



A journal for restless minds

## LIVING A LIE

*Conversion to mendacity*

## THE TEMPLE OF GOD

*Is holy and you are the temple*

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

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

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

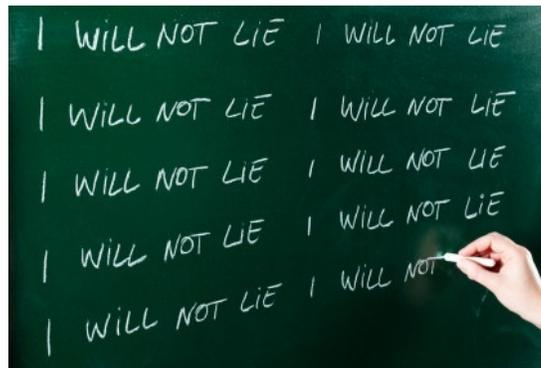
## Living A Lie

*Conversion to mendacity*

There is a pervasive dis-ease, a vague insubstantial shadow, discomfiting the soul. Few can put a name to it, most are blissfully unaware, finding little or no reason to concern themselves with the esoteric or the transcendental. Such matters, it is said, are better left to those who dabble in the arcane arts and crafts; living is much too challenging and difficult to spend time on the philosophical, existential or ontological meaning of existence; they are simply not disposed to entertain reason, that is, if they bother in the least with such esoterica.

There are those, among the living, who can recall with lucid memory, when the natural state—where lie and truth were strongly distinguished by mind and conscience—was extolled and adhered with righteous conviction.

Alas, no more. *“One of the characteristic phenomena of the day is how unsubtle lying has become, how what in another day would be immediately and universally identified as something only a moral imbecile could propose is put forward as truth by educated people and readily published by major organs of communication. Increasing ease of association by electronic means has made it possible for the advocates of perversity, who have always existed among crackpots, sociopaths, and pathological liars, to find one another, band together in various enterprises, make a great deal of noise, and gather a greater following among the ignorant and unreflective than has ever before been possible.”*<sup>1</sup>



Most of us—and here I must in truth admit to my own culpability—have, whether consciously or not, decidedly acquiesced in some way to participation in what S. M. Hutchens terms the *“principal sacrament of the conversion to mendacity.”*

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## The Temple Of God

*Is holy and you are that temple*

A few years ago, during a confirmation class, as we were discussing the Ten Commandments, I remarked that God created each of us in His own image and likeness, that He loved us unconditionally and that because He created us and He loved us, we not only owed him our love in return but that we were obliged to love everyone; they were God's creation after all. One student, a very bright but often difficult one, leaned back in his chair, crossed his arms, and with an incredulous look on his face asked, "Even cops!?" I remember responding, "Yes, even cops!"

In today's Gospel Jesus tells the Jews that if they destroy the temple he would raise it up in three days. The Jews of course did not understand what Jesus meant. They, like many of us tend to interpret things far too literally. We have this notion of temples or churches as places where God resides. We forget that God is everywhere; churches are buildings where we go to feel closer to God, to worship and to pray together to our Creator.

St Augustine wrote that "God's temple is holy," and you are that temple: *all you who believe in Christ and whose belief makes you love him. All who believe in this way are like the living stones which go to build God's temple, and like the rot-proof timber used in the framework of the*

*ark which the flood waters could not submerge. It is in this temple, that is, in ourselves, that prayer is addressed to God and heard by Him."*

St. Paul tells us that we are members of Christ's body, therefore we are individually and collectively temples of God. St. Paul wrote "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you."

OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT  
**YOUR BODY**  
IS A TEMPLE  
OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
WITHIN YOU, WHOM YOU  
HAVE FROM GOD?  
YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN, FOR  
YOU WERE BOUGHT  
WITH A PRICE.  
SO GLORIFY GOD  
IN YOUR BODY.  
1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

Meister Eckhart, a 14th century Dominican, similarly wrote that "This temple is the human soul, which God has made exactly like Himself, just as we read that the Lord said: 'Let us make humankind in our image and likeness.' Nothing else resembles God so much as the human soul."

