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A journal for restless minds

Colloquī *: to discuss*

A Poverty of Spirit

The truth shall set you free

A Poverty of Spirit

The truth shall set you free

Thoughts seen as clear as daylight shining bright through an open window are now refracted through a fractured prism; coherent thought turned inchoate mush, distorted by the cacophony of angry, edgy voices shouting madly to be heard above the mobbish din. Perhaps such incoherence is from nightmares filled with riotous mobs bent on terror, chaos and anarchy that are of a sudden all a rage. Or perhaps, it is the vapid obeisance of cowering lions afraid of shadows cast from moonbeams and the distant howling threat of madness. But then perhaps, both or none or something altogether different, like self-induced schizophrenia or paranoia. My thoughts betray me, no matter what the source, I struggle to explain the upside-down and backwardness of the insanity that surrounds us. I pray for sanity and sanctity to return. It can come none too soon for I am coming of a mind it may likely never come again.

This dreadful struggle is more than an inconvenient demon to be exorcised or the encroachment of plaque threatening to smother aging synapses. It is the age of *Deliberate Contradiction* where up and down are determined by which pole one is under, when left and right find equality with right and wrong, and normal has become abnormal while what was once obscene has been ordained the *new* normal. It is the age of tribalism and the age of globalism, the age of heterodoxy and the age of orthodoxy, the age of self-defined principles, the moment of *my* truth—your truth can be true only as long as it is my truth—objecting to objective and everlasting Truth, the age of science and the age of alchemy, sorcery, and myth. It is an age of heroic virtue and an age of deceit. It is a time for believing all things and a time to believe in nothing at all. It is as Dickens described in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the

epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” It is the dark night of the soul now lighted by the fires of hell.

Father Dwight Longenecker has written an incredibly timely book, *Immortal Combat: Confronting the Heart of Darkness*, which everyone who claims to be a child of God, every Christian, every Catholic—both laity and clergy—should read and reread until it is firmly implanted in the mind, heart, and soul. “This is not a theology book,” Father Longenecker writes in his introduction, “I will not use theological language, philosophical concepts, psychological terminology, academic arguments, or purely logical reasoning.” Be warned, however, as the inscription reads on the old maps, where the map ended and the terror began, “Here be dragons.” And he means that quite literally.



We will face some of the monsters that symbolize and reveal the complexity of evil. I’m thinking of those terrifying alien-looking creatures that dwell in the darkest depths of the deepest ocean trench. I’m thinking of the hounds and hags of hell and beasts from beyond the darkest corners of our weirdest

nightmares. I am using this type of language because I believe the imagination is a surer guide through the darkness than theological theorizing.

This journey will take us into the dark caves of Moria, into the realm of the Balrog and the orcs, Leviathan, Grendel, and the terrible dragon Tiamat. It will take us to wade through the foul-smelling marshes of Lerna—the gate of the underworld—to wrestle with the Hydra, that huge many-headed serpent with poisonous breath and blood so vile, even to smell it was to perish.

This is not theory or theoretical theology. If you read this book seriously, you will be shaken and troubled to the core.

It is desperately important in our age to speak in these terms because our moral imagination, on the one hand, is weak, pale, and sickly, while ironically, in the realm of popular culture, the mythical imagination is healthier than ever. The academic world is a dry husk of learned articles filled with jargon and footnotes, while in the world of movies, television, gaming, and fantasy

literature, the imagination roars and soars.

We must, therefore, use the imagination to dive like a spelunker into the depths of the underworld, then surface spluttering with joy, clutching the pearl of great price—which is to truly grasp the mysterious meaning of Christ’s sacrifice. If we do not dive deeply, our faith will wither away into dry theological theories, warm sentimentality, and the horrible plague of utility. If we don’t go on the quest to encounter the dragons of the deep, our faith will splutter out—ending not with a bang, but a whimper.

Modern Christianity has lost sight of its true purpose and mission. Twisted into political activism, therapeutic bromides, and sentimental, subjective devotions, infected with silly New Age self-help theories and weighed down with internal quarrels, immorality, and corruption, Christians are confused and bewildered—knocked sideways by the modern world with its strident ideologies and shallow solutions.

