

# Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

## The Temptation Of Eden

*Vox audita perit littera scripta manet*

### 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.

## The Temptation Of Eden

*Vox audita perit littera scripta manet*

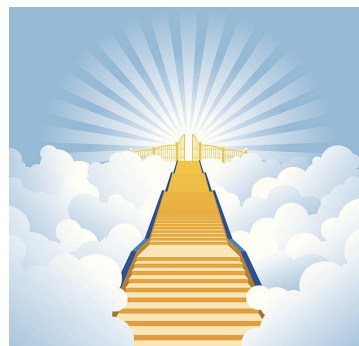
At the dawn of creation, when God made the earth and filled it with life, he planted a garden in Eden, in the east. It was paradise; all that was good grew in abundance. God formed man to know only of the good not of evil and placed him in the garden. But the unknowing was to be his undoing for man desired what was not his to know, to "be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). Evil has no place in paradise, thus man was driven from the garden to toil and till the earth. Paradise was hidden from the eyes of man; now but a myth of sordid dreams.

Those misguided souls with divine aspirations dream of Eden, they lust for paradise, a garden to satisfy the merest whim without deserve; such dreams

mere godless fantasies, poisonous delusions of karma-coated ecstasy.

Solomon wrote "A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire" (Proverbs 16:27), frequently rendered "Idle hands are the devil's workshop; idle lips are his mouthpiece." Either way, I suppose, the notion is much the same.

From the beginning, man has sought to define Love on his own terms; man's free will the means to an end: choosing to be human *and* divine.



Saint John of the Cross wrote, "At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love" (*Dichos*, no. 64). Perfect love will make possible entrance into heaven, imperfect love will require purification and a total lack of love will mean eternal separation from God (USCCA, 153). And yet, we misjudge what love *is*, for in truth, we have no understanding of it. We make of love

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what we want of it and what we want of love is self-satisfaction.

**W**e have become a sycophantic orchestra conducted by liars, cheats, charlatans and politicians who glibly promise paradise on a wink and a nod. Such as this is of ancient rhyme, as Isaiah wrote eight centuries before Christ, those who prey on the ignorance—a want of knowledge—of the innocent by their deceit in their conceit are destined for Sheol (hell).

Therefore my people go into exile for want of knowledge; their honored men are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes, who say: "Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!" Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who acquit the guilty for a bribe, and deprive the innocent of his right (Isaiah 5:13, 18-21)!

Although Isaiah's condemnation focused on the powerful and the elite, we cannot absolve the people of their sin, the sin of vincible ignorance. As it is today—even more so now than then—too many throughout human history—have *chosen* to remain vinci-

bly ignorant, choosing the path of unknowing, to press the "Easy Button".

To "know" a thing is to make it a part of you. Knowing—that is "knowledge"—is an internal matter of the mind, it is not external as are information, ideas, and data. "It is only through undertaking the hard, focused work of thinking through these things and understanding them that we internalize them; that they become "knowledge."<sup>1</sup>

**Ignorance is  
only blissful  
until the issue  
that you've  
ignored jumps  
up from the  
sidewalk and  
bites you  
squarely in the  
Derri re.**

*- David Roppo*

**W**e are living in the "Information Age," with ready, easy access via the Internet to the wisdom attained over millennia at our instant beck and call, and yet few are wont to seek out those who have assimilated this wisdom, even fewer even care to make the effort "to know" of it.

C. S. Lewis recognized this in 1954. In his inaugural lecture as Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge he told his audience:

[T]he vast change which separates you from [the] Old Western [order] has been gradual and is not even now complete... I myself belong far more to that Old Western order than to yours... If a live dinosaur dragged its slow length into the laboratory, would we not all look back as we fled? What a chance to know at last how it really moved and looked and smelled and what noises it made!... Speaking not only for myself but for all other Old Western men whom you may meet, I would say, use your specimens while you can. There are not going to be many more dinosaurs.

