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A journal for restless minds

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# Whither Thou Goeth

*Lead me beside still waters*

**R**alph Waldo Emerson *never* wrote “Life is a journey, not a destination” despite the appropriations. What he did write was much more profound and earnest: “To finish the moment, to find the journey’s end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom.”

I have always found such memetic apocrypha disingenuous, mere nonsense by any measure. Life is neither journey nor destination any more than apple pie can be thought meat and potatoes. What Emerson did pen to paper is as true as it is wise, which is to say, living every moment truly, enjoying every second of every moment as if it were to be your last, keeping your “eyes on the prize.” That indeed is wisdom. A life unlived or one lived poorly is—as the apocrypha suggests—a dreadful journey going nowhere. Life is about the destination, living is how you get there; it is about where you finish not which path you take; it is about how you arrive not how many obstacles you surmount or overcome or how many shortcuts you take along the way; it is about the target where you aim your bow not the distance your arrow flies. Life is at best a test, a time of trial, a race set apart for winners and losers where everyone receives a destination trophy. There are no participation trophies for no one can avoid participation; life is, by its nature, a participative exercise, you either win or you lose, there is no “I’ll sit this one out.”

This seems to me so obvious and yet I cannot help but note the oblivious multitude who never question the obvious heresy propounded by “life is a journey, not a destination” or its reciprocal: “life is a destination, not a journey.” The truth is far too many minds are moribund, comfortable in their terminal mindlessness; restlessness a dis-

ease that rattles the empty chambers of the mind, a disease to be diligently avoided like the plague.

Thus, as I see it—and thank the Lord I do see it—those who are most averse to reading Colloqui are most uncomfortably put off by the subhead found on every issue: “A journal for restless minds.” Their mental comfort quite clearly disturbed since their minds are nowise restless, utterly torpid and moribund. Henry Ford (1863-1947) once said, “Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason so few people engage in it.” Truer words from a fallible human being were never spoken. Which is why, I suppose, sophistry rules the day. To speak the truth, one must know it to be true. There really are no shortcuts. God gave man reason for a reason; man finds reason too difficult to engage for any reason, thus, what is seldom used is quickly lost. Without a map the treasure will be lost forever; without reason truth will not be found; without truth the mind will spin in endless circles going nowhere, round and round.



The argument used by professional men of science that what they call quack remedies are superstitions is really an argument in a circle. It amounts to this, that the herbs used by an old woman are untrustworthy because she is superstitious; and she is superstitious because she believes in such herbs. Her method is bad because she is stupid; but the main proof of her stupidity is that she pursues her own method. To put it shortly, the doctor does not believe in the old woman upon the ultimate ground that she does not believe in the doctor.

For the scientific man has a simple method of dealing with the mere thing called human evidence. He has only to say that it is ignorant evidence: as in one sense it must be until everyone in this country has a medical degree. I may have a considerable experience of a subject, but I cannot be so learned as a specialist or (I hope) as mad as a specialist. I may have worn a great many hats in my life, but I am not so learned as a hatter—or as mad as a hatter. Professional science is thus in a singularly strong position. It can go on day and night calling for evidence, and it can rule out the evidence of the mass of mankind. This method

applied by modern science which it applies to old wives' cures or popular discoveries is also the method which it applies to the dreams of faiths which are the mark of mankind. Again it is a simple circular argument. The people of the East believe in miracles because they are ignorant. How do you know they are ignorant? Because they believe in miracles. Thomas Aquinas believed in Catholicism because he lived in a darkened age. Why was it a darkened age? It was darkened by Catholicism. The Highlanders believe in second sight because they are superstitious. Prove that they are superstitious? Well, for instance, they believe in second sight. Father Murphy believes in relics because he is a fool; he is certainly a fool, for he positively believes in relics. Jones tells me that he saw the ghost of his uncle last Tuesday. But, of course, you wouldn't believe a liar like that—a man brazen enough to say that he saw a ghost last Tuesday. In short, the elephant stands on the tortoise and the tortoise stands—on the elephant. By such mental processes it is possible to escape from the narrow methods of deductive logic.<sup>1</sup>

Four years ago, I began a journey—my life began ages before—because my heart was “restless until it finds its rest in thee,” Augustine's plaint an endless echo in my mind. When the path I had traveled arrived at an unexpected divergence I had to choose another for the restlessness remained. And, as Augustine confessed, so too must I, “O Beauty, so ancient and so new, too late have I loved you. You have sent forth fragrance, and I have drawn in my breath, and I pant after you. I have tasted you, and I hunger and thirst after you. You have touched me, and I have burned for your peace.”<sup>2</sup>

You, dear reader, know well the rest of the story. Colloqui was conceived and born a journal for restless minds, and so it continues. Over the long hard months of viral lockdown, I have not rested but have occupied myself collecting memories, but with very few I now regret a word or two. I have surrendered my time and will to binding four volumes—of their lasting value I will not entertain a notion—a collection of Colloquialisms, collected essays from the past four years. It has been an arduous journey, yet incomplete, for I continue to edit and review and re-edit; it is the anal in me I suppose, but that journey's end is fast approaching.

