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A journal for restless minds

Colloquī *: to discuss*

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A Barmecidal Reality Show

Reflections from a twisted mirror

This tale I have told before. It is, I tell myself, well worth repeating so I shall, in due course, repeat myself. After all, it is what is now demanded from an age now so fast receding. I no longer can recall (though in truth I never could) that seminal moment—now so long ago and far away in the waxing out of August or the waning into full September in the forty-sixth year of the twentieth century—of my first, and, I submit, momentous conception. That I was born is disreputably suspect by these arthritic hands that now compose conjured thoughts which surprise no one, no one at all; a Barmecide¹ feast to satisfy some ancient romantic fantasy, I suppose. That I entered the harsh artificial light of compulsory delivery, neonate hands clutching Augustine in the left and Aquinas in the right is apocrypha of the meanest heresy; it was a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary which occupied my newborn limbs, nothing less, nothing more. It was, after all, the perfect possession for the timely birth of a newly evicted mewling miscreant.

The person who carried this unhappy burden and so painfully expelled my reluctant, ungrateful self from the library of my dreams—and this cannot be emphasized enough—was not a *non-binary birthing person*. Sorry if that offends the mulish sterility propounded on some Barmecidal reality show. For truth, no apology will soon or late arrive for offending such delusory gibberish, such nonsense but reflections from a twisted mirror mirroring madness. No, it was, is, and always will be my *mother*; though my father's role was seminal, my mother's difficulty a pregnant pause prolonged, *together*, they loved me into life.

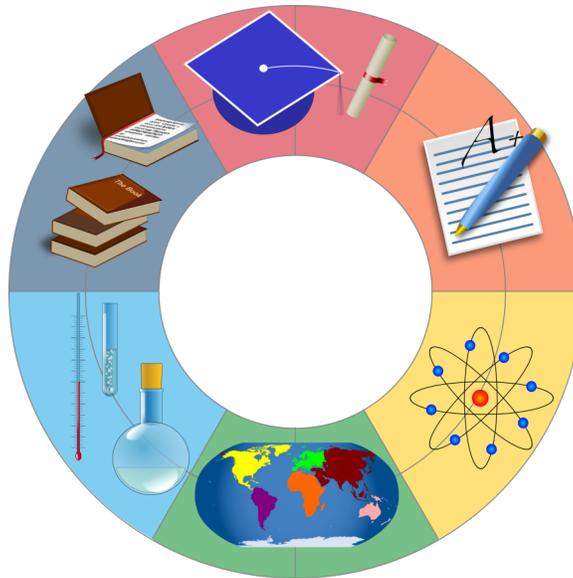
It is of my mother that I choose to repeat the tale so oft repeated, for mothers so often bear their burdens with

simple grace in stoic silence. I must grant credit where due credit rests. What small genius of the mind I may yet possess is from her no small talent and devotion to the knowing. She was the genius, I a poor reproduction. We shared a love for ink and pen, for discovering sunlight beyond the *Cloud of Unknowing*²—what linguists call *etymology*, my mother called *meaning*—for love of language, the pure joy of unwrapping a word like a chocolate truffle, to enjoy the sweet taste of it with profound delight. She was an every-day scholar, not a degreed intellectual; a seeker of truth, not a doer of great deeds (though eleven children by any measure an achievement of great fecundity); a mouse that roared with wit and truth unafraid to steal the cheddar from false traps set by those who would disregard so meek a voice. She was a teacher and a fine one, respected and honored by her students and her peers; she held no degrees, no fancy titles, no academic credentials, or certifications. She was a journalist of the “old” school, a truth

teller who on rare occasion would, as is human nature, narrowly miss the mark, though never with the slightest intent to deceive. More than these, woman and mother first, last, and everywhen in between. In a sacred word, she was a saint, uncanonized so far, but a saint just the same.

Yet, I digress, though it is but a brief aside to the retelling of the twice-told tale. Whenever I, or any of my siblings, were at a loss for word or words, my sainted

mother would teach us a well-taught lesson in independence and the value of self-instruction. “Go look it up,” her stock reply, “Go look it up.” She, of course, knew the answer to those childish questions, but to provide the answer would have been to encourage indolence and dependency on our part and she would have none of that. When we were too young to read of our own accord, mother would read for us, but there would be no discernible gap to separate her reading from our own. Each of us, whether boy or girl, received a well-rounded domestic education of hearth and home, which included, but not limited to regular, often daily instruction in cooking, canning, baking, sewing, laundry, ironing, sweeping and



mopping, dusting, bed making, you name it. "You never know when you may need to know those things," and she was, as we would come to realize, inevitably right.