**A**ccording to Monsignor Charles Pope "We live in the age of the designer God, when many claim the right to imagine and craft their own version of god." Monsignor Pope notes how those who claim a spirituality separate from organized religion explain themselves.

Some of them refer to it as "the god within." Others call it "the god of my understanding." Still others speak of "the Jesus I know." A consistent feature of these manufactured gods is that they just so happen to agree with the "believer" on almost everything. Another common characteristic is that they differ in significant ways from what the true God has given to us through revelation. We used to call inventing and worshipping your own god "idolatry." Today, the euphemism for this is being "spiritual but not religious." In labeling themselves this way, people claim the virtue of faith; they speak of themselves in pious terms and even applaud themselves for being tolerant and open-minded, even while being dismissive (i.e., intolerant) of organized religion and the Scriptures.

Jesus spoke rather plainly of those

who claim to be religious but are inwardly deceiving themselves and engaging in a game of "Let's Pretend."

**H**ere, Monsignor Pope refers to the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus warns his disciples against hypocrisy. It bears repeating.

In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him!

And I tell you, every one who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God. And every one who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (John 12:1-5, 8-12).

The Greek word for "hypocrisy" is ὑπόκρισις (*hypocrisis*); its nominative ὑποκριτής (*hypocrites*), literally means

"actor." It is fine for an actor to pretend for a time to be someone he is not, that is, to act a part. But in the spiritual sense, it is hypocritical to pretend to be other than who or what we are; just so, it is hypocrisy to pretend to a fantasy, to exist in a world that buggers reality.

Those who would create for themselves a "designer god," the "spiritual, but not religious," are fooling no one but themselves. They are hypocrites, self-righteous fools who feel no need to suffer the strictures "organized religion" would impose; they have no need of doctrine and dogma or of any book written thousands of years ago to tell them how to live, what to do or not do. Having a direct connection to their own designer god is a neat trick, an Oscar-winning act of editing, reshaping and reworking God into their own image and likeness. Thus their designer god provides them with infallibility, an inerrant understanding that precludes them from sins of immorality and wrongdoing; all who would disagree are heretic. "This is acting; it is hypocrisy and self-righteousness."

**W**orshiping the god of one's own design is idolatry of self. In *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis, following Christian theology, posits that the only way a soul may be accepted into Heaven, to be saved, is to love God above all things. This, of course, is precisely what Jesus called the greatest and first commandment.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord

your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

**T**hough Lewis never explicitly states why it is necessary to believe in and love God in order to be truly good—and therefore to be saved—he provides two reasonable arguments. First, belief in God predicates a belief that infinite goodness is possible; a human being who believes in God, and therefore infinite goodness, will be capable of treating others with goodness—there is, in a sense, no upper limit to their capacity for goodness, kindness, and morality. Second, believing in God is the ultimate form of humility, of "humble love." Anyone who loves God first and above all else knows how to love others selflessly. Those who do not believe in God (atheists and agnostics) often mistake love for desire—in particular, the desire for ownership. Lewis shows, through various characters in the novel, that love, if it is not grounded in love for God, can be twisted into sin. The only way to be saved is to love God completely which means "sacrificing" feelings for earthly things (money, non-Christian ideology, sex, and even other human beings) and directing those feelings to a complete surrender to the love for God.

Not surprising, most of the souls Lewis describes over the course of the novel find it difficult, if not impossible, to give up short-term, sinful pleasures for the sake of God. They have become so accustomed to enjoying earthly pleasures such as lust and wealth, or



even more abstract “pleasures” like curiosity and art, that they have forgotten about loving God, the only true source of pleasure and happiness there is.

**T**hrough metaphor, Lewis aptly describes how sinners, no matter their station in life, foolishly sacrifice their spiritual happiness for the sake of material reward and selfish pleasure. Other souls encountered are sinners who have turned their backs on loving God, some fully conscious of what they are doing while others delude themselves into believing that other pleasures are better.

