

# GILBERT

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF G.K. CHESTERTON

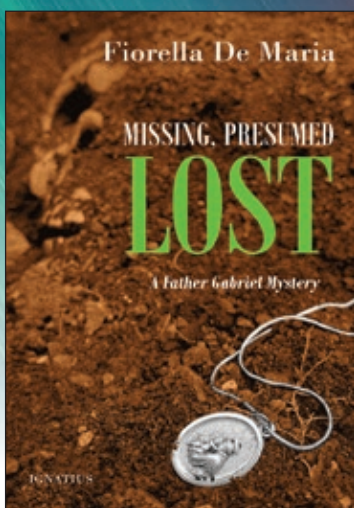
*"I enjoy trees  
because they  
exist in spite  
of me; and I  
believe the  
sentiment  
to be at the  
root of all  
that real kind  
of romance  
which makes  
life not a  
delusion of  
the night, but  
an adventure  
of the  
morning."*

— G.K. CHESTERTON





# Fiction that Stirs the Mind & Spirit



## ◆ MISSING, PRESUMED LOST

Fr. Gabriel returns to St Mary's Abbey, but all is not well in the sleepy village of Sutton Westford. A former village boy turned property developer has returned to build houses on the grounds of a disused mine. A local opposition group campaigns to stop him, and he receives increasingly menacing threats. Then workmen make a gruesome discovery on the site — the skeleton of a child missing for 30 years.

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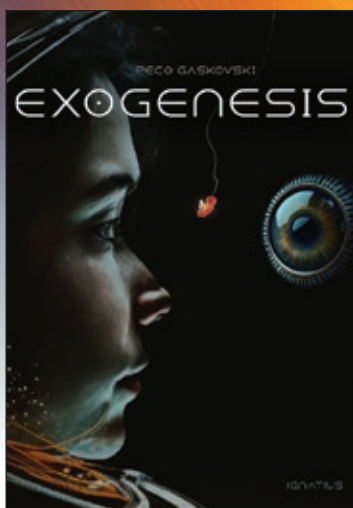
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Author, *A Bloody Habit*

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## TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

By Dale Ahlquist

■ Just as we were going to press, we learned the sad news of the death of Father Ian Boyd, the founder and longtime editor of the *Chesterton Review*. He received the American Chesterton Society Lifetime Achievement Award in 1999. He was one of the world's great Chestertonians. We will devote a full treatment of his life and work in a future issue.

■ There was a casually announced contest in the last issue, where deep inside my Chesterton University column, I pointed out that Chesterton misquoted one of his own most famous lines. I said that the first person to tell me the correct wording and the original source would get a free tee shirt. Jeff Anderson from the appropriately named city of Gilbert, Arizona, was the first person to respond with the answer that "A thing worth doing is worth doing badly," was from *What's Wrong with the World*, published in 1910. (It appears in the chapter "Folly and Female Education" in which GKC defends amateurs who truly do things out of love rather than for monetary rewards – the prime example being mothers.)

Mr. Anderson got the tee shirt, which we hope he is wearing proudly, in spite of the fact that it was merely a leftover from a previous conference, and in spite of the fact that – it's actually *not* the correct answer! Hardly anyone would be expected to know this, but G.K. Chesterton first used the line in the *Daily News*, October 18, 1901. It prompted a letter to the editor a few days later that opened with: "Sir – Cannot something be done to keep within reasonable bounds the verbal exuberance of your too brilliant contributor, G.K. Chesterton! I ask, because his reckless practice of making old-established and highly respectable proverbs stand on their heads is seriously imperiling my domestic peace."

A couple months later the *Daily News* referred to GKC as "The Prince of Paradox" for the first time, to which the editor of the *Globe* responded on December 13: "We believe he will get over this, and other things. Let us recognize young talent without depleting the vocabulary of royalty."

The fact that the line (and GKC) had become popular is demonstrated in an interview in 1907. P.W. Wilson

of the *Daily News*, says to Frances:

"The best thing your husband ever wrote," so I began, "was that 'if a thing is worth doing at all –'"

"It is worth doing badly," replied Mrs. Chesterton. "I know it well, because I have opened debates on the point and got everyone to agree. Look at children playing with paints," she continued, "and you will realise the truth of the paradox. Music and dancing and singing have all been banished from our lives because we are all afraid to do things badly."

(Note: the interviewer also gets the quote wrong.)

■ Speaking of interviews, I was interviewed by Matt Fradd on his very popular podcast "Pints with Aquinas." The interview will be released for public consumption on February 5.

■ And speaking of *What's Wrong with the World*, Larry Bleau of The Villages, Florida, sent us a succinct and poetic summary of that book:

Hudge and Gudge went out to dine;  
They feasted on rich food and wine.  
When the two had had their fill,  
They left poor Jones to pay the bill.

■ And speaking of what's wrong with this magazine, some of our readers noticed that a few pages were out of order in their copy of our previous issue. Well, it wasn't just their copy, it was everybody's. As publisher and editor, I, of course, take responsibility for this blot on an otherwise perfect universe. Our membership remains intact in spite of its poor leadership. Thank you, everyone, for continuing to put up with me. And thanks to Ciaran Guilfoyle of Derby, England, for sending this clerihew:

*Gilbert* (Volume 27 Number 2)  
Has been knocked slightly askew.  
Now it seems we must explore  
To find pages forty-three and forty-four. ☞





## LUNACY AND LETTERS

*from Gilbert! Readers*

### REGARDING “PADRES AND PEARLS”

(27.2), I disagree with the term “art” being used to describe pixels, especially in the case of video games. While no doubt we need good Catholics in the film and video game industries, we should view that work as one of evangelization. I believe you are taking the analogy of Baptism too far when applied to these technologies. If someday Christendom is to return, these things should fade into the past, being replaced by their superior incarnational alternatives: local theatres, card games, and sports with our neighbors, reading aloud with our families. You once asked of the “rock and roll” movement, “But where is this all going?” I urge you to ask the same question of the electronic screens.

Or perhaps we can baptize cheap, mass-produced beer while we are at it?

**MATT ROWE** (a former video game addict Millennial)  
*Lawrence, Kansas*

**I FOUND MYSELF** in hearty agreement while reading Mark Johnson’s “It’s a Dog’s World” (September-October). Dogs are indeed replacing children instead of accompanying them, which is ever the ideal. This trend set me on some ruminations. A couple years into marriage and naturally wishing to proliferate the abundance of our love for each other, my wife and I were considering getting a dog. Now, I was already 31 years long in the tooth at that point and realized that getting a dog would put a drag on our domestic liberty and travel spontaneity of which wouldn’t be worth the fuss of a dog. A child, on the other hand, is always worth the fuss. Therefore, we decided it was time to plan to conceive. God blessed us with a witty and winsome son who turns 10 soon. I’m sure that my telling of this woolly decision-making rubric to him, the fact that he won out over a dog, will only ever do wonders for his self-esteem, that is, keep it grounded in humility and humor. A dog alone at that juncture in life would’ve been a vain attempt to imbue human likeness into a

creature that cannot bear the image of man, despite the imaginations of many dog owners. Neither the eternal dance between the triune Godhead, nor His image, is satisfactorily transmuted through animal kind. Animals alone aren’t suitable vessels to receive the overflow of God’s self-love. Just as man alone bears God’s image among corporeal creation, so children alone replicate the dance between man and woman, bear their image, and are suitable vessels for the overflow of their love. Furthermore, I’d die for my son, but I wouldn’t even take a chance at serious injury to save my dog. Maybe that makes me a bad dog owner, but it also makes me not a bad dad.

Having prefaced with that, allow me to say I grew up having many dogs, have a dog now, and I love dogs. At the same time, I don’t love dogs one iota. This ambiguity of the word, “love,” was the main task when I wrote “Dog Soup for the Soul,” an article published in the January 2015 issue of *Groove Korea* magazine reflecting on my experience eating dog soup in South Korea. Was it good? Doggone scrumptious. Digestion? Not too ruff of the stomach. But love, what of love? My love for dogs resembles my love for sour ale or starry night campfires much more than it does my love for country, family, truth, or God. In the first instance, love isn’t love at all, but a liking, an enjoyment, a pleasure gleaned, and regarding dogs (not sour ale), is occasionally affectionate. However, this affection is tempered by the truth that animals were created for the wisely stewarded pleasure and service of man. Such pleasure and service can take many forms, such as company, work assistance, clothing, over-zealous alarm systems, and food sources to name a few. So, when I say I love petting my dog and seeing him enjoy the rawhide bone I gave him, and yet I also enjoyed the dog soup I ate nearly a decade ago and wouldn’t hesitate to serve up my own canine today if the situation were apocryphal enough, there is no contradiction. There is, however, a paradox. I ventured into the crux of this paradox when I wrote, “treating animals humanely means treating them as if we are human, not

as if they were.” To rub my dog’s head while looking into his big brown loyal eyes one moment, and yet be willing to unabashedly roast him on a spit if the occasion called is not cruelty, but it is a mystery. And of the mystic Chesterton aptly and inimitably writes, “He has always cared more for truth than consistency. If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and contradiction along with them. His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight: he sees two different pictures at once and yet sees all the better for that.”

COLBY MATHEWS  
Springville, Indiana



A photo I took of a street dog resting on the stoop of restaurant that serves dog soup. The upper right listing on the menu sign is one of the Korean words of denoting dog soup.

## CHESTERTON FOR TODAY

■ We are incessantly told that past periods were very bad; and I cheerfully agree that they must have been most horribly bad, if they were really worse than the period we are asked to praise. (*G.K.'S WEEKLY*, JAN. 18, 1930)

■ Things are very complex, and everybody is doing the wrong thing; and I suspect they really think that things are too complex for anybody to do the right thing. (“NEGATIVE MORALITY,” *ALL I SURVEY*)

■ Farming will always last ... Whoever tills those fields will count for a great deal in the affairs of humanity. (“IN THE AMERICAN COUNTRY,” *WHAT I SAW IN AMERICA*)

■ Journalists ought not to be distrusted because they are worse than other people. They are not. They ought to be distrusted because they are more powerful than other people; because they have, like the priests of old, the keys of knowledge, and can if they will shut others out and go not in themselves. A conspiracy of journalists could easily hurl the whole of this nation upon political ruin. (*THE WORLD*, SEPT. 20, 1904)



■ If our government were really a representative government, it would certainly not be a meddling government. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, NOV. 15, 1924)

■ This is a paradox of democracy, that though men can be as paltry as their own most paltry aims, they can also be as heroic as their own most heroic aims. (*MORNING LEADER*, FEB. 24, 1904)

■ Any man with eyes in his head, whatever the ideas in his head, who looks at the world as it is today, must know that the whole social substance of marriage has changed; just as the whole social substance of Christianity changed with the divorce of Henry VIII. (“THE SURRENDER UPON SEX,” *THE WELL AND THE SHALLOWS*)

■ We shall never return to social sanity till we begin at the beginning. We must start where all history starts, with a man and a woman, and a child, and with the province of liberty and property which these need for their full humanity. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS*, MAY 3, 1919)



## 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

# The Heavenly Chariot Rides On

By Joe Grabowski

**WRITING OF WHAT HE CALLED** "the thrilling romance of orthodoxy," Chesterton observes: "People have fallen into a foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy."

He goes on to relate how the historic Christian Church was in every age beset with heresies on every side, and doggedly ran Her mad course between them – not always elegantly, it may be admitted, but nonetheless indefatigably. "She swerved to left and right, so exactly as to avoid enormous obstacles."

His wrapping up of the account of this great adventure is such a stirring bit of prose that it is worth quoting at length:

It is easy to be a madman: it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own. It is always easy to be a modernist; as it is easy to be a snob. To have fallen into any of those open traps of error and exaggeration which fashion after fashion and sect after sect set along the historic path of Christendom – that would indeed have been simple. It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands. To have fallen into any one of the fads from Gnosticism to Christian Science would indeed have been obvious and tame. But to have avoided them all has been one whirling adventure; and in my vision the heavenly chariot flies thundering through the ages, the dull heresies sprawling and prostrate, the wild truth reeling but erect.

If one imaginatively enters into the metaphor, it needs hardly be noted that riding along on such a conveyance amidst such a journey must sometimes be quite uncomfortable; and so it has been; and so it is. Whether it be when "the whole world groaned in astonishment to find itself Arian," or when the Papacy fell captive to the factious worldly interests of the Babylon called Avignon; or when hosts of clergy, theologians, and laity united their voices together in protest favoring "the Pill" over the Pope, there has been no shortage of times during which

the task of keeping one's head has been at least as difficult in the Church as without.

When last December the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) released, with the Holy Father's approbation, its declaration, *Fiducia supplicans* – on "the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings" and, more specifically, the question of whether ministers in the Church could bless those in same-sex relationships or other "irregular situations" – these quotations from Chesterton rose up in my mind. Had I lived to see the day that the chariot finally wobbled too far and ended its ages-long journey? No, that didn't seem likely. What, then? Well, at the very least I was sure that here was an instance of the "wild truth," however finally "erect," very visibly in the moment "reeling," and I wasn't the only one who'd noticed.

"Pope says priests can bless same-sex unions," ran the headline in the Associated Press, and this was perhaps not the most egregious. Father James Martin, notorious for his misleading presentation of the Church's perennial teachings around the Sixth Commandment, made great hay with an asinine photo op for the *New York Times*, inviting two men of his acquaintance to pose for a blessing, in clear and direct contradiction to what the document actually allows (*i.e.* "spontaneous" blessings, carefully arranged to prevent public scandal). Yet I wouldn't be holding my breath for Martin to face censure for his actions.

