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GILBERT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF G.K. CHESTERTON

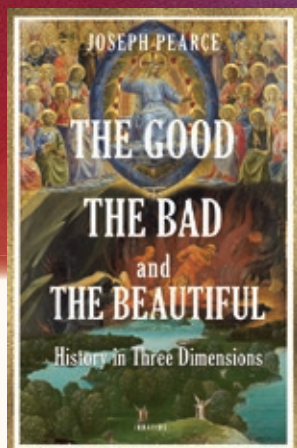
*The secret, the symbol,
the promise – A child is born.*

– G.K. CHESTERTON



UNIQUE INSIGHTS ON HISTORY & GENESIS

◆ THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL



Joseph Pearce presents a history of Christendom over 20 centuries that focuses on what was good, bad and beautiful in each century. This triune presence is perfected in the person of Christ who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”, and thus we can see the very pattern of history as a tapestry of varying threads which are good, bad or beautiful.

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“A wonderful account of Christian history from a unique and compelling lens. Pearce doesn’t gloss over the dark side of Christianity but takes an honest look at the ups and downs of history.”

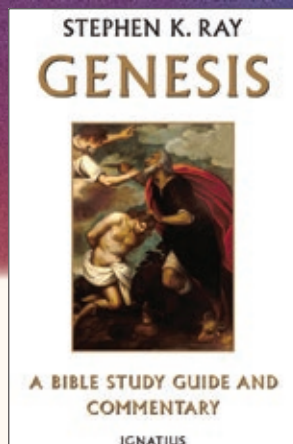
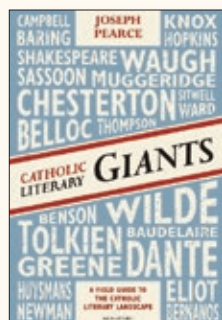
— Bishop James Conley, Lincoln, Nebraska

Also by Joseph Pearce

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—Dr. Mary Healy, Professor of Scripture, Sacred Heart Major Seminary

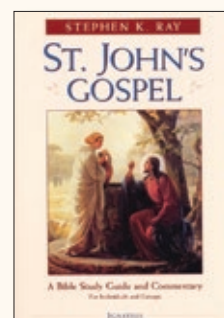
“An outstanding commentary. Ray relies on solid scholarship but never gets lost in academic debate as he makes the text alive to all readers. May it contribute to a renaissance of expository Bible reading and preaching.”

—Al Kresta, Radio Host, *Kresta in the Afternoon*

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CONTENTS

TREMENDOUS TRIFLES 2
By Dale Ahlquist

GENERALLY SPEAKING 4
Hope for the Future
By Dale Ahlquist

STRAWS IN THE WIND 6
Society
By G.K. Chesterton

ALL IS GRIST
The Way That Led Me to Mr. Chesterton 9
By Claudia McDonnell

Dorothy L. Sayers, Chesterton, Whose Body? and Overstrand Mansions 11
By John Hissong

TRUTH IN THE STATE OF TRANSMISSION 16
The 2023 Chesterton Schools Network Summit

THE HOMILIES OF FATHER BROWN 20
The Queer Feet
By Chris Chan

THE SURPRISE 22
Waiting in the Wings
By John Walker

MISCELLANY OF MEN 25
If I Had Been a Man, and Large
Alice Meynell (1847-1928)
By David P. Deavel

BOOK REVIEWS
The Political Economy of Distributism 27
Reviewed by Chuck Chalberg
Chestertonian Calvinism 28
Reviewed by Dale Ahlquist

The Chestertons and the Top Meadow Troupe 30
Reviewed by John Walker

NOTTING HILL 32
Disagree — But Don't Dismiss
By Joe Grabowski

THE SPICE OF LIFE 34
Solving the Book Club Problem
By Mark Johnson

WILD ABOUT CHESTERTON 36
Chesterton's Tribute to George MacDonald
By Fr. Robert Wild

THE GOLDEN KEY CHAIN 38
The Gospel of St. Matthew 1-2 Imagination and the Image
Conducted by Peter Floriani

CHESTERTON'S MAIL BAG 41
Church and State (not in that order)
By G.K. Chesterton

ALL I SURVEY 42
Growing into Chesterton
By David W. Fagerberg

ROLLING ROAD 45
Padres and Pearls
By Dale Ahlquist

BALLADE OF GILBERT 48
Again
By G.K. Chesterton

THE NEW JERUSALEM 49
A Brooklyn Jew Spends 60 Years With the Chesterbelloc
By Rabbi Mayer Schiller

THE FLYING INN 52
Amateurs
By David Beresford

NEWS WITH VIEWS 53
Compiled by Mark Pilon

CHESTERTON UNIVERSITY 56
Modern Notions That Are Not Normal
By Dale Ahlquist

DOMESTIC EMPRESS 58
Those Who Wander
By Susan Sucher

LETTER TO AMERICA 59
The Thing They Left Out
By G.K. Chesterton

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TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

By Dale Ahlquist

■ By now I assume everyone has heard that the new Speaker of House, Mike Johnson from Louisiana, quoted Chesterton in his opening speech before the U.S. House of Representatives. He used GKC's line from *What I Saw in America*: "America is the only nation ever founded on a creed." And he continued to express Chesterton's idea that America's creed is laid out in its founding document, the truths we hold to be self-evident, endowed by God: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Let's hope he continues to quote Chesterton. There will be plenty of opportunities.

■ We are pleased to announce a new book from Word on Fire: *Know Thyself* by Andrew Youngblood. Subtitled "Classical Catholic Education and the Discovery of Self," the book offers Andrew's experience and insight into the subject, which includes the years he served as the head of a Chesterton Academy school-within-a-school at Cardinal O'Hara High School in Philadelphia, and the time he spent as the Director of Curriculum for the Chesterton Schools Network. I wrote the introduction. The growth of classical schools is phenomenal, but there are still many people who remain befuddled by what classical education even is. This is the book to read.

■ I was very honored to receive the Our Lady of Victory Medal from the Alcuin Institute for Catholic Culture in



Dr. Richard Meloche, Director of the Alcuin Institute, presents the award to Dale

Tulsa, Oklahoma. I was presented the award on October 7, the anniversary of the Battle of Lepanto, which became the Feast of Our Lady of Victory (and later the Feast of the Holy Rosary). The award is given to someone who has promoted Catholic Culture. It is, of course, not I, but the members of the Society of G.K. Chesterton and the founders and faculties and staff of the many academies in the Chesterton Schools Network, who have truly done this blessed work.

100
YEARS AGO

G.K. Chesterton gave a speech at the opening of an "author's auction" benefit organized by Sir Philip Gibbs for the Orphaned Boys' Home at Maryfield House. H.G. Wells, Hilaire Belloc, Compton Mackenzie, Katherine Tynan, and Sinclair Lewis also appeared and auctioned off signed copies of their own books. Gibbs was a renown journalist who served as a war correspondent in the First World War. Other writers attending included poet and journalist Cecil Roberts and lyricist Adrian Ross. The event took place at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. David Barnes in Beaufort Gardens.

Left to right (standing): Cecil Roberts (and cat), Adrian Ross, Sir Philip Gibbs, Mr. and Mrs. Barnes. Left to right (seated): Frances Chesterton, G.K. Chesterton, Lady Gibbs.



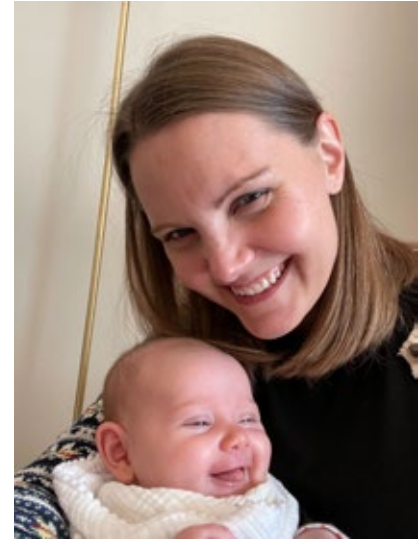
■ Speaking of staff and building Catholic Culture, three of our staff members have added Chestertonians to the world in recent weeks.



Maya Fleischer, School Success Manager for the Chesterton Schools Network, is the mother of Henry Anthony Fleischer, born on May 14, 2023.



Rose Gawarecki, Director of Membership for the Society of G.K. Chesterton and Copy Editor of Gilbert, is the mother of Penelope Rose Gawarecki, born on August 23, 2023.



Grettelyn Darkey, Director of Development for the Society of G.K. Chesterton, is the mother of Avila Teresa Darkey, born on September 4, 2023.

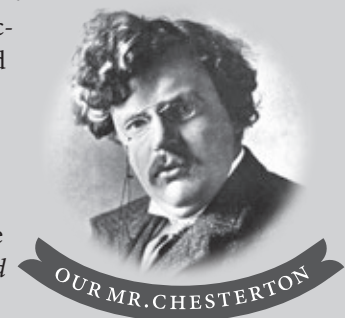
■ One of the most mysterious newspaper advertisements that we have ever seen is this plain item in the *Bolton Evening News* (Jan. 19, 1909) under the header: DECLINE OF ENGLISH LIBERTY.

The copy reads: “Mr. G.K. Chesterton asserts that the decline of English liberty has set in, and in

proof of this he says we no longer lampoon the King and Royal family as was the custom in the days of George IV. Be that as it may, we assert that the stamina of England’s youth and manhood can be maintained on porridge made from Thrum’s Rolled Oats.”

GKC gave a lecture in Dundee, Scotland in 1905. An anonymous reporter for the local paper offered this description :

Everybody had a thrill as the Man of Types walked on to the platform. He was almost as piquant as one of his own paradoxes, and as unexpected. A big head, covered with Jovian curls, a large countenance, with a great capacity for humour; a huge body, its rotundity emphasised by a short dinner jacket, and making the legs look disproportionately slender – such is the outward presentment of Mr Gilbert K. Chesterton. His appearance was promising. And everybody settled with keen expectation to hear what he had to say. The Chairman was splendidly unobtrusive. He did not even attempt to label the dish of the evening; he merely took off the cover with a flourish and invited us to sample. The first disappointment was the lecturer’s voice. It was the voice of a fat man, also fat and husky, made for quips and laughter, but not for addressing a large audience. When he tried to raise it, it grew shrill, and for the most part he spoke in an ordinary conversational tone, which could not have been audible to those at the back part of the hall or in the galleries. (*Dundee Evening Telegraph and Post*, Dec. 11, 1905)





GENERALLY SPEAKING

"No doubt it is, generally speaking, normal and inevitable that we should be accused of the wrong things; when one is accused of the right things, one so often gets hanged." –G.K. CHESTERTON

Hope for the Future

By Dale Ahlquist

Our educational authorities have already made sure that the system is rigid without making sure that it is right. They have already achieved universality but not unity. They have arranged to teach history without considering what history teaches; they have obtained powers of compulsion for teaching the truth to everybody; and then, looking into their own minds, have found that the truth is not in them. (ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, JUNE 12, 1920)

One of the curious silent collapses of the modern intellect occurred when people began to talk about "education," without saying *what* education. (ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, JULY 1, 1916)

IN THE ENORMOUS BATTLE FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS AND SOULS OF OUR CHILDREN, the modern education system has all the advantages of size, reach, funding, compulsion, and control. That system includes both public and private schools that operate alike and madly follow the latest fads and fashions and fallacies and offer less and less of the timeless truths.

We can look around and see the devastating results everywhere: a populace with little literacy, no reasoning skills, no moral compass, no knowledge of the past, no appreciation for our cultural accomplishments, no common sense. They are glued to screens, awed by vapid celebrities, and stuck in dead-end jobs as wage slaves. They are wobbly and depressed, but also angry and inarticulate. They think in fragments, they talk in fragments. They are the product of our nation's education system.

But the thing about Goliath is that he is made to be toppled. The thing about David, who will defeat him, is that he sings songs unto the Lord.

My friends, even though winter is upon us, there is already a promise of spring. There is hope for the future.

The Chesterton Schools are that hope. We are teaching high school students truth, goodness, and beauty. They study with a purpose. They learn not only what is important, what is vital, but what is eternal. Few high schools today teach four years of theology. But we do. Almost no schools teach four years of philosophy. But we do. Most schools have abandoned the arts except as an elective, abandoned ancient history and literature

except as a curiosity, and abandoned Latin altogether. But not at Chesterton Academy where students study music, drawing, painting, theatre, explore the whole human story and read its classical books and learn its primary language. They study math and science in its fuller context and not as an end in itself. And they read G.K. Chesterton. This integrated curriculum has as its focal point the Incarnation, the truth that informs all other truths.

The result? Joyful, well-formed Catholic men and women who are changing their communities wherever they are, in all the different paths we are seeing them taking, whether it be in the professional world, skilled trades, service, parenthood, or priesthood.

The growth of the Chesterton Schools Network has been a thrilling phenomenon at a time where this is not a lot of happy news. Next year there will be sixty-nine schools in the U.S. and four other countries. We fully expect a total of one hundred schools in the next three years. The interest in classical education has skyrocketed as parents are increasingly fed up with the educational status quo. Even so, there is nothing to compare with

the wildfire growth of the Chesterton Schools Network. Even others involved in classical education stare at us in disbelief. The reason is that we have given parents the inspiration plus the tools they need to start their own schools and fight their local academic Goliaths. There is indeed hope for the future.

But. But. We simply cannot sustain this growth without an infrastructure. We cannot continue to onboard new schools without an adequate staff to serve them. We cannot recruit, train, and guide new faculty and school leaders without a team in place to carry on these tasks. And we cannot ensure that the many schools are implementing the curriculum and keeping the vision as they grow, even while they dance their local dances and exude their own unique charms.

People have been throwing money at education for a long time, but their dollars have often been wasted because they neglected to ask *what* education. They have created a system that is rigid without being right. The schools have not only stopped teaching the truth, they have banished it.

Here is the way to fight back against an education system that has been stomping on our culture for over a century. Here is a way to funnel some funds in the right direction. Please consider making a major gift to our Capital Campaign, “Hope for the Future.”

We all know the problem. Now let’s be part of the solution.

Can you think of anything more important? ☞

CHESTERTON FOR TODAY

■ The Liberal still professes to be jealous of the encroachments of orthodox and organized religion. But as a fact there is no organized religion to compare with the oppressive regimentation of organized irreligion. There are no tests that impose orthodoxy to compare with the tests that impose

heresy, like the heresies of hygiene. The old doctrines of theology are not forcibly imposed on anybody. But the new theories of science are forcibly imposed on everybody. (*NEW WITNESS*, OCT. 13, 1922)

■ Every government ought to be checked by an opposition. (*G.K.’S WEEKLY*, JULY 27, 1933)

■ All honest men in politics are partisans, whether they like it or not. (*DUNDEE EVENING TELEGRAPH AND POST*, DEC. 11, 1905)

■ Many people today spend their lives in the really delightful pursuit of kickable objects. (*ACTON GAZETTE*, DEC. 2, 1910)



■ Note the number of positive assertions made in the name of popular science, without the least pretence of scientific proof. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, JULY 12, 1930)

■ No theories and no pedantic statistics will ever prevent ordinary people from finding a meaning and a literature in their own lives; great tragedy when the baby dies; great comedy when the baby tries to eat the soap. We always take ourselves seriously; it is only learned men, in huge books, who take us frivolously, and make us feel like a swarm of flies. (*LONDON OPINION*, APRIL 2, 1904)

■ It is a curious feature of this fad of birth prevention, as distinct from all other fads, that every man professing it ought really to apologize for being alive. (*NEW YORK AMERICAN*, MAY 13, 1933)

■ If there is one thing we know, as we know that we shall all be dead, it is that we shall all be old-fashioned. (*LISTENER*, JAN. 4, 1933)



STRAWS IN THE WIND

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton

Society

By G.K. Chesterton

THE CHURCH SHOULD MAINTAIN the character of criticising the political world. The Christian Church entered into the world when the world had already reached a considerable stage of political organisation and perfection. There are, I know, a large number of very entertaining writers who maintain that Christianity was in the nature of something evolved in the dark ages by barbaric juggling in the place of the worship of wooden idols, and that the development of this was Christianity. Now, of course, whether you like Christianity or not has nothing to do with that question. It is historic that Christianity was the final development of the highest civilisation the world had ever seen. That is a historic fact. It comes at the end of civilisation. In fact it was a result of high political civilisation. When Christianity entered into this world, it entered into it with a claim to judge that high political civilisation, to say “this is right, and that is wrong,” in fact to judge.

What is the first primary fact about Christianity? That it did not lead up from barbarism out of darkness into civilisation. It stepped up to civilisation and told it what it thought of it. Christianity was a corrective. That civilisation, as you know, broke down. It plunged the whole of our race into a long period of disaster and darkness.

Christianity came upon the tide of that intellectual civilisation, it accompanied that civilisation through its bad period, and brought it up again into life, and generated an enormous number of new forms, invented a new architecture, a new civilisation, a new art. That is a general fact, as we may say, as to what Christianity originally was. Now, we, as a Church, have the right to judge this civilisation, have a right to renew the criticisms which were launched in the early days of Christianity, have a right to continue the struggle which went on in the middle ages. You will remember in the very middle ages – the period most easily remembered in that struggle was the time of Becket and

Henry the Second – you will remember it was universally considered that the morally good Churchman was a nuisance to all politicians. So far from it being the idea that the Church should not interfere with politics quite the reverse was the case. We know what happened. Curious things happened. For instance, in the Sixteenth Century, a lot of people, who, I believe, are now generally described as “Protestants,” but who in those days went by the ordinary description of “robbers,” went and took away the money of the monasteries. Other unfortunate events followed upon that. The Puritan revival gave a new character to the English Commonwealth. A complete indifference to everything followed in the 18th Century, with a consequent enormous importance of politics. There had been the accidental madness of two or three people, such as Henry VIII, and so on.

It is to my mind one of the most pathetic tasks of human life is to make some effort to rescue the proper meaning of words. To give an example: I find invariably that things which are wrong, are described as

“orthodox.” That would be a fair example of the systematic debasement of the word. All men are not wise, all men are not sensible. Every man ought to think his own thoughts orthodox. That is a good example. It is a word perfectly sensible with a right meaning – meaning in Greek, right things. You will find a systematic debasement of the meaning. Another word is “respectable,” a terribly misused word. “Respectable” and “respectability” have come to mean a certain class of sin against which the Christian Church has always been particularly severe. But there is no reason why it should mean it. The word “respectable” is perfectly sensible. The original meaning is that a man has so conducted himself in his social state, in Society, as to be respected. It does not follow he is a better man. To have done right is in the highest sense virtuous, but it is not in the highest sense respectable. The person who wishes to be as magnificent as Joan of Arc, must consent to forfeit the good opinion of a large number of decent, solid, sensible people. That is another thing altogether. The word has a perfectly legitimate meaning. It means contriving to earn the ordinary respect of his fellow citizens. There is nothing evil about it. The man who thinks only of himself has no particular virtue, he is not respectable, he is disreputable; that is in the literal sense of the word. A man may live so as to procure for himself the respect of his fellow citizens, and in words contained in the Declaration of Independence of the United States – “with a decent respect to the opinion of mankind.” That has always seemed to explain why Americans won in the great war. When I compare that spirit with the modern idea, with the Jingo idea, that the more other countries hate us, the more it shows how splendid we are, I think it is a magnificent phrase, so complete in itself, a complete absolute restraint, “a decent respect for the opinion of mankind.” It ought to matter to you whether you are respected. It ought to matter to you whether you are respectable. The word has a perfectly rational and right meaning.

