

Colloquī

August 09, 2019
Volume 03, Number 52



A journal for restless minds

Truth Without A Home

It is the lie that gives birth to violence

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

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

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

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

Truth Without A Home

It is the lie that gives birth to violence

The canonization of Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman on October 13, 2019 will occasion the first person from England since the 17th century to be officially recognized a saint by the Roman Catholic Church.

John Henry Newman (1801–1890) was a prolific writer, theologian and poet, an Anglican priest who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1845. He was quickly ordained a Catholic priest and in 1879 was created Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in recognition of his services to the cause of the Catholic Church in England.

In his religious autobiography *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* written in part to vindicate the false accusations made against him by Charles Kingsley, who in an article asserted that "Father Newman in-

forms us that truth for its own sake need not be, and on the whole ought not to be, a virtue of the Roman clergy." What followed was some energetic sparring back and forth between the two, with Kingsley attempting to defend his assertion in a lengthy pamphlet entitled "*What then does Dr. Newman mean?*", described by one historian as "one of the most momentous rhetorical and polemical failures of the Victorian age."

Truth, then, was central to Newman's philosophy and theology. The introduction to the *Apologia* begins with a quote from Rev. Wm. Barry, D.D.

No autobiography in the English language has been more read; to the nineteenth century it bears a relation not less characteristic than Boswell's 'Johnson' to the eighteenth.

Though his *Apologia* is better known, *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*,



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

published the year of his conversion to Catholicism (1845), is a *tour de force*, as relevant today as it was then.

And, let us not forget, he was a poet of no small account. By way of introduction, Newman was “full of charm and serene expectancy; and with it we may associate these lines of his—sincere expression of one who was in all his earthly and heavenly pilgrimage a truth-seeker, heart and soul.” (*see inset*)

“Truth without a home,”—how wonderful the line—for it says far more than first is met. Most, I assume, will readily concede—when wedded to the line below it—a reference to the risen Lord who once said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). And yet, could there be more to the sainted poet’s verse than “old history”? Pilate dared to ask of what is truth without caring for an answer. Truth. The poet searched for truth but told his quest was all for naught, what truth once might have been now burnt in the fires of hell by madmen unwilling to permit their lies ever see sunlight.

There are and with little doubt have always been some, either secular and religious, who are wont to teach and promote progressive ideologies; ideologies effectively denying objective truth by making the entire economy of existence exclusively dependent on human subjective dispositions. For those who would advance positions

contrary to the constant teaching of the Catholic Church, many seek to justify their claims by insisting that through the ages there has been a development of doctrine under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a fact that the Church has always admitted, but ...

Of course, to speak of a development of doctrine does not mean to interpret historical Christianity in terms of ... idealism, historicism, and modernism. Proponents of these currents think of God, or the Absolute, as a so-called transcendental a priori—that is, as the subjective necessary condition of our

*When I would search the truths that in me burn,
And mould them into rule and argument,
A hundred reasoners cried,—‘Hast thou to learn
Those dreams are scatter’d now, those fires are spent?’
And, did I mount to simpler thoughts, and try
Some theme of peace, ‘twas still the same reply.*

*Perplex’d, I hoped my heart was pure of guile,
But judg’d me weak in wit, to disagree;
But now, I see that men are mad awhile,
‘Tis the old history—Truth without a home,
Despised and slain, then rising from the tomb.”*

reason and experience, which is itself prior to our experience and can never be the object of experience. Inasmuch as the Absolute is the condition for our thought and language, it cannot itself be expressed in words and concepts. According to this approach, then, all the dogmas of the Catholic faith are only provisional conceptual formulas that give expression to the ever-changing religious sentiment found in the Church’s collective consciousness. “Consequently, the formulae too, which we call dogmas, must be subject to these vicissitudes and are, therefore, liable to change.”^{1a} Following this theory, doctrinal formulas aim at uniting the faithful to the Absolute in a wordless fashion, but they do not in themselves really represent revealed truths. Thus, we would not

believe really in God, but in the phenomena of our imagination and their echoes in our language. By development of doctrine, however, Newman—and with him the whole Church—did not think of a development in terms of Idealist philosophy as we have just exposed them. Such an understanding of development contradicts the fullness of truth present in the historical person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God.

A fundamental problem of modern philosophy is the relation between truth and history. In its temporality, history seems to be the realm of the transient, the changeable, the contingent, whereas truth is beyond time, always valid, and found in the realm of divine ideas. As such, truth is never completely within the reach of finite human beings, who can approach it ever more closely but ultimately can never get ahold of it. Christian theology, in contrast, does not start with the question of how—under the conditions of historical existence—it is possible to know the truth. Rather, it begins with the fact of God’s self-revelation in time. The Incarnation is not an idea meant to help us grasp the temporal significance of Jesus in conceptual terms. Rather, the Incarnation is a fact of divine action in history. Reflecting on it, the Church becomes progressively conscious of all that this event implies and presupposes. The understanding of the faith—the *intellectus fidei*—presupposes and unfolds the hearing of the faith—the *auditus fidei*. Jesus appears in the “fullness of time” (cf. Mk 1:15; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10). In the fullness of time God sends his Son, born of the Virgin Mary, into the world and into history, to accomplish his salvific work, reconciling us once and for all to God and directing our thoughts and actions to the truth and goodness of God (cf. Gal 4:4).