For those unfamiliar with Father Dwight Longenecker, please allow him to introduce himself.

I was brought up in an Evangelical home in Pennsylvania. After graduating from the fundamentalist Bob Jones University with a degree in Speech and English, I went to study theology at Oxford University. Eventually I was ordained as an Anglican priest and served as a curate, a school chaplain in Cambridge and a country parson on the Isle of Wight.

Realizing that the Anglican Church and I were on divergent paths, in 1995 I and my family were received into the Catholic Church. For ten years we continued to live in England where I worked as a freelance writer and charity worker. Then in 2006 the door opened to return to the USA and be ordained as a Catholic priest. I now serve as Pastor of Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

I had always wanted to be a writer, but it was only when I left the Anglican Church to become Catholic I suddenly had something to write about. I began writing short articles for the Catholic press, and then a few books came along. I’ve now published about twenty books and booklets across a range of topics: apologetics, the saints and Catholic culture.¹

Somewhere—the specific page now eludes me—he writes, “Every human being is fighting either for *heaven* or for *hell*. There are no neutral territories. There are no pacifists.”

As noted on the back cover of *Immortal Combat*:

Today, far too many leading Christians water down the robust teachings of our Faith. Ignoring Christ’s clear example and constant demand that we boldly confront evils, they preach an amicable, nonconfrontational, feel-good gospel.

Now comes Fr. Dwight Longenecker with this potent book that shows how, by engaging in the lost art of spiritual warfare, good Christians can repair the extensive damage this trend has caused.

Without fear or favor, Fr. Longenecker maps out the myriad places where evil lurks in our world, shines a light on its many faces, and details the countless clever tricks it uses to hide. He delineates ten sturdy principles that must motivate all Christian warriors who hope to expunge evil and stop it from returning. And finally, he explains in fascinating detail the art of immortal combat, showing how self-sacrifice and contemplation of the Cross can bring victory over any evil, no matter how hidden or how grave.

Immortal Combat is different from typical religious genre, in fact, it is quite the antithesis, focusing on the evil that is by our very nature found within each of us. The reader will quickly realize that the journey Father Longenecker intends to lead you lies buried deep within the “heart of darkness.” The first half, Part I, begins with just that title and the chapter headings are but guideposts leading one ever deeper into the depths of hell:

1. War in Heaven
2. The Minotaur and the Labyrinth
3. The Dragon in the Garden
4. The Three-Headed Hound of Hell
5. Medusa and Her Sisters
6. Geryon and the People of the Lie
7. Murder and the Mob
8. Sacrifice and Scapegoats

Using both ancient and modern mythology (e.g. Cerberus, the three-headed hound from hell, familiar to Harry Potter fans as Hagrid’s beast “Fluffy”) Father Longenecker illustrates and explains the insidious nature of evil and how easily we fall victim to the temptations of the devil. For example, the three heads of Cerberus represent power, pride, and prejudice. As the reader will quickly discover, each of us has through free will the power to make choices. “It is not just that I *have* power. It feels like I *am* power, and I assume that the exercise of my power is justified.”

This is a basic instinct. It is a key to survival. It is unquestioned. I, therefore, see nothing wrong with exercising my power to its greatest extent. To do as I please is as elementary as the need to breathe, eat, and drink, to procreate and live. It never once occurs to me that my will should be curtailed and my power limited in any way.

Furthermore, because I have the power to choose, my choice must be the right choice. I must be right. There can be no other option.

The total conviction that *I am right* is the heart of pride, and pride is the second head of the hell hound Cerberus.

Real pride is the overwhelming, underlying, unshakeable, unchallenged, unquestioned, total, and complete conviction that *I am right*. Like power, pride is rooted in the ability to choose and the knowledge of good and evil.

It works like this: when I make a choice, I claim power for myself, but also, when I make a choice, I assume the choice I have made is the *right* choice. This conviction that I am right operates at the level of instinct. The very act of choosing includes the assumption that *I am right*.

