

April 23, 2021
Volume 05—Number 11



A journal for restless minds

Colloquī *: to discuss*

Antiquarian Apostasy

All that ever was, never was

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

Antiquarian Apostasy

All that ever was, never was

There is an unhappy misery among those who self-subscribe to the glitterati, the manicured agnostics, the self-appointed apostles to the gods of earth, evangelizers of the most irrational antiquarian apostasy for the sake of a preposterously contrived creed to the here and now. Apostates they are, indeed greedily so, for to their sophistic minds, all that ever was, never was but myth and fairy tale; the future-present—the Elysium of their desires; ancestral heritage and tradition trifles to be scourged, scorned, crowned with thorns, then crucified. Thus, they are well and truly cancelled. They say they are free, free to be all they are wont to be, and yet: “Mental and emotional liberty are not so simple as they look. Really they require almost as careful a balance of laws and conditions as do social and political liberty. The ordinary aesthetic anarchist who sets out to feel everything freely gets knotted at last in a paradox that prevents him feeling at all.”¹ What the paradox is when the mad sentimentalist, the vulgar fanatic so passionately yearns to no longer feel anything at all.

These days religion, void of God, is but a socio-cultic system of depraved behaviors and practices, worldviews, texts, ideologies, so many bothersome isms that on rare occasion antipathetically relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements. It is unsurprising that what constitutes a religion today finds no scholarly consensus for, so few “scholars” are willing to submit to so base a creed, one so unpopular as to profess an unwavering faith in an unknowable God.

One of the last century’s greatest Christian apologists, C.S. Lewis—rivalled only by G.K. Chesterton and Saint John Paul II—in his 1943 book, *The Abolition of Man*, warned of the very real possibility that any one single generation might attempt to remove itself from the neces-

sary continuity of generations, proclaim itself superior to all that came before, and—even without necessarily meaning to—establish itself as the authority of all that will come after it.² Given the technological advances in genetic engineering, Lewis’ concerns have proven prophetic which only proves them all the more deeply troubling.

The truth finally becomes apparent that neither in any operation with factual propositions nor in any appeal to instinct can the Innovator find the basis for a system of values. ... All value will be sentimental; and you must confess (on pain of abandoning every value) that all sentiment is not ‘merely’ subjective. You may, on the other hand, regard them as rational—nay as rationality itself—as things so obviously reasonable that they neither demand nor admit proof. But then you must allow that Reason can be practical, that an *ought* must not be dismissed because it cannot produce some *is* as its credential. If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved. Similarly if nothing is obligatory for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all.

To some it will appear that I have merely restored under another name what they always meant by basic or fundamental instinct. But much more than a choice of words is involved. The Innovator attacks traditional values (the *Tao*) in defence of what he at first supposes to be (in some special sense) ‘rational’ or ‘biological’ values. But as we have seen, all the

values which he uses in attacking the *Tao*, and even claims to be substituting for it, are themselves derived from the *Tao*. If he had really started from scratch, from right outside the human tradition of value, no jugglery could have advanced him an inch towards the conception that a man should die for the community or work for posterity. If the *Tao* falls, all his own conceptions of value fall with it. Not one of them can claim any authority other than that of the *Tao*. Only by such shreds of the *Tao* as he has inherited is he enabled even to attack it. The question therefore arises what title he has to select bits of it for acceptance and to reject others. For if the bits he rejects have no authority, neither have those he retains: if what he retains is valid, what he rejects is equally valid too.

But then, in every form of the *Tao* which has come down to us, side by side with the duty to children and descendants lies the duty to parents and ancestors. By what right do we reject one and accept the other?



Again, the Innovator may place economic value first. To get people fed and clothed is the great end, and in pursuit of its scruples about justice and good faith may be set aside. The *Tao* of course agrees with him about the importance of getting the people fed and clothed. Unless the Innovator were himself using the *Tao* he could never have learned of such a duty. But side by side with it in the *Tao* lie those duties of justice and good faith which he is ready to debunk. What is his warrant? He may be a Jingoist, a Racialist, an extreme nationalist, who maintains that the advancement of his own people is the object to which all else ought to yield. But no kind of factual observation and no appeal to instinct will give him a ground for this option. Once more, he is in fact deriving it from the *Tao*: a duty to our own kin, because they are our own kin, is a part of traditional morality. But side by side with it in the *Tao*, and limiting it, lie the inflexible demands of justice, and the rule that, in the long run, all men are our brothers. Whence comes the Innovator's authority to pick and choose?

