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A journal for restless minds

# Colloquī *: to discuss*

## Questioning The Perfect

*The Deposit of incorruptible, irreformable Faith*

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## Deacon's Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

# Questioning The Perfect

## *The Deposit of incorruptible, irreformable Faith*

**F**AITH, according to Paul, “is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear” (Heb 11:1, 3). Christ Jesus demanded much more from us: a “faith as small as a mustard seed” (Lk 17:6), and yet, a perfect faith, “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Christ, the Son of God, commissioned the eleven and commanded them to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:15-16). What Christ taught was nonnegotiable, incorruptible, irreformable, an unchangeable faith to be transmitted down through the ages until he comes again.

Again, Paul emphasized in his second letter to Timothy the necessity to “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed,” then strictly charged him and all those who have faith in Christ Jesus:

preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths (2 Tm 4:2-4).

Christ asks us whether “when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth (Lk 18:8)? Faith is both demanding and difficult, especially for imperfect, fallible creatures such as man. God creates us perfect—for how could He, the Father, the Perfect, in his perfection do otherwise? But each is created with free will, and being human, we freely

and greedily exercise our free will, contrary to his perfect judgment, in accord with our imperfect, peccable nature. Imprudently, we insist we know “a more perfect way” to conduct our lives; we, like our first parents, imagine that with but a taste of forbidden fruit we can be as gods. We choose to forget, ignore or disbelieve the promise of eternal life. Our fallible imperfect nature professes daily to deny the ineffable spirit, the transcendent soul, the Perfect, those “things not seen.”

God imbued within every soul the capacity to reason, to know moral truth. And yet, such regard for reason “has occasionally collapsed into hyper-rationalism, such as the type which Thomas More and John Fisher thought characterized much scholastic theology in the twenty years preceding the Reformation.”



*Solis affectibus* “By Feelings Alone” captures much of the present atmosphere within the Church throughout the West. It impacts how some Catholics view not only the world but faith itself. At the core of this widespread sentimentalism is an exaltation of strongly-felt feelings, a deprecation of reason, and the subsequent infantilization of Christian faith.

So what are symptoms of *Solis affectibus*? One is the widespread use of language in everyday preaching and teaching that’s more characteristic of therapy than words used by Christ and his Apostles. Words like “sin” thus fade and are replaced by “pains,” “regrets” or “sad mistakes.”

Sentimentalism likewise rears its head whenever those who offer reasoned defenses of Catholic sexual or medical ethics are told that their positions are “hurtful” or “judgmental.” Truth, it seems, shouldn’t be articulated, even gently, if it might hurt someone’s feelings. If that was true, Jesus should have refrained from telling the Samaritan woman the facts about her marital history.

*Solis affectibus* also blinds us to the truth that there is—as affirmed by Christ Himself—a place called Hell for those who die unrepentant. Sentimentalism simply avoids the subject. Hell isn’t a topic to be taken lightly, but ask yourself this question: When was the last time you heard the possibility that any of us could end up

eternally separated from God mentioned at Mass?

Above all, sentimentalism reveals itself in certain presentations of Jesus Christ. The Christ whose hard teachings shocked his own followers and who refused any concession to sin whenever he spoke of love somehow collapses into a pleasant liberal rabbi. This harmless Jesus never dares us to transform our lives by embracing the completeness of truth. Instead he recycles bromides like “everyone has their own truth,” “do whatever feels best,” “be true to yourself,” “embrace your story,” “who am I to judge,” etc. And never fear: this Jesus guarantees heaven, or whatever, for everyone.

In his book *To Look on Christ*, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) paints a realistic portrait of the Christ, true God and true man, not at all as the saccharine milquetoast so often characterized and sentimentalized in the minds and hearts of post-modern Christians.

A Jesus who agrees with everything and everyone, a Jesus without his holy wrath, without the harshness of truth and true love is not the real Jesus as the Scripture shows but a miserable caricature. A conception of “gospel” in which the seriousness of God’s wrath is absent has nothing to do with the biblical Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

It has become quite apparent that the *Ecclesia militans*, the Pilgrim Church on earth, has been seriously infected with *Solis affectibus*, drastically diminishing the *gravity* and *clarity* of the unyielding faith demanded of all men by God, specifically as it applies to the salvation of our immortal souls. The triune God is merciful and just though absolutely clear in what he commands of those in whom he breathed the gift of life; it is then only with the firmness of faith, unwavering hope, and obedience to the will of God that we can hope to obtain eternal life.

There are three primary causes for the pilgrim Church sinking now into the infested swamp of *Solis affectibus*:

First the Western world is drowning in sentimentalism. Like everyone else, Catholics are susceptible to the culture in which we live. If you want proof of Western *Solis affectibus*, just turn on your web-browser. You’ll soon notice the sheer emotivism pervading popular culture, media, politics, and universities. In this world, morality is about your commitment to particular causes. What matters is how “passionate” you are about your commitment, and the cause’s degree of political correctness—not whether the cause itself is reasonable

to support.