Furthermore, power and pride are so basic and deeply embedded in the foundations of who we are that we cannot see them. Power and pride seem like part of the genetic code. They are the air we breathe. They are the world we live in. They are the foundation of the house, and foundations, by their very nature, are buried. They are deep down. They are invisible.

This invisibility of power and pride reveals the third head of Cerberus: prejudice.

Prejudice is intertwined with pride and power. To have a prejudice is to prejudge. It means our perceptions are biased: we view the world through tinted glasses. We do not judge objectively, but rather, we approach life's challenges with our ideas and opinions preloaded.²

As odd as this may seem, I have long been intrigued by the paradox of what would happen if or when an unstoppable force should meet up with an immovable object. According to a 3rd century BC Chinese philosophical book *Han Feizi*, this paradox explained the word *contradiction* (Chinese: 矛盾; pinyin: *máodùn*; lit.: 'spear-shield') by using a parable of a man selling a spear and a shield. When asked how good his spear was, he said that his spear could pierce any shield; when asked how good his shield was, he said that it could defend from all spear attacks. When asked what would happen if he were to strike his

shield with his spear, he could not answer. Another ancient example can be found in the myth of the Teumessian fox, who can never be caught and the hound Laelaps, who never misses what it hunts. Realizing the paradox, Zeus turns both creatures into static stars. Whichever version one prefers, the paradox rests on two incompatible premises—that there can exist simultaneously such things as unstoppable forces and immovable objects. The paradox is flawed because if there exists an unstoppable force, it follows logically that there cannot be any such thing as an immovable object and vice versa.

While it may yet be unclear, understanding the flaw in this paradox is important to understanding Cerberus or Fuzzy or all the other three-headed hounds from hell. It explains why so many of us simply cannot nor will not admit to, alter, or relinquish our power, pride and prejudices. I am immovably right; therefore, you must be unmistakably wrong. My truth is infallibly true; therefore, your truth must be a fallacious delusion. What a conundrum, a paradox. Where is the flaw? Who is wrong? Who will be the one to blink first? It begins to sound a lot like that old Abbott & Costello comedy routine "Who's on First?" except no one is laughing.

On June 7, 2020, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, former Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò sent a letter to President Trump warning him that "the current crises over the coronavirus pandemic and the George Floyd riots are a part of the eternal spiritual struggle between the forces of good and evil."

Mr. President,

In recent months we have been witnessing the formation of two opposing sides that I would call Biblical: the children of light and the children of darkness. The children of light constitute the most conspicuous part of humanity, while the children of darkness represent an absolute minority. And yet the former are the object of a sort of discrimination which places them in a situation of moral inferiority with respect to their adversaries, who often hold strategic positions in government, in politics, in the economy and in the media. In an apparently inexplicable way, the good are held hostage by the wicked and by those who help them either out of self-interest or fearfulness.

These two sides, which have a Biblical nature, follow the clear separation between the offspring of the Woman and the offspring of the Serpent. On the one hand, there are those who, although they have a thousand defects and weaknesses, are motivated by the desire to do good, to be honest, to raise a family, to engage in work, to give prosperity to their homeland, to help the needy, and, in obedience to the Law of God, to merit the Kingdom of Heaven. On the other hand, there are those who serve themselves, who do not hold any moral principles, who want to demolish the family and the nation, exploit workers to make themselves unduly wealthy, foment internal divisions and wars, and accumulate power and money: for them the fallacious illusion of temporal well-being will one day – if they do not repent – yield to the terrible fate that awaits them, far from God, in eternal damnation.

In society, Mr. President, these two opposing realities co-exist as eternal enemies, just as God and Satan are eternal enemies. And it appears that the children of darkness – whom we may easily identify with the *deep state* which you wisely oppose and which is fiercely waging war against you in these days – have decided to show their cards, so to speak, by now revealing their plans. They seem to be so certain of already having everything under control that they have laid aside that circumspection that until now had at least partially concealed their true intentions. The investigations already under way will reveal the true responsibility of those who managed the COVID emergency not only in the area of health care but also in politics, the economy, and the media. We will probably find that in this colossal operation of social engineering there are people who have decided the fate of humanity, arrogating to themselves the right to act against the will of citizens and their representatives in the governments of nations.