Since I can see no answer to these questions, I draw the following conclusions. This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao*, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained. The effort to refute it and raise a new system of value in its place is self-contradictory. There has never been, and never will be, a radically new judgement of value in the history of the world. What purport to be new systems or (as they now call them) 'ideologies', all consist of fragments from the *Tao* itself, arbitrarily wrenched from their context in the whole and then swollen to madness in their isolation, yet still owing to the *Tao* and to it alone such validity as they possess. If my duty to my parents is a superstition, then so is my duty to posterity. If justice is a superstition, then so is my duty to my country or my race. If the pursuit of scientific knowledge is a real value, then so is conjugal fidelity. The rebellion of new ideologies against the *Tao* is a rebellion of the branches against the tree: if the rebels could succeed they would find that they had destroyed themselves. The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in.³

It perhaps requires some measure of concentration to extract a measure of understanding from what Lewis wrote, but what he wrote of concerning the increasing rejection of values, tradition, the Natural Law, Traditional Morality, Practical Reason, or First Principles is far too

much in evidence these days to be ignored or tossed casually down the memory hole.⁴ The absence of God, replaced by the idol gods of earth, and the denunciation of religion are but ominous commentary on the advancing "progress" toward the abolition of man. In his inaugural address to Cambridge University, Lewis would subsequently describe the trials and the end of the Old Western Men, men who desire to love the world through beauty and the humanities, rather than through utility and the sciences.

It is hard to have patience with those Jeremiahs, in Press or pulpit, who warn us that we are 'relapsing into Paganism.' It might be rather fun if we were. It would be pleasant to see some future Prime Minister trying to kill a large and lively milk-white bull in Westminster Hall. But we shan't. What lurks behind such idle prophecies, if they are anything but careless language, is the false idea that the historical process allows mere reversal; that Europe can come out of Christianity 'by the same door as in she went' and find herself back where she was. It is not what happens. A post-Christian man is not a Pagan; you might as well think that a married woman recovers her virginity by divorce. The post-Christian is cut off from the Christian past and therefore doubly from the Pagan past.

Ah, how true it is in what Lewis said of turning round the clock to unwind it in the false hope it might or could reverse its quotidian recto-circumnavigation. To return to the halcyon pagan days before that early Easter sunrise; before what once was said to be the glory of Rome so viciously suborned by that radical Christian cult bent on turning the world on its head, upending the well-established, officially sanctioned state religion of demigods and gods for every purpose under the earth and above the heavens. Religion was personal and impersonal, the gods and earthly powers cared for none but themselves, even less for the other. To this poor mind, it was Hans Urs Von Balthasar⁵ who would, even at so late a date, provide sound theological witness to religion, Christianity, and Catholicism.

Religion is the world in its journey toward God. Christianity is God journeying toward the world, and people who believe in him taking the same direction as he. Catholicism is Christianity which, with utmost seriousness, allows God in his fullness, the whole God, to pursue this destination right up to the bitter end—and ultimately to the end of blessedness.

The other forms of Christianity are somehow ashamed of God for involving himself so deeply with Adam's clay, for getting his hands dirty. Many things are left to their own course; much is left to the individual's conscience and opinion. He is supposed to submit himself "to the word", but for the most part this does not concern itself with detailed regulations. So the decisive factor is mostly the *Zeitgeist*, the trend of the times, which looks at things from a secularized standpoint. Should the Church really involve herself with questions of sexual ethics inside and outside marriage, questions of contraception and divorce? Should she seek a binding interpretation of the gospel's requirement of poverty? Or, stepping into the area of the *mysterium*, should she try to explain more precisely the real presence in the Eucharist or the Virgin Birth? Why not simply let such matters alone? Catholic ethics often seems so casuistic and petty compared with other Christian ethics, and Catholic dogmatics often seems so materialistic.

There were many genuinely petty inquiries in late Scholasticism, topics pursued out of a curiosity that was unworthy of the profundity of the mystery. No one today will want to revive them. And no one will want to defend many a distortion found in popular forms of devotion. But behind abuse there is often a good usage, preserving a reverence for the matter of which man is made and which he has to reckon with, the deep, vulnerable, and often humiliating mysteries of human bodiliness (which is inseparable from his spirit): "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you ...? So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19f). "For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are" (1 Cor 3:17).

In the biblical revelation the world is secularized only insofar as it is deprived of its own illusion of being divine. It is sacralized, however, insofar as the only God, holy and sacral, who has created it, chooses it for his dwelling place in a wholly new and intimate way. And he does this, not in a vague and general way, but individually and particularly.⁶

As for Dogma, Balthasar wrote "Fundamentally there is only one single dogma, just as the human being is a single unity in spite of his many organs, conditions and views. "This dogma is identical with the apostolic proclamation: He who rose from the dead has suffered on the cross 'for us and for many'; therefore he is the Son of God; therefore he was born of the Virgin; therefore he is the Judge of the living and of the dead who will rise. And since he is God's Son, he is not subordinate to God the Father, and the Spirit he sent to his Church is really the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Father and Son. ... These affir-

mations are not juxtaposed: they are interrelated; if Jesus is risen from the dead (and 'otherwise our faith is in vain'), they logically imply each other." From this Balthasar asserts "The one, original dogma, the fact established by God, is the Catholic truth."