If my mother was the principal, home economics, language arts, and general studies teacher, my father was the shop teacher, campus security police, life coach and employment counselor. Both taught religion, faith, morals, ethics, virtue, prayer, and what it meant to love unconditionally. My father's passionate love affair and complete devotion to the love of his life, my mother, was as real and true as humanly possible. If they ever argued it was in private, out of earshot of their children. He was her knight errant, quick with sword and mace to defend her virtue and her honor; there was no offense that drew the blade more rapid than ill-tempered ripostes against her majesty. Their love affair was a model for their children to follow and to emulate; it was a high bar, too high for weaker mortals, saint, or angel.

Where mother was erudite, my father (dad) was practical, a pragmatic genius with the mundane, the ordinary, everyday physics: electrical, plumbing, heating, wood-working, drywalling, flooring, painting; he could do it all and imparted into each of us his tradecraft, because that is what practical men did then, men who had graduated the school of "make do with do without" forged by the hardships borne of the Great Depression, men who had gone to war and seen things no man or woman should ever have to see. He never spoke of what he experienced or saw as a Corpsman attached to the Marines in the Pacific during the war, not ever; he took those nightmares to his grave. He taught us (all eleven of us) how to hunt, mostly rabbit or squirrel, later deer, quail, and wild turkey; how to handle a rifle or shotgun with respect, never to point it at anyone, either over your shoulder or down toward the ground, how to safely straddle a barb-wire fence, and above all, the patience of Job. We knew to take him seriously for he had lost his brother Charles (my namesake) at the age of 12 in a hunting accident. We learned how to clean and butcher what we killed, we never killed for pleasure, what we killed was food for the table. Dad taught us how to fish, though I have never known the peculiar pleasure he enjoyed sitting still for endless hours on the bank of pond or lake watching for that silly bobber to bobble—more times than not it never did. For dad it

mattered little, if at all. How he loved it, for it was his way of letting the world and all its troubles slide slowly by (of course, a beer or two were always there to soldier and to die a thirsty death in silent tribute to the cause.)

More than anything, I still recall, dad taught us the value and dignity of honest labor. No matter the job or task, whether big or small, important or trivial, he taught as he lived, that "if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well the *first* time." Work was seldom easy, rarely fun, but the lessons learned were ones that have lasted for a lifetime. I grew up working for most of my young life on a farm owned by an uncle, husband of my mother's closest sister, whose oldest child and son was less than a month older than I. Working on a farm meant sunup to sundown days, hard, often unpleasant work, everything from baling hay to clearing manure out of pig stalls, milking cows or tending newborn calves and piglets, painting barns to stretching barbed wire fencing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting wheat, oats, alfalfa, clover, corn, and soybeans. The "facts of life" were there for all to observe; just as some may claim "there are no atheists in foxholes," there is neither time nor room for prudery on a farm. If you were tall enough and had a foot big enough to step on the clutch, you were old enough to drive a tractor. Those of us who worked on farms had ten or more years of driving experience over city kids. That did not mean we were better drivers, merely overconfident, with an exuberance for taking risks, living large on the edge of tomorrow. By the time I graduated from high school I had worked on the farm, delivered newspapers, helped in the family garden (a quarter mile long and twenty plow shears wide,) held jobs in a grocery store, a diecasting factory, house construction, driven a grain truck, and played in a band. Not every task I undertook was a proud achievement. I also managed to wreck the family car more than once, blew the engine on the way to get my driver's license, and was well-and-truly caught speeding when I skipped school after forging my mother's signature.

On my part, I do not run the list to boast of any great or small achievement but to offer a reflective observation that perhaps, as a society, we have become complacent with too much, we have gone soft, believing there is a debt owed us merely because we exist. Too many have turned their backs on hard work and individual

achievement. Why work when the government will pay you not to work? A centuries-old proverb tells a tale of causality and how seemingly insignificant things can result in disastrous unintended consequences.