In the meantime, living continues at an ever-increasing pace it feels, and so must I this restless journal for “I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.” Where shall I go

from here? Shall I take my rest beside still waters (Psalm 23:2) or entreat the Lord “Whither thou goest I will go” (Ruth 1:16) knowing not what lies before me? What will the Holy Spirit conduce my spirit to put to paper will surprise both thee and me for I never know what restless thought will of a sudden pop into my bobbed head. Only the Holy Spirit knows, and he never tells me until its time. He hints and teases but never reveals what is of any great importance, so we must remain patient—one of the virtues so difficult to master. One hint perhaps, I came across while browsing through my library of Chesterton, a thing which I shall endeavor to begin with this very issue, Volume 05, Number 01 in the essay *Baptism by Fire: The holocaust of the lambs*.

To teach children only the first elements of religion is like reading children only the first chapters of a detective story. It is cruelty to children. The last chapters of a detective story are necessary in order to make any sense of the first. And religion differs from philosophy exactly in this: that religion is a detective story, in the sense that its secret is not only satisfying, but also startling. To break into the middle of a thing like that and say it must stop at page five is exactly like breaking into the middle of a romance, or of a riddle, or of an anecdote, or of a practical joke. In all cases you are cutting the thing off at a point before you have come to the point of it. You are making the thing immortal before it really exists. You are justifying the thing just before it has justified itself.<sup>3</sup>

This I believe is where the knee meets the kneeler. Catholics of all ages no longer know the rudiments of their faith; few can rightly claim “the dogma lives strongly within you,” as so infamously slurred of Amy Coney Barrett. Too many profess to be Catholic yet cannot or will not profess the faith in which they so loudly profess belief. There are more than enough “summer soldiers and sunshine patriots,” spineless clergy and sanctimonious Christians. It is long past time to face the lions with steel and resolve knowing full well the lions' teeth are false.

Above all, I thank you dear reader for your devotion and support. Reading what I write is rarely an easy task, as well I realize, but if it were gently wrapped would that make it any easier to chew? “Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God” (John 14:1). “Know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Go with God, go with God, go with God.

# Baptism by Fire

## *The holocaust of the lambs*

Scripture is replete with vivid imagery of persecution and sacrifice, of love and hate, good and evil, trial and triumph; it is, after all, the greatest story ever told and yet ... who dares to pore its weighty pages seeking the Word of God when picture books with few pages and scant words are easier to digest. In a general audience, Pope Benedict XVI once asked, "What can we learn from St. Jerome?"

It seems to me, this above all; to love the Word of God in Sacred Scripture. St Jerome said: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ". It is therefore important that every Christian live in contact and in personal dialogue with the Word of God given to us in Sacred Scripture. This dialogue with Scripture must always have two dimensions: on the one hand, it must be a truly personal dialogue because God speaks with each one of us through Sacred Scripture and it has a message for each one. We must not read Sacred Scripture as a word of the past but as the Word of God that is also addressed to us, and we must try to understand what it is that the Lord wants to tell us. However, to avoid falling into individualism, we must bear in mind that the Word of God has been given to us precisely in order to build communion and to join forces in the truth on our journey towards God. Thus, although it is always a personal Word, it is also a Word that builds community, that builds the Church. We must therefore read it in communion with the living Church. The privileged place for reading and listening to the Word of God is the liturgy, in which, celebrating the Word and making Christ's Body present in the Sacrament, we actualize the Word in our lives and make it present among us. We must never forget that the Word of God transcends time. Human opinions come and go. What is very modern today will be very antiquated tomorrow. On the other hand, the Word of God is the Word of eternal life, it bears within it eternity and is valid for ever. By carrying the Word of God within us, we therefore carry within us eternity, eternal life.

