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A journal for restless minds

Colloquī *: to discuss*

A Call for Protest

It is time to take back our Ecclesia

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Anyone who still believes in miracles; in whom there remains a shred of enchantment in their heart; who still has room in their soul for the mysterious, the metaphysical, the mystical and the transcendent must, with great unease, be feeling lost and uncertain in these trying times of trial and tribulation. No matter how often we remind ourselves of what Jesus promised, it is terribly difficult and near impossible to overcome those nagging doubts, those unsettling thoughts that invade our spirit like a deadly virus. Jesus said, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it (MT 16:17-18).

It certainly seems from all outward appearances as though the powers of death have gained the upper hand when it comes to the wages of sin against faith and reason. The powers of death do not fear God because either God does not exist or God is dead; either way, God is no longer relevant. In his introduction to *Letters on Liturgy* Fr Dwight Longenecker writes of how it is a sad truth that we live in the most disenchanting era of human history.

Our utilitarian, techno-scientific world is obsessed with being useful. ... All of our angels have fallen—being fired down from full flight with a fusillade of facts. We are told that the sacraments are no more than symbols, that demons are merely the projection of our immature, terrified minds, and that all things mystical have turned out to be figments of a diseased imagination. What our ancestors thought was supernatural we are told is no more than a blip in the brain, a chemical reaction in the cerebellum, or a bad dream caused by an excess of pickled herring.

Our present state of mind is the result of half a millennium of increasingly wooden thought. From the nomi-

nalists onward, each succeeding generation was less imaginative and more literal. Each generation of thinkers took apart the supernatural world like the foolish boy who took apart the alarm clock looking for time. Bit by bit they dismantled the mythological, dissected the dogmas, and dismissed the miracles. They forgot Gandalf’s dictum that “he who takes something apart to understand what it means departs from the path of wisdom.” The result is our brave new world which is rational, hygienic, efficient and economical... and exceedingly dull.

We became disenchanting while at the same time longing for a greater meaning to life. Modern man is searching for his soul, but the Catholic Church, the one religion which still maintained the mystery of cultic worship and an unsettling system of sacrifice, dumbed itself down into a suburban therapy session, with a happy meal thrown in.



The one religion that acknowledged the need for cosmic redemption and the majesty of divine worship—the one religion that believed in sin, the fearsome possibility of hell, and the poignant hope of heaven threw out all that “Blood of the Lamb” malarkey in favor of psychotherapy.¹

It is easy to know persecution when it comes knocking at your door, when your limbs

are nailed to a tree and the lance pierces your heart or when you lose your head; but when you are far removed from it, when your life is pleasant and your burden light it is easy to become complacent, to look the other way and ignore what is all too real. Even when persecution comes to the door and stares us in the face, we are *reluctant* to deny it welcome; we want to be gracious, kind, hospitable, we are Christians, after all; surely persecution means no ill will! I am a good person. I mind my own business. I obey all the rules. But persecution comes in many forms and almost always under subtle, clever disguise.

I believe most of us like to meet life in stages, allowing us to test the waters, dip our toes in to get a feel for the temperature and then slip into the water slowly. We like to slowly let life into our lives but as soon as we begin to feel overwhelmed, we pull back and stop, unwilling to

fully commit. A good analogy is an old one. How do you cook a frog? Well, you don't just throw it in a pot of boiling water, it will immediately jump out. So, you put it in a pot of cold water and slowly bring the water up to a boil while it swims merrily around, unaware. Most of us, if we are perfectly honest with ourselves, will admit to having spent a lot of time blissfully floating in lukewarm water, unaware that the water is slowly coming to a boil. Soon, whether we want to or not, we will have no choice but to get out or get cooked.

Remember the famous Beatles song, *Imagine*? Like so many songs, the words are seldom well-considered, at least on a deeper level; *imagine, if you try* to understand and you will quickly discover the words convey an "anti-ideology, one you cannot imagine, even if you try.