The central theme of *The Great Divorce* is the concept of free will. Saint Augustine proposed a useful way of understanding free will: if a human being acts a certain way, and, under identical circumstances, *could* have acted differently, then that human has exercised free will. While never explicitly defined in the novel, Lewis strongly suggests that humans can only enter heaven by exercising their innate free will.

God created each of us with free will, we are born with it, we can choose where to go, what to think, and—most importantly of all—whether or not to love God. Admittedly, Lewis uses poetic license in premising that humans have the capacity to choose to go to heaven even after they die. In the novel, humans retain their powers of free will, meaning that they can choose to leave Hell and enter Heaven. Over the course of the novel, the “Narrator” observes the souls of

human beings in Hell as they board a bus that takes them to the Valley of the Shadow of Life, located at the outskirts of Heaven. In the Valley, spirits and angels try to convince the damned souls to love God and give up whatever sin that is keeping them out of Heaven. If a damned soul chooses to embrace God, they are welcome into Heaven with open arms—even if they have committed horrific sins on earth. In this way, the novel shows that going to Heaven is the result of a free, personal choice, not an external action (such as going to church, donating to charity, etc.).

Interestingly, while going to Heaven might seem to be the obvious choice for anyone with free will, the vast majority of damned souls refuse to choose Heaven and eternity with God. Loving God means surrendering one’s love of earthly things—other people, one’s pride, wealth, possessions, etc.—and most are either afraid or reluctant to give them up for God. Inexplicably, others refuse God because they are under the delusion that damnation and life in Hell are preferable to salvation. For example, the souls of educated, academic human beings smugly suggest that Hell is more conducive to “creativity” than Heaven. By definition, the concept of free will allows humans to choose between two or more options. In *The Great Divorce*, most of the souls choose the *wrong* option—damnation—because they are confused, prideful, or otherwise corrupted.

**L**ewis argues that Christianity is the most obvious and intuitive way to think about life, morality and happiness. In order to

make this argument, Lewis employs what is known as the *reductio ad absurdum* technique: proving that Christianity is common sense by showing the alternatives to be irrational, nonsensical, or otherwise ill-founded.

**T**he damned souls who refuse to believe in God or the divinity of Christ are deeply confused about themselves and their place in the world. They want to hurt themselves or hurt other people, and some of them even deny the existence of any afterlife at all—despite the fact that they are *in* the afterlife. Furthermore, souls who deny the existence of God and Christ often fail to show basic human emotions like compassion, respect or dignity.

Christianity regards creation as good. All bad and evil has its sole origin in man’s disobedience towards God and man’s turning away from God. Man cannot redeem himself from the calamitous situation in which he has been since his falling away from God, not even by a collective effort of united humanity as a whole. The Christian concept of humanity is therefore not particularly optimistic. The only foundation on which human confidence and hope can be based, is Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, in whom God became man. Only the individual can make the conversion and turning to Christ for himself. Nevertheless, this individual conversion also has an impact on family, society and the state and leads to a Christian culture in which everything is placed under the kingdom of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Thomas Stark notes in his lecture that the socialist myth, perhaps “the most influential political

myth of modernism, is essentially fed by the ideology of the Enlightenment and the philosophy of German Idealism.

Even supposedly conservative spirits are today infected—mostly without noticing it—by the socialist myth and act as a fifth column in the battle against the traditional and thus against the Christian foundations of our culture.

Socialist myth describes history as a deterministic process that follows an underlying script shaping it. According to this script, history is structured by a process of permanent progress in the form of an irresistibly progressive human emancipation, i.e. in the form of a steady gain in freedom, made possible by the progressive dissolution of all kinds of binding attachments. ... The socialist myth thus presents history as a permanent revolution, and, respectively, it interprets the permanent revolution as a necessary consequence of the dialectical constitution of history.