Perhaps one could determine such “passionate” but quite irrational causality from no more worthy an adversary than Joseph Ratzinger, who argues that we have come convinced “we do not have to be redeemed by Christianity but, rather, from Christianity; there is an insistent feeling that, in truth, Christianity hinders our freedom and that the land of freedom can appear only when the Christian terms and conditions have been torn up.”<sup>2</sup> It is enough that we are “passionate” for something, that we stand among the politically correct no matter the reasonableness of the cause, that we feel passionately committed, sufficiently opposed to any truth, any faith, any religion which hinders us from obtaining the fullness of freedom due to unreasonably harsh doctrinal restrictions.

Second, let’s consider how faith is understood by many Catholics today. For many, it appears to be a “feeling faith.” By that, I mean that Christian faith’s significance is judged primarily in terms of feeling what it does for *me*, *my* well-being, and *my* concerns. But guess what? Me, myself, and I aren’t the focus of Catholic faith.

Catholicism is, after all, a historical faith. It involves us deciding that we trust those who witnessed to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who transmitted what they saw via written texts and unwritten traditions, and who, we’ve concluded, told the truth about what they saw. Catholicism doesn’t view these as “stories.” To be a Catholic is to affirm that they really happened and that Christ instituted a Church whose responsibility is to preach this to the ends of the earth.

Catholic faith can’t therefore be about me and my feelings. It’s about capital-T Truth. Human fulfilment and salvation consequently involves freely and constantly choosing to conform myself to that Truth. It’s not about subordinating the Truth to my emotions. In fact, if Catholicism isn’t about the Truth, what’s the point?

Historically, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” A question desperately in search of an answer; rarely asked, seldom if ever answered. At issue, though admittedly not the only issue but nonetheless critical, is that history, of any kind and of any age, is looked upon with skeptical disdain, ridicule and doubt, thoughtlessly considered biased, racist, misogynistic, mis-, dis-information, etc., meant to twist minds and torture souls. Thus, it is understandable, though deplorable, that so many view Christianity, Christ, and the Church he instituted as fable, story, and myth. Ignorance is bliss, except when it belies the truth.

Third, sentimentalism's pervasiveness in the Church owes something to efforts to downgrade and distort natural law since Vatican II. Natural law reflection was in mixed shape throughout the Catholic world in the decades leading up to the 1960s. But it suffered an eclipse in much of the Church afterwards. That's partly because natural law was integral to *Humanae Vitae's* teaching. Many theologians subsequently decided that anything underpinning *Humanae Vitae* had to be emptied of substantive content.

While natural law reasoning recovered in parts of the Church from the 1980s onwards, we've paid a price for natural law's marginalization. And the price is this: once you relegate reason to the periphery of religious faith, you start imagining that faith is somehow independent of reason; or that faith is somehow inherently hostile to reason; or that your religious convictions don't require explanation to others. The end-result is decreasing concern for the reasonableness of faith. That's a sure way to end up in the swamp of sentimentalism.<sup>3</sup>

What is it then concerning Natural Law which merits such irrational antipathy, so severe an animus toward reason, both human and divine? What is of greatest concern—for what has become all too common to the modern/post-modern mind—is the appalling lack of understanding of Natural Law: few can or care to explain what *is* Natural Law, fewer know of it, those who do find wry humor in its mention.

The Angelic Doctor, Thomas Aquinas, tells us that “law, being a rule or measure, can be in a person in two ways: in one way as in him that rules and measures; in another way, as in that which is ruled and measured, in so far as it partakes of the rule or measure.”

Therefore, since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Therefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, by which it has a natural inclination to its due act and end; and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law.

...the light of natural reason, by which we discern what

is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light. It is therefore evident that the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law.<sup>4</sup>

What Aquinas tells us then is that natural law, become known to us by reason, is obtained through man's participation in immutable eternal law. God commands, we obey. Nevertheless, throughout history, man has consistently agreed to disagree, taking matters into his own mutable hands, and in doing so, making unnatural what is natural, turning reason into unreason, gods of idols and idols of men. Predicated on the acceptance of natural law, then, is not the least subtle acknowledgment of and submission to the Divine will. This, quite unnaturally, without reason, demands divine disassociation, elevating man above and beyond all reason, for without eternal law there can be no natural law, without natural law there can be only mutable law made by man.

Divine providence guided the American founders during the 18th and early 19th centuries, forging one nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all, forming a more, though not by any means, perfect union founded soundly on Judeo-Christian faith and virtue, a government by, for, and of the people. Religion, and an abiding faith in a higher Power, was to the Framers, unquestionably essential. John Adams was blunt when he wrote: “We have no government armed with powers capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net.” Or,

As George Washington said in his farewell address, “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.” Or as the more skeptical Jefferson asked equally clearly, “Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis? A conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God? That they are not violated but with His wrath?”<sup>5</sup>

In the latter decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, gale force winds blew heavy throughout Europe and throughout Western civilization. By the turn of the 19th century, formidable ideological

forces, Marxism, Socialism, Modernism, Materialism, and Progressivism were threatening to tear apart heretofore Western Judeo-Christian civilization and to impose another, more progressive view.

One of the leading Progressives in America, Frank Goodnow, wrote of the Founders motives and dependence on divine providence, though his motives reeked with insincerity and condescension. You can viscerally feel the sneer.