I take lastly a word curiously debased, the word “Society.” Of course one knows that most people would immediately distinguish between the term “Society,” applied to certain trade combinations, and as applied to ordinary human relations. With regard to that word I feel exactly as I feel in the case of the word “respectability,” and of the word “orthodoxy.” One’s sympathy is

due to the people who are most violently denounced by idealists. I think idealists in this commit all the spiritual sins at once. I think it very often happens that idealists put their denunciations of Society in a form which is sometimes infinitely worse than the views of Society itself. For instance, a famous picture we have seen “The Poet in the Garret.” A Bohemian artist, standing apart from Society, saying, “I will not go into Society.” That man is not only uncivilised, and committing an error, he is committing a sin. He is first of all guilty of spiritual pride; secondly, he denies the existence of the brotherhood of man. Compared with him, with that miserable creature, the artist in the garret, the merest butterfly of Society is admirable. I am, so to speak, against “prigs,” and on behalf of “snobs.” The “snob” is a person who in some way does recognise that men are brothers, although he is a person who always treats himself as the younger brother in a way. The “prig,” of course, is a person who claims a kind of superiority, a moral and spiritual superiority. By all means, then, be proud so long as you are not proud of something creditable. I think the most insupportable people are those people who are proud of a virtue when they have it. The man is good and knows it. That is so. He is the most horrible specimen the psychological world can give. That general statement, then, about “Society,” to begin with. It is perfectly right and perfectly sound to have social relations. If we cannot have real social relations, let us have miserable sham social relations of the class called “Society.” They are better than nothing. The great crime of “Society,” “Society,” with the big “S,” is simply that it is unsociable. That is where the peculiar evil, the peculiar sin of the arrogant genius in the garret comes in. He is always sneering at Society, because it is sociable. He is always saying, “You are wrong to mix with each other, to come into social contact with each other, to be a part of a definite organisation.” The ordinary man in the present day has an idea generally that he would like to be in Society. Now, what is Society? The word is a very good example, like “respectability”; it has been curiously, entirely debased. Men wish to have some fixed relations with their fellows, with other men. That is Society, to be able to meet in some kind of relationship with your fellows. You have a tongue, you desire to have someone to speak to; you have ears, you have a desire to have someone to listen to; you have the faculty to love, you

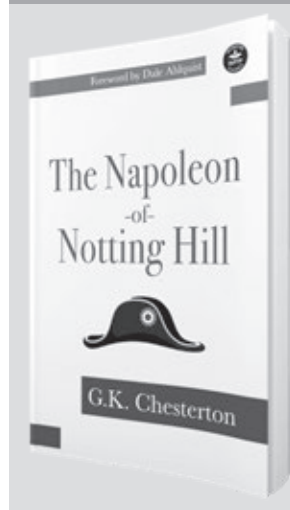
have a desire to have people to love; you have the power to make beautiful things, you desire that other people should praise them. Incidentally I may remark that people are perfectly right when they say the foundation of the whole of Society in one sense is vanity, but vanity I may say is not a mortal sin. It is a valuable quality, because vanity is only a debased form of that desire for social recognition and encouragement. It is the bare fact that man is a social animal. There is a wide difference between the occasional weakness of vanity and the sin of pride. Vanity is a social element, pride is not. The first thing that strikes us about people who have real influence in the modern world, I think, is the tendency to be unsociable. The aristocrat tends to lapse into barbarism. That is not a joke in the least. You have only to go through the country to see it is true. When a man has an enormous amount of money, an enormous amount of political power, his tendency is to be by himself, to seclude himself. The first impulse of a rich man is to have an enormous amount of space. Another desire is to have silence, to have complete rest for the nerves, secluded from the modern world. There is no particular ground for any moral attack upon the governing classes in that respect. There are very few middle class people who do not try to get a railway carriage to themselves on the way to Scotland. There is a certain degree of excuse. It

is in the nature of an attempt to lapse into barbarism, an attempt to become a savage again. You wish, as far as you can, if you are rich, to cease to belong to civilisation. You wish the same, unfortunately, when you are very poor, the two extremes meet in that respect. I do not think anybody could enter a third class railway carriage, full of decent mechanics, and fail to notice that that third class carriage becomes almost immediately a community, a very rough community, a 12th Century community. Now, you get into a first class carriage, full of extremely highly educated and refined persons. They are full of terror, lest any one should speak to the other. It is an attempt to return to savagery. I have no patience for my part with people who force their own peculiarities on others. I dislike the man who, unable to smoke for certain reasons, declares that smoking is a sin; I dislike the people who do not care for meat, and therefore say it is wicked to eat animals; I dislike the people who get very drunk on one glass of wine, and therefore say that teetotalism is a duty. In some sense, I say, without hesitation, that I am one of those who enjoy a Bohemian existence more than I can possibly express it at this moment, but it does matter whether I put my gloves on my feet or my boots on my hands. It is entirely wrong to say it does not matter what you wear. Another evil against which, in the name of Society, we have to guard is the tendency to loneliness among the intellectual, among the rich, or more powerful classes. It is more widespread than the other evil of which I spoke.

We propose to produce a revolution, to produce a revolution in the minds of everybody who ventures to join it, a revolution which destroys that perfectly placid spiritual isolation, that perfectly placid moral security which in 99 cases out of 100 represents the members of the more comfortable class in the modern world. The first thing in belonging to the Christian Church is to feel uncomfortable. Every man who belongs to Society has felt profoundly dissatisfied with the things of this world. The whole conception of our faith lies in the idea that the world may be very wrong, that strength may be very wrong, that success may be very wrong, that victory may be very wrong – but mercy and justice in which we believe can never be wrong. ☚

From *The Commonwealth*, December 1905. The substance of a lecture given at St. Mary Abbots Church, sponsored by the Christian Social Union, November 8th, 1905.

The Napoleon of Notting Hill



Beautiful new edition
of G.K. Chesterton's
beloved classic novel.
With a new foreword
by Dale Ahlquist

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ALL IS GRIST

"Literature is only the contrast between the weird curves of Nature and the straightness of the soul." —G.K. CHESTERTON

Essays for Today and Tomorrow

The Way That Led Me to Mr. Chesterton

By Claudia McDonnell

LONG BEFORE I KNEW WHO G.K. CHESTERTON WAS or read anything he had written, I was drawn into his orbit not in a classroom or a lecture hall, but within the walls of a home. It is only now, having read Chesterton for decades, that I realize how appropriate that setting was.

It was not my own home, but the home of one of my closest friends: Maggie, a classmate at our parish school and at our Catholic girls' high school. The house, located twenty miles from Manhattan in the town where we grew up, was a three-story Victorian. It had rows of packed bookshelves on each side of the front entryway and a bedroom upstairs that was filled with books and was called "the library" by the family. I thought it was a wonderful thing to have a library in your own house.

Before Maggie lived there, the house had belonged to her maternal grandfather, William Thomas Walsh, and his wife, Helen. Walsh was a historian and a professor at Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart (now secularized and known as Manhattanville College). He also was the author of a number of books, and one of his publishers was Sheed and Ward, the company founded by the legendary Catholic authors Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward. The Sheeds were widely known not only as writers and publishers, but also for their work as speakers with the Catholic Evidence Guild.

Walsh retired from Manhattanville to devote more time to writing. Sadly, he died not long afterward, in 1949. A decade or so later, Maggie's family moved into the house, where Walsh's widow still lived. The family had continued their friendship with the Sheeds, and Frank and Maisie sometimes stayed at the house when they were in New York. One evening I met them there.

I was a 14-year-old high school freshman. Although

I cannot remember much about what was said, I knew then, as I know now, that I was in the presence of Catholic literary royalty, and my impressions of the evening remain clear.

Maisie entered into conversation eagerly, and she spoke with a lively, twittery voice. She was cheerful and genial and quick with an observation or a comment. She plainly enjoyed talking, and I'm reminded of Frank's reminiscences in print of his early days with the Catholic Evidence Guild in London. He wrote that he would follow Maisie onto the speaker's platform and soon lose the crowd that had gathered to listen to her. He would then have to step aside and let Maisie return to the platform, where she would quickly win back the audience.

Frank, like his wife, was an eager speaker. He was relaxed and joyful, and it seems to me now that faith and hope burned so brightly inside him that he knew there was no point in worry or anxiety. I knew that he was a man of great learning and deep knowledge of the Catholic faith; he had written a number of books and translated the *Confessions* of St. Augustine.

Maisie wrote the official biography of G.K. Chesterton in 1943, and a decade later supplemented it with *Return to Chesterton* (recently re-released from Cluny). Sheed and Ward also published most of Chesterton's later books. But their connection went beyond that: Chesterton was the godfather of their son,

Wilfrid Sheed, the late author whose books include *Frank and Maisie: A Memoir with Parents* (1985).

I had told the young nun who was my religion teacher at school that I was going to meet the Sheeds, and she was excited for me and even, I think, a little envious in a good-natured way.

It was not just meeting the Sheeds, however, that made an impression on me. It was the atmosphere of Maggie's house even when no one else was visiting. I was struck by its Catholic and literary aura. The faith was practiced and honored and talked about; clearly, it mattered to the people who lived there, and it helped to shape their lives. Signs and symbols of the faith reinforced the message. A neat row of black-bound missals stood atop a large bureau, painted light yellow, in the hallway leading to the back door. Catholic art was on display in the house; three framed works, given to me years later by Maggie's mother, Jane, now hang on the wall of my home. Two are drawings: one of St. Peter – Walsh wrote a book about him – with the saint's face marked by the tracks where his tears had flowed. The other is a drawing of the now-canonized Cardinal John Henry Newman reading a book by the light of a table lamp. Another is the framed scroll, printed in calligraphy, that was awarded by the Gallery of Living Catholic Authors to William Thomas Walsh in 1944 for his book *St. Teresa of Avila*.

Jane also gave me Maisie Ward's biography of Chesterton; she had two copies, and by chance she gave me the one with marginal notes entered by her father. When I realized that I had Professor Walsh's copy, I returned it to Jane and took the other, thinking that Jane would want to have her father's book. That is one act of kindness that I regret; Jane passed on many years ago, and how I wish I had the professor's annotations now. But I read Maisie's entire wonderful biography, and it was all the more moving for me to see Chesterton through the eyes of a fine biographer who had not only studied him, but had also known him well and talked with him – and was someone whom I had met.

I recall seeing Frank Sheed a few times after that first meeting. He gave a talk at the high school Maggie and I attended; I recall that he dismissed science fiction but said, to my delight, that reading poetry was an obligation. He also spoke once at our parish church; I remember hearing him say that as an outdoor speaker with the

Catholic Evidence Guild, he found that the Church's teaching on the Holy Trinity held the attention of listeners and that they found more light and nourishment in it than in any other.

Once, after Maisie's death, I encountered Frank with Jane at church after Mass on Easter Sunday. But it was the meeting at Maggie's house that influenced my life. It deepened my interest in Catholic literature, and I believe that it helped to lead me to my career as a journalist with *Catholic New York*, the newspaper (now discontinued) of the Archdiocese of New York.

One day in 1981 at the paper's office in Manhattan, the managing editor told me that Frank Sheed had died, and she asked me to write an obituary. I told her of my meeting with Frank and Maisie, and of hearing Frank's talks.

"That's the kind of obituary to write," the editor said, and she urged me to draw on those encounters.

Frank's funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Patrick's Cathedral, about a 15-minute walk from our offices. The editors were not in the office that day, and I looked around and decided that if I left for an hour or so, I would not be missed. I slipped out quietly, walked swiftly through the streets, and entered the Cathedral, feeling that it was a great privilege to be there and to pray for the man who had done so much to spread and deepen the Catholic faith throughout the English-speaking world, and who had affected my life, too.

Meeting the Sheeds at Maggie's house was a great gift, but I am equally grateful for the intangibles I received there, especially the welcome that embraced me and all visitors, and the experience of the Catholic faith rooted in friendship, literature, and conversation.

The home truly is the domestic Church. G.K. Chesterton knew that, and he celebrated the home as the heart of civilization and the cradle of faith – without which there is no civilization. Happy the home today that celebrates him and the Catholic faith that he embraced, and those who keep his work and memory alive. It is our turn now to gather with family and friends around our tables and share our spiritual and literary legacy. ☞

CLAUDIA MCDONNELL is a retired Catholic journalist from New York who was the winner of the Cup of Inconvenience at the 2023 Chesterton Conference.

Dorothy L. Sayers, Chesterton, *Whose Body?* and Overstrand Mansions

By John Hissong

IF ASKED TO NAME A SUCCESSOR TO CHESTERTON, nine out of ten readers would name C.S. Lewis, but, although Lewis clearly followed in Chesterton's footsteps, he was preceded along that path, and more completely, by another great British writer, Dorothy L. Sayers. All three were apologists and poets, all three were besotted with Dante, but, like Chesterton and unlike Lewis, Sayers was also a successful mystery writer and playwright.

Sayers was born in 1893, a generation after Chesterton, and was very heavily influenced by him. Toward the end of her life she was to write, in the 1952 introduction to *The Surprise*, a forgotten play of Chesterton's whose posthumous publication she instigated,

To the young people of my generation, G.K.C. was a kind of Christian liberator. Like a beneficent bomb, he blew out of the Church a quantity of stained glass of a very poor period, and let in the gusts of fresh air in which the dead leaves of doctrine danced with all the energy and indecorum of Our Lady's Tumbler.

In some ways, they were so alike. Sayers, for example, shared Chesterton's deep humility and love for self-deprecating humor. Once, in her later years, having come to share Chesterton's perhaps over-corpulent form, flustered and a bit disheveled after a struggle to enter a motor vehicle, she declared upon finally settling herself, "The elephant is crated." It is so reminiscent of Chesterton's comment in a similar, though reverse situation at Notre Dame, replying to the suggestion that he might do better if he tried to exit a vehicle sideways, "I have no sideways."

Dorothy's relationship with Chesterton started as a

reader. She read *Orthodoxy* shortly after its 1908 publication. It thrilled her. It is no exaggeration to say, and Sayers herself said it on more than one occasion, that

Chesterton changed the course of her young life. In 1912 she matriculated at Oxford, and in 1914, she began attending many of his public lectures there, coming to know him as a speaker as well as an author. It's likely that she attended Chesterton's lecture at Oxford in November of 1914, just before he collapsed into his great, nearly fatal, illness. There are some indications from her letters that she invited him to speak to a group of her friends, The Mutual Admiration Society, very much like Chesterton's own group of childhood friends, the Junior Debating Club. Chesterton had a great gift for friendship and had the knack of

taking the thoughts and opinions of those younger than him with great seriousness, treating each person in his orbit as if they were the most important person in the world. Dorothy responded to his warmhearted charm. In her letters to others, she refers to him affectionately as GKC and worries about his health. In 1917, as an author herself, she sought him out, although unsuccessfully, to publish a book of her poetry. As she matured, their relationship grew more equal. By the late 1920s, they could best be described as very good friends.



Dorothy Sayers by Sir William Oliphant Hutchison, oil on canvas, circa 1949-1950

By that time, Sayers had won fame and financial independence as an author of detective fiction. Though she penned many other works in many other genres, just as Chesterton is today most remembered for Fr. Brown, so Sayers is most remembered for her aristocratic detective, Lord Peter Wimsey. She began writing her first Wimsey novel, *Whose Body?*, in 1920 or 1921, and it was published in 1923 by T. Fisher Unwin, quite possibly with an assist from Chesterton. Gilbert had worked at the publishing firm as a reader from 1896–1902 and it would have been only natural that he would have helped Dorothy with introductions. *Whose Body?* was wildly successful and ten more Wimsey novels as well as twenty-one short stories followed over the next sixteen years. They are masterful. She has been almost universally lauded as one of the Golden Age Queens of Crime.

Sometime in 1930 – the exact date is unclear – Sayers, with four of her Wimsey novels under her belt, joined several other mystery writers led by Anthony Berkeley and including Agatha Christie, and G.K. Chesterton, in founding The Detection Club, the first and still most illustrious society for crime writers in the world. Chesterton was elected its first President, and Sayers wrote their colorful initiation ceremony. Her great enthusiasm for the Club provided much of the energy which kept it going through the Great Depression. She herself was later elected Chesterton's successor as Club President.

In 1936, possibly inspired by Chesterton's death that same year, there was a sort of sea change in her life and, although she remained very active in the Detection Club and wrote a few short story mysteries, she largely turned away from detective fiction, abandoning a partially finished Wimsey novel and turned more and more to writing some really profound, insightful, and explicitly Christian works. The first of these was a play, *The Zeal for thy House*, produced in 1937 for the Canterbury Festival, the same festival that sponsored T.S. Eliot's creation of *Murder in the Cathedral* two years before. There were to be several other plays, many of them broadcast on the BBC at the height of the Blitz, culminating in a play cycle dramatizing Christ's life, *The Man Born to be King*. She also contributed a series of religious conversations to the BBC, later collected into a book, *The Christ of the Creeds*, just as Lewis' similar broadcasts

later became *Mere Christianity*. She wrote several spiritual prose works, *The Mind of the Maker* and *Creed or Chaos?* among them. They are carefully thought out, very well written, and deserve to be on the thinking believer's bookshelf.

Given her scholarly history at Oxford where she had studied medieval literature, the more spiritual turn of her working life took her, almost naturally, into a monumental, more than a decade's long labor of love in translating Dante's *Divine Comedy* – a work also deeply beloved by Chesterton – into English. Sayers set herself the difficult task of preserving the complex Italian *terza rima* rhyming scheme in English, something only a few others have done.

Sayers' great debt to Chesterton was certainly obvious to her, and she repeatedly dropped hints of it in her detective fiction. Using the voice of Lord Peter's mother, the Dowager Duchess of Denver, Sayers mentions Chesterton in her second novel, *Clouds of Witnesses*. Chesterton pops up again in her sixth novel, *Five Red Herrings*. In her final Wimsey novel, *Busman's Honeymoon*, a reworked play, she quotes from Chesterton's Fr. Brown story, "The Hammer of God." But it is *Whose Body?* which contains her most extensive, albeit indirect, homage to Gilbert and Frances: the whole novel is set very closely around their London home in Overstrand Mansions!

Aside from a few brief months immediately following their honeymoon at the 1 Edwardes Square home of a friend of Frances with the unfortunate name of Mr. Boore, Gilbert and Frances made their home from their marriage in 1901 to their move to Beaconsfield in 1909 at Overstrand Mansions, first in a top floor garret apartment, No. 60, then, after their finances improved, in No. 48, a larger apartment a floor below and one entrance-way to the east. It was while living there a half hour's drive across the Thames from Fleet Street, the center for Chesterton's work as a journalist, that he wrote his first works on Dickens, his biographies of Carlyle, Browning, Thackeray, Tennyson, Tolstoy and Watts, his first two novels, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, and *The Man Who Was Thursday*, most, if not all of his third novel, *The Ball and the Cross*, three of his finest collections of essays, *Twelve Types*, *All Things Considered*, and *Tremendous Trifles*, and his first foray into the detective genre, *The Club of Queer Trades*. It was also there that he became

involved in *The Blatchford Controversies*, which led to the writing there of *Heretics*, and, ultimately, in more than one sense, to *Orthodoxy*. A hallowed place!

Overstrand Mansions is a large apartment building – the British call it a mansion block – of late Victorian flats built by Sir Cyril Flower, first Baron of Battersea, just south of Battersea Park, on the right bank of the Thames opposite Chelsea (where Belloc lived). The mansion block, built beginning in 1893, was a commercial success and became the first of a series of originally five and later seven mansion blocks, all built along Prince of Wales Drive bordering the park. Overstrand Mansions is more or less in the middle of the development. Primrose Mansions is to the east across Alexandra Avenue, followed by York Mansions moving further east, and then Prince of Wales Mansions. Cyril Mansions is to the west across Beechmore Road, followed by Norfolk Mansions, and then Sidestrand (later renamed Park) Mansions.