In order for us to worship and give praise and thanks to God as we should—we must love and respect others. We cannot love God if we do

not love all that He has created. True and honest worship demands that we love and respect those whom He has created in His own image and likeness.

When a scholar of the law asked Jesus "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

We must recognize that when we hurt others we are desecrating the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are, in a very real sense, behaving exactly like those vendors and money-changers who Jesus drove from the temple. When we fail to live by the Ten Commandments, when we lie, steal, or covet what others might have, when we lash out in anger, criticizing people, or causing them pain we are desecrating their temples, their places of worship, and God's holy sanctuary.

Loving God means loving all that God has created because He created all out of love. Underlying my student's question was an important and fundamental fact. While we, as children of God, who have been created in His image and likeness, must love all that God has created, we are not required to like everyone.

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**G**od created each of us out of love but not all return his love by following His commandments. We are not asked to love evil, to condone or support those who may do us harm, to promote hatred, bigotry, or violence.

I believe that Jesus gave us the words and showed us, by his example, how we must love others, when, at his crucifixion, he prayed to God and said *"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."*

As we reflect on today's readings, let us recognize that we are all the body of Christ, the ever living temple of the Holy Spirit.

Let us join together in love to worship God who created each of us in love, with love, and for love.

Amen.

Homily for the  
The Third Sunday of Lent (B)  
Exodus 20:1-17  
1 Corinthians 1:22-25  
John 2:13-25

## On The Way

*Thoughts from the journey*

**S**pend two weeks outside your comfort zone and you will encounter the unexpected and experience the marvelous. While I cannot hope to relay all that we experienced on our recent journey—sailing through the Panama Canal from Colon to Panama City, then onto San Jose, Costa Rica—I must speak of a few of its more memorable encounters and discoveries.

Anyone who has ever traveled beyond our borders knows of the inevitable necessity to exchange currencies, however, in Panama, the exchange rate is one U.S. dollar for one U.S. dollar. While Panama has their own currency, it consists of a single coin, their standard coin of the realm is the U.S. dollar. Who would have thought?

Both Panama and Costa Rica have no standing military. For Panama, the U.S., by treaty, is bound to protect the neutrality of the Canal. The skyline of Panama City is a marvel of steel and glass; none of it existed 16 years ago. There is construction everywhere. The people are genuinely friendly, the major religion is Catholic, and churches are everywhere and often. The bishop's residence (former residence) is a massive four-story building.

Costa Rica is one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. There is mandatory 1-12 grade education and scholarships widely available for post-high school education. Most of the people speak English as a second language. Over 80% of the population is Catholic. There are over 100 volcanoes throughout the small country with 7-8 active (one last erupted just last year.)

Over the next few issues I will add more thoughts on these two marvelous countries and their people.

## 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

**On Conscience**  
*Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger*  
Ignatius Press  
2007, 82 pages.

**Society and Sanity**  
*Frank Sheed*  
Sheed & Ward, New York  
1953, 270 pages.

**Strangers in a Strange Land**  
*Charles J. Chaput*  
Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**  
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

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

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

**T**raditional morality, at the center of human existence, with its clear and unambiguous distinctions between right and wrong, between truth and lie, are early victims of such mendaciousness, for mendacity tacitly approves self-justification while denying the vital necessity of objective morality and of truth in the absolute.