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world
You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one.*

John Lennon said his song was meant to be, in his own words, "anti-religious, anti-nationalistic, anti-conventional, anti-capitalistic." He explained that the message that ran so contrary to western culture and tradition wasn't rejected—"because it's sugar-coated, it's accepted." He went on to describe how his song's message was "virtually the Communist Manifesto, even though I am not particularly a communist and I do not belong to any movement."

"Oh, that is just a silly song," you think, "it means

nothing. It is a harmless tune with a great melody" but it is *not* nothing, it is far from harmless despite the sentimental utopian melody. The immediate subconscious response is of an abstract idea or a dream; a hope, a utopian promise of a fair and simpler world, a longing for some rapturous path toward a different way of living, of wishful thinking. It is easy to forget all the anti-stuff, whether good or bad: no heaven, no hell, no religion, no countries, no possessions, no greed or hunger.

Living for today is a tricky proposition. It implies a life with no planning for the future, shirking responsibility, consuming instead of producing—a suggestion to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. It is the grasshopper ignoring the ant's warning about the coming winter. To the untold millions of fans, Lennon's words created hope for a pathway to a wonderfully new and better way of living.

Lennon's tune also advanced his beautiful utopian idea of no countries, nothing for people to fight over, "and no religion, too."

No religion, no countries, no possessions, and no worries—what a great life. This wasn't the first time such a suggestion was made. Lennon's song was actually a lyrical retelling of the ancient teachings of Plato, Marx, Engels, and Mao.²

There has ever been but one Utopia and it was short-lived.

[T]hen the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:7-9).

But, never fear, man is an obstinate ass, if nothing else, and despite all the evidence to the contrary, continues to prefer chasing after windmills and smoking pipedreams. God gave to men free will and the ability to reason, to think rationally; man quickly took the first and tossed the latter two. We no longer reason because we have lost any reason to think for ourselves; whether rationally or irrationally, thinking makes no sense at all. Most of us have lost even the ability to form our own opinions.

Now when I say people have lost their opinions, I mean this: that the outer ring has discovered that the inner ring is indifferent; or possibly, that the inner ring does not exist. The individuals inside are thinking as individuals. The mob outside are ceasing to think as mobs; certainly ceasing to think as armies. The man in the know only knows that he knows nothing. He is no longer certain either that progress is a good thing or that tradition is a good thing. And the man outside has fallen into a confusion ...

In some ways it may well be said that this blank state of mind is a better thing than the bigotries and blatant slanders of the past. And up to a point, doubtless, it is a good thing. But there is a further difficulty which I do not think is very well understood. Not only have men lost their opinions, but many of them seem to have lost the power of forming opinions. They have seen all there is to be seen of the last stages of beliefs; but they do not seem even able to imagine what the beginning of a belief would be like. They seem to think there is something archaic and antediluvian about those first acts of the mind, by which it opens the open question of the world. It seems a mere mad negation to start from scratch. It seems a barbaric fantasy to begin at the beginning. They no more employ first principles than flint arrows, and regard the first proposition of Euclid as a palaeolithic drawing on a rock. They would almost as soon rebuild all our elaborate and toppling cities of civilization all over again, from their first foundations, as really dig up one of their own reasons for one of their own opinions.

Easter, which is the spiritual New Year, should be a time for the understanding of new thoughts and the making of new things. The representatives of the rising generation can give us any number of negative reasons for not observing certain forms or traditions. They do not seem to see that it is their business as artists to create forms. They will not realize that it is their business as builders to found new traditions. If the old conventions have really come to an end, the others have to do something much more difficult; they have to come to a beginning. I doubt if they have any clear idea about how to come to a beginning. They do not understand that positive creations are founded on positive creeds. To touch but lightly upon the great mystery that is most involved in the idea of Easter, we have seen lately a lively curiosity revolving round the ancient idea of the return of the dead. Perhaps it should rather be called the great and glorious doubt about whether the dead are dead. When that doubt came to trouble a generation of materialists, it naturally turned many of them into spiritualists. The spiritualist is nearly always a converted materialist. He is seldom or never a natural mystic. For most of these men it was enough of a revelation that

