

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

Running In Reverse

The tyranny of opinion

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.

Running In Reverse

The tyranny of opinion

There is a certain pleasure, so deliciously enjoyed—some might even think of it perverse—revisiting a time-worn study, reminiscing over bent and tattered leaves, now yellowed with age, inscribed with thoughts from somewhere and then far off, yet, ever bit an oracle of the here and now. To borrow, one senses a convergence in the force, a sense of coming round, like riding a carousel, the beginning is the ending or the other way, it matters little to the insouciant carouser. Monozygotic twins—now and yesterday—too much alike to tell the difference.

G. K. Chesterton once quipped, "Thoroughly worldly people never understand even the world; they rely altogether on a few cynical maxims which

are not true."¹ Five score and ten have gone round enough to prove his point. Anyone of his acquaintance would attest the times were mean and ugly and dissolute; then and now the same and yet the younger appears much the worse.

The human race has got itself queerly stuck in reverse, running away from yesterday as if maniacs let loose with no



particular place to go. When his publisher said of somebody that "...he believes in himself" Chesterton readily replied, "Shall I tell you where the men are who believe most in themselves? For I can tell you. ...The men who really believe in themselves are all in lunatic asylums."

Here then lies a dystopian tale. For those who believe in themselves have been put out rather than shut in, lifted up rather than strapped down. There can

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be no rational explanation for the madness of those who would hang God for blasphemy.

That the world has gone mad is quite the obvious to thoroughly worldly men who have no doubts as to their sanity. They are quite content comfortably ensconced within their vellum skin, believing everything would be the better if only the world was as sane as they. It is the common man—at once in control of both his mind and his reason—who harbors doubts as to his sanity, terribly afraid of being found out for the unforgivable sin of orthodoxy.

What is it that madmen are so insanely mad about? Why must the sky be black and blue, then of a sudden sober gray? Why must carriages turn to pumpkin at the stroke of midnight? Why must two plus two always end up an even four and not an imaginary oddment of three or five or seven? Who makes the rules meant to be ignored and broken? The madman shouts the sky is falling while getting wet standing in the rain. The lunatic convinces himself divine, proclaiming “better to be god than not” knowing nothing in the least of godly things. Madmen are slaves to opinion; truth and souls be damned to hell. Not knowing who or what or where, the lunatic proclaims a hundred things which make no sense, refusing to take no for an answer to questions never asked.

It was Chesterton who argued in the neighborhood of the mad-house modern science was “much impressed with the need of beginning all inquiry

with a fact” (post-modern science not so much impressed with the inconvenience) just as the “ancient masters of religion were equally impressed with that necessity.”

They began with the fact of sin—a fact as practical as potatoes. Whether or no man could be washed in miraculous waters, there was no doubt at any rate that he wanted washing. But certain religious leaders ..., not mere materialists, have begun in our day not to deny the highly disputable water, but to deny the indisputable dirt. Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved. ... The strongest saints and the strongest sceptics alike took positive evil as the starting-point of their argument. If it be true (as it certainly is) that a man can feel exquisite happiness in skinning a cat, then the religious philosopher can only draw one of two deductions. He must either deny the existence of God, as all atheists do; or he must deny the present union between God and man, as all Christians do. The new theologians seem to think it is a highly rationalistic solution to deny the cat.²

No longer does one present an argument with ordinary, everyday facts, no matter how inarguably true. No. No. That simply will not do. Opinion trumps those awful facts—within the margin of error, of course; truth, a nasty habit by those who would belittle the opinions of their neighbors. It is the opinion of the majority of those surveyed that wins the day or the consensus of portside politicians screaming hysterically that the sky is melting and the world will end in twelve years. They know it to be true because the opinions of 99.99999% of bug-eyed, green-

bearded chameleons posing as scientists surveyed have declared it undeniably so. No further proof necessary; no antithesis allowed. Any facts to the contrary are wrong, terribly wrong. No reasonable person dares ask, “Why twelve years? Why not six or eight or ten or any other imaginary number?” for fear of being assaulted for the mortal sin of staring at reality.

The abandonment of reason to the tyranny of opinion yokes unfettered liberty and freedom to the plow of subjugation and slavery. The madman is a fool who may readily agree he is mad though blind to his own foolishness. Ask a socialist what is wrong with the world and he will pray you a litany; ask what should be done and the socialist will demand your life without so much of a thank you for your generosity. Ask a progressive what is wrong with the world and the progressive will puff up and claim utter lack of progress; ask what should be done and the progressive, like any robber, will demand all that you have. Ask a politician what is wrong with the world and the answer will inevitably be to set the fault at the feet of the opposing party; ask what should be done and the politician will call for free and fair elections. Ask a philosophy professor what is wrong with the world and the response will be God; ask what should be done and the professor will say wash the mouths of those who call God their Father. Ask an honest man who is uncommonly sane what is wrong with the world and he will echo the question; ask what should be done and he will ask for a moment of silence to thank God for the many blessings he has received.