Lord Battersea was a noted patron of the arts. Although Battersea was on the then-unfashionable side of the Thames, and the flats were intended for (and indeed, embraced) by poorer working-class Londoners – which in 1901 certainly included the Chestertons – they were tastefully done. The flats were inspired very heavily by the Arts and Crafts movement, which wanted to ensure that everyone, not just the wealthy, had access to beautiful things. Though they vary considerably in size and number, all seven of the mansion blocks are five stories tall, made of red brick with white trim, each with entrance stairways for perhaps ten flats apiece every 50 feet or so along the block. Different contractors built each set of mansions, and each has its own style, but they are all attractively decked out with pleasing and harmonious architectural details, a common roof line, balconies on many of the lower floors, bay windows, dormers, turrets, and the like. They all have lovely views of Battersea Park. The flats were so beautifully designed, that, although originally intended for the working class, they now fetch astronomical prices; a flat near the Chestertons' old flat sold recently for 1.9 million pounds.

Just west of this development, on the north side of Prince of Wales Drive at Albert Bridge Road, was the National Anti-Vivisection Hospital, later Battersea General Hospital. As its original name implies, it was funded by an animal rights activist, Mrs. Henrietta

Jane Monroe, a quirky beginning for a hospital even by British standards. The hospital was erected in Strathdon, an old Italianate villa built by developer George Todd decades earlier, and it later expanded into other nearby houses. (For years, the outpatient department operated out of the villa's stable and coach house.) The hospital opened in 1902, when the Chestertons were living just down the street. It's very possible, even likely because of its convenience, that either Gilbert or Frances, or both, received medical care there. Although Lord Battersea's mansion blocks are still thriving, the hospital is no longer there; it was demolished in 1972.

This stretch of Prince of Wales Drive, including Chesterton's Overstrand Mansions home and the Battersea Hospital is clearly the backdrop for *Whose Body?* Anyone familiar with the street, or willing to spend some time virtually traversing Prince of Wales Drive in Google Street View, will readily recognize the setting. The murderer in the novel lives at St. Luke's House, adjoining St. Luke's Hospital on Prince of Wales Drive in Battersea. Sayers' principal victim was last seen alive on Alexandra Avenue traveling towards Prince of Wales Drive, on his way to a fateful visit with the murderer at St. Luke's House. At one point, the murderer has a cab drop him off at 50 Overstrand Mansions to disguise his true destination, then dashes down the street to his home. *Nota bene*: when Chesterton lived at No. 48, *this would have been his entranceway!* Later the murderer carries a corpse to the roof of St. Luke's House, then crosses over to the roof of the adjoining mansion block of "Queen Caroline Mansions," and deposits the body in the bath of a top floor flat, No. 59.

Sayers' knowledge of this part of Battersea almost *has* to be connected in some way with Chesterton. She lived in Bloomsbury, near Fleet Street, on the other side of the Thames, at 24 Great James Street, and Londoners are notoriously neighborhood-bound. How, then, did Sayers come upon Battersea as a setting? Did Sayers as a student at Oxford, obviously a major fan of Chesterton, seek out places connected with her hero's past, as many Chestertonians do today? Did the Chestertons ever invite her to their home?

Sayers makes some minor alterations to further the purposes of her plot. The fictitious hospital is clearly near Alexandra Avenue, in the middle of the mansion blocks, not on the western end, and the residence

associated with the hospital, St. Luke's House, obviously adjoins the fictitious Queen Caroline Mansions, with a roof at nearly the same level as, and only a few feet from the Queen Caroline roof. Perhaps, in her imagination, she simply moved the National Anti-Vivisection Hospital and its associated buildings next to Primrose Mansions on the east side of Alexandra Avenue and renamed them Queen Caroline Mansions or perhaps she imagined an entirely new eighth mansion block. In any case, although the names have been changed to protect the innocent – and to protect Sayers from libel

suits – it's quite clear that she took her inspiration from the National Anti-Vivisection Hospital, Lord Battersea's mansion block developments, and even Chesterton's own entranceway.

I'd like to imagine Gilbert reading the manuscript of *Whose Body?* before its publication, gratefully taking childlike delight in recognizing every detail of the setting. In any case, I think it's clear that her use of the setting so closely associated with Chesterton is a pointed homage to a writer Sayers deeply admired. ☞

JOHN HISSONG runs the Cleveland Chesterton Society.

CAN'T YOU TAKE A JOKE?

■ Christendom has no more truly Christian quality, even in its degradation, than the power of laughing at itself. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, AUG. 5, 1911)

■ A joke can be so big that it breaks the roof of the stars. ("THE DICKENS PERIOD," *CHARLES DICKENS*)

■ Honesty is never solemn; it is only hypocrisy that can be that. Honesty always laughs, because things are so laughable. ("A PLEA FOR HASTY JOURNALISM," *THE APOSTLE AND THE WILD DUCKS*)

■ It is impossible to caricature that which caricatures itself. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, DEC. 16, 1911)

■ It is absolutely useless and absurd to tell a man that he must not joke about sacred subjects. It is useless and absurd for a simple reason; because there are no subjects that are not sacred subjects. (*DAILY NEWS*, SEPT. 1, 1906)

■ I think we may jest on any subject. But I do not think that we may jest on any occasion. (*DAILY NEWS*, SEPT. 1, 1906)

■ Being funny has nothing to do with being untrue or undesirable. (*DAILY NEWS*, SEPT. 14, 1907)

■ His jokes may be much worse in your opinion than they are in his opinion; but after all they must be jokes; they cannot be entirely shapeless mysteries, like many modern works of philosophy. ("SHERLOCK HOLMES," *A HANDFUL OF AUTHORS*)

■ Our very pleasure in pure fancies should consist partly in the certainty that they are not facts. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, MAY 15, 1909)



“The Child that played with moon and sun
Is playing with a little hay.”

G.K. Chesterton



Virginia



TRUTH IN THE STATE OF TRANSMISSION

The Soul of Education



The 2023 Chesterton Schools Network Summit

[**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In our last issue, we reported on the annual Chesterton Conference, but we waited till this issue to talk about the conference before the conference: The amazing CSN Summit. About 300 people from over 50 schools gathered for three days of talks and seminars and workshops. And now we will hear from some of those who attended.]

AS A NEW headmaster, and as one new to the Chesterton Schools Network entirely, there were numerous things that I thought needed to be done or led in certain ways that would be ideal for the flourishing of the school. I hadn't, however, heard the network talk about such things in the lead-up to the conference or in any of the preparations I was given by the board. I knew not if I should talk about these ideas or just get on with them as obvious points of improvement or even just to forget about them as too *avant garde* (or more aptly: outdated!). To my astonishment, not only did I hear these same ideas from other member schools, but these ideas were themselves being preached from the pulpit by the network representatives. It sure filled me with joy to know that Chesterton Academies are truly on the same page.

JEREMY DUO

Headmaster, Chesterton Academy of Fort Worth

I EXPERIENCED the sheer quiet power (there's a Chesterton paradox for you) occurring behind the scenes of all the schools. Chesterton quipped that the last great act of rebellion was to be Orthodox, and that "there never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy." I excitedly felt like a thief in the night, a soldier strategizing with his troops in the war against Modernism, not using the modern educational guns of sparkles and vogue untried methods, but with the quiet but penetrating sword of orthodoxy.

ZACH SUMMERS

Headmaster, Chesterton Academy of St. Margaret Clitherow
Knoxville, Tennessee

OUR ACADEMY began six years ago in Mount Angel, a small rural town in Oregon. We have 55 students this year, and the appeal of the school draws families from about a fifty-mile radius. My experience with this school has shown me that there is something special about the Chesterton Academy, but it was only through the conference that I truly discovered what I was a part of. Chesterton is not just a school, it is a movement. More than that, it is an educational revolution, and one I believe is being led by the Holy Spirit.

I have read (in awe) stories about saints who founded multiple schools or orphanages or hospitals, wondering how they could do so much so quickly, only to realize that it is singularly the Spirit who can move so swiftly through the heart of the Church. Looking around at the hundreds of other Chestertonians at the conference, I realized for the first time that I was not just reading about some movement of the Spirit from the past but was part of that movement right now. My advice to any reader considering founding a Chesterton Academy near you? Join the revolution.

DR. RYAN MAINARD
Board President,
Chesterton Academy
of the Willamette Valley

MY OBSERVATIONS from the CSN Summit? Three things: the remarkable growth of the network and (as a consequence) the conference; the commitment to mission; and the joy among all who attended. What an honor it was to be part of the conference!

DR. PAMELA PATNODE
Program Director for Certificate
in Catholic School Leadership,
The Saint Paul Seminary

THIS WASN'T just a bunch of people looking for a networking opportunity. This was an array of various, brilliant minds who wanted to connect their fields of knowledge to the ultimate point of learning: the discovery and worship of the Truth, Who loves us and gave His life for us. The conference was packed with prayer and study, and many hours well into the night were nourished with deep discussions of theology. It was a magnificent experience.

JACK RYAN
Faculty, Chesterton
Academy of Saint Louis

Fr. Joseph Johnson, CSN Chaplain, offers a meditation on forming the souls of students.

IT WAS ASTONISHING really, and yet what would I have expected from a group who follows the example of G.K. Chesterton?

LISA WILLIAMS
Founding Board Member, Stella Maris
Chesterton Academy
San Clemente, California

THE ANNUAL SUMMIT – just like the CSN curriculum itself – can only be described as a journey of the mind and soul. The seminars delved into the various facets of Chesterton Classical Education. The conference compelled those present to reflect on life and literature. The Chesterton schools are quietly reclaiming the hearts of educators and education and planting the seeds of Beauty, Truth, Goodness, and Hope. We journey through centuries of thought, leading us here and now today. We are faced with a choice: what legacy will we leave behind us as we journey through our brief life?

IVANA QUADRELLI
Faculty, Chesterton Academy of St. Joseph
Dayton, Ohio





WHO WOULD voluntarily take a week out of their summer vacation and willingly sign themselves up for an indoor academic conference? Who in their right mind would do such a thing? Well, I would, and in fact, I did do such a thing – alongside numerous other faculty and staff of various Chesterton Academies across the country. Attending the CSN Summit as a first-timer, I came into the conference week expecting to leave logistically informed and prepared (which, thankfully, I was); but I also left having been inspired, fueled, and ready to embark upon the exciting adventure of the year ahead!

ANNA REGNIER

Faculty, Chesterton Academy
of the St. Croix Valley
Stillwater, Minnesota

THE MASSES and the gathering of people of faith confirmed and reinforced my vocation as a teacher at Chesterton Academy of Sacramento. Also, I was impressed by the dedication and professionalism of the different network schools. The whole venture, the food, and individual breakout sessions were well planned and well done.

JEFFREY E. SCUDDER

Faculty, Chesterton Academy of Sacramento

FOR MY TEAM, the CSN Summit brought immense encouragement and clarity of purpose. Even more than the practical takeaways, from resources and connections to colleagues around the country, the power of the reverent daily Mass, paired with plenary talks on themes that hit close to home, brought into focus for us all what matters the most. All who attended came away with a stronger shared sense of purpose, and for myself, a greater urgency to bring the full faculty along in future years.

THOMAS THOITS

Headmaster, Chesterton
Academy of Annapolis

◀ *Dr. Joshua Russell
(center) gathers a ring
of school leaders.*

FAITH, FRIENDSHIP, and formation all in a few days! I have attended the Chesterton Schools Network Summit for the last 5 years and look forward to the upcoming year. Our staff, faculty, and board enjoy fellowship with old friends, making new ones and – best part – face challenges together, share lessons

*Greg Billion runs a
Socratic seminar on
Plato's Republic.*



learned, and enjoy each school's success! Attending this conference is a must for everyone involved with Chesterton Schools.

AZIN CLEARY

Co-Founder and Executive Director,
Chesterton Academy of Annapolis

FOR ME, the Chesterton Conference was an "Ephphatha" experience. Just like the Lord "opened up" the ears of the deaf man, the Conference opened me up to how best to bring the Lord to all my students in all the disciplines I teach.

JOSE LUCAS BADUE

Faculty, Chesterton Academy of Annapolis

THE JOY and levity of Chesterton came through in a big way. I left wanting to return with our entire faculty next year. There will be something for everyone.

ADAM DICKERSON

Headmaster, Martin Saints
Classical High School
Oreland, Pennsylvania

AS A FIRST-TIME attendee working to open a Chesterton Academy in August of 2024, and a lifelong Catholic, I have never been part of a conference where everyone I came in contact with was so incredibly



Patrick Lechner is a fountain of wisdom in discussing how to teach literature.

excited, joyful, and a true, intentional disciple of Jesus Christ. It was incredibly beautiful and edifying to witness and left me energized, humbled, and hopeful for the future of our beautiful and universal Church!

ERIKA HAYES

Board Chair, Chesterton
Academy of St. Joan of Arc
Muncie, Indiana

THIS YEAR'S CSN Summit exceeded all expectations, from insights shared by keynote speakers to updates and unveilings of new and enhanced resources cultivated by the Chesterton Schools Network. Adding to this were the strategic break out sessions, where the Summit organizers miraculously pivoted to add extra hours in the day to include 'part two' sessions (at the request of many!) so as to continue the discussions and future planning. Round it out with incredible networking opportunities, meals, and evening socials shared in deep, forward-thinking discussions and laughs with fellow leaders, educators, and boards. This could not have been achieved without the Holy Spirit.

◀ *Laura Ahlquist
inspires the
drama circle.*

ASHLEY MCBRIDE TAYLOR

Board Chair, Chesterton Academy
of St. Benedict Columbus, Ohio



THE HOMILIES OF FATHER BROWN

*"What do you mean – reality?" demanded Grimes after a bristling silence.
"I mean common sense," said Father Brown.*

The Queer Feet

By Chris Chan

(Warning: Spoilers for
"The Queer Feet" follow.)

IN THE SECOND STORY in the "Flambeau Conversion Trilogy,"

Father Brown saves a priceless set of silverware. After visiting the exclusive Vernon Hotel to administer the Last Rites to a dying waiter, Father Brown uses a little office there to write down the man's last words. His scribbling is interrupted by the sound of footsteps, and without knowing for certain that a crime has been committed, he correctly deduces from the flimsiest evidence that a theft is occurring.

The Vernon Hotel is the site of the annual dinner of The Twelve True Fishermen, a very elite club filled with men who definitely do not make their livings by sailing out into the sea and catching fish. The highlight of their annual elaborate meal is the fish course, which is always served with special silverware, each piece encrusted with a pearl. This unique and valuable set is exactly the sort of treasure that attracts Flambeau. As all of the members of the club and all of the waiters are dressed in black evening dress, the casual observer would find it impossible to distinguish the two groups by sight.

Flambeau's disguise is not composed of wigs and makeup but instead is nothing but pure attitude. In front of the Twelve True Fishermen, he adopts a pose of a hurriedly efficient waiter, quickly making adjustments to the table. When he's around the hotel staff, he takes on the persona of an indolent, sybaritic member of the upper classes, enjoying a luxurious evening. The waiters think him a gentleman, and vice versa. When Father Brown hears a pair of feet first walking with the quick and measured tread of a waiter, and then switching to the comfortable swagger of an aristocrat, he realizes it's the same man rapidly shifting his attitude and leaps to the correct conclusion about who's strolling down the corridor.

Upon challenging Flambeau and convincing the thief to return the silverware, Father Brown returns them and cannot resist adding some commentary:

Father Brown got to his feet, putting his hands behind him. "Odd, isn't it," he said, "that a thief and a vagabond should repent, when so many who are rich and secure remain hard and frivolous, and without fruit for God or man? But there, if you will excuse me, you trespass a little upon my province. If you doubt the penitence as a practical fact, there are your knives and forks. You are The Twelve True Fishers, and there are all your silver fish. But He has made me a fisher of men."

"Did you catch this man?" asked the colonel, frowning.

Father Brown looked him full in his frowning face. "Yes," he said, "I caught him, with an unseen hook and an invisible line which is long enough to let him wander to the ends of the world, and still to bring him back with a twitch upon the thread."

This passage was a major inspiration for Evelyn Waugh's classic novel *Brideshead Revisited*. The idea of a lost (or at least wandering) soul as a fish on a line, which can be reeled back by God at any moment, became a foreshadowing metaphor for the fates of many of the characters, who despite their decisions and actions, were all eventually brought back to the Church. This foreshadows the next story, "The Flying Stars," which completes "The Flambeau Conversion Trilogy."

In "Queer Feet," Chesterton, through Father Brown,

is making some rather pointed remarks about the quirks of the class system, and the rather arbitrary lines that separate various groups. Every few paragraphs, there is a little quip or comment about their worldviews, such as “ghosts were to them an embarrassment, like beggars.” They aren’t excoriated, but Chesterton is giving their noses a little tweak.

To paraphrase Roald Dahl’s line in “The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar,” the Twelve True Fishermen weren’t bad men, but they weren’t particularly good men, either. Riffing off of the *SNL* character Linda Richman, “the Twelve True Fishermen were neither true nor fishermen.” To the best of the reader’s knowledge, they broke none of man’s laws, but despite their wealth and social status, they did little to improve the lives of others or their broader society. Their annual dinner was a frivolity, a set of traditions without meaning other than the opportunity to luxuriate in their wealth and exclusivity.

When the Fishermen realize that one of the waiters has died, when a moment ago their primary concern was a dozen silver forks and as many knives, the omniscient narrator of the tale notes that “it may be (so supernatural is the word death) that each of those idle men looked for a second at his soul, and saw it as a small dried pea.” The words have been carefully chosen. The word used to describe the fishermen is “idle.” Their great sin is sloth. Sloth is more than just inactivity. It’s

Needed: PEN PALS FOR PRISONERS

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the ability to do something useful or helpful and instead choosing to focus on frivolities. And whatever pangs of guilt they felt, they only lasted for a moment before they returned to their existences of personal amusement.

Father Brown preached to two men that night. The first, the master thief Flambeau, repented of his crime and returned the stolen silver. The second was Colonel Pound, representing the dozen respectable wealthy men who were challenged to examine their lives of idle luxury, and in the end, the only change they made was to switch the color of their evening coats from black to green. When Father Brown preached, both listened, but only Flambeau took genuine action to save his soul. And even then, Flambeau needed one more homily in order to change permanently. ☞

CHRIS CHAN is a historian, information scientist, mystery writer, and literary critic from Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



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While others cut Zeus
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The Lord set the bar high for Peter,
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teeter.
But with the Holy Spirit
He could easily clear it.

Alas, Robert Falcon Scott
Has a South Pole burial plot.
He was unable to survive there
Because he tried to drive there.

Orson Welles
Cast cinematic spells,
Such as knocking us dead
With a film about a sled.

Some dismiss Hilaire Belloc
As a curmudgeonly relic.
But in predicting things vile,
He beat them by a servile state mile.



THE SURPRISE

*"There are some people who would hardly accept any direct happiness,
unless you sprang it on them as a surprise." –G.K. CHESTERTON*

Waiting in the Wings

By John Walker

SHORTLY AFTER MY ONE-MAN SHOW on Chesterton *The Golden Key* aired on EWTN in 2017, the director, Mike Masny, sent me an email. He told me that EWTN had decided, upon receiving positive reviews, to turn the one-man show into a pilot for a new series. They wanted to begin the brainstorming sessions of what the show would be.

In short order we explored the parameters of the purgatorial setting that *Chesterton Station* established with the idea that other visitors traveling through the afterlife might stop over at the station. The concept offered us a myriad of guest star characters. Writers, theologians, and friends of Chesterton's all could stop by the station and engage in scenarios that would not only unpack some of Chesterton's viewpoints, but theirs as well. Chesterton would serve as a guide to these souls traveling through the afterlife. The theme would give viewers a glimpse into a deeper relationship with Christ. But there was still one hiccup. Something gnawed at my psyche.

As exciting as this new project was, the actor in me was missing something. After filming the first two episodes, I went to one of my most favorite annual events, the Chesterton Conference. One evening, as I sat there, watching Chuck Chalberg perform Chesterton on stage, I immediately discovered what that missing item was. After acting on the professional stage and over 100 plays, it had been almost 20 years since I had been on stage. A long time to be waiting in the wings. So, as I sat there, watching Chuck perform before a live audience, I thought to myself, I needed to return to my natural habitat, the theater.

