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Colloquī *: to discuss*

The Ignorance of Bliss

Spiraling down the memory hole

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Spiraling down the memory hole

Funny—though not in the leastwise humorous—how fiction has turned too real to contemplate; how what once was terrifyingly real has been turned upside down, inside out, *normalized*; normal, now termed abnormal, is perfunctorily tossed down the Orwellian memory hole; normality is no longer considered either practicable *or* permissible. It is frightening how words that used to frighten or disgust the lot of us are become so commonplace and normalized, the words which once brought comfort now so bitter to the tongue. It is as if all the race of men has of a sudden turned to frogs, swimming comfortably in a pot of water, slowly but inexorably coming to a boil. “Come on in, the water’s fine,” we are told, they insist. The ancient tale of Babel should remind us of the consequences of self-induced ignorance, but no one knows of Babel these days, no one reads anymore, no one bothers to speak the same language, but then, no one can find the time to reason why.

The candid and courageous use of reason is necessary if we are to begin to speak the same language. An unwillingness to do so leads to the intolerance of the “cancel culture”, which is not by any means a new phenomenon. It begins with the banning of words and the burning of books, and ends with the banning and burning of people; it ends with dissidents being cancelled by the guillotine, the gulag or the gas chamber. The alternative is much more humane. All cultures, whether separated by time, space or skin colour, must make the necessary effort to understand each other. This requires learning how to talk to each other and, more important, how to listen to each other.¹

A long time ago, so long ago there are few old enough to remember and those that would, or could, grow fewer with each passing moment, there was a novel—yes, I know, there are a great many novels—but this specific novel, *Fahrenheit 451*, was written by Ray Bradbury 68

years ago when I was but a strapping lad of 6. Such an odd but intriguing title. The book’s tagline explains it as “the temperature at which book paper catches fire, and burns.” The novel presents a future American society where books are outlawed, and “firemen” burn any that are found. On the back cover of my copy is this description: “*Fahrenheit 451* is a masterpiece that stands with George Orwell’s ‘1984’ and Aldous Huxley’s ‘*Brave New World*.’ This is no rocket story or trip to the moon, but a frightening forecast of the world as it might be in the next few generations...when a powerful government has given people every physical comfort but denied them the right to think!” As for the government giving people every physical comfort, by all appearances, we are fast approaching, if not yet reached such a grand level of governmental largess. Even illegal migrants are freely gifted

housing, healthcare, schooling, transportation and billions of near-worthless printed dollars. Milton Friedman once said, “I am persuaded that the problem of our society today is too much government, not too little. Indeed, I am persuaded that government is failing to perform the functions which it alone can perform because we are trying

to have it perform functions which it cannot perform. In Walter Lippman’s phrase, which goes back to the 1920s, ‘we are an over-governed society.’” I am further reminded of a thing Frederick Douglass declared in Boston in December 1860, “liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one’s thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist.”

It was a pleasure to burn.

It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and *changed*. With the brass nozzle in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, the blood pounded in his head, and his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning to bring down the tatters and charcoal ruins of history.²

That is how Guy Montag, a fireman, is introduced. Married to Mildred for ten years, neither one of them no



longer able to recall either when or where they first met, neither cares to make the effort. They sleep apart, they live disparate lives under the same roof. There is no love or affection between them. Mildred early on overdoses on sleeping pills, but because such attempts were so commonplace, two non-medical technicians come to resuscitate her, one pumping her stomach and the other replacing her blood. "Fifty dollars, please." Mildred spends her days in a parlor where three of the four walls are video screens playing roles in video programs (games) which she knows nothing of and cares less for the characters or the play itself. She complains how much more fulfilling life would be if only they had a fourth wall (only \$2,000 in 1953, \$19, 511 in 2021).

This is frighteningly all too familiar. Reading books has become, for far too many, a nasty habit, an utter waste of time. Video games and digital media are much more engaging. Professor Mark Brennan drove the point home in the February issue of *Chronicles* magazine.

My students look at me in amazement when I tell them I read 8 to 10 hours per day. I look at them in amazement when they tell me they play video games 16 hours straight.