any light of any sort gleamed through the cracks of the door of death, which they had assumed to be the blank wall at the end of a blind alley. The result on the mass of their sympathizers or semi-sympathizers was something very like what I have suggested as the attitude of the man staring with a blank face at the blue rosette. It is not so much the condition of having discovered something as of being ready for anything. It is not so much that most modern people have found a faith to set against the materialists as simply that they have lost faith in materialism. The sceptic is sure of nothing now, not even of his five senses. It is not so much a new vision as a new void to be filled with visions; and this is no place in which to argue about what the visions shall be.³

We are no longer wise should we have ever desired wisdom. We no longer harbor a love of wisdom if we have ever felt such a desire to be wise. Philosophy (from the Greek: φιλοσοφία, *philosophia*, 'love of wisdom') asks fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language; few, if any, these days can find the time or make the effort to become wise.

In genius and influence, according to Christopher Dawson, Abu Hamed Mohammad Ghazali (1058–1111) most resembles Saint Thomas Aquinas. This is indeed high praise. The Persian scholar's most famous work is *The Destruction of Philosophy (Tehâfat el Falâsifah)*. As a Moslem thinker, he saw clearly the fundamental incompatibility between the Moslem faith and the Greek conception of the universe as an intelligible order that can be penetrated by human reason. He did not succeed, however, in destroying philosophy, but he did succeed, to some degree, in submerging it.

In our own day, philosophy remains submerged because it is incompatible with the reigning ideology of political correctness. The absence of philosophy in the public forum prevents a view of reality that everyone can share. Ideologies are limited to a partisan group. Without a universal truth, particular groups will remain at odds with each other. Philosophy is the search for and, to a certain extent, the discovery of truth. Without a unifying philosophy, people remain divided, with one tribe setting itself against another tribe.

Logic is an essential part of philosophy. It abhors contradiction and demands consistency. Racism, therefore, is racism no matter what race it unjustly demeans and degrades. If all rectangles are four-sided, then every particular rectangle must be four-sided, including those that are square, rhomboid, or trapezoid. It is inconsistent for any race to assume a racist attitude toward another race simply because that race is different or has

either exercised or suffered the injustice of racism.

Nobel laureate Albert Camus once stated that we must find a way in which we are neither executioners nor victims. His proposal for an even playing field is perfectly consistent with an over-arching philosophy of humanity: all men are created equal, and no race is superior to another.

A crucial question concerning the turmoil that abounds in today's world is whether "Black Lives Matter" is a realistic and effective tool in combating the evil of racism. Philosophy must be called upon to deal with this important question. The fact that it is submerged poses a problem, for it is only the breadth of philosophy that can expose the narrowness of an ideology.

Cardinal Wilfred Fox Napier, himself a black man, and archbishop of Durban, South Africa, has stated that "a brief study of the founding statement of 'Black Lives Matter' indicates the movement is being hijacked by the interests and parties committed to dismantling the very values, structure and institutions which have over the centuries undergird the best civilizations and cultures!" The cardinal, together with a rising number of other people of color, have denounced BLM for its renunciation of the nuclear family, its embrace of the LGBTQ+ consortium, and its promotion of abortion. They represent tangible proof that Black Lives Matter is divisive even among blacks. Cardinal Napier questioned whether black lives matter even to the organizers of Black Lives Matter. He cited their indefensible allegiance with Planned Parenthood.

"Is there any good reason," Cardinal Napier asked, "other than political correctness, why abortion is not defined as and declared immoral and illegal, as the hate crime of our era?" Absolute silence concerning the protection of black babies in the womb does not, logically, show that black lives matter.