If the Son is no longer equal in nature with the Father, as Arius asserted, but is only similar to him, the whole internal logic of the world's redemption falls apart, bringing with it the structure of the Trinity, the Church, and of eschatology, as the Fathers never tired of demonstrating.

Either the truth of revelation is Catholic, all-embracing, "greater than which nothing can be conceived", or it is not truth at all. And it is only in order to protect truth's catholicity against falsification and loss of substance that, down through the ages, councils have made statements designed to prevent the Church from veering to left or right of a proper understanding.⁷

In completing his thoughts on Catholic truth, Balthasar enclosed a brief excerpt from Chesterton's masterpiece, *Orthodoxy*, wherein he wrote of the many paradoxes of Christianity; the passage bears considered reflection.

Last and most important, it is exactly this which explains what is so inexplicable to all the modern critics of the history of Christianity. I mean the monstrous wars about small points of theology, the earthquakes of emotions about a gesture or a word. It was only a matter of an inch; but an inch is everything when you are balancing. The Church could not afford to swerve a hair's breadth on some things if she was to continue her great and daring experiment of the irregular equilibrium. **Once let one idea become less powerful and some other idea would become too powerful.** [*emphasis added*] It was no flock of sheep the Christian shepherd was leading, but a herd of bulls and tigers, of terrible ideals and devouring doctrines, each one of them strong enough to turn to a false religion and lay waste the world. Remember that the Church went in specifically for dangerous ideas; she was a lion tamer. The idea of birth through a Holy Spirit, of the death of a divine being, of the forgiveness of sins, or the fulfilment of prophecies, are ideas which, any one can see, need but a touch to turn them into something blasphemous or ferocious. The smallest link was let drop by the artificers of the Mediterranean, and the lion of ancestral pessimism burst his chain in the forgotten forests of the north. Of these theological equalisations I have to speak afterwards. Here it is enough to notice that if some small mistake were made in doctrine, huge blunders

might be made in human happiness. A sentence phrased wrong about the nature of symbolism would have broken all the best statues in Europe. A slip in the definitions might stop all the dances; might wither all the Christmas trees or break all the Easter eggs. Doctrines had to be defined within strict limits, even in order that man might enjoy general human liberties. The Church had to be careful, if only that the world might be careless.

This is the thrilling romance of Orthodoxy. People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad. It was the equilibrium of a man behind madly rushing horses, seeming to stop this way and to sway that, yet in every attitude having the grace of statuary and the accuracy of arithmetic. The Church in its early days went fierce and fast with any warhorse; yet it is utterly unhistoric to say that she merely went mad along one idea, like a vulgar fanaticism. She swerved to left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles. She left on one hand the huge bulk of Arianism, buttressed by all the worldly powers to make Christianity too worldly. The next instant she was swerving to avoid an orientalism, which would have made it too unworldly. The orthodox Church was never respectable. It would have been easier to have accepted the earthly power of the Arians. It would have been easy, in the Calvinistic seventeenth century, to fall into the bottomless pit of predestination. It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom—that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.⁸

It is easy to push the Easy button. Too easy. The easier, more comfortable, the greater the satisfaction with life, the easier it is to take God for granted or ignore him altogether. Like a prudent parent who commands respect, good manners, and strict obedience, who demands nothing less than a child's absolute best, Mother Church and

God, our Father demand nothing less than perfection from their imperfect children. It is hard, never easy. In our smugness we have fallen into the trap of arrogating ourselves to "low expectations"⁹; in the solace of our indifference, we have too easily become complacent, willingly leaving the hard stuff for another day or to someone else. Hard work, personal responsibility, and golden rules are for fools and Mamas don't raise no fools. We have succumbed to the poorest rhyme, ignorant of the poet's siren elegy, "Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree."¹⁰ In our apathy, we become bitter; in our bitterness, we breed resentment, anger and hate; thus, we abandon reason; without reason, faith, hope, and love are but anachronistic feelings which further fuel our apathy.

Glenn Ellmers, Senior Fellow of the Claremont Institute and a visiting research scholar at Hillsdale College, wrote recently: "Let's be blunt. The United States has become two nations occupying the same country." The two nations were not what might immediately (if at all) come to mind; for what he was really impeaching were the "many native-born people—some of whose families have been here since the Mayflower—who may technically be citizens of the United States but are no longer (if they ever were) *Americans*. They do not believe in, live by, or even like the principles, traditions, and ideals that until recently defined America as a nation and as a people."¹¹ The other nation are people who do consider themselves *Americans*, people who believe in the principles upon which America was founded, who would willingly die to protect and defend the freedoms of every American. Either nation, Ellmers writes, cannot be sliced, diced, and sat under the usual "sorting hat" of liberal, conservative, libertarian, socialist, democrat, republican, left or right, gay, straight, black, white, brown or yellow, or whichever house has the proper plumbing. The true line of demarcation lies between love and hate, those who love America and those who hate America.