Our library serves as a giant study hall, with stacks of musty books squeezing out valuable study space. I joke with my students in class, "I could remove all the books from the shelves and burn them on the library steps. No one would notice. Then we could replace the stacks with more study spaces!" They laugh. Then they ask me why the school doesn't do that. I cry.

Bradbury elsewhere wrote, "You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them." Further on in *Fahrenheit 451*, the reader comes upon a book burning. Responding to a report of a suspected cache of books at a "flaking three-story house in the ancient part of the city, a century old if it was a day," Montag and his fellow firemen break into the house. One fireman "grabbed at a woman, though she was not running, she was not trying to escape." Montag finds it most unsettling that the woman was still there.

How inconvenient! Always before it had been like snuffing a candle. The police went first and adhesive-taped the victim's mouth and bandaged him off into their glittering beetle cars, so when you arrived you

found an empty house. You weren't hurting anyone, you were hurting only *things!* And since things really couldn't be hurt, since things felt nothing, and things don't scream or whimper, as this woman might begin to scream and cry out, there was nothing to tease your conscience later. You were simply cleaning up. Janitorial work, essentially. Everything to its proper place. Quick with the kerosene! Who's got a match!

How depressingly prescient! Our society and culture have decidedly descended through the nine circles of hell.³ Burning and destroying property is not hurting anyone, it is only property, only things. Things cannot be hurt. It is the people's fault, they have only themselves to blame for hoarding things, for becoming attached to things, for wanting things. Consider the riots and destruction last year. Think of CHAZ (Capital Hill Autonomous Zone) in Portland.

All the books were gathered into a pyre, kerosene pumped on each book and in every room in the house. The old woman, refusing to leave, "knelt among the books, touching the drenched leather and cardboard, reading the gilt titles with her fingers while her eyes accused Montag."

"You can't ever have my books," she said.

"You know the law," said Beatty. "Where's your common sense? None of those books agree with each other. You've been locked up here for years with a regular damned Tower of Babel. Snap out of it! The people in those books never lived. Come on now!"

She shook her head.

Beatty raised his hand in which was concealed the igniter. "We're due back at the House. Besides, these fanatics always try suicide; the pattern's familiar."

Notice the argument. Her books are not ideologically pure or politically correct⁴, the ideas expressed are disparate, there is no common line of thought, no agreed upon narrative. It is all a mess, not worth saving, certainly not worth dying over. The woman's threat of self-immolation is a ruse, an attempt to elicit compassion, a common ploy by fanatical book lovers. All minds must think alike, acknowledge the accepted line of thought, no deviation can or will be permitted. Besides, the people described in those books are fiction, fake, they never existed, so why give them any weight.

The old woman opened her hand, holding an ordinary kitchen match. The woman weighed the firemen quietly with her eyes, "her quietness a condemnation," then with contempt for them all, struck the kitchen match against the railing.

Montag was tormented by such a senseless act, incapable of comprehending such devotion to mere inanimate objects; he subsequently called in sick, though he knew it was a tortured conscience that consumed him, burning deep inside his mind. The fire chief, Beatty, comes calling to explain. "Every fireman, sooner or later, hits this. They only need understanding, to know how the wheels run. Need to know the history of our profession." There you have it, the soothing aloe of "need to know", where facts and history, manipulated and revised, are necessary to reorient the doubting wanderer, to redirect the wavering waffling waffler back to a return to normal insanity, to purity of thought. After some discussion, Beatty asks Montag if he likes sports, bowling, golf, basketball, billiards, pool, football, to which Montag agrees he enjoys them all. Beatty then explains why he asked.

"More sports for everyone, group spirit, fun, and you don't have to think, eh? Organize and organize and super-organize super-super sports. More cartoons in books. More pictures. The mind drinks less and less. Impatience. Highways full of crowds going somewhere, somewhere, somewhere, nowhere. The gasoline refugee. Towns turn into motels, people in nomadic surges from place to place, following the moon tides, living tonight in the room where you slept this noon and I the night before."