The end of the eighteenth century was marked by the formulation and general acceptance by thinking men in Europe of a political philosophy which laid great emphasis on individual rights. Man was by this philosophy conceived of as endowed at the time of his birth with certain inalienable rights. Thus, Rousseau in his 'Social Contract' treated man as primarily an individual and only secondarily as a member of human society. Society itself was regarded as based upon a contract made between the individuals by whose union it was formed. At the time of making this contract these individuals were deemed to have reserved certain rights spoken as 'natural' rights. These rights could neither be taken away nor be limited without the consent of the individual affected.

Goodnow's disdain and utter contempt for the founding documents and the principles of self-government, consent of the governed, separation of powers, checks and balances, and limited government subservient to the will of the people quickly became evident as he proclaimed the tide and times had changed and a new, progressive era had begun. Any civilized society no longer need concern itself with Nature's God, nor with superstitious religious nonsense, or as Lennon imagined, with "no religion too."

In a word, man is regarded now throughout Europe, contrary to the view expressed by Rousseau, as primarily a member of society and secondarily as an individual. The rights which he possesses are, it is believed, conferred upon him, not by his Creator, but rather by the society to which he belongs. What they are is to be determined by the legislative authority in view of the needs of that society. Social expediency, rather than natural right, is thus to determine the sphere of individual freedom of action.<sup>6</sup>

Woodrow Wilson, who would become the 28th President of the United States (1913-1921), was a progressive ideologue who was unafraid to express his views openly.

On July 4, 1911, in an address to the Jefferson Club of Los Angeles, Wilson stated "If you want to understand the real Declaration of Independence, do not repeat the preface." The 'preface' to which he was referring were the first two paragraphs containing the most revered, well-remembered and important principles constituted in the Declaration. All that remains are the grievances against the British monarchy. Thus, to Wilson, the Declaration was no more than a ideological victimology manifesto.

Progressivism is not, and never has been, supportive of "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" nor of self-evident truths that men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights. Faith in God, Truth and reason are not a part of the Progressive's creed nor acceptable vocabulary. For Progressivism's true believers, religion is superstitious nonsense, any and all rights are alienable, conferred by society, by the state, by the government. What rights society grants can and will be taken away at the will or whims of the State.

C.S. Lewis would, in *The Abolition of Man* (1943) clearly argue otherwise, painting a "real picture ... of one dominant age which resists all previous ages most successfully and dominates all subsequent ages most irresistibly, and thus is the real master of the human species."

But then within this master generation (itself an infinitesimal minority of the species) the power will be exercised by a minority smaller still. Man's conquest of Nature, if the dreams of some scientific planners are realized, means the rule of a few hundreds of men over billion upon billions of men. There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger.<sup>7</sup>

In a lead up to an interview with Cardinal Gerhard Müller, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 2012 to 2017, Lothar C. Rilinger notes the severe dichotomies that separate "New World Order" progressivism from the existing traditional world order.

Since God as the final authority of human action is rejected in the belief in progress, in the New World Order a society is to be constructed which knows no limits and in which everything that people are capable of developing and thinking is to be permitted; nothing is to

stand in the way of progress or hinder it in its development. Metaphysics is considered pre-modern and banished from social discourse and with it also the belief in redemption of man in eternity. Only that which can be falsified or verified is to be valid, so that man's redemption is to take place on earth, in earthly life. What Karl Marx called paradise on earth is to be achieved in a different way through the progress that is shaped by the New World Order.

For some decades now, the demand that the existing world order be replaced by one that no longer knows recourse to God, but only to unconditional progress, has again been haunting political discourse. The demand for this world order, which is called the "New World Order," is being raised almost alongside the political, public discourse. What must we understand by the "New World Order"?

**Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller:** According to both the Jewish and Christian creeds, it is God Himself who, in His sovereign goodness, created the world out of nothing and ordered it in His eternal Word (logos, reason) and Spirit (power, wisdom). Human reason is finite and in principle – due to original sin – susceptible to disturbance by egoistic impulses, such as the disordered desire for power, money, self-indulgence / pleasure. Man is thus intellectually and morally fallible.

Only if we allow ourselves to be addressed by God's Word and to be enlightened, guided and strengthened by His Holy Spirit, can we recognize the truth and freely-willingly choose the good as the goal of our actions. Historical experience teaches us that every attempt to give order to the world through human understanding and human power has invariably ended in catastrophe. We need not reach back far to see this. The colonialism and imperialism of the 19th century, the Japanese super power ideology and Leninist-Stalinist communism, as well as all dictatorships of smaller states in South America, Asia and Africa prove that the grasp for world power, i.e. the establishment of a New World Order has sprung from a diabolic-destructive and not a theological way of thinking.

The program of a New World Order under the condition of a total economization of man, in which self-appointed financial and political elites remain as the thinking and controlling subject, comes at the price of the depersonalization of the masses. The human being is merely the biological raw product, which is upgraded to a computer in a total network of information. There will no longer be any person then, no immortality of the soul, no living being with heart and mind, spirit and free will. What remains is a construct without home and hope.