As far as the substance of the articles of faith is concerned, it is impossible to add or subtract anything. In the Church's efforts to combat heresies and to come to a deeper understanding of revealed truths, there can, however, be an increase in the articles of faith. The *filiolique*, for example—that is, the definition of faith that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*—does not add anything to the Trinitarian faith. This formulation merely gives a clearer expression of a truth that is already known—namely, that the Spirit is not the second Son of God. Development of doctrine in this sense refers to the process by which the Church, in her consciousness of the faith, comes to an ever deeper conceptual and intellectual understanding of God's self-revelation. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, all the articles of faith "are contained implicitly in certain primary matters of faith, such as God's existence and His providence".^{1b} Development of doctrine is possible because in the one truth of God all the revealed truths of faith are connected, and those that are more implicit can be made explicit. After all, the doctrinal formulas are not themselves the object of the act of faith. Rather, the believer's faith refers to the very reality of God and God's truth in Christ. As Saint Thomas put it: "The act of the believer does not terminate in a proposition, but in a thing."^{1c} Contrary to modernism's claims, however, the formulas of faith indeed refer to the knowledge of God. They are not just the fortuitous expressions of our subjective consciousness of God.¹

Gerhard Cardinal Müller, the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Pope Francis and an internationally known theologian points to Cardinal Newman's famous *Essay* and the principal ques-

tion he sought to answer.

Since revelation is the personal and dialogical self-communication of God in the medium of the historical existence of Christ and his Church, we need criteria in order to tell the difference between real development of doctrine and what Newman calls a corruption. Development means a growth in the understanding of spiritual and theological realities, guided by the Holy Spirit (Cf. *Dei Verbum*, no. 8). This growth does not occur from any kind of natural necessity, and it has nothing to do with the liberal belief in progress. In fact, as happens also in one's personal spiritual life, it is possible to regress. A dangerous standstill can occur in the Church, for example, when gifted theologians and scientific institutions are not sufficiently promoted or when bishops are appointed who are ill-equipped for their eminent duty of teaching and preaching (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 25). Bishops do not belong to the periphery, but to the center of orthodoxy.²

Newman, in his *Essay*, set down seven Notes (principles) to describe healthy developments of an idea from its state of corruption and decay: "preservation of type", "continuity of principles", "assimilative power", "logical sequence", "anticipation of its future", "conservative action on its past", and "chronic vigor". He prefaces his discussion of these seven principles by noting that an important objection must first be considered.

It may be said in answer to me that it is not enough that a certain large system of doctrine, such as that which goes by the name of Catholic, should admit of being referred to beliefs, opinions, and usages which prevailed among the first Chris-

tians, in order to my having a logical right to include a reception of the later teaching in the reception of the earlier; that an intellectual development may be in one sense natural, and yet untrue to its original, as diseases come of nature, yet are the destruction, or rather the negation of health; that the causes which stimulate the growth of ideas may also disturb and deform them; and that Christianity might indeed have been intended by its Divine Author for a wide expansion of the ideas proper to it, and yet this great benefit hindered by the evil birth of cognate errors which acted as its counterfeit; in a word, that what I have called developments in the Roman Church are nothing more or less than what used to be called her corruptions; and that new names do not destroy old grievances.

This is what may be said, and I acknowledge its force: it becomes necessary in consequence to assign certain characteristics of faithful developments, which none but faithful developments have, and the presence of which serves as a test to discriminate between them and corruptions. This I at once proceed to do, and I shall begin by determining what a corruption is, and why it cannot rightly be called, and how it differs from, a development.

To find then what a corruption or perversion of the truth is, let us inquire what the word means, when used literally of material substances. Now it is plain, first of all, that a corruption is a word attaching to organized matters only; a stone may be crushed to powder, but it cannot be corrupted. Corruption, on the contrary, is the breaking up of life, preparatory to its termination. This resolution of a body into its component parts is the stage before its dissolution; it begins when life has reached its perfection, and it is the sequel, or rather the continuation, of that process

towards perfection, being at the same time the reversal and undoing of what went before. Till this point of regression is reached, the body has a function of its own, and a direction and aim in its action, and a nature with laws; these it is now losing, and the traits and tokens of former years; and with them its vigour and powers of nutrition, of assimilation, and of self-reparation.³

Newman's first two criteria "preservation of type" and "continuity of principles" ensure the stability of the faith's foundational structure against those who would suggest a "paradigm shift" in the form of the Church's being and of her presence in the world. Whenever a paradigm shift is proffered as to the form and presence of the Church, this can generally be understood to mean a relapse into a modernist and subjectivist way of interpreting the Catholic faith. The term "paradigm shift" in the context of the Catholic faith most often refers to "any form of fundamental change in theoretical forms of thought and social behavior."⁴

Apart from the question of objective grave sin, proposals to reinterpret Catholic doctrine ... also touch upon the sacramental economy, which is now said to receive its measure from the individual believer's subjective dispositions before God. Here one needs to recall that no ecclesiastical authority can disregard the order of the sacramental mediation of grace, which is based on the concrete relationships we live out in the flesh. Thus, it is impossible for a Catholic to receive the sacraments in a worthy manner, unless he resolves to abandon a way of life that is in opposition to the teachings of Christ. Indeed, for Newman the sacramental principle

is among the central principles of Christianity, which cannot change.⁵

According to Newman, by the "power of assimilation" a true development occurs when Christianity is able to assimilate the existing environment by informing and changing its culture. Corruption occurs, however, whenever the environment assimilates Christianity to itself. "Thus, a paradigm shift, by which the Church takes on the criteria of modern society to be assimilated by it, constitutes not a development, but a corruption."