We will also discover that the riots in these days were provoked by those who, seeing that the virus is inevitably fading and that the social alarm of the pandemic is waning, necessarily have had to provoke civil disturbances, because they would be followed by repression which, although legitimate, could be condemned as an unjustified aggression against the population. The same thing is also happening in Europe, in perfect synchrony. It is quite clear that the use of street protests is instrumental to the purposes of those who would like to see someone elected in the upcoming presidential elections who embodies the goals of the *deep state* and who expresses those goals faithfully and with conviction. It will not be surprising if, in a few months, we learn once again that hidden behind these acts of vandalism and violence there are those who hope to profit from the dissolution of the social order so as to build a world without freedom: *Solve et Coagula*, as the Masonic adage

teaches.

Although it may seem disconcerting, the opposing alignments I have described are also found in religious circles. There are faithful Shepherds who care for the flock of Christ, but there are also mercenary infidels who seek to scatter the flock and hand the sheep over to be devoured by ravenous wolves. It is not surprising that these mercenaries are allies of the children of darkness and hate the children of light: just as there is a *deep state*, there is also a *deep church* that betrays its duties and forswears its proper commitments before God. Thus the *Invisible Enemy*, whom good rulers fight against in public affairs, is also fought against by good shepherds in the ecclesiastical sphere. It is a spiritual battle, which I spoke about in my recent *Appeal* which was published on May 8.

For the first time, the United States has in you a President who courageously defends the right to life, who is not ashamed to denounce the persecution of Christians throughout the world, who speaks of Jesus Christ and the right of citizens to freedom of worship. Your participation in the *March for Life*, and more recently your proclamation of the month of April as *National Child Abuse Prevention Month*, are actions that confirm which side you wish to fight on. And I dare to believe that both of us are on the same side in this battle, albeit with different weapons.

For this reason, I believe that the attack to which you were subjected after your visit to the National Shrine of Saint John Paul II is part of the orchestrated media *narrative* which seeks not to fight racism and bring social order, but to aggravate dispositions; not to bring justice, but to legitimize violence and crime; not to serve the truth, but to favor one political faction. And it is disconcerting that there are Bishops – such as those whom I recently denounced – who, by their words, prove that they are aligned on the opposing side. They are subservient to the *deep state*, to globalism, to aligned thought, to the New World Order which they invoke ever more frequently in the name of a *universal brotherhood* which has nothing Christian about it, but which evokes the Masonic ideals of those who want to dominate the world by driving God out of the courts, out of schools, out of families, and perhaps even out of churches.

The American people are mature and have now understood how much the mainstream media does not want to spread the truth but seeks to silence and distort it, spreading the lie that is useful for the purposes of their masters. However, it is important that the good – who are the majority – wake up from their sluggishness and do not accept being deceived by a minority of dishonest people with unavowable purposes. It is necessary that the good, the children of light, come together and make

their voices heard. What more effective way is there to do this, Mr. President, than by prayer, asking the Lord to protect you, the United States, and all of humanity from this enormous attack of the Enemy? Before the power of prayer, the deceptions of the children of darkness will collapse, their plots will be revealed, their betrayal will be shown, their frightening power will end in nothing, brought to light and exposed for what it is: an infernal deception.

Mr. President, my prayer is constantly turned to the beloved American nation, where I had the privilege and honor of being sent by Pope Benedict XVI as Apostolic Nuncio. In this dramatic and decisive hour for all of humanity, I am praying for you and also for all those who are at your side in the government of the United States. I trust that the American people are united with me and you in prayer to Almighty God.

United against the Invisible Enemy of all humanity, I bless you and the First Lady, the beloved American nation, and all men and women of good will.