This involves the reduction of 99 percent of the world's

population to a chipped biomass, to human material or a consumer group, to bots. Human beings have only as much "value" ("value" here is meant economically, not morally) as they contribute to the maintenance of this system of domination and exploitation and function within it. Totalitarian domination is realized in an absolute bureaucracy when man is abolished as man. "Action would prove to be superfluous in the coexistence of human beings when all human beings have become one, all individuals have become specimens of the species, all action has become terms of acceleration in the lawful apparatus of movement of history or nature, and all actions have become executions of the death sentences which history and nature have imposed anyway," Hannah Arendt wrote in 1951 (Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, München 2021, 959; *ibid.* Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, 1973), while the founder and operator of the Davos World Economic Forum recently signaled his transhumanist utopias to the world in these words: "Today's external devices [...] will almost certainly be implantable in our bodies and brains. [...] These technologies can invade the hitherto private realm of our minds, reading our thoughts and influencing our behavior." (Klaus Schwab/Nicholas Davis, *Shaping the Future of the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, New York 2018, 39; 28).

Totalitarianism is always hatred of life, preferring the mechanically reducible to the living and sacred. The control group decides who may live or must die. In the war of aggression against Ukraine, Putin lets his troops bring along mobile crematoria so as not to endanger his power domestically by the images of returning coffins.

No less a figure than the eminent philosopher and highly alert analyst of modern totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt, summed up the "nihilistic credo of the 19th century" with Dostoevsky's saying: "Everything is permitted," namely when man does not believe in God as his Creator and his Judge. (Hannah Arendt, *What Does Personal Responsibility Mean in a Dictatorship?*, Munich 2020, 43; lecture first given in 1964/65). It is true that since the early Enlightenment philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) there have been more than just a few attempts to develop atheistic or evolutionary-materialistic ethics with the aim of detaching individual and social ethics from their transcendental basis. But these boldly propagated initiatives had to fail necessarily because there is morality only if a person has to answer personally, not before the conditional world, but before the Unconditional.

The secularized and officially anti-Christian "West" allows for Christianity as a civil religion at best. However, celebrities who have decidedly renounced the Church are happy to use a church of art-historical value



as the backdrop for their wedding, even though they do not wish to understand marriage as a divine institution and as a promise of His grace.

If in a ship the boundary between the interior and the seawater that washes around the hull is abolished through the perforation of the ship's side, even the best captain and the fully attuned crew can no longer save the ship from sinking and themselves from perishing. All the hopes for a happy humanity through political and technical revolutions have not been fulfilled. The utopians are like Sisyphus, the tragic symbolic figure who always fails just before the success of self-redemption. The dreams of the brave new world are as unsuccessful as the bald man who wants to pull himself out of the swamp by his lost hair instead of grasping the outstretched hand of his savior.

Stalin and Hitler continually feared conspiracies, whether out of calculation in order to intimidate and eliminate the opposition, or out of their paranoia, which was the breeding ground of their tyranny. The Jesuits in the 18th century at the Bourbon courts, the Vatican in the 19th century in the liberal-anticlerical circles, and the Jews in the 20th century – according to the forged “Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” – were all considered carriers of a world conspiracy. The Church and the capitalists, too, were considered the enemies of progress towards the workers' paradise, who could only be towards the workers' paradise, who could only be stopped by the communist world revolution. In my youth, people spoke of conspiracy theories in the case of eccentric contemporaries who saw UFO's everywhere or concocted unverifiable world explanations from contemporary events.

Today the word “conspiracy theorist” is an ideological fighting term of mentally challenged anti-fascists, who lead their “fight against the right” with Nazi methods, i.e. intimidate media, threaten with violence, for example against the judges of the Supreme Court who denied the human right to abortion, or against a lecturer at Humboldt University – once the epitome of the German scientific standard – who wanted to explain the biologically evidenced fact of the bisexuality of human nature, without which there would not be any individual human beings, not even those who rabble against it.

In finite things there are always several aspects and perspectives to be considered. Only the distinction between true and false and between good and evil is without alternative, because it arises from the evidence of its principles. Certainly, there are also truths without alternatives in practical things, such as that a house collapses if it does not stand on a firm foundation. But these are general physical, mathematical or philosophical basic principles. Even in a sandy area you can build a

house, so long as you are able to build a good foundation otherwise. The opinion that one could not build cities in the sand of the March was thus by no means without alternative. Therefore, one must not use this kind of vocabulary to suppress legitimate discussion and controversy and conveniently spare oneself the better arguments.

The morally unrestrained rule of ideologists, politicians and economists over the people in the one world must necessarily lead to lack of freedom, oppression and extermination of disagreeable opponents or people useless for the system.

The culture of death blows over the whole world with the ideological delusion of the right to abortion, the right to self-mutilation (in the irreversible sex change), euthanasia, the alleged mercy death for those who are too tired to live, incurably ill and allegedly senselessly vegetating seniors, killing whom is supposed to be an act of compassion.

Without Christianity – with its root in the history of God's revelation in Israel, in which the best heritage of Greek and Roman culture is also integrated, in connection with the heritage of the whole of humanity – Europe and America would only be empty territories, where markets alone rule and which are inhabited by nameless inhabitants, who are granted the form of existence of a robot.

Religion does not return like one natural phenomenon that draws another after it. Religion, as the spiritual-moral disposition and attitude to trace the entirety of the world back to the higher power of the divine, and to feel a reverence before the sanctity of life, is not detachable from human nature. Supernatural faith, poured into us by the Holy Spirit, which enables us to fully assent to God in His Word to us with mind and will, is something different. In the parable of the unjust judge who deprives a poor widow of her right, Jesus tells his disciples: “Will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:6ff).