In his fourth note, Newman speaks of the necessity of a "Logical Sequence" among the different steps of a development. For a development to be healthy, it must proceed in logical continuity with the teachings of the past. Is there any logical continuity between John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (November 22, 1981)—which teaches that the divorced living in a new union must resolve to live in continence or else refrain from approaching the sacraments (no. 84)—and the change of this selfsame discipline that some are now proposing? There are only two options. One could explicitly deny the validity of *Familiaris Consortio*, thus denying by the same token Newman's sixth note, "Conservative Action upon the Past." Or one could attempt to show that *Familiaris Consortio* implicitly anticipated the reversal of the discipline that it explicitly set out to teach. On any honest reading of John Paul II's text, however, such a procedure would have to violate the basic rules of logic, such as the principle of non-contradiction.

When "pastoral change" becomes a term by which some express their agenda to sweep aside the Church's teaching as if doctrine were an obstacle to pastoral care, then speak-

ing up in opposition is a duty of conscience. ... Above all it is important to recall that the pope, as a "private person" (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 25) or brother among brothers, cannot prescribe his personal theology and lifestyle or the spirituality of his religious order to the whole Church. Obedience as a religious vow is different from the obedience of faith that every Catholic owes to revelation and to its ecclesial mediation. The bishops are bound to obey the pope because of his judicial primacy and not on account of a personal vow they have taken. The papal and episcopal offices are at the service of preserving the unity of faith and communion. Therefore, it is among the pope's and bishops' first duties to prevent polarization and the rise of partisan mentalities.

All this means that in the exercise of its teaching ministry, it is not enough for the Church's Magisterium simply to appeal to its judicial or disciplinary power as if its teachings were nothing but a matter of legal and doctrinal positivism. Rather, the Magisterium must seek to present a convincing case, showing how its presentation of the faith is in itself coherent and in continuity with the rest of Tradition. The authority of the papal Magisterium rests on its continuity with the teachings of previous popes. In fact, if a pope had the power to abolish the binding teachings of his predecessors, or if he had the authority even to reinterpret Holy Scripture against its evident meaning, then all his doctrinal decisions could in turn be abolished by his successor, whose successor in turn could undo or redo everything as he pleased. In this case we would not be witnessing a development of doctrine, but the dire spectacle of the Bark of Peter stranded on a sandbank.

Those who seek to accommodate the gospel message to the mentality

of this world, invoking the authority of Cardinal Newman in their efforts, should consider what he says about the Church's continuity of type. According to Newman, the true Church can be identified by the unchanging way in which the world has perceived her through the centuries, even amid many developments. As Newman says, in the world's eyes the Church is "a religious communion claiming a divine commission, and holding all other religious bodies around it heretical or infidel; it is a well-organized, well-disciplined body". This communion "is spread over the known world; it may be weak or insignificant locally, but it is strong on the whole from its continuity", and it is a natural enemy to governments external to itself; it is intolerant and engrossing, and tends to a new modelling of society; it breaks laws, it divides families. It is a gross superstition; it is charged with the foulest crimes; it is despised by the intellect of the day." Newman concludes: "And there is but one communion such. Place this description before Pliny or Julian; place it before Frederick the Second or Guizot. ... Each knows as once, without asking a question, who is meant by it." Where would Newman find such a communion today?

Cardinal Müller then asks "What is the significance of Christian doctrine for the life of the faithful?" This is just as it appears to be a crucial question though seldom much considered by the modern Christian. To the post-modern "thinker" the absolute, objective truth claims of the Catholic Church only serve to beget conflict and violence, her real strength lies in the practice of charity.

Aristotle's famous affirmation *Amicus Plato sed magis amica veritas*—Plato is a friend but truth is a greater friend—should therefore be reversed. ... Is it thinkable that the confession of specific truths of faith is no longer necessary for salvation? Or is there a *regula fidei*—a rule of faith—that contains the center of revealed truths and that all Christians need to confess in order to be in a right relationship with God and neighbor?

It is rather the lie, inasmuch as it can't prevail by force of argument, that necessarily gives birth to violence or the threat of it.

Post-modern Catholics and Christians have been led, like lambs to the slaughter, to believe that the path to true ecumenical peace and harmony, to a more tolerant coexistence among peoples of diverse backgrounds (re: ethnicity, gender, religion, etc., *ad nauseam*) is to reduce Christianity to works of pious charity or to a "natural" religion and a morality *sans* supernatural revelation. Thus, in so many words, the sum and substance of Jesus is love; he taught and lived a morality of true human kindness, the exemplification of a good man, a milquetoast itinerant preacher.

The Church's dogmas are seen as mental constructs that allow the clergy to preserve and increase their power. For the proponents of this opinion, Jesus wanted a Christianity free from dogma—and it is precisely this kind of Christianity that corresponds to the needs of the present age. From this perspective, we need today a humanism without metaphysics, without revelation, and without a morality that is hos-

tile to life. At the beginnings of the ecumenical movement before, and after World War I, the following motto was frequently quoted: "Doctrine separates, life unites."⁸

There have been others who claim the monotheism of Christians and Jews promotes violence and intolerance. This defies both historical and empirical fact. It also contradicts basic logic.

