christ, and in the moral law are considered passing fashions. The latest thing in this new tolerance is considered the true thing, as if truth were a fashion, like a hat, instead of an institution, like a head. At the present moment, in

psychology the fashion runs towards Behaviorism, as in philosophy it runs towards Temporalism. And that it is not objective validity which dictates the success of a modern philosophical theory, is borne out by the statement a celebrated space-time philosopher of England made to the writer a few years ago, when he was asked where he got his system. "From my imagination," he answered. Upon being challenged that the imagination was not the proper faculty for a philosopher to use, he retorted: "It is, if the success of your philosophical system depends not on the truth that is in it, but on its novelty." In that statement is the final argument for modern broadmindedness: truth is novelty, and hence "truth" changes with the passing fancies of the moment.

**A**rchbishop Sheen was without a doubt a prophet in his own time and ours. I have written elsewhere of my sincere admiration for his genius and saintly countenance. As one writer recently noted, "with a saintly long-ranging spiritual vision, Bishop Sheen saw the roots of today's crisis firmly planted and growing in 1974, ..." although I would argue, he saw it much earlier, as his essay would clearly indicate.

There is within this brief excerpt much to digest but to fully consider all would require a more expansive apologia than either time or space would allow. Under such constraint I will limit myself to three mentions—although fruit of the same tree—which call for further explication with regard to current societal and cultural norms. There is however a common thread which weaves the ragged garment that

we have clothed ourselves and that is the unbreakable thread of truth. For truth, objective truth, is thread of stainless steel which can neither break nor rust from either abuse or neglect.

**T**he pundit speaks of many things which must be true for such famed expertise would not confess to unknowing. That Archbishop Sheen would observe the human fallacy so commonly found among those of “famous authority in one particular field” before the age of television and the Internet is extraordinarily prophetic. Our appetites are whetted by the purported expertise smugly proffered by famed experts with absolutely no expertise in whatever swill they are proffering. Their opinion is made all the worse for being offered not as such but as the gospel truth, which it is in truth not gospel.

Then there is that “weird fungus of broad-mindedness,” that “passion for novelty, as opposed to the love of truth.” Such has become our passion, to choose pleasure and popularity rather than be labeled dangerous deviants and devout disciples of Truth. It has become anathema to speak truth; for truth dares risk offense and offense by any measure can never be tolerated. As so wonderfully stated above, a want of intellectual backbone has made us “straddle the ox of truth and the ass of nonsense” lest the feelings of some foppish fool be twittered.

I will not add further except to suggest revisiting the parable to which Archbishop Sheen remarks “no accusing finger would be leveled at a divorcee or one living in adultery.” It is

worth some moment of reflection considering the shameless decline in morality and the decadence from which western societies and cultures have succumbed these past 84 years.

Philosophy is of a serious nature—recent novation make light its seriousness—being the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence such subjects tend to weigh heavy upon the intellect. Such weighty thought ought never be undertaken as casually as choosing whether to dye one’s hair vivid pink or what shirt best matches one’s underwear.

We are each a philosopher having a philosophy borne of what we know of ourselves and the world around us. Whether it is rational and reasonable depends on whether it is founded upon truth or mere novelty. It is on that which broadminded, tolerant people hang their philosophical hats: “truth is novelty, and hence ‘truth’ changes with the passing fancies of the moment.”

**S**uch philosophical novelty mocks truth and denies its necessity; not any truth but truth which brooks no argument, truth founded on reason, truth which will no doubt offend base passions and willful desires. Truth is *not* novelty; truth, objective truth matters.

During a recent conversation with parishioner and convert, Frank Noski, I was asked to review a paper he had written. I was more than delighted to do so and was both pleased and grateful to be offered such a gift. Although the essay in its entirety was of a differ-

ent topic and for another audience, a portion expresses well similar thoughts to those which are my own. I asked for and was granted permission to reprint the salient points of Frank’s essay; what is quoted has been slightly modified for brevity.

**F**ranks begins by acknowledging that he was raised in a non-Catholic family or as he makes abundantly clear, “an anti-Catholic family,” which ultimately placed many intellectual hurdles in his path toward Catholicism.