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
for want of a shoe the horse was lost,
for want of a horse the knight was lost,
for want of a knight the battle was lost,
for want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
So a kingdom was lost—all for want of a nail.*

I must admit to one—perhaps a few more than one—significant advantage(s) over those for whom the fortunes of youth which I experienced firsthand are now so disparaged or controverted. Few, including much of my younger siblings equally divided—there were five and five, separated from first to last by two decades and two—has ever been so cruelly compelled to live under so severe a poverty: no television, only radio; no cell or so-called smart phones, only one telephone tethered to a wall and a party line to boot (everyone on the line listened, no secrets, think big brother only nosy neighbors or a great-aunt down the road,) consider it no less a pre-postmodern social media platform; no computers, iPads, or other electronic toys, only books to read and imagination to entertain—it is truly amazing how entertained one can be without all the technocrap to elevate the dopamine to rope-a-dope the mind. Washing machines had a hand-cranked wringer (no high-speed spin-cycle) and dryers were clothes pinned on a clothesline outside the back door or a convenient window; dishwashers were four hands (two to wash, two to dry and put away; wars were fought over whose hands did what); no microwave; no air-conditioner, only open windows and screened-in porches with porch swings, and hand fans to breeze the sweat off your brow. My *earliest* memories of my grandparents home were of a woodfired potbelly cooking stove, hand-pumped water from the well outside (cruel, bitter cold in winter,) and a double-hole “unheated” outhouse with a Sears catalog down between the hen house and the apple trees. It was a glorious time to be alive, for we were free to believe all the good things of that today and imagine better days for then tomorrow.

Neither ignorant nor uneducated rubes, such lived experiences and daily instruction warranted that we were

perhaps far better educated in the things that mattered most than high school or college graduates today. In elementary and high school, we were taught—not indoctrinated—the fundamentals necessary for critical thinking: *how* to think not *what* to think. We learned grammar, language (English, Latin, and Spanish) and read and enjoyed great literature, mathematics (including geometry, algebra,) science (physics, chemistry, biology,) history, geography, and civics. That—it would eventually prove, still applicable today—more than enough to overstuff any pre- or post-pubescent cranial cavity. Each day the blessings of Almighty God we acknowledged with a prayer for our “one Nation under God,” and we pledged true faith and allegiance to the country we were *equally* blessed to call “Land of the Free, Home of the Brave.”

Social justice, political correctness, sex education, con-jured courses in gender, ethnic, or identity studies, revisionist history, anti-American isms (atheist ideologies of Communism, Marxism, Socialism, progressivism) were blessedly absent the curriculum, though everyone from the youngest to the oldest was as well-informed and cognizant of the evils each represented. We were taught to recognize evil and to avoid the near occasion, never to ignore or blind ourselves of its ever presence. Those and similar subjects were not included in any public or parochial classroom because the classroom was where students were sent to learn how to become faithful, patriotic, contributing adults, not how to hate their neighbor for the unalterable cosmetic tyranny imprinted upon them by the accident of birth.

If we misbehaved or disrespected any teacher, we were in double trouble—parents were contacted, justice was swift and certain, no appeal, no probation, no time off for good behavior—and we knew it. No parent *ever* sided with a juvenile delinquent; we were wrong, and we were too soon made aware of that irreducible, inarguable fact with a sore *end* to our miscreancy. Why this was so was a simple matter. Parents and teachers were adults with MAD (Mutually Agreed Disciplinary) authority and the duty and responsibility to exercise it whensoever necessary. Children were not in charge, they knew it, so they seldom dared step outside long-established, well-defined boundaries; they did so at their own peril.

Religion, morality, ethics, virtue, values, and social graces were the rightful domain of *parents, to be taught in the home*, lessons which were then required to be carried into the classroom and beyond. Every pubescent child was given “the talk” by parents which was all or more than what was necessary to scare the bejeezus out of even the most daring from any further investigation into the mysteries of baffling biologically burgeoning bodies. Taboo was *the* word, and it was a strong one few cared or dared to ignore, though there always were the foolish few who would dare provoke the curiosity cat. Those that did inevitably discovered that cat had sharp claws and the temperament to use them.

Though authentic, recorded history was taught—should rote memorization be considered teaching—I found it boring and a frustration. Memory, whether short or long, has never been a particular personal talent on loan from God³; a passing grade in history—then, though I cannot say whether it remains the same today—demanded unerring accuracy recalling names, dates, and places, facts that wasted no time at all traveling in one ear and out the other. How strange it now seems that the very subject I found so tedious in my youth would later prove so great a fascination; twelve years after high school I received a degree in, of all things, history. The bobber had bobbed, and I was well-and-truly hooked. What changed? Age, maturity, and experience proved important contributions, but history, I discovered, no longer demanded rote recitation of obscure names, dates, and places regimented in their proper order. History, as I came to know and enjoy, enjoined a deeper dive into the causes, conduct, and consequences of historical events and the significant actors who played their part upon history’s recorded stages. As one of my college professors said of history and those who would learn from it, “no earnest historian would dare rely on their frail and fallible memory. Never trust the facts to your memory; honest historians will tell you, ‘Go look it up.’” And that brought back a memory!