Much the same could be said of religion broadly, Christianity generally, and to this Christian and Catholic, Catholicism specifically. To parrot Ellmers, "Let's be blunt." The Catholic Church has become two churches trying desperately to occupy the same empty tomb much as Ellmers says of the United States becoming two nations.

There are many “cradle” Catholics who consider themselves to be members of the Catholic Church but who are not, in truth, *Catholic*, for they do not “believe and profess *all* that the holy Catholic Church believes, teaches, and proclaims to be revealed by God.”¹² They are often referred to as “Cafeteria Catholics”¹³ because they pick and choose what they believe and ignore what they choose not to believe. Catholic philosopher, Peter Kreeft, once asked “how can there be so many ‘cafeteria Catholics?’” and then answered his own question “There is no such thing, really. It’s a contradiction in terms. *Catholic* means ‘universal’, or ‘whole’, or ‘all’. *Cafeteria* means only ‘some’. It means being picky and choosy.” He then asked, “You know what the Greek word for ‘pick and choose’ is?” “*Heretic*.”¹⁴ Oops!

Then there are those Catholics who make every, some might even go so far as to say super human, effort to fully and faithfully exercise the tradition, doctrine, and dogma as taught by the magisterium, the successors to the apostles, to whom Jesus Christ commissioned to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded” (Matthew 28:19-20). Balthasar, perhaps in a moment of Catholic fidelity, makes it quite clear: “Jesus must be Catholic, otherwise his Church, which follows him and is promised his fullness, could not be called Catholic. **Being Catholic means embracing everything, leaving nothing out.**” [*emphasis added*]

A Church can be Catholic only because God is Catholic first, and because, in Jesus Christ and ultimately in the Holy Spirit, this catholicity on God’s part has opened itself to the world, simultaneously revealing and giving itself. The Spirit is “Person”, the “We” in God: he provides the basis for the “we” that exists between God and ourselves, and hence too between men. But we would know and possess nothing of this if Jesus Christ had not stood at the alpha and omega of all God’s ways in the world, as the form of revelation available to anyone who is open to it, i.e., is prepared to believe.¹⁵

Cafeteria Catholics (whether laity or clergy), with varying degrees of hubris, dare to place conditions and limits upon God and his Church; such a church, as they envision it, is but a house built on sand where the light shines not on the Divine Presence, but lays buried deep beneath the

heavy burden of quick setting cement. In a sense, most Catholics, can be found, on occasion, dining at the cafeteria of desire. Temptation smells so sweet and it is always tempting to pick and choose what seems so good and pass on those things that fail to entice the tongue. We are fallen creatures, good and bad, strong and weak. Remember Adam? That fruit looked so good, so where’s the harm in one small bite?

A prevailing attitude among most, if not all, cafeteria Catholics, even among stalwart Catholics and Christian believers, is the widespread belief “that religion and worship should spark our emotions and make us feel good. The wayward conclusion is reached: if they cannot accomplish the demands of sentiment, then they aren’t worth doing. This is the sad, false reality that occurs when religion becomes sentiment.”

In our desire to accept the path of true worship, there are some struggles along the way. We are fallen, and in our fallenness we are inclined to incomplete worship, or even to well-disguised self-worship. In particular, our sentiments and emotions want to corrode reality and make our hearts the center of all things. With that temptation before us, we have to clarify what our heart is, why we’ve been created with sentiments and emotions and how we are to understand them.

As human beings, made in the image of God, we have a self-possession born from our spiritual souls. This self-possession is the ground upon which we share in God’s own divine reason. It is the basis upon which our sentiments move.

Biblically, our self-possession is referred to as “the heart,” which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls our hidden center, the place of truth, decision, covenant, and the arena where we encounter God (2563).

And so, when the Bible speaks of “the heart,” it is not referring to the epicenter of our emotions, or even to how we “feel” in the popular sense, but rather to the place where truth is discovered (not invented), where we are revealed to ourselves, and where we encounter the living God.

In a moral sense, “the heart” is also a reference to our conscience. Properly understood, the conscience is the inner sanctuary of the person where he communicates not only with himself but also with God. There, in the hidden meeting place of his interior life, the moral law and the person’s freedom interact and make decisions. In understanding the conscience in this way, we can see

it as the place of unity between the moral law and freedom. It is in the heart, a person's conscience, that the moral law tempers freedom and spares it from becoming an idol, as it reveals the moral law and commands our freedom to obey it.

In a similar fashion, freedom empowers the moral law for the growth of virtue and holiness. A mature conscience does not seek to be freed from truth but sees truth as the means by which it can be truly free and grow in goodwill as a child of God.

If a person does not have some form of an interior life, and lacks an attentive ear to his conscience, then he can be easily misled regarding what is true, good, and beautiful.

At times, sentiment assaults our hearts, and we are tempted to compromise with evil, to betray goodness or to redefine it. ... In particular, if sentiment overtakes our conscience, then we are imprisoned in a small, self-created world, where good and evil become whatever we feel they should be. In such a world, we become slaves to the whims, shallowness, and cruelty of our own emotions. In this process, our sentiments demand that we worship them. By adhering to this false worship, we end up worshipping ourselves.