A careful study of the declaration itself, and consultation with reliable theological commentators, assured me that there wasn't anything blatantly heretical or problematic in the pastoral provisions set forth therein. But that it was an ill-judged missive bound to cause pain

and confusion – not to mention leaving open the door to myriad abuses and liberties – seemed an unavoidable conclusion. Like so many others, I was frustrated, at risk of becoming despondent, struggling with impulses toward uncharitable sniping or grousing.

I turned to Chesterton, and found comfort. “At least five times,” he writes in *The Everlasting Man*, “with the Arian and the Albigensian, with the Humanist sceptic, after Voltaire and after Darwin, the Faith has to all appearance gone to the dogs. In each of these five cases it was the dog that died.” At least five times. I could certainly think of more to add to the count. But each only adds to the argument, *a fortiori*. The more numerous Her sons’ defections, the more surely shone the Mother’s indefectibility. Chesterton cannot help but notice such a paradoxical pattern. In Her members’ many weaknesses, the Church is ultimately made strong.

Through so many perils, from Pelagius to the Pill, the Church had passed intact, bruised and battered like Her Bridegroom though She may appear. And even the simplest among the Saints and Doctors knew to expect nothing else, for Christ warned us it would be so: “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you” (Jn. 15:20). Yet He had also promised, and proved, that the story doesn’t end at the Cross. As Chesterton sagely writes, “Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a god who knew the way out of the grave.”

With the gift of hindsight, it is easy to take too much for granted. When we think of Chesterton’s remarkable journey to the Faith over so many years, culminating in his final reception in 1922, one part of the narrative we pass over too facilely is this: the very fact that there was any Church there to receive him! One need only cursorily consider the history of the preceding four centuries to realize that this was by no means an inevitable circumstance. If one imagines oneself in the place of a peasant amidst the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, looking ahead to the future, England would not seem likely ever to be an apt setting for the biographies of men like Newman and Chesterton. No, only with the eyes of faith could such be foreseen, and hardly!

That the Church should be there to welcome Chesterton when he was ready to step over the threshold

was neither more nor less than a miracle. And yet, as miracles go, this particular one – the uncanny stubbornness of the Faith to outlive epochs and empires – is one of the commonest in Church history, seen everywhere from Tepeyac to Tokyo.

We needn’t always be comfortable in our perilous perch in the giddy chariot that is the Church. From time to time, we may be bewildered, experience whiplash or worse jolts, when those at the reins seem to take a turn too fast or fail in avoiding a pothole. The charism of infallibility pertains to the chariot, in the end, not to the driver: we are assured that the wheels won’t come off, that the Thing will never turn over into a ditch. We are not assured of a smooth ride.

For my part, I decided to leave the commentators to their discussions of doctrine and to the pastors of the Church the thorny figuring out of how to implement this controversial instruction in our confusing times. Better for me to focus on what I had to do, to keep doing my small part in the vineyard to bring in the Lord’s harvest. What else could one do? I would keep my head. Buckle down in my seat. Trust the surety of the steed. And hold on for dear life: because, whether I liked it or not, I was sure at any rate that this wouldn’t be the last bump along my road. “There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy.”

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

**100**  
YEARS AGO

G.K. Chesterton addressed a grand rally of Knights and Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament at the London Coliseum. 8000 people were in attendance. He was introduced by Cardinal Francis Bourne. Chesterton talked about the revival of chivalry. He said that everybody knew that for some two hundred years the English people had been busily engaged in trying to get rid of all Catholic things. Now they were engaged in trying to get back all Catholic things, with the exception of Catholicism itself. He reminded the audience that the idea of knighthood was a Catholic creation, once won through valor, but now purchased by plutocrats.





## ROLLING ROAD

*Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.*

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# When Presidents Were ...

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By Dale Ahlquist

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION** to this magazine the last few years, you might have noticed that we have steered clear of Presidential politics. It is a subject on which the majority of people – no matter what their affiliation – cannot remain calm. While this is true of Presidential politics especially, it is becoming true of politics generally. But perhaps that has always been the case.

We here at the Society of GKC believe that when we hit upon the idea of renaming Distributism as Localism, we found a much better way to focus on how to solve many of the problems that face our country. The real solutions are not going to come from the top, and they are not going to come from Washington DC. They are going to come from the bottom, and they are going to come from you and your next door neighbor. So you'd better go over there and introduce yourself, and tell them about their new gift subscription to *Gilbert*.

In this column, I am going to break my moratorium on discussing the President of the United States. However, I'm not going to discuss the current occupant of the White House nor any recent occupant, but a couple of former residents, one of whom lived there when the place got burned down by the British. But I'm not even going to discuss their residences at the White House, but at their own houses.

Thanks to the fact that some good folks in Charlottesville, Virginia,

are opening Chesterton Academy of Saint John the Evangelist there next fall, I was recently invited to their fair city to help light up the locals for classical Catholic learning. And while I was there, my hosts graciously arranged for me to visit Monticello, the home of our third President, Thomas Jefferson, and Montpelier, the home of the fourth, James Madison. They lived less than 20 miles from each other. I would have visited the home of our fifth Commander-in-Chief, James Monroe, who

also lived nearby, but his house isn't there anymore. There's just an outline of it on the ground. And both Monticello and Montpelier could just as easily not have been there had it not been for a combination of luck and heroic effort to save their properties and then preserve them for posterity.

Both these men are buried on their stately estates. Monticello sits high on a hill from which you can see the campus of the University of Virginia, which Jefferson also founded. Education was important to him. He was a man of learning. "I cannot live



*The nickel view of Monticello*

without books,” he said – after he sold his entire library and subsequently bought another one.

He also said: “Wine is a necessary of life,” after he ran out of wine while serving an important guest. He then enlarged his vineyard and his wine cellar.

Jefferson is one of the most quoted writers of the last quarter millennium, even though it’s just a few lines of his that are always quoted: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ...” They are from the Declaration of Independence. He was 33 years old when he wrote that famous document.

He was Secretary of State, then Vice President, then President. He called the Presidency “a splendid misery.” He didn’t mention that he was President on his very final piece of writing: the inscription on his gravestone, only that he was Author of the Declaration of Independence and the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and was Father of the University of Virginia.

As I approached the grave, I heard a father explaining to his young son the difference between a democracy and a republic. On the way to the cemetery there is a “contemplative site.” Obviously a recent addition. What was interesting about it is that there was absolutely nothing interesting about it. There was nothing



*Mr. Patrick Lannon accompanies Dale at Madison's Temple of Wisdom.*



*Jefferson's Duplicate Writing Machine for copying his letters while he wrote them.*

to contemplate. Apparently it was designed to reflect Jefferson's religious ideas.

But G.K. Chesterton was a big Thomas Jefferson fan: “My own tastes are for the tradition of Jefferson rather than of Franklin ... I believe that all men have equal rights, including the right to a thing called justice, which is attested by a thing called conscience; and I agree with the American Declaration of Independence, that this recognition in every man of a certain dignity refers ultimately to a certain divinity ... I believe in liberty very much as Jefferson did, allowing for the fact that a hundred years of history and experience have taught me to believe a little more than he did in original sin.”

After Jefferson's death Monticello was purchased by a Jewish naval officer named Levi. His family lived in the home for nearly a century, but it was in pretty rough shape when the public took it over and restored it.

James Madison's nearby home needed even more restoration. The estate was a tobacco plantation until the 19th century, after which it was acquired by the Dupont family (yes, *that* Dupont), who owned Montpelier for





*Dale explains “We the People” to James while Dolly looks on.*

most of the 20th century. They covered it in pink stucco, added two wings to the building, and built a horse track on the property. They arranged to give it the National Trust on condition that the Trust restore the house to its original condition and keep the horse track. Amazingly, it now looks like it did when Madison lived there. Except for the horse track.

Madison was the Father of the Constitution, Architect of the Bill of Rights, and the only Secretary of State never to have left the country. The oldest of 12 children, he could read and write in seven languages. He attended the College of New Jersey (which became Princeton) instead of William and Mary – where Jefferson went and got all those Scottish Enlightenment ideas. His classical tastes are reflected in the Temple of Liberty that he constructed on his property. It sits over a cellar in which they stored ice that was cut from the pond. Dolly Madison used the ice to make oyster ice cream, her favorite.

On his deathbed, Madison’s last words were in response to his niece who asked, “Anything wrong?”

“Nothing, my dear, but a change of mind,” leaving to the ages the mystery of what it was he changed his mind about.

He owned an educated and well-spoken slave named Paul Jennings. After Madison’s death, Jennings, with help from Daniel Webster, was able to purchase his freedom from Dolly, who needed the money. Ironically, Jennings would one day give money to Madison’s widow, who died destitute. Dolly was the first presidential wife referred to as “The First Lady” but she did not get that title until President Zachary Taylor gave it to her at her funeral in 1849. Did I mention that Madison was first introduced to Dolly by Aaron Burr?

Now let me ask: what were you thinking when you saw the headline to this article? What did you imagine would follow the ellipsis: When Presidents were ... Men? Great? Smart? Patriots? Smokers? Slaveowners? All are correct.

Both these men knew the wrong of slavery but neither did anything about it except depend on it. “We have the wolf by the ears,” said Jefferson, and he didn’t know how to let go. Madison wrote: “We have seen the mere distinction of color made, in the most enlightened period of time, a ground to justify the most extreme dominion of man over man.”

Chesterton says, “I believe that it was always common ground to people of common sense that the enslavement and importation of negroes had been the crime and catastrophe of American history.”

But after the slaves were freed, there came another crime and catastrophe in American history, and it is still among us. When history looks back, will it not only puzzle at how our first leaders justified slavery but at how our later leaders justified abortion? ☹️



*Dale points out additional self-evident truths to Thomas.*





## Revolution

**A**ll conservatism is based upon the idea that if you leave things alone you leave them as they are. **B**ut you do not. **I**f you leave a thing alone you leave it to a torrent of change. **I**f you leave a white post alone it will soon be a black post. **I**f you particularly want it to be white you must be always painting it again; that is, you must be always having a revolution. **B**riefly, if you want the old white post you must have a new white post."

G.K.Chesterton



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# The Appeal to the Slandered

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By G.K. Chesterton

[Editor's Note: This GKC essay is a review of two books published by Sheed and Ward in 1930: *No Popery* by Herbert Thurston, S.J., and *The Thundering Abbot* by Henri Brémond. While the books may or may not any longer be of interest to today's reader, the issues he discusses are as timely as ever.]

**TWO BOOKS** have recently been published which are very different in form and formal purpose; which were written in different countries by men of very different national types and traditions; which are in

some ways almost a contrast in tone and method; but which curiously reinforce each other. They combine especially to enforce one Catholic argument and one reply to an anti-Catholic argument.

Both probably have been, or will be, reviewed in a regular manner in this paper, by critics much more competent than I am to estimate their considerable scholarship and research. I am not concerned here with the details, but with the necessity of drawing out in a plain and popular outline this one particular fallacy and its exposure.

One is Fr. Thurston's forcible collection of historical studies called *No Popery*. They might be called a series of posthumous or retrospective sections for slander brought by Popes before the tribunal of literature, where dignity did not allow them to be brought before the tribunal of law. In every case, I think, Fr. Thurston, as the prosecuting counsel, would now win his case with heavy damages before any judge or jury, Protestant or Rationalist; or indeed before any tribunal except an Orange Lodge.

On the face of the facts, it is just about as probable that Pius the Ninth was a Freemason as that Sylvester the Second was a magician; and they are both about as probable as the cheerful statement that Cardinal Vaughan was a forger. Even the bad Popes never lived such lives as the wild romances attributed to them; and the series is crowned with the wildest romance; that of the Pope who never lived at all. I need not say that

I refer to that popular character, Pope Joan, of whom it is to be hoped that we read here for the last time.

Fr. Thurston backs his way through this forest of fables with a sort of masculine patience and unruffled contempt which are truly admirable. Almost all his statements might be called understatements; but they easily annihilate the enemies' misstatements. By the end of the book, this steadiness of tone produces a peculiar and rather powerful effect on the mind; it is as if one sane man were talking in a lunatic asylum.

The other book is a brilliant sketch, one might almost say a brilliant squib, by the Abbé Bremond, excellently translated by Mr. Sheed, giving an individual view of an individual controversialist in the complex controversies of seventeenth century France; De Rancé, the founder of the reformed Trappists; here described as *The Thundering Abbot*.

The author, to put it mildly, thinks that the Thundering Abbot thundered a great deal too much, and he ends his remarks with a delicate reminder that the Lord was not in the thunder. Because De Rancé denounced the Catholic life around him, and especially because he came very near to defying the Pope, he was made a hero, and what is worse, an authority, by all those who wished to show that the Pope and

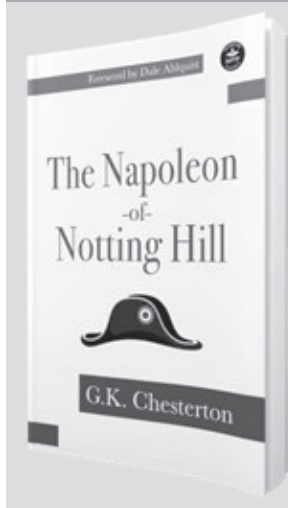
the Catholics were always wrong. He was in his way a hero, but he was not, in any way, an authority. And, as the translator truly notes in the preface, it was really the reformer who was nearly always wrong.