"Now let's take up the minorities in our civilization, shall we? Bigger the population, the more minorities. Don't step on the toes of the dog-lovers, the cat-lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico. The people in this book, this play, this TV serial are not meant to represent any actual painters, cartographers, mechanics anywhere. The bigger your market, Montag, the less you handle controversy, remember that! All the minor minor minorities with their navels to be kept clean. Authors, full of evil thoughts, lock up your typewriters. They *did*. Magazines became a nice blend of vanilla tapioca. Books, so the damned snobbish critics said, were dishwater. No *wonder* books stopped selling, the critics said. But the public, knowing what it wanted, spinning happily, let

the comic-books survive. And the three-dimensional sex-magazines, of course. There you have it, Montag. It didn't come from the Government down. There was no dictum, no declaration, no censorship, to start with, no! Technology, mass exploitation, and minority pressure carried the trick. Today, thanks to them, you can stay happy all the time, you are allowed to read comics, the good old confessions, or trade-journals."

As for the firemen, Beatty explains, "What more easily explained and natural? With school turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkerers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be."⁵

You always dread the unfamiliar. Surely you remember the boy in your own school class who was exceptionally "bright," did most of the reciting and answering while the others sat like so many leaden idols, hating him. And wasn't it this bright boy you selected for beatings and tortures after hours? Of course it was. We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other; then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against. So! A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man? Me? I won't stomach them for a minute. And so when houses were finally fireproofed completely, all over the world there was no longer need of firemen for the old purposes. They were given the new job, as custodians of our peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior; official censors, judges, and executors.⁶

Here then is the unvarnished truth laid bare: "Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone *made* equal. Each man the image of every other," not the image and likeness of God. Everyone is happy (though Montag admits to himself that he definitely is not,) because with everyone equal to every other, no one can judge themselves against another, no one is better or less than another, all are equal, though some are more equal than others.⁷ Everyone is *made* equal, everyone receives a participation trophy as long as they participate, go along to get along, therefore, no one can be less or more "happy" than any other, everyone must, by fiat, *be equally* happy. Happiness is a given, you are happy because you have been told you are happy. What is missing from this

“Everyone is happy” mandamus⁸ is meaning, what is absent is purpose, and the freedom to pursue one’s own happiness.

Time has a purpose. The meaning of a sentence becomes clear when we put a period at the end of it. The same applies to life. When we talk about things worth dying for, we’re really talking about the things worth living for, the things that give life beauty and meaning. Thinking a little about our mortality puts the world in perspective. It helps us see what matters, and also the foolishness of things that, finally don’t matter.

There are two great temptations that I’ve seen people struggle with over my lifetime. The first is to try to create life’s meaning for themselves, which translates in the end to no meaning at all. The second is to live and die for the wrong meaning, the wrong cause, the wrong purpose. The world is full of disguised and treasonous little gods that demand our full attention and in the end betray our deepest longings. But there is only one god, the God of Israel. And only in him, as Augustine said 1,600 years ago, can our hearts finally rest.⁹

Oh, those disguised and treasonous little gods that demand our full attention! How soon and easy we forget to whom we are called to serve.¹⁰ How quickly we turn away from God to worship those treasonous little gods!¹¹ The Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, speaking of human intelligence and intellectuals (specifically metaphysicians) wrote, “The botanist who wishes to describe the artichoke describes the stem, the root, and the leaves. The metaphysician eliminates all that and studies the rest. This manner of procedure, exposed in this form, seems absurd; it is, however, that of the metaphysicians. When it is a question of living beings, they eliminate all the physico-chemical phenomena. This elimination made, they suppose that there still remains something.”¹² In his critique, Sheen writes that such a concept is antithetical, that is, “naturally unsuited for life.” Why? Because it substitutes a symbol for reality, the primary condition such a concept must fulfill.

Life deals with realities and not with figures, with substances and not with shadows. But a concept [such as mentioned above] gives merely figures, shadows and symbols, and is consequently unsuited for the purposes of life. At best it gives us “a rubric under which we write all living beings,” or a “frame in which we place an infinity of objects one alongside the other.” The concept “man,” for example, is such a scheme under which all the individual men in the world are grouped. It has the advantage of extension, it is true, but it reveals nothing about the nature of the reality. It lacks compre-

hension, and in lacking that it fails to attain reality. The mind in the face of reality merely stamps out a ticket or gives a receipt which is value for all objects of that class, but this ticket or receipt is in no way representative of reality. It is a mere symbol or a *sucédané*¹³ that is no longer remembered as such.¹⁴

I will take one universal happiness ticket and a receipt for a background check on reality, please.