As Hutchens writes, *“There are two changes a self undergoes following this conversion. First, a new and exculpatory morality is invented in the form and likeness of the old. The Lie now at the center of existence is gilded over by good works and good intentions that excuse and preserve it, as fornication may be overlooked in the righteousness of abstaining from meat.*

*Second, there is an increasingly violent hatred of the insistence of conscience—which cannot entirely be extinguished until humanity is—that there is a dominating evil in the person. Hatred of a corrupted self is commuted to others who persist in speaking with conscience’s voice—normally the ‘religious’—who are consequently attacked and denigrated in every way possible. This accounts for the otherwise inexplicable irrationality and rabidity of hatred against those identified as ‘haters,’ but whose hatred consists of nothing more than denying the goodness of perverted life. Existence with the Lie produces a lying existence, which, in accord with its expansive character, becomes bolder when it finds no effective resistance.”*

Titus Livius or Livy (59 BCE–17 CE), Roman historian and author wrote in the preface to his History of the Roman Republic *“Let him note how, with*

*the gradual relaxation of discipline, morals first subsided, as it were, then sank lower and lower, and finally began the downward plunge which has brought us to our present time, when we can endure neither our vices nor their cure.”*

Rome had conquered the world but had lost its soul. It would appear that we have progressed little over the millennia in that respect. *“The cultural rebellion of the 1960s was a denial of human sinfulness in the most radical way, and its fruits are everywhere. It has done incalculable damage to religion, to education, and to men, women, and children.”*<sup>2</sup>

In an article, reflecting on the twentieth anniversary of the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (“Faith and Reason”), written for First Things, Archbishop Charles Chaput observes:

*“Looking back on the past two decades, we can’t help but see Fides et Ratio as prophetic. Our social climate and public discourse are now ruled by what the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre calls the morality of ‘emotivism.’ We implicitly rank feelings over careful judgment, sincerity over facts, and authenticity to ourselves over collateral damage to others. Each person is free to think whatever he wishes about the universe, morality, personhood, religion (or the lack thereof)—but only so long as each person avoids offending the sovereign space of others.*

*Of course, this standard is applied selectively. And it’s guided by norms of political correctness that reflect the agendas of the leadership class. The hymns we sing to tolerance are theatrical and superficial. At the heart of today’s emotivism is a paradox. Modern secular morality is based on individual autonomy. In theory, each*

*person forges the meaning of life for himself. But this autonomy can only be exercised within the narrowly conformist context: participation in the liberal, secular market, with its typical consumptions and pleasures. Increasingly **absent** is the intellectual and moral discipline that a community shaped by the classical virtues instills. Everyone is urged to develop an autonomous vision of one’s self, distinct from the herd. But each one is also pressed to conform to the opinions and behaviors of the herd. This leads inevitably to the culture of simultaneous egotism and groupthink paraded before us in our daily news feeds.”*<sup>3</sup>

**M**ichael Polanyi—a fellow of the Royal Society and an acclaimed physical chemist turned philosopher and a prodigious writer—believed that humans are made to seek the truth, and that all knowledge requires a foundation, a framework of preexisting belief to provide it with coherence.

*“Rejecting the traditional philosophical foundations of Western culture gives rise to a spiritual turmoil that science, technology, and prosperity can’t quell. ...*

*We’re meant to be beings who relate to God, to one another, and to ourselves in genuine love, through our bodies and choices. Knowing the truth about our nature makes us free for that vocation.*

*Human beings are more fruitful and authentic in their relationships and inner lives when they know they’re bound by a truth beyond themselves. Fides et Ratio describes the connection between truth and human freedom. Knowing what’s true makes us free to be ourselves, to live for*

what's real, and to appreciate the dignity of others. True knowledge of persons leads to an expansion of human love. That's part of any sound philosophy."<sup>4</sup>

**A**rchbishop Chaput adds that a major intellectual problem of modernity is its bias against (or fear of?) transcendence. "Human reason is naturally oriented toward exploring life's deepest realities. We search for what is ultimate. We want to find the real origin of things. We ask why. This search leads us to the question of God. In the words of John Paul: 'Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the metaphysical dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God.' But our modern rationality too often adopts a crippling kind of skepticism that imprisons us within the world of politics, economics, and technology."

Our world has been remade, transformed by human hands, rationalized and technocratic, a world without transcendence. In it, we are shielded from the inconvenient Truth, building a wall between ourselves and God, his demands and his invitations.