The Abbé Bremond succeeds pretty thoroughly in piercing to the truth upon two essential facts; the second much more essential than the first. First, that the great reformer of his order spent most of his life in trying to reform every other order except his own. And, second, that he spent practically the whole of his life in trying to reform everybody else except himself.

It would be impossible to imagine a more entirely English book than Fr. Thurston's; or a more entirely French book than the Abbé Bremond's. The latter is full of an irony so radiant and limpid that we feel it almost possible to live in the topsy-turvydom of irony as in a native air and daylight.

The Englishman always says exactly what he means, or just a little less than he means. The French says so exactly the opposite of what he means that it seems to have more exactitude than the other. He excels in that inversion of the important and the unimportant, which has often made French wit seem to dunces more mystifying than mysticism; as when Voltaire said: "To succeed in society it is not enough to be stupid; you must also have good manners."

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There is exactly that ironic inversion in the Abbé Bremond's comment on De Rancé's claim that God had given the literary excellence to his protest against Rome. "*Non nobis, Domine ... to God alone the glory, not only for the challenge to the Holy See* – that would go without saying – but also for the beauty of the style – the clause-laden style – in which the challenge was wrapped up. Matter and form – is 'inspired' – since in such a case the Holy Ghost could not allow M. de Rancé to offend the Academy!"

Yet, as I say, these two works run parallel in the matter of a very important historical argument; which they both bring out very forcibly and clearly. It might almost be stated thus; that those who are most incredulous in dealing with Catholicism are sometimes a great deal too credulous in dealing with Catholics.

In their eagerness to prove that the Pope is not infallible, they practically assume that every Catholic *is* infallible – so long, of course, as he is testifying against the Pope. Exactly what Bremond brings out in the case of De Rancé, the English Jesuit brings out in the case of Matthew Paris and William of Malmesbury and many more. We never said that all loyal Catholics were always right. There is no possible sense in our opponents talking as if all disloyal Catholics were always right.

This popular Protestant fallacy takes two forms; the first is a contradiction in terms and the second is an argument in a circle. In the first place, the critics of the Church, especially of the medieval Church, with monotonous and yet monstrous exaggeration, repeat perpetually; "Medieval men were superstitious savages, barbarous ruffians, demented fanatics, cruel persecutors, crafty plotters, haters of truth, enemies of science; men not to be trusted as priests or citizens or rulers or even rational creatures."

And at the end of all this almost endless diatribe, Fr. Thurston thrusts in the really unanswerable question: "Then why do you trust them as chroniclers?"

If men in medieval times were in every possible way scandalous, why should they not be in this particular way scandal-mongers; and why are we bound to believe every word of their scandal-mongering? If Matthew Paris was cut off from truth because he was a Papist, why was he inevitably bound to tell the truth when he was talking about the Pope? If William of Malmesbury was sunk in every kind of error, because



he was a medieval monk, why was he divinely preserved from all error when he said that Pope Sylvester was a wizard? What sort of people were these mysterious medievals; entirely unreliable men and entirely reliable historians; basely deluded in all their loftiest beliefs and scientifically correct in all their lowest quarrels; incredible in themselves and infallible against each other?

The common sense of this case is, of course, that medieval men were neither so bad as their critics suggest in criticising them, nor so good as the same critics assume in using them as material for criticism. But their very virtues were rather violent, both in the good and the bad sense, and they were not in practice restrained, as we are, from all criticism of the rich by a very unilateral law of libel. Of all men in history, they were the most likely to be often wrong in their criticisms, even when they were most right in their lives.

But the same argument, as I have said, applies to the parallel case of the great Trappist of the seventeenth century. The Thundering Abbot was an ascetic who thundered at monks for not being ascetic enough, and was disgruntled even with the Pope for being ready to let them off some of their asceticism. Therefore he is summoned as a witness to Papal tyranny and monastic corruption, by the very people who tell us that asceticism itself is the most corrupting tyranny of all.

But if monastic austerity hardens the heart and darkens the mind, might it not have hardened the heart of this excessively austere monk and possibly slightly darkened his portrait of the Pope? Here again the central common sense is clear enough; that the

Pope was much more sensible than the Abbot, and the ordinary monks not much worse than this one very extraordinary monk. Once admit this, however, and the whole structure of the Horrible Revelations of Roman Catholic Life collapses altogether.

The other argument, which I call an argument in a circle, is this. Our critics begin by saying: "Roman Catholics are all reduced to a dead level of obedience and mental slavery; they must all say exactly the same thing on every subject; they can only repeat traditional fables, or at the best truisms; not one of them dares say anything but what all the others have said."

Having assumed this principle, the critics then look at the facts of the wild, complicated, intensely controversial and varied history of Christendom, and infer that every Catholic must be speaking for every other Catholic. If Matthew Paris calls a Pope extortionate, it must be because he was so certainly and self-evidently extortionate that the whole Catholic Church accepted the fact. If some furious Jansenist called a Jesuit a liar, it must be an obvious fact that Jesuits are liars; and a Catholic dogma that Jesuits may lie.

All this bewildering nonsense results from the simple falsehood which has been assumed at the beginning. There is no cure for it except the simple fact; and the simple fact is that Catholics agree with each other on Catholicism and on precious little else, and that their history has been the most varied, the most vigorous, the most combative and the most many-sided culture that human history has ever known. ☸

From *The Universe*, November 7, 1930

A journalist who went by "T.M.P." interviewed GKC for the *Book Window*, June, 1928:

Nobody enters the company of G.K.C. without a feeling of entering into good conversation as easily as a duck takes to water. Ideas pervade him; he shakes them off with a chuckle of enjoyment as if they were yours instead of his. Nor does he need to choose a subject for himself, as so many good talkers do. He is content to take up the "service" you send him, and return it with interest. ... You never come away from him without feeling as if you had climbed a hill-top and relished the fullness of life and thought at its best.



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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

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# Hollywood and The Holy Spirit

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By Candace Jaegle

**ONCE UPON A TIME A LONG, LONG TIME AGO** – in 1982 – in Hollywood, California, there lived a happy young lady whose life was simply perfection. She was young, blonde, blue-eyed, and drove a brand new Renault convertible. She earned an easy livelihood working at the movie studios (Walt Disney Productions, The Disney Channel, and Columbia Pictures) as a secretary (we still called them secretaries in those days). Her boss paid her well, and he relied upon her discretion and charm, because he often required a small “happy nappy” after his liquid lunches. He held an executive position and was at that time involved in the building phase of Tokyo Disneyland. She was very fortunate, because his trips to Japan were frequent, and he would always bring her back very cool presents. She actually learned a few key Japanese phrases which came in handy at her favorite L.A. sushi place. She was a Roman Catholic from New England. For most of her young life, she practiced her faith, loved Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and knew how to say her rosary. Even during the tumultuous Sixties (when she was in her teens), she managed to survive pretty well, because she preferred hops to heroin. She never forgot God, or blamed Him for anything. Though she was not actively practicing her Catholic faith, her current philosophy was of the Doobie Brothers/Cyndi Lauper variety: “Jesus is Just Alright”, and “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun.” And so, when she left New England for the City of the Angels, she thought she’d found paradise!

As I mentioned, beer was always her favorite drug of choice, and Coors (alas, no *Coors Light* in those days) was her absolute favorite. Hops were mother’s milk to her – being of Irish, Polish, and German heritage. She could pretty much hold her own and was always puzzled when her dates would fall asleep, especially when she wanted to “dance ‘til dawn.” Like Saint Augustine, when she talked to God, she’d say, “Not yet....”; however,

she had no idea *exactly* who Saint Augustine was back in the 80s.

She was indeed blessed, for in those halcyon days, Walt Disney Productions at 500 South Buena Vista in Burbank, was truly the happiest place on earth – like stepping into a 1940s musical. Sleeping Beauty was slumbering peacefully and not yet “woke.” The Disney family still owned the company, and Diane Disney’s tall dark

and handsome ex-football player husband, Ron Miller, was CEO. All of the animators were still “on the lot,” and the films and music were all produced in-house at 500 South Buena Vista. Employees could freely explore and wander the back lot. The Zorro set was still intact. One could enjoy a picnic lunch by the pool in the backyard of an old movie set (*The Million Dollar Duck*), or visit the sound stages to watch the filming of such Disney blockbusters as *Herbie Goes Bananas* or *The Devil and Max Devlin* (starring Bill Cosby and Elliott Gould) – lest we also forget *The Last Flight of Noah’s Arc* with Genevieve Bujold or *Tron*, starring Bruce Boxleitner. These productions were followed by *The Black Hole* which probably sank WDP into a financial black hole. CEO Michael Eisner’s reign was still yet looming on the horizon.

An Annette Funicello spotting would not be unusual. The buildings were beautiful, art-deco style. You could visit the Animation Building to watch the artists create the hand painted “cells.” These cells were offered for sale to employees once the filming was completed. Disney classics were available to take home on loan, along with a reel-to-reel projector. Home video was yet to be born. All employee office supplies and stationery sported either a small Mickey Mouse or a little black mouse-ears logo. Employee lunch was cafeteria style in the commissary where beer and wine were offered, along with a pretty tasty choice of entrees. Celebrities who were currently starring in a Disney production, such as Bill Cosby, Cloris Leachman, or Elliott Gould could often be spotted in the adjacent private dining area through the glass windows. A then-unknown Tim Burton had a private office and studio where his strange sculpted creations could be seen in his windows across the patio. This was before *Pee Wee’s Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Edward Scissorhands* catapulted him to fame. Once a year, the animators would create an exhibit in the Disney studio library of a dozen or so caricatures of people on the lot. One year, they actually created a 3-D *Mr. Potato Head* of the then president, Card Walker, using a real potato. (Come to think of it, Mr. Walker *did* sort of have a Potato head.) They created a menacing cartoon-like figure of CEO Ron Miller stalking the halls, Frankenstein style, (though Mr. Miller was rather a handsome monster). Once a week, the studio musicians would play big band music, so that employees could *cut up a rug* during their lunch hours.

Among the relatives of the stars who worked at the Studio were Don Nelson, Ozzie’s brother and Ricky’s Uncle; Mike Funicello, brother of Annette; Shelley Ames, Leon’s daughter; Don Sterry, cousin of Mr. Ed’s Alan Young; Gary Krisel, son of Virginia Weidler who played Kate Hepburn’s precocious little sister in *Philadelphia Story*. Yes, it was a 1940s’ musical alright.

One of the original animators hired by Walt Disney was Cliff Nordberg who would often join the pretty secretaries during lunch and entertain them by drawing wonderful caricatures of them on the spot. Cliff worked on many of the early animation features such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *Mary Poppins*. Before email, staff received mail deliveries three times a day from the mail room runners who called themselves “traffic.” Most of them were aspiring film editors, musicians, or producers who wanted to learn their trade from the studio pros. Many of them achieved success, such as composer John Debney, who was nominated for his score of Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ*. John’s father, Lou Debney, composed music for the *Mickey Mouse Club* and *Zorro*.

Bob Hope made Toluca Lake famous. This was the classy section of Burbank, and there were some famous eateries there where you could always spot celebrities. Paty’s, Barrone’s, and the world famous Hot Dog Show. In the 1930s, W.C. Fields lived on Toluca Lake. As the story goes, after he enjoyed his daily quart of gin, he’d venture out on the lake in a rowboat with a rifle to aim a few shots at the swans which he said were too noisy.

And so, as you can imagine, dear reader, our little heroine’s life was very, very good for a long time, living in beautiful downtown Burbank. That is, until one night at The Rainbow Club on Hollywood Boulevard (or was it Santa Monica Boulevard?) she was being “chatted up” by a clean-cut looking fellow, tall with dirty blonde hair. He seemed polite enough as he asked her, “Do you and your friend want to join us at a house party in the Hollywood Hills, not far from here?” She replied, “Oh, maybe, let me find Patty and see if she wants to come.” Just at that moment, another young man arrived on the scene, sized up the situation, and with narrowing eyes whispered in his friend’s ear, his back to our heroine. He then said, “Let’s go NOW,” and disappeared. When the first young man turned to follow him, the young lady said, “Hey, what happened?” (After all, she still had



visions of meeting a celebrity or two at that party). He replied with a smirk and a wink, "You have the seal of the Holy Spirit. We do have to go now." With that, they both vanished. Our heroine blinked hard and shook her head. (After all, she only had 2 or 4 Coors Lights.) She stared at the empty space where the guys had been standing. Did they vanish into thin air, she wondered?

She could not find Patty right away, so she had time to think back to her distant Catholic life ... Confirmation! Ah ha! "Bishop Harrington, you may have just saved my life, as well as my soul!" She slowly drove home to her apartment in Burbank, giving thanks to God. (She

may have also had the hiccups which sneaked up on her whenever she got nervous.)

Oh, it was a bumpy road for her, still, full of adventures and drama, but her story is not fiction. She retold it again and again whenever someone remarked that there was no need for God, organized religion, or for the sacrament of confirmation – or that the Devil is not real.

So, my dear reader, if you ever find yourself in Hollywood, be sure to take along your seal of the Holy Spirit: "Don't leave home without Him." ☸

**CANDACE JAEGLER** runs the local Chesterton Society in Worcester, Massachusetts

## WHY DO YOU KEEP ASKING ME RHETORICAL QUESTIONS? – 7

■ What should we think of a saint who denounced sin without ever admitting that he was a sinner?