Our sentiment—the combined experience of our feelings and emotions—cannot be used as a gauge for whether something is good or evil. Our sentiment is not a moral equivalent to the Ten Commandments. Simply that we feel something does not make it right (or wrong).¹⁶

The conscience of the cafeteria Catholic overtaken by sentiment becomes enslaved to the whims, shallowness, and cruelty of their emotions, and as stated above, sentiment demands worship and false worship ultimately ends up in self-worship. Unconsciously, perhaps, the cafeteria Catholic thus makes of himself like a god.

Unlike the cafeteria Catholic, the constant Catholic humbly acknowledges that the holy Catholic Church is not his but God's: God's house, God's table, God's food, God's rules. We must be willing to unconditionally abide by the house rules if we wish to hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21-22). "Only if we exhibit a readiness that stipulates no conditions can the Spirit, in his freedom, prove to us that the entire Catholic revelation—God, Christ, the Church—was and remains a project un-

dertaken by the sovereign free love of God."¹⁷

The Church instituted by Christ is an instrument of Divine Grace. "Jesus has died and has returned to the Father; true, his Spirit is there, but will he be able to imprint himself on the recalcitrant matter of history without an instrument capable of shaping that same history? Jesus himself chose people and sent them out, tentatively at first, only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and then finally and definitively to all nations to the end of time."

There is a temptation to define these people, or the Church they constitute, in terms of pure mission: they are to radiate Christ into the world. There is a temptation to forbid them to reflect on their own nature and to see such reflection as a turning-aside from their commission, as an interruption of the clear stream they are meant to be. They are supposed to want to be nothing more than the "hyphen" that traverses world history, linking Christ with the Kingdom of God that is expected at the end of time.

The question arises, however, how there can be mission without a missionary, a sending-out without someone sent. Christ himself was pure mission from the Father, but he had to know who he was in order to be able to point away from himself and toward the Father. In this sense a purely function Christology is a contradiction that in no way does justice to Holy Scripture unless, at least implicitly, it is also structural and ontological.¹⁸ The question "Who are you?" echoes through all the Gospels, and Jesus responds to it by avoiding the traps it contains, which once again shows that he knows his personal identity. It is an identity, of course, that is co-extensive with his mission.

The same question "Who are you?" is continually and of necessity being addressed to Christ's ambassadors, and they cannot take refuge in some anonymous "radiation", leaving the answer to Christ and the Holy Spirit. The witnesses must produce their papers; they themselves must be able to substantiate their faith and their mission. And if they present the New Testament as their documentary evidence and use it to demonstrate not only their faith but also their personal commission, they thereby show that their letters of accreditation belong, not just to anyone, but to them.

Of course, this reveals the whole paradox of the Catholic Church. It is the pure radiation of Christ into the world, and, in order to radiate, it must also be a structure. It is both in motion "away from itself" and abiding "in itself". The reconciliation of the world has already been achieved, and Christ's selection of the individual

messengers (“he called to him those whom he wished”) is simultaneous with this work of reconciliation: as the Light of the World (Jn 8:12), he has already appointed his chosen messengers to be the “light of the world” (Mt 5:14). The Church *is* first and foremost the radiation of the redemption (far beyond all structure), and in order to be this radiation it *has* structure.

The Church is one element within Jesus Christ’s work of reconciliation. Consequently it shares—in appropriate measure—in the insoluble paradoxes that surround him, i.e., that it is precisely in his humiliation that Jesus shows his greatness, and that it is by pointing exclusively to the Father that he gives expression to his own unique personality.

In its paradoxical unities the Church, which is composed of sinners and fallible human beings, and which, for two thousand years, has offered an unprotected flank to the world, is much easier to dismantle. But the fact that she is constantly accused of contradictory traits points back to the Christological paradox.

The Church, it is said, is too ascetic and takes too much delight in the world; she is too severe (celibacy, the indissolubility of marriage) and too lax; she is too dependent on the Old Testament (“holiness through works”) and too antisemitic; she is the snivelling failures’ religion of suffering (Nietzsche), but blesses secular weapons or uses them herself, against outside opponents (the Crusades) or enemies within (the Inquisition). Protestants accuse her of being too concerned with tradition; Orthodox, of being too little concerned.

The Church’s sacramental practice is too close to folklore, or else it is too remote from everyday reality. She is too interior and world-denying, so say those whose commitment is political, while others complain that she is too activist, too conformist, too compromised by the capitalist half of the world. She clings to her schools and hospitals (the beginning and end of life), but her interest in the efforts of mature humanity is small or marked by distrust (e.g., the fate of Teilhard). She is much too tolerant, running after every modernity, ever since she incorporated Platonism and subsequently Aristotelianism into herself, right up to the present day when she is getting tangled up with the Jewish philosophy of hope—and at the same time she is the epitome of intolerance.