What is undeniably true and universally acknowledged—at least until this year of our Lord 2020—is that when epidemics strike, men and women turn to God. It does not take an academic or renown historian to prove the veracity of such a claim, it has been so from the beginning. Yet, this current pandemic is inexplicably a horse of a different color or a bat out of hell. Not only must we maintain social distancing from one another, we must also maintain a “safe” distance from God. “In this latest of epidemics, most churches the world over have been closed and their worshippers have been directed to websites where leaders hold virtual ceremonies. There have been reports of crackdowns on Christians attempting to worship in the flesh, such as in Louisville, Ky., where the mayor ordered fines for Christians listening to a service in their cars. Christians seem to be easily ticketed, while Muslims cramming into mosques are ignored. Avoiding Islamic unrest is par for the course in today’s West.” For many, if not most of us, the fear is not with the lockdowns or even the closures of businesses and churches. Our greatest fear is of what may assuredly follow. “Perhaps the hiatus will convince people to totally stop going to church. Perhaps the physical worship of God will become redundant. Perhaps the Christian faith will become as rare as a movie without the F-word.”

For those who foresee a Christian renaissance triggered by the Chinese virus, there has to be a lot more death

involved—we really have not seen mass death since 1945. Back then, a religious boom followed the end of World War II, and it lasted well into the mid-’60s, when scum secularists and scummier hippies aided and abetted by the media managed to declare God dead.

If a Christian revival does take place, I hate to think what The New York Times columnists of this world will do for an encore. They’ll probably declare God racist and his flock a bunch of bigots. They’re already writing narratives like these, so what else is new? The Times writers and reporters’ barely concealed glee at the pandemic’s damage to President Trump is almost worth the price of three dollars.

Mind you, there’s also a downside to all this. Weeks or months without attending church can nudge people out of the habit. For Catholics, missing Sunday Mass is a sin, but now bishops have assured us that the obligation is lifted, temporarily. We shall see what we shall see.

As I write, there are just over 200,000 people who have died from the virus worldwide, about the amount that died in the battle of Okinawa, or half of the casualties at the Battle of Normandy, while Stalingrad ended with over 1.3 million deaths. More died during the World War I flu epidemic (probably started in Kansas but called the Spanish Flu), which followed the slaughter of 10 million on the battlefields of Europe. Tens of millions died during the troubles from 1939 to 1945. The Chinese virus is way down the line as far as disasters go.

And another thing: Christianity has been declared dead and buried by sages such as Voltaire and Rousseau and others (all rotting in hell as I write) but has managed to return each and every time. Isolation breeds spirituality—not a bad thing in today’s horrible secular world.³

The second half of *Immortal Combat*, Part II: The Sword of Light, begins with Chapter 9: The Secret Son.

There is a plot line so well loved and well worn that storytellers can’t resist falling back on it time and time again. I don’t know if it has a name, but it could be called “The Triumph of the Secret Son.”

The story is simple: There is an evil power that dominates the world. Hidden deep within that world is a secret son. He is an orphan boy, tucked out of sight with a humble working family. He is of mysterious parentage and has a secret destiny, but he grows up in safety in the most ordinary and humble of homes.

He is the one destined to defeat the overwhelming evil. His mission is to discover and then fulfill that destiny. His humility will be his secret weapon. His insignificance will be his shield. His weakness will be his

strength.

Yes, it is the orphan Luke Skywalker, residing on his uncle's farm on the planet Tatooine. It is Clark Kent, taken in by Jonathan and Martha in Kansas. It is the lonely Frodo Baggins, adopted by his uncle Bilbo. It is Peter Parker, living with Uncle Ben and Aunt May. It is Indiana Jones, searching for his father; Dr. Neville of *I am Legend*, separated from his wife and child; Neo of *The Matrix* alone in his room; and Dorothy, traveling to Oz to find her way home.

This timeless story is *the* story which explains everything. Looking forward and looking back, all the stories point to the great story—that great story that tells us who Jesus Christ really is.