The decline of the Church in Germany and in Europe is not caused by secularization, the Church struggle of the totalitarian regimes and the Kulturkampf from Bismarck to the Giordano Bruno Society, but by the lack of faith, the weakness of hope and the coldness of love of the baptized and confirmed Catholics, who rather let themselves be beguiled by the siren sounds of the world than listen to the voice of their Good Shepherd and follow Him.<sup>8</sup>

Like the ancient Greek demiurge Ouroboros, it would appear we have come full circle, eating our faith to spite the spirit. We have willingly and deliberately allowed ourselves to “be beguiled by the siren sounds of the world,” and in doing so have, in far too many instances, lost faith in the unbounded beneficence of God. That is not, as Cardinal Müller first appears to suggest, a summary dismissal of those siren sounds of the world from fault, for evil delights the weak and fallible mind with temptations often too difficult to resist. Secularism, Materialism, and Progressivism, along with a plethora of other isms require a faithless people, a people thoroughly addicted to the false promises of ever-greater emotional highs which can only be purchased from godless dealers of spiritual death. The more addicted to the siren sounds of the world, the weaker the bonds of faith, hope and love, until that moment when the spirit dies and faith is lost forever.

It was Evelyn Waugh, writing in a British newspaper, who warned his contemporaries how stark the choice was that faced them. Ninety years later, Europe [and I would add, America] is being shaken politically, culturally, psychologically, economically, and, many of us would add, spiritually.

The progressive solution has always had two elements; to impose improvements and to get rid of Christianity, which stands conceptually and practically in their way.

TS Eliot mocked the claims of progress and labelled them regression, as they are. In 1934, he wrote about the coming collapse of society, the death of Christendom and the dereliction of the Church in “Choruses from ‘the Rock’”.

*Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;  
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.  
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,  
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death,  
But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
The world turns and the world changes,  
But one thing does not change.  
In all of my years, one thing does not change.  
However you disguises it, this thing does not change:  
the perpetual struggle between Good and Evil.  
Forgetful, you neglect your shrines and churches  
The Church disowned, the tower overthrown,  
the bells upturned, and what have we to do  
but stand with empty hands and palms  
turned upwards in an age which advances  
progressively backwards?*

In 1930, Evelyn Waugh explained why he and so many others had become Catholic Christians. The real struggle was nothing to do with the Reformation. It wasn't even between fascism, communism and democracy, it was between Christianity and chaos.

“It seems to me that in the present phase of European history the essential issues is no longer between Catholicism, on one side, and Protestantism, on the other, but between Christianity and chaos...”

Ninety years later, the flight from God to chaos has accelerated, but so has the attraction and the promise of the Catholic Church.

Democracy is itself in a state of collapsing into a politically correct totalitarianism, forbidding freedom and policing an increasingly draconian cancel culture.

None of this should surprise us, but it should energize us. Cancelling the Church is an attempt to cancel God.<sup>9</sup>

Ideologies, such as those previously mentioned, once were consistently condemned by the Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> The apostolic successors, the episcopacy, are specifically ordained to teach, defend and protect “Tradition, the revealed doctrine on faith and morals given by Christ to the custody of the Church, which the Apostles transmitted orally in their preaching, liturgy, and life, and which is continuously transmitted from generation to generation in the entire life of the Church through the action of the Holy Spirit. This also preceded and then accompanied the written transmission through the New Testament.”

The word “tradition” comes from the Latin word *tradere*, which means to “pass on.” Tradition is a sacred heritage passed on from generation to generation through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is life in Christ, with the faithful as living stones built together in the household of God upon Christ as their foundation.

In Mark 16:1, Jesus commands the Apostles: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole of creation.” He did not tell them to *write* the Gospel, but to preach it, which means to transmit orally the teaching they received.... Thus, the Tradition that is imparted by the Apostles and their successors is a living Tradition, bringing each new generation of disciples into vital contact with Christ and His Gospel.

The witness of the Apostles and their successors in their preaching, liturgy, and governance of the Church is the principal way in which the apostolic Tradition is transmitted to all generations and places, imparting vital contact with Jesus Christ, source of grace and truth. This witness is made possible as Jesus makes clear,



through the outpouring of the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.<sup>11</sup>

Pope Leo XIII emphasized the defensive nature and conservative teaching authority demanded of the apostolic successors and specifically of the successive occupant of the Petrine office. In *Satis cognitum, On the Unity of the Church*, §12, he stated “He willed then that he whom He had designated as the foundation of the Church should be the defense of its faith.” To *conserve and defend the faith* is the sacred obligation and only permissible function of the magisterium, the universal episcopacy. Thus, to butcher Matthew 19:6 terribly: “What therefore God has commanded, let not man then abrogate.” Again, Feingold describes the duties of the Petrine office and the universal magisterium quite clearly:

The Petrine office is essentially that of conserving the faith, confirming the brethren in the faith and the bond of charity, and of feeding all the sheep of Christ, maintaining in the bond of unity, all the bishops scattered through the world. Joseph Ratzinger, as Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, writes in *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the Mystery of the Church*:

From the beginning and with increasing clarity, the Church has understood that, just as there is a succession of the Apostles in the ministry of Bishops, so too the ministry of unity entrusted to Peter belongs to the permanent structure of Christ’s Church, and that this succession is established in the see of his martyrdom.<sup>12</sup>

The task of the apostolic witness of the universal episcopacy and the Petrine witness of the bishop of Rome is to maintain the deposit of faith intact through all centuries so that all the faithful may have the freedom won for us by Christ.