(*NEW YORK AMERICAN*, FEB. 17, 1934)

■ If the dogmas are true, what can you do but try to get men to agree with them? (*DAILY NEWS*, FEB. 13, 1906)

■ If truth is relative, to what is it relative? (*DAILY NEWS*, JUNE 2, 1906)

■ What sort of fight can they make who are taught in the same breath that their enemies are immoral, and that morality itself is immoral? (*DAILY NEWS*, NOV. 17, 1906)

■ Why should a woman get caught in the industrial machine, to add to the profits of a filthy profiteer? (INTERVIEW, *SYRACUSE HERALD*, APRIL 11, 1921)

■ What happens to the Holy Family, and to the human family, under the harrows and winnowing fans of the fantastic social science of our times; our modern machinery of eugenics and divorce and division of labour and compulsory educations and coercive hygiene? (*NEW WITNESS*, DEC. 10, 1920)

■ *Vanitas vanitatum*, which of us has his wish in this world, or, having it, is satisfied? (INTRODUCTION TO *THACKERAY*)



■ How can I love my neighbor as myself if he gets out of range for snowballs? ("THE NEW HOUSE," *ALARMS AND DISCURSIONS*)



TRUTH IN THE STATE OF TRANSMISSION

*The Soul of Education*

# Foolish Wisdom

By Charlie Reese

**IN OCTOBER OF 2023**, Oregon's State Board of Education voted unanimously to suspend the reading, writing, and math proficiency requirement that was once necessary for students there to earn a diploma. It was originally suspended following the COVID years and now the suspension is extended to 2027. Since the suspension of the basic skills requirement took place following COVID, graduation rates increased. But of these students receiving diplomas, less than half were proficient in English, and around 31% were proficient in math. The awarding of diplomas to a substantial population of high school students who can't read what's on their diplomas amounts to the educational equivalent of a participation trophy. It does not prepare students for a world that has wholly different standards for success.

In Pasco County, Florida, the school board there came up with a solution to combat absenteeism by creating a series of four-day weekends in their school year. In other words, because students are missing school days, they would offer fewer school days. Problem solved!

The public education industry is moving goalposts for the sake of accommodating rather than challenging the students in their charge. It proves the point G.K. Chesterton made over a century ago when he said "It is better to speak wisdom foolishly like the saints than to speak folly wisely like the deans."

"Like the saints." In the spirit of Chesterton's wisdom, an educational movement started in his name in 2008 has blossomed across the country and the seas. Nearly 60 Chesterton academies – most of which are named for saints – have opened thanks to parents who grew tired of the lowering standards in government schools. The curriculum in Chesterton Academies is challenging. Four years of Latin, calculus or statistics in senior year, classical books that many college students would struggle with, all to be mastered before a student's name is put on a diploma.

The sad part of Oregon's policy is exemplified in one word in the first sentence above: unanimously. Not one Board of Education member dissented. Not one suggested alternatives to the declining literacy rates. It was as if the only goal they had were the graduation rates. Congratulations, they've increased the number of graduates just like the Florida school board redefined school attendance – it's not absenteeism when the school is closed!

These public officials believe their policies are helping students, but they need to step out of their academic cocoons and visit the world which their students are "graduating" into. A recent employer survey conducted in Wisconsin shows that three-quarters of businesses think students graduating from public K-12 system are not prepared for the workforce. 56 percent of respondents said they have employees who struggle with the ability to read or do math. One of the recommendations that employers in that state put forth is to tie funding to proficiency scores. That may seem anathema to those educators who are doing away with proficiency measurements in order to get a diploma, but once students leave their schools they enter a world where proficiency comes with real rewards and lack of proficiency leads



to ongoing struggles and hardships. They do no favors for those they think they are educating. A student getting carried over the finish line may find fewer finish lines to cross in the future, and fewer mentors willing to carry them.

The people making decisions in government (taxpayer) funded schools as those examples above have all the academic credentials for their roles, and it must have crowded out the common sense they started out with. They've surrendered any sense of academic rigor to the rigor mortis of educational philosophy banalities.

In fact, the flawed egalitarian approach to educational rewards has a tint of hypocrisy to it as long as the same educators continue to promote Educator of the Year awards. If they are jettisoning standards for students, they have no standard even by which to give an award for teaching.

Fortunately, parents still possessing common sense and an idea that students should be adequately prepared to rise up to a world that is challenging, are taking action by enrolling their children into schools like Chesterton Academies. Some are even starting these academies. These people are the real Educators of the Year. Every parent who enrolls their child, every teacher committed to the Chesterton curriculum, every donor that makes it possible to raise up a new generation of truly educated men and women are Educators of the Year – at least by my standards



(which are quite high!). If public schools are awarding diplomas to those who certainly don't qualify, there's no reason why we can't recognize those who truly do embrace the new educational movement that is the Chesterton Academies, which continues to grow, to inspire and challenge. By the end of this decade we may well double the number of Chesterton Academies because enough parents have taken to heart the wisdom in another Chesterton quote: "Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously." 🐉

**CHARLIE REESE** is Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Society of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, and more importantly, a two-time wearer of the Clerihew Championship Sash.



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Thucydides  
Offers many lucidities,  
Although the lessons he teaches  
Are a bunch of made-up speeches.

King Leonidas  
Thinks he can fight us.  
Worry not! After our incursion,  
All Spartan cats will be Persian.

Saint Thomas More  
And Henry VIII went to war.  
The king lost his head figuratively,  
While the great Saint, his,  
disfiguratively.

Erich Weisz  
Was slippery as ice.  
He performed magic like a genie;  
A real Houdini!

Salvador Dali  
Tried to paint time, by golly.  
But for gosh sakes,  
His clocks look like soggy pancakes.

I remember watching Dick Van Dyke  
In Mary Poppins as a tyke.  
To clarify, I was the squirt;  
He was Bert.



## THE HOMILIES OF FATHER BROWN

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

# The Flying Stars

By Chris Chan

(Warning: Spoilers  
for "The Flying  
Stars" follow.)

**THE THIRD AND FINAL ENTRY** in the "Flambeau Conversion Trilogy" sees Father Brown celebrating Christmas with friends. When a marvelous present consisting of three large diamonds is stolen, the priest-detective realizes that the master thief has struck again, but in a powerful confrontation, Father Brown makes sure that the theft of the diamonds is Flambeau's last heist.

After swiping the gems, Flambeau is poised to make his escape, but Father Brown spots him and begins talking to him. It should be noted that there is nothing forcing Flambeau to listen to the priest. At any moment, he could rush off into the night with the diamonds, and there's nothing Father Brown could do to drag him back. Father Brown has no rifle pointed at Flambeau, no squadron of police officers ready to pounce at his signal. All Flambeau needs to do is run, and he'll be free, enriched with a small fortune in gemstones, and able to steal again whenever he likes.

But Flambeau stays because something in Father Brown's words holds him at bay, and in the space of a few minutes, Father Brown leads the thief to repentance, causing him to reject his life of crime. The story states that the priest keeps Flambeau in place as if he holds "some long invisible leash." Readers don't know for sure how much time passes between "The Flying Stars" and the time when Flambeau becomes the priest's investigative partner, but a Christmas miracle happens that night, as Flambeau's heart and life are turned around, and it's all thanks to Father Brown's words. In their first two meetings, Father Brown was content to retrieve the stolen property and then allow Flambeau to face the police (presumably he escaped from custody soon after Valentin arrested him in "The Blue Cross") or allowed him to go on his way (as in "The Queer Feet"). But at this point, Father Brown demands more from Flambeau. He makes it clear that this is a tipping point for the thief, and that Flambeau's only



options are either repentance or destruction.

Speaking to Flambeau, the priest says:

“I want you to give them back, Flambeau, and I want you to give up this life. There is still youth and honour and humour in you; don’t fancy they will last in that trade. Men may keep a sort of level of good, but no man has ever been able to keep on one level of evil. That road goes down and down. The kind man drinks and turns cruel; the frank man kills and lies about it. Many a man I’ve known started like you to be an honest outlaw, a merry robber of the rich, and ended stamped into slime. Maurice Blum started out as an anarchist of principle, a father of the poor; he ended a greasy spy and talebearer that both sides used and despised. Harry Burke started his free money movement sincerely enough; now he’s sponging on a half-starved sister for endless brandies and sodas. Lord Amber went into wild society in a sort of chivalry; now he’s paying blackmail to the lowest vultures in London. Captain Barillon was the great gentleman-Apache before your time; he died in a madhouse, screaming with fear of the ‘narks’ and receivers that had betrayed him and hunted him down. I know the woods look very free behind you, Flambeau; I know that in a flash you could melt into them like a monkey. But some day you will be an old grey monkey, Flambeau. You will sit up in your free forest cold at heart and close to death, and the treetops will be very bare...

Your downward steps have begun. You used to boast of doing nothing mean, but you are doing something mean tonight. You are leaving suspicion on an honest boy with a good deal against him already; you are separating him from the woman he loves and who loves him. But you will do meaner things than that before you die.”

This is one of, if not *the* most important extemporaneous homilies that Father Brown makes over the course of the series. In most of his speeches, the priest explains why individuals committed the crimes they did and how he knew that they were guilty. In this speech, Father Brown pivots from explaining how he knew how Flambeau committed the theft to warning Flambeau that his life of crime will eventually destroy him spiritually. From what we’ve seen so far, Flambeau has seen his thefts as a kind of intellectual game. He targets some valuable bauble owned by

someone who can afford it, and then devises some elaborate plan to obtain it, often involving disguise and acting. Flambeau hasn’t *needed* the wealth he’s stolen, but he’s *wanted* the adventure of it all. He loves proving that he’s cleverer than everybody else.

But Father Brown appeals to him by pointing out that innocent people are getting hurt. It’s not a matter of a millionaire losing a trinket they can easily afford. This is the case of two young lovers, one of which is in an outspoken socialist, and is the chief suspect in the thefts. The cloud of suspicion might destroy the relationship, and it’s this point that may sway Flambeau. Taking other people’s property is one thing, but getting in the way of love is a different matter for a man like Flambeau. Father Brown understands that Flambeau doesn’t steal for profit, but for adventure. But causing unhappiness in others spoils all the fun.

When many people sin, they declare, “This isn’t hurting anybody,” as if their actions are a purely private matter that harms no one else. But Father Brown gets through to Flambeau by arguing that a life of crime will not only crush his own soul, but will sow suspicion and distrust in others. Christmas is a time of miracles, and Father Brown sways Flambeau’s heart by causing him to care about others, and himself – that is, his own soul – as well. ☁

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

(Illustration from *The Father Brown Reader* see ad on page 47)

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## 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*

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# "An Actor Prepares" (for The Role of a Lifetime) (Or, How This Actor Was Prepared)

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By John Walker

**I SUPPOSE IT IS STILL TRUE** if you want to be a working/paid stage actor you head to New York City or Chicago or towns with a strong regional theater scene and work your way into a theater company until they hire you again and again. If you are more focused on being a screen actor, you head to LA where they go through actors like tissue paper because on any given day there are hundreds of projects filming. But, if you're a serious actor, you go where the job offers take you.

Like a gypsy you follow the work, especially when LESS than 2% of all actors in either union – Actors Equity Association or the Screen Actors Guild – only make a living wage of \$30,000 a year, which as you know, is really not a living wage. So it was that despite the theatre-purist grumblings of disapproval from my fellow American Conservatory Theater graduate students, that when I was approached by Warner Brothers and Disney feature film casting VPs after our showcase auditions, I packed up my pickup truck and drove south to LA, with no idea of what I would find.

Upon arrival there were a flurry of auditions and screen tests for lead roles in films and television projects. I was told by executives that these studios were positioning me, at various times, to be catapulted into stardom on high profile projects. Suddenly I had an agent and a manager. The whirlwind didn't last long. There were half a dozen very close calls with fame and fortune as my work became more noticed, but those jobs were either shelved or, "went a different way in casting," or as a film director told me in an interview, my 6'5" frame was simply too tall for the camera frame. In the end the small roles were a great training ground, every month or so I worked with a new director and played a different character. On

the job training, you could say. The summers were for Shakespeare festival work. On the stage where I truly felt at home. After ten years, a job led to New York City, and the theatre/tv work doubled.

Once in NYC my stage work in Shakespeare landed me a top agent. In my first meeting, Abrams agent Tracey Goldblum asked me if I was interested in commercials. She thought my comic timing and ability to improv was unique. I had never been asked that before. I asked her what she meant. She told me that many actors think commercials were beneath them, they wanted theater, film, and television only. I asked if the pay was good for commercials and do you get to go home more at night? I had learned that theater work often meant being out of town often, television work meant working long hours away from home and film work even more so, with distant locations. This was a concern to me because my wife and I were expecting our first child. I wanted and needed to be home. Tracey told me that commercials paid very well and often were directed by film directors so you can make good connections, too. Plus, she said, you're going to be home more often with commercials. I remember saying, "Nope, they're not beneath me." Tracey smiled and suddenly I was doing around 100 auditions a year for commercials.

Suddenly, I became a sought-after talent in the “casual guy/doofus dad” category. The pay was much better than I had ever expected and there was still room for theatre. For a few years it was great. But theatre was beginning to take a back seat in my vehicle to success.