Where do you start? I thought a lot about that question when I was preparing for this. And when the dust settled in my head, I realized that where I must start is with this simple premise: *Truth matters*. I don’t care if you have believed something your entire life and your mom and your dad said it was true, and the grandparents said it was true, and all of your friends said it was true, if an idea or belief is shown to be false, you must abandon it. ... If something is proven in your mind beyond a reasonable doubt, proven down in the fabric of your soul, then you have an obligation to act. ... Truth must come before everything else. You will always be safe if you conform your life to truth. The Truth will set you free.

... We can detect truth with reason and logic, and we can detect it through the scientific method. Conversely we can detect falsehood in a similar manner.

There really is only one KIND of truth. Objective truth. Not all questions that we face in this world fall under the domain of objective truth, and it is important that we understand differences that exist between certain kinds of questions.

Some questions have an objective answer. Some questions have a subjective answer. Objective questions can be shown to have *only one correct answer*. Subjective questions potentially have many answers. In fact, to be more precise, subjective questions really don't have answers, per se. They elicit opinions, not answers. ...

Let's start with a fundamental principle: Things that are different are not the same. Agreed? With regard to questions that are rooted in objective truth, different correct answers to the same question cannot be possible. Two plus two cannot be four today and seven tomorrow ... It is irrational to argue that it is a possibility for both of these answers to be correct. It does not matter one iota how the culture might shift to see mathematics in a new and different and creative way, or employ in some other way the use of creative semantics. At the end of the day two plus two is and will always be four.

There is a reason for this which is why we can use reason to figure it out: two plus two equals four—*conforms to reality*. That's the reason this answer and only this answer is correct. The answer to this questions has been established by something or someone greater than ourselves, individually or collectively; something or someone transcendent to us. We don't have to like the answer to the question or agree with it, but the answer does not change as a result.

... if we ask the question: is there any circumstance or situation in this world, where when we combine two items with two more items and then count them up, can we

come up with any other answer than four, the answer is a resounding, no, that can never happen, two plus two equals four. We can do this experiment over and over and always get the same answer. The statement two plus two equals four comports with reality.

Now, on the other hand, if we ask: what is the prettiest color for a car, this is a purely subjective question. There are no right or wrong answers, or no right or wrong opinions. Some people will agree on blue, others black, some green and others red. Those who answer blue will agree wholeheartedly with everyone else who says blue but will disagree with those who say red. But it's all totally a matter of opinion. We cannot conduct an experiment that will prove that blue is a prettier color than green for an automobile. ...

If 1,000,000 people were asked, what is the sum of two plus two and 999,999 of them answered six, the answer is still an objective unchanging four. And if 1,000,000 people were asked what is the prettiest color for a car and 999,999 of them said green, it simply means that of the 1 million people asked, 99.99% of them THOUGHT that green is the prettiest color for a car, today. The question has no objectively correct answer, and in fact at some point in the future, some of that million people might change their minds to a different color. It's purely subjective.

...if we understand that objective truth is fixed and final and established by something or someone greater than ourselves, we should be able to see the shortcoming of a subjective, opinion-driven religion. ... Jacopo Cardinal Sadoletto, Bishop

of Carpentras, writing in 1539 in response to the so-called reformation ... points out the obvious problems concerning the Protestantism of his day. Cardinal Sadoletto writes:

*"For already, since these men began (speaking of the reformers) how many sects have torn the Church? Sects not agreeing with them, and yet disagreeing with each other—a manifest indication of falsehood, as all doctrine declares. Truth is always one, while falsehood is varied and multiform; that which is straight is simple, that which is crooked has many turns. Can anyone who acknowledges and confesses Christ, and into whose heart and mind the Holy Spirit hath shone, fail to perceive that such rending, such tearing of the Holy Church, is the proper work of Satan, and not of God?"*

Religion deals with objective *Truth*, not subjective opinion. The answers to the questions are given by the Creator; they are not determined by individuals or consensus of many individuals banded together. The answers are not determined by the whims of individuals or group of individuals, no matter how smart or certain they may be.

God is the Authority. He is the One who has the authority to ordain reality. Jesus asks in Luke 6:39, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?"