This is beautifully explained in the CDF’s above-mentioned document:

The Roman Pontiff—like all the faithful—is subject to the Word of God, to the Catholic faith, and is the guarantor of the Church’s obedience; in this sense he is *servus servorum Dei*. He does not make arbitrary decisions, but is spokesman for the will of the Lord, who speaks to man in the Scriptures lived and interpreted by Tradition; in other words, the *episkope* of the primacy has limits set by divine law and by the Church’s divine, inviolable constitution found in Revelation. The Successor of Peter is the rock which

guarantees a rigorous fidelity to the Word of God against arbitrariness and conformism: hence the martyrological nature of his primacy.<sup>13</sup>

Pope Leo XIII, writing elsewhere from what was previously cited, specifically called out those who would overestimate human faculties.

We know that there are some who, in their overestimate of the human faculties, maintain that as soon as man’s intellect becomes subject to divine authority it falls from its native dignity, and hampered by the yoke of this species of slavery, is much retarded and hindered in its progress toward the supreme truth and excellence. Such an idea is most false and deceptive, and its sole tendency is to induce foolish and ungrateful men willfully to repudiate the most sublime truths, and reject the divine gift of faith, from which the fountains of all good things flow out upon civil society. For the human mind, being confined within certain limits, and those narrow enough, is exposed to many errors and is ignorant of many things; whereas the Christian faith, reposing on the authority of God, is the unfailing mistress of truth, whom whoso followeth he will be neither enmeshed in the snares of error nor tossed hither and thither on the waves of fluctuating opinion.<sup>14</sup>

Cardinal Francis Arinze, having served under both Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI as Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, at the approaching age of 90, is a voice which should be heeded rather than ignored. “The bishops don’t own the Church, the Pope does not own the Church. We are only servants. You cannot do my part and I cannot do your part but if each does their own part the Church will become present in the world.”

There must be a reason why Cardinal Arinze raises this matter now, and there is a suggestion that he feels the Church is being pulled in a direction which is contrary to the concluding documents of the Council [Vatican II] that he attended in person and which was comparatively less preoccupied with the distribution and exercise of political power.

Ideologies underpinned by neo-Marxism are indeed finding their way into the Church, including through various synodal processes aimed at “listening” or, in the eyes of many people, making the Church more democratic and representative. They are finding greatest currency in the rich liberal democracies of the Western World.

Like other concerned clerics, Cardinal Arinze has become increasingly alert to creeping excesses which now extend to the redefinition of the Church's identity and mission and those of each of her individual members.

It is an intervention in the German Church which, he points out, is justified by *Christus Dominus*, the 1965 conciliar decree on the pastoral office of bishops in the Church. His episcopal concern for the whole Catholic Church, he explains, means that he had a duty to object to proposals in the German Synodal Way for the abolition of priestly celibacy, for the priestly ordination of women and for aspects of Catholic doctrine on sexuality to be effectively scrapped or redefined.

Besides the Synodal Way, he also takes issue with the claims of two European cardinals who propose that Catholic moral teachings are negotiable or even false, and with the assertion of one of them that the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are "not set in stone".

"It is not wise for a Catholic bishop or priest or, worse, a cardinal, to suggest that," Cardinal Arinze says before quoting paragraph four of *Fidei Depositum*, the 1992 apostolic constitution of Pope John Paul II, which states that the Catechism "is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium ... [and] a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith".

"No bishop in the Catholic Church can say the words are 'not set in stone' —no Catholic who shares our faith can say so, because the Pope has teaching authority. He is not just giving an opinion," he says.

"When the Lord Jesus sent the Twelve Apostles he didn't give them directives entirely agreeing with the world of their time—the Greek world and the Roman world. If the Church agreed with the world on everything we wouldn't have martyrs at all, beginning from the Apostles—and St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Thomas More, St. Maria Goretti. They wouldn't give their lives if they had agreed with the world on all the details of suggestions put in front of them. No-one likes to be killed but they valued their faith more than human life ... if we live in that faith evangelization will continue."<sup>15</sup>

Speaking from a different, but particularly relevant point of view, Jewish conservative philosopher Yoram Hazony writes of the persistence of small-T tradition, the necessity for honor, and the problems that arise out of an adherence to Enlightenment rationalism.

The persistence of a traditional institution depends on the honor that is awarded to individuals for upholding it. This is because people persist in any effort when they are honored for it, or when they believe they will be honored for it in the future; and they become dispirited and desist when their effort is met with disregard and contempt.

Enlightenment rationalism supposes that individuals, if they reason freely about political and moral subjects without reference to tradition, will quickly discover the truth concerning these matters and move toward a consensus. But experience suggests just the opposite: When people reason freely about political and moral questions, they produce a profusion of varying and contradictory opinions, reaching no consensus at all. Indeed, the only thing that reasoning without reference to some traditional framework can do with great competence is identify an unlimited number of flaws and failings, both imagined and real, in whatever institutions and norms have been inherited from the past. Where individuals are encouraged to engage in this activity, the process of finding flaws in inherited institutions proceeds with ever greater speed and enthusiasm, until in the end whatever has been inherited becomes a thing of lightness and folly in their eyes. In this way, they come to reject all the old ideas and behaviors, uprooting and discarding everything that was once a matter of consensus. This means that Enlightenment rationalism, to the extent that its program is taken seriously, is an engine of perpetual revolution, which brings about the progressive destruction of every inherited institution, yet without ever being able to consolidate a stable consensus around any new ones.