Violence is the one instrument the truth cannot use to make itself recognized. After all, truth aims at understanding, which comes about only when the truth is freely accepted by reason. Therefore, to help someone come to this understanding—to help someone come to know the truth—one cannot resort to violence but must make use of rational arguments that seek to persuade. Truth can be denounced as a source of violence only if one apodictically⁹ asserts that relativism is the only correct position that one can take before a truth that is ultimately unknowable.

It is rather the lie, inasmuch as it can't prevail by force of argument, that necessarily gives birth to violence or the threat of it.

Both experience and reason tell us that truth and love belong together and that truth and freedom are twin concepts, whereas lies and hatred, ideology and violence, form an ominous alliance.

What, then, is the basic error proper to metaphysical skepticism and moral relativism? It may well be that they mistake truth for theory. A theory will of course always be somewhat removed from everyday life. In Christ by contrast, knowing God's *truth* and observing his commandments in one's *life* always go together. In him the "light has come into the world" (Jn 3:19). All those

who justify their evil deeds hate the light and love the darkness, hiding their evil deeds from the light of truth. Truth and morality are interdependent. This is the radical novelty of Christianity. There must not be any contradiction between the faith that is confessed and the life that is lived according to God's commandments. "But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God" (Jn 3:21).

Does our eternal salvation depend on the concrete acceptance of the truths of faith? At this point we can see the answer to our initial question. Relativism about truth limits salvation to earthly joys, sensual pleasure, and emotional contentment. What is lost sight of, then, is the fact that God is the origin and goal of human beings. He himself is the goal of our infinite quest for truth and happiness. Forgetting God, we miss our true being.

God, who is the truth, leads us into the truth. God reveals himself to us. This is why our beatitude also depends on our belief in the ecclesial Creed that concerns the triune God. Our baptismal confession is not about the state of our emotions nor about what Jesus subjectively means to us or who we think he is: a prophet, a teacher of ethics, or whatever other projection human beings can invent in their attempts to justify themselves. Rather, what we are asked in baptism is whether we believe in God the Father, who created us; in God the Son, who redeemed us; and in God the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us and who is the Lord and giver of divine life.

John Henry Cardinal Newman introduced the distinction between a "liberal" and a "dogmatic" principle for interpreting Christian revelation. The liberal principle accepts the truths of God's revelation in Christ only to the extent that they

cohere with natural reason, correspond to pious feelings, or serve the needs of civil society (*Apologia*, chap. 2). The dogmatic principle, in contrast, is described by Newman in these terms:⁹

That there is a truth then; that there is one truth; that religious error is in itself of an immoral nature; that its maintainers, unless involuntarily such, are guilty in maintaining it; ... that the mind is below truth, not above it, and is bound, not to descant upon it, but to venerate it; that truth and falsehood are set before us for the trial of our hearts; that our choice is an awful giving forth of lots on which salvation or rejection is inscribed; that "before all things it is necessary to hold the Catholic faith"; that "he that would be saved must thus think," and not otherwise; ... —this is the dogmatical principle, which has strength.¹⁰

On the occasion of his elevation to the cardinalate in 1879, Newman, in what is called his *Biglietto* speech, further explained the meaning of liberalism:

Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, but that one creed is as good as another. ... [This liberalism] is inconsistent with any recognition of any religion, as *true*. It teaches that ... [r]evealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste; not an objective fact, not miraculous; and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy. ... [Revealed religion] is in no sense the bond of society.¹¹

Although Cardinal Müller, in *The Power of Truth*, justifiably focuses on the challenges to Catholic doctrine and morals, his thoughts could just as well be—and rightly should be—applicable to post-modern secular cultural and political milieus. There is no joy in acknowledging the similarities in either civil or ecclesiastical politics. The left

in either case dares not debate lacking reasoned argument to ratify its cause. Their cause, they know, is but a lie. It is the lie that gives birth to violence.

Today, theology is often subordinated to ideology and ecclesiastical politics. Instead of exchanging arguments in open debate, one discredits people. Every problem is made to center on persons, and thus it is neutralized. Even if someone knows Holy Scripture by heart, has studied the Fathers of the Church, and proves to be an expert in modern philosophy and science, to discredit him it is enough for some backwater journalist or amateur theologian to call him "conservative", and all his knowledge will be neutralized, just as the best wine becomes undrinkable when a drop of poison is mixed into it. Each newly appointed bishop is tested at the first press conference and labeled conservative or liberal—whatever this is supposed to mean—depending on whether he expresses himself "for or against" the ordination of women, "for or against" the blessing of homosexual couples, "for or against" priestly celibacy, and "for or against" Holy Communion for the "divorced and remarried". Other topics are of no interest and differentiated arguments do not count. Thus, allegations of personal ideological bias take the place of objective discussion. Those who would like to see a looser connection between ecclesial communion and the communion of the sacraments—allegedly in order to make it easier for the people of today to come to the faith—immediately accuse their critics of closed-mindedness and rigid pharisaic adherence to dogmas that the secularized Christian can no longer understand.

Today we witness an antidogmatic climate that has negative effects on

the understanding of the sacraments. The sacraments are then no longer regarded as the visible signs instituted by Christ and celebrated in the Church, effecting invisible grace in those who are well disposed. The sacraments are turned into psychological and social means of support to facilitate our inner mystical experiences with a “Christ” that is shaped in our consciousness according to our own image and likeness. The grace of the sacraments is certainly not a reward for good moral conduct, but even less is it a justification for immoral conduct and a life lived against God’s commandments. When it comes to the relation between grace and morality, there is no “either-or”, but a “both-and”, just as we read in the documents of the Second Vatican Council: “It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation.”