It was the narrative, the story, the lived experiences that were so enormously important, not so much the who, the when, or the where, though order was always a good thing to pay close attention. It is the lessons learned from history that are especially important and yet, still today,

rarely taught.⁴ There is an Orwellian twist, a mind destroying ideology prevalent of current pedagogy, cogently described by Betsy McCaughey.

It’s hard to know what’s worse—brainwashing kids or lying about it. Parents worried that their kids are being indoctrinated with critical race theory can’t get straight answers. Local school boards and principals lie to them, claiming children are merely being taught to be “critical thinkers.”

On June 12, the truth came out. Teachers unions and activists held rallies in 22 cities to support critical race theory. What they said was eye-popping. They unabashedly declared that their goal is indoctrinating students in far-left causes.

The Zinn Education Project, which organized the June 12 events, produces race-centric material for junior high and high schools across the country. Lesson plans are offered free for teachers to download. Parents wondering where the critical race theory their children are getting comes from can go to the website. They’ll be shocked.

Zinn was founded by the late Howard Zinn, a Marxist historian who said that teaching social studies wasn’t about dates and events. It was to make students want to change the world, overthrowing the status quo.

A Zinn lesson called “Students Design a Reparations Bill” explains that students will be asked to improve on the “flimsy” reparations bills currently in Congress. Critical thinking isn’t encouraged. This isn’t a debate about whether there should be reparations. This is one-sided indoctrination. “As racial justice activists, students are all on the ‘same side,’ in this role play,” says the Zinn website.⁵

On the same page, Timothy Barton, president of Wall Builders, a national organization dedicated to highlighting the true facts about the founding of America, our Constitution, and our rich history, commented on the falsehoods now being peddled by the proponents of Critical Race Theory⁶ and the 1619 Project. “Proponents of critical race theory are peddling the falsehood that America’s history is rife with inherent racism, all the way back to the first settlers’ arrival on our shores. This movement has gained so much steam that even a sitting U.S. senator, Sen. Tim Kaine (D. Va.), claimed that the ‘United States didn’t inherit slavery from anybody. We created it.’ This statement isn’t only erroneous, but also shows how mainstream the lies about our nation’s history have become.”⁷

It is worth remembering Santayana. “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” These days, those who will not learn from the past, condemn it, then condemn you for the past they so adamantly misremember. Which then begs the question, “When or will we ever learn?” There is a tragic melancholy that overwhelms the soul should history be so vacuously sloughed. Chris Flannery, one of the founders of the *Claremont Institute* and currently a Senior Fellow and contributing editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*, like Erato’s muse, did not so long ago, disabuse such misremembering: “The mystic chords of memory stretch not only from battlefields and patriot graves, but from back roads, school yards, and bar stools, city halls, blues joints, summer afternoons, old neighborhoods, ball parks, and deserted beaches—to everywhere you find Americans being and becoming American.”

Historically in America, prior to the latter half of the twentieth century, for those who will remember, the news was *just* the news⁸; opinion⁹ based on presupposition, predilection, personal bias, or ideological suasion was anathema to the American ear. Editors edited for accuracy and truth; “Just the facts, ma’am.” Within the growing Soviet hegemony, however, State-controlled “news” media such as *Pravda*¹⁰ and *TASS*¹¹ were derisible propaganda, fodder for ridicule, tabloid screeds to be tossed in the circular file along with gossip items and outer space aliens on the cover of the *National Enquirer*. Comrades of the State, kept their silence out of fear of being “cancelled” to a Gulag or as more often, disappeared. Perhaps it was Alexander Solzhenitsyn who not only was witness to the horrors of history but dared survive to record it. Of *The Gulag Archipelago 1918 – 1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, Solzhenitsyn wrote: “For years I have with reluctant heart withheld from publication this already completed book: my obligation to those still living outweighed my obligation to the dead. But now that State Security has seized the book anyway, I have no alternative but to publish it immediately.” In its preface, Solzhenitsyn wrote “In 1949 some friends and I came upon a noteworthy news item in *Nature*, a magazine of the Academy of Sciences.”

It reported in tiny type that in the course of excavations on the Kolyma River a subterranean ice lens had been discovered which was actually a frozen stream—and in

it were found frozen specimens of prehistoric fauna some tens of thousands of years old. Whether fish or salamander, these were preserved so fresh a state, the scientific correspondent reported, that those present immediately broke open the ice encasing the specimens and devoured them *with relish* on the spot.

The magazine no doubt astonished its small audience with the news of how successfully the flesh of fish could be kept fresh in a frozen state. But few, indeed, among its readers were able to decipher the genuine and heroic meaning of this incautious report.

