



A journal for restless minds

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DEACON'S DINER

Food for a restless mind

★ JUNE 21 to JULY 4, 2016 ★
FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM WITNESSES TO FREEDOM
FORTNIGHT4FREEDOM★ORG

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

The Tragedy

Silent Acquiescence

Living in the high desert comes with its own unique challenges; perhaps the most challenging is the regular occurrence of wildfire, almost invariably accompanied by high winds sweeping over difficult terrain. Twice in the past six years the community where I live has seen homes threatened and wildlands charred by wildfire. It never fails to raise the level of fear and anxiety.

Six years ago outside our door the nightscape was reminiscent of the fires of hell: angry flames racing up the mountainside before us, fueled by the dry cheat grass and fanned by high gusting winds. With the most recent wildfire there was smoke, lots of it, but far less visible flame. As darkness fell, instead of descending into a hellish nightmare there was a sense of complacency, not quite a feeling of normalcy and yet not so far removed from it. In short, most simply tried to ignore it as if it were no big thing.

Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once remarked *"The refusal to take sides on great moral issues is itself a decision. It is a silent acquiescence to evil. The Tragedy of our time is that those who still believe in honesty lack fire and conviction, while those who believe in dishonesty are full of passionate conviction."*

All this is to say that we live at a time when our religious liberties are more threatened than ever by the flames of religious intolerance fueled by those who find God an impediment. We are confronted on a daily basis with grave moral issues, some burning like the fires of hell, so evil they threaten to consume everything and anyone in their destructive path; while others like smoldering smoke raise but brief but complacent alarm even as they slowly choke the life from our very souls.

Silence in the face of evil is acquiescence but it is much more, for it grants voice to those who would destroy all that is good and holy, all that is of God. Speak out! Let your voice cry out with fire and conviction. Let freedom ring!



Memories And History

Think while you still can

Memories are often like unwelcome guests, arriving unannounced; generally disrupting an otherwise normal routine. One must although always be prepared to admit to moments when an unexpected memory comes calling and is most gratefully welcome.

A long time ago, much longer than I care to divulge, during study hall one day Sister Ann Maureen stood towering above my desk glaring with grim disapproval at the book held firmly in my fourteen years-old hands. "Does your mother know you are reading *that* book?" she demanded. To which, as I clearly recall, I smiled and said, "Oh yes, we are reading it together. See, this is her bookmark."

The book my mother and I were reading together was John Steinbeck's *The Winter of Our Discontent*, his last novel, published in 1961, the year in which I was "caught" reading it by the good Dominican Sister.

Two brief side notes to this memory: This book awoke in me the nascent desire to write. I remember after finishing it I sat down and wrote a short story along a similar vein (typed on a manual typewriter of course; as to where the story is now I have no recollection.) I also find myself ever grateful to my mother for encouraging me to read and to always appreciate great literature. She taught

me to never fear the truth but to avidly seek it, for she believed and lived as Jesus taught "and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."¹

Steinbeck's novel was at the time controversial, for it touched on issues which were seldom discussed in polite company. Sadly, times have changed while the issues for the most part have grown ever more malignant and metastasized.



At the heart of the novel is the human struggle between good and evil. In a very real sense it is a morality play where social and economic status wage battle with the values of honesty and integrity.

The protagonist, Ethan Allen Hawley, was born into Long Island aristocracy, but through family misfortune, finds himself working as a grocery store clerk. Surrounded by temptation and corruption, Hawley struggles to hold onto to his inherent integrity even while trying to reclaim his former status and wealth.

Although *The Winter of Our Discontent* was published fifty-six years ago, the story still reads as current today as it did when it first found its way to print.

It speaks to many of the most important social and moral issues encountered today: illegal immigration, bribery, corruption, moral decay, ruthlessness, social status, power, wealth, alcoholism, drugs, depression, and suicide. Yet Steinbeck never glorifies, nor does he pasteurize, the evil; neither does he paint Hawley as a saint. It is a story of one man's struggle to hold onto what is good amid the temptations presented to him by his family, friends, and society.

All this came knocking at the door of my mind when I came across an article written by Randy Boyagoda in which he warns against the institutionalization of creativity.² Boyagoda rightfully bemoans the current trend toward academic efforts to mechanize a heretofore creative art form—*writing*—and to conform those who would indulge—*writers*—to ideological zombies.