Many people today are incapable of truly entering the liturgy because they do not trace the Church’s life and dogma back to the fact of the Incarnation, but instead consider Christianity simply a historical variation of a general religious feeling that is induced by some vague transcendence. The nature, action, and effect of the sacraments are disclosed only in the light of the Incarnation and the real historical mediation of salvation in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, the incarnate Word of God. From this perspective one will immediately perceive that the mindset of those who say, “This may be dogmatically correct, but it does not work for pastoral care,” is completely un-Catholic. Christ, the Teacher of the Truth that is God himself, who makes us come to know and love him, is at the same time the good Shepherd and the Bishop of our souls (cf. 1 Pet 2:25), who gave his life for us on the

Cross. Therefore, there cannot be a double truth in Catholic teaching. What is dogmatically wrong will have harmful effects on pastoral work to the extent that the latter will be guided by false principles, endangering the salvation of souls.

In our age of social media, digital communication, and totalitarian mainstreaming, what is of primary importance is not whether the pope and the bishops reach people, but rather that through their message Christ reaches people—Christ, who is the truth and the life of God. Therefore, as the Church’s one and only indivisible Magisterium, the pope and the bishops in union with him carry the gravest responsibility that no ambiguous sign or unclear teaching comes from them, confusing the faithful or lulling them into a false sense of security. For the pope and the bishops, it is part of their occupational hazard to find themselves in situations where the opinion leaders and the mighty of this world accuse them of being out of touch with reality, hostile to life, or stuck in medieval times. The prophets of old were persecuted. Jesus warned his disciples that people would “utter all kinds of evil” against them falsely on account of the true faith (Mt 5:11). Why then do the bishops, as successors of the apostles, think that the reason for persecution and slander is found merely in a false media policy, which could then easily be remedied by improved communication skills?

In the epoch of dogmatic relativism, which quickly turns into a verbal and violent persecution of the witnesses of revealed truth, one needs clarity in one’s theological thinking and the courage of the martyrs in order to bear witness to the truth, as Jesus did before Pilate. The Church’s concern is with following Christ in the truth of God, and not with the power of the world.

At the moment of instituting the Eucharist, Jesus did not give detailed answers to all the individual questions that would arise in later reflection. But all the Church’s dogmatic declarations are based on the nature of this sacrament as Jesus instituted it. Whoever wants to receive the sacramental Body and Blood of Christ must already be integrated into the Body of Christ, which is the Church, through the confession of faith and sacramental baptism. Thus, there is no mystical, individualistic, and emotional communion with Christ that can be thought of apart from baptism and Church membership. After all, Christ is always the Head of his Body, and his Body is the Church. There does not exist any mystical and individualistic communion with Christ based on emotion, pre-scinding from membership in the ecclesial Body of Christ.

It has always been clear to every Catholic that to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist in a lawful and fruitful manner, one needs to be in full communion with the ecclesial Body of Christ in the profession of the Creed, in the sacraments, and in the hierarchical constitution of the visible Church. In addition, believers must be in the state of sanctifying grace—that is, they need to have repented sincerely of any mortal sin and confessed it, firmly resolving not to sin again. Ordinarily it is in sacramental absolution that the faithful are freed from grave guilt that radically separates them from God and the Church.

For Catholics, the sacraments are not simply signs of the sinner’s justification that has already occurred by faith alone. Rather, they are signs that bring about what they signify.

The moment one interprets man’s spiritual hunger for God and divine

grace in psychological instead of theological terms, there is the danger of confusing the Christian sacraments with pagan magic. On account of supernatural faith and grace, the Eucharist is a “medicine of immortality”;¹² it is not a remedy for psychodramatic experiences and traumas.

Some argue, with ostensible generosity, that things should not be interpreted too strictly, and that ultimately the decision to receive Holy Communion should be left to people’s pious feelings and goodwill. In reality, however, this appeal to subjective sentiments that override sacramental discipline exhibits a contempt for the faith as it has been revealed by God and entrusted to the Catholic Church. ... The magisterium “is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed” (*Dei Verbum*, no. 10).¹³

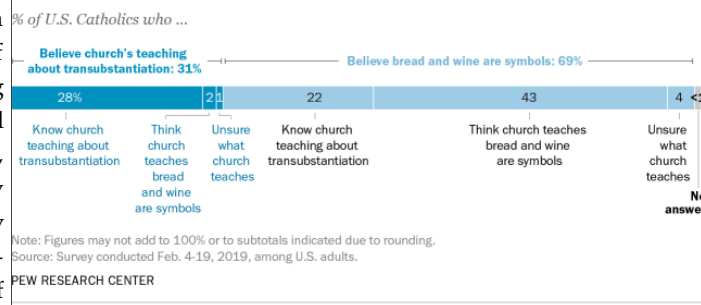
Dwight Longenecker, a former Anglican now Catholic priest, recently wrote that a great divide has opened between those who believe in a revealed religion, and those who believe it is all a symbol. In an article (*Catholic Herald*, “Half of US Catholics think the Eucharist is only symbolic. How did this happen?”, August 1, 2019) he recalls a story about the writer Flannery O’Connor.