As for us, however—we understood instantly. We could picture the entire scene right down to the smallest details: how those present broke up the ice in frenzied haste; how, flouting the higher claims of ichthyology and elbowing each other to be first, they tore off chunks of the prehistoric flesh and hauled them over to the bonfire to thaw them out and bolt them down.

We understood because we ourselves were the same kind of people as *those present* at that event. We, too, were from that powerful tribe of *zeks*, unique on the face of the earth, the only people who could devour prehistoric salamander *with relish*.

And the Kolyma was the greatest and most famous island, the pole of ferocity of that amazing country of *Gulag* which, though scattered in an Archipelago geographically, was, in the psychological sense, fused into a continent—an almost invisible, almost imperceptible country inhabited by the zek people.

And this Archipelago crisscrossed and patterned that other country within which it was located, like a gigantic patchwork, cutting into its cities, hovering over its streets. Yet there were many who did not even guess at its presence and many, many others who had heard something vague. And only those who had been there knew the whole truth.

But, as though stricken dumb on the islands of the Archipelago, they kept their silence.

By an unexpected turn of our history, a bit of the truth, an insignificant part of the whole, was allowed out in the open. But those same hands which once screwed tight our handcuffs now hold out their palms in reconciliation: “No, don’t! Don’t dig up the past! Dwell on the past and you’ll lose an eye.”

But the proverb goes on to say: “Forget the past and you’ll lose both eyes.”

Decades go by, and the scars and sores of the past are healing over for good. In the course of this period some of the islands of the Archipelago have shuddered and dissolved and the polar sea of oblivion rolls over them.

And someday in the future, this Archipelago, its air, and the bones of its inhabitants, frozen in a lens of ice, will be discovered by our descendants like some improbable salamander.

I would not be so bold as to try to write the history of the Archipelago. I have never had the chance to read the documents. And, in fact, will anyone ever have the chance to read them? Those who do not wish to recall have already had enough time—and will have more—to destroy all the documents, down to the very last one.

I have absorbed into myself my own eleven years there not as something shameful nor as a nightmare to be cursed: I have come almost to love that monstrous world, and now, by a happy turn of events, I have also been entrusted with many recent reports and letters. So perhaps I shall be able to give some account of the bones and flesh of that salamander—which, incidentally, is still alive.¹²

In the opening chapter, *Arrest*, Solzhenitsyn points out how sometimes “arrests even seem to be a game—there is so much superfluous imagination, so much well-fed energy, invested in them.”

After all, the victim would not resist anyway. Is it that the Security agents want to justify their employment and their numbers? After all, it would seem enough to send notices to all the rabbits marked for arrest, and they would show up obediently at the designated hour and minute at the iron gates of State Security with a bundle in their hands—ready to occupy a piece of floor in the cell for which they were intended. And, in fact, that’s the way collective farmers are arrested. Who wants to go all the way to a hut at night, with no roads to travel on? They are summoned to the village soviet—and arrested there. Manual workers are called into the office.”

Of course, every machine has a point at which it is overloaded, beyond which it cannot function. In the strained and overloaded years of 1945 and 1946, when trainload after trainload poured in from Europe, to be swallowed up immediately and sent off to *Gulag*, all that excessive theatricality went out the window, and the whole theory suffered greatly. All the fuss and feathers of ritual went flying in every direction, and the arrest of tens of thousands took on the appearance of a squalid roll call: they stood there with lists, read off the names of those on one train, loaded them onto another, and that was the whole arrest.

For several decades political arrests were distinguished in our country precisely by the fact that people were arrested who were guilty of nothing and were therefore

unprepared to put up any resistance whatsoever. There was a general feeling of being destined for destruction, a sense of having nowhere to escape from the GPU-NKVD (which, incidentally, given our internal passport system, was quite accurate). And even in the fever of epidemic arrests, when people leaving for work said farewell to their families every day, because they could not be certain they would return at night, even then almost no one tried to run away and only in rare cases did people commit suicide. And that was exactly what was required. A submissive sheep is a find for a wolf.¹³

In America, during the 40s and 50s, radical political ideologies were ill-considered, a nasty habit like chewing tobacco or drug addiction, best avoided in polite company; politics was personal, generally unsavory, and discouraged in congenial conversation. Radical ideologies were held beneath contempt by God-fearing, blue- and white-collar middle-class working Americans, especially those who had experienced first-hand or read of those like Frankl and Solzhenitsyn, survivors of the grotesque depravities and genocides committed by socialist madmen (Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao top the list) in the Nazi concentration camps and Soviet gulags. Postwar was Cold War, the threat of nuclear Armageddon felt as real as had the genocidal holocausts, products of man’s inhumanity toward man, evil so abhorrent, revealed at the conclusion of the most recent global conflict. The world was on edge, timorously at peace, yet everyone was aware of the specter of mass extinction, the existential¹⁴ threat of nuclear annihilation.