He is the Secret Son.⁴

As one might suspect by now, the journey into the heart of darkness can overwhelm the heart or as Fr. Longenecker warned in the beginning, “you will be shaken and troubled to the core.” But there is hope in the Secret Son, there is light that will dispel the darkness, there are weapons we can wield to slay the dragons and defeat the demon horde. The final chapters, like the first are guideposts; unlike the first, these lead upwards toward the gates of heaven.

9. The Secret Son
10. The Little Lady
11. The Full, Final Sacrifice
12. Victim and Victor
13. Only the Penitent Man May Pass
14. Behold the Lamb
15. Liturgy and Liberty
16. The Swords of the Spirit

I cannot leave without a few parting thoughts. As I have never been reluctant to challenge convention or avoid controversy, I will not begin to do so now. I am certain there will be some who take umbrage at what follows. That is your choice and I am perfectly fine with that. In Chapter 15, Liturgy and Liberty, you will read what I fervently believe to be true. Again, if you demur, that is your choice. That does not make it right though you have within you the power to believe it so. The first thought which I believe most important concerns the critical importance of the Mass, which we have been so egregiously denied.

We participate in the Mass not simply by saying the prayers, singing the hymns, and listening to the homily.

Instead, through the Mass, as in Baptism, we are plunged into the death and resurrection of Christ, and this participation happens at the deepest level of our being.

This is the real reason the Mass should be celebrated in a traditional, formal, ceremonial, and ritualistic way. It is not celebrated this way just because “Father likes all that fancy, traditional stuff.” A ceremonial celebration of the Mass is not simply a matter of taste. When the clergy are robed, when the altar servers move in a formal pattern, when the words, music, and gestures of the celebration are ritualistic, we respond in the depths of our being. The beauty of architecture, music, vestments, incense, and gesture speak to us in a language beyond words—the language of beauty. This supernal language reaches down to the depths of our souls, the place deeper than words where the Sin of the World is most deeply lodged.

This is why the modernist celebration of the Mass is a travesty. Not simply because the buildings are brutal and the music banal. It is not only because the Mass has been turned into a sentimental family celebration with shallow prayers and bland politically correct preaching. The modernist celebration of the Mass is appalling not merely because these things are an error in taste, but because the real power of the sacrifice of the Mass is being emasculated. The depth of experience that takes place through ceremony and ritual is being watered down. The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is being minimized and its true power over evil negated.

The Cross of Jesus Christ towers over the wrecks of time. It reaches into the greatest depths and raises humanity to the highest glories. The Cross broke humanity's addiction to power, pride and prejudice. It answered Resentment, Rivalry, and Revenge, and it is through the sacrifice of the Mass that this once for all sacrifice is made real within the depths of our humanity. It is there, day by day in a thousand churches and chapels, that the cosmic Cross of Christ, which defeated the demons, is brought into the present moment and applied for our needs and the needs of the whole world.

Through the Mass, the victory of the Crucified has been celebrated on the field of battle and the bedsides of dying kings. Through the Mass, the victory of the Crucified has been brought to poor orphans and starving prisoners in concentration camps and applied for the healing of lepers, the weeping reconciliation of bitter enemies, and the comfort of a dying martyr. It has brought the Crucified to bless the union of a hopeful bride and groom, the birth of a child, and the memory of the faithful departed.

The sacrifice of the Mass is nonnegotiable. Through this ancient ritual, this fragile, broken world still holds together. Through this sacrifice, the demons still flee, and nature groans for redemption. Without this sacrifice, the darkness would descend. The gates of hell would prevail. The center would not hold. All would slip away, and the demons would swarm like locusts to devour the world.

When we celebrate Mass, we are joined with Jesus Christ, victim and victor, and this union provides the dynamic power of grace to walk in the way of the Christian warrior.

My final thoughts come from words spoken by Shelby Steele, a Hoover Institution senior fellow specializing in the study of race in American society and the consequences of contemporary social programs on race relations and by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. some 63 years ago. Systemic racism has been much in the news recently, so much so that nothing much else wags the tongue. There is, no doubt, a certain meaning, a definition, a characterization, an explanation for the term but I have not heard yet a single satisfactory, cogent, thought-provoking mention to help in understanding it. Here, I must confess to being an unequivocal racist, a human racist, a child of God, made in His image and likeness; as far as I have been able to discern, God is without form or shape or size or color. In Genesis, God created man from the dust of the earth and woman from the man's rib, both were made in his image, he never mentioned what color the skin or the eyes.