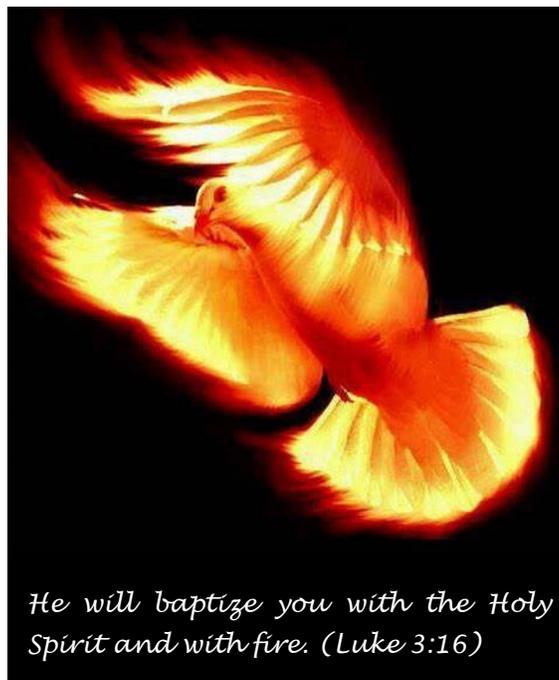
I thus conclude with a word St Jerome once addressed to St Paulinus of Nola. In it the great exegete expressed this very reality, that is, in the Word of God we receive eternity, eternal life. St Jerome said: "Seek to learn on earth those truths which will remain ever valid in Heaven" (*Ep. 53, 10*).<sup>5</sup>

"Human opinions come and go." How true that is. We live in an age where opinion is currency, the coin of the realm, where everyone *dives est, quae in rebus non, pauper in omnibus, quae re* (is rich in what matters not, poor in all things that matter.) I am reminded of an adage comparing opinions to onions, of which neither suit my taste nor fancy. Opinions are like onions. All you have to do is subtract 3.141592 and they are exactly the same. The people that like the way they taste like them a lot. They

want you to try them. And if you do not like the taste, then you just do not know what is good for you. After all, onions are good for you. The same goes for opinions or so they insist. What matters most are the words we use and the care we take in using them. Opinions necessarily use words but carelessly which is why most opinions fail the smell test. Chesterton said as much at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Our generation professes to be scientific and particular about the things it says; but unfortunately it is never scientific and particular about the words in

which it says them. It is difficult to believe that people who are obviously careless about language can really be very careful about anything else. ... And never before, I should imagine, in the intellectual history of the world have words been used with so idiotic an indifference to their actual meaning. A word has no loyalty; it can be betrayed into any service or twisted to any treason. There has arisen an intolerable habit of using special and partisan terms with words like "true" or "nobler" put in front of them. ... The recent religious teachers will cry out—"I am for that real Christianity which can do without help from a supernatural world, that truer Christianity which does not believe in God or any such symbolic dogma."



Really, I do not see why I should not carry this principle to any length whatever. I cannot see why I should not call myself a true Mahometan because I believe in Christianity, or a true Confucian because I do not believe in Confucius, that fine but pharisaical agnostic. ... Or if a house has been burgled by a man dressed up as a policeman, we might say, "And was he not indeed a policeman? May he not have had the policeman's essence, the care for mankind, the appeal to eternal law, more perfectly than any common constable on the beat? Is not everyman, in a sense, a policeman? Is he not set as a silent watch over society, etc., etc."

The fact is, that all this evasive use of words is unworthy of our human intellect. ... And a man who thinks that men can get on perfectly well with the secular emotions of kindness and aspiration is not "a true Christian," but a perfectly reasonable agnostic.

If we are to look for a new religion or a new irreligion, I think we might at least keep our eyes clear to look for it, our heads clear to understand what it means. If we are to dissect historic religion, we might at least clean our knives; if we are to look out for a new Star of Bethlehem, we might at least clean our telescopes. But in this matter words are our knives, words are our telescopes. And we have not made any effort to clean our words at all, to wash off them all the alien substances of habitual sophistry and sentimental misuse. The modern man who prides himself on looking the world in the face and seeing what it means does not look one single word in the face and see what that means. Those very men who most boldly reject the creeds are those who most meekly accept the words of which creeds are made.

If it is right to call God the author of a universal law, how can it be wrong to call Him a Ruler? "Author" is only the Latin for maker. "Ruler" is only the English for the author of a rule. But the fact is that Mr. Campbell has excellent brains, but thinks it more advanced and modern not to use them, as indeed it is. He is guided in his choice of phrases by mere aimless sentimentalism; he like the phrase "Source of Life," because it sounds harmless and journalistic; and he dislikes the phrase "Maker and Ruler," because he recalls a time of clearer and stronger thoughts. Of all the expressions of our current indifference to the meaning of words, I think that the most irritating is this cool substitution of one kind of definition for another. We must not (it seems define the absolute as a person, which is the highest thing we know, but we may define it as a fountain, or a lamp, or a wheel, or a tree, or a piece of clockwork, or anything we see lying about. We may define the *anima mundi* as long as we define it as inanimate. We may describe the life of the universe as long as we describe the life of the universe as dead. I cannot see why I have not as good a right to say that God is a Ruler as Mr.