The litany is endless. Seeing the Church from the front, the critic complains that he cannot see the back; the critic who stands behind her feels insulted that she does not turn round to him. More precisely, what the one sees as her “grandeur”, another regards as her “misère”. Provided this “misère” reflects the “misère” of Christ (and is not simply the self-incurred misery of sin), both “grandeur” and “misère” could be grasped as

identical, and this would provide a basis for discipleship in both cases. True, in the realm of phenomena the Church’s disparate aspects can be added together and totalled, but her catholicity is like that of her Lord, whom she reflects: she transcends quantity, however great and comprehensive. She cannot adequately be defined because she is part of the mystery of God; participating in this mystery is of her very essence.¹⁹

In his marvelous allegory, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis imagines the denizens of “the grey town” so involved with their own selves they cannot recognize where they reside. One Spirit, “who was naked and almost blindingly white,” in a revealing conversation with an old acquaintance now residing in the grey town, asks,

“Excuse me. Where do you imagine you’ve been?”

“Ah, I see. You mean that the grey town with its continual hope of morning (we must all live by hope, must we not?), with its field for indefinite progress, is, in a sense, Heaven, if only we have eyes to see it? That is a beautiful idea.”

“I didn’t mean that at all. Is it possible you don’t know where you’ve been?”

“Now that you mention it, I don’t think we ever do give it a name. What do you call it?”

“We call it Hell.”

“There is no need to be profane, my dear boy. I may not be very orthodox, in your sense of that word, but I do feel that these matters ought to be discussed simply, and seriously, and reverently.”

“Discuss Hell reverently? I meant what I said. You have been in Hell: though if you don’t go back you may call it Purgatory.”

“Go on, my dear boy, go on. That is so like you. No doubt you’ll tell me why, on your view, I was sent there. I’m not angry.”

“But don’t you know? You went there because you are an apostate.”

“Are you serious, Dick?”

“Perfectly.”

“This is worse than I expected. Do you really think people are penalised for their honest opinions? Even assuming, for the sake of argument, that those opinions were mistaken.”

“Do you really think there are no sins of intellect?”

“There are indeed, Dick. There is hide-bound prejudice, and intellectual dishonesty, and timidity, and stagnation.

But honest opinions fearlessly followed—they are not sins.”

“I know we used to talk that way. I did it too until the end of my life when I became what you call narrow. It all turns on what are honest opinions.”

“Mine certainly were. They were not only honest but heroic. I asserted them fearlessly. When the doctrine of the Resurrection ceased to commend itself to the critical faculties which God had given me, I openly rejected it. I preached my famous sermon. I defied the whole chapter. I took every risk.”

“What risk? What was at all likely to come of it except what actually came—popularity, sales for your books, invitations, and finally a bishopric?”

“Dick, this is unworthy of you. What are you suggesting?”

“Friend, I am not suggesting at all. You see, I know now. Let us be frank. Our opinions were not honestly come by. We simply found ourselves in contact with a certain current of ideas and plunged into it because it seemed modern and successful. At College, you know, we just started automatically writing the kind of essays that got good marks and saying the kind of things that won applause. When, in our whole lives, did we honestly face, in solitude, the one question on which all turned: whether after all the Supernatural might not in fact occur? When did we put up one moment’s real resistance to the loss of our faith?”

“If this is meant to be a sketch of the genesis of liberal theology in general, I reply that it is a mere libel. Do you suggest that men like...”

“I have nothing to do with any generality. Nor with any man but you and me. Oh, as you love your own soul, remember. You know that you and I were playing with loaded dice. We didn’t want the other to be true. We were afraid of crude salvationism, afraid of a breach with the spirit of the age, afraid of ridicule, afraid (above all) of real spiritual fears and hopes.”

“I’m far from denying that young men may make mistakes. They may well be influenced by current fashions of thought. But it’s not a question of how the opinions are formed. The point is that they were my honest opinions, sincerely expressed.”²⁰

The Great Divorce was but a dream with Lewis as its central character. On the front page is a quotation from George MacDonald which in part inspired the dream: “No, there is no escape. There is no heaven with a little of hell in it—no plan to retain this or that of the devil in our hearts or our pockets. Out Satan must go, every hair and

feather.” In his preface, Lewis writes what few these days dare consider, to their eternal peril.

I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on. Evil can be undone, but it cannot ‘develop’ into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, ‘with backward mutters of dissevering power’—or else not. It is still ‘either-or’. If we insist on keeping Hell (or even Earth) we shall not see Heaven: if we accept Heaven we shall not be able to retain even the smallest and most intimate souvenirs of Hell. I believe, to be sure, that any man who reaches Heaven will find that what he abandoned (even in plucking out his right eye) has not been lost: that the kernel of what he was really seeking even in his most depraved wishes will be there, beyond expectation, waiting for him in ‘the High Countries’. In that sense it will be true for those who have completed the journey (and for no others) to say that good is everything and Heaven everywhere. But we, at this end of the road, must not try to anticipate that retrospective vision. If we do, we are likely to embrace the false and disastrous converse and fancy that everything is good and everywhere is Heaven.