According to Shelby Steele, an American who by virtue of birth happens to have brown skin and brown eyes, "The oppression of black Americans is over with. Yes, there are exceptions. Racism won't go away—it is endemic to the human condition, just like stupidity. But the older form of oppression is gone ... Before it was a question of black unity and protest; no more, it is now up to us as individuals to get ahead. Our problem now is not racism, our problem is freedom." "Your racial identity is a passive thing. Your racial identity is not an agent of change. It is not going to build a new life for you. It is not going to do all the things that life calls upon you to do, calls upon you to do for yourself. In fact, it is a delusion for which you can waste an awful lot of time." "Racism is endemic to the human condition, just as stupidity is. We will always have to be on guard against it. But now it is recognized as a

scourge. What has happened is that black America has been confronted with a new problem: a shock of freedom" (WSJ, Jan. 12, 2018). "You are confronted with what are you going to do with freedom? What are you going to do now? And historically, it scared the hell out of us. We would be fantasizing if we denied that. Who wouldn't be? Freedom is a frightening thing, it places such a burden of responsibility on you, on a person who has it. You are now responsible. Your reputation is not based on what you do."

In an address at the Second Annual Institute on Non-violence and Social Change at Holt Street Baptist Church, in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 5, 1957 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed his audience with these words:

The great thing about life is that any man can be good, and honest, and ethical, and moral, and can have character. We are not animals to be degraded at every moment. We know that we're made for the stars, created for eternity, born for the everlasting, and we stand by it. We must improve our standards; improve our conduct; we must even improve our cultural standards.

I believe in the future because I believe in God. And I believe that there is a personal power in this universe that works to bring the disconnected aspects of reality into a harmonious whole. I believe that there is a force, a creative force, that works at every moment to bring low prodigious hilltops of evil and to bring down gigantic mountains of injustice. And He's still working; He's working now, at this hour. And because He's working, I know He's working to establish His kingdom. I believe in it, in Him, and I believe in the future of this whole struggle.

Again, Dr. King reminds each of us of our shared humanity, of our common human race and the inestimable value of every human life.

But my friends, if we are to be prepared for this new order and this new world which is emerging, we must believe that we belong. Every Negro must feel that he is somebody. He must come to see that he is a child of God and that all men are made in God's image. He must come to see that the basic thing about a man is not his specificity, but his fundamentum, not the texture of his hair or the color of his skin, but the texture and quality of his soul. He must come to the point that he will believe with the eloquent poet:

*Fleecy locks and black complexion,
Cannot forfeit nature's claim.
Skin may differ, but affection,
Dwells in black and white the same.
Were I so tall as to reach the poles,
Or to grasp the ocean at a span,
I must be measured by my soul.
The mind is the standard of the man.*

Tell your children that. Say it to them at every hour, so they will be able to live in this age with a sense of dignity, and a sense of self-respect. This is something that we can do.

Father Longenecker began his book by asking "Have you noticed that nobody sings 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' anymore?" The first verse as he then recalls goes like this:

*Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before.
Christ the royal master
Leads against the foe
Forward into battle,
See His banners go!
Onward, Christian soldiers!*