**T**ruth, like medicine, is often difficult to swallow until sugarc-coated to suit the palate. Archbishop Sheen wrote in 1931:

Truth does grow, but it grows homogeneously, like an acorn into an oak; it does not swing in the breeze,

like a weathercock. The leopard does not change his spots nor the Ethiopian his skin, though the leopard be put in bars or the Ethiopian in pink tights. The nature of certain things is fixed, and none more so than the nature of truth. Truth may be contradicted a thousand times, but that only proves that it is strong enough to survive a thousand assaults. But for any one to say, "Some say this, some say that, therefore there is no truth," is about as logical as it would have been for Columbus, who heard some say, "The earth is round," and others say, "The earth is flat," to conclude: "Therefore there is no earth at all."

Like a carpenter who might throw away his rule and use each beam as a measuring-rod, so, too, those who have thrown away the standard of objective truth have nothing left with which to measure but the mental fashion of the moment.

The giggling giddiness of novelty, the sentimental restlessness of a mind unhinged, and the unnatural fear of a good dose of hard thinking, all conjoin to produce a group of sophomoric latitudinarians who think there is no difference between God as Cause and God as a "mental projection"; who equate Christ and Buddha, St. Paul and John Dewey, and then enlarge their broad-mindedness into a sweeping synthesis that says not only that one Christian sect is just as good as another, but even that one world-religion is just as good as another. The great god "Progress" is then enthroned on the altars of fashion, and as the hectic worshipers are asked, "Progress towards what?" the tolerant answer comes back, "More progress." All the while sane men are wondering how there can be progress without direction and how there can be direction without a fixed point. And because they speak of a "fixed point," they are said to be behind the times, when

really they are beyond the times mentally and spiritually.

In the face of this false broad-mindedness, what the world needs is intolerance. The mass of people have kept up hard and fast distinctions between dollars and cents, battleships and cruisers, "You owe me" and "I owe you," but they seem to have lost entirely the faculty of distinguishing between the good and the bad, the right and the wrong. The best indication of this is the frequent misuse of the terms "tolerance" and "intolerance." There are some minds that believe that intolerance is always wrong, because they make "intolerance" mean hate, narrow-mindedness, and bigotry. These same minds believe that tolerance is always right because, for them, it means charity, broad-mindedness, American good nature.

What is tolerance? Tolerance is an attitude of reasoned patience towards evil, and a forbearance that restrains us from showing anger or inflicting punishment. But what is more important than the definition is the field of its application. The important point here is this: Tolerance applies only to persons, but never to truth. Intolerance applies only to truth, but never to persons. Tolerance applies to the erring; intolerance to the error.

America is suffering not so much from intolerance, which is bigotry, as it is from tolerance, which is indifference to truth and error, and a philosophical nonchalance that has been interpreted as broad-mindedness.

**O**n December 23, 1776, Thomas Paine wrote "These are the times that try men's souls." At such times despair—a thoroughly unpleasant sort—will slither through the cracks. There are, of course, those who would never waste

the opportunity a crisis presents; delighting in the misery inflicted upon anyone but themselves, advantaging their own self-interest for as long as none who are "anyone" claim foul.

**T**hen again, there is hope; hope rooted in faith grounded in One Truth and One Love. The world has been turning far longer than memory may recall; Love remembers beyond all memory wherein shall reside all hope. "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

During one of his weekly television shows in 1974, Archbishop Sheen reminded his viewers that there is an ebb and flow to history, that nothing of man lasts forever but Christ.

First of all, we are at the end of Christendom. Now not Christianity, not the Church. Remember what I am saying. Christendom is economic, political, social life as inspired by Christian principles. That is ending—we've seen it die. Look at the symptoms: the breakup of the family, divorce, abortion, immorality, general dishonesty. We live in it from day to day, and we do not see the decline. We take it for granted—we get used to things, and almost accept them as the rule. ... the press that we read, the television that we see, is in no instance inspired by Christian principles. As a matter of fact, there is, on the part of many of us, the tendency to go down to meet the world—not to lift the world up. We are afraid of being unpopular—so we go with the mob.

Should anyone find these words too uncomfortably close to home, remember the years 1931 and 1974, 87 and 44 years in the past. It is not at all

difficult to imagine how much worse things have become with the coronation of “tolerance” for and acceptance of gender dysphoria and reassignment, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, marriage redefinition, and the sexual abuses both inside the Church and throughout society.