1. G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1908), 89.
2. Bradley J. Birzer, “10 C.S. Lewis Books Every Imaginative Conservative Should Read”, *The Imaginative Conservative*, April 19, 2021.
3. C.S. Lewis, “*The Abolition of Man*” (London: C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1944); *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics*, (London, C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 2002), 712-714.
4. A memory hole is any mechanism for the deliberate alteration or disappearance of inconvenient or embarrassing documents, photographs, transcripts or other records, such as from a website or other archive, particularly as part of an attempt to give the impression that something never happened. The concept was first popularized by George Orwell’s 1949 dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, where the Party’s Ministry of Truth systematically re-created all potentially embarrassing historical documents, in effect, re-writing all of history to match the often-changing state propaganda. These changes were complete and undetectable. Though nearly forty years past the novel’s title date, the memory hole is in heavy use these days by bureaucrats, media, and, according to author Glenn Ellmers, “Silicon Valley Technology oligarchs becoming sort of a private sector Ministry of Information and Propaganda.” Christopher F. Rufo, executive director at the Documentary

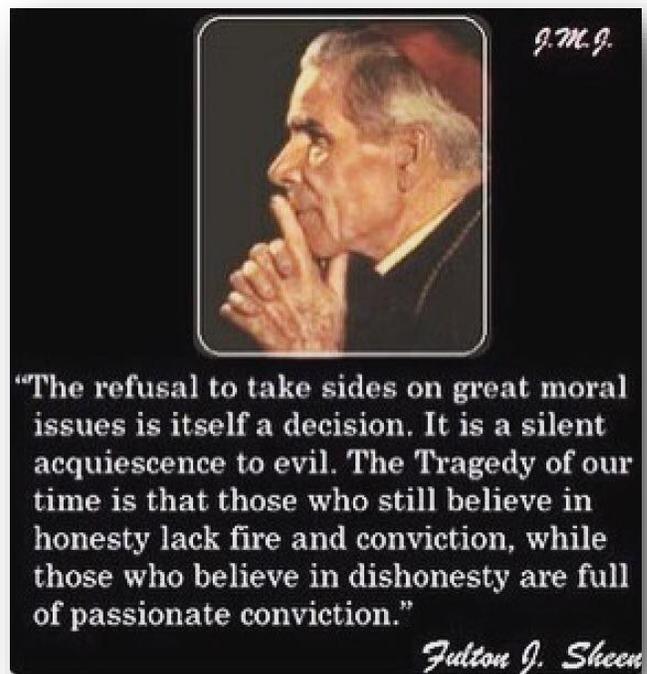
4. (cont.) Foundation, in a lecture delivered at Hillsdale College on March 30, 2021, stated, "In the name of equity, UCLA Law Professor and critical race theorist Cheryl Harris has proposed suspending private property rights, seizing land and wealth and redistributing them along racial lines. Critical race guru Ibram X. Kendi, who directs the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University, has proposed the creation of a federal Department of Antiracism. This department would be independent of (i.e., unaccountable to) the elected branches of government, and would have the power to nullify, veto, or abolish any law at any level of government and curtail the speech of political leaders and others who are deemed insufficiently 'antiracist.'"
5. Hans Urs Von Balthasar (1905-1988) was a Swiss priest widely regarded as one of the greatest theologians and spiritual writers of modern times. Named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II, he died shortly before being formally inducted into the College of Cardinals. He wrote over one hundred books, including *Prayer, Heart of the World, Mary for Today, Love Alone is Credible, Mysterium Paschale*, and his major multi-volume theological works: *The Glory of the Lord, Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*.
6. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "*In the Fullness of Faith on the Centrality of the Distinctively Catholic*" (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1988; Orig. German Title: *Katholisch*, Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Johannes Verlag, 1975), 111-113.
7. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "*In the Fullness of Faith*", 105-107.
8. G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 93-94. Orthodoxy, as Chesterton employs the term means "right opinion."
9. The phrase "Bigotry of low expectations" was originally coined by Michael Gerson, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush.
10. Joyce Kilmer, *Trees*.

*I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

11. Glenn Ellmers, Senior Fellow of the Claremont Institute, "*Conservatism is no Longer Enough*, The American Mind, March 24, 2021.
12. *Profession of faith*, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, p. 351.
13. Cafeteria Catholics know no station: rich, poor, educat-

ed, uneducated, laity, worst of all, ordained clergy, whose manifest duty and responsibility it is to faithfully hand on all that the Church teaches, believes and professes. For further explication, see "*Catholicism À La Carte*", Colloqui, Vol. II, No. 47 (April 13, 2018), No. 48 (April 20, 2018), No. 49 (April 27, 2018).