He relays some counsel he received from Richard John Neuhaus prior to his death: "If you want to write, then write." And he goes on to write how Neuhaus would be highly skeptical of the explosion of creative writing programs at American universities, programs designed to teach writers how to write—and what to write about.

Boyagoda points out the danger posed by the American contemporary

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secular academia to the health and future of American literary culture:

"We know how contemporary secular academia often constrains the mind, turning deeper questions of life and belief into objects of expertise. There is no reason to think that literature can maintain a catholic and diverse approach to the Big Questions if its producers first pass through five or six years of formal instruction in an ideological setting that tends to constrain ambition and concern.

One especially bad effect of the academic institutionalization of creative writing, he [David Foster Wallace] observed, is the reigning secular progressive ethic that comes to rule over emergent literary imaginations. Focused on current concerns and topical matters, secular progressivism treats history and tradition less as right storehouses for new writers to explore, learn from, and plunder, than as musty prisons from which to escape into the bright bare present: 'Way too many students are being 'certified' to go out there and try to do meaningful work on the cutting edge of an artistic discipline of whose underpinnings, history, and greatest achievements they are largely ignorant.' Would be writers are taught to pass over 'Homer and Milton, Cervantes and Shakespeare, Maupassant and Gogol, to say nothing of the Testaments.'

At this juncture there may be some question as to exactly how Steinbeck and Boyagoda should be connected and precisely where this is heading. I promise they are and we will get there straightaway.

Memories are important for they remind us of our past and the wisdom

gained from our experiences, our successes and our failures, of all that has formed and shaped our lives. Similarly, cultures and societies are built upon the foundation and work of all that has come before.

Memories and history are the records upon which we must rely lest we find ourselves beginning each new day as if it were the first. When either becomes clouded or distorted we must of necessity become new born, placing our unquestioning trust in an ever malleable and fluid truth which no one has the ability to confirm or deny. We become dependent upon something other than our own intellect to tell us what or why we should remember anything at all.

Steinbeck wrote of the truth as he saw it then and Boyagoda writes of just how far we have succumbed to the mind-numbing incessant chatter of a gaggle of geese having been saved from the chopping block.

On the back cover of Ray Bradbury's masterpiece *Fahrenheit 451* is this inscription: "*Fahrenheit 451 is a masterpiece that stands with George Orwell's '1984' and Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World.'* This is no rocket story or trip to the moon, but a frightening forecast of the world as it might be in the next few generations...when a powerful government has given people every physical comfort but denied them the right to think!"³

While we may not have yet reached the time when firemen burn books, we have certainly traveled well down the road toward a future when government provides every physical

comfort. We have yet to be denied the right to think although the less we seek the truth on our own accord, the more we place our complete trust and reliance on what we are told rather than on our own minds, the sooner the day will come when we will deny ourselves the right to think.

Think about it while you still can.

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1. Jn 8:32.
 2. Randy Boyagoda, Ph.D, *Write Away*, First Things, August/September 2015, pp.33-37.
 3. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, Ballantine Books, 1953.

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A PRAYER FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

*Almighty God,
Father of all nations,
For freedom
you have set us free in Christ Jesus.*

*We praise and bless you
for the gift of religious liberty,
the foundation of human rights,
justice, and the common good.*

*Grant to our leaders the wisdom
to protect and promote our liberties;
By your grace
may we have the courage
to defend them, for ourselves
and for all those who live
in this blessed land.*

*We ask this through the intercession
of Mary Immaculate, our patroness,
and in the name of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
with whom you live and reign,
one God, for ever and ever.*

Amen.

Religious Liberty

Our first freedom

It is difficult at times to understand Jesus. There are times when what he says pricks like barbs on a rose. When called by Jesus, a potential disciple responds “Lord, let me go first and bury my father” to which Jesus replies “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Such callousness in the face of grave personal loss seems so unlike Jesus—so what are we missing here?

What we are missing is the cultural understanding of first-century Palestine. We necessarily view life through the lens of now: of our own time, culture, and place; we have no true understanding of how great a divide exists between then and now, of the differences that engulf two-thousand years of historical and cultural changes. And then we must add to it the multi-linguistic challenges of translation, context, and usage.