Can there be the slightest doubt the world has completely lost its orbit? Before Copernicus started a revolution by formulating a new cosmology of the universe—or closer to home: the solar system—admiring how the sun was the heliocentric star of the astronomical show, the earth held center stage and humanity played the fool. Five hundred years later, humanity plays the bigger fool, moving the self to the universal center and all the world the stage. God has been evicted, replaced by a new theology—egology—the self-study of the egocentric self. Man is thus twice the fool, but has no knowledge of it. “If a man has lost a leg or an eye, he knows he has lost a leg or an eye; but if he has lost a self—himself—he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it.”³

The unreasonable man will, when confronted by a fact standing in the way of his opinion, refer to the latest survey to improve his lie. To illustrate, it is an indisputable fact that the world has never for an instant stopped spinning like a top while circling round the sun. Not in a perfect circle, mind you, but in an odd eccentric, even on occasion politely doffing its polar cap in deference to the infrequent passers-by. This orbital eccentricity—which is even older and more eccentric than Methuselah—changes with quotidian regularity.

Now enter 11,000 bug-eyed, green-bearded chameleons willing to scratch an X on fine parchment, warning of the imminent desecration of holy mother earth. “We declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from

around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency” unless and until ... wait for it ... that human pestilence, also known as “the world population must be stabilized—and, ideally, gradually reduced.”⁴

According to these 11,000 climate changing chameleons, a tipping point is fast approaching. They have clearly bitten into the apple of “population control” poisonously provided by Maynard Keynes, who quite positively posited that what was needed to address the looming Malthusian catastrophe was a smaller and “better” population, cultivated by “the powerful weapon of the preventive check” to be administered through a state-directed population policy. His conclusion? “I believe that for the future the problem of population will emerge in the much greater problem of heredity and Eugenics. **Quality must become the pre-occupation.**” [Emphasis added]

It sounds far too much like those new-age theologians who would deny the cat.

But then, facts have a nasty habit of waking from the dead to spoil the wake and deny the funeral. Of the 11,000 chameleons, few wore the color “scientist”. The vast majority hued colors unsuitable for any rainbow: “Ph.D. student”, “MD”, “Zookeeper”, “Mickey Mouse” and “Albus Dumbledore”.

Speaking then of changing hues at every novel twist and turn, perhaps another dire emergency should be added to the endless existential threats now threatening holy

mother Gaia.

Here, I am speaking of the uncontrolled overpopulation of gender-dysphoric chameleons who, in their madness, would cut off their noses—or, as is more likely the case, their genitalia—to neuter themselves. That there are those who would object to the spaying and gelding of cats and dogs and a myriad of other hapless creatures while willingly allowing themselves and others to be neutered and shape-shifted into some ungodly alien creatures beggars all notions of sanity.

There is, however, a plus side to this madness. Otherwise sane, rational people who are perfectly comfortable being sexually dimorphic—either male or female, whichever of the two and only genders God made of them—rather enjoy the pleasures and the products of their God-given reproductive unions. Gender-changing chameleons are self-sterilizing, thus, by default, they cannot replace themselves, sacrificing themselves for the salvation of holy mother Gaia. One might rightly wonder why any god or goddess, supposedly divine and by their self-same divinity, all-powerful, would require salvation from rapacious pests, but that is a question for another day.

What has gone wrong is this: the cart is now pulling the horse. That anyone with the least amount of commonsense would say, “This is madness” is a sure sign of their own sanity. A sane man who is ill will ask a doctor for a prescription to what ails him; the madman blames the doctor for failing

to cure him of his illness before it was well and truly caught.

A sane man might read a sign that offends his sense of decency and shake his head in mild disgust, sympathizing for the poor devil so obviously lacking the skills necessary to express himself without invoking such crude profanity. And yet, the one who is sane, will mutter to himself, "That poor devil has the right to say whatsoever happens to enter his mind and on his heart" and then, quickly turn away out of common decency. However, those who are mad will hoist their foul petards without conscience, their intentional purpose to incite a violent reaction. They will claim the right to utter whatever foul invective should cross their unhappy lips, yet when the anticipated reaction comes about, obstinately claim the right to speak freely while demanding the offender be silenced.