Post World War II, Marxism, Communism, and Socialism came under heavy well-deserved scrutiny—as attested by hearings of the House Unamerican Activities Commission. Predictably, such unpopular, thoroughly discredited ideologies went to ground. Supported by a relatively small cadre of radicalized, over-educated, Marxist academics, such anarchists began the slow march that would eventually, over decades, shift the solemn educational promise of the academy away from American ideals of liberty—the freedom to exchange ideas, to discover new ones and find fault in old ones through open and honest civil discourse—by reforming and transforming the post-modern university into progressive mind-numbing Socialist/Marxist re-education camps.

Yet, at the same time, for most Americans, it seemed as though nothing was changing or had changed. Until the turn of the most-recent century and the advent of the technocratic State, no topic was forbidden, free speech was a constitutional right, not subject to censorship or cancellation by the Orwellian thought police or ministry of truth; there were more important topics to discuss and daily life with which to contend. Few Americans cared to bother or pay attention to such esoteric foofaraw. Such inattention has ultimately proved a monumental miscalculation. Americans in the main knew and never forgot what Ronald Reagan so eloquently expressed: “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it on to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.”

Neither did the enemy. Few now remember the speech from September 29, 1959, delivered by then General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev to the UN. Most remember, if anything at all, only the television coverage of him banging his shoe on the podium.

Your children’s children will live under communism, You Americans are so gullible. No, you won’t accept communism outright; but we will keep feeding you small doses of socialism until you will finally wake up and find you already have Communism. We will not have to fight you; We will so weaken your economy, until you will fall like overripe fruit into our hands. The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

There is a well-known recipe, handed down for generations, which guarantees, *guarantees* the death of any nation, and it goes by the name of Socialism. Socialism came from Marxism and always leads to Communism; ultimately it will fall like a house of cards as history has consistently proved, though those who still defend it insist: “This time it *will* work.” According to the Socialist cookbook, the recipe calls for eight ingredients.

1. **Healthcare** – Control healthcare and you control the people.
2. **Poverty** – Increase the poverty level as high as possible, poor people are easier to control and will not fight back

if you are providing everything for them.

3. **Debt** – Increase the debt to an unsustainable level. That way you are able to increase taxes, and this will produce more poverty.
4. **Gun Control** – Remove the ability to defend themselves from the Government. That way you are able to create a police state.
5. **Welfare** – Take control of every aspect (food, housing, income) of their lives because that will make them full dependent on the government.
6. **Education** – Take control of what people read and listen to and take control of what children learn in school.
7. **Religion** – Remove the belief in God from the Government and schools because the people need to believe in ONLY the government knowing what is best for the people.
8. **Class Warfare** – Divide the people into the wealthy and the poor. Eliminate the middle class. This will cause more discontent and it will be easier to tax the wealthy with the support of the poor.

It would appear, by all the ingredients at hand, that America’s goose may be well-and-truly cooked, or at the very least, prepared for the oven to be roasted until completely overdone. Of the items listed on the menu, the last is perhaps now of the gravest concern. Though the division between the haves and have nots is nothing new, the current divisiveness goes well beyond any such bifurcated mathematics. Far-left Socialist Progressives have changed the calculus, promoting division among race, ethnicity, gender, identity, politics, and religion; the menu changes with each passing moment or change in climate. Such radical change to the calculus adds accelerant to the flames of division and credence to Khrushchev’s warning.

“A nation divided against itself cannot stand,” proclaimed Sam Houston during the Senate debate on the Compromise of 1850, and eight years later by Abraham Lincoln in 1858 upon his nomination to the U.S. Senate. Lincoln, as history records, went further, saying, “I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate

extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become lawful in all the States, old as well as new — North as well as South.”

In the Spring issue of *Modern Age*, Ofir Haivry writes, “But there was another notion of collective identity that came to exert a far more potent influence than either of these [divine right monarchist theory or ill-defined biological identity, such as race], and which even eclipsed at times the tradition of biblical-based national identity. This new notion argued for replacing the nation with the state.”