And we see precisely the same phenomenon among Marxists and liberals, academics and journalists—social groups in which it is often said that a person should "think critically" and "think for himself," yet no one seems to notice how rare it is for anyone to mount a dissent once the leading figures within these respective hierarchies have made their views known. Indeed, even if the consensus on a given subject was born only recently, and even if it will change again tomorrow, the great majority of these "critical thinkers" can be counted on to accept the new thinking when it comes.<sup>16</sup>

Why Hazony's view of small-T tradition is germane to the Catholic Church's capital-T Tradition should raise serious concerns with regard to current anti-religious progressive public policy and the interpretations of Tradition and sacred Scripture now prominently and publicly supported and promoted by non-Traditionalist, progressive, liberal clerics from the highest to lowest in the hierarchy

of the Catholic Church. The Church is in dire need of voices like Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Cardinal Müller, Cardinal Arinze, Cardinal Sarah, Archbishop Schneider, Archbishop Cordileone, Archbishop Chaput (ret.), Bishop Strickland, and other voices of truth like Fr James Altman. The Church certainly could use the intercessory prayers, now in heaven, of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen and Pope St. John Paul II.

S. M. Hutchens notes that “A left-wing church intellectual is credibly quoted as saying, ‘You can tell the health of an organization by whether they’re looking for heretics or converts.’”

Nonsense. One of the necessary marks of a *mens sana* [Latin: healthy mind], corporate or individual, is that it is not distracted by sophisms like this one. Health implies the ability both to reproduce the organism *and* to eliminate waste. People who talk like this chap know they are heretics who can only retain their status in churches that aren’t looking out for them.<sup>17</sup>

A letter from a reader in the same issue comments on Hans Boersma’s compelling article “*Let’s Talk About Sin*” (March/April 2022). He writes in part:

Practically, Boersma’s article appears at a time in the church when the very messengers of Evangelicalism’s gospel have fallen down, one by one, and are unable to be put back together again—that is, without any admission or confession of their personal sins of sexual misconduct or power abuse.

Boersma recalls church history to remind us of the benefits of mourning over our sins. Clearly, we need to hear more on this topic from patriarchs like Climacus and Aelred. Today’s sermons mention little about “joyful grief.” “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted”—might this early Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount go beyond grieving for the loss of a loved one and apply also to a *compunctio* of the soul as is pierced by his own sins?

Hans Boersmaa has gifted the church with a timely Lenten reminder to contemplate our personal need for grace and mercy. Only when we do so might we be empowered to confront the social injustices of our culture.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, a cautionary note tossed at those who are granted the awesome duty to preach and teach the faith of the Church instituted by Christ. The world needs a revival

of the spirit, a true Christological response to the very plea made by the Apostles to the Lord, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)! Not with platitudes, sops and bromides as has become all too common, but with a fervent faith, one to actually believe in, a faith born out of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

The greatest enemy to faith today is not outside the walls and pews of God’s house, but rather the stale, insipid banalities that are consistently heard within.

The disappearance of Jesus as teacher explains why today in Christian churches—of whatever leaning—little effort is made to teach people to do what he did and taught....Who among us had personal knowledge of a seminar or course of study and practice being offered in a “Christian Education Program” on how to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who spit on you and make your life miserable”? Much less, then, one on how to conduct our business or profession on behalf of Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17, 23). The most common response by Christians in the “real” world to Christ’s teachings is, precisely, “Business is Business.” And we all know that that means.

Sincere teaching on such matters simply does not appear on the Christian’s intellectual horizon as something that might be done. We do not seriously consider Jesus our teacher on how to live; hence we *cannot* think of ourselves, in our moment-to-moment existence, as his students or disciples. So we turn to popular speakers and writers, some Christian and some not—whoever happens to be writing books and running talk shows and seminars on matters that concern us.<sup>19</sup>

In his twenties, Malcolm Muggeridge was attracted to communism and went to live in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. Fortunately, the experience turned him into an anti-communist. He explained his conversion, revulsion, and subsequent reversion in *Jesus Rediscovered*:

I cannot myself imagine a more fearful fate for our species than that they should so habituate themselves to their earthly circumstances to be finally contented with them, or a more sublime one than that they should continue till the end of time to peer into the distance after the land that is very far off. In my early days this sense of being a stranger was closely related to political zealotry; the Left is for strangers, who persuade themselves that the causes they espouse are on behalf of the weak

against the strong, or the poor against the right. In my case, enlightenment came dramatically in the course of a journalistic stint in Moscow. The spectacle of all my heroes abasing themselves before a great tyrant, and purporting to justify all his doings and his works cured me of hero worship forever.... It was not just that a particular regime had been discredited in my eyes, and a particular set of hopes and desires shown to heaven fraudulent. The whole notion of progress died on me, and I saw our way of life based on it as crazy and hollow—getting richer and stronger and wiser, moving faster and farther, pursuing happiness ever more avidly, and leading all mankind into the same pursuit, which in the end turns out to be a fantasy, a death wish.<sup>20</sup>

Cardinal Müller recently spoke of the ongoing Synod on Synodality:

[... some comments were] a hermeneutic of the old cultural Protestantism and of modernism, that individual experience has the same level as objective Revelation of God. ... And surely everybody outside the Church who wants to destroy the Catholic Church and the fundamentals, they are very glad about these declarations. But it's obvious that is absolutely against Catholic doctrine.