"God is the one we may not name in polite conversation. Religious convictions are deemed awkward at best, and dangerous at worst. What happens to human reason in the absence of any reference to God is predictable. Its horizons lower. It become a tool of the modern sciences. And the materialist philosophy that results, scientism, regards as true knowledge only that which is achieved by modern empirical research.

Of course, this kind of reasoning is — or should be — obvious nonsense. It suggests that no real knowledge can be gained by ethics, law, literature, philosophy, or religion. It claims that only what can be empirically verified counts as true knowledge. **But this very claim itself can't be empirically verified.** So in a sense it's self-refuting

But that doesn't keep vast numbers of people from privileging reductive reasoning, for it gets **practical results**. In a seemingly post-ideological, pragmatic age, results are king. Thus, learning becomes equated with modern science and its technical by-products. Man is reduced to a physical animal who resolves his problems by technology, politics, and economics. Culture becomes an empty shell. The spirit is choked off from deep questions about justice, friendship, fidelity, worship, existence, God, beauty."

R. J. Snell writes of the perversion that now pervades academia, where "teachers politicize the texts, pervert free inquiry, reduce ideas to propaganda, and generally act like ideologues and self-appointed prophets. Perhaps worse," he writes, "they destroy the books, treating even the best texts of our heritage as fodder in the endless race-gender-class routine, never allowing the books to speak for themselves, let alone staying out of the way so students can experience beauty, wonder, piety, and gratitude. Such teachers are illiberal, whatever their professed political leanings, ..."

**H**e further notes, "I tried to be irenic, that is, to facilitate students' questions rather than my own, to let books speak for themselves, and to count it a success if students did not know my opinions on the political

issues of the day. All this made sense because of a commitment to the 'long game,' the sense that truth would out itself, would make itself known to any student of good will. Consequently, it was more important to teach students to question and ponder, to think and read, and to honestly explore and argue than to arrive at prescribed answers, for in doing the former they were likely to discover the truth in a way that would affix it deeply into their souls.

The long game quite often entailed a willingness to wait, even to allow students to flail about in temporary confusion, for so long as they sincerely sought to know, the odds were good that they would make progress while becoming more honest, more engaged, and more virtuous learners and persons."<sup>5</sup>

Snell continues, confessing to a certain degree of naiveté or culpable ignorance with respect to his irenic methods, while noting his failure to recognize the signs of the times, noting that "the danger to our form of life is more of an existential threat than it was before. What had been gathering clouds is now a full-on tempest threatening our little raft."

He writes of the radical nature of the now default model of Western society which Charles Taylor defines as "exclusive humanism," "the belief that there are no final goals beyond human flourishing and that such flourishing can be attained and satisfied without any reference to, belief in, or involvement in the transcendent. On this understanding, ordinary, immanent fulfillment is all there is, all we can hope for, and all we need or should want. ...this kind of secularity sets the conditions of belief in what he terms

the 'immanent frame.' Even religious adherents operate from within the framing picture of exclusive humanism and define and live their belief from the starting point of immanence."

To be sure, this is a radical departure from traditional understanding of reality and truth. As Snell quite correctly warns us:

*"There have always been unbelievers, and at times even hostile and active proponents of unbelief, but our secular age is one in which 'the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable,' as Taylor puts it. But not just conceivable, as if it is now possible to think this way; rather, unbelief has become the condition of the possibility of conceiving. That is, unbelievers no longer position themselves against the background of widespread belief; rather, it is believers who must position themselves against a default model of exclusive humanism and who must believe despite the patterns of what is held to be conceivable. To believe is now to dissent.*

On its own, exclusive humanism is not an existential threat to the tradition, even if it goes some way to explain the pervasive loss of faith. Unique to our time, though, is that the default model of unbelief is coupled with an aggressive, even tyrannical, impetus to what Phillip Rieff terms 'anti-culture.' Proponents of the older traditions not only engage the battle from a defensive position, but their opponents hold sway in most, if not all, of the culturally formative institutions, and are engaged offensively. Not content to hold predominance, they need to uproot and eradicate tradition. ...