14. Peter Kreeft, "*Jacob's Ladder: Ten Steps to Truth*" (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2013), 152. *haíresis*, (derived from *hairéomai*, "personally select, choose") – properly, a personal (decisive) choice.
15. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "*In the Fullness of Faith*", 27-30.
16. Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD, "*Untangling Religion from Sentiment*", Catholic Answers Magazine, May-June 2021, 27-28.
17. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "*In the Fullness of Faith*", 31.
18. **Ontological:** *adjective*, relating to the branch of philosophy (Ontology) that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming, and reality.
19. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "*In the Fullness of Faith*", 45-49.
20. C.S. Lewis, "*The Great Divorce*" (London: C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., 1946) 34-37.



Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

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

BOOKS

Things Worth Dying For

Charles J. Chaput

Henry Holt and Company

2021, 258 pages.

Faith and Politics

Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Ignatius Press

2018, 269 pages.

Voyage to Alpha Centauri: A Novel

Michael D. O'Brien

Ignatius Press

2013, 587 pages.

The Everlasting Man

G.K. Chesterton

Dover Publications

2007, 270 pages.

Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of

Catholic Beliefs

Peter J. Kreeft

Ignatius Press

2014, 426 pages.

The Irony of Modern Catholic History:

How the Church rediscovered itself

George Weigel

Basic Books

2019, 322 pages.

Letters on Liturgy

Father Dwight Longenecker

Angelico Press

2020, 164 pages.

Immortal Combat

Father Dwight Longenecker

Sophia Institute Press

2020, 144 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

www.catholic.com

Catholic Herald

www.catholicherald.co.uk

Chronicles

www.chroniclesmagazine.org

Gilbert!

www.chesterton.org

The National Catholic Register

www.ncregister.com

Our Sunday Visitor

www.osvnews.com

ONLINE

Crisis Magazine

www.crisismagazine.com

The Imaginative Conservative

www.theimaginativeconservative.org

Catholic Exchange

www.catholicexchange.com

Intellectual Takeout

www.intellectuالتakeout.org

Life News

www.lifenews.com

Life Site News

www.lifesitenews.com

OnePeterFive

www.onepeterfive.com

Catholic Vote

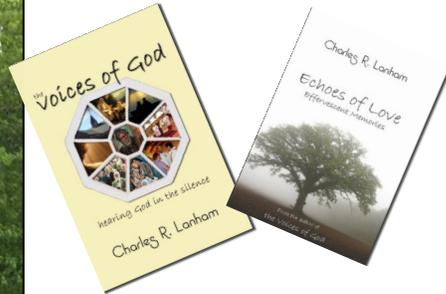
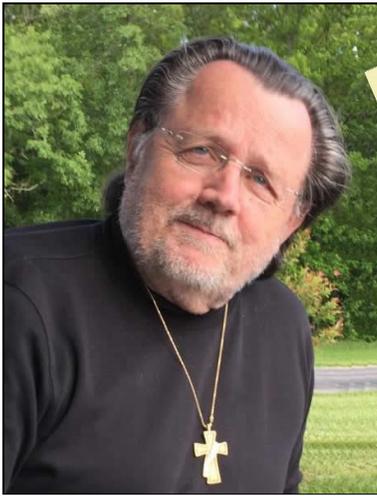
www.catholicvote.org

The Catholic Thing

www.thecatholicthing.org

PragerU

www.prageru.com



COMING SOON!
COLLOQUI
VOLUMES I, II, III, IV



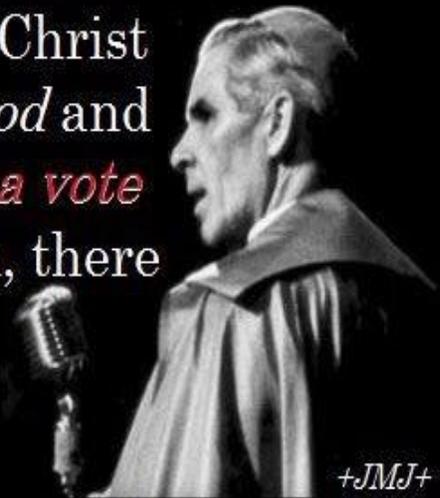
Books are available on
Amazon.com or from the
author's web site at:
deaconscorner.org

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 500 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

Deacon Chuck can be contacted thru email at
deacon.chuck@deaconscorner.org

“Once the world, like Pilate, gives Christ and Barabbas, *virtue* and vice, *good* and evil an equal hearing, and *allows a vote* to determine which will be chosen, there is no need to count the ballots.

*Goodness will invariably
be led to a Cross.”*



+JMJ+

+Venerable, Fulton J. Sheen, 1948

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.

Colloquī is published weekly by Deacon’s Corner Publishing. Each issue of **Colloquī** is available online: <https://deaconscorner.org>

Copyright © 2020 by **Deacon’s Corner Publishing**. All rights reserved. Produced in the U.S.A. <https://deaconscorner.org>.