In the United States, there are 138 abortions for every 1,000 live births. But among blacks, the figure is 501 abortions for every 1,000 live births. Logic indicates that if black lives mattered, BLM would show some concern for the disproportionate rate of abortions among people who are black. New York City health statistics, for example, show that more black babies are aborted than are born each year. Yet, Alicia Garza, a co-founder of BLM states that "reproductive justice"—that is, abortion—"is very much situated within the Black Lives Matter movement."

Bishop Joseph Strickland, of Tyler, Texas, has condemned BLM because of its announced threat to the good of society. On Independence Day, 2020, he cited a BLM statement declaring its plan to "disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement."

Bishop Strickland states that the BLM organization "fails to acknowledge that the breakdown of the nuclear family, which disproportionately affected blacks in America, was at the heart of the downward spiral of crime, poverty, and dependence in which many blacks found themselves." Ryan Bomberger, a man of color, has inaugurated Radiance Foundation, a life-affirming foundation. He posted on his website, "Top Ten reasons I'll never support the #Black Lives movement."

A co-founder of Black Lives Matter Toronto, a Black Muslim named Yusra Khogali, has argued that white people are "recessive defects" and mused about how their race could be "wiped out". She has called Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "a white supremacist terrorist" and has urged crowds to "rise up and fight back."

The discrepancy between logic and ideological rhetoric has given a great deal of space for "anything goes," including violence to people, property, and language itself. One can understand the anger of some people and how their anger gives rise to a less than temperate reaction. This belongs to the field of psychology. These people need help, not governmental control. It is more difficult to understand how people who should know better and who have not been angered by injustice can defend the BLM position on a philosophical basis.

Although submerged, philosophy is not dead. It retains its reasonableness. But it does need to be resuscitated before it can benefit people and provide a basis for universal brotherhood. Anger must subside and dialogue must begin. This is a tall order but a necessary one. We need people of courage, such as Cardinal Napier, Bishop Strickland, and Ryan Bomberger, to lead the way. They are truly valiant, for they are willing to surrender repose in order to disseminate truth.⁴

All evidence leads me to believe we are being driven into a perfect storm and the storm is inexorably pushing us to the brink. Those of you who frequent Facebook know that I have begun offering my thoughts during the week; if so, you may recognize some of what follows.

For more than half a century we have allowed academies of "higher education" free rein to inexorably turn generations of our young into uneducated fools. Think about it. How many have spent a fifth or more of their up-to-then brief lives in higher academia "studying" anything and everything in a concerted effort to delay growing up! After putting off maturity and adulthood for four or five or more years, they wave their sheepskins, evidence of wasting an insane amount of their parents' and other people's money for a worthless sheet of faux parchment. Let's face it, colleges and universities are no longer academies of "learning"; they have

become, to be kind and generous, high-priced diploma mills.

Victor Davis Hanson, classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, recently wrote: "Earlier generations went to college mainly to become educated and develop marketable skills. They weren't very interested in ethnic and gender "studies" courses, ranting professors and woke administrators. For the students of the 1960s who were, protesting was a side dish to a good investment in an affordable college degree that would pay off later. But when such pathways are blocked, beware. The woke but godless, the arrogant but ignorant, the violent but physically unimpressive, the degreed but poorly educated, the broke but acquisitive, the ambitious but stalled—these are history's ingredients of riot and revolution."

Tragically, and horrifyingly, the "learning" most recent college graduates have received is little more than ideological indoctrination, woke *pravda* which correctly serves to prove Pope's observation, "A little Learning is a dangerous thing." Dangerous indeed.⁵

The problem and the tragedy are not relegated solely to the halls of higher education. It begins at the very beginning. With the current meltdown of American social and cultural norms resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have been shuttered with no reopening realistically or practically in sight. Case in point: The United Teachers Los Angeles union recently released a list of demands that it argues *must* be met before school can reopen in America's second-largest city. Apparently, the 35,000-member union sees the coronavirus as a perfect opportunity to demand the enactment of a far-left agenda that it supported long before COVID-19 arrived in America. According to the document, "*The Safe and Equitable Conditions for Starting LAUSD in 2020-21*" their list of demands include defunding of police, a federal bailout of LA schools, the abolition of charter schools, "Medicare for All", and calls for the state of California to implement a "millionaire's tax" and a "wealth tax."