This, of course, is not the least or worst of it. For the madness has spread into and has quite thoroughly infected the halls of justice, government, civil society and the sacred grounds of Holy Mother Church. There are enough examples to fill a book, which I have no burning desire to fill; I will leave such accounting to the devil to be sure for his everlasting amusement. I will, however, list a few, which for heaven's sake I cannot and do not recommend.

The earth has two poles, north and south, which, while opposite one another are not in opposition. They are both complementary and necessary, not in the least polarizing but altogether

er unitive, quite the opposite to the polarization that is now occurring among the human inhabitants of this fair globe. It is perfectly reasonable to note that a major contributing factor to this increasing divisiveness is the abandonment of reason.

When we absolutize our preferences, build echo chambers, and fail to agree on basic facts or the meaning of evidence, we insulate ourselves from ever having the capacity to change our mind. It is a matter of course then that we isolate ourselves from those who differ from us, retreating to the safe space of those we already know to have "correct" opinions, which just happen to mirror our own.⁵

Chesterton often praised the virtues of logic—by all appearances now lost along with reason, morality and sanity. In one of his Father Brown stories, "The Blue Cross," he describes French detective Aristide Valentin as "a thinking man, and a plain man at the same time."

All his wonderful successes, that looked like conjuring, had been gained by plodding logic, by clear and commonplace French thought. ... But exactly because Valentin understood reason, he understood the limits of reason. Only a man who knows nothing of motors talks of motoring without petrol; only a man who knows nothing of reason talks of reasoning without strong, undisputed first principles.

Later on, Father Brown, upon unmasking master criminal Flambeau—posing as another clergyman—discloses why he knew he was not, in fact, a priest.

"As a matter of fact, another part of my trade, too, made me sure you

weren't a priest." "What?" asked the thief, almost gaping. "You attacked reason," said Father Brown. "It's bad theology."

Chesterton clearly saw what too few are even conscious of today in whatever we might suggest to be civil discourse. With the ubiquity of social media comes anonymity, which provides cover for our willingness and too often an addictive compulsion to share opinions on each and every topic that comes across our newsfeeds, knowing nothing of the topic any more than a man who knows nothing of motors talks of motoring without petrol or that reason requires strong, undisputed first principles.

Restraint is necessary but seldom practiced. As a result, we have doctors who swear by the Hippocratic oath to do no harm while tearing apart unborn human beings limb by limb while taking special care in preserving organs for a tidy profit, providing patients with the means to suicide and euthanizing the old and undesirable to save a dollar. We have judges sworn to uphold the law and administer justice fairly and equitably who sentence without evidence, allow prejudice to overrule truth, convict without due process, free the guilty and jail the innocent.

And then, there are those dubious barristers who are bent on protecting our precious liberties—the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)—come hell or high water, which would be something if they believed in hell or heaven, or if they dared come close to water, high or low, lest they melt.

As one pundit recently opined:

There are a lot of unbelievable things happening in our world today. So many, that it's easy to ignore them as they whip by us like the Wicked Witch of the West's hoard of flying monkeys.

But some things are just too remarkable [actually, I would have used bizarre, for remarkable subtly implies something positively extraordinary] to ignore. The ACLU's tweet for International Men's Day is one of them:

- There's no one way to be a man.
- Men who get their periods are men.
- Men who get pregnant and give birth are men.
- Trans and non-binary men belong.⁶

What is equally bizarre—I simply cannot frame this madness as remarkable—is that this irrational nonsense has also been spotted flying across the pond. Whether coming or going, I have no clear understanding; it does not matter either way. According to The Telegraph, the all-wise British city council of Brighton & Hove has determined that men can experience that heretofore mysterious feminine time of the month known as their *period*.

School children will be taught that “all genders” can have periods in new sex education lessons, in a victory for transgender rights campaigners.

The new advice follows a council report which said: “Trans boys and men and non-binary people may have periods”, adding that “menstruation must be inclusive of all genders.”

Seriously? As Forest Gump was known to say, “Stupid is as stupid does.” If you find yourself taking a quick trip to powder your nose or clear your stomach, my apologies. These are neither the first nor the only times when supposedly intelligent, educated people have shown themselves so far removed from reality and no doubt it will not even remotely be the last. Clearly, we are living in the age of STUPIDITY! And I would further insist, insanity.

At one time or another we have all heard the definition of insanity as “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results” which may be in most cases true enough, however, in the here and now, it somehow feels far wide of the mark. The legal definition of insanity hits the target closer to the bullseye: “mental illness of such a severe nature that a person cannot distinguish fantasy from reality”.