There is nothing that compares to the immediacy of an audience response when you're on stage, the pin-drop moment when both you and the audience are totally engaged in the drama. Nothing really can replace

that or replicate that. This is why theater has existed and continues to thrive since the ancient Greeks, or even further back to Neanderthal man, dancing around a fire, dressed as an animal, pretending to imitate the outcome of the hunt. The experience of theater can never be replaced.

As fate would have it, Chuck was thinking of hanging up his Chesterton cape. Hard to believe that the man who in 1998 created the Chesterton performance would ever consider stepping down. But he felt that this might be the right time. Although I was thrilled to pursue this sort of performance at any conference, I would not do it without Chuck's approval. Chuck gave me his blessing, and at the next conference, I made my debut.

The next conference was as always, a joy to attend. But for me, that conference was punctuated by bouts of anxiety about my very first public performance as Chesterton. As I said, it had been 20 years since I had performed on the stage. Since then, I had focused so much effort on teaching at Franciscan University, or filming *Chesterton Station*, that I had a real concern if I could do a live performance well. But before I knew it, I was introduced by Chuck and strode into the fray smoking a cigar, heading to the podium. That was my first mistake. I had played it safe. I would be giving a talk with a script, not acting. I vowed to not play it safe at the next conference. No self-respecting actor would go out on stage with the script.

Four months before the next conference, I returned to the acting craft. I did my research, I fashioned a script, I relentlessly memorized it for months, and I walked on stage for a live performance. This time I would be in character, had memorized my lines, selected my objectives and tactics, and did what I did best. Acting on stage in character is a very surreal, out-of-body experience. Your due diligence in creating the character keeps you focused on being the character, while a small part of your actor brain is paying attention to the roadmap of the performance. Sir John Gielgud once said that good acting is merely trying to keep the audience from coughing or reading their program. The 30 years of acting in so many Shakespeare plays, and in so many professional theaters returned with a vengeance. It had not been 20 years of waiting in the wings, it had been 20 years of building up the water behind the dam. That night, the dam broke.

I started acting in high school and got my first professional gig in summer stock. At 15 I knew there was no other career for me but that of the professional actor. It was not about fame or applause, or any of the old anachronisms that people apply to actors. It was not about low self-esteem and insecurity which caused a person to hide behind a character. It was the craft of acting, creating a role, the training, the work before the performance. The craft Stanislavsky put forth in the acting Bible, *An Actor Prepares*.

It is hard to explain the actor's craft to anyone who isn't an actor. It seems that someone just dresses up and says somebody else's words. That is the tip of the iceberg. There is training, research, and months of work prior to the performance. Also, if the actor does it well, both he and the audience are transported to a new reality where disbelief is suspended for a short time, where the audience and the actor share in the immediacy of live theater. In Kabuki theater, there is a shinshoku priest of the Shintō religion of Japan

performing a religious ceremony with the actors backstage in order to help them truly become the character. In the Greek theater, there were supplications made to the gods before taking the stage for the same purpose. I know that I make many prayers before a performance! Acting has always been a sacred profession ever since our savior took on the role of a man to fulfill his rescue mission in the human drama.

In many ways, theater has modeled civilization as the Greeks intended to. It is no wonder the medieval church used theater as part of a religious revival, to impact the faithful with a festival that gave them a deeper understanding of their faith. And there's no accident that the director, actors, and audience form a trinity. Blessed Pope John Paul and theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar – to name a few – unpack this concept in their writings. Chesterton, as always, puts it best: "Shakespeare said all the world's a stage... but Shakespeare acted on the much finer principle that a stage is all the world."

Perhaps we are all waiting in the wings to discover the role God has written for each of us and play it truthfully. ☞

DR. JOHN WALKER, the new official Chesterton Impersonator, is the Associate Professor of Theatre at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

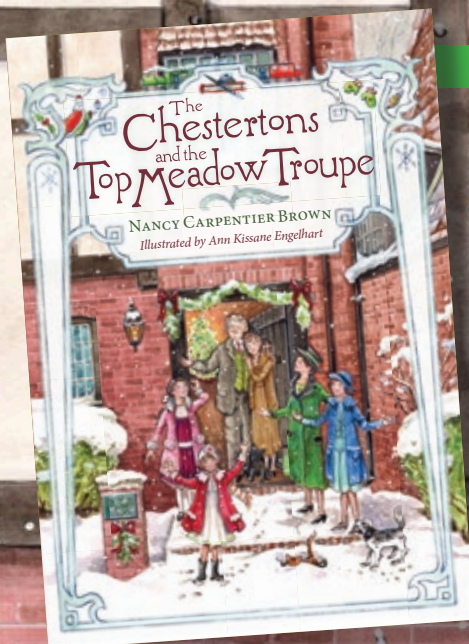


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MISCELLANY OF MEN

*"I cannot do my duty as a true modern by cursing everybody
who made me whatever I am."* —G.K. CHESTERTON

If I Had Been a Man, and Large

Alice Meynell (1847–1928)

By David P. Deavel

WRITING TO FRANCES, A YOUNG GILBERT ENTHUSED, “I have been taken to see Mrs. Meynell, poet and essayist, who is enthusiastic about the Wild Knight and is lending it to all her friends.” This was no small matter, for Alice Meynell was then an established poet and writer while Chesterton was still up-and-coming.

Mrs. Meynell, after all, had not only known popular success but been praised by Ruskin, Francis Thompson, Coventry Patmore, and George Meredith, among others. She was considered for the position of Poet Laureate of England after Tennyson’s death in 1892. She would be considered again in 1913 when Alfred Austin died, losing out this time to Robert Bridges. Despite this disappointment, she was inducted into the Academic Committee of the Royal Society of Literature in 1914. Sir Henry Newbolt said at her induction that her poems demonstrated a “union of wit and religious emotion as rare now as it was characteristic of the seventeenth century in England.”

Though she thought herself more an essayist, Chesterton believed her a true poet. In his essay “From Meredith to Rupert Brooke,” he attributed Francis Thompson’s greatness “to Alice Meynell, a woman who was a poet (not a poetess) of the sort that women were least supposed to be; an intrinsically intellectual poet.” He expanded upon this judgment in the chapter of his *Autobiography* titled “Some Literary Celebrities.” There he wrote that she “was no aesthete; and there was nothing about her that can decay.” Comparing her life to “a slender tree with flowers and fruit for all seasons,” he could detect “no drying up of the sap of her spirit, which was in ideas.” Indeed, this mystical intellectual nature of hers

was great because it was “alive to an immortal beauty where all the Pagans could only mix beauty with mortality.” This mysticism had something of mystery about it, for she had “the ghostly gravity of a shadow and her passing something of the fugitive accident of a bird,” but Chesterton declared that she was herself neither fugitive nor shadow. “She was,” he concluded, “a message from the Sun.”

Though Chesterton defended her, others were not so sure. The mother of eight children (one died in infancy), Meynell “always preserved,” according to one daughter, “the privacy of a stranger in her personal things”—even among those closest to her. Frances Chesterton wrote in her diary that Alice was “nice, intelligent, but affected (I suppose unconsciously),” and said she was one of “the precious people”

who “worry me.”

Born Alice Christina Gertrude Thompson on October 11, 1847, Meynell was the daughter of Thomas Thompson and his second wife, Christiana Weller. Thompson was the legitimated son of a Creole mistress and a wealthy Englishman. He inherited several houses and £40 thousand (about \$5 million). With his friend Charles Dickens, he heard Weller, a concert pianist and beauty, play. Both pursued her, though Dickens was married at the time. Thompson won her hand; Dickens attended the wedding.




Alice Meynell (1847–1928)

The Thompsons spent much of Alice and her sister Elizabeth's childhood traveling all over Europe, living mostly in Italy. When Alice was sixteen, the family settled on the Isle of Wight. Christiana, a dramatic and loving mother, became Catholic in the mid-1860s; Alice followed her in 1868. (The rest of the family was received over the next twelve years.) Alice was herself dramatic, becoming infatuated with the priest who received her into the Church (he had to break off ties eventually), but also poetic. Family friend John Ruskin praised some poems she sent him in 1866 as well as her first poetry collection in 1875.

Catholicism, poetry, and romance came together in odd ways. Coventry Patmore, twenty-four years older, became infatuated with her; this time *she* would have to break off the relationship. She reciprocated with Wilfrid Meynell, a writer five years her junior who had converted from Quakerism and was beguiled by Alice's poem, "One Heart Shall Be Thy Garden." Though a poor journalist, he won her heart and her wealthy father's grudging acceptance. The two lived in Kensington, where the children were born (two, Viola and Frances, themselves became successful authors). Husband and wife wrote for popular publications such as *The Spectator* and *Pall Mall Gazette* while Wilfrid edited *The Weekly Register*.

Together, the two founded *Merry England*, which first published Francis Thompson's work. Alice and Wilfrid took in the opium-addicted poet and arranged the publication of his first volume of poetry.

Perhaps surprisingly, given Chesterton's admiration, Meynell was a well-known suffragist, founding the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society in 1911. Though she told Wilfrid, "I am not militant," she did indeed march for the right to vote and engaged in other social reform movements. The Great War was a difficult time for her, but her poetry, which ebbed and flowed, flowed during this time. In 1916 she wrote "To Shakespeare," which she called "my one, one masterpiece."

Plagued with health difficulties throughout her life, including intense migraines (which she called "wheels"), she died on November 27, 1922. Chesterton's affection for her was not surprising, for it was reciprocated. Her daughter Viola's memoir of her mother included Alice's declarations of affection, even possessiveness, about Gilbert: "I hope the papers are nice to my Chesterton. He is mine much more, really, than Belloc's." The affection was evidently rooted in a sense of identification: "If I had been a man, and large, I should have been Chesterton." 

DAVID P. DEAVEL is Associate Professor of Theology at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas.

WHY DO YOU ASK ME RHETORICAL QUESTIONS? 6

■ If Nature herself is so kind a mother, why should anybody be so pessimistic as to shrink from motherhood? (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, AUG. 26, 1922)

■ Why does the perfect social state always seem to be a state of perfect boredom stiffened only by self-righteousness? (*LONDON MAGAZINE*, AUGUST, 1924)

■ If there is not real responsibility for anything, why should we be responsible for either justice or mercy towards murderers? (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, JUNE 23, 1928)

■ Why are we bound to treat what is natural as something actually superior to what is supernatural? (*G.K.'S WEEKLY*, SEPT. 7, 1933)

■ Does anybody realise what a queer and fantastic faith is covered by the very name of Adam Smith? (*G.K.'S WEEKLY*, MAY 3, 1934)

■ Is it your experience of this world that the very best and happiest thing always happens? (*LISTER, OCT. 3, 1934*)

■ Moslems and Calvinists might unite on predestination; but do we want them to unite on predestination? (*DAILY NEWS*, JAN. 18, 1913)

■ Is it possible to get people to listen to reason? (*NEW WITNESS*, APR. 28, 1922)



BOOK REVIEWS

"The opinions which nobody can agree with are mostly in the books that nobody can read." –G.K. CHESTERTON

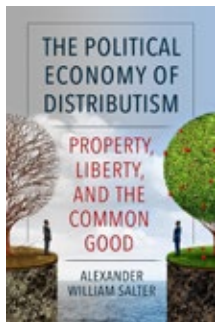
A Scholarly Respect for Distributism

The Political Economy of Distributism: Property, Liberty, and the Common Good

By Alexander William Salter

The Catholic University of America Press, 2023.

238 pages.



Reviewed by
Chuck Chalberg

A professional economist and a devoted (amateur?) distributist, Alexander William Salter has done his best to merge his vocation and his avocation in this dogged, even passionate, intellectual pursuit of that ever elu-

sive goal of achieving the “common good.” The result is a book that is well worth reading, if you are an economist or a distributist – or, like Salter, both at once. But it would be especially worthwhile reading for the Hedges and Gedges of our world, if only they could be coaxed into doing so.

Salter’s real targets in these pages are the advocates and practitioners of bigness, whether they be bureaucrats or business types, politicians or intellectuals. No surprise here. Salter, after all, is a spirited defender of the goals and ideas, if not necessarily the economic ideas or insights, of either Belloc or Chesterton.

In fact, the first half of the book is comprised of what are essentially extended essays on two Belloc books, *The Servile State* and *An Essay on the Restoration of Property*, followed by similar chapters on Chesterton’s *What’s Wrong with the World* and *The Outline of Sanity*.

As an economist, Salter is gently – and on occasion, not so gently – critical of Chesterton and Belloc as the economists they never claimed to be. As a

self-proclaimed distributist (Salter has yet to migrate to localism or any variation thereof), he is warmly sympathetic to Chesterton and Belloc as the *political* economists that he deems them to have been.

Professor of Economics (Texas Tech) that he is, Salter might have given either of them at best a gentleman’s C had they been his students. Donning his economist’s hat, Salter is forced to concede that both “historically and theoretically” there are “economic gains to bigness.” In addition, he judges that Chesterton overlooks (ignores?) the crucial, even magical, and certainly inevitably necessary, role of prices in a market economy.

But Catholic distributist that he also is, Salter praises both Belloc and Chesterton as social philosophers and critics of modern industrial societies. More than that, each understood what he understands to be of fundamental importance, namely the crucial connection between individual property owning and a free society. More than *that*, all three understand that there is a crucial connection between property ownership, vibrant family life, *and* the common good.

Here all three are precisely on the same page. By way of speaking for both Belloc and Chesterton, Salter declares their adherence to the social teaching of the Catholic Church is key since that teaching puts one on a “straight road to distributism.” *That* said, Salter cannot resist giving himself some wiggle room by adding that this particular road “may not be the only road.” Apparently, he wants his readers to think, and perhaps he thinks, that it is possible to believe in distributism, promote localism in your own community, *and* still shop, at least occasionally, at Walmart.

Is Salter searching for some sort of third way between capitalism and socialism? He denies as much, even though Catholic social teaching rejects both pure capitalism and pure socialism. And yet he seems to be promoting some version of what might be termed common good capitalism, which amounts to some sort of middle way between Hudge and Gudge, between a market economy and a planned economy, between one’s adherence to Chestertonian/Bellocian ideals and one’s

less than ideally Chestertonian/Bellocian practices (Walmart, anyone?).

In his defense, Salter wants nothing at all to do with a planned economy of any variety. That becomes quite clear in the second half of the book, as Salter returns to his self-assigned role as thoughtful book reviewer. Here he gives the penultimate word to one Wilhelm Röpke. Born in 1899, Röpke was a German Lutheran economist and author who was committed to both “rigorous scientific economics and a Christian-humanist moral philosophy.”

Well-versed in the writings of Belloc and Chesterton, Röpke “tempered his enthusiasm for markets and democracy (with) an unshakeable belief that man’s commitments to the permanent things . . . not only preceded economic arrangements but also made those arrangements possible.”

Three results of his enthusiasm and beliefs were *The Economics of the Free Society* (1937), *The Social Crisis of Our Time* (1942), and *A Humane Economy* (1960). Salter sees these books as less an attempt on Röpke’s part to find a middle way than an effort to achieve a “balancing act” between economic reality and distributist goals.

As Salter sees it, our Hodge-and-Gudge-dominated western societies need “both pillars (meaning markets and government) to carry forward the distributist project.” For Röpke, pricing is a necessary market function, while helping to maintain competitive markets is always a “just and necessary” state function. For Salter, distributists should have nothing to fear from price theory, but if Röpke is right “they have a good deal to fear from ignoring it.”

They? Salter prefers to regard Röpke as a “fellow traveler” of distributism. Fair enough, since that is pretty much what Salter is as well. In any case, such a designation is a term of affection, not approbation. To be a fellow traveling distributist is far removed from fellow traveling with communism.

Salter goes on to credit Röpke with combining the best of Belloc and Chesterton, as all three search for the best way to achieve a “free, just, de-collectivized, de-centralized, and de-proletarianized” (did he mean proletarianized?) society.”

In the end, Röpke’s message is Salter’s message: Markets, while “necessary for a humane economy, are not enough.” In a few more well-Saltered words, “only

a market economy, resting on both genuine ownership and competition, can deliver the goods. The question is how to humanize it.”

Ah, that *is* the question. Related to it is a Salter question: How do we get there? He readily concedes that at this juncture there is no clear road map. At the same time, he refuses to regard this as anything close to an insurmountable problem. After all, such was the case for Belloc, Chesterton, and Röpke as well. For the time being, therefore, it is quite enough that each of the three is pointing in the right direction.

All three, plus Salter himself, seem to agree that politics can never be the solution, much less the ultimate answer. And yet, once again Salter wiggles for room with a nod in the direction of something called the American Solidarity party. Created in 2011, its platform is “not shy about its debt to distributism.” It’s also more than a few votes shy of relevance, totaling only 42,305 for its presidential candidate in 2020. Thank goodness we will always have Chesterton and Belloc, as well as the Alexander Salters of Texas Tech and elsewhere, to keep steering us in the right direction. ☞

CHUCK CHALBERG writes from
Bloomington, Minnesota.

As Fate Would Have It

Chestertonian Calvinism: A Brief Explanation and Defense

By Douglas Wilson

Moscow, Idaho, Blog and MaBlog
Press and Tire Center, 2022.

156 pages.



Reviewed by **Dale Ahlquist**

G.K. Chesterton was not anti-Semitic, but he has been accused of it. Relentlessly. However, Chesterton *was* anti-Calvinist, and relentlessly so. And yet, he has been adored and appreciated by Calvinists, and now even

apparently defended against the charge – by a Calvinist pastor no less. The twist is better than a pretzel. I would say, “than a good detective story,” however, the mystery remains. The provocative title and subtitle of the book do not quite deliver on the promise.

When I read Chesterton before I was a Catholic, taking it all in no particular order, and slowly realizing that at some point he had become a Catholic, I just ignored it. There was too much good stuff to enjoy, and I wasn’t going to allow anything to spoil it. So I just kept working around it. I merely assumed (as does Rev. Wilson) that GKC was wrong about that bit and that somehow this nagging problem would resolve itself. It was a great relief to discover that I was the one who was wrong. Had I continued on the twisted path I might have one day written as incomprehensible a book as Rev. Wilson has.

The author obviously loves Chesterton, but he has to justify that love. He admits that his book is somewhat all over the place, but he claims that Chesterton’s writings are the same way. Unfortunately for him, that’s not the case. While GKC’s writing is about everything, it is held together by a solid, consistent, and coherent philosophy and theology. Rev. Wilson’s book does not demonstrate the same trait. For example, he has a very mixed-up approach to the sacraments. He does not accept the Catholic priesthood and yet likens Protestant pastors to “ordained electricians,” theologians who know how to correctly wire a house. So, who “ordains” them? By what authority? Similarly, he refers to “Classic Protestantism.” That’s an oxymoron. Classicism represents tradition – derived from both a Christian and a Pagan past. Protestantism is a distinctive and abrupt break from that tradition, not a revival but a rebellion and a rejection. Understandably, he is forced to use a term like “Classic Protestantism” because of what Protestantism has become. After centuries of protesting against everything, including itself, it is not merely without the sacraments, it is without the Creed, in some cases even without Christ. It has even undermined the Bible on which it is based. Perhaps a better term for Rev. Wilson to defend would be “Arrested Protestantism.” Thus far and no farther.

The book seems to be a collection of random notes, and in some cases, sermon notes. His affection for GKC comes out in some of his clever phrases, and his pleasant and joyful spirit. But it’s not clear what he is

defending. Is it Chesterton or Calvinism? He does not confront any of Chesterton’s specific criticisms of Calvinism, but he doesn’t even quote Chesterton enough to explain why he likes him so much. Of course, the weakness of any book is that it does not quote Chesterton enough.