Then the writers’ strike came in 1999. All SAG actors went on strike over emerging internet contracts. Just like today with AI. Then right after that, 9/11 happened and the world changed. We packed up our two toddlers, I took my winnings and left for a calmer existence in the rolling green hills of Vermont, where my kids could grow up and I would start teaching. I never realized how much I missed acting.

As the years passed my schedule as an educator then later as a monastery farmer and retreat center director left no time even to consider acting anywhere. Not to mention there were no theaters or film studios anywhere. I began to feel like a fish out of water. I thought, maybe I could develop my own project. At least researching and working on something would feel like I was still a professional actor. After years of not being the one making creative and career choices about my craft, I knew that the next thing I did, I would do my way. That’s when the idea of a one-man show for the stage began to haunt my thoughts. Something no one would see except maybe a few parishioners in a church hall, but it would still be acting. The idea took roots when one night watching public television, I was introduced to a 1970s mystery show, “The Father Brown Mysteries.” It was only a few clicks of the mouse on the old Gateway desktop and I had discovered Chesterton, as well as an idea that this little project of mine might have found the person around whom to create a show. Thankfully, I didn’t have cable TV, because if I had seen EWTN’s “The Apostle of Common Sense” I would’ve tossed my idea out, knowing Chuck Chalberg had captured Chesterton to a T already. But I didn’t know, so my actor research muscles flexed. Soon I was becoming completely enamored and amazed by this Chesterton person. He was my height, about my weight

and was a profound philosopher, poet, cartoonist, joyful defender of the faith and I hadn’t even scratched the surface! He wore a cape, carried a sword stick, a pistol and a large knife he called his “letter opener.” He left the house in slippers to lecture to crowds, got lost on the way and had to telegraph his wife to remember his destination. He debated the greatest minds from Shaw to Darrow. He often halted busy London traffic by stopping mid-street to argue with himself. He loved a song, a pint, a poem, a fairy tale but mostly an argument, as long as it wasn’t a quar-

rel. He excelled at verse as well as prose. He would sneak out of his house to dress as a pirate or Indian from the American plains in order to play with the neighborhood children when he wasn’t performing puppet shows for them. He looked at the world as miraculous and greeted it with wonder, gratitude, and most of all joy. I had found the center piece of my one man show and started to work on it.

The rest of the story has been an adventure. It includes writing a script, performing it on EWTN, the offer by the same to create a new series, “Chesterton Station,”

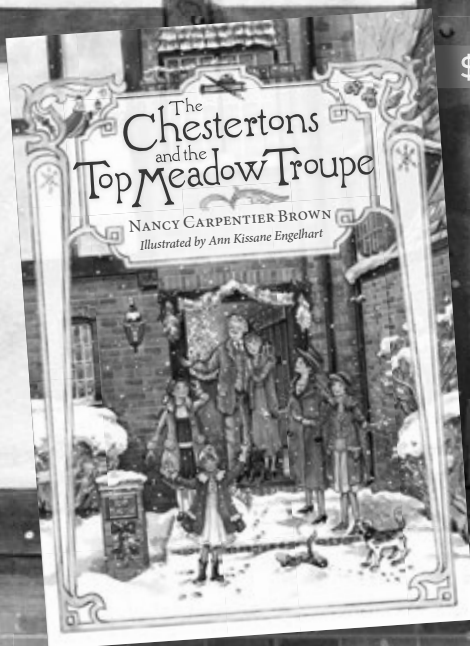
and the aspect of not performing for a few friends in a church basement but for hundreds at a Chesterton conference, not to mention a national tour of the show in the Spring of 2024. But the adventure is just beginning.

The best part of it all, is that no matter how much I do in continuous research to meet these new projects, there will be never enough of getting to know my character. Chesterton is not a one and done role like Hamlet. He is like setting sail on the “Dawn Treader” to discover new worlds. I know full well, I could study him the rest of my life and still have more to learn. It’s an endless character study. Not to mention an endless and uplifting journey deeper into my faith. It’s been the greatest role of my life and one of the most resonating blessings I ever received. ✍️

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







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*Now available at [Chesterton.org](http://Chesterton.org)*







MISCELLANY OF MEN

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

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## An American Chesterton

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Joyce Kilmer (1886–1918)

By Dale Ahlquist

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

**IT IS AMONG THE MOST FAMOUS**, most anthologized, most parodied of American poems, just for its opening and closing verses.

But most people don't know the name of the poet. Of those who do know the name, most don't know anything about Joyce Kilmer. What surprises most people is that he was, first of all, not a woman. Not only was he a man, he was a soldier, who died heroically in World War I at only 31 years old. He was also a Catholic convert. And a big fan of G.K. Chesterton, to whom he was often compared.

Like Chesterton, Kilmer was an established journalist and popular lecturer. He was already well known for his poetry during his lifetime, but his tragic death catapulted him to great fame. Think James Dean.

Robert Cortes Holliday edited a book of Joyce Kilmer's poems, essays, and letters. It sold out before the first printing, and went to a third printing within a month of publication.

That prompted a second volume of Kilmer's essays, which included one on Chesterton's poetry. Kilmer says that GKC "is the plumed knight of literature with the sword of wit and burnished shield of Faith."

And he expounds on Chesterton's technique of "reverse English":

It would be the mere prose of our daily life for birds to fly about close to the tent's roof, and for men and women to ring bells and

sit in rocking chairs. It is the poetry of the circus that men and women fly about close to the tent's roof, and birds ring bells and sit in rocking chairs. . . . By faith the walls of Jericho fell down. By faith the Eight Algerian Aërial Equilibrists stayed up.

Holliday says that Kilmer's "glorification (almost deification) of everyday things; its militant persistence in running counter to dull acceptance of current ideas; its sleight-of-hand dexterity in bringing a thing to life by standing it on its head – is Chestertonian." He doesn't merely imitate or parody Chesterton, but his "rollicking

pages have on them the tender bloom of the natural fruit." The three words most repeated in his essays are: faith, mirth, and democracy, leading Holliday to make the claim that Kilmer is "more Chestertonian than even Mr. Chesterton."

Gilbert and Frances Chesterton visited Kilmer's widow in New York in 1921. Aline Kilmer was a gifted poet in her own right, and it is worth remembering one of her lovely and indeed poignant poems:

## Things

By Aline Kilmer

Sometimes when I am at tea with you  
I catch my breath  
At a thought that is old as the world is old  
And more bitter than death.

It is that the spoon you just laid down  
And the cup that you hold  
May be here shining and insolent  
When you are still and cold.

Your careless note that I laid away  
May leap to my eyes like flame  
When the world has almost forgotten your voice  
Or the sound of your name.

The golden Virgin da Vinci drew  
May smile on over my head  
And daffodils nod in the silver vase  
When you are dead.

So let moth and dust corrupt and thieves  
Break through and I shall be glad  
Because of the hatred I bare to things  
Instead of the love I had.

For life seems only a shuddering breath  
A smothered desperate cry,  
And things have a terrible permanence  
When people die. ☞

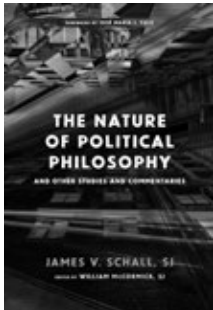


## BOOK REVIEWS

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

# Another Last Book from Father Schall

*The Nature of Political Philosophy*  
James V. Schall, S.J.  
Edited by William McCormick, S.J.  
The Catholic University Press of America  
220 pages



Reviewed by **Chuck Chalberg**

Thank you, Fathers Schall and McCormick. This collection of essays is a fitting capstone to the intellectual life and academic career of the late, and much lamented, author (and longtime columnist for *Gilbert*). It should also serve as a book that one is likely to return to often in the years ahead. If

only it might one day be a book to *turn to* by those who are so committed to what Father Schall refers to as the “modern project.” Such a turn would be belated at best, but very welcome.

Modern project? The term belongs to fellow political philosopher Leo Strauss, but Schall borrows it frequently, but never too frequently, in these pages. In essence, the modern project is this: create a heaven on earth or any number of heavens on earth. In other words (to borrow an often helpful phrase from Schall), this project is a godless project.

Needless to say, both Fathers Schall and McCormick reject such a project. More to the immediate point of this book, both Jesuit priests contend that true political philosophy is impossible without God. In other words (there I go again), the operating presumption at the heart of genuine political philosophy is the existence of a Creator. This is truly what is meant by the “nature” of political philosophy.

This assumption is as old as Aristotle. And Schall also borrows from Aristotle, both liberally and properly.

So where did things go seriously wrong? Schall sees that the most serious mis-step is the eighteenth-century Age of Enlightenment, which he contends was “not an elevation of reason,” but a call for the “will to power” instead.

It was also the Enlightenment that spawned nineteenth-century utopian dreams, which in turn has resulted in twentieth- and post-twentieth-century nightmares, given man’s repeated attempts to move into those dream worlds by actually seeking to build large scale heavens on earth that have turned out to be totalitarian hells instead.

Father McCormick puts the matter succinctly in his wise introduction: Father Schall long understood the “folly” of thinking that grand human ideas could actually change the world for the better. Wise indeed, although “folly” is no doubt too kind a word for what Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and their ilk wrought. In any case, Aristotle was right long ago: Any attempt to build the “best city” in this world is to invite tyranny of the worst sort.

The collection opens with a brief “autobiographical memoir,” which is essentially an intellectual memoir. It might have been an odyssey, but there really wasn’t a Schall odyssey other than his journey from the American heartland to Georgetown University. To his great credit, this Iowa farm boy carried the truths that he was taught as a youth wherever he went. And those same truths ultimately informed his political philosophy.

To be sure, Father Schall always hoped that his writing would have a “certain lightness” to it. And it does. He also concedes that all writing is inevitably a “struggle with hubris.” And it is. Schall asks: Is something true because I say it is true? Or do I say that something is true because it is true? Here any Schall temptation to hubris is often, but not always, tempered by that beguiling “lightness.”

Virtually every essay in this collection returns to and



reinforces this from Aristotle: “If man were the highest being, politics would be the highest science.” Then it is Schall’s turn – and with a momentary absence of “lightsomeness”: “But man is not the highest being.”

What follows from that is what drives this entire collection. It is Father Schall’s contention that political philosophy always confronts two issues that no polity can ever resolve by itself. One is the issue of justice, and the other is the matter of friendship. True justice, after all, implies an immortality at which point justice is finally achieved. And, while friendship has a necessary place in our lives, it is not something that the polity can – or should – mandate.

Devotees of the modern project disagree. Enter modern political ideology, which seeks to establish the “inner-worldly” perfect regime of justice and friendship. And then what enters all too often is tyranny.

Given such justifiable concerns, a certain amount of lightsomeness is perhaps necessary. The same might be said of other Schallian, but never shallow, conclusions. Death, for example, is not the greatest evil. Far from it. Doing wrong is *the* great evil. More than that, to admit that one has done wrong is to admit that the world is *not* incoherent and that it *does* have an order.

No one understood this better than Saint Thomas More, and, as luck and coherence would have it, there is an essay on More in this collection. That would be the same Thomas More whom Chesterton thought would come to be regarded as the “greatest Englishman.” That would also be the More whom Schall praises for understanding what Socrates understood, namely that “no evil can come to a just man” and that it is “better to suffer evil than to do it.”

A Schall essay on Martin Luther is also included in this collection. While Schall’s Luther was not a budding totalitarian, he inadvertently did contribute to the modern political project of eliminating God from politics. How so? Luther’s suspicion was that man by himself wanted to be God, that man by his nature was “unable to want God to be God.”

To be sure, Luther would have regarded the establishment of a secular state apart from the laws of God to be the height of human folly. And yet Schall detects that there was only a “small,” but nonetheless “monstrous” step from Luther’s exultation of God to the modern project of a “completely autonomous man.”

Lest you think that the entire collection is devoted to Father Schall’s questioning and condemning the modern project writ large, the need for at least a small dollop of lightsomeness extends to Schall’s concerns about individual “I can be like God” matters as well. No specific essay here is devoted to the transgender fad, but it lurks and lingers in these pages.

And if Father Schall was ever tempted to avoid the light touch, his wide reading always seems to have given him friends and allies to provide the hammer. (The “selected bibliography” is itself a minor treasure.) So let’s let one of those friends and allies, E.F. Schumacher, state the plain fact of the matter, minus any hint of you know what: “The modern experiment to live without religion has failed.” ☞

**CHUCK CHALBERG**, Chesterton Impersonator Emeritus, writes from Bloomington, Minnesota

## Introduction to a Giant

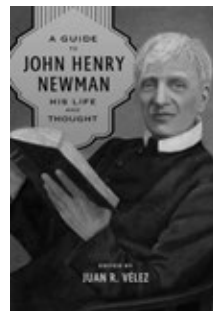
### ***A Guide to John Henry Newman:***

*His Life and Thought*

Edited by Juan R. Vélez

Catholic University of America Press, 2023

525 pages.



Reviewed by **David P. Deavel**

Of the making of anthologies there is no end. Some are collections of great essays from the past, some collections of papers from conferences or perhaps solicited pieces in honor of a living or recently deceased scholar and centered around a general theme, while some are meant to be capacious treatments of the different aspects of a particular question or the thought of a particular writer. *A Guide to John Henry Newman: His Life and Thought* is in the last category. Similar to the *Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* and *Oxford Handbook of John Henry Newman*, both done in the last 15 years, it is perhaps more like the former insofar as many of the

chapters are less in the “scientific” mold of historiographic scholarship and more in the mode of very good introductory chapters to Newman’s thought. Like the latter, however, it is a doorstep volume that aims more at being comprehensive, though not entirely so – there are no chapters on Newman’s fiction, for instance.