Many conservatives believe that with the collapse of the Eastern bloc, socialism has finally failed and been defeated because everyone has since realized that it did not bring social justice. Rather, it was based on a voluntary or forced self-exploitation of the masses on behalf of an elite leadership caste, a cadre party that demanded an unconditional allegiance and loyalty, and total submission to its totalitarian ideology.

Many conservatives also believe that socialism has failed because it followed a false nineteenth-century economic theory that has since been refuted many times, for example, by the Austrian School. Thus, for example, Marx's labour value theory is demonstrably wrong, and in the planned economy, due to state intervention in the market, necessari-

ly arrives at the improper distribution of resources. It is therefore incomprehensible why socialism would still be appreciated by so many people. This assessment, however, is based on two assumptions: namely, first of all, that socialism intends to base itself on a coherent scientific theory, and, secondly, that the goal of socialism is to realize freedom, justice and prosperity. Both presuppositions are wrong.

In his 11th thesis on Feuerbach, Marx writes: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, what is essential is to change it". Thus Marxist "theory" does not intend to present reality as it is, but to make of it something other than what it is. The socialist theory does not intend to provide a correct scientific analysis of reality. It is rather a mere means in the political struggle for power. It serves the manipulation of the masses as an incitement to revolution.

Moreover, it is a fatal error to assume that the origin of socialism lies in the nineteenth or perhaps the eighteenth century, and that in its origin it was bound to the historical and economic conditions of that time. An in-depth historical analysis, on the contrary, compels us to accept the insight gained by Igor Shafarevich, "that socialism is one of the universal fundamental forces that are effective throughout human history." The Russian mathematician and philosopher Igor Shafarevich, a friend of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, presented his epoch-making work *The Socialist Phenomenon* in 1975, in which his previously formulated thesis is proved by extensive historical material.

Shafarevich wrote that from a systematic point of view socialism could be distinguished as either state or chiliastic. State socialism is basically as old as the history of advanced civilization, evidenced by civilizations in Mesopo-

tamia, Egypt, or ancient China as well as the Central American cultures of the Incas.

In this vein, Professor Stark went on to observe what Shafarevich defined as "State Socialism."

State socialism is characterized by a complete state monopoly of all resources and means of production, as well as by a complete state monopolization of agricultural and artisanal handicraft production. Trade and the money economy are of little importance here due to the prevailing state storeroom economy. Private property practically does not exist, since the population receives everything it needs for living and for its work, such as food, labor, materials, tools, etc., even clothes, from state storerooms, without the distributed goods being turned over into private ownership. Just as private property, the classic family is not to be found in state socialism. The entire population thus lives in complete dependence on the state, and is subject to the total control of an oligarchic ruling class that exercises a cruel reign of terror.

What Shafarevich defines as chiliastic socialism is seldom recognized or acknowledged but it is perhaps the greater danger to Western civilization.

Chiliastic socialism is a gnostic movement by nature. It basically arises only with the rise of Christianity and as a decisive counter-movement to Christianity. Chiliastic socialism provides state socialism with its ideological justification, so that state socialism and chiliastic socialism can be regarded as two sides of the same coin.

The gnosis, unlike and contra to Christian thought, regard man as

inherently good; evil or badness exists or occurs solely from circumstances of living.

Ultimately, it results from the fact that the material world—as Marcion (85-160) teaches—emerged from the creation of an evil demiurge (namely Yahweh). Good and evil are—according to Manichaeism—equally original principles that were separate in the beginning. They are mixed in the present time and must be separated again in the future. Accomplishing this is man's task. Man can thus liberate himself from his disastrous situation by means of a collective effort, through which he overcomes everything material on the path of self-abandonment and spiritualization, thus creating an ideal social situation within the world and history.

As Stark notes, "Without exception, all medieval heretical movements were gnostic sects." Since the early nineteenth century, research has consistently found an uninterrupted continuity binding the heresies of the first centuries to the gnostic heresies of the Middle Ages, confirming a unified movement that pursues socialist aims throughout.