Campbell has to say that He is a River; neither of us has seen God at any time. But this fallacy of the inanimate symbol, so dear to Pantheists, is very common in modern literature, and greater men than Mr. Campbell have undoubtedly fallen into it.<sup>6</sup>

As much as many may consider Chesterton a century and twelve too far gone, opinion and the carelessness of words are yet more ancient. I found myself amused reading Matthew's recounting of the obsessive machinations the Pharisees were willing to contrive to entrap Jesus. It was beneath their dignity to do such themselves so they sent their surrogates, their disciples who smarmily challenged him, "Teacher, we *know* that you are a *truthful* man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are *not* concerned with anyone's opinion, for you *do not regard* a person's status" (Matthew 22:15-21). Smooth as silk, pump up his ego, play to his pride, how could any man not feel much at ease among such sycophantic admirers? Note the slick sanctimony, derisively implying Jesus does not care for anyone's opinion any more or less than he cares for the status of those who would suffer one. But wait, there is more, for then comes the trap: "Tell us, then, what is *your* opinion?" Gotcha! If Jesus does not care for anyone's opinion, then of what value is his own?

Perhaps, it is the question never asked which leaves such a bitter taste: "Where is truth?" Opinion never swears an oath to truth, opinion too often the rebellious truant to honesty. Opinion is, by definition, a view or judgment formed about a thing, wedded neither to fact nor knowledge; it is too often carelessly applied to modern politics relying on the beliefs or views of a number or a majority of people. The problems with public opinion are manifold, so many there is a "science" for analyzing groupthink which is as "scientific" as climate change and as predictable as any meteorologist predicting a snowstorm in the middle of a heat wave. And, as Mark Twain once opined, "I am not one of those who in expressing opinions confine themselves to facts."<sup>7</sup> From every evidence, modern journalists thoroughly subscribe to Twain's opinion. He also wrote some years earlier, "When we are young we generally estimate an opinion by the size of the person that holds it, but later we find that is an uncertain rule, for we realize that there are times when a hornet's opinion disturbs us more than an emperor's."<sup>8</sup>

And yet, we have become convinced in the efficacy of our opinion or rather, in the opinion of the vast unwashed opinionators, we no longer rely on fact but opinion, truth is what the survey says, knowledge is spoon fed by propagandizing opportunists masquerading as “experts” demanding strict adherence to “the science” which they know nothing except what they claim is the opinion of an overwhelming percentage of scientists (of what “science”, they do not say) claim to be true. It is, to put it bluntly, pure hooey, unadulterated balderdash, and blarney, propaganda charaded by charlatans and conmen (e.g. politicians, lobbyists, bureaucrats, actors, and much of the media) upon the unsuspecting rube in pursuit of influence or dishonest lucre. “‘Propaganda’ is a word of evil connotation. The average American, hearing it, is reminded of spies and secret police, of cynical reporters and biased magazines, of lobbies and special privilege and lies.”

It is the contention ... therefore, that the idea that propaganda is always harmful, always false, is wrong. Propaganda can be used for a good cause as well as for a bad one. The motives and the ends are the important parts of any campaign; propaganda merely supplies the method of operation. ... propaganda means *any attempt to persuade anyone to a belief or to a form of action.*

The propaganda process is an essential feature of life in the modern world, no more evil because of its frequent misuse than drugs or dynamite, the characteristics of which it shares. We live our lives surrounded by propaganda; we create enormous amounts of it ourselves; and we form most or all of our cherished beliefs with its aid.

The sum of what we know through personal experience is small. In politics and economics, for example, where the facts are often not clear-cut and where rival authorities are common, all of us depend on sources outside ourselves for our opinions. Most Americans “know” their stands on Communism, big business, labor unions, and international relations. You have opinions on all these things. But do you know any Communists? Have you ever administered a big business? Are you a member of a labor union? A screen lies between each of us and the world of events, through which we allow certain kinds and amounts of information to filter, and our term “propaganda” describes the way in which that filtering occurs.

It follows that we cannot “guard against” propaganda; we should be lost without it. Most of us know that the earth moves round the sun because we have accepted the propaganda of mathematicians and astronomers, or

that vaccination prevents smallpox because we believe the arguments of physicians and bacteriologists; but few laymen can produce adequate scientific evidence to support these propositions. So with most of our opinions and attitudes. We live in a reported universe, and our most essential information comes to us, at best, at second hand.

These remarks imply that anything may be labeled propaganda that attempts to make someone accept a fact or a point of view. On the basis of such a definition, a fish that imitates a rock in order to lure its luncheon a little closer is a propagandist, and so is a physicist who presents the results of his experiments to a group of his colleagues. And broadly speaking, both fish and physicists *are* propagandists.