Liberté, égalité, fraternité, French for “liberty, equality, fraternity”, the national motto of France, originated during the French Revolution, a period not known for its approbation toward either liberty, equality, or fraternity. And yet today, many of the politically correct elite, those holding to a progressive, leftist ideology, find themselves praising the revolution precisely for the egalitarian triptych, the murderous mob violence exorcised from their historically mangled memory. Wordsworth once penned a poem which eulogized his admiration for the French Revolution.

*Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—Oh! Times ...
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchantress—to assist the work
Which then was going forward in her name.*¹⁵

“Reason,” personified in Wordsworth’s lines, is of course a charged word in this context because after those first heady days, some of the worst mob passions in human history were loosed upon the world when all power centered in one body, the National Assembly, and cancel culture resorted to the guillotine.¹⁶

The radical vision, then, as it is today, was to “change the world,” which is the rationale for the current weaponization of education. The reigning premise “is that the world permanently needs changing, never conserving.”¹⁷ It is this vision of society which the “morally anointed intellectual elites,” as Thomas Sowell calls them, see problems to be “solved,” solutions to be concocted, ideas not of their own divinization to be cancelled as irrational and antisocial.

At the heart of the social vision prevalent among contemporary intellectuals is the belief that there are “problems” created by existing institutions and that “solutions” to these problems can be excogitated by intellectuals. This vision is both a vision of society and a

vision of the role of intellectuals within society. In short, intellectuals have seen themselves not simply as an elite—in the passive sense in which large landowners, rentiers, or holders of various sinecures might qualify as elites—but as an *anointed* elite, people with a mission to lead others in one way or another toward better lives.¹⁸

Should one doubt what Sowell claims, one needs look no further than the first press conference of President Biden who unequivocally stated multiple times that he was elected to solve problems, to offer solutions to long standing issues facing the nation. One example to prove Sowell's point was Biden's push for a massive infrastructure bill which he stated repeatedly would create millions of jobs—totally ignoring the thousands of jobs lost when he killed the Keystone pipeline and the construction of the border wall. But what is completely missing from his "plan" is how to bring manufacturing companies and businesses back into the U.S. to provide those jobs; the government does not create jobs, private enterprise does. In short, his plan is all smoke and mirrors and those processes and policies that were working, initiated by the previous administration, cancelled as irrational, antisocial, and undoubtedly racist. A simple survey evidences this issue. Take five minutes and survey items in your home. Look for the "Made in" label. Try to find something, anything manufactured in America. Note where virtually everything you own is manufactured, that is where the jobs are. One last point. "Creating jobs" without incentivizing private enterprise to stay in country means future jobs created are foreign born. Something to think about. Except, of course, you have been denied the right to think.

Nothing proves the dough more than the actions and conduct of the Church and the body politic over the events of the preceding 12 months.

Certainly, 2.7 million global deaths is a tragic milestone.¹⁹ And yet, with cases finally on the decline, we are only just beginning to come to terms with the untold socio-cultural cost of lockdown policies, mask mandates, and enforced social distancing. Whatever one thinks of the governmental measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus, one point is clear: the societal fallout of COVID-19 has been such as to rapidly hasten the socio-cultural decline already well underway across the Western world during the past few decades. A direct and dire consequence of this state of affairs is

the sustained degradation of man in his social, political, and spiritual nature, a degradation which will only be reversed by recourse to a sound anthropology rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.²⁰

As the broader public has been told repeatedly by public health "experts," government bureaucrats, and elected "autocrats" over the past year, the health benefits of COVID-19 restrictions have outweighed the side effects, that mask mandates and other invasive policies were "necessary evils" in this crisis. But and this is a big, big "but", they *are evils*, nonetheless, both in terms of their immediate and long-term effects.

Doubtless the damage to physical health caused by the virus has been considerable. But the full social costs of massively increased mental health issues, suicides, alcoholism, obesity, pornography usage, and divorce—all brought about in no small part by state-instituted policies in response to the pandemic—are yet to be fully determined. More troublesome still are the serious threats which these policies have presented to our individual civil liberties and to the social fabric of the nation. Lurking behind it all, a confused and flawed anthropology lies hidden as if in plain view.