He does, however, take up the matter of puritanism. He admits that the Puritans were, as he says it, “well, puritanical.” But it wasn’t supposed to be that way. And now they’ve sort of gotten over it. He calls upon C.S. Lewis for help:

It follows that nearly every association which now clings to the word *puritan* has to be eliminated when we are thinking of the early Protestants. Whatever they were, they were not sour, gloomy, or severe; nor did their enemies bring any such charge against them . . . For [Thomas] More a Protestant was one ‘drone of the new must of lewd lightness of minde and vane gladness of harte’ . . . Protestantism was not too grim, but too glad, to be true . . . Protestant are not ascetics but sensualists.

He is so fond of this passage that he repeats it three times in the book. But I’m not sure it helps his thesis. Chesterton never calls Protestants ascetics. Puritans give up pleasure because it is bad, ascetics give up pleasure because it is good. But ascetics are joyful. They have sacrificed something temporary for a sublime and eternal pleasure. It is sensualists who are not joyful; they pursue pleasure to its dead ends. At any rate, Rev. Wilson, whom we will assume enjoys beer and cigars, disassociates himself from Puritans, even if they were Calvinists. He is as anti-puritan as Chesterton.

But the issue he avoids is the issue that is the focus of GKC’s displeasure with Calvinism: predestination. And its flip side: free will.

All modern madness is the result of philosophies that lock themselves into “the clean, well-lit prison of one idea.” For Calvinists, it was the Sovereignty of God that left no room for free will. The sane man accepts

“All modern madness is the result of philosophies that lock themselves into “the clean, well-lit prison of one idea.” ”

the paradox of fate and free will. But the Calvinist doctrine of predestination paved the way for all the mad philosophies that followed it, whether they were religious or not. They all represent one form of determinism or another, whether it be biological, economic, psychological, racial, social, mechanical, or chemical. No one takes responsibility for anything, and everybody assumes they can get all their money back.

I have read Calvin's *Institutes*. No one should ever have to do that. Perhaps that is why the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* came as such a breath of fresh air – which quite possibly was the movement of the Holy Spirit. Chesterton provides the same freshness.

As I say, this book does not solve the mystery offered by its title. Or, for that matter, the mystery of its cover illustration: a photograph of a dog in an unnatural position on a well-appointed parlor sofa. Disorder among order. Perhaps I missed the point that it is a depiction of an unusual juxtaposition. All I could see was nonsense. ☞

Christmas with the Chestertons

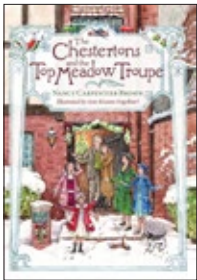
The Chestertons and the Top Meadow Troupe

By Nancy Carpentier Brown

Illustrated by Ann Kissane Englehart

ACS Books, 2023.

241 pages.



Reviewed by **John Walker**

As a young boy, I spent a lot of my childhood in Norway. Not speaking the language fluently and not having any playmates my own age, I spent a lot of time roaming the fields and forests, imagining great adventures. My grandmother had

an extensive library with books of many types. In her library was a collection of E. Nesbit books full of fantastical adventures of young Victorian children in far-away country locations. At age ten, I devoured these



books. After each read I played the adventures out in the garden and countryside of Norway. I have no doubt that these magnificent tales were the reason I discovered Narnia shortly after.

When I had children of my own, and they were reaching the same age I wanted to read good fiction to them. At the time there was a plethora of young readers' series but all of them were either badly written or offered nothing to developing a love literature, a love of wonder, and the love of the imagination. So I returned to the stories by E. Nesbit, and they were a huge hit.

I am so happy that Nancy Brown has written a sequel to *The Chestertons and the Golden Key*. I loved reading that book and returning to that imaginative and playful age of my ten-year-old self. While teaching classes at Franciscan University of Steubenville, I would often carry that book around with me, occasionally just opening it to read a quick page as a sort of palate cleanser, or a reset button for my frame of mind. It was the best anti-depressant because even a short time in the world of Nancy Brown's writings awakens the inner child where everything is an adventure and the

imagination instantly takes flight.

In the new book, we once again meet Clare Nicoll and her sisters, real-life friends (and spiritually adopted daughters) of Gilbert and Frances Chesterton. They experience another sweet adventure together. This one involves, among other things, getting a story published, winning a dog show, and looking for a lost soldier. Of course, it also involves the Chestertons.

Nancy Brown has added new life, authenticity, and integrity to the classic books of E. Nesbit reminding us older readers to read like children again and encouraging young readers of today to be children of wonder and

imagination forevermore. Through a masterful craft of writing, she has brought back that style of writing that made E. Nesbit so popular in her own time and even popular today. If you have young readers, don't hesitate to bring this book and its prequel into their lives. But don't be surprised if you find your children digging for buried treasure in the days to follow.

Nancy Brown deserves our gratitude for returning a childlike wonder and a spirited imagination back to children's literature in stories that parents can depend on to inspire their own children to be children in our present times. 🧸

MORE ABOUT LANGUAGE

■ Most fundamental falsehoods are errors in language as well as in philosophy. Most statements that are unreasonable are really ungrammatical. (ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, OCT. 16, 1909)

■ Every time one man says to another, "Tell us plainly what you mean?" he is assuming the infallibility of language: that is to say, he is assuming that there is a perfect scheme of verbal expression for all the internal moods and meanings of men.

Whenever a man says to another, "Prove

your case; defend your faith," he is assuming the infallibility of language: that is to say, he is assuming that a man has a word for every reality in earth, or heaven, or hell. He knows that there are in the soul tints more bewildering, more numberless, and more nameless than the colours of an autumn forest; he knows that there are abroad in the world and doing strange and terrible service in it crimes that have never been condemned and virtues that have never been christened. Yet he seriously believes that these things can every one of them, in all their tones and semitones, in all their blends and unions, be accurately represented by an arbitrary system of grunts and squeals. (G.F. WATTS)



■ In conversation it is the small words that count. It is the phrases that go to make up, not so much the things said as the way of saying it. It is all the links of language, the "but" and "perhaps" and "after all" and "so to speak" that produce in conversation the sense of what a man really means. (NEW WITNESS, AUG. 5, 1921)

■ Men tell more truth by their metaphors than by their statements. (ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, DEC. 17, 1910)

■ The modern laxity of language has had a great deal to do with the ultimate laxity of conduct. (G.K.'S WEEKLY, JULY 4, 1931)

■ The worst of using strong language is that it produces weak language. (ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, AUG. 28, 1926)

■ All bad language necessarily weakens itself by use. (THE BOOKMAN, DECEMBER, 1932)

■ It is not we but the word that is winged and is immortal; and our only ambition is to help the Divine gift of language and letters to outlive us all. (INTRODUCTION TO ESSAYS BY DIVERSE HANDS, 1926)



NOTTING HILL

"It is easy to show that liberties are local; it is much less easy to prove that Liberty is universal." —G.K. CHESTERTON

Disagree — But Don't Dismiss

By Joe Grabowski

A READER WROTE TO THE MAGAZINE to voice disagreement with the economic ideas presented herein. However, what he really voiced was not disagreement, but dismissal. We ask for a return to disagreement, the only starting point toward true agreement. The reader writes:

Every time I read something in Gilbert on Chesterton and economics, I feel like yelling at my magazine.

Any magazine worth the paper it's printed on ought, from time to time, provoke thoughtful readers to disagree. Yelling at a magazine one is reading is, therefore, not altogether an unwholesome hobby. We do, however, caution against yelling at other people's magazines. Nothing quite disrupts the dentist's waiting room like this pastime.

Don't get me wrong, I love the magazine and Chesterton's work.

We do, too!

I just don't believe that Chesterton, and by extension Mr. Ahlquist, actually understand Capitalism. No human can be perfect.

Here we arrive at a disagreement. Alas, though, it is not the disagreement we *should* be after. The wrong way of disagreeing here, in turn, would be our retorting that perhaps some don't understand Chesterton and, by extension, Mr. Ahlquist and our magazine. But this gets us nowhere. Instead, we should seek for a *better* disagreement; for it is possible that, even after two parties have well and fully understood each other, yet they may still disagree. *That* is the sort of disagreement we seek because it produces the good of real argument.

Chesterton said that the key to argument is that people must first agree in order to disagree. That is to say, we must first push through the temptation merely to

dismiss one another as misunderstanding or not grasping the point, and instead agreeably allow one another's genuine disagreement on the real matters involved. In the present case, I feel safe speaking for Chesterton and for the many in his lifetime and since who have shared his economic views, in saying it feels rather patronizing to be accused of mere ignorance or naïveté. A more productive (not to mention the more gallant and chivalrous) starting point would be to accept that Chesterton and we who follow him actually have understood Capitalism, but disagree as to its merits.

Yet, as our reader says, no human is perfect. All too natural the temptation to want to simply dismiss Chesterton as having not understood Capitalism: this way, one can ignore the force of his argument and evade the trouble of needing to take seriously a giant intellectual of great insight and perspicacity who has looked at a question hard and come to a different answer about it than we.

No human can be perfect. The monopolistic Capitalism that Chesterton describes is what we would now refer to as crony Capitalism or even state sponsored Capitalism, not real Capitalism. One can forgive Chesterton for making this mistake, considering the time period, as this negative description was exactly the economy that fascist Europeans were trying to create.

We repeat here the line "No human being can be perfect," because, though in the original letter it refers back to its antecedents, it can be applied even more fruitfully to what follows. Indeed, this is in many ways the crux of the issue.

Capitalism's exponents seem always to want to have it all their own way. Whatever problems ever can be pointed out in Capitalist systems are chalked up to failures to achieve an *ideal* Capitalism. The problem is that we're not looking at the *true* form of Capitalism.

Yet, when the very same argue against other systems, such as the subsidiarism of local ownership Chesterton espouses, they say precisely that it is too idealistic – and, after all, “No human being can be perfect!” The very reality of human sin and man's imperfection that is at one time appealed to as the final proof Chesterton's system can never be realized is applied in the next breath as the blanket excuse for whatever failures arise in this or that instantiation of Capitalism!

Chesterton himself was far from unaware of human sin and imperfection. He said that the one dogma for which no supernatural proof was ever needed was that of Original Sin. And he was not so very far off from some defenders of Capitalism in his reasoning here; he just arrived at a different conclusion. After all, did he not aver that the problem with Capitalism is that there are too few Capitalists? It is not that Chesterton merely failed, ignorantly, to distinguish between *ideal* Capitalism and the “monopolistic Capitalism” and “crony” or “state sponsored Capitalism” into which it devolves. It is rather that he believed, given human sinfulness, that such devolutions are almost inevitable in a system that relies upon certain concentrations of wealth and power as a central mechanism.

However, if you actually read Adam Smith (who by the way was a strong proponent of Christian charity) you will see something very similar to Distributism in my opinion. For example, Smith's descriptions of the butcher, brewer and baker. “Basic rights” under Capitalism and “degrees of competition” are also interesting concepts (hint, monopoly is not the ideal).

For the sake of argument, let us allow that Smith's (and others') ideals are not very far off from Chesterton's and our own. This again gets us nowhere. The question we still need to argue is *why* the ideal is so very often seemingly so very far off.

Why does Capitalism end up in monopolies, when they are not the ideal? Why can the cronies always cram themselves into positions of control? Whatever we think of what Smith says of the butcher, brewer and

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baker, and what motivates them, why *after* Capitalism there are so many *fewer* butchers, brewers and bakers left to look after their own interests? Why does our meat come off a mechanized factory line? Why were so many small brewers dissolved into multi-national concerns producing flavorless fizzy water? Why is the daily bread of so many the bland, pestilential, pre-sliced bricks of boredom packing grocery store shelves?

You can trust me, after all I am a doctor (of business anyways).

Well, as to that, this appeal to trust has not the force it once had; we demur as to why. Instead, let us close by asking instead for an exchange of mutual trust based not on credentials but on good will. Let us, as Chesterton urges us, find the will to agree to disagree, not in order to go our separate ways in disagreement, but in order to have that wholesome and Christian exchange of ideas that we called an argument. Let us find those ideals where we agree; let us find the ways and means that diverge into disagreement; and let us finally enter into that healthy competition of ideas that may indeed produce abundant fruits.

For our part, we pledge ourselves to trust. You may trust that we will not stop presenting here Chesterton's and our ideas with candor, welcoming disagreement when it arises. We trust and hope that you will continue to seek both agreement and disagreement in these pages, and, if you ever feel cause to yell, that you won't hesitate to give us a holler via another letter.

JOE GRABOWSKI is the Vice-President of the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton

[Our thanks to Jamey Darnell, of State College, Pennsylvania, who wrote the Letter to the Editor.]



THE SPICE OF LIFE

They may end with a whimper But we will end with a bang

Solving the Book Club Problem

By Mark Johnson

AS A YOUNG MAN, I HAD LOFTY VISIONS of the book club I would someday join. It would resemble the fashionable, intellectually super-charged French salons of the 18th century – we’d be an eclectic group of literati, sprinkling witticisms throughout a night’s sparkling discussion on a great book we’d chosen by general acclamation.

As we warmed to our *vinho do Porto*, our discourse would veer to the heart of literature’s meaning, and eventually to the meaning of life itself. We’d stumble out the door at 2:30 am or so, with the night’s theater of the mind still rehearsing in our brains. Together we’d look up at the array of stars in the night sky and marvel at how insignificant they are compared to the celestial richness of our night’s discussion. Sleep on book club nights would be happily out of the question.

In my late 20s, the opportunity at last arrived to help form a book club in the lived world instead of my imaginary one. The result was a breathtaking variation from the French Salon script I had written for it.

I didn’t expect any issues with the individuals I’d invited to join the club – they had literary, cultural, and political inclinations that mirrored my own. But I soon discovered that other complexities of the human animal can rule the day in book clubs. Two members were enthralled by the sound of their own voices, and confident that everyone else was hanging on their every word, eager for more . . . and more and more. These two happily took it upon themselves to supply 80 percent of the discussion.

Even when the motor mouths paused to breathe and others could squeeze in a word and a half, the size and scope of our monthly reading – about 200 pages of text – provoked conversations that meandered here, there, and everywhere. Some members were hell-bent on dissecting the book’s “historical context,” others favored the “textual analysis” school, and still others adopted

the “that-reminds-me-of-what-my-wife-said-to-me-this-morning” frame of mind.

Then there was the problem of how to select our books so as not to provoke a World War III equivalent. Skirmishes flared over the relative value of short stories, novels (classics or modern?), non-fiction, and fantasy. What length of book would work? Some of us spent almost every non-work hour devouring the text, squeezing in just enough sleep to stay alive, while others could barely fit in a 15-minute “pillow read” at the end of the day.

We first tried book selection democracy – using equal-weighted voting. The plebiscite was peaceful enough, but the process provoked heavy-handed, private lobbying to promote each person’s favorite. Split votes occasionally grew into personal resentments, and difficult negotiations produced please-no-one compromises.

The alternative to democracy was worse yet. We tried taking turns selecting the text, but this guaranteed sour disappointments on a regular basis. I ended up reading a couple of 300-plus page dogs, for which I politely mouthed praise while privately retching at anodyne prose or themes from some literary netherworld.

What a tragedy!! One of the world’s great joys – choosing and reading a good book – becomes the result of muddy compromise.

Have I convinced you to throw in the towel on book clubs? I hope not. Fast forward from my 20s to my 60s. From out of the dust of failed clubs of the past, I found

the dream group in a very unexpected place.

It arrived courtesy of a literary genius with not just a handful of major works, but a repertoire of 37, which almost everyone agrees set the bar for excellence. For each gathering, we read just five to seven pages, which ensures a focused but scintillating discussion. And despite its brevity, each night's reading offers remarkable opportunities for historical and textual analysis, and even yields lessons for life at home in 2023.

Who is this master of the mother tongue whose work seems perfectly designed to solve all book club problems? Think *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Think, as Chesterton said, of the author who "is so big that he hides England." Think Shakespeare.

Every week our book club reads one act of a Shakespeare play aloud, a practice that naturally constrains those (including myself) who are afflicted with chronic verbal diarrhea. Everyone has a read-aloud part, so no wallflowers are permitted. When a member nonetheless sees no reason to place restraint on the golden gems flowing from his tongue, our leader calmly remarks, "perhaps we should move on to reading the next scene so we can finish Act III tonight." Even the most obstreperous chatterbox seems to acquiesce in the face of this common-sense goal.

Though Shakespeare's plays were written more than 400 years ago, they still nudge us towards rich and spirited conversations, because they speak to the timeless elements of the human condition. Take *Measure for Measure*, one of Shakespeare's least-read plays. It wrestles with a host of issues that continue to bedevil us today. Should a society set rules concerning sex outside of marriage? Do such rules become illegitimate if "everyone is doing it" and they are not consistently enforced? What is the correct balance between enforcing a law and mercy? Can mercy, overused, become an enabler of future wrongs? Can an overuse of mercy devolve into rule by men and not by law?

Is there a better, more relevant menu of issues for respectful but boisterous verbal sparring in 2023?

Shakespeare is the perfect subject for a book club because, as Allan Bloom put it, he is the perfect mirror of human nature:

His plays remind us of the classical goal of contemplation rather than the modern aspiration to

transform. Shakespeare did not consider himself the legislator of mankind. He faithfully records man's problems and does not evidently propose to solve them.

“**Shakespeare is the perfect subject for a book club.**”

This spirit of contemplating the myriad aspects of human nature, rather than proposing their reform, infects our group. Conversations steer clear of the ephemeral stuff in today's headlines – the political and cultural minefields that, even among friends, tend to provoke all-out war – and focus instead on the universal questions of the human condition.

Could a playwright other than Shakespeare solve the book club problem? I don't think so. Consider the best – Sophocles, Moliere, Ibsen, Chekhov, Shaw. Each penned a few gems, but none have such consistent excellence over such a large volume of work. Our group has been reading Shakespeare plays for four-and-a-half years now, and we've still got a long way to go, including some of the Bard's "greatest hits." I suspect that, even when we've read them all, we'll happily start over again.

Does the Shakespeare reading group capture any other ideal book club elements I dreamed about years ago – convivial sips of port, endless skies at evening's end, sleepless nights full of the theater of the mind?

Yes on the first two, but even though the "theater of the mind" continues to swirl late at night, sleep seems to come naturally after our gatherings. As Shakespeare conjures in his last play, *The Tempest*:

The isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight,
and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show
riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd
I cried to dream again. ☞

MARK JOHNSON of Edina, Minnesota, has also added the role of columnist for Gilbert to his retirement.



WILD ABOUT CHESTERTON

"The chief aim of order is to give room for good things to run wild." —G.K. CHESTERTON

Chesterton's Tribute to George MacDonald

By Fr. Robert Wild

MOST OF THE GILBERT READERS WILL KNOW that for a number of years I've had a great interest in Chesterton's mysticism, or rather, with Chesterton as a mystic. (You will recall my book on this topic, *The Tumbler of God*.) Why I mention this book is that my present articles are an adapted version of the last section of the manuscript, which is a kind of afterword, a brief presentation of a tribute Chesterton once made to George MacDonald, one of the significant guides through what Chesterton once called the "tangle of the mind."

Ian Boyd, the former editor of *The Chesterton Review*, and surely one of the most knowledgeable of Chestertonian scholars, tied MacDonald's influence and Chesterton's mysticism together in this way:

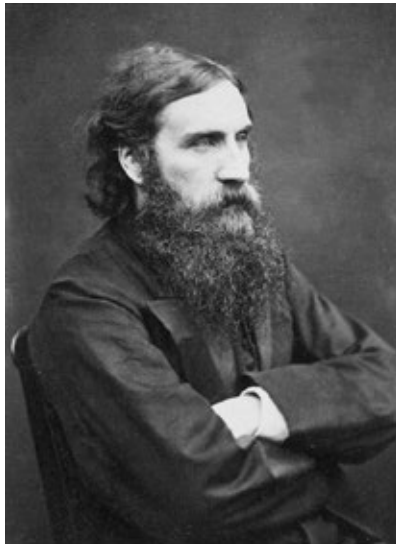
...what is most needed for an understanding of [Chesterton's] work is a definition of the special religious quality which permeates it. Like George MacDonald, from whom he learnt the Sacramental view of life which altered his entire existence, he evolved a biblical spirituality which is fundamentally mystical. Whatever the variety of his topics, his underlying subject is always the same: the presence of God in created being.