In one of her letters collected in *The Habit of Being* she described how she was present at a swanky literary gathering in New York where the author Mary McCarthy was a fel-

low guest. O’Connor was intimidated by the literati and said scarcely a word all evening. Then she describes the scene:

Well, toward morning the conversation turned on the Eucharist, which I, being the Catholic, was obviously supposed to defend. [Mary McCarthy] said when she was a child and received the Host, she thought of it as the Holy Ghost, He being the “most portable” person of the Trinity; now she thought of it as a symbol and implied that it was a pretty good one. I then said, in a very shaky voice, “Well, if it’s a symbol, to hell with it.” That was all the defense I was capable of, but I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about it, outside of a story, except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable.

Seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics believe bread, wine used in Communion are symbolic



Father Longenecker goes on to cite a recent Pew survey that “reports that 50 per cent of US Catholics share O’Connor’s faith. The other half are on Mary McCarthy’s side. Fifty per cent believe the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. The other half think it is symbolic.” This would be bad enough if it were true, but it isn’t even close, it is much worse than half.

According to the latest Pew Research Center survey conducted between February 4-19, 2019, a mere one-third of U.S. Catholics agree with the Church that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ. As Gregory Smith, associate director at Pew notes:

Transubstantiation—the idea that during Mass, the bread and wine used for Communion become the body and blood of Jesus Christ—is central to the Catholic faith. Indeed, the Catholic Church teaches that “the Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’”

But a new Pew Research Center survey finds that most self-described Catholics don’t believe this core teaching. In fact, nearly seven-in-ten Catholics (69%) say they personally believe that during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine used in Communion “are *symbols* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.” Just one-third of U.S. Catholics (31%) say they believe that “during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus.”

In addition to asking Catholics what they believe about the Eucharist, the new survey also included a question that tested whether Catholics *know* what the church teaches on the subject. Most Catholics who believe that the bread and wine are symbolic do not know that the church holds that transubstantiation occurs. Overall, 43% of Catholics believe that the bread and wine are symbolic and also that this reflects the position of the church. Still, one-in-five Catholics (22%) reject the idea of transubstantiation, even though they know about the church’s teaching.

The vast majority of those who believe that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ—28% of all Catholics—do know that this is what the church teaches. A small share of Catholics (3%) profess to believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist despite *not knowing* the church’s teaching on transubstantiation.

About six-in-ten (63%) of the most observant Catholics—those who attend Mass at least once a week—

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

accept the church's teaching about transubstantiation. Still, even among this most observant group of Catholics, roughly one-third (37%) don't believe that the Communion bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ (including 23% who don't know the church's teaching and 14% who know the church's teaching but don't believe it). And among Catholics who do not attend Mass weekly, large majorities say they believe the bread and wine are symbolic and do not actually become the body and blood of Jesus.¹⁴

Bishop Robert Barron was taken aback by the report. "It's hard to describe how angry I feel after reading what the latest [Pew Research] study reveals about understanding of the Eucharist among Catholics. This should be a wake-up call to all of us in the Church." He added, "I'm blaming myself, bishops, priests and anybody" responsible for transmitting the faith. "We're all guilty. It's been a massive failure of the church carrying on its own tradition." And as Father Longenecker observes:

The recent survey reveals more than a doctrinal squabble between Catholics. The disagreement about the Eucharist is indicative of a Grand Canyon in the Christian Church. The canyon is between two utterly opposed understandings of the Christian religion.

The modern materialist believes that Christianity is a human invention that is the product of a certain historical period and culture. As such, it not only may change, but it must change according to the time and culture in which it finds itself. In other words, Christianity is a relative religion. Not only is the Eucharist symbolic, but the whole

wild and glorious Christian faith is no more than a symbol.

The second view is that of the historic supernaturalist. For him, the Christian faith is not relative; it is revealed. ... The Eucharist and the entire Christian faith is therefore not symbolic but supernatural. It is revealed by God, and the essence of it cannot be adapted to the vagaries of history and culture.

We should not be naïve. This canyon runs deep through the whole of contemporary Christianity. The great divide today is no longer between Protestant and Catholic, but between those who believe in a revealed religion and those who believe it is all a symbol.

We should also not underestimate the damage the modern materialist point of view does to the Church. The bottom line must be: if it is all no more than a symbol, what's the point? Why bother? Or to echo Flannery O'Connor, "To hell with it."

Bishop Barron's anger is understandable, yet the wake-up call has been sounding for more than a few years now—the problem is and has been that the "guilty" have simply rolled over and gone back to sleep after hitting the snooze button. An earlier Pew survey, conducted in 2015, should have been sufficiently alarming to wake-up the slumbering shepherds from their apparent somnambulism.

The share of Americans whose primary religious affiliation is Catholic has fallen somewhat in recent years, and now stands at about one-in-five. But according to a new [Pew Research Center survey of U.S. Catholics and others](#), an additional one-in-ten American adults (9%) consider themselves Catholic or partially Catholic in other ways,

even though they do *not* self-identify as Catholic on the basis of religion.

Who are these "cultural Catholics"? Often, they think of themselves as Catholic in one way or another even though many belong to another faith tradition (such as Protestantism). Others are religiously unaffiliated, identifying as atheist, agnostic or simply "nothing in particular."

Most of these cultural Catholics (62%) say that for them personally, being Catholic is mainly a matter of ancestry and/or culture (rather than religion). But majorities also point to religious beliefs and teachings as key parts of their Catholic identity. For example, 60% of cultural Catholics say that having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is essential to what being Catholic means to them. Likewise, 57% say the same about believing in Jesus' resurrection. A similar share (59%) say that working to help the poor and needy is essential to their Catholicism.