The reader considering the volume will first note how many notable scholars and writers from the U.S., Spain, France, Britain, Australia, and Macao contributed. Many are well-known in the world of Newman scholarship, including Paul Shrimpton, John Crosby, Fr. Keith Beaumont, Msgr. Roderick Strange, the late Fr. John T. Ford, David P. Delio, and the editor, Juan R. Vélez. Many others are well-known or talented scholars in their own fields of theology (Michael Dauphinais, Tracey Rowland, Fr. Uwe Michael Lang, Jeffrey Morrow), philosophy (Michael Pakaluk), classics (Scott Goins and Barbara Wyman), and literature (Victor Garcia Ruiz). Not a few are clerics primarily in pastoral work but also scholars (Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Australia, Daniel Seward of the Oratory in York, England, and Fr. Frédéric Libaud of Strasbourg, France).

Of course, it is possible that even distinguished authors can phone in their work, but this is not the case with *A Guide to John Henry Newman*. All the chapters provide good introductions to the main writings of Newman on a particular subject. Some provide more secondary resources, but they do not necessarily do a better job than those who focus their attention on the primary ones. While no one collection will be able to cover all the aspects of a giant thinker such as Newman, this one does provide a very good one-stop shopping collection for those who are interested in Newman’s thought and would like something to help them think through what they are reading. Anyone who teaches a course on Newman at the undergraduate or graduate level (as I do) will want to either use this book as a secondary text or point students to it for extra reading.

Given the twenty-seven chapters in the volume, a review of this size cannot cover all or even most. So, a few highlights. First, the best summary/synthesis chapters. Ruiz’s Chapter 5 on Newman’s friends gives a kind of tour through some of Newman’s most important friendships. It is charming and could be helpful to people beginning to get to know Newman. Stephen

Morgan gives as clear an account of Newman’s understanding of imagination as I have seen in Chapter 3. Fr. Lang’s Chapter 7 on Newman’s use of the Church Fathers, Fr. Libaud’s Chapter 16 on Newman as spiritual master, Fr. Beaumont’s Chapter 18 on the spirituality of his preaching, and Fr. Nicolas Gregoris’s Chapter 25 on his mariological understanding all give brilliant introductions to his spiritual vision and teaching.

Second, some good chapters with an argumentative turn. Chapter 1, by Delio and Matthew Briel, gives a good account of how Newman thought and thought again about the Oxford Movement and the place in which it stood as part of what Newman called the Christian “idea.” It rebuts some of the work of the late Yale historian Frank Turner and his followers who have approached Newman’s account of his own thought with a deep suspicion. On a related topic, Chapter 10 (Christopher Lane) effectively shows how Newman thought of the importance but also the limitations of history. And Jeffrey Morrow’s Chapter 7 gives a good sense of Newman’s often misunderstood thoughts on several aspects of questions of biblical inspiration and interpretation. Archbishop Fisher’s Chapter 19 shows why Newman’s explanation of conscience is so very important to understand correctly in a time in which truth has been sidelined or relativized. Chapter 26 argues that Newman’s understanding of the place of the laity was a forerunner of the ideas of Vatican II and also of theologians (Congar) and saints (Escriva). Chapter 27 (Delio) shows how Newman thought about “liberalism” – both why he used the term the way he did and why his analysis of that phenomenon was essentially correct.

In the end, this volume has something for everybody who’s interested in Newman. If it does not cover everything about Newman, it introduces the reader who knows a little bit and helps the scholar who wants to go deeper or have a way of showing Newman’s thought in a snapshot. As a scholar of Newman, I certainly learned a great deal from excellent chapters on Newman’s educational practice, use of classics, poetry, and liturgical thought. Sympathetic, serious, and scholarly, it is ideal for students, scholars, and lovers of a great saint and mind.

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



## 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

# Time Once Again for More Letters Asking, "What's the Difference?"

Dear Mr. Chesterton,  
What's the difference between Christian Science and Christianity?

*Signed,*  
Eddy

Dear Eddy,  
Christian Science says that pain is not a reality. Christianity says that pain is so great a reality that even the Creator could feel it.

*Your friend,*  
G.K. Chesterton  
(Daily News, Apr. 11, 1908)

◆ ◆ ◆

Dear Mr. Chesterton,  
What's the difference between Judaism and Christianity?

*Signed,*  
Josh

Dear Josh,  
Judaism, with its dark sublimity, said that if a man saw God he would die. Christianity conjectures that (by an even more catastrophic fatality) if he sees God he will live forever.

*Your friend,*  
G.K. Chesterton  
(*"Reading the Riddle,"*  
*The Common Man*)

Dear Mr. Chesterton,  
It seems to me that Imperialism and Patriotism are the same thing.

*Signed,*  
McShoom

Dear McShoom,  
To a lucid mind Imperialism and patriotism are opposite; patriotism means that boundaries are sacred, and Imperialism means that they are not.

*Your friend,*  
G.K. Chesterton  
(Daily News, May 14, 1910)

◆ ◆ ◆

Dear Mr. Chesterton,  
Isn't glory just glory? What difference does it make if we take a Latin approach or a Teutonic approach?

*Signed,*  
Wilhelm

Dear Wilhelm,  
The Latin tradition calls glory, glory; while the Teutonic traditions would call it master-morality of the evolution of a higher type.

*Your friend,*  
G.K. Chesterton  
(*Introduction to The*  
*New World of the Theatre*)



Dear Mr. Chesterton,  
What is the difference between the small Capitalist and the large Distributor?

Signed,  
Sam

Dear Sam,  
I can only answer that there is no difference at all, because I am, I suppose, in a sense a large distributor – but, God knows, I am a very small capitalist!

Your friend,  
G.K. Chesterton

(Mid-Sussex Times, July 11, 1933)

## REASON AND ITS DISCONTENTS

■ They will tell you the modern world rebels against Religion. It rebels much more against Reason. (*LISTER, FEB. 20, 1935*)

■ The whole modern world is at war with reason. ("THE SUICIDE OF THOUGHT," *ORTHODOXY*)

■ The mediaeval world was far ahead of the modern world in its sense of the things in which all men are at one: death and the daylight of reason and the common conscience that holds communities together. Its generalisations were saner and sounder than the mad materialistic theories of today; nobody would have tolerated a Schopenhauer scorning life or a Nietzsche living only for scorn. ("THE LITTLE POOR MAN," *ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI*)

■ The mediaeval reasoners knew better than most men that reason is not everything. What I complain of is that, while the mediaevals invoked something which is above reason, which they called Faith, the moderns often invoke something which is below reason, which they call subconsciousness or herd instinct or libido or will to live. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, MAR. 26, 1932*)

■ Thomas Paine invented the name of the Age of Reason; and he was one of those sincere but curiously simple men who really did think that the age of reason was beginning, at about the time when it was really ending. ("REVOLUTION AND THE BONES OF PAINE," *WILLIAM COBBETT*)

■ There never was an age of reason. Men were always men and women women: and their two generous appetites always were the expression of

passion and the telling of truth. ("THE COLDNESS OF CHLOE," *WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD*)

■ The real use of reason is to find the meaning of instinct. (*ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, JULY 4, 1914*)

■ Theology is only the element of reason in religion; the reason that prevents it from being a mere emotion. ("THE HAT AND THE HALO," *THE THING*)





## 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

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# No Longer a Nation of Shopkeepers

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By G.K. Chesterton

**THE OBVIOUS OVERPOWERING FACT** of modern commercial history is the growth of Trusts [i.e. mega-corporations. - Ed.] and big Business to the defeat or destruction of small traders. There was some desperate attempt to deny the fact, but most now confine themselves to attempting to defend what they can no longer deny.

Perhaps it is natural that those who are no longer allowed to own for themselves, work for themselves, sell or bargain for themselves, are also no longer able to think for themselves. But, anyhow, the bluff of the big Shop has been put over almost entirely because people do not think.

The defence is based on some vague word like Efficiency, meaningless until we have discussed Effect. But the fallacy is this: that what is called "organisation" is not alive like an organism. It is not in itself even an advantage; only in some cases an inevitable disadvantage.

When mountaineers must be roped together, the rope should be strong; but that does not mean that men walk better when tied with a rope. Armies must be organised for one abnormal task, holding a long line by men linked together.

But suppose victory depended on twenty different duels fought in different cities. If a fencer in Paris thrust in tierce because another fencer was doing so at that moment in Madrid, the fencer would certainly be killed. If a sabreur had to make the upper cut at five minutes to three because all the rest must do it, he would not succeed, or even survive.

So it is with the more amiable duel of buying and selling. It is simply false to say that the manager of a liquor store is the better off for only stocking the liquors of one big organisation.

Obviously both he and his customer are much worse off, the customer by not getting what he wants and the manager by not being able to supply what is wanted. And the chain store is the type and example of all

modern Big Business.

In other words, where there is not an abnormal need of discipline, as in armies, it is a direct disadvantage that individuals should not use their judgment, either with a sword or a pint-pot.

Nothing but nonsensical advertisement (which is one of the silly things that only the very rich can afford) would ever have hidden from intelligent human beings the advantage of individual intelligence.

There is one advantage in large organisation: that it can afford to advertise its own inefficiency as efficient. There is one person to whom the Big Business is a practical convenience: the Big Business man.

It is certainly more convenient for him to own a hundred grocers' shops instead of one. But it is not more convenient for the grocer's assistant, who finds himself controlled in a hundred matters on which his own intelligence could act more freely.

And it is most certainly not more convenient for the customer, who could either accuse his local grocer of sanding the sugar or else know him well enough to be certain he was incapable of it. As it is the customer will do nothing at all, knowing that a large, modern efficient organisation is certain to sack the wrong man.

The objection to Big Business, which means monopoly of trade, is civic; it is the citizens' resistance to a tyranny. This is the answer, if any were needed, to those who argue about small businesses started in spite of monopoly.

Mostly they are either sham businesses already acting for monopoly or those started with the hope of

being bought up. We shall not expect a strong support against bribery and slavery from those who only want to be bribed and enslaved. But the whole argument is lacking in reality, otherwise common sense.

England, alas, is no longer a nation of shopkeepers. For the shopkeepers have not been allowed to keep their shops.

We know that America, a noble nation, once claiming with justice a pride in liberty, is now in fact dominated by despotic organisations whose essential object

is to exterminate economic freedom.

The Communist has a right to rejoice in this prospect, for his whole purpose is to combine all Trusts in one gigantic Trust called the State. But nobody who is not a Communist has any right to regard this monstrous monopolist concentration except with despair or with defiance. ☹️

From *The Leader*, September 10, 1935

## MOOD

■ The one most exalted and enthusiastic mood, merely considered as a mood, is that of the man who can affirm and witness to a truth above all his moods. To enjoy this a man must have a philosophy. But the narrow philosophy is that which only allows of one mood, such as rebellion, or disdain, or even despair. The large philosophy is that which allows of many moods; such as charity, or zeal, or patience. And it is so with what I count the largest of philosophies; which can be in revolt against the Prince of the World while it is loyal to the creator of the World; which can love the world like St. Francis, or renounce the world like St. Jerome. The point is that the Christian not only has mirth and indignation and compassion and comradeship and individual isolation; but he has them consistently; and each of them has a clear place in his theory of things.

(*NEW WITNESS*, OCT. 15, 1920)

■ Every heresy has been an effort to narrow the Church. It sets the mood against the mind. It degenerates, as the mood turns into a monomania. ("THE TESTAMENT OF ST. FRANCIS," *ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI*)

■ Faith is that which is able to survive a mood. ("THE ORTHODOXY OF HAMLET," *LUNACY AND LETTERS*)

■ Catholic abuses can be reformed, because there is the admission of a form. Catholic sins can be expiated, because there is a test and a principle of expiation. But where else in the world today is any such test or standard found; or anything except a changing mood ...? ("A SIMPLE THOUGHT," *THE THING*)

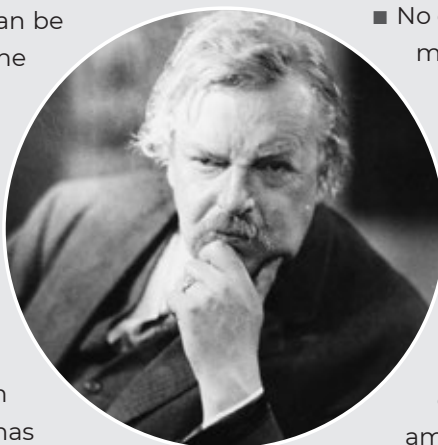
■ Man left to himself is a victim of moods. ("THE STORY OF THE STATUES," *THE RESURRECTION OF ROME*)

■ No one worth calling a man allows his moods to change his convictions; but it is by moods that we understand other men's convictions. ("THE ANARCHIST," *ALARMS AND DISCURSIONS*)

■ Under all else, the modern mood is the passive mood. With all its superficial revolution, it is the very reverse of revolutionary. So far from having an ambition of ruling itself, it has lost the old and universal habit of amusing itself.