There are a number of channels of propaganda that are important to the average American. They are, in no special order, personal contacts, newspapers, magazines, radio programs, books and visual media, such as motion pictures, the theater, and television. There is nothing final in this list. If you like, you may divide the propaganda that reaches you into the things you read, the things you hear, and the things you see. Every individual will have to make his own evaluation of the importance of these media. The man who gets most of his news through the radio and most of his entertainment from motion pictures lives in a different world from the man who reads carefully two or three newspapers a day and spends most of his evenings reading books and magazines of opinion. But everyone is affected by some of these channels of propaganda, and the more conscientiously one attempts to “keep up with things,” the longer will grow the list of contenders for belief.<sup>9</sup>

It is perhaps then, what the authors note here in the last, that bears the burden of their argument, for no matter the method or the means, opinions are formed and beliefs are carved by such elements that inexorably erode and corrode, thus reshaping our thoughts and actions. What we come to believe as truth is forged and tainted by the propaganda we obtain from sources we choose to see and hear, and in an odd sense, from those we choose to ignore. Whatever we choose to ignore, what does not fit our preconceived beliefs, we do so with certain knowledge, that is to say there is an explicit, often unconscious awareness of that which goes against what is believed because it discredits preconceptions, or sullies what is desired. The consummate example: the fall of our first parents; they chose to ignore what had been forbidden them, chose to ignore the Truth. They chose to believe a lie, they chose opinion

over truth, they chose to accept propaganda from the sibilant serpent, the original snake-oil salesman.

There is another factor which must be incorporated whenever there is a choice between fact and opinion: fear. "Fear permeates the brain much more than fact. We have to keep repeating the facts before we believe them."<sup>10</sup> Fear is immediate and visceral; fear is an instinctual, emotional response. Facts need time to digest along with confirmation; seldom, if ever, do we accept facts without some validation, no matter how little; we are simply too skeptical to believe our senses, we doubt what we do not want to believe.

As Dr. Marc Siegel explains, our increased fear levels have been a long time coming, beginning long before the current pandemic outbreak, perhaps beginning on the morning of September 11, 2001 when he volunteered his "services to the transforming emergency center at Bellevue, absorbing the rush of human emotion—at once committed to the task and yet frightened."

As I volunteered my services to the Red Cross and to my patients in the succeeding months, I discovered a newfound vulnerability. I entered the media world and found that each health care topic I discussed in an article or on TV seemed blown out of proportion to the real danger. I seized the chance to learn about each succeeding "bug du jour" and to try to offer perspective and a salve of reassurance whenever I could.

We all personalized 9/11, and it made us all feel more at risk, whether we were really at risk or not. We grew afraid more easily than before, misinformed by our leaders and provoked by the news media.

We have never been the same since.

Fear out of proportion to the real risks was made worse by a lack of preparedness. Even if you didn't have a reason to be afraid before, you could see how poorly you would be protected if there really were a reason to fear.

I witnessed their [patients] fear of SARS, despite the fact that I never saw any evidence that SARS was close to becoming widespread. My office phone rang with anxieties over influenza as it went from being a ho-hum underappreciated killer to the latest rage.

I understood from the outset that our fear mechanism had gone awry, but I didn't know exactly how. I could study the process by which dangers were manufactured and provoked, but as a medical doctor I also had to

study the original fight-or-flight mechanism that was intended to protect us.

Fear invaded our homes like never before, affecting more and more people. Newspaper headlines were apocalyptic warnings. Media obsessions fueled our cycles of worry, which burned out only to be replaced by more alarming cycles.

The passions and routines of everyday life were our primary defenses against this contagious fear. These defenses, however, were being eroded, bombarded by the ongoing doom-and-gloom of the daily news, until they were completely hijacked by COVID-19, and there was no everyday life anymore. But twenty-four hours of cable news continued to infiltrate our sleep, and was almost as damaging to our health as cigarette smoke was to our defenses against cancer.

How did it get to be this way? Fear was looming larger in our lives now with the pandemic more than ever before. Yet no one had ever tried to integrate what scientists had learned about the physiology of fear with the increased reliance on fear on the part of both the media and the politicians. Of course, some fears had their origin in real events, most prominently the attacks of September 11, 2001, and now, the spread of the coronavirus, which at the time of this writing had already infected more than 6 million people in the U.S. alone, killing close to 200,000. Still, despite the real ever-present danger from COVID, the overall climate of fear was inflated well out of proportion to the risk and the reality and was its own core danger to society.

Under the stress of unremitting fear, we have become more susceptible to disease, including heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Once we become sick, our fear grows.

In studying fear, I came to believe that it has a tendency to reignite itself. Once a fear fire is extinguished another one takes its place. There are fear seekers in our society, and there are plenty of worriers in between.