**A**rchbishop Sheen reminded his audience that of 22 civilizations that have decayed since the beginning of the world, 19 rotted and perished from within. He further made note of the 500-year cycle in Catholic Church history, saying

the Church is not a continuing thing — it dies and rises again. It proceeds on the principle of Christ himself as priest and victim. And there comes the defeat, the seeming decay, we are put in the grave, and then we rise again. We have had four deaths in our Christian history.

The first death came with the fall of Rome but then rose again through the efforts of Church Fathers like Augustine. The second death coincided with the Moslem invasions and the Great Schism at the beginning of the second millennium (c. 1054). “It seemed to be the end of everything. And then we came to life again”

He noted that the third death came when the Church became “rotten” from within by clergy and religious; the result:

Reformers who almost always reform the wrong things. And they began reforming the faith, and there was nothing wrong with faith—it was morals that needed to be reformed. It’s not renewal—it’s really

moral reformation that is needed today, too.

Bear in mind he said this 44 years ago. And yet, as in the previous cycles, the Church will inevitably rise from the ashes to new life, but not yet.

And now we’re at the fourth period, and we’re rotting—we’re spoiled—no great zeal, no great learning, no great fire. Yet there is hope because anyone who knows history is not particularly disturbed

But the enemy in each of the 500-year periods has been separate and distinct. We had, and here I am speaking generally of enemies within the Church, in the first 500 years, false doctrine centering around the person of Christ ... the Christological heresies. So the Church was just split open, and that was one of the reasons that made it possible for the Moslems to develop. The next period saw attacks on the head of the Church, leading to the Eastern Church breaking away. By the 16th century the attack was on the body of Christ, the mystical body, the Church.

Our enemy today is the world—the spirit of the world. Today we have to conform to the world or we’re branded. Our Lord said, *I have taken you out of the world.* We say, ‘no we have to win the world, and to win it you have to be one with it.’ Our Lord says, *I pray not for the world.* He was praying for the spirit of the world. And this is the easiest kind of way to fall off the log—worldliness. It’s so simple, and it can be justified for a thousand reasons; namely, the Vatican Council said we have to go into the world—indeed, but not to be world, which is quite a different matter. So this is our attack today. This is one of the basic causes of our degeneration, of our death. We’re dying. What about it? What’s the answer? The answer is: these are great and wonderful

days in which to be alive. I thank God...that I can live in these days, because these are days of testing.

**T**he days of testing are of yet far from complete; the testing if anything has become all the more intense and at times terrifyingly difficult. Archbishop Sheen noted that in the three decades prior (to 1974) it was easy to be Christian.

The atmosphere was Christian; morals were Christian; there was no great problem in adapting ourselves to a Christian society. But now, when everything is turned around, these are days when the masks have got to come off, and we reveal ourselves just as we really are.

Today the current is against us. And today the mood of the world is, ‘Go with the world, go with the spirit.’ Listen, dead bodies float downstream. Only live bodies resist the current. And so the good Lord is testing us.

And he is testing Western Christians with worldliness, and how many of us are falling? Just as the Israelites were tested by God in the desert, that is what he is doing to us. We are showing what we really are now. St. John says in his Epistle: ‘They did not love us really from the beginning. That is why they left us.’ And so the souls that are falling away have just failed to meet the test. It is very much like the test that the Jews had.

What we are going to have in the Church is a minority report: a minority report of sisters, a minority report of priests, a minority report of laity—not the minority that is aggressive and troublemaking, but the minority that like Caleb and Joshua, trusts in God. So we are tested just as the Jews were tested.

Not far after our time, and perhaps in the time of some, then will come the battles and the testing. Our Lord said, *Satan would sift you as wheat*. And we are being sifted as wheat. So we can all thank God that we live in these days. Really, it's beautiful. Now we can say, 'aye' or 'nay,' and we can bear up under assault, criticism and ridicule, because this is the lot of the Christian in the days of the spirit of the world.

**I**t is altogether rather difficult to discern beauty in floating dead bodies or in facts which place us here in these dark and challenging days and yet the sainted bishop sees the times as beautiful and not in the least gloomy. Why beautiful? Because

It is a picture of the Church in the midst of increasing opposition from the world. And, therefore, live your lives in the full consciousness of this hour of testing, and rally close to the heart of Christ.