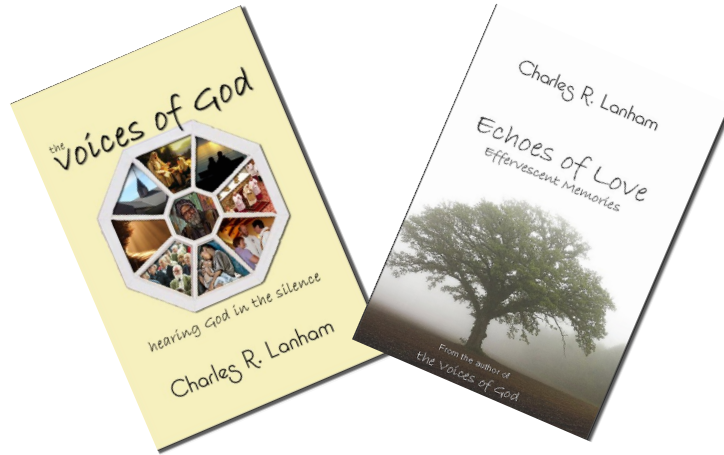
He then dares you. "Go ahead. Look through any modern, up-to-date hymnbook. You won't find it. ... Good luck finding any of the old hymns about Christian warfare. The editors have quietly removed them, censored them out, consigned them to the cupboard with the plumed hat, the cape, the dusty armor, and the rusty swords. We don't talk like that anymore. We don't sing rousing military marching songs. Instead we rise up on eagles' wings, and Jesus hears us crying in the night, and there is only one set of footsteps on the beach because that is when He carried us. We haven't beaten our swords into plowshares; we've beaten them into pacifiers."

"The problem with this puppy-dogs-and-kittens Christianity is that it is not really Christianity. From the beginning to the end of time, the heart of the old, old story is not comfort, but conflict." In the final chapter he concludes by providing us with an armory of weapons, ten Swords of the Spirit to engage the invisible enemy in *Immortal Combat*. "This entire book has been an attempt to hammer home the fact that the Lord Jesus came into this world to do battle with the ancient foe and that He won

the victory with a stunning reversal. He was devoured by the Sin of the World and demolished it by bursting it from the inside out."

The battle cannot be fought and won without confronting the enemy; the enemy cannot be met while cowering in fear; fear cannot overcome the Sin of the World. Complicity, complacency, or compliance with evil will never defeat the enemy of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is long past time to beat our pacifiers into swords. It is long past time, far too long. Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war!

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1. <https://dwightlongenecker.com/about-fr-longenecker/>.
 2. Fr. Dwight Longenecker, *Immortal Combat: Confronting the Heart of Darkness*, (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2020), 35-37.
 3. Taki Theodoracopulos, *The Pandemic of Godlessness*, *Chronicles Magazine*, June 2020, p. 50.
 4. *Immortal Combat*, 85-86.
 5. *Immortal Combat*, 132-133.



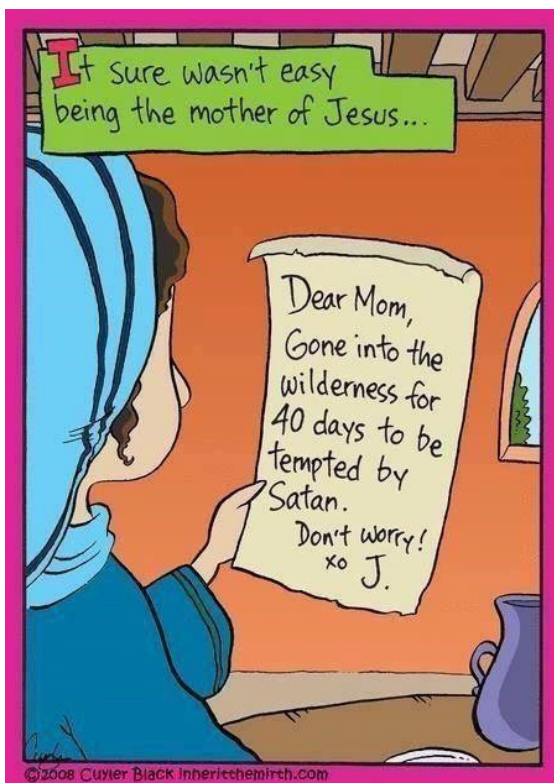
Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master of anything) and a servant of God. He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and has written over 400 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

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Colloquī, the present infinitive of *colloquor* (Latin: *to talk, to discuss or to converse*) is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God. Each week **Colloquī** will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more. Be forewarned! Essays may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the expressed intent to seek the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.

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