In contrast to antiquity, socialism among medieval heretics turns into a broad popular movement of insurgents, who – unlike the ancient socialists – rise up against the dominant religion. Under their influence, the Socialist doctrines become "intolerant, saturated with hate and destructive". <sup>1</sup> "This hatred of the Catholic Church and of the way of life which has come about under her leadership shows that the core of the world-view of heretical sects can be understood as an antithesis to the ideology of medieval Catholicism." "The teachings of these sects demanded the complete annihila-

tion of the Catholic Church, the destruction of the society of that time, and as long as such a possibility did not offer the turning away from the world, their hostile disregard."

Shefarevich wrote that the source of this vitriolic hatred for the Catholic Church was a rebellion against the transformation of human society into some supreme state of high ideals and values promoted by Christianity. "The Middle Ages embodies a grandiose attempt of Western European humanity to build its life on the basis of the highest values, to understand it as a path to certain ideals formulated by Christianity."

Every heretical doctrine that emerged in the Middle Ages had, clearly stated, or in necessary consequence, a revolutionary character, that is, to the extent that it came to power, it had to bring about a dissolution of the existing state, a political and social upheaval. Any gnostic sect, the Cathars and Albigensians, who had actually provoked the hard and inexorable legislation of the Middle Ages against heresy, and had to be fought in bloody wars, were the Socialists and Communists of that time. They attacked marriage, family and property. If they had won, a general overthrow, a sinking back into barbarism and Pagan licentiousness would have been the result. Every connoisseur of history knows that there was no place even for the Waldenses, with their principles regarding oaths and the criminal law of the State in the European world of that time.

All these special theories point to a single goal: the overcoming of that unity of God and the world, God and man, realized through the incarnation of Christ, which is the foundation of Christianity (at least in its traditional interpretation).

There were two ways to achieve this goal: rejecting the world or denying God. The first path was taken by the Manichean-Gnostic sects, whose doctrine saw the world in the power of a wicked God and recognized only one task of life, the salvation from the captivity of matter (for those who were able to do so). Not only did the pantheistic sects not renounce the world. They rather proclaimed the ideal of domination over it (again for the elect, with the other 'gross' people also included in the category of the world). In its teaching, one can find the archetype of the idea 'to subjugate nature', which became so popular in later centuries. But domination of the world for some seemed not accessible through the execution of the divine plan, but rather through the denial of God, through the transformation of the chosen 'free spirits' even into gods.<sup>3</sup>

All civil society is necessarily based on the freedom of its citizens. Freedom, especially if it is to have lasting existence, must work under the prerequisite of order; every order based upon certain convictions and consequent judgment and values. In the nineteenth century, the medieval socialist ideology began to shift from open rebellion to a new playing field, the literary expression of utopia, stripped of its religious cloak. In the first half of the twentieth century socialism reappeared, mutated into cultural Marxism by Antonio Gramsci in Italy and the Frankfurt School, first in Germany and subsequently in the USA, where in the second half of the twentieth century it was propagated by Saul Alinsky. Cultural Marxism is socialism adapted to the free and prosperous societies of the West, where it is understood that in such societies

There will never be mass revolution because the working class and the poor know they are better off in a free society and a market-based economy than under socialism, and that, under conditions of freedom, ever greater prosperity and a better society will emerge than under the conditions of servitude.

**T**he socialist strategy was therefore reevaluated and the most promising for overthrowing civil society was to trigger an erosion of values within it. And that is exactly what the Frankfurt School disciples did. Their starting point was anthropology, interpreting man as a network of rudimentary impulses and a product of external influences and circumstances, whose happiness consists in the fulfillment of basic needs.

Such an anthropology calls for a hedonistic society in which sin is not only accepted but even praised.