In the middle-eastern culture at the time of Jesus it was customary for the eldest son to be held responsible for the care of aging parents; the eldest would remain in the home with his parents and manage their property and provide care for them including insuring their proper burial upon their deaths. If that was the situation here, then the request might not have been to attend to an immediate funeral but for one well into the future.

This changes our understanding. Jesus is telling the potential disciple and us that there can be no excuse for

hesitation or reluctance when he calls. If you hesitate or find an excuse to postpone responding to his call you are in effect saying, “I’m not interested in following you right now.” What’s more, in all likelihood you never will.

What is perhaps most remarkable, beyond the temporal and cultural gulf that separates us from first-century Palestine is how great a divide now exists neighbor to neighbor, between those chosen to govern and those who have chosen to be governed, between natural rights endowed by our Creator God and rights granted by man.



No doubt we face serious cultural and societal challenges yet the biggest problem we face isn't what makes the headlines or the evening news. Issues such as gay marriage, abortion, euthanasia, mass murders, terrorism, joblessness, economic instability, and even the continuing decline of faith and morals are all serious cultural and societal issues but what underlies them all is a thing oddly similar to our common misunderstanding of the Gospel: a crippling inability to communicate clearly and effectively with one another due primarily to a lack of a common shared vocabulary, eerily reminiscent of the Tower of Babel.

As Archbishop Charles Chaput explains:

“...we use words like justice, rights, freedom and dignity without any commonly shared meaning to their content.

We speak the same language, but the words don't mean the same thing. Our public discourse never gets down to what's true and what isn't, because it can't. Our most important debates boil out to who can deploy the best words in the best way to get power. Words like 'justice' have emotional throw-weight, so people use them as weapons. And it can't be otherwise, because the religious vision and convictions that once animated American life are no longer welcome at the table. After all, what can 'human rights' mean if science sees nothing transcendent in the human species? Or if science imagines a trans-humanist future? Or if science doubts that a uniquely human 'nature' even exists? If there's no inherent human nature, there can be no inherent natural rights—and then the grounding of our whole political system is a group of empty syllables.”¹

EQUALITY UNDER THE LAW

This unique experiment which we like to call the American Experience, was first and foremost founded on self-evident truths “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Our foundational document, the Declaration of Independence declares and affirms that a Creator God, through his power and grace gifted all men with certain ‘unalienable Rights’, rights that can neither be taken nor given away.

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Since God gave these rights to man, no individual, group, or authority may take them away. They are unalienable by virtue of the fact that man is made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore all men are endowed with certain attributes, powers, freedoms, and legal protections as part of our human essence. They are gifts from our Creator God and thus impossible for any government to alter or nullify man's divine inheritance. But those with the power to govern are too often want to try to usurp the will of God.

Our American heritage is one of freedom and our most cherished freedom is the right to freely worship according to our conscience. In 2012 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Ad Hoc Committed for Religious Liberty suggested that the fourteen days from June 21st—the vigil of the Feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More—to July 4th, Independence Day, be dedicated as a 'Fortnight for Freedom'—a great hymn of prayer for our country. In their inaugural letter they stated that Religious Freedom:

"...is the first freedom because if we are not free in our conscience and our practice of religion, all other freedoms are fragile. If citizens are not free in their own consciences, how can they be free in relation to others, or to the state? If our obligations and duties to God are impeded, or even worse, contradicted by the government, then we can no longer claim to be a land of the free, and a beacon of hope for the world.

...

In his famous "Letter from Birming-

ham Jail" in 1963, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. boldly said, "The Goal of America is freedom." As a Christian pastor, he argued that to call America to the full measure of that freedom was the specific contribution Christians are obliged to make. He rooted his legal and constitutional arguments about justice in the long Christian tradition:

I would agree with Saint Augustine that 'An unjust law is no law at all.' Now what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.

It is a sobering thing to contemplate our government enacting an unjust law. An unjust law cannot be obeyed. In the face of an unjust law, an accommodation is not to be sought, especially by resorting to equivocal words and deceptive practices. If we face today the prospect of unjust laws, then Catholics in America, in solidarity with our fellow citizens, must have the courage not to obey them. No American desires this. No Catholic welcomes it. But if it should fall upon us, we must discharge it as a duty of citizenship and an obligation of faith."²

DIGNITATIS HUMANAЕ

The Second Vatican Council, in its Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae) promulgated by Pope Pius VI makes it absolutely clear what the Church's teaching was concerning religious liberty:

"The human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs ... whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits. ... This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed. Thus it is to become a civil right."³

This year we observe the fifth 'Fortnight for Freedom' which began last Tuesday, June 21st and will continue through July 4th, Independence Day. Five years ago the bishops closed their letter with an appeal to us all:

"To all our fellow Catholics, we urge an intensification of your prayers and fasting for a new birth of freedom in our beloved country. We invite you to join us in an urgent prayer for religious liberty."