And if there is anything that has to be restored in our day, I would say it would be violence. Violence! The kingdom of heaven is won by violence. And only the violent shall conquer it.

When the Church drops things, he said, the world picks them up but twists them in the wrong way. For example, mysticism drops, and the young turn to pharmaceuticals and drugs.

And we drop violence, discipline, commitment to the Cross, and the world picks it up ... That's why there's no stopping the violence of this country. We just have to ... hire more police guards, build more hospitals for the addicts. Why? Because there's no moral reason on the inside why they should stop.

Ronald Reagan in his 1981 Inaugural Address countermanded the then near universal argument that bigger government, more entitlement spending and more coercive laws could solve most, if not all, problems when he said, "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." He was right, just as Archbishop Sheen was right a mere seven years prior. Government may wield a mighty sword but Christ hung upon the hilt of a sword far larger and mightier than any government.

Archbishop Sheen went on to explain:

Our Blessed Lord said *I have come to bring the sword*. Not peace! We are always talking about peace, peace, peace! Yes, because that war (World War II, Korean War, etc.) happened—but we aren't making war in ourselves—and there's not going to be any peace in the world until we make war. Our Lord said, *I came not to bring peace, but the sword!* He never used the word 'peace' until after Easter.

The Lord brought a sword. It's not the sword that's thrust outward against the enemy. It's the sword that's thrust against ourselves, cutting out the seven pallbearers of the soul: pride and covetousness and lust and anger, envy, gluttony and sloth. And we've given up the sword—someone else has taken it up, and we have to restore it! Then we'll get peace! And peace is never corporate—it's never social—until it's first individual.

Social peace, world peace, is the extension of individual peace in our hearts. When we are right with God, then we will be right with our fellow man. When we are not right with God, then we will be wrong with everyone else.

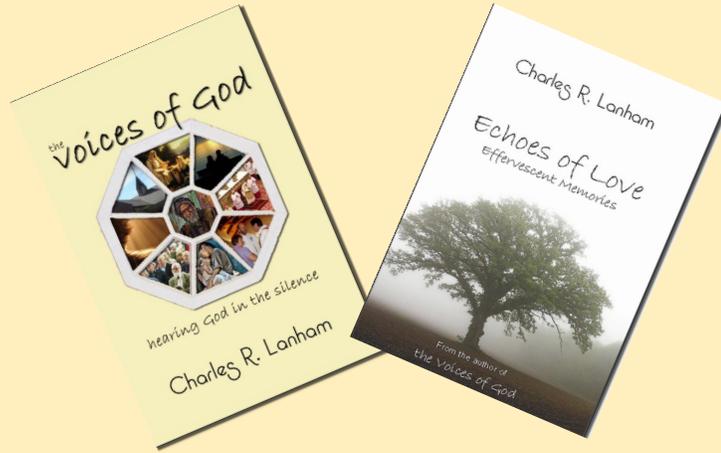
The Lord is keeping reserves. He is training us. We'll make the entry. We'll prepare for a new Church. And he is with us—we just simply can't add rules—only we've already won as a matter of fact, only the news has not yet leaked out—and so it's violence that has to be restored.

We have forgotten—or perhaps we have no desire to acknowledge—what we are; we most assuredly harbor an opinion and therein lies a truly sordid tale. Most find the thinking much too wearying for there are so many other things far more entertaining. And yet, what is cheaply purchased carries heavy hidden costs which one can ill-afford.

One final thought from the venerable Archbishop to chew:

On all sides we hear it said today, "The modern world wants a religion without dogmas," which betrays how little thinking goes with that label, for he who says he wants a religion without dogmas is stating a dogma, and a dogma that is harder to justify than many dogmas of faith. A dogma is a true thought, and a religion without dogmas is a religion without thought, or a back without a backbone. All sciences have dogmas. "Washington is the capital of the United States" is a dogma of geography. "Water is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen" is a dogma of chemistry. Should we be broad-minded and say that Washington is a sea in Switzerland? Should we be broad-minded and say that H<sub>2</sub>O is a symbol for sulfuric acid?

It makes a great difference whether we choose to live as children of God, resisting the current of popular opinion, or floating downstream following the herd. But, it is your choice.



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