May I note that this last phrase "the presence of God in created being" is the mystical grace I believe Chesterton had and formed the central focus of my book.

I would like, then, to extend a tribute to George MacDonald, the mystical man of letters of the nineteenth century, for the contribution he made to

Chesterton's life and thinking. Basically, this contribution was the sacramental view of reality which Fr. Boyd mentioned.

In Chesterton's Introduction to Grenville MacDonald's book about his parents, *George MacDonald and His Wife* (1924), Chesterton pays supreme literary homage to a story by MacDonald which, he says, changed his whole life. Often, Chesterton said, the question is posed to us: "What is the best book you have ever read?" Chesterton, for his part, says that this is not a realistic question to ask, since "our minds are mostly a vast uncatalogued library." Nevertheless, he does answer the query in his own case:



MacDonald in the 1860s

But in a certain rather special sense I for one can really testify to a book that has made a difference to my whole existence, which helped me to see things in a certain way from the start; a vision of things which even so real a revolution as a change of religious allegiance has substantially only crowned and confirmed. Of all the stories I

have read, including even all the novels of the same novelist, it remains the most real, the most realistic, in the exact sense of the phrase the most like life. It is called *The Princess and the Goblin*, and is by George MacDonald, the man who is the subject of this book.

In order to put Chesterton's comments about MacDonald's influence within a certain framework, I turn to C.S. Lewis's Introduction to MacDonald's fantasy novel, *Lilith*, in which he makes some very important observations about the kind of literature MacDonald wrote. You know very well that MacDonald was a fundamental inspiration for Lewis, who said that he never wrote a book without quoting him. He even went so far as to say that MacDonald's novel *Phantastes* converted and baptized his imagination at a time when Christianity was furthest from his mind:

The whole book had about it a sort of cool, morning innocence, and also, quite unmistakably, a certain quality of death, *good* death. The quality which enchanted me in his imaginative works turned out to be the quality of the real universe, the divine, magical, terrifying and ecstatic reality in which we all live.

What kind of literature did MacDonald write? From an artistic point of view, Lewis rates it as third class. But Lewis says the literary style is not the most important thing. MacDonald, Lewis points out, wrote

fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoetic. And this, in my opinion, he does better than any man. This art of myth-making does not essentially exist in words at all. In a myth – in a story where the mere pattern of events is all that matters – any means of communication whatever which succeeds in

lodging those events in our imagination has, as we say, “done the trick.” After that you can throw the means of communication away. ☚

To Be Continued

FATHER ROBERT WILD is a priest of the Madonna House community in Combermere, Ontario, founded by Catherine Doherty.

Walking with Father Vincent



Walking with Father Vincent is a montage of anecdotes, clippings, thoughts and insights centering around the remarkable life of Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., (d. 1943), an Irishman from Portaferry, County Down, and perhaps the best-known Dominican Friar of the twentieth century. Foreword by Dale Ahlquist.

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THE GOLDEN KEY CHAIN

"The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because they are generally the same people." –G.K. CHESTERTON

GKC on Scripture • Conducted by Peter Floriani

The Gospel of St. Matthew 1-2

Scepticism, both in its advantages and disadvantages, is greatly misunderstood in our time. There is a curious idea abroad that scepticism has some connection with such theories as materialism and atheism and secularism. This is of course a mistake; the true sceptic has nothing to do with these theories simply because they are theories. The true sceptic is as much a spiritualist as he is a materialist. He thinks that the savage dancing round an African idol stands quite as good a chance of being right as Darwin. He thinks that mysticism is every bit as rational as rationalism. He has indeed the most profound doubts as to whether St. Matthew wrote his own gospel. But he has quite equally profound doubts as to whether the tree he is looking at is a tree and not a rhinoceros. ("Charles II," *Varied Types*)

Matt. 1:16 [Luke 3:23-39] [the genealogies of Jesus]

The genealogical tree is really a most common or garden sort of tree. It is only the tree of life; a mere trifle. The feeling of interest in one's own family is one of the most natural and universal feelings; it has nothing particularly oligarchical, or even aristocratic about it. And when the philosophers discovered that all men were important, they ought obviously to have discovered that all families were important; and even that all pedigrees were important. Nor can I see any reason why the genealogical tree should not bear flowers as well as fruit; why there should not be colours and emblems and external beauty to express the variations of the social group. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 1, 1921)

Matt. 2:1-12 [the Magi come to adore the newborn Christ]

It is still a strange story, though an old one, how they came out of orient lands, crowned with the majesty of kings and clothed with something of the mystery of

magicians. That truth that is tradition has wisely remembered them almost as unknown quantities, as mysterious as their mysterious and melodious names; Melchior, Caspar, Balthazar. But there came with them all that world of wisdom that had watched the stars in Chaldea and the sun in Persia; and we shall not be wrong if we see in them the same curiosity that moves all the sages. They would stand for the same human ideal if their names had really been Confucius or Pythagoras or Plato. They were those who sought not tales but the truth of things; and since their thirst for truth was itself a thirst for God, they also have had their reward. [Matt 10:42] But even in order to understand that reward, we must understand that for philosophy as much as mythology, that reward was the completion of the incomplete. . .

From the moment when the star goes up like a birthday rocket to the moment when the sun is extinguished like a funeral torch, the whole story moves on wings with the speed and direction of a drama, ending in an act beyond words. ("The God in the Cave," *Everlasting Man*)

There were three things prefigured and promised, by the gifts in the cave of Bethlehem concerning the Child who received them; that He should be crowned like a king; that He should be worshipped like a God; and that He should die like a man; and these things would sound like Eastern flattery, were it not for the third. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, Dec. 12, 1931)

Matt. 2:13-18 [the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and the slaughter of the innocents]

We might well be content to say that mythology had come with the shepherds and philosophy with the philosophers; and that it only remained for them to combine in the recognition of religion. But there was a third element that must not be ignored and one which


that religion forever refuses to ignore, in any revel or reconciliation.

There was present in the primary scenes of the drama that Enemy that had rotted the legends with lust and frozen the theories into atheism, but which answered the direct challenge with something of that more direct method which we have seen in the conscious cult of the demons. In the description of that demon-worship, of the devouring detestation of innocence shown in the works of its witchcraft and the most inhuman of its human sacrifice, I have said less of its indirect and secret penetration of the saner paganism; the soaking of mythological imagination with sex; the rise of imperial pride into insanity. but both the indirect and the direct influence make themselves felt in the drama of Bethlehem. A ruler under the Roman suzerainty, probably equipped and surrounded with the Roman ornament and order though himself of eastern blood, seems in that hour to have felt stirring within him the spirit of strange things. We all know the story of how Herod, alarmed at some rumour of mysterious rival, remembered the wild gesture of the capricious despots of Asia and ordered a massacre of suspects of the new generation of the populace. Everyone knows the story; but not everyone has perhaps noted its place in the story of the strange religions of man. Not everybody has seen the significance even of its very contrast with the Corinthian columns and Roman pavement of that conquered and superficially civilised world. Only, as the purpose in his dark spirit began to show and shine in the eyes of the Idumean, a seer might perhaps have seen something like a great grey ghost that looked over his shoulder; have seen behind him filling the dome of night and hovering for the last time over history, that vast and fearful face that was Moloch of the Carthaginians; awaiting his last tribute from a ruler of the races of Shem. The demons also, in that first festival of Christmas, feasted after their own fashion. ("The God in the Cave," *Everlasting Man*)

There is something beyond expression moving to the imagination in the idea of the holy fugitives being brought lower than the very land; as if the earth had swallowed them; the glory of God like gold buried in the ground. Perhaps the image is too deep for art, even in the sense of dealing in another dimension. For it might be difficult for any art to convey simultaneously the divine secret of the cavern and the cavalcade of the mysterious kings, trampling the rocky plain and shaking the

cavern roof. Yet the medieval pictures would often represent parallel scenes on the same canvas; and the medieval popular theatre, which the guildsmen wheeled about the streets, was sometimes a structure of three floors, with one scene above another. A parallel can be found in those tremendous lines of Francis Thompson:

East, ah, east of Himalay
Dwell the nations underground,
Hiding from the shock of Day;
From the sun's uprising sound.

But no poetry even of the greatest poets will ever express all that is hidden in that image of the light of the world like a subterranean sun; only these prosaic notes remain to suggest what one individual felt about Bethlehem. (*New Witness*, December 8, 1922) 

PETER FLORIANI is a computer scientist and writer in Reading, Pennsylvania and author of *A Golden Key Chain*, from which this article is excerpted.

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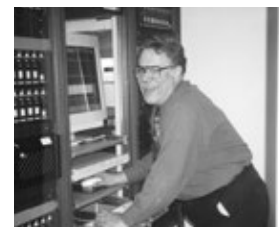
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THE SIGNATURE OF MAN

"Art, like morality, consists of drawing the line somewhere." –G.K. CHESTERTON

Chesterton on Art

Imagination and the Image

MAN CREATES IN HIS CAPACITY of the image of God; and he is in nothing so much the image of God as in creating images. ("William Blake and Inspiration," *A Handful of Authors*)

Imagination demands an image. An image demands a background. The background should be equal and level, or vast and vague, but only for the sake of the image. (*New Witness*, July 15, 1921)

A very great deal of Art is due to lack of imagination. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 10, 1914)

There cannot be anything less imaginative than mere unreason. Imagination is a thing of clear images, and the more a thing becomes vague the less imaginative it is. Similarly, the more a thing becomes wild and lawless the less imaginative it is. (*Illustrated London News*, March 24, 1906)

I do not call any man imaginative unless he can imagine something different from his own favourite sort of imagery. I do not call any man free unless he can walk backwards as well as forwards. I do not call any man broadminded unless he can include minds that are different from his own normal mind, let alone moods that are different from his own momentary mood. And I do not call any man bold or strong or possessed of stabbing realism or startling actuality unless he is strong enough to resist the merely neurotic effects of his own fatigue, and still see things more or less as they are; big mountains as big, and great poets as great, and remarkable acts and achievements as remarkable, even if other people are bored with them, or even if he is bored with them himself. (*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 12, 1932)

There certainly is and ought to be a field for the truths of intuition and imagination. The solution I would suggest is so simple that all human civilization has really adopted it already. The right field for the intuitive or indefinable type of truth is in the arts. It will best teach its own type of truth, not by introducing un-



The infinite recognition by Rene Magritte, 1963

reason into the operations of reason, or turning the multiplication table upside down, or denying that truth is the opposite of falsehood – but by minding its own business and producing its own masterpieces out of its own workshop. Truth that really cannot be expressed in logic can be expressed in the line and colour and rhythm and imagery and melody. And those intangible truths express them-

selves there without mucking up philosophy or morality or the sane process of thinking. (*Illustrated London News*, Mar. 26, 1932)

The most strenuous and staggering sort of imagination can see what is really there; where a weaker imagination always sees its own image everywhere. ("Thinking about Europe," *The End of the Armistice*)

What is wanted is the truly godlike imagination which makes all things new, because all things have been new. (*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 12, 1932)

The mightiest pleasures of the imagination are all made out of hints. (*New Witness*, Feb. 3, 1916)

The most essential educational product is Imagination. ("The True Victorian Hypocrisy," *Sidelights*)



CHESTERTON'S MAIL BAG

"I am always writing letters to apologize for not having written letters." –G.K. CHESTERTON

Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail

Church and State (not in that order)

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
Modern evils arise from people having too much liberty.

Signed,

George Bernard Shaw

Dear Mr. Shaw,
I say they arise from the governing classes having too much liberty and the governed having less liberty than ever.

Your Friend,

G.K. Chesterton

(New Witness, April 14, 1922)

♦ ♦ ♦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
It is a fact that a small section of the community bakes the bread and a small number plays the piano. Because they know how to do it better than the rest of us. What is there unreasonable in having a small number of people governing us? Because they know how to do it better than the rest of us.

Signed,

Better Government

Dear Better Government,
The answer is that government is too human a thing to be treated in that way. The deepest things in life have never been trusted to specialists, and I hope they never will. Some people think it would be a good thing if sexual selection were arranged by experts and if it were regulated by the State whom we should love and marry. There you have the same kind of thing as government. If a thing comes very near to real humanity it must be managed by real human beings. There are things, like writing love letters, which the ordinary man should do for himself even if he does them badly. No woman hires a lady specialist to talk unintelligible talk to babies. Looking after the affairs of your village, your tribe,

or your State is a thing of the same character. It is right for men to govern themselves even if they govern themselves badly.

Your friend,

G.K. Chesterton

(Manchester Guardian, Jan. 21, 1907)

♦ ♦ ♦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,
The Pope, in a palace and a tiara, is a strange successor to Jesus Christ "Who had not a place where to lay His head."

Signed

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Dear Sir Arthur,
We may say in passing that for some three hundred years of human history every single Pope did very decidedly know where to lay his head. And that was in the lion's mouth. For the first few centuries all the Popes were Martyrs; and an institution that has begun like that has earned some little share of attention. Suppose the Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury ever since the time of Queen Elizabeth had all regularly been burnt as heretics. Suppose the Presidents of the Spiritualist Church are all regularly hanged by the common hangman for the next three hundred years. Should we ever hear the last of it? And yet, in the other case, even from Catholics we hear very little of it.

Add to this that after this period of martyrdom a hundred such religious rulers have lived in their palaces as plainly and austere as hermits in caves, and you have a role which most of these religious reformers would find harder than a vagabond's, one indeed so uncomfortable that even the pleasure of wearing a tiara (and it is apparently supposed to be worn day and night) would hardly reconcile them to it.

What is the deduction from that "contrast"? Are we

simply to stand staring at the dreadful contrast? What are we to do about it? Does it mean that a movement beginning with a poor and persecuted prophet ought not to become popular and powerful in the world? Does it mean that a thing becoming popular and powerful ought not to have any external symbols and formalities, like the flag of a regiment or the procession on a public holiday? If we say “King George the Fifth wearing his crown at breakfast in Buckingham Palace, is a strange

successor to Alfred burning the cakes,” do we mean that kings ought to go on burning cakes, or that men ought not to be kings, or what do we mean?

I would suggest here is that the man who says that sort of thing never really thinks what he is saying.

Your friend,

G.K. Chesterton

(Glasgow Observer, Oct. 10, 1925)



ALL I SURVEY

“It is true that I am of an older fashion; much that I love has been destroyed or sent into exile.” —G.K. CHESTERTON

Growing into Chesterton

By David W. Fagerberg

WRITING ABOUT A MAN sometimes leads to comparing oneself to the man, and I have found at least one way in which I am growing into Chesterton.

It is not his size. He was 6’4”; I am 6’2”. It is not his weight. I once reached his estimated 270 pounds, but with the help of an app I dropped 40 of them. (I wonder if he would have used such an app; maybe he would have preferred the one that catalogues beer instead.) It is not his hair, of which there are many legendary pictures. In a letter to fiancée Frances he wrote, “Does my hair want cutting? My hair seems pretty happy. You are the only person who seems to have any fixed theory on this.” When my hair wants cutting I take myself to the bathroom and put a towel down over the sink; I have not been to a barber for a quarter century.

It is not his literary output. How shall we count his books? One source puts it at 80, another at 100; my output is 16 volumes, if I stretch the definition of book to include three lengthy booklets. And his articles or essays? Shall we say 5,000? I total a hundred less than one twelfth of that. Though we share the honor of being “Credo Catholics,” instead of “cradle Catholics,” our entry into the Church does not share the same timing, his at age 48, mine at age 39. And we do not share the

same life-span. It startled me to see I have already extended nine years beyond his age of 62 when he died.

But I have thought of one way in which I am growing slowly into Chesterton, and it was brought to me by this story in Maisie Ward’s *Return to Chesterton*.

The Chestertons’ own maid told Mrs. Saxon Mills, to whom for a while the Chesterton flat was let, of her troubles in cleaning up after him. Especially was

she worried over the bathroom. He would flood the floor, to the imminent danger of the ceiling below. So she tried to get into the room as quickly as possible after him to mop up. One day she had heard him get out of the tub and was hovering around, waiting for her moment, when a tremendous splash assailed her ears. Then came a deep groan and the words, “Dammit, I’ve been in here already.”

These days, such forgetfulness plagues in the form: “Dammit, what did I come in here for?” I know some important reason had brought me into the kitchen.

As one person put it, the mental rolodex does not spin as fast as it used to, and I sometimes need five minutes to fill in after the first letter of the name or word. One day I found myself saying, “Our Lady of Guada ... Guatemala isn’t right. What is it again?”

I notice a certain liberty in retirement that accompanied Chesterton his whole life. Forgetfulness is only one facet of it. One day I saw a meme online advertised as a clock for retired people. Where the numbers one through twelve normally stood, ringing the circle, the names of the days of the week were to be found: Sunday through Saturday. “What day is it?” I often ask Elizabeth.

I have noticed that I have no more “before” in my life now. I used to have to prepare lecture notes *before* class; finish grading papers *before* the end of midsem break; write a score of emails *before* the afternoon faculty meeting. Now there is nothing that needs doing before tomorrow, because it can always be done tomorrow. I can picture Chesterton busy, but never hurried. He had all the time he needed, even for the pub.

When I try to explain to the incredulous why I retired, I gesture to the scales Lady Justice holds, and invite the inquirer to imagine one tray filled with department meetings and the other with my three grandchildren. Chesterton wrote,

If a man had climbed to the stars
And found the secrets of the angels,
The best thing and the most useful thing
he could do
Would be to come back and romp with children.

If a man had finished graduate school, and found the secrets of the card catalogue, the best and most

useful thing he could do is retire and play with his grandchildren.


Chesterton was known for a prodigious memory, but not a hamstrung memory. Studies have been written showing how he differed by a word or two when he quoted a page or two of the classic poets. He remembered the substance; he sometimes even remembered the substance in a format that was better than the original. I increasingly suffer something similar. In writing the quote about children in the preceding paragraph I had to do word searches in my old class notes, Ward’s biography, Ker’s biography, and the Society of GKC web page, because I remembered it as “coming back to play with babies.” Where would I be without search engines?

Forgetfulness is not a moral weakness, it is only a pleasant foible. Forgetfulness occurs when there are too many important things in the brain crowding out the trivial things, and as one gets older one sorts out the trivial from the important. Chesterton always knew what was important, and what is not. I am glad to be growing into him. ☞

DAVID FAGERBERG is Professor Emeritus of Theology at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

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ROLLING ROAD

Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

Padres and Pearls

By Dale Ahlquist

AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER I was in San Diego (La Jolla actually) to speak at the Catholic Answers Conference. My friend Chris Check, who joyously leads the fabled army of apologists who form the ranks of Catholic Answers, puts on a good show. He claims to have borrowed things from *our* conference, and yet Joe Grabowski and I were taking notes on how Chris runs *his* conference. Thanks to having a plum position of being a speaker on opening night and Mr. Check's shameless plugging of the Chesterton Society, we gained a lot of new members. But a lot of folks who are already Chesterton Society members turned up, and it was great fun to see them.

While most of the Catholic celebrity speakers swooped in and swooped out, I, not being a celebrity, hung around for the whole conference to the amazement of many of the attendees. Of the swoopers, I have to say that Scott Hahn (whom I first met at EWTN over 20 years ago) has a certain gravitas to him. He's older and grayer now, having become not yet an elder statesman, but a commanding presence as one of the great laymen of the Catholic Church.