Peter Hitchens, in an essay for the Daily Mail (July 19, 2020), noted that the state has made serious inroads into every corner of our lives combating this viral pandemic.

It has come between husbands and wives at the ends of their lives. It has forbidden the old to embrace their grandchildren. It has denied us funerals and weddings, locked the churches, silenced the ancient monastic music of cathedral choirs and prevented the free worship of God for the first time in 800 years, and banned us (unless we are Left-wing) from holding or attending public meetings.

Harrold adds, "The crisis must not be understated. Never before in the history of English common law have the masses so willingly gone along with all manner of pervasive and intimate government overreach. In an insidious contortion of Christian ethics, 'Love your neighbor, and especially the vulnerable' is now replaced with 'Surrender your liberties for the sake of the community, or else we'll turn you into a social pariah.'"

The issue of facemasks is especially instructive. We now experience a situation where, by executive edict, the all-powerful state not only requests but actively

demands, almost without exception and under penalty of fines or something worse, that every man, woman, and child cover their faces with a soggy cloth. Of course, facemasks may well carry some health benefit in the face of this disease. But we would be foolish to ignore the other, less benign effects that flow from their statewide enforcement. In a culture prone to what Neil Postman has described as “The Great Symbol Drain,” the symbolism of the facemask still retains a remarkable potency. To wear the thing is to submit, and visibly so, to the proposition that the Big Brother arm of the state knows our human needs and priorities better than we do.

Christopher Dawson, in his classic work *The Crisis of Western Education*, asks how it is that the people of Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia were, by and large, willing to tolerate the murderous abuses committed at the hands of their civil leaders. The answer? “[T]he instinct of social conformity is stronger than the instinct of humanitarianism. When the state decides that inhuman measures are required for the good of the party, the individual accepts its decision without criticism and in fact without recognizing what the state is doing.” By nature a social animal, man will always naturally seek to conform to the herd mentality, and it typically takes a significant amount of effort and moral resolve for him to counteract this proclivity.

The cultural elites of our day understand this facet of human nature all too well. Media brainwashing, as well as public shaming of celebrities who dare contravene the established edicts, are just some of their preferred methods for attaining ideological uniformity. Together with Marx, they tacitly deny human nature, positing in its place the *Gattungswesen*, or “species-essence,” defined solely in terms of social relations. Man is not, in the final analysis, an individual with unique value and worth. Rather, he exists merely as a cog in the social machine working toward an agenda which the higher-ups have already set.²¹

This is an especially important point, a thing worth etching into our failing memory: to the intellectual elites, who are almost entirely godless, man is but a cog, a mass of inchoate matter, a resource to be used up and then discarded, with neither thought nor a second’s consideration. Likewise, there are a great many who see man as a pestilence, a viral plague against their goddess Gaia, holy mother earth. While many of the elite will deny allegiance to the cruelties of past genocidal maniacs (more often they will simply suggest such cruelties have likely never occurred, such genocides are merely a conspiracy theory) the likes of Mao, Stalin, Lenin, Hitler, Idi Amin, and so on,

their progressive atheistic ideologies betray them.

The elites do not speak of human needs because such things are of little or no consequence to their agnostic view of human “resources.” But the truth is, all men have needs (food, shelter, etc.) and all have an innate need for meaning so to find true happiness and fulfillment. All have a need to feel important, to matter if not to themselves, then to God. As Dennis Prager recently opined: “The more government intrudes in people’s lives, the less important most people feel—unless they work for the government. Yet, to progressives, government is, or should be, almost everything in people’s lives. It should take care of as many people as possible. However, at a massive price: The more one relies on the government, the more one will inevitably lack a sense of importance. ... One could accurately say that we are replacing America’s motto, ‘In God We Trust,’ with, ‘In Government We Trust.’”²² Prager is correct, though the qualifier “almost” is far too kind. To progressives, government is, or should be “everything” in people’s lives.