The British author, C.S. Lewis, once declared that “the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian and scholar who subversively fought and died under the reign of Adolph Hitler, during his imprisonment by the Nazis wrote on the issue of stupidity. “Stupidity,” he said, “is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice,” for the latter is more recognizable and gives “human beings at least a sense of unease.”

Against stupidity we are defenseless. Neither protests nor the use of force accomplish anything here; reasons fall on deaf ears; facts that

contradict one's prejudgment simply need not be believed—in such moments the stupid person even becomes critical—and when facts are irrefutable they are just pushed aside as inconsequential, as incidental.

If we want to know how to get the better of stupidity, we must seek to understand its nature. This much is certain, that it is in essence not an intellectual defect but a human one. There are human beings who are of remarkably agile intellect yet stupid, and others who are intellectually quite dull yet anything but stupid. We discover this to our surprise in particular situations. The impression one gains is not so much that stupidity is a congenital defect but that, under certain circumstances, people are *made* stupid or that they allow this to happen to them. We note further that people who have isolated themselves from others or who live in solitude manifest this defect less frequently than individuals or groups of people inclined or condemned to sociability. And so it would seem that stupidity is perhaps less a psychological than a sociological problem.

Yet at this very point it becomes quite clear that only an act of liberation, not instruction, can overcome stupidity. Here we must come to terms with the fact that in most cases a genuine internal liberation becomes possible only when external liberation has preceded it. Until then we must abandon all attempts to convince the stupid person. This state of affairs explains why in such circumstances our attempts to know what ‘the people’ really think are in vain and why, under these circumstances, this question is so irrelevant for the person who is thinking and acting responsibly. The word of the Bible that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom declares that the internal liberation of human beings to live the responsible life

before God is the only genuine way to overcome stupidity.

What Bonhoeffer maintained, that the nature of stupidity, its essence, is not a genetic fault of the intellect but rather a manufactured defect, Lewis substantiates: "What we call man's power is, in reality, a power possessed by some men which they may, or may not, allow other men to profit by. ... Man is as much the patient or subject as the possessor, since he is the target ... for propaganda."⁷

Every—on which it must be emphatically stressed—society that has turned to socialism, communism, fascism or any of its myriad deviant forms has failed terribly, always at a horrific cost in uncountable human lives. To the extent that such societies have "succeeded"—and I use that word with the utmost caution to mean longevity not accomplishment—its initial *success* and span of control has necessarily depended on its total and complete cooptation of education and a propagandizing media, and yet, more than any other factor, the absolute denial of God and the corruption of religion unto itself.

Speaking in the preface to his book *Heaven on Earth*, Joshua Muravchik, a former socialist, argues that the interest in socialized government and the decline in nationalist sentiment is a secular religion.

Ironically, the power of this faith was to some degree obscured by the popularity of Marxist theory, which held that ideas were merely the surface froth thrown up by underlying currents of technological pro-

cess and material interests. This too was a seductive notion because it answered that most puzzling question: why do people think what they do? But this 'materialist' interpretation of ideology has not stood the test of time, least of all in explaining socialism's own history. What material interests or technology caused the triumph of socialism, or its defeat, in Russia? Its transmission to China, Cuba, and North Korea? Its appearance in other forms in Sweden, Israel, Tanzania, Syria?

Arguably, [socialism] was the most popular idea of any kind, surpassing even the great religions. Like them, socialism spread both by evangelization and by the sword, but no religion ever spread so far or so fast. Islam conquered an empire that at its height embraced 20 percent of mankind. It took 300 years before Christianity could speak for 10 percent of the world's people, and after two millennia it claims the adherence of about one-third of the human race. By comparison, within 10 years after the term 'socialism' was coined by the followers of Robert Owen in the late 1820s, roughly 60 percent of the earth's population found itself living under socialist rule of one kind or another.

One must ask, what caused and continues to cause such appeal? Muravchik suggests an unknowing of history.

A new generation began to come of age without direct memory of "history." And like the phoenix, socialism seemed to rise from the ashes and weave its spell once again. The image of equality, harmony, and easy abundance still tantalized; it gained new cachet as a panacea for the pains of globalization, migration and industrial obsolescence.

Assuming Muravchik's analysis of socialism as a faith, a secular religion, should we then not be asking ourselves a few questions before swallowing the canary whole? Are we become that stupid or are we all just stark raving mad?

Do we believe that morals are mere historical perspectives enforced by those with power? Do we treat others as though they were merely obeying the laws of gravity when they hurt us? Or, do we feel personally offended? Are morals rooted in a transcendental reality – in a common Power – that all of us understand, and that all of us can appeal to when wronged by our neighbor?