Since I had an important engagement in the same area the following weekend, I cleverly decided to stay in San Diego the



intervening week. I found a reasonably priced little independent hotel in the utterly unreasonably priced area of Point Loma. I went to Mass at the Mission San Diego de Alcalá, founded by Blessed Junipero Serra in 1769. When he and his fellow Franciscans who had taken a vow of poverty, built that mission they might not have imagined a nearby building would one day bear the sign “Yacht Insurance.”

The Pearl is a 1960s’ motel updated to retain even more mid-century discomfort. However, it also includes 21st century innovations such as Plant Paper. It is made from plants but none of those plants are trees. It’s soft enough as toilet paper. But when used as paper, that is, as something you read, it doesn’t quite work. It doesn’t take ink very well, and so you can barely read it. Of course, who knows what the ink is made from?

I had a room the size of a monk’s cell. A *small* monk’s cell. The austerity program justified my walking a couple of blocks each day to the harbor where this mid-westerner could dine on fresh seafood. (“If our fish was any fresher, it would still be swimming!”) The first day when I sat down for a harbor-side lunch along with a fresh fish I’d never heard of called opah, I noticed that it was a different crowd from the Catholic Answers attendees. Everyone had dogs and suntans. At the next table was a relatively normal-looking upper-middle-class couple with their two teenagers. But the teenagers did not mirror their normal-looking parents. My guess is that they were boys pretending to be girls, but I might have called it exactly wrong. Whatever they were, they weren’t what they thought they were. Other tables featured a loud limping older fellow with a bevy of Asian women, a heavily tattooed couple stabbing sulkily

at their sand dabs, and some pleasant poker-playing grannies in sun dresses. And then, lo and behold, sat a couple from Texas that I had just met at the Catholic Answers conference.

During the day I stayed in my cell working on my next book and on this magazine. The motel is situated around its original kidney-shaped pool and some evenings they showed “dive-in” movies on a biggish screen. When I was there, it was *Goldfinger*, adding to the 60s’ aura.

I didn’t even begin to fully take in the beautiful sights and fabulous features of San Diego, which has nicknamed itself “America’s Finest City.” However, one evening members Clay and Anne Hoffman took me to dinner at a restaurant affording a dramatic view of the downtown. And one afternoon I visited another of our members, Bob Sheridan, a retired Navy man who lives on Coronado Island across from downtown San Diego. He has lived there since “before the bridge,” a soaring structure that now connects what was once a sleepy little community with the mainland. “In the old days,” Bob told me, “If you missed the ferry, you had to spend the night in a bar.” In spite of the traffic, the island retains an idyllic charm.

I also ventured out to the Cabrillo National Monument, which offers a gorgeous view of the San Diego Harbor on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other. In 1542, a mere 50 years after Columbus landed in America on the opposite coast, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sailed into San Diego Harbor and became the first European to set foot on the west coast. Whether he was Spanish or Portuguese is a matter of some debate, which surprises me since most people have never heard of him.

At the end of the week, I drove my rental car to the airport where I picked up my wife Laura and son Gabriel who had flown in for the next major event: moving Gabriel into college. Our youngest has enrolled at John Paul the Great Catholic University in nearby Escondido. Founded only 20 years ago, it might be the smallest university in the world, with just over three hundred students. Yet it offers an amazing gamut of degrees, from business to the humanities. But the main focus is on the arts, especially the film arts: directing, screenwriting, post-production. The modern medium of movies has stood as the most powerful and vivid art



form for about a century but is now rivaled by another incredibly powerful art that is less passive than film and more consuming: computer gaming. The little university offers a degree in that as well. What these two art forms have in common is that neither of them have been baptized. The Catholic Church has only been a spectator to these arts, hoping for the best. Here is an attempt to train Catholic artists who will bring their faith to these genres and transform them from within. We can do better than James Bond.

Derry Connelly is an Irishman with the appropriate brogue, who came to America some 40 years ago to get an engineering degree at UCLA. After working as an engineer for a while, he decided to start JP Catholic (the nickname for the university). As an engineer, he

understood where the need was in Catholic post-secondary education. We didn't need more engineering schools ("because engineering schools are not so dark"). We need more good arts schools ("because the art schools are very dark").

Gabriel is planning to study film editing and post-production. But he'll also be required to take business courses as well as theology and philosophy. He lives in an apartment, as the school has no dormitories. And he has to cook for himself, as the school has no dining hall. His four roommates are from three different countries. And I was quite pleased that there were five incoming freshmen from five different Chesterton Academies around the country, including one from Canada. It is a privilege to be part of something so positive. ☁





BALLADE OF GILBERT

Again

By G.K. Chesterton

Like the wind on the sands she was in the flare of her sand-wild hair,
Like to a gull in the foam she was, like to a rushing of air;
Billowed and brake her flaming locks 'gainst the dreaming blue of the sea,
Like to the dash of a sudden rain, like to a flood went she.
And I, I followed fleetly, how could I follow but fleet,
For the sea went by in her great wild eyes, and the sea-wind in her feet,
And the long wave rose as an elfin wall and bent as a flickering crown,
And the russet cloudland barred the night when the broad red sun went down.
Many a maiden lingers, with the poppy-fans at her feet,
When the swallows dapple the yellow dome, and the slopes are ribbed with wheat,
But at her feet, jagged and fiery only the starfish lay,
And above her head with a clamour the hoarse gull rushed astray.
She looked on the cliff and the shingles, she stood by the surfs and me,
She moved 'twixt the rock and the raucous wave, a very child of the sea.
The morning wasted the shorelands, one morning emptied the grot;
Morning she came unto me; one morning came she not.
Life went on with its duties, gatherings, questions, strife,
On through the long year's roaring; and she sank out of my life.
And I sealed up my heart with portals, walls without crevice or mark,
But within my heart lay an ocean whose pulses throbbed in the dark.
And some hour of the year, in the darkness whose sun was barred in a grave,
Would break with a sudden thunder a long white desolate wave.
And the good friends gathered round me, the true, the tender, the strong,
The brave old band of comrades I have loved so well and long,
And they trod my heart as a meadow, a windy wandering heath,
And the young-eyed daisies showed not the old earth-grave beneath.
One morning a word fell vaguely: she was coming, perchance was nigh.
How lightly the chance was taken on the lips of others than I.
A knocking: a door half-opened, a shape—and from that hour down
A dazzling fire and a fragrance: a sudden secret crown.

In the grey of a parlour twilight mine eyes could but heavily see—
 If God's strong world be not as a dream—it was not a dream, but she
 With her high head low for a greeting, her proud cheeks fair with a flame,
 Speaking clear in the gloaming, simply saying my name.
 After the long years, fruitful, strong, after the love gains won,
 After the slow births, mighty and new, that now seemed little and done,
 After the broad lands, noisy and thronged, that lay 'twixt me and the sea,
 God, who forgets not what he has willed, looked on us, I and she.
 She sat yet again beside me; a fire sang in my head;
 We said things childish, frantic. Who knows what things we said



THE NEW JERUSALEM

"The world owes God to the Jews." –G.K. CHESTERTON

A Brooklyn Jew Spends 60 Years With the Chesterbelloc

By Rabbi Mayer Schiller

OY VEH! THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE AN EASY TASK. I hope to answer in the limited space to follow these two questions: 1) How did a Jewish baby boomer, born in 1951 Brooklyn, who became Orthodox and later a rabbi, fall in love with Chesterton (and the far more neglected, Belloc.) And, eventually Baring and Knox, Cardinals Newman and Manning, continuing on to Arnold Lunn, C.S. Lewis, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and many other defenders and explicators of traditional Christianity? 2) What did this same baby boomer do with the accusations that Chesterton and Belloc hated his own people, the Jews?

The story begins in midtown Manhattan where on Saturday morning my father (yes, I am that baby boomer) would take me to the arcades (often then, yet anachronistically called, "penny arcades" by my dad)

which dotted Broadway in those days. This was, of course, many years before video games emerged but there were enough varied games in those arcades to keep us occupied until lunch. Our midday repast was often enjoyed at Arthur Maizel's Steakhouse located next to the arcade on Broadway and 50th Street. There we'd scour *Cue* magazine to decide which movie we'd then see. Now, for a brief time, there was on that same block a two-story bookstore, whose name I have long forgotten. Simply stated, without all the aforementioned being aligned, arcade, restaurant, and bookstore, this article would never be written and my life would have proceeded very differently. Even a non-Calvinist has to see a heady dose of predestination at work.

In the spring of 1962, in that Broadway bookstore, I bought Goldwater's *The Conscience of a Conservative* and, later Dean Smith's *Conservatism*. (No, not that Dean Smith of Chapel Hill fame, whose political views were virulently leftist!) And, from that point on I was "in" American conservatism as it then presented itself.

In those days, years before *National Review* (and, sadly, Bill Buckley himself) had become faceless and soulless, the journal had a clearly Christian core. This was also before Buckley's brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell's, took many of *NR*'s key writers to his overtly Catholic journal *Triumph* (1966 – 1976). In both magazines the names of Chesterton and C.S. Lewis made frequent appearances. The Latin Mass was clearly good and Vatican II very bad.

And, yes, John Stormer, in his 1964 Goldwater campaign classic, *None Dare Call it Treason* had advised that we read *The Wanderer*. Stormer was no papist but he fancied the traditional views of the Matt family. This was four years before Walter Matt bid brother Alphonse farewell over Vatican II confusions, thereby founding *The Remnant*.

It was thus clear to me that the social and religious values which I was increasingly espousing (having opted for Orthodox Judaism at the nadir of the Goldwater campaign, around the time of the Oregon primary) were promoted and clarified in orthodox Christian (primarily Catholic) circles.

There is actually a precise date when it all kicked off. It was December 25 of 1972, and I was coming back from a New York Rangers hockey game at Madison Square Garden. At the Port Authority bus terminal,

42nd Street and Eighth Avenue, there was a fairly well-stocked bookstore. There I took down from the shelf C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*. Immediately it captured me. On the bus ride home I plowed through its pages. One Lewis book led to the next and beckoned me to Chesterton.

As to Chesterton, it was only his major works that were still in print by the early 1970s. I first turned to those: *Orthodoxy*, *The Everlasting Man*, *The Dumb Ox* and *St. Francis*.

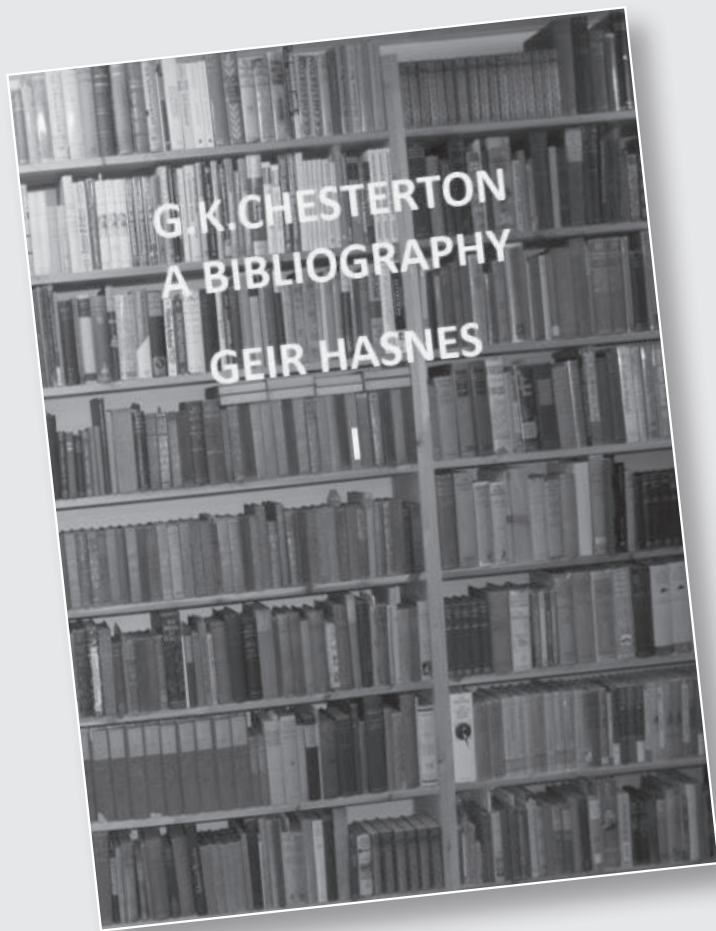
Lewis was the probing analyst although not devoid of spiritual passion. But GKC was something very different. There was logic, yes, but also an embrace of being in its totality, with all of its nooks and crannies rendering a path to the Almighty. Plus there was the inexhaustible joy. Joy in humor and poetry, in beauty and love, in grave matters and incongruous ones. All had one Ultimate Source. The toys and joys of childhood – and adulthood – all summoned one to the Creator. Each book was an all-embracing manual on Divine Service.

A few Image paperbacks just wouldn't suffice. A.C. Prosser, of Chicago, advertised in the major Catholic journals and newspapers of the time. He had an enormously large collection of books by the Chesterbelloc and its posse. Soon I was steadily ordering from him. The prices weren't cheap, but I was able to gather an assortment of the writers mentioned earlier.

And there things have pretty much stayed for the last fifty years. I have spoken at many a Catholic gathering since then. Yes, I've made several ideological adjustments here and there. My patience with the official American right didn't last much beyond Bozell's "Letter to Yourselves" in *Triumph*. But all in all, I have since then consistently seen orthodox versions of the Christian faith as good for Christians and society as a whole and providing much insight and inspiration even for the interested Jew.

OK, well and good you say, if somewhat off the beaten path. But what about the accusation of the Chesterbelloc's hatred of Jews? Well, as in the old TV Batman show, for that you will have to tune in at the same Bat time and station in the next issue of *Gilbert!* ☺

RABBI SCHILLER taught the Talmud to New York yeshivas for close to half a century. Largely retired at present, he still does some local tutoring near his Monsey, New York home.



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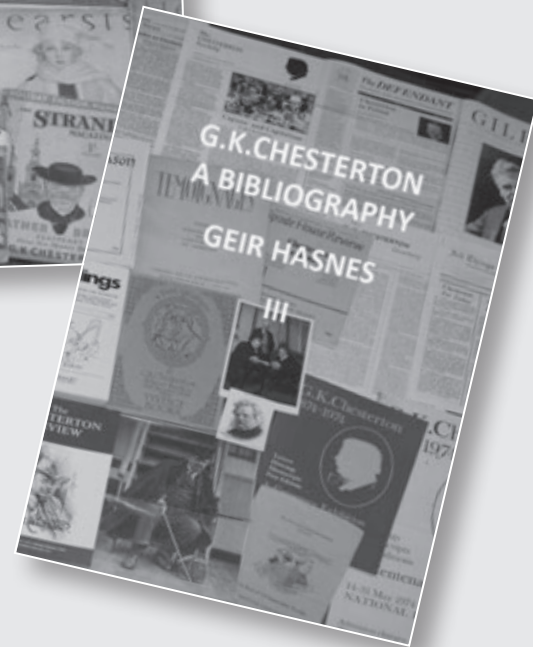
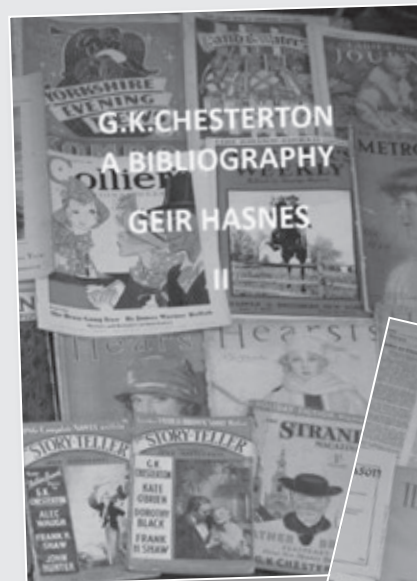
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THE FLYING INN

Home Rule at Home

Amateurs

by David Beresford

That is the one eternal education; to be sure enough that something is true that you dare to tell it to a child. From this high audacious duty the moderns are fleeing on every side; and the only excuse for them is, (of course,) that their modern philosophies are so half-baked and hypothetical that they cannot convince themselves enough to convince even a newborn babe.

—G.K. CHESTERTON,

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD

I WAS PART OF A TEAM that started a small, what was then a parent-run school. Twenty years later this school is now firmly established as a small thriving Chesterton Academy. The beginnings of this school were haphazard, not rocky, just amateur. The word amateur is commonly used as a

slur, to imply second rate, or poor quality. This is incorrect, amateur means a lover, someone who has done something for the love of the project, of the purpose.

On our part, my wife and I had been hosting Saturday morning catechism classes in our kitchen for our children and those from two other families. These were taught by Fr. Hickey, a local devout priest. Simultaneous to this, the local Pro-Life association was discussing an emerging need for human scaled religious education to counter the highly bureaucratic variety that the professional education system had become.

The Pro-Life group invited any interested parents to a meeting to explore ideas about education, which brought these two disparate initiatives together. The rest of this article is a guide based on what I have learned about starting a school. However, each school is different even as each child is different; these guidelines are written with that understanding.

First: You need a place, ideally a building with at least one room with a large table and chairs. Obvious, right? Not so much. In our planning stages we argued during weekly meetings for a year about everything except place. We haggled over uniforms, agonized over curriculum, gave and received long speeches about what behavior would be tolerated. At these meetings the shyest said little, and the boldest ranted with abandon, and we realized we needed advice.

We met with people who had already started schools. One advised keeping central control, another suggested that we needed to be willing to go deeply into personal debt and trust Divine Providence to bail us out . . .

. . . which leads to the second point: You must remain true to your vocation vows. This means if you are a mother, being a mother comes first and school second. A father? Be a father first, part-time school administrator second. Part of the duties of both vocations includes the education of children. These duties also include the economic well-being of one's family. If you ever hear someone say "Just step out in faith!" Ignore this. By trying to start a school you are already stepping out in faith. Part of this faith means to use the gifts the Good Lord has blessed you with, which include reason and the resources you have in the service of your vocation. It is not stepping out in faith to jump off a cliff, nor is it stepping out in faith to go into personal debt to start a school.

Third: You need a teacher. During the course of our year-long meetings about starting a school, we invited a priest from Texas to come and talk with us. Father asked us, "Do you have a building?" By this time the answer was yes. We had the use of a basement of a parish hall.

"Do you have a teacher?" Fr. then asked.

Brilliant! This is wisdom. We had drawings of uniforms, a widening set of study subjects, a jar full of pencil stubs, and a general sense that we still needed to discuss discipline, but no teacher!

"You need a teacher. I know a girl who just finished high school and is taking a year off before college. If you give her room and board at one of your homes, she could teach."

"Does she have a teaching degree?" we asked.

"Not needed, she is teaching small children, the main thing is they need to be happy."

To start a school, find a place and a teacher. Get secondhand hard-cover books, and let the children play outside as much as possible.

We started with 9 students. Our subjects were: field trips to the fire station, reading books, arithmetic, soccer and dodgeball, drawing, painting, singing, hiking and keeping a nature journal, putting food in the bird feeder. If volunteered to teach Latin, we taught Latin. If someone

knew geography, we taught geography. All *ad hoc*, all volunteer, all amateur, all consistent with human nature and how children have always learned.

So-called real schools, state schools, are organized to process large groups of children along an assembly line; they are good at handling bulk like this. Small parent-run schools are organized along the lines of how families grow, with older children and younger children together.

Children absorb knowledge. Children are self-taught in a new language by the age of two, while living in a home of amateurs. We can trust this about childhood: if you provide a safe, fun place to learn, you cannot stop children from learning.

When the children got older, well, then it was time for Chesterton Academy. ☺

DAVID BERESFORD is a biology professor at OLSWC, an entomologist, and lives on a farm in Douro-Dummer, Ontario.