Not to be outdone in the lunacy department, Governor Gavin Newsom, following in the footsteps of his mentors and idols on the right coast, was quick to follow with his own dictatorial diktat, this time addressing the godawful religious now rampantly spreading coronavirus throughout the state.

First, [Governor Gavin] Newsom tried to limit all

churches, regardless of their size, to just 10 people total in the building. Then he banned singing and chanting. And on Tuesday [July 14, 2020] Gov. Newsom issued a new edict via the State's Public Health Officer dictating that about 80 percent of California's faithful may not gather for any worship, no matter how small the gathering.

As of July 13, ALL indoor services are banned in 30 counties, even IN-HOME Bible studies and fellowship. More counties may be added by King Newsom.

Yet the very order that bans indoor church and in-home Bible studies specifically ALLOWS PROTESTS.

Under California's latest directive, you can engage in revolutionary riots tearing business and neighborhoods apart, but you cannot have a Bible study with your neighbor or friend in your home.

Gov. Newsom used the tired old COVID excuse as his justification for stealing the constitutional rights of California's Christians. But according to empirical data from the CDC, COVID has a death rate of around 0.26% --about the same rate as a tough flu year.

Not only has Gov. Newsom supported the mass protests, for months it has been well-known that he has welcomed COVID-positive people to cross the border with Mexico and flood the California hospitals.

Once tyrannical governors taste power, they want more.

When COVID struck, leftists used it as an opportunity to shut down the booming economy that President Trump rebuilt from the ashes of the Obama administration. These restrictions left millions unemployed and struggling.

Then the riots began and spread throughout the country, which Democrats and their mainstream media accomplices initially tried to blame on supporters of law and order. The same Democrat governors that have the most severe restrictions on churches publicly support the mass protests (CA, IL, ME, MN, NJ, NJ, VA and more).

Now, it seems that many governors and local officials prefer to keep people of faith locked in our homes and out of our churches. And in California, Gov. Newsom even bans home fellowship!

It is not a stretch to imagine these local and state tyrants will try to keep draconian lockdowns in place until after the election. And then, be prepared for the next round when they want to force you to take an untested vaccine.

The restrictions on churches and houses of worship are illegal and unconstitutional. The First Amendment

protects the right to worship as you please and without government interference.

If we allow tyrannical government officials to rob us of our inalienable right to religious freedom, they will take more and more, until religious freedom is lost forever – and all the other liberties we have will also disappear.⁶

As I wrote on Friday, July 17, 2020, just yesterday, I am tired of being told I cannot worship my God as I have every right and the sacred duty to do. I am bone-tired of the diktats and the edicts by those who profess no faith—other than in themselves—that deny the unalienable rights bestowed upon all by Almighty God and the rights established by the Constitution.

And yet, as bone-weary as I am, as sick as I am of the current direction the radical left are hellbent on taking us, what makes me so angry, what gets my tighty-whiteys all tied up in a wad are those who refuse to stand up and take a stand against the evil that now threatens to consume us all. Nothing good has ever come from accommodation, appeasement or compromise with evil and make no mistake any limits or restrictions placed on houses of worship by those in elected civil office are evil, unconstitutional, and illicit no matter how loud they shout EMERGENCY, the sky is falling!

The Greek word for church is “*ecclesia*,” which means “assembly.” My spirit is tired of being told to watch a video or livestreamed service; that does nothing to satisfy the spirit. Televised worship is akin to starving watching a chef prepare a banquet knowing you will never be fed. Without the Sacraments, the liturgy is mere ritual without a taste of satisfaction. Without the Eucharist, the Eucharist is but a symbol of what has been denied. St. John Chrysostom said of the *ecclesia*:

You cannot pray at home as at church, where there is a great multitude, where exclamations are cried out to God as from one great heart, and where there is something more: the union of minds, the accord of souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the priests (Catechism of the Catholic Church, §2179).