For modern men do not amuse themselves. They are amused, which is quite a different thing. (*NEW WITNESS*, NOV. 4, 1921)

■ For every mood there is an appropriate impossibility – a decent and tactful impossibility – fitted to the frame of mind. Every train of thought may end in an ecstasy, and all roads lead to Elfland. ("THE DICKENS PERIOD," *CHARLES DICKENS*)







## THE SPICE OF LIFE

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

# Still ... No Satisfaction

By Mark Johnson

**THERE ARE FEW SCENES MORE CRINGE-WORTHY** than 80-year-old Mick Jagger leering at an audience, croaking “I can’t get no satisfaction” and doing his geriatric best to rooster-walk across the stage like a 19-year-old in the throes of a testosterone overdose. Jagger and his barely vertical sidekick, 80-year-old Keith Richards – who sports an increasingly sinister “lecher-in-the-alley” look – are once again taking their Rolling Stones’ circus on the road in 2024.

Jagger and Richards aren’t the only aging rockers embarrassing themselves in hapless attempts at adolescent posturing. A host of grandpas from yesterday’s rock star royalty are still screaming about teenage angst, flailing away at phallic-like electric guitars, and tossing around great lions’ manes of dyed, transplanted hair.

There’s the visibly decaying, 75-year-old Alice Cooper, still wailing his wall-of-noise classic, “I’m 18 and I Like it.” Brian Johnson, 76, of AC/DC, still warns the girls that he’s “TNT, and I’m about to explode.” Bruce Springsteen, 74, continues to belt out his theme song of youthful rebellion, “Born to Run” and, in “I’m on Fire,” gasps about his hots (hopefully down to room temperature by now) for a young filly.

These rest-home candidates often struggle to let go of their adolescent obsessions with a “goodbye” concert, but then find they can’t kick the habit. The septuagenarians in the hard rock band Kiss, for example, went on a “Farewell Tour” that lasted over a year. Then they changed their minds and launched a second series of farewell concerts, which they dubbed the “End of the Road Tour.” The “end of the road” proved endless, and has now stretched over five years. The Eagles, all in their mid-70s, are currently in the midst of their aptly named “Long Goodbye Tour.”

In many cases, of course, the inexorable laws of nature have stopped disintegrating rockers in their tracks. No surprise, given that they often augmented their forever-young years with a steady diet of freebase cocaine

and other pharmaceutical fireworks. Industrial-level decibel levels have also exacerbated Father Time’s insistence on hearing decline. Arrowsmith’s shrieking frontman, 75-year-old Steven Tyler, recently canceled a series of concerts because of vocal cord bleeding, while 78-year-old Pete Townsend of the explosive band The Who had to cut back because of partial deafness brought on by his sonic boom guitar blasts.

For those Rock and Roll Methuselahs who don’t literally drop in mid-song, half-measures can keep them limping across the stage. David Coverdale, the 72-year-old frontman for the hard rock band “Whitesnake,” uses backup singers to hit the high notes he can no longer reach. The septuagenarians of Kiss have used the most notorious trick in the book – lip-synching pre-recorded vocals.

But let’s be fair. You can’t blame these doddering rockers when tens of thousands of folks are willing to plunk down \$200-plus to see Mick Jagger wriggle what’s left of his gluteus maximus. The average Eagles ticket price – which entitles you to see a tiny speck of a band at the far end of a sports arena – is \$239, reports the *Wall Street Journal*.

Why do we shell out sums like this to watch 70- and 80-year-old, face-lifted grandpas prance about on a jumbotron?

I get it that 65 is no longer normal retirement age, given our increasingly lengthy and healthy lives. Still, isn’t there something unnerving about old men still

jerk about on a stage, howling about high school fantasies and no-limits libido? Shouldn't there come a time when you look for richer fruit – passing on what you've learned to a grandchild, diving inside a rich novel, pursuing a coffee-infused conversation about the Big Questions, marveling at the expanded meaning of love on the eve of your 50th wedding anniversary?

It's part of God's plan that adolescence is just a "phase," and not a permanent vision of what constitutes the good life. But this has proved a problem for the Baby Boomers, who constitute the fan base for the adolescent messages of these rock bands. (The American Association of Retired Persons is sponsoring the Stones' 2024 tour, and its 38 million members have first dibs on tickets.)

The Boomers came of age in the initial, seemingly carefree days of the Sexual Revolution. That revolution's holy grail, the pill, roared onto the scene in the 1960s. For the first time in history, it appeared, the male inclination to sexual adventuring would now no longer involve tradeoffs or consequences, since sex could be separated from childbearing. Chesterton famously observed that "The first two facts which a healthy boy or girl feels about sex are these: first that it is beautiful and then that it is dangerous." The Boomers believed at the time that they were entitled to ignore fact number two.

In pursuit of this mirage of "freedom," they also discarded family ties and responsibilities. Patriotism evaporated and they abandoned God and the church in droves. The sweet Woodstock-infused air of a new Garden of Eden seemed just around the corner.

But the Boomers, it turned out, had not heard the siren song embedded in the soothing melodies of the Sexual Revolution, which lured young men and women to emptiness and pain. In that dreamtime, many didn't appreciate the price to be paid for that illusory "freedom" – the objectification of women and the impaired ability of men to love in the sacrificial ways necessary to promote a rich, rewarding family life.

As time went on, society constructed a variety of guard rails on the Boomer-built sexual superhighway. Among these were highly technical forms of "consent" to male/female interaction and a complex legal architecture of sexual harassment. The cumulative effect was often to rob sexual attraction of its romance and life-sustaining purpose.

Many Boomers, however, continue to relish memories of that early flush of excitement over a world that seemed to lack all restraints – an endless youth that had no compromises and end-date. So, when the opportunity arises, they rush out to watch the old bands and relive the glory days before all the emptiness of the Boomer dream was exposed. With the assistance of fellow septuagenarians on the stage, they attempt to defy the laws of aging and recall those days in arcadia.

In 1989, my wife Kathy and I joined an ecstatic, fist-pumping crowd at a Rolling Stones concert in Minneapolis. She wrote about it at the time:

After running through a few greatest hits, Mick Jagger broke into "Honky Tonk Woman." Giant inflatable dolls, "women of the evening," ballooned voluptuously toward the ceiling, and Keith Richards' haggard, leering face loomed on the giant video screen above the crowd.

Suddenly the rock n' roll pirates and their helium-filled wenches triggered an epiphany for me. As I stared at Richards, another image flashed into my mind – my new baby's face. I felt acutely aware of her dependence on me, and her trust that I would sacrifice my own pleasures if need be to make her life safe and secure and guide her through life's trials.

After her "epiphany" that night, Kathy never attended another hard rock circus, but the Rolling Stones keep rolling. They first sang "I Can't get no Satisfaction" in 1965, almost sixty years ago, and continue to do so today. Have the 80-year-old Stones come any closer to achieving "satisfaction" in the intervening years? Watching their ever-more-faltering attempts to reproduce the spirit of their teenage yearnings – my guess is the answer is "no."

And what of Kathy? She's done her level best to achieve foundational goals set early in life and to which she again dedicated herself on that "epiphany" night in 1989. And I think it's fair to say she's had some "satisfaction" with her success.

The little secret, of course, is that her goal was never "satisfaction" in and of itself. It had a higher and better name. ☺

**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

Part 2

By Father Robert Wild

**IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CHESTERTON RECALLS** how the myths of fairy tales endured as the foundational truths of his inner world. George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* was instrumental in preparing Chesterton's mind for Christian dogma. It would be a fascinating study, if it has not already been done, to draw parallels between the Christian truths in MacDonald's writings and Chesterton's own religious thinking.

Chesterton describes for us what "did the trick" for him in MacDonald's writings, what baptized his own imagination when he read *The Princess and the Goblin*. Through this book he was given an imaginative appreciation, I believe, of the doctrine of original sin – which was a good place for the Holy Spirit to begin the process of his conversion. (He would later say that Original Sin is the only doctrine of the faith that needs no proof.) It is also my opinion, which we will look at briefly, that MacDonald's sometimes profound portrayal of evil (as in *Lilith*, for example) confirmed what Chesterton had experienced of personal evil in his own life. But before going into this interpretation, here is how Chesterton describes what the *Princess and the Goblin* did for him:

When I say it is like life, what I mean is this. It describes a little

princess living in a castle in the mountains which is perpetually undermined, so to speak, by subterranean demons [note the word demons] who sometimes come up through the cellars. She climbs up the castle stairways to the nursery or the other rooms; but now and again the stairs do not lead to the usual landings, but to a new room she has never seen before, and cannot generally find again. Here a good great-grandmother, who is a sort of fairy godmother, is perpetually spinning and speaking words of understanding and encouragement. When I read it as a child, I felt that the whole thing was happening inside a real human house, not essentially unlike the house I was living in, which also had staircases and rooms and cellars. This is where the fairy-tale differed from many other fairy-tales; above all, this is where the philosophy differed

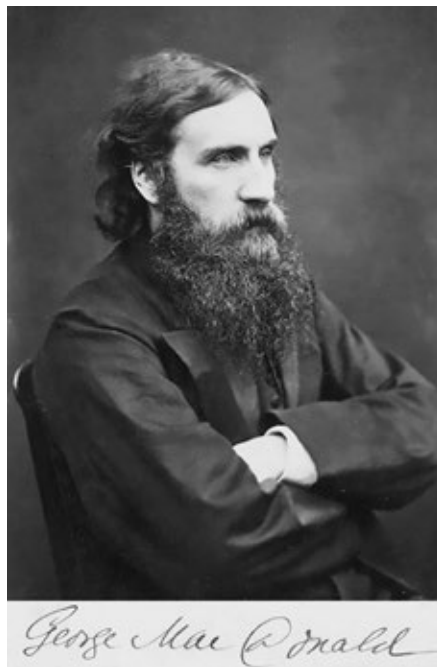






Illustration by Jessie Willcox Smith from *The Princess and the Goblins* by George Macdonald,

from many other philosophies. I have always felt a certain insufficiency about the ideal of Progress, even of the best sort which is a Pilgrim's Progress. It hardly suggests how near both the best and the worst things are to us from the first; even perhaps especially at the first. I am speaking of what may emphatically be called the presence of household gods – and household goblins. And the picture of life in this parable is not only truer than the image of a journey like that of the Pilgrim's Progress, it is even truer than the mere image of a siege like that of the Holy War. There is something not only imaginative but intimately true about the idea of the goblins being below the house and capable of besieging it from the cellars. When the evil things besieging us do appear, they do not appear outside but inside.

Chesterton would later read in the Gospel the Lord's words about hatred, adultery, greed, murder – the household goblins – coming from within, from the heart; and that “nothing outside a man can defile him.” This experience of the goblins coming from within is a universal experience, only denied by people who will not take responsibility for their own actions. We do not “progress” away from the goblins; nor do we launch a final and successful attack upon the castle. To our dying day we experience the goblins within and are called to an eternal vigilance. What C.S. Lewis said of himself could be applied to Chesterton:

Now *Phantastes* was romantic enough in all conscience, but there was a difference. Nothing was at that time further from my thoughts than Christianity and I therefore had no notion what this difference really was. I was only aware that if this new world was strange, it was also homely and humble, that if this was a dream, it was a dream in which one at least felt strangely vigilant....

George MacDonald, through his Christian fantasies, buried deep within Chesterton's mind some of the seeds of truth. Then, when Chesterton finally read the gospels, the simple images of *The Princess* were “more corroborated than corrected when I came to give a more definite name to the lady watching over us from the turret, and perhaps to take a more practical view of the goblins under the floor.”

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



I fell at the foot of one of the large trees. by John Bell, 1894 from *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance* by George MacDonald



## 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 4

**Matt 4:4 [Deut 8:3]:** But [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

A humane and civilized happiness is one of man's needs, not merely one of his pleasures. Luxury is itself a necessity. Man does not live by bread alone; but at the very lowest level of thought by bread and butter. All arguments about the treatment of the poor which are based on the idea that we can make them first contented animals, and then go on to their souls, are false down to the root. By giving a man just enough exercise, just enough cocoa, you cannot make a contented beast; but only a discontented man. (*Open Review*, June 1909)

**Matt 4:7 [Deut 6:16]:** Jesus said unto [Satan]: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

But in that terrific tale of the Passion there is a distinct emotional suggestion that the author of all things (in some unthinkable way) went not only through agony, but through doubt. It is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." No; but the Lord thy God may tempt Himself; and it seems as if this was what happened in Gethsemane. In a garden Satan tempted man; and in a garden God tempted God. He passed in some superhuman manner through our human horror of pessimism. ("The Romance of Orthodoxy," *Orthodoxy*)

**Matt 4:8:** Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

I call the plains high because the plains always are high; they are always as high as we are. We talk of climbing a mountain crest and looking down at the plain; but the phrase is an illusion of our arrogance. It is impossible even to look down at the plain. For the plain itself rises as we rise. It is not merely true that the higher we

climb the wider and wider is spread out below us the wealth of the world; it is not merely that the devil or some other respectable guide for tourists takes us to the top of an exceeding high mountain and shows us all the kingdoms of the earth. It is more than that, in our real feeling of it. It is that in a sense the whole world rises with us roaring, and accompanies us to the crest like some clanging chorus of eagles. The plains rise higher and higher like swift grey walls piled up against invisible invaders. And however high a peak you climb, the plain is still as high as the peak. ("The High Plains," *Alarms and Discursions*)



St. Matthew of Folio 27 of the Book of Kells with the four evangelists.