NEWS WITH VIEWS

"We do not need a censorship of the press. We have a censorship by the press."—G.K. CHESTERTON

Compiled by Mark Pilon

Ixnay on Odgay

OTTAWA—Weeks before Remembrance Day in Canada, Chaplain General, Brigadier-General Guy Belisle signed the directive which stated that any "spiritual reflection" must be "inclusive in nature, and respectful of the religious and spiritual diversity of Canada." The Department of National Defence confirmed that chaplains must refrain from words such as "God" and "Heavenly Father" in official ceremonies. The directive stated that chaplains must use language "mindful of the Gender-Based Analysis" and "consider the potential that some items or symbols may cause discomfort or traumatic feelings when choosing the dress they wear during public occasions." "This directive is about expanding participation in the reflections of military chaplains and not about limiting it," according to a Department of National Defence spokesman.

GKC: It is true to say of a religious conviction, of course, that it must primarily be private – that it must be held in the soul before it is applied to the society. It is equally true of a political conviction, or an economic conviction, or any conviction. If this is what he means by calling religion a private affair, there is no such thing as a public affair. But, if he means that the conviction held in the soul cannot be applied to the society, he means manifest and raving nonsense. In other words, if he means that a man's religion cannot have any effect on his citizenship, or on the commonwealth of which he is a citizen, he escapes from being platitudinous by being preposterous. A man might be a Thug or a Mormon; a man's religion might involve something like human sacrifice or a conscientious objection to fighting. In more civilised societies that have a theocratic tinge, there is obviously all the difference in the world between a Puritan State and a Papal State. It is a matter of mere common-sense that in such things the greater includes the less. The cosmos, of which we

conceive ourselves the creatures, must include the city of which we conceive ourselves the citizens. A man's notion of the world in which he walks must have an effect on the land in which he walks.

I Have a Dream

LONDON—Russian scientist, Michael Raduga is the founder of Phase Research Center, which is now a research department of REMspace Inc. According to its website, the Phase Research Center explores “the nature of the phase state(sic) and the ways any person can control it. The phase state includes lucid dreaming, out-of-body experiences, sleep paralysis, etc.” He reports on Instagram about his recent project: “For the first time in history, we conducted direct electrical stimulation of the motor cortex of the brain during REM sleep, lucid dreams, and sleep paralysis. The results open up fantastic prospects for future dream control technologies.”

To achieve these results, he spent 10 hours using paper clips to hold his scalp in place while he bored a hole in his head with a drill he purchased at a hardware store, in order to implant a chip in his brain. He told the *Daily Mail*, “I am glad I survived but I was ready to die.” “During the first 30 minutes I was ready to give up many times because first of all, I lost a lot of blood – approximately a liter of blood. And I was afraid I could just lose consciousness,” he explained, adding “I finished the surgery I took a shower and I worked for 10 hours straight... people didn’t know.” People figured it out, though. He also posted the following on Instagram. “Two neurosurgeries. I was on the verge of death a few times. Five weeks on strong antibiotics. Six months of working time. Huge expenses and losses. Lifelong health consequences.”

A martyr for science.

GKC: One of the most widespread and fundamental elements in the dream-world, it seems to me, is the element of the divorce between the appearance proper to one thing and the emotions proper to another. In real life we are frightened of vipers and decorate ourselves with flowers. In dreams we are quite capable of being afraid of flowers and decorating ourselves with vipers. In dreams we think violets nauseous, sewers fragrant, toads beautiful, stars ugly, a street with three lamp-posts exquisite, a pole with a white rag horrible.

It is a commonplace how we attribute emotional qualities to the things that happen in dreams, how we believe a string of idiotic words to be superlative poetry, how we permit a perfectly trumpery set of events to overwhelm us with indescribable passions. The real point is, as it appears to me, that all this amounts simply to the conclusion that in dreams is revealed the elemental truth that it is the spiritual essence behind a thing that is important, not its material form. Spiritual forces, abroad in the world, simply disguise themselves under material forms. A good force disguises itself as a rose in bloom, a bad force disguises itself as an attack of chicken-pox. But in the world of sub-conscious speculation, where all superficial ornaments are shattered and only the essentials remain intact, everything but the ultimate meaning is altered. The spiritual forces, in their nocturnal holiday, have, like lovers on a Bank Holiday, changed hats. All the outrageous topsy-turvydom of dreams is sufficiently represented by saying that angel and devil have changed hats, or, to speak more accurately, have changed heads. In a dream we love pestilence and hate the sunrise. In a dream we shatter temples and worship mud. The whole explanation is to be found in the conception that there is something mystical and undefined behind all the things which we love and hate which makes us love and hate them. The metaphysician of the Middle Ages, who talked a great deal more sense than they are nowadays given credit for, had a theory that every object had two parts: its accidents and its substance. Thus a pig was not only fat and four-legged and grunting and belonging to a particular zoological order, and pink and sagacious and absurd-beyond all this he was a pig. Dreams give a great deal of support to this conception; in a dream a thing might have the substance of a pig, while retaining all the external qualities of a boiled cod. The medieval doctors, of course, applied this principle most strongly to the idea of Transubstantiation, maintaining that a thing might be in its accidents bread, while being in its substance divine. Whether it be reasonable or not for a waking man to worship a wafer or bread, it is quite certain that a dreaming man would worship a wafer of bread, or a pair of boots, or a sack of potatoes, or a pint of castor oil. It all depends upon what disguise the highest spiritual power took in appearing to him, the incognito in which the King chose to travel.

First Ticket's Free

CHESAPEAKE, Virginia—Jeremy Rodden endorsed by the Virginia Democratic Party in the upcoming election for the Virginia House of Delegates, has become the de facto spokesman for the After School Satan Club at B.M. Williams Primary School in Chesapeake. Last year, he posted the following on his campaign Facebook page. "Hey kids! Let's have fun at After School Satan Club!"

He wrote: "I can't wait to sign up my second grader for this after school club! Fellow BM Williams parents, let me know if you plan on signing up your kiddos and if you need any help with carpooling/transportation. Note for those who don't know: this club does not practice any religious indoctrination whatsoever, unlike some of the other clubs offered at this school and at schools throughout Chesapeake Public Schools."

When news of the club was publicized Rodden published a news item claiming that the school and a Satan Club volunteer had been the target of a bomb threat, which he blamed on "Christian terrorism." He proceeded to ask for donations to the Satanic Temple and said, "tell them the Christian Nationalist terrorists of Chesapeake sent you."

In addition to seeking public office, Rodden has also authored or contributed to the following books. *Demonic*

Carnival: First Ticket's Free, *Demonic Household*, *UnCommon(sic) Evil: A Collection of Nightmares*, *Demonic Creatures*, and *UnImaginable(sic) Horrors*, and *Demonic Wildlife*.

No religious indoctrination whatsoever.
Demonic wildlife?

GKC: We cannot be content with the vague modern phrase that every sentiment must be tolerated so long as it is sincere. Sincerity is a palliation of partly evil things: but it is an aggravation of entirely evil things. That a man is a sincere Mormon makes him better; but that he is a sincere Satanist makes him worse. There are theories so vile, there are beliefs so abominable that one can only endure their existence by denying their sincerity. Sincerity in these cases has no moral value. It amounts to no more than saying that a cannibal sincerely enjoys boiled missionary, or that Mrs. Brownrigg sincerely tried to hurt her apprentices. Those who talk of "tolerating all opinions" are very provincial bigots who are only familiar with one opinion. There are opinions which are in the literal and legal sense intolerable. Otherwise we are saying that two blacks make a white; that one who has acted wickedly is excused if he has thought wickedly too. ☺

MARK PILON is a retired institutional investment salesman, who grows extremely hot peppers and plays the hammered dulcimer.

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"To describe the indescribable. That is the whole business of literature, and it is a hard row to hoe." –G.K. CHESTERTON

An Introduction to the Writings of G.K. Chesterton by Dale Ahlquist

Modern Notions That Are Not Normal

G.K.'s Weekly, Volume 15 • March 12, 1932 – September 3, 1932

By Dale Ahlquist

"Normal people generally take normal things for granted; even when they are no longer there.

—G.K. CHESTERTON,
G.K.'S WEEKLY, MAR. 19, 1932

THE NORMAL THINGS are not there anymore. But the "new normal" is not normal. We have fallen into a complacent compliance with this abnormal state of things. Part of the problem is that we have not only forgotten

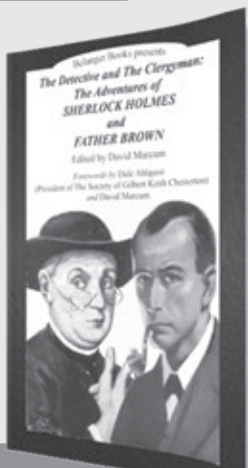
that certain modern notions are not normal, but that they are modern, preceding us by only a few generations that have been disruption and departure from tradition.

People are surprised when Chesterton argues, as he does in this volume of *G.K.'s Weekly*, that both Capitalism and Communism are modern notions. That is all they've ever known. But more surprising still, Chesterton argues that they are the *same* notion:

In face of any clean idea of Liberty and Property, the Capitalist and the Communist systems are simply the same thing. It is not a paradox; but a cold fact, which intellectuals at least can understand. It

can be stated in a precise formula. Communism is that form of Capitalism in which all workers have an equal wage. Capitalism is that form of Communism in which the organising officials have a very large salary. That is the difference; and that is the only difference. Both presuppose property not personal, but worked from a centre and distributed as wages.

Very, very late in human history came this curious experiment of assuming that everything was better if we sold everything to one another and tried



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to cheat one another of as much as possible, even to the extent of selling our own labour to one another. Even if that modern experiment were still at the top of its practical success . . . even if it were bursting with prosperity, I should say that in its essence it was vulgar and filled with the spirit of a slave.

An increasing number of people seems willing to sacrifice their liberty and the liberty of their families for some nominal sort of economic security.

But wage slavery is not economic security. And economic security, in spite of what economists promise, doesn't ever come about for the many, and hardly even for the few. "Monopoly on a large scale," says Chesterton, really means "bankruptcy on a large scale." He points out the irony "that the economists who were the high priests of the religion of wealth now discover themselves to be deceivers, unable to give real hope or counsel to their people."

Similarly, the Communists are slaves, forced to "endure the same abnormal austerity in order to be abnormal, that we endure to be normal." A person who has chosen a life of asceticism may be doing something noble and beautiful, but when a whole society is forced into it, "it becomes simply vandalism or barbaric destruction." Or: "It is one thing to impoverish oneself; it is quite another responsibility to impoverish a whole cultural system of its culture."

There is an alternative to Capitalism and Communism, a third way, or as GKC calls it "a third ideal." (Even though he says the two are the same, he admits he hates Communism more than Capitalism). The only true alternative "is that individuals should own and be free." Widespread individual ownership and personal autonomy is of course what GKC and his colleagues call Distributism (that unfortunate term).

Other modern notions that are normal? "Both conscription and disarmament are very modern notions."

And Pacifism, which GKC says "will probably succeed in dragging us all into War." The Pacifists trying to hide from the Great War are like atheists coming out and "giving little lectures after the Day of Judgment."

Chesterton knows the rising threat from Germany. He recognizes that Nazism is the same as Prussianism. The only difference between Hindenburg and Hitler? "The old Prussian is post-war. The young Prussian is prewar."

But what is the most destructive of modern notions that we have come to accept as normal?

Compulsory education.

Chesterton says the modern change came first when "Education was regarded as a substitute for Culture." Or, as he says, it might even be better expressed by saying "instruction was regarded as a substitute for education." It meant that we "had begun only to get facts by teaching and not truth by tradition." And these facts were few, and were carefully selected, and "were almost entirely trivial." Those are "the facts now taught by the new power of Compulsory Education."

Hitler came and went, but we still get great satisfaction of beating him up as the last century's great evil. But it is not Hitler who has been stealing the hearts and minds and souls of our children for the last few decades, who has been systematically doing away with the normal, promoting perversion, coddling confusion and separating them not only from their parents but from their collective past. We can look to the public schools for that "vandalism or barbaric destruction." If we really believe in liberty we would do everything possible to protect our children from today's state-sponsored compulsory education. And there is an alternative. Start a Chesterton Academy.

Let's end on an amusing note. This volume contains one of the few instances where GKC quotes himself. It's one of his most famous lines – and he misquotes it. "When I said, 'Whatever is worth doing is worth doing badly' . . ." Okay, fans, what is the original line, and where is it from? Free tee shirt to the first person who gets it right. Send your answers to info@chesterton.org. ☺





DOMESTIC EMPRESS

"I do not deny that women have been wronged and even tortured; but I doubt if they were ever tortured so much as they are tortured now by the absurd modern attempt to make them domestic empresses and competitive clerks at the same time." –G.K. CHESTERTON

Those Who Wander

By Susan Sucher

UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES all mothers fall madly in love with their newborn babies. They can't imagine anything more beautiful than their precious little ones. If we are being objective, however, those wrinkly, red, squishy, delightful mushroom-headed humans are not, in the strictest sense of the word, beautiful. These odd little creatures find their way into our hearts, but why?

Babies offer us a world of inconvenience. Sleeping in – ha! You'll be lucky if you sleep half the night. Clean clothes? A thing of the past. Bodies once in pristine condition are marked by lack of sleep, stretch marks, and bags under the eyes. As we will soon discover, those inconveniences are both temporary and just the tip of the iceberg.

We fall in love with our strange babies because we were made in the image and likeness of God. But wait, isn't God beautiful – that makes us and our babies beautiful too, right? Not exactly. Like God, we are able to participate in creation. In fact, in order to produce these funny-looking little babies, we have to say "yes," in a reflection of the "yes" of the Blessed Mother. We have to participate in a very real and intimate way in the miracle of creation.

And like the Creator, we find joy and pleasure in our perfectly imperfect children. Our ability to love the imperfect is one of the principal ways we are like the Creator. To the extent that we love the unlovable, or at least the squishy-faced, mushroom-headed toddler, we are imitating a Creator who loves us despite, or even because of our flaws.

Chesterton, in his essay "In Defence of Ugly Things," argues that the pursuit of aesthetic perfection, as found in Greek civilization was a "great and terrible sin against the variety of life." Conformity must never be the goal.

Just as we have a Creator with an infinite mind, "Nature intended every human face, so long as it was forcible, individual, and expressive, to be regarded as distinct from all others, as a poplar is distinct from an oak, and an apple tree from a willow."

These unique individuals progress quickly from baby to toddler – testing limits and finding new paths of destruction and ways to wreak havoc in our once tranquil homes. As much as we can admire Chesterton's thoughts on the individuality and nonconformity of the human person, sometimes, we wish our little humans might not exemplify his views so perfectly. No matter how many children we have, none of us become experts, because each child challenges us in his or her own unique way. Parenthood is clearly the domain of the amateur.

The school age child gives us plenty of opportunity to reflect on the beauty of the developing intellect. Their curiosity and wonder at the world rejuvenates even the most worn out parent and helps us to "stand on our heads" and wonder at God's creation. There is nothing like the inquisitiveness of a nine year old to stimulate our own marvel at creation and all that is within.

This temporary respite does not last. School age children become young adults – ones who, by their nature, discover more fully their own free will. Not, as they used to, in small and relatively harmless ways, but in large

ways – life altering ways. All of a sudden, this charming idea of individuality and non-conformity becomes terrifying and has potentially disastrous consequences.

By the time our children reach young adulthood, they are generally more proportionate and less physically top-heavy, but the imperfections they do have are much harder to overlook. As they find their way in the world, rejection of family values and ideals, and embrace of rebellious norms of the day is a typical step in normal but frequently painful development.

The challenges of Chesterton's day were different from those of our own, but they all stem from the principal fault – our tendency to tell God that we know better, thank you very much, and we are happy to substitute our wisdom for His own. Just as each person has his own beauty, each person has his own path to the Creator. Some, a very precious few, never wander. They are the ones who have discovered that “there are two ways to get home; and one of them is to stay there.” Blessed are the parents who have children who do not wander.

Blessed too, despite the pain, are the parents whose

children do wander. Some children abuse the gift of free will by making devastating choices. These choices are all the more painful for a parent who knows, by virtue of experience, of the terrible ramifications of the rejection of the straight and narrow path. Like Job, these parents suffer not because they are bad, but because they are good. Their goodness lies not in perfect parenting decisions, because who among us can claim to have parented perfectly? The goodness of these parents lies in loving the unlovable.

After the values and the care and the efforts to accept have been rejected, like an eternally loving Father, these parents endure in their love and care for their wandering children. Like Job, they persevere in faith and hope for the joy of reconciliation without any evidence that any of it is having any effect on their unfortunate situation. In doing so, they become more like the Creator who desires to draw all of us, even in our imperfection, to Himself. ☸

SUSAN SUCHER is a domestic empress, wife of Greg and mother of nine.



LETTER TO AMERICA

“I do not understand America. Nor do you.” –G.K. CHESTERTON

The Thing They Left Out

By G.K. Chesterton

IT IS QUEER THAT WHEN CRITICS are grumbling at Democracy and the Declaration of Independence, or at least the primary principles with which it starts, hardly anybody notices the one mistake that was really made by the great men of that philosophy and that phase of history. Jefferson was not wrong in saying that men in the abstract have rights; or that men in the concrete have wrongs. To deny that is really to deny any difference between right and wrong. But he and his generation were in one point really negative and narrow; and that is that they did not allow enough even for the *practical* importance of religion.

I do not mean that they were necessarily wrong in founding a secular state; nor is it the point here that they were wrong in their personal religion or irreligion. What they should have realized is that other people were and are as deeply divided by religion. Moreover, even irreligion is a religion. They regarded a French atheist and an Irish Catholic simply as a French citizen and an Irish citizen.

But the other titles do tell in practice; each of them is a public fact, even if we regard it as a public nuisance. This misunderstanding prolonged the agony in Ireland and it looks as if it would prolong the agony in India.

India is, in every sense, an affair of some heat; but I find that even in the most heated controversy I am left out in the cold. I was never a good party man; but in this matter I seem especially to fall between the two stools of the two parties. The Party System in England stands vaguely for a certain division between two sorts of people. They may be called the respectable and the reasonable, though I have sometimes found the reasonable the more unreasonable of the two. Anyhow, the respectable (for I have sometimes been permitted to sit down among respectable people), the conservative or conventional or traditional men I know, tend to say, "The Indian question is Imperial; it must be solved by great governing powers and considerations of Empire!"

The reasonable people (for I know some quite reasonable people who allow me to talk to them), the rationalists, the liberal progressive people all say, "The Indian need is Independence; it must be a self-governing unit," and so on. Then they *both* say, "Let us hope no silly squabbles about religion will spoil this great unity," whether Imperial or National.

Now I am so perverse that I think the religious squabbles are much less silly than the political squabbles. I am much more certain that there is such a thing as Islam than there is such a thing as India.

I believe much more in the existence of a Hindoo than in the existence of an Indian. And I think the difficulties do arise from the doctrines; but much more from the trick of ignoring the doctrines.

Mr. Gandhi is exhibited in all sorts of aspects and attitudes; chiefly, in the popular press, as a person who wears spectacles and not much else. Now it seriously seems to me the most important fact about him that he believes in Reincarnation; *more* important than

his believing in Passive Resistance. It is not only the chief difficulty for us; but the chief difficulty for him. Because of Reincarnation, he cannot see the problem of the Pariahs, or Untouchables (however sincere his sympathy), quite so simply as it is seen by a Moslem or a Christian. In the two latter creeds there can be no Untouchables.

Moslems and Christians have bashed people on the head; have bashed each other on the head; have kicked and punched and pummelled their enemies heartily. But even by this they clearly showed that their enemies were not untouchable. But Hindoos believe that Pariahs are where they are by a certain spiritual order or necessity; and though a man like Gandhi might modify it, he finds it difficult to defy it.

By that huge crowd of outcasts, like nothing on earth, barring the road of reform, you may measure how horribly *practical* is the thing called a religious doctrine. ☞

From the *New York American*, January 9, 1932



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