*The agents of anti-culture are committed to an inverted catholicity, pronouncing universal judgments on meaning, freedom, and the human good, judgments that claim to be authoritative standards of legitimacy. To dissent is to place oneself outside of legitimacy, thus to be a heretic threatening the stability of anti-culture. ... Traditional culture must not simply be denied; it must be disallowed."*

The Polish philosopher-statesman Ryszard Lugutko rebrands *anti-culture* as "liberal-democratic" with the term indicating a fervent ideological commitment rather than a simple adherence to liberal or democratic systems or beliefs. Lugutko writes that anti-cultural liberal-democratic systems first claim ascendancy over everything, consigning traditional culture to the dustbin and denying its legitimacy:

*"Not only should the state and the economy be ... liberal-democratic, but the entire society as well, including ethics and mores, family, churches, schools, universities, community organizations, culture, and even human sentiment and aspirations. ... Once one sends one's opponents to the dustbin of history, any debate with them becomes superfluous. Why waste time, they think, arguing with someone whom the march of history condemned to nothingness and oblivion ...? People who are not liberal-democrats are to be condemned, laughed at, and repelled, not debated. Debating with them is like debating with alchemists or geocentrists."*<sup>6</sup>

Lugutko, a professor of philosophy at Jagellonian University in Krakow, Poland, has lived under communism and for two decades under a liberal democracy. From first-hand experience he has discov-

ered that these two political systems have a lot more in common than one might think.

Both systems reduce human nature to that of the common man, who is led to believe himself liberated from the obligations of the past. Both the communist man and the liberal-democratic man refuse to admit that there exists anything of value outside the political systems to which they pledged their loyalty. And both systems refuse to undertake any critical examination of their ideological prejudices.

Both systems share a similar viewpoint that institutions and thoughts deemed incompatible must be eliminated, even though they are already considered useless, laughable, and on their way to inevitable demise:

*"The people, structures, thoughts that exist outside the liberal-democratic pattern are deemed outdated, backward-looking, useless, but at the same time extremely dangerous as preserving the remnants of old authoritarianisms. Some may still be tolerated for some time, but as anyone with a minimum of intelligence is believed to know, sooner or later they will end up in the dustbin of history. Their continued existence will most likely threaten the liberal-democratic progress, and therefore they should be treated with the harshness they deserve."*

And, as Snell observes, *"The agents of anti-culture, thus, are unwilling simply to allow the tradition to dissolve, as they believe it is inevitably destined to do, for the continued existence of the traditional culture, even temporarily, is judged imper-*

missable and threatening; it destabilizes the new forms of meaning and (dis)order, and so it must be stamped out.”

**I**t is thus essential for anti-cultural liberal-democratic adherents, through a prolonged process of moral and ideological reform, to overcome the existing hegemony of traditional culture. This “war of position” is waged using a combination of coercion and persuasion, “such that the subordinate classes would not be dominated by power alone but would somewhat freely consent to the new values. Their own values would be cajoled and pushed along—nudged—sometimes bullied, sometimes seduced or entertained, until the people desired anti-culture. Hegemony, thus was “the organization of consent,” the structuring of institutions so that people would view the world through new lenses.

Of course, the mere presence of the older system is incongruous, a sign of contradiction; it shows the people’s consent to be arbitrary, provisional, and reversible. The existence of the Church, for instance, is a mark of difference that calls the values into question, and so the Church must be eviscerated, or better, be so corrupted as to lose its moral distinctiveness and become part of the consenting anti-culture. (Why, after all, were the Little Sisters of the Poor forced to provide contraception when it would have been so easy for the Affordable Care Act to make accommodations for them?) ...