The prayer can be found on page 3



Homily for
13th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C.
1 King 19:16B, 19-21
Galatians 5:1, 13-18
Luke 9:51-62

1. Charles J. Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia, *Of human Dignity: The Declaration on Religious Liberty at 50*, First Things, March 18, 2015.
2. USCCB, *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty: A Statement on Religious Liberty*, March 2012.
3. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)*, no. 2, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

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Render Unto Caesar

To whom do you serve?

From where does the notion of a separation of church and state derive? For most Americans I suppose their immediate response might be from the First Amendment to the Constitution but that would be woefully incorrect.

The idea of a distinct separation of church and state goes much further back, over a millennia before the birth of Christ, to the time when Samuel anointed Saul to be the King of Israel.

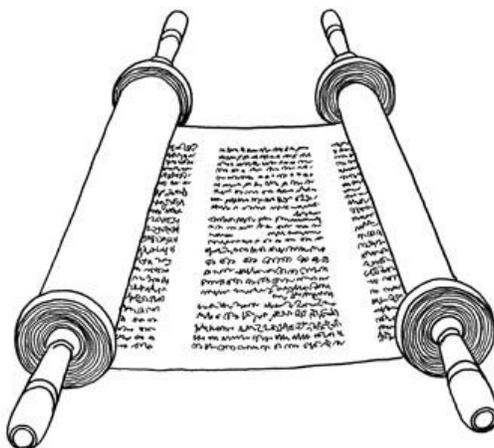
"In his old age Samuel appointed his sons judges over Israel. His sons did not follow his example but sought illicit gain and accepted bribes, perverting justice. Therefore all the elders of Israel came in a body to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, 'Now that you are old, and your sons do not follow your example, appoint a king over us, as other nations have, to judge us.'

Samuel was displeased when they asked for a king to judge them. He prayed to the Lord, however, who said in answer: 'Grant the people's every request. It is not you they reject, they are rejecting me as their king. ... Now grant their request; but at the same time, warn them solemnly and inform them of the rights of the king who will rule them.'"¹

Samuel, the prophet, priest and judge, reluctantly anoints Saul by pouring oil on his head, thus raising him up to the stature of king, Yah-

weh's anointed one. In doing so, Samuel relinquishes his role as judge and becomes solely a priest and prophet.

This is the beginning of the distinction between the sacred (church) and the political (state.) A principle is established that delineates and defines the roles of priest and king:



"A priest is not a king, and a king is not a priest. ...

Moreover, the two functions are not equal. Implicit in this very act of anointing we can see that the prophet is really higher than the king. Saul receives his royal stature from a prophet, a man of God, and a priest. If there is any doubt in that regard, when King Saul takes it upon himself to offer a sacrifice as if he were a priest, Samuel accuses him of violating 'the commandment of Yahweh your god,' and so declares that the kingship is to be taken from him, and given to another."²

Here we see the beginnings of a moral and theological basis for the separation of church and state. The people of Israel, including their king, were

to be judged by the Law. The word of the king was not law unless it conformed to the Law (Yahweh's commandments.) If the king's law did not conform to the Law, the people were not bound to obey it.

Fast forward 1400 years to the time of Saint Augustine, who wrote in *City Of God*:

"While the homes of unbelieving men are intent upon acquiring temporal peace out of the possessions and comforts of this temporal life, the families which live according to faith look ahead to the good things of heaven promised as imperishable, not as snares or obstructions to block their way to God, but simply as helps to ease and never to increase the burdens of this corruptible body which weighs down the soul. Both types of homes and their masters have this in common, that they must use things essential to this mortal life. But the respective purposes to which they put them are characteristics and very different.