In the biblical account of the origin of national identity, there is no role for the state as such. Descent, language, religion, and even laws all exist before the state, and indeed they seem to be a prerequisite for the creation of a national state. This goes against what has become in the past few generations a generally accepted truism that states are the origin of laws and the agency by which national language and other cultural characteristics are created. According to this recent account, nations actually arose only after the rise of the modern state, around the time of the French Revolution, and are essentially a product of the state. In truth, however, this view is simply a construct of consent theories, which emerged in the early seventeenth century and have since come to be unquestionably imbibed by most university graduates. Against the individual-consent theories concentrating on the state, the account of the nation in biblical tradition, and in the English tradition stemming from it, regards national identities, including national laws, as preceding the state and remaining to some degree independent of it. In this idea of the nation, the state comes after the nation and is subservient to it.”¹⁵

There is much more to be said, but time does not allow a fuller accounting. I will leave that for another day. I will, instead, leave you with this final thought. It is not my own but well worth considering.

To call something “politically correct” is to acknowledge that it is not correct, at least by the standard of reality. A man in a dress is a man, but according to political correctness he is a “trans-woman,” a term with the same ironic structure. To call someone a “trans-woman” is to acknowledge that he is not really a woman.

Moreover, few people who support “political correctness” invoke the phrase in earnest. More often they do

so with tongue in cheek, as if to acknowledge their own overreach. But though self-aware progressives may not always use the term with sincerity, they always seem to enforce the standards with severity.

The more conservatives attempt to fight political correctness, the worse the problem seems to get. The situation recalls Chesterton’s distinction between progressives, whose business “is to go on making mistakes,” and conservatives, who exist “to prevent mistakes from being corrected.”¹⁶

Having finished with a quote from G.K.C., I shall simply leave it at that.

1. **Barmecide:** *adj*, illusory or imaginary and therefore disappointing; *noun*, a person who offers benefits that are illusory or disappointing. Early 18th century (as a noun): from Arabic Barmakī, the name of a prince in the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments, who gave a beggar a feast consisting of ornate but empty dishes.
2. Anonymous, “*The Cloud of Unknowing*”, a work of Christian mysticism written in Middle English in the latter half of the 14th century. The underlying message suggests that the way to know God is to abandon consideration of God’s particular activities and attributes and be courageous enough to surrender one’s mind and ego to the realm of “unknowing”, at which point one may begin to glimpse the nature of God. It draws on the mystical tradition of *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* and Christian *Neoplatonism*, which focuses on the *via negativa* road to discovering God as a pure entity, beyond any capacity of mental conception and so without any definitive image or form. The author is unknown, though the English Augustinian mystic Walter Hilton has at times been suggested, but this is generally doubted. It is possible he was a Carthusian priest, though this is not certain.
3. A phrase often used by the great radio host Rush Limbaugh who would tell his listeners, “That’s the point of saying it’s on loan. ‘Cause we’re all going home someday. And talent vanishes when that happens. So it’s just another way of thanking God for whatever abilities I have from wherever they came. Nothing more than that.”
4. Another facet of significance in my education, and here I am speaking of my college experience, took place during my final, some might call it, senior year, then fully twelve years out of high school. I was on my ninth year of a nine-year enlistment in the Army, stationed at Fort Bragg, NC, determined to finish my on-again, off-again, seemingly never-ending post-graduate studies. Fayetteville State University, a satellite of the University of North Carolina and one of the oldest historic black