So it is that a kind of sacral status has been assigned to notions such as ‘rights,’ ‘progress,’ ‘equality,’ ‘victims,’ ‘the Other,’ ‘colonialism,’ or ‘the marginalized,’ to choose but a few. Such terms have become part and parcel of the organization of con-

sent, and they are used to bully and beat those who hesitate before sexual liberation, embryo-destructive research, the redefinition of marriage, and so on—who in his proper mind can be against ‘rights’ or for ‘colonialism’? Those who desist are first deemed irrelevant and archaic; then are judged hostile, threatening, and dangerous; and finally are erased, eradicated.”

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Propaganda Minister, believed that: “If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth. If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.” As one would expect, he was also an ardent believer in socialism: “To be a socialist is to submit the I to the thou; socialism is sacrificing the individual to the whole.”

**W**hat should Catholics and people of faith do to combat this encroaching tide of perversity and mendacity? For starters, “learning how to think clearly, with the Church, in a mature and well-informed fashion, is vital” according to Archbishop Chaput. “It’s every bit as crucial as feeling our religious convictions deeply. Sentiment isn’t enough, and that directly affects how we understand the role of conscience.

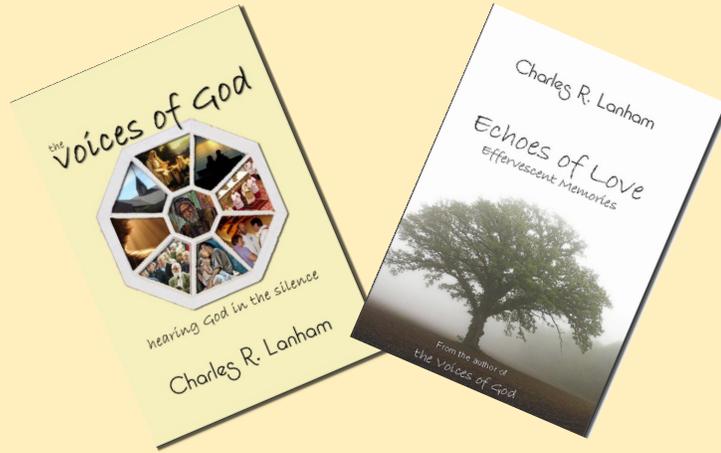
Christian faith is more than good will and kind intentions. Conscience is more than our personally sincere opinions. A healthy conscience needs a strong for-

mation in the commonly held truths of the Catholic community. Without it, conscience can very quickly turn into an alibi machine. The world is a complicated place. It requires sound Catholic reasoning skills rooted in the teaching of the Church.

The trouble is that we’ve now had at least two generations of poor catechesis and very inadequate conscience formation. So when voices tell us to leave today’s hot-button moral decisions to the ‘adult consciences’ of our people, we might want to agree—ideally—but before we do, we need to examine what exactly that means. We have a great many otherwise successful, credentialed adults who see themselves as Catholic but whose faith education stopped in the sixth grade. Recovering the discipline of good Catholic moral reasoning is urgent

When you find yourself in an environment dominated by poor philosophy and theology, “Ignore the nonsense, read, watch and listen to good Catholic material, and live your faith in conformity with what the Church has always taught. The basics still apply on marriage, sex, honesty and everything else. There are no ‘new paradigms’ or revolutions in Catholic thought. Using that kind of misleading language only adds confusion to a confusing age.”

1. S. M. Hutchens, “Quodlibet: How Can They Lie Like That?,” Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, Volume 31, Number 2, March/April 2018, p. 4.
2. James Hitchcock, James M. Kushiner, *Editorial: The Abusive Society*, Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, Volume 31, Number 2, March/April 2018, pp. 3-4.
3. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., Archbishop of Philadelphia, “Believe, That You May Understand”, First Things, March 2018, pp. 35-40.
4. Charles J. Chaput, “Believe, That You May Understand”, pp. 36-37.
5. R. J. Snell, “Reason Takes Up Arms”, Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, Volume 31, Number 2, March/April 2018, pp. 37-38.
6. Ryszard Legutko, “The Demon in Democracy: Totalitarian Temptations in Free Societies” (Encounter Books, April 19, 2016).



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

**deaconscorner.org**

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