So, too, the earthly city which does not live by faith seeks only an earthly peace, and limits the goal of its peace, of its harmony of authority and obedience among its citizens, to the voluntary and collective attainment of objectives necessary to mortal existence. The heavenly city, meanwhile—or, rather, that part that is on pilgrimage in mortal life and lives by faith—must use this earthly peace until such time as our mortality which needs such peace has passed away. As a consequence, so long as her life in the earthly city is that of a captive and an alien (although she has the promise of

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ultimate delivery and the gift of the Spirit as a pledge), she has no hesitation about keeping instep with the civil law which governs matters pertaining to our existence here below. For, as mortal life is the same for all, there ought to be common cause between the two cities in what concerns our purely human living. ...

*So long, then, as the heavenly City is wayfaring on earth, she invites citizens from all nations and all tongues, and unites them into a single pilgrim band. She takes no issue with that diversity of customs, laws, and traditions whereby human peace is sought and maintained. Instead of nullifying or tearing down, she preserves and appropriates whatever in the diversities of divers races is aimed at one and the same objective of human peace, provided only that they do not stand in the way of the faith and worship of the one supreme and true God. ... Of course, though, the City of God subordinates this earthly peace to that of heaven. For this is not merely true peace, but, strictly speaking, for any rational creature, the only real peace, since it is, as I said, 'the perfectly ordered and harmonious communion of those who find their joy in God and in one another in God.'*³

Augustine affirms that there ought not be any conflict between the state (earthly city) and the church (heavenly City) so long as the state limits its concerns to earthly things and subordinates itself to the heavenly City. He makes clear that while there ought to be a separation between the earthly city and the heavenly one, the state must always stand in judgment to the Law of God.

As Benjamin Wiker writes:

"The distinction between church and state, religious and political power is peculiar to Christianity, and the church invented it. ...

We cannot comprehend how the distinction between church and state ever arose until we grasp the fundament fact: Christians believed that the Bible really was the revealed truth of God, and so they treated what it said as the authoritative guiding source for their approach to everything, including the relationship of the church to political power. The distinction between church and state arose within Christianity, and nowhere else, because of the accepted authority of the Bible."

Wiker goes on to write that the Christianization of the Roman Empire, contrary to legend, did not result in the fusion of church and state but their separation. *"The church insisted that it must be independent of the state for two very good reasons: so that the church would not corrupt itself by becoming worldly, and so that the state would not corrupt the church by bending the Christian religion to serve political ends."*

What differs today is the absence of any stricture upon the state to be subordinate to the will of God. It no longer holds that the church has the higher authority, rather it acts as if precisely the opposite were true.

1. 1 Samuel 8:1-7, 9.
2. Benjamin Wiker, *Worshipping the State: How Liberalism Became Our State Religion*, Regnery Publishing, March 25, 2013.
3. Saint Augustine, *City of God, Book XIX, Chapter 17*, pp. 463-465, Image Books Doubleday, 1968.

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.



Bon Appétit!

BOOKS

God or Nothing

Robert Cardinal Sarah

Ignatius Press,
August 31, 2015, 285 pages.

The Great Divorce

C. S. Lewis

HarperOne, Revised ed. edition
April 21, 2015, 160 pages.

Return

Brandon Vogt

Numinous Books,
2015, 231 pages.

PERIODICALS

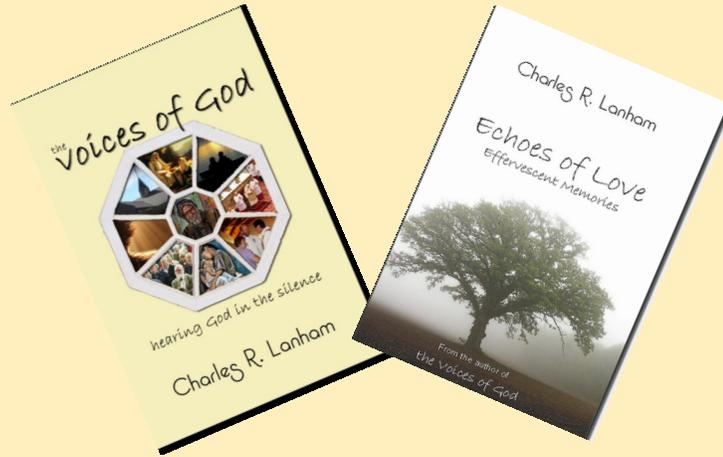
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