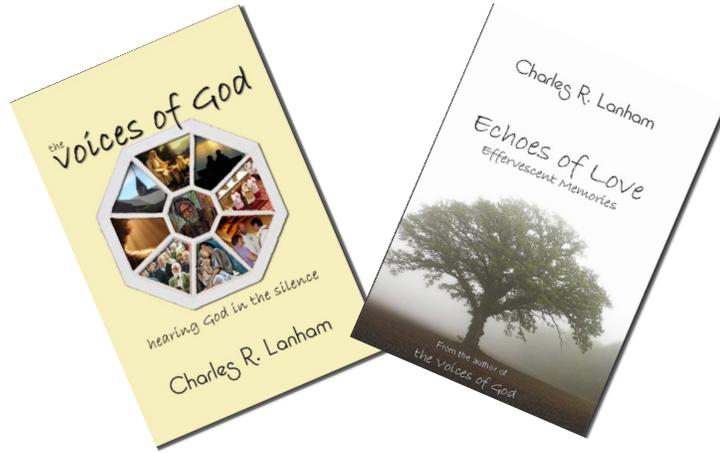
Church leaders who do not stand up against the unlawful abrogation of their flocks to freely assemble and to exercise their religion are complicit. The Constitution does

not say, “except in an emergency when those in power deem it necessary to limit such exercise of religion.” The reason so many churches go along to get along is not for the health of it; it is out of financial self-interest (fear of being sued,) and you can take that to the bank.

Some may argue it is to protect the sick and the vulnerable. Do not buy into that canard. That is the rationale for today, but tomorrow more draconian measures will be taken because that is how it always works. The mob is never satisfied; the mob never allows a good crisis to go to waste.

It is time to call for protest. It is time to take back our *Ecclesia*. It is time for “We the people” of faith to kneel in protest, to demand our right to freely exercise our religion in worship without limitation nor restriction, in full communion with our Lord God. It is time, with one voice, to sing “We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song,” then, and only then, shall we overcome. Amen.

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1. Dwight Longenecker, *Letters on Liturgy, Introduction: foreword by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone*, (Kettering, OH: Angelico Press, 2020), 8-9.
 2. Paul B. Skousen, *The Naked Socialist*, (Riverton, UT: The Ensign Publishing Company, 2014), 3.
 3. G.K. Chesterton, “*The Blank State of the Modern Mind*”, *The Illustrated London News*, April 3, 1926.
 4. Donald DeMarco, Ph.D., “*America, Post-Logic*”, *Crisis Magazine*, July 17, 2020.
 5. Deacon Chuck Lanham, “*My Thoughts for Thursday, July 09, 2020*”, <http://deacons-corner.org/Thursday-july-09-2020/>.
 6. Mat Staver, “*Gavin Newsom Didn’t Just Close Churches, He Also Banned In-Home Fellowship Meetings*”, *LifeNews.com*, July 1, 2020.



Books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from the author's web site at:

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"I feel a strong desire to tell you -- and I expect you feel a strong desire to tell me -- which of these two errors is the worse. That is the devil getting at us. He always sends errors into the world in pairs -- pairs of opposites. And he always encourages us to spend a lot of time thinking about which is the worse. You see why, of course? He relies on your extra dislike of the one error to draw you gradually into the opposite one. But do not let us be fooled. We have to keep our eyes on the goal and go straight through between both errors. We have no other concern than that with either of them."

C.S. Lewis
Mere Christianity

Colloquī, the present infinitive of *colloquor* (Latin: *to talk, to discuss or to converse*) 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! Essays may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the expressed intent to seek the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.

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