The symptoms of fear, the maladaptive kind, include an exaggerated sense of vulnerability, out of proportion to the actual risk. Like any illness, the illness of fear interferes with function. Fear victims are revved up in fight-or-flight mode. Their bodies ask them, how is a person to be protected from an ever-growing threat without being on the alert? Stress hormones—adrenaline, catecholamines, and cortisol—are secreted in excess amounts. These counter-regulatory hormones cause the liver to make more sugar and create more and more energy, which builds up without proper outlet. To this, nervous sedentary people add more stimulants such as coffee, which revs them up further. It is a perfect storm. People don't eat well, sleep well, or experience

sufficient pleasure because they are always on the alert.<sup>11</sup>

Fear, anxiety, stress elevated by a tsunami of vagrant opinion, media fearmongering and political propaganda have fueled the flames of what Dr. Siegel calls “fear fire”, tossed onto an election year tinderbox, stoked by mobs bent on anarchy, chaos, violence, and uncontrolled mayhem across the country have indeed produced a perfect storm. As the year has worn on, it has become ever more obvious the liberal/progressive political elites have become increasingly beholden to technocratic oligarchs and foreign interests. Lockdowns and the concomitant economic meltdown, school and church closures have resulted in greater damage to individual and community health than the coronavirus. The moral compass of the nation has been broken; whether it can soon or ever will be reoriented remains an open question.

All this leads to a rather ominous conclusion, one which only serves to fan the flames of this now murderous pyre, one that was observed by the Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen over seventy years ago.

It is a characteristic of any decaying civilization that the great masses of the people are unconscious of the tragedy. Humanity in a crisis is generally insensitive to the gravity of the times in which it lives. Men do not want to believe their own times are wicked, partly because it involves too much self-accusation and principally because they have no standards outside of themselves by which to measure their times. If there is no fixed concept of justice how shall men know it is violated? Only those who live by faith really know what is happening in the world; the great masses without faith are unconscious of the destructive processes going on, because they have lost the vision of the heights from which they have fallen. The tragedy is not that the hairs of our civilization are gray; it is rather that we fail to see that they are.

The modern world is witnessing the liquidation of the idea of the natural goodness of man, who has no need of God to give him rights, no need of a Redeemer to salvage him from guilt, because progress is automatic and inevitable, thanks to education and science. This false assumption had its roots in Rousseau, who reinterpreted the Christian tradition by making man naturally good and blaming institutions and civilizations for evil. Comte, Darwin and Spencer were subsequently invoked to support the idea that man was on the road to becoming a god. But modern history has completely

dissipated this false philosophy of man, as the interval between wars shows man becoming increasingly dehumanized. The interval between the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian wars was 53 years, the interval between the Franco-Prussian War and World War I was 43 years, and the interval between World War I and World War II was 21 years—and this at a time when man has all the material conditions necessary for his happiness. Having lost the purpose of life which religion supplied, modern man became increasingly frustrated as his disappointed hedonism turned to pessimism. Thus man, who isolated himself from the religious community, now by reaction finds himself absorbed by the political community as despair becomes the dominant note of contemporary philosophy and literature.

[Another] idea being liquidated today is rationalism understood in the sense that the supreme purpose of life is not the discovery of the meaning and the goal of life, but solely to devise new technical advances to make this world a city of man to displace the City of God. Rationalism properly understood is reason concerned with ends and means to an end; modern rationalism is reason concerned with means to the exclusion of ends. This was justified on the grounds that progress made ends impossible. The result was that man, instead of working toward an ideal, changed the ideal and called it progress.<sup>12</sup>

What the venerable Archbishop witnessed and spoke of seven decades ago should frighten everyone, even more so in this present day. Without God: morality, rights, justice, human life, meaning and reason, responsibility and duty, faith and spirituality, reality and conscience own no relation to the Truth. Man’s truth is not God’s Truth, it is but mere opinion countenanced as propaganda.

Man, having both body and soul, lives in two worlds, a material world and a moral and spiritual world. God ordered man’s physical world by the “days” of creation; then he ordered man’s moral and spiritual world by the Ten Commandments. The source of both orders is Truth.

The crucial importance of truth for morality is not generally understood today. People are rarely taught that morality is more than kindness and compassion, more than good intentions, even more than love. For love without truth is not true love.

Love and truth are equally absolute, for both are divine attributes, infinite and eternal. Truth and love are “what God is made of”. These two are one in God, and the more godly we are the more they are one in us.<sup>13</sup>

No one is wont to ask, “what is the reason?” Why those who rule are so hellishly bent on ridding themselves of the very ones that grant them license? Power corrupts, I suppose, one possibility, yet where is the substance; their bones are naked, no meat, no gristle. Why the hatred, the vitriol, the bile? Why the animus toward the One who made us all? What is their agenda? Here then, a hint:

For evil to reign, the past must be buried in ignorance, ... This cancelling of tradition is not undertaken to make way for a new culture or some alternative substance: the goal is only to tear down, never to build up.