One can only hear the words of Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who once famously said, “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” Where are the priests, the bishops, the cardinals willing to speak and to act against the evil that now pervades every fiber of our faith? When, or if, will the Church begin to exterminate the scourge of heresy and predation now rampant? When will the Church stop with the complicity and duplicity now noticeably visible; with the conspiracy of evil that now infests the *Ecclesia militans*, the Pilgrim Church, from top to bottom? When will preachers preach again *all* that Jesus commanded, *all* of what Jesus taught? These are questions that beg for answers, sooner than now.

What comes of this is a simple but hard to swallow fact, which comes from the title of Feingold’s book of fundamental theology—*Faith* comes from what is heard. For so long as the Word of God is not heard from the mouths of those ordained to preach to all the nations, the pews will continue to gather more cobwebs and dust. As long as Church hierarchy, by their silence, accepts and implicitly

condones heresy preached by false prophets (wolves) among the flock, the Church will continue to decline; even the most faithful will eventually lose faith.

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### BOOKS

#### God and Intelligence in Modern Philosophy

*Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen*

Longmans, Green & Co., 1928;

Cluny Media, 2019, 322 pages.

#### Religion Without God

*Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen*

Longmans, Green & Co., 1928;

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#### The Everlasting Man

*G.K. Chesterton*

Dover Publications, 2007, 270 pages.

#### After Humanity

*Michael Ward*

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#### Homo Americanus

*Zbigniew Janowski*

St. Augustine's Press, 2021, 259 pages.

#### The Cardinal Müller Report

*Gerhard Cardinal Müller*

Ignatius Press, 2021, 221 pages.

#### Knowledge and Decisions

*Thomas Sowell*

Basic Books, 1980, 422 pages.

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*Thomas Sowell*

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*Russell Kirk*

Sherwood Sugden & Company, 1984-88, 311 pages.

#### On Human Nature

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Princeton University Press, 2017, 144 pages.

### PERIODICALS

#### First Things

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

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

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

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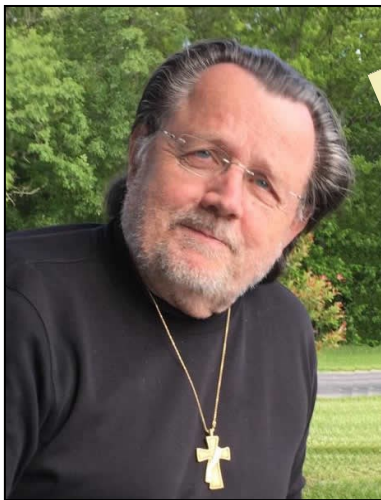
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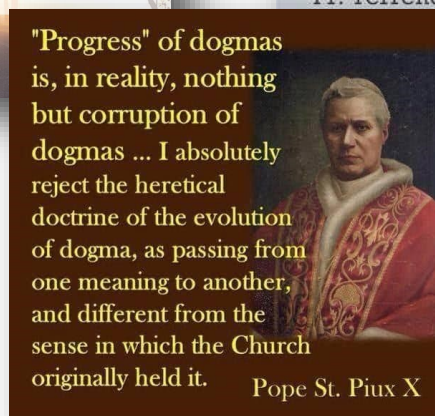
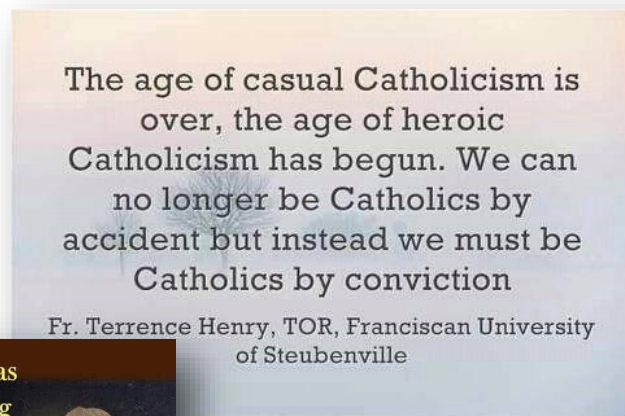
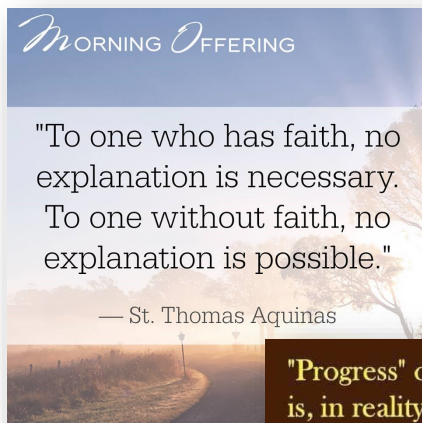


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