Finally, if the West is declining – if Christianity is declining – why are we still assuming we can create any lasting Heaven on Earth?⁸

Some are wont to call it a culture war, which I suppose has some merit, but then, it seems rather more an epic battle of a mad, mad, raging mad horde of social justice demons fighting saints and angels for the keys to heaven. God has obviously been benched, forced to sit this war out. The battle is ultimately about maximizing "power", the power to control lives, the power to create heaven on earth for the few who have it and hell for those who hold no share of it.

Socialism appeals because it is attractive enough for people who have been made stupid to believe and support by providing a mix of moral and material incentives. It propagates its grand vision from within centers of culture and education, orienting people to its conception of the good, true,

and beautiful, by passing on to future generations, through education, a worldview that incorporates its ideology. Socialism depends on suggesting goals specific enough to fool some of the people, but vague enough that they can be reinterpreted such that the goals are never quite met. If not just outcomes but procedures become essential tenets, then the ideology can self-perpetuate for a long time.

The founding fathers created a Constitutional Republic of the people, by the people, and for the people whose will was to be respected and faithfully carried out by duly elected *representatives*. It is noteworthy and yet seldom brought to any attention what is written in Article IV, Section 4 of the United States Constitution.

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a *Republican Form of Government*, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

What is further worthy of notice are these words for which not a single instance in the aforementioned document can be found: *democracy* or *democratic*, *leader* or *leadership*, *govern* or *governed*. What is found are best expressed in the Ninth and Tenth Amendments to what is referred to as the Bill of Rights:

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained *by the people*.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or *to the people*.

Before any further note, I would be remiss if I did not recall the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence.

When in the Course of human events, *it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another*, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

No other form of government exists where the people are the governors of their individual destinies; government is servant, neither master nor administrator. This nation is not a democracy but a republic. We the People forget that at the peril of our very lives.

1. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, (New York: John Lane Company, 1908), 22.
2. G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 23.
3. Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*.
4. William J. Ripple et al., "World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency", in press with Bioscience Magazine. From the abstract: "*Scientists have a moral obligation to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and 'tell it like it is.'* Based on this obligation and the data presented below, we herein proclaim, with more than 10,000 scientist signatories from around the world, a clear and unequivocal declaration that a climate emergency exists on planet Earth."
5. Anders Koskinen, "*Father Brown and the Nature of Logic*", Intellectual Takeout, October 30, 2019.
6. Annie Holmquist, "*Avoiding Stupidity in the Age of Pregnant and Period Producing Men*", Intellectual Takeout, November 20, 2019.
7. C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics: The Abolition of Man*, (London: C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 2002), 719.
8. George Luke, "*The Secular Religion of Socialism*", Intellectual Takeout, November 19, 2019.

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

Salvation

Michael Patrick Barber

Ignatius Press
2019, 189 pages.

Faith and Politics

Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Ignatius Press
2018, 269 pages.

The Day Is Now Far Spent

Robert Cardinal Sarah

Ignatius Press
2019, 350 pages.

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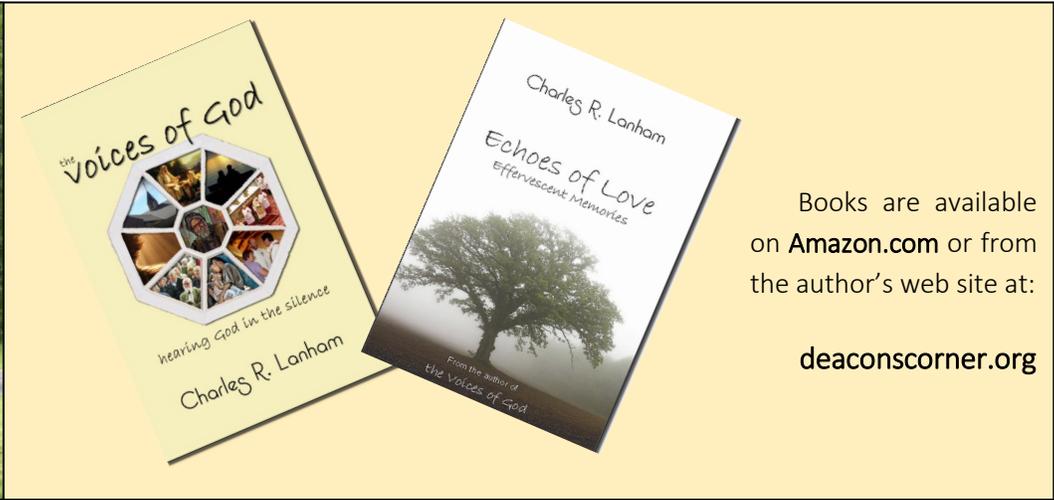
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Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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