Such is the goal of the movement ...: not a better order but no order at all, not a better polis but no polis. The strategies to pursue this negativism as such, with no other purpose than elimination and amnesia, begin with cultural subversion, by suppressing the knowledge of tradition, and extend to systematic violence, the cessation of any rule of law.

We are without a doubt living in the midst of moral collapse. “We are living through an era of the infinite politicization of all things; every discussion, every news story, and nearly every social media post is caught in the ellipse defined by the killing of George Floyd and the upcoming November election.” How are we expected to live with all the evil that surrounds us? Jünger offers an answer in a 1934 letter written to his brother, Friedrich Georg. The context is important: Hitler had been in power for just short of two years; the intra-Nazi conflict with the SA around Ernst Röhm, the “night of long knives,” had recently transpired; and Germany was sliding toward a totalitarian radicalism as familiar points of moral orientation slipped away.

The revolutionary stage that we have now entered can only be met with deeper powers than rhetorical, literary or ideological responses—we are being tested at our core. Now is the time to show your cards so we can see who you are. In this state of evil illusions and deceit, thought itself becomes dangerous simply when it is right, and spirits who have the proper measure, act like mirrors that reveal the emptiness of this shadow world. A logical thought, a pure verse of poetry, a noble deed, even just not participating in the lowly—these are things that arise like threatening weapons that are all the more powerful the less one makes reference to our times.

As difficult as it is to wrap arms around the current

social chaos that is encroaching from all sides, the culture war against culture itself, we must in all good conscience make a stand. Make no mistake, the goal of the present socialist ideologues is to tear down and destroy all that is good with America. It takes no strategic genius to discern the battle lines: faith and religion, truth and justice, law and order; all are under constant assault, the heavy guns of division and hate spewing forth unending barrages at the mighty gates of our great republic. The enemy are wolves who believe we are but lambs fit for slaughter. They are wrong for they have for far too long ignored the shepherd standing watch over his flock. The lambs are not defenseless; together, with their shepherd, they can defeat the enemy. Separate and divided, absent their shepherd, there most certainly will come the holocaust of the lambs. All that must be done, will be done, has been done under the standard of “In God We Trust” and so we shall and so we will ever long endure.

*God bless America  
Land that I love  
Stand beside her  
And guide her  
Through the night  
with the light from above*

*From the mountains  
To the prairies  
To the oceans  
White with foam  
God bless America  
My home sweet home*

*From the mountains  
To the prairies  
To the oceans  
White with foam  
God bless America  
My home sweet home  
God bless America  
My home sweet home*

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1. G.K. Chesterton, *Charlatans and Quacks, Collected Works XXVIII* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987), 47-48; orig. pub'd: The Illustrated London News, February 15, 1908..
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  8. Mark Twain, "An undelivered Speech", 1895.
  9. William Hummel & Keith Huntress, *The Analysis of Propaganda*, (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1949), 1-4. William Hummel was Professor of English at Kansas State College and Keith Huntress was Professor of English at Iowa State College. Though dated in some ways by advances in technology and means of communication, what they wrote remains valid and ever much *apropos* for the twenty-first century.
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  13. Peter J. Kreeft, "Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church," (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2001; reprinted 2014), 270-72.
  14. Russell A. Berman, "Standing Against Tyranny," First Things, November 2020, 25-31. Berman considers Ernst Jünger's (1895-1998) relevance for our times. He writes that Jünger spells out the difference between the anarchist and the anarch. Those ideologues who glibly dub themselves "anarchists" act precisely as ideologues, committed to a political "-ism," and they therefore unavoidably recreate the structures of domination associated with the state structures they pretend to oppose. His alternative is the "anarch," the character of integrity, true to himself, willing to venture metaphysically into an adventurous realm, "off the grid," as one might say today, or to find sufficient internal strength to resist the temptations of participating in the extortions, distortions, and self-mutilations that make up political life. Anarchists cluster around the pressure of forced community participation in "autonomous zones," while the anarch pursues independent thought and action in the pursuit of autonomy. Nazis participated in mass demonstrations and wrapped themselves in sloganeering language. Jünger chose to stand alone, against tyranny. And for this reason, he remains an author for our time.

## 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

**Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know**

*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.

**G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume XXXVI**

*The Illustrated London News 1932-1934*

Ignatius Press

2011, 613 pages.

**Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism and the future of the West**

*R. R. Reno*

Regnery Gateway

2019, 182 pages.