Sizable minorities of cultural Catholics also participate in some of the church's rituals. For instance, about a third of cultural Catholics (32%) say they attend Mass at least once a year, and roughly a quarter (26%) say they receive Holy Communion at least sometimes when they attend Mass. A third (33%) say they gave something up or did something extra for Lent this year, and about four-in-ten (41%) say it would be important to them to receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick (sometimes part of "last rites") if they were seriously ill.

Roughly two-thirds of cultural Catholics (65%) were raised Catholic or had at least one Catholic parent. And about six-in-ten (62%) of these cultural Catholics who have immediate family connections to Catholicism say that this family background is the reason for their link to the Catholic faith.

Among the cultural Catholics who were *not* raised Catholic and did not have a Catholic parent, a plurality (36%) say that they have an affinity for the church. And 15% say that a previous or current marriage to a Catholic is the reason they see themselves as having a connection to Catholicism.

Cultural Catholics tend to show warm feelings toward the church. For example, nearly three-quarters (73%) expressed a favorable view of Pope Francis when the survey was conducted in May and June, compared with 59% of ex-Catholics (i.e., those who were raised Catholic but no longer identify as Catholic on the basis of religion or in any other way).

Some of these cultural Catholics may in the future even return to Catholicism – 43% of cultural Catholics who were raised Catholic say they could see themselves returning to the church someday, while only 8% of ex-Catholics say the same.

The same survey provided additional insight into how ignorant most “Catholics” are in understanding what the Catholic Church teaches and what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ and his Church. Specifically, the survey examines the practice of receiving Holy Communion whenever Catholics attend Mass.

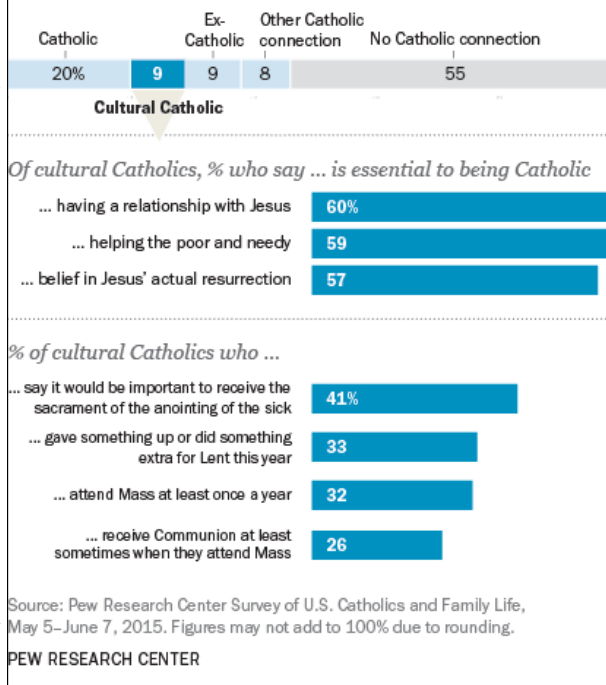
It is important to reiterate, before proceeding further, what the Church has taught since the 16th century.

1376 The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: “Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the con-

viction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our

Who Are Cultural Catholics?

Among all U.S. adults ...



Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation. (CCC)

Perhaps, it is the fault of using such a big, mysterious and difficult word—*transubstantiation*—that causes such a lack of respect and due reverence for what they are about to receive. Perhaps. But if this is so, then it is incumbent upon those who know to teach those lacking understanding. Here, Father Longenecker provides one explanation.

The way I explain the doctrine of transubstantiation begins with the definition of the word. Transubstantiation means “substance across”. I then explain that the

Christians of the Middle Ages thought of the word “substance” as meaning the precise opposite of our definition. By “substantial” we mean physical, and solid as perceived by our bodily senses. The medieval philosopher, on the other hand, meant by “substance” the invisible aspect of a thing that did not change and was therefore eternal.

In our downstairs bathroom we have a collection of family photographs. There I am as a child of two in my father’s arms. Next to it is a family photo when I am five, another when I am 12, then my high school portrait, my college years and then yesterday’s me ... an old bald man. The physical form has changed, but in each photograph you can see it’s me. That invisible, unchanging person is my substance.

It is this “substance” of the bread and wine that changes. The reality of the bread and wine – the “bread-ness” and “wine-ness” of the stuff – becomes the Body and Blood of Christ. This philosophical explanation is the best one we have of what remains a mystery.

A proper understanding of the Eucharist therefore leads to a proper understanding of the whole faith. If I can understand how the bread and wine are truly the Body and Blood of Christ, I might also begin to see God’s mighty hand in all his works. When I start to see how this world is, as Gerard Manley Hopkins put it, “charged with the grandeur of God”, then I may begin to grasp the sacramental mystery of the Church itself.

The aforementioned survey found that about four-in-ten (43%) Catholics—including cultural Catholics and ex-Catholics—receive Communion every time they attend Mass. Overall,

77% of Catholics report taking Communion at least some of the time when they attended Mass, while 17% say they never do so.

Roughly two-thirds of Catholics who are cohabiting or divorced and remarried still do receive Communion at least some of the time, 34% say they receive Communion every time they go to Mass, 7% say they accept the sacrament most of the time and 23% take Communion some of the time.¹⁵

This same survey reported that fewer than half of Catholics thought homosexual behavior, remarriage without an annulment, cohabitation, or contraception were sins. This points to a wider issue, one which few are wont to raise, especially those who are tasked with shepherding their flock for fear of being accused of “personal ideological bias” or perhaps, worse, hung on a cross. The issue that dares not be named is that which once was known as “S.I.N.”.