Perhaps the reason the powers-that-be are so interested in social conformity, so desperate to make their policies appear “normal,” is because they realize that without the illusion of normalcy, ordinary people might wake up and realize the absurdity of what is going on. They are terrified of the little child pointing out the uncomfortable truth that the emperor has no mask.²³

There are burgeoning signs the sleeping giant may well be stirring and the powers that be are desperate to lull it back to sleep by turning up the volume and changing the lullaby. There are always other crises to distract the somnambulant beast, reinducing comatosis being one favored approach, preventing the sleeping giant from becoming aware to what they have been and continue doing until it is far too late. The southern border crisis—I apologize, I meant to say “challenge”—has recently directed attention away from COVID-19. Funny how that works. Abnormality remains in place, but no one is paying attention, so addicted are we to our video games, social media, and perverted sexual fantasies.

Behind much of the foregoing lies a metaphysical reality succinctly captured in *Gaudium et spes*, one of the key documents of the Second Vatican Council: “When God is forgotten...the creature itself grows unintelligible.”

Richard John Neuhaus made the same observation at a societal level: without religion, politics cannot hope to flourish. The events of the past year have clearly crystallized this reality, highlighting the manner in which, for modern man who is no longer sure as to what his highest good is, the state has become his idol to which he turns for wealth and security. In this pitiful condition, the mighty arm of the federal government has even morphed into the source and guarantor of his rights and liberties. In return, he simply needs to extend his unflinching and unquestioning allegiance.

Historically, of course, it was the purview of the Church to temper the worst excesses of governmental overreach. Christianity, and especially Catholic Christianity, has always been a defender of man as man. In the second century, St. Irenaeus stood heroically against the Gnostics who sought, in the Platonic tradition, to undermine man's bodily nature and elevate the spiritual at the expense of the physical. In the post-Enlightenment era, by contrast, hedonism has proven the greater challenge, with the Church standing firmly against the pleasure-seeking excesses of the materialist-individualist *Zeitgeist*.

Today, however, it appears that the Western world has largely descended into that anthropological nihilism²⁴ so contrary to the Church's mission, yet so delighted in by "the principalities and the powers" (see Ephesians 6:12). COVID-19 did not cause this state of affairs, but it certainly aided and exacerbated it. More regrettable still has been the systematic failure of the Church to properly respond to the current crisis. Though at first an unknown quantity, it quickly became clear in late spring of last year that the threat posed by COVID-19 was not as grave as we first feared.

Nevertheless, in spite of this newfound information, the vast majority of Church leaders were content to go along with the mainstream media narrative. With a few notable exceptions, many dioceses backed down—worse, bowed down—before the great Hobbesian Leviathan with its requests (in some cases, demands) that the churches be closed. The result, at least in the Catholic world, has been the *de facto* end of the Sunday obligation, lending credence to the notion that hand sanitizer and facemasks would be more effective than prayer and worship in combating the invisible foe.

It is a frightening thought (should one be so inclined to such criminal behavior) to consider how far the world, until recently based on Greco-Roman civilization and Christianity, has descended to a world without a soul, without roots, without ideals, without love, beauty, or human kindness. It is as though a passage from the King-

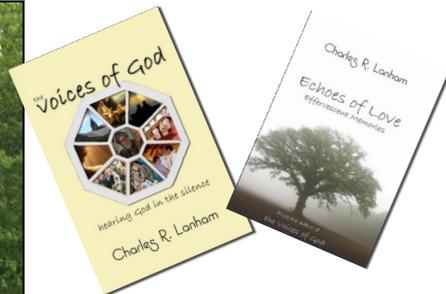
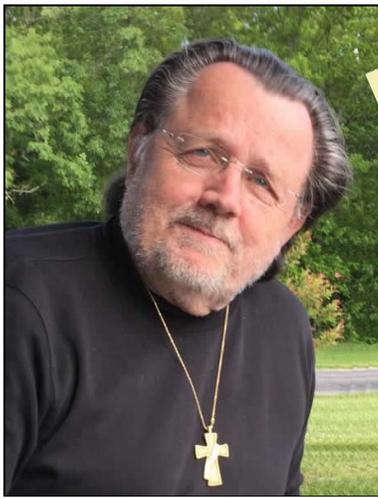
dom of Christ to the Kingdom of the Antichrist, from the Kingdom of God to the domain of Satan. Instead of Church leaders the likes of Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher who refused to bow before evil and suffered death for their convictions, we have Church "leaders" who "would like to choose whether to be executed by hanging or the guillotine, without making any objections to the legitimacy of the sentence." When Henry VIII declared that the bishops unanimously accept his case, the Archbishop of Canterbury declared that "all my brethren here present will affirm the same." At that moment, Bishop Fisher said, with firmness, "No sire, not I. You have not my consent thereto." And that set him on the course leading to his execution. Thomas More refused to sign a loyalty oath, refused to accept Henry as the head of the Church of England. For that he was executed. Where are the Mores and the Fishers today? The only path our present-day Church leaders are leading us is a primrose one going downhill fast.