This applies, of course—as already in the heretical movements of the Middle Ages—especially to the sin against the sixth commandment, which is sold to people as a liberation. That sin, of course, the exact opposite of freedom was already known to St. Augustine, who said that a man has as many masters as he has vices. By means of the so-called “sexual revolution”, a lifestyle is made palatable to people in which they consider servitude to be a desirable state of life. The transformation of society into something totally hedonistic, however, also provides the Frankfurt revolutionaries with a means by which they can fight against their most hated social institution, marriage and the family, which they defame as the germ cell of fascism.

However, as the family is the foundation of every healthy society, destroying the family necessarily leads to the destruction of all social fabric and, as a result, the disappearance of civil behavior and lifestyles, the disappearance of the rules of courtesy and dress standards, all of which man needs to express his dignity. But he who robs people of their dignity and undermines the foundations of civil society makes this society ripe for attack and for the takeover by the revolutionary storm troopers, who, of course, today are no longer recruited from the proletarian masses, but from all sorts of fringe groups and alleged victims.<sup>4</sup>

**H**ere it must be noted that socialists accuse the Creator of creating a bad world and in order for all evil and suffering to be overcome a new world and a new man must be created. Socialism is an enemy of all religion and defames it as the opiate of the people.

There is much more to speak on the evil nature of socialism, but time and space demand attention. One final thought: The proverb *Vox audita perit littera scripta manet* means “The heard voice perishes, but the written letter remains.” Something to think about until next week.

1. Daniel Lattier, “*This Is How a Dark Age Begins...*”, Intellectual Takeout, February 5, 2016.
2. Thomas Heinrich Stark, PhD., “*The Socialist Myth: Igor Shararevich and Modern Nihilism*”, a lecture given in July at The Roman Forum 2019 Summer Symposium held in Gardone Riviera, Italy, which focused on the them “*Modern Myths & the Destruction of Church & Civilization*”. The text of the lecture was published September 5, 2019 by The Catholic World Report and can be read at <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2019/09/05/the-socialist-myth-igor-shafarevich-and-modern-nihilism/>.
3. I. R. Schafarevich, “*The Socialist Phenomenon*” *Der Todestrieb in der Geschichte*. Erscheinungsformen des Sozialismus, Grevenbroich 2016, p. 140.
4. Thomas Stark, “*The Socialist Myth*”.

## Deacon's Diner

### *Food for a restless mind*

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

#### BOOKS

##### Salvation

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

##### Touchstone

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

##### Catholic Answers Magazine

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

##### Chronicles

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

##### The National Catholic Register

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

##### Our Sunday Visitor

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

#### ONLINE

##### Crisis Magazine

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

##### The Imaginative Conservative

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

##### Catholic Exchange

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

##### Intellectual Takeout

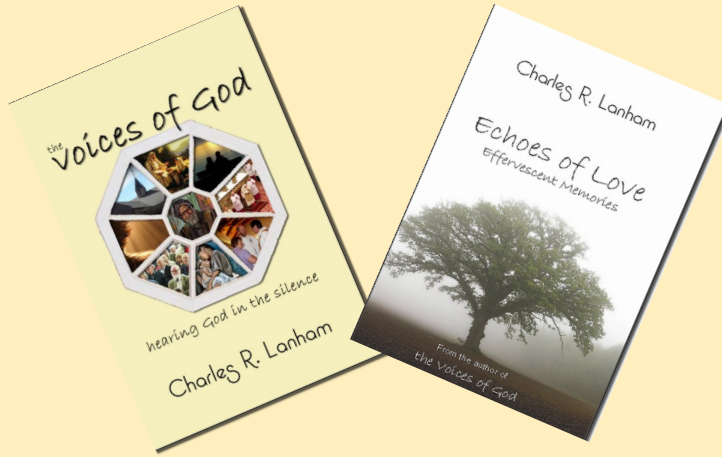
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##### Life News

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