We are called “broken”, which means, I suppose, that we are oddly bent out of shape or have a limb dangling in some abnormal misalignment. Just don’t call us “sinners” for that explains too much, it will surely offend and, God knows we must not do such to any other; offend God if you will, he will never mind—when has he ever slapped a wrist when his name is used in anger.

Ignorance is bliss. Is not that what they say, for if you do not know about a thing you have no need to be concerned. What you don’t know won’t

hurt you, don’t you know? My dad, a smoker, said many times, “Cigarettes will never kill me.” Turns out, he was right; he was killed in an accident, so we will never know the truth of his discomfiting boast.

It is long past time for “SIN” to be revived as a subject for the pulpit; it is long past time for “bishops, priests and anybody responsible for transmitting the faith” to preach and to catechize all that Jesus taught and the Catholic Church teaches; it is long past time for the us to quit hitting the “snooze button” and wake-up.

Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mk 16:14-16).

1. Gerhard Cardinal Müller. *The Power of Truth*, (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2019), pp. 25-27. (1a) Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (September 8, 1907), no. 13. (1b) *Summa Theologica* II-II, 1, 7. (1c) *Summa Theologica* II-II, 1, 2 ad 2.
2. *Ibid*, 28-29.
3. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 6 ed., (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), Part II, Chap. V, 2, pp. 169-70.
4. *The Power of Truth*, p. 29.
5. *The Power of Truth*, p. 31.
6. *The Power of Truth*, pp. 32-35
7. *The Power of Truth*, p. 36.
8. *The Power of Truth*, p. 37.
9. *The Power of Truth*, pp. 38-44. (9a) *apodictically*: to clearly establish or to be beyond dispute.
10. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Part II, Chap. 8, Sect. I.
11. John Henry Cardinal Newman, “*Biglietto Speech*”, May 12, 1879.
12. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 20.
13. *The Power of Truth*, pp. 55-61.
14. Gregory A. Smith, “*Just one-third of U.S. Catholics agree with their church that Eucharist is body, blood of Christ*”, Pew Research Center, August 5, 2019.

15. Aleksandra Sandstrom, “*5 facts about Communion*”, *Deacon's Diner*, Pew Research Center, September 24, 2015.

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

BOOKS

Salvation

Michael Patrick Barber

Ignatius Press
2019, 189 pages.

Faith and Politics

Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Ignatius Press
2018, 269 pages.

Catholicism & Modernity

James Hitchcock

The Seabury Press
1979, 250 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

www.catholic.com

Chronicles

www.chroniclesmagazine.org

The National Catholic Register

www.ncregister.com

Our Sunday Visitor

www.osvnews.com

ONLINE

Crisis Magazine

www.crisismagazine.com

The Imaginative Conservative

www.theimaginativeconservative.org

Catholic Exchange

www.catholicexchange.com

Intellectual Takeout

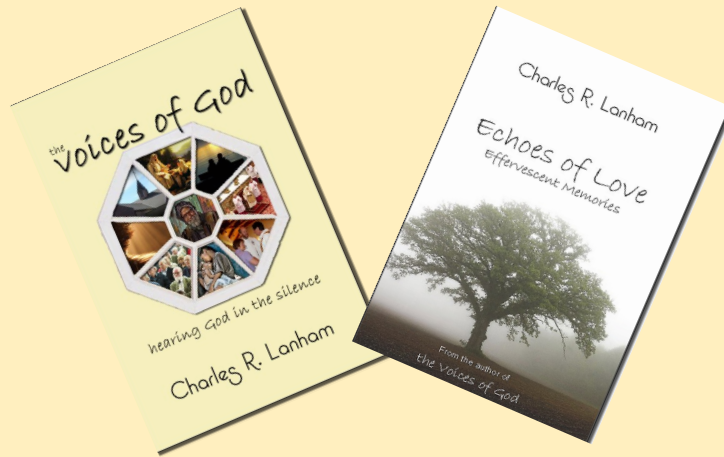
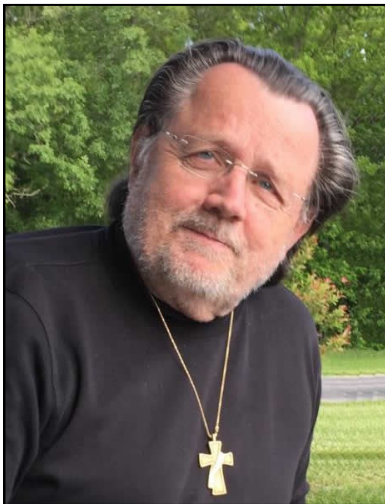
www.intellectualtakeout.org

Life News

www.lifenews.com

Life Site News

www.lifesitenews.com



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

deacons corner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, 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 is currently writing his third book **Without God: Finding God in a Godless World**.

Each issue of **Colloquī** can be viewed or downloaded from

<http://deacons corner.org>.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at

deacon.chuck@deacons corner.org

Colloquī is a weekly publication of **Deacon's Corner Publishing**.

Copyright © 2016 by **Deacon's Corner Publishing**. All rights reserved.

Deacon's Corner Publishing

4742 Cougar Creek Trail

Reno, Nevada 89519