4. (continued) universities in the country was nearby, offered an exceptional program in history and political science and I jumped at the opportunity. The Army was even willing to release me from my military duties to attend full-time on campus, so the rest is...ahem... history. The professors were top-notch, from every corner of the globe: Serbia, China, India, you name it. It still amazes me today that no one ever demanded that I check my white privilege before entering a classroom; I was, at the time, outside of the professors, among fewer than a dozen "persons of no color" among a sea of color on campus; I never felt threatened, oppressed or victimized, neither, as far as I knew, was I ever considered an oppressor, just another student on campus trying to get the best education I could. And I did, in more ways than one.
5. Betsy McCaughey Ph.D., *"The Leftists Writing Your Child's Social Studies Lessons"*, The Epoch Times, June 23-29, 2021, A15. Betsy McCaughey., Ph.D., is a political commentator, constitutional expert, syndicated columnist, and author of several books, including *"The Obama Health Law: What it Says and How to Over It,"* and *"The Next Pandemic."* She is also a former lieutenant governor of New York.
6. Critical Race Theory is grounded in "Critical Theory", a product of the Franklin School. It views race as a socially constructed identity which serves to oppress non-white people. Recently, due to growing criticism by concerned parents of children in K-12 schools, the left has proclaimed it is no longer pressing forward with CRT programs, in fact, it never was, CRT was simply a talking point for the right and white supremacists. Such rhetoric is a shell game, only the name has been changed. Critical Race Theory is now to be referred to as Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (Trans SEC); the curriculum remains the same.
7. Timothy Barton, "The Untold History of Juneteenth", The Epoch Times, June 23-29, 2021, A15.
8. The legendary CBS news anchorman, Walter Cronkite, signed off each evening, "And that's the way it is, ..." after reporting the news straight up, never offering his opinion or skewering the facts.
9. There is an aphorism that perfectly expresses the attitude of the average American in the 50s and early 60s: "Opinions are like anuses. Everyone has one and most of them stink," though a cruder word most often replaced 'anuses'.
10. **Pravda** (Russian: Правда) trans: "truth", is a Russian broadsheet newspaper, formerly the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, when it was one of the most influential papers in the country. It emerged as a leading newspaper of the Soviet Union after the October Revolution, and was an organ of the Central Committee of the CPSU between 1912 and 1991.
11. **TASS** (Russian: Информационное агентство России ТАСС) Russian News Agency TASS (TACC) was founded in 1904. In Soviet times, it was named the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (Russian: Телеграфное агентство Советского Союза, *Telegrafnoye agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuzo*), in July 1925 by a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet it was established as the central agency for news collection and distribution for all Soviet newspapers, radio and television stations.
12. Alexander L. Solzhenitsyn, *"The Gulag Archipelago 1918 – 1956 : An Experiment in Literary Investigation I-II"*, Translated from the Russian by Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1973). Solzhenitsyn in the dedication wrote: "I dedicate this to all those who did not live to tell it. And may they please forgive me for not having seen it all nor remembered it all, for not having divined all of it."
13. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
14. **Existential**, adj.: relating to existence, concerned with existence, especially human existence. The threat of nuclear war was and remains an existential threat to humanity, to our existence. Claiming climate change and other fictions are existential threats are an abuse of the word.
15. Ofir Haivry, *"What Is Anglo-American Nationalism?"* Modern Age: A Conservative Review, Spring 2021, published by The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 16-17.
16. Michael Knowles, *"Speechless: Controlling Words, Controlling Minds"* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2021) xv-xvi, cf. G.K. Chesterton, *Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton: The Illustrated London News, 1923-1925* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1990), 33.

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

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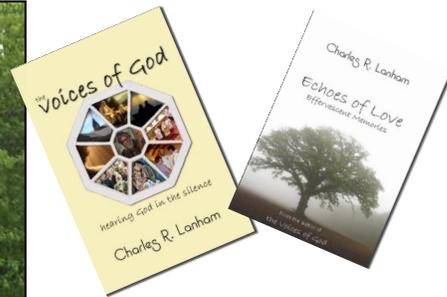
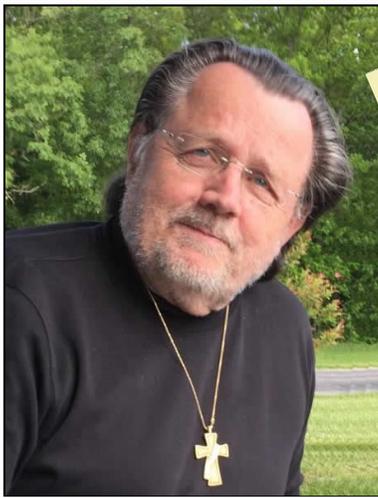
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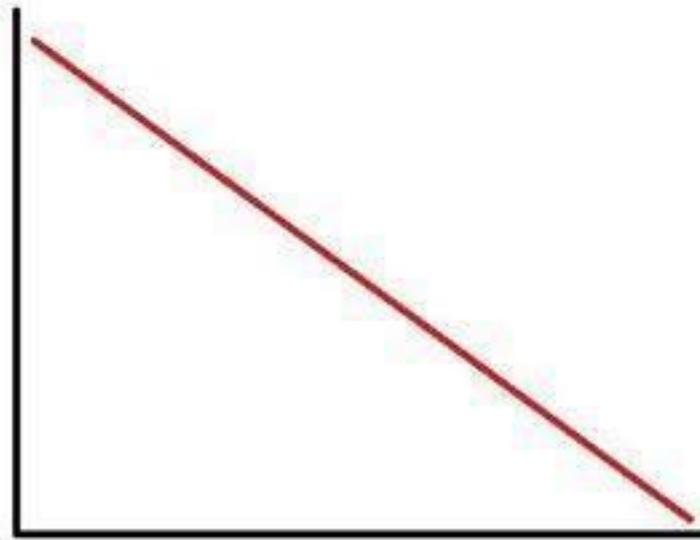
Books are available on
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author's web site at:
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Deacon Chuck Lanham is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master 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.

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Knowledge of History

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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