**The Irony of Modern Catholic History:**

How the Church rediscovered itself

*George Weigel*

Basic Books

2019, 322 pages.

**Letters on Liturgy**

*Father Dwight Longenecker*

Angelico Press

2020, 164 pages.

**Immortal Combat**

*Father Dwight Longenecker*

Sophia Institute Press

2020, 144 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**

[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

**Touchstone**

[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)

**Catholic Answers Magazine**

[www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com)

**Catholic Herald**

[www.catholicherald.co.uk](http://www.catholicherald.co.uk)

**Chronicles**

[www.chroniclesmagazine.org](http://www.chroniclesmagazine.org)

**Gilbert!**

[www.chesterton.org](http://www.chesterton.org)

**The National Catholic Register**

[www.ncregister.com](http://www.ncregister.com)

**Our Sunday Visitor**

[www.osvnews.com](http://www.osvnews.com)

### ONLINE

**Crisis Magazine**

[www.crisismagazine.com](http://www.crisismagazine.com)

**The Imaginative Conservative**

[www.theimaginativeconservative.org](http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org)

**Catholic Exchange**

[www.catholicexchange.com](http://www.catholicexchange.com)

**Intellectual Takeout**

[www.intellectualtakeout.org](http://www.intellectualtakeout.org)

**Life News**

[www.lifenews.com](http://www.lifenews.com)

**Life Site News**

[www.lifesitenews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com)

**OnePeterFive**

[www.onepeterfive.com](http://www.onepeterfive.com)

**Catholic Vote**

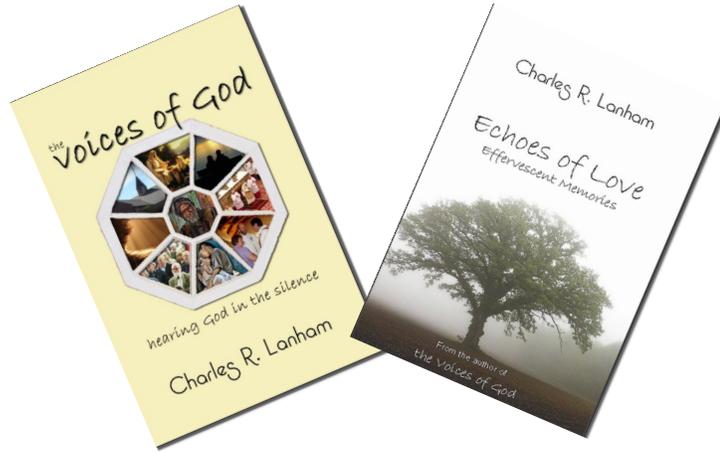
[www.catholicvote.org](http://www.catholicvote.org)

**The Catholic Thing**

[www.thecatholicthing.org](http://www.thecatholicthing.org)

**PragerU**

[www.prageru.com](http://www.prageru.com)



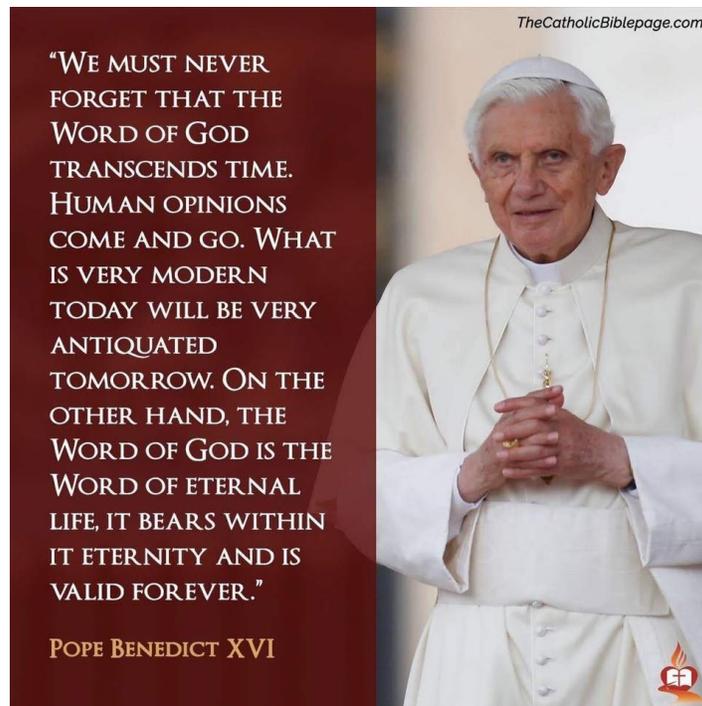
Books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from the author's web site at:

[deaconscorner.org](https://deaconscorner.org)

**Deacon Chuck Lanham** is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master of anything) and a servant of God. He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and has written over 500 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

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**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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