Heaven forbid, the hound of heaven of a sudden be loosed before paradise can be won! Of course, the minor flaw in the slaw, the ingredient which must be first eliminated is the human pestilence. Oops! Did I say that out loud? Forget it, do not think about it, do not think, DO NOT THINK. CANCEL! CANCEL! CANCEL!

In the midst of this rapid and pervasive cultural decline—a decline severely hastened and exacerbated by the pandemic—the Western world stands at a crossroads. No longer certain as to what it means to be an *imago Dei*, our vision of the human person stands confused and distorted and in desperate need of renewal. Yet we must not lose heart, for it has always been in the darkness that that distinctly Christian virtue of hope shines most luminously. It is hope which will carry us through the present crisis and help us rediscover man's identity and design.²⁵

It is laughable, even more, ludicrous to consider how lemminglike we have become, how ignorant we have made of ourselves. In disguising ourselves as little treasonous gods, all dressed up for Halloween or some palace masquerade we allow ourselves to be convinced we are happy. Oh, the ignorance of bliss! How blissfully we tread down the pathway to perdition while singing a happy song.

1. Joseph Pearce, "But Words Will Never Hurt Us?", *The Imaginative Conservative*, March 18, 2021.
2. Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, Thirty-eighth printing, 1975).
3. The nine circles of Hell refer to Dante's "Inferno"; in order of entrance and severity: Limbo, Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Anger, Heresy, Violence, Fraud, Treachery. For further explanation and description, see <https://www.thoughtco.com/dantes-9-circles-of-hell-741539>.
4. It is an interesting exercise to search for the definition of "politically correct." The result: Adjective exhibiting (or failing to exhibit) political correctness. Synonyms: socialist, communist, communistic, Bolshevik, leftist, anti-capitalist, radical, revolutionary, militant, red, progressive, liberal, reforming, social-democrat, Labor, Laborite, Marxist, Leninist, Marxist-Leninist, Trotskyite, Maoist, commie, lefty, pink, bolshe. Any questions?
5. Other synonymous words are perhaps more instructive: geek, nerd, brainiac, bookworm, egghead, etc. Then there is the rather unsavory connotation favored by the proletariat, the unwashed masses, the common folk for the intelligentsia, the academic "elite" which, for the most, is justly deserved.
6. Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 49-54.
7. George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, (1945). The direct quote is "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others." *Animal Farm* is an allegorical novella, first published in England in August 1945. The book tells the story of a group of farm animals who rebel against their human farmer, hoping to create a society where the animals can be equal, free and happy. Ultimately, however, the rebellion is betrayed, and the farm ends up in a state as bad as it was before, under the dictatorship of a pig named Napoleon.
8. **Mandamus**: a judicial writ issued as a command to an inferior court or ordering a person to perform a public or statutory duty.
9. Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap., Archbishop, Ret., "Things Worth Dying For: Thoughts on a life worth living" (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2021), 8-9.
10. "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15).
11. When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Up, make us gods, ...'" (Exodus 32:1).
12. Fulton J. Sheen, "God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy" (New York, NY: IVE Press, 2009, orig. published 1925), 30.
13. **Sucedané**: a substitute.
14. Fulton J. Sheen, "God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy", 31-32.
15. William Wordsworth, "The French Revolution as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement".
16. Glenn Arbery, "Edmund Burke and the Progressive Mind," *The Imaginative Conservative*, March 19, 2021.
17. Greg Weiner, Assumption University, 2021.
18. Thomas Sowell, "Intellectuals and Society" (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 94.
19. For some perspective upon which public health "experts" are studiously silent, perhaps because it lessens the impact of the pandemic narrative, one should look at starvation numbers: an average of 9 million people die every year die every year from hunger and hunger-related diseases. This is more than from AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and COVID-19 combined. So far, in 2021 alone, 2.1 million people have died from hunger, a child dies from hunger ever 10 seconds. Where is the outrage, where is the urgency?
20. Clement Harrold, "The Rage Against Man", *Crisis Magazine*, March 24, 2021. Clement Harrold is a British citizen studying at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, majoring in Theology, Philosophy, and Classics, with a minor in German.
21. Clement Harrold, "The Rage Against Man".
22. Dennis Prager, "The Human Need to Feel Important—and How Government Squelches It", *The Epoch Times*, March 17-23, 2021, A15.
23. Clement Harrold, "The Rage Against Man".
24. **Anthropological Nihilism**: Anthropology is the scientific study of humanity, concerned with human behavior, human biology, and societies. Nihilism is a philosophical doctrine that suggests the negation of one or more reputedly meaningful aspects of life. Nihilism is commonly presented in the form of existential nihilism, which argues that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. Moral nihilists assert that morality does not inherently exist, and that any established moral values are abstractly contrived. Nihilism also asserts that, in some aspect, knowledge is not possible, or that reality does not actually exist. Thus, it would appear, anthropological nihilism must assert that human beings are not real, that nothing we think or experience is real, that human beings do not exist.
25. Clement Harrold, "The Rage Against Man".



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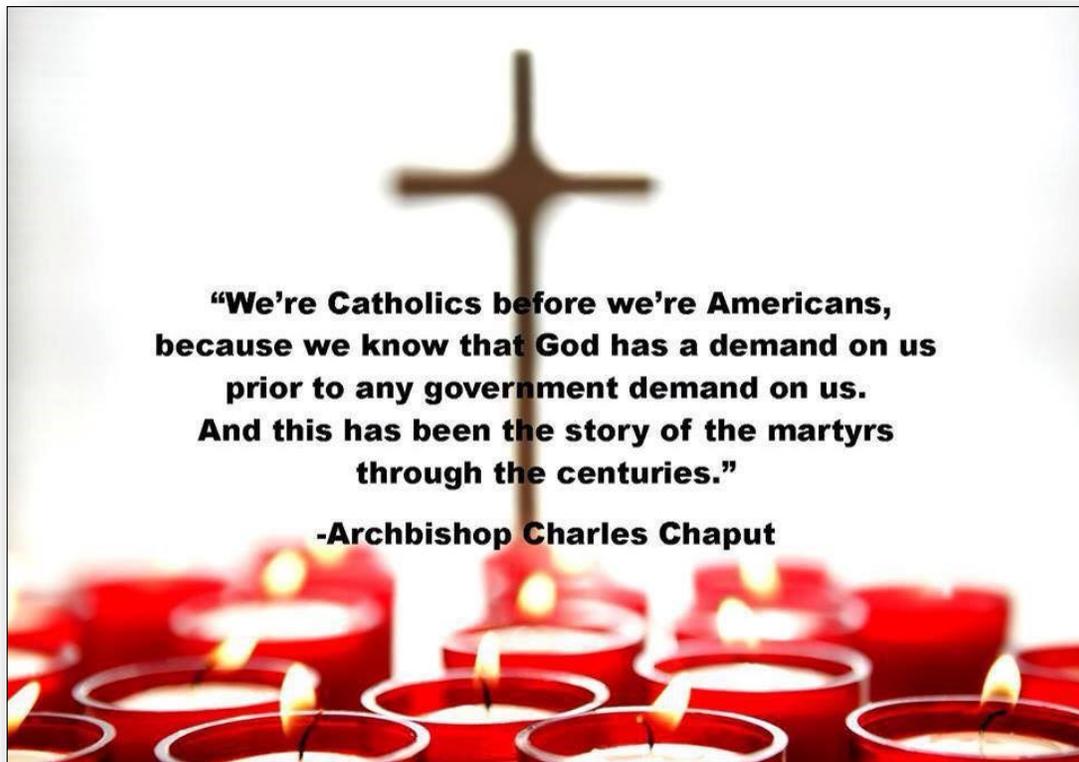


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