Satan was the most celebrated of Alpine guides, when he took Jesus to the top of an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth. But the joy of Satan in standing on a peak is not a joy in largeness, but a joy in beholding smallness, in the fact that all men look like insects at his feet. It is from the valley that things look large; it is from the level that things look high; I am a child of the level and have no need of that celebrated Alpine guide. I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help; [Ps 121:1] but I will not lift up my carcass to the hills, unless it is absolutely necessary. ("Tremendous Trifles," *Tremendous Trifles*)

**Matt 4:19:** And he saith unto them [Simon Peter and Andrew], Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Truth does not merely stick pins into people to sting them to anger without stopping them from action; truth puts hooks into people, in the manner of that ancient and magnificent metaphor which sent man forth to be the fishers of men. (*New Witness*, April 27, 1923)

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." ("The Queer Feet," *The Innocence of Father Brown*)

**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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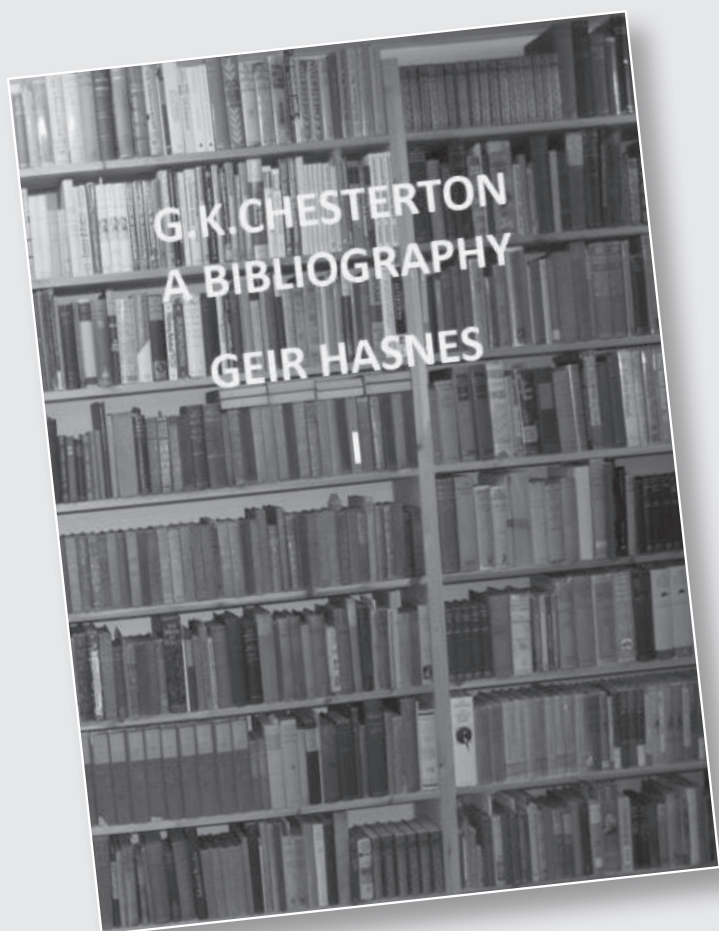
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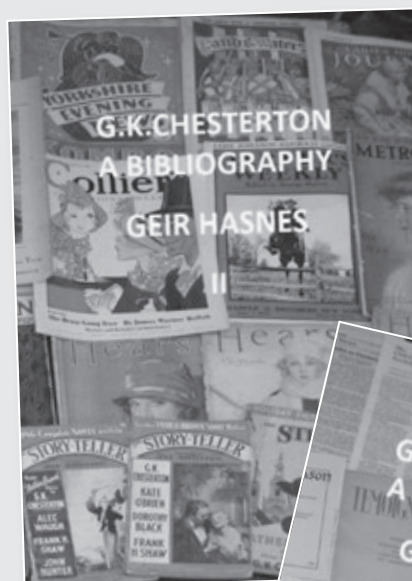




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"The world owes God to the Jews." –G.K. CHESTERTON

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## A Brooklyn Jew Reflects Further on the Chesterbelloc and Jewry

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By Rabbi Mayer Schiller

**STANDARDS ON A WORKABLE DEFINITION** of anti-Semitism have much altered over the years. Three decades ago, William Buckley offered the following understanding of anti-Semitism in order to read Joe Sobran out of the National Review-ism: "Anyone who gives voice, especially if this is done repeatedly, to opinions distinctively, even uniquely, offensive to the security of settled Jewish sentiment involving religious or ethnic or tribal pride engages in anti-Semitic activity."

This vague and largely incomprehensible sentence is sufficiently broad as to tar most anyone as an anti-Semite.

I hope now to present what is called, in the parlance of Talmudic probings, "the lomdus of the sugya," as I see it. This phrase is roughly translated in English as "the focal point of the topic being studied." It is far removed from the "anything that makes any Jew upset" definition offered by Chairman Bill.

Jews were seen in Medieval Europe as lacking conversion to the "one true faith," as Catholicism was once consistently referred to. After many buffetings, in Renaissance, Reformation and, finally, the political, social, and religious liberalism of the Enlightenment, this doctrine and, particularly, its exclusionist policies and condemnations regarding Jews, began to weaken. These weakenings culminated in a radical change of the general political and social framework of European civilization. It was this alteration of assumptions, enabled by many events, but certainly of great significance among them, the American and French revolutions which we must reflect upon. America, with its First Amendment orientations and, France, with its Declaration on the Rights of Man, paved the way. The Church and its popes had assorted perspectives on this about face and, in the nineteenth century, largely opposed it. But by the time of Vatican II, Rome comes to generally embrace modern

social and universalist sensibilities. In 1965 *Dignatatis Humanae* was passed by 2308 votes to 70.

This split between traditional social assumptions and modernist ones was at the root of most right-left debates pre-World War II. But in Post-WWII the "respectable" right has also enshrined democracy, freedom, liberty, diversity, etc., among its "own" teachings. There have been attempts to reconcile what once was with what has now become neo-Catholic reality. John Courtney Murray in *We Hold These Truths* made such an attempt. *The Wanderer* was once, perhaps no longer, a newspaper devoted to this task. One might argue that Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI were striving, in the larger scheme of things, to offer a form of Catholicism which, although light years away from Pius IX's *Quantum Cura* and Pius X's similar philosophy, would while advocating for First Amendment-esque dogmas of freedom and liberty, also seek to maintain pre-existing orthodoxy in other areas.

The Vatican II philosophy, at its best, enthusiastically embraced Enlightenment notions of "rights" and "freedoms" but also sought to maintain limited injections into society of religious sensibility and general morality. This may well be seen as the legacy of John Paul II. The alternative today is that of a secular liberalism which sees society in terms of legal social contract theories, devoid of any religious/moral core. The organic religious society,

rooted in either traditional Counter Revolutionary theory or the limited injection notions of a JP II-ism struggle against a society based solely on individual rights with a newly added dose of ruthless anti-Christian animus.

For Jewry, who occupied, in Europe prior to the eighteenth century, at best, some form of second-class citizenship, it was clear that the left was the team to be backed. This, in turn, made them seen as enemies by the political forces of counter revolution prior to WWII. Jews desired societies of freedom, choice, and of only legal bonds between citizens.

Post-WWII, the older European right with its assorted assertions of religion, state, and identity, much of which had thrown in its lot with the Axis, was discredited and persecuted.

Yet, despite this fact, for most Jews, the old loyalties to the left remained intact. Changes might be made to Good Friday prayers but Jews largely saw organic Gentile societies as a threat, which might well exclude or harm them. The Holocaust solidified this notion.

Chesterton and Belloc said and believed some exaggerated things about Jews. But their sense that the Jewish drive for social heterogeneity would create a murky environment for believing Christians in general and society, as a whole, seems to have some historical cogency.

Chesterton and Belloc were complicated political figures. Despite their frequent romanticizations of the

Middle Ages, they were in many ways liberals. From their calls for massive economic redistribution to loyalty to Boer and Polish struggles against colonial powers and affirmation of the “common man,” theirs was not a restorationist, fascist counter reformation.

Whatever one might think of the traditional Catholic counter reformation of earlier popes and movements those moods and their models have, since 1945, ended.

What remains today is the battle between ruthless Big Brother totalitarian secularism which dominates schools and media and the newer versions of Christian social teaching who no longer seek political/religious concordats. It is a teaching of moral norms not to be coerced but simply placed in the public square of ideas.

Meanwhile, it seems that private settings of schools, families, and communities are the best means now to affirm eternal truths. Chesterton and Belloc were not blind to the Jewish embrace of the revolution writ large. They didn’t always express this understanding well. For the present moment, they yet offer us, Jews and Gentiles alike, via their teachings and the reality of their lives, a joyous model of rejecting Big Brother and embracing Joy. As a Brooklyn Jew of the 1950s it seems clear to me that their team is mine. ☺

**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.

## 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

## Never Mind Your Organs

TOKYO—Tokyo District Court sentenced 63-year-old Hiromichi Kikuchi, chairman of the Association for Patients of Intractable Diseases, to eight months in prison and a fine of ¥1 million for arranging organ transplants for Japanese citizens without government approval. The problem with such transplants is the frequency with which the source of such organs is nearby

China, and the frequency with which the organs are taken without the “donor’s” consent. It seems that China has become the source of not only the preponderance of manufactured goods of whatever quality, but of human organs, in the best condition for transplanting. Kikuchi has admitted that China is, in fact, his organization’s primary source for organs.

GKC: Our two points, you will observe, are: (1) that we dislike cutting up a pal; and (2) that we place the



interests of a man higher than those of a dog.

The strange thing is that many of those who clamour most loudly against the vivisection of a dog, do not in the least mind cutting up a pal when the pal happens to be a man. For they are of the cult so quaintly styled "humanitarian," and they are responsible for all that shoddy gospel of social science which is based on the vivisection of man.

Some few of the humanitarians are of a nobler sort. They are cold scientific fellows who would vivisect you a rabbit, a frog, a dog, or a man with equal readiness; their bloodless yet insatiable scientific curiosity has no limits. Their curiosity is rather an awful thing, yet we respect them far more than those smug sentimentalists who smile to see a conscious man on the rack and shriek when a chloroformed dog is strapped down on the operating table.

The thing is, we suppose, that humanitarians do regard the dog as a pal, and do not regard the poor as a pal, but as a queer and rather frightening creature, who must be dissected for their own sakes, if not for his.

## Not So Careless Youth

USA—Seven-year-old Kynlee Heiman is a hit on social media because of her gymnastic abilities and body-building physique. She joined Instagram in 2021,

at the age of four, and by the end of 2023 has over 300,000 followers. Her mother, a gymnast herself at one time, owned a gym when Kynlee was very young. She states that when COVID shutdowns closed her gym, she had much equipment at home. Her mother also reports that Kynlee showed interest in working out at the age of three, following the footsteps of her older brother. Kynlee's routine involves training for six hours a day, three times a week, and a mere three hours a day, twice a week.

In addition to demonstrating her fitness and gymnastic abilities online, she is also a model, dancer, actress, and beauty pageant contestant.

When Science found by fearless research

The need for exercise,

Our careless Youth was climbing trees

Or idly blacking eyes:

To thoughtless schoolboys breaking bounds

For leapfrog or for hare-and-hounds,

Or fighting hard for fourteen rounds,

It came as a surprise.

## Santa's Real Risk

BOSTON—The John Snow Project released a short video for Christmas, 2023. Its title was *A Very COVIDY Christmas*. It begins with an image of Santa with presents in his sleigh, surrounded by elves, followed by a

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narrator intoning “Twas the night before Christmas. Santa took a deep breath. If only he’d known it would lead to his death.” Of course, Santa dies, but others learned the lesson. A following scene shows elves using hand sanitizer before entering a building with a sign saying “Wash hands before entry.” Then the screen is filled with the message “DON’T LET COVID RUIN CHRISTMAS,” followed by images of Christmas ornaments in the shape of an N-95 mask, a syringe labeled “latest vaccines,” and a COVID test kit.

From whom could Santa have caught COVID? And by the way, didn’t we already let COVID ruin Christmas, and isn’t that what the John Snow Project would like to happen in perpetuity?

GKC: To shake off this dangerous and dreamy sense I went into the shop and tried to buy wooden soldiers. The man in the shop was very old and broken, with confused white hair covering his head and half his face, hair so startlingly white that it looked almost artificial. Yet though he was senile and even sick, there was nothing of suffering in his eyes; he looked rather as if he were gradually falling asleep in a not unkindly decay. He gave me the wooden soldiers, but when I put down the money he did not at first seem to see it; then he blinked at it feebly, and then he pushed it feebly away.

“No, no,” he said, vaguely. “I never have. I never have. We are rather old-fashioned here.”

“Not taking money,” I replied, “seems to me more like an uncommonly new fashion than an old one.”

“I never have,” said the old man, blinking and blowing his nose, “I’ve always given presents. I’m too old to stop.”

“Good heavens!” I said. “What can you mean? Why, you might be Father Christmas.”

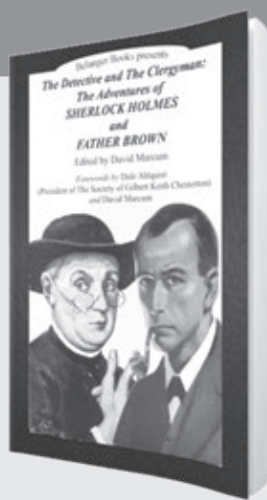
“I am Father Christmas,” he said, apologetically, and blew his nose again.

The lamps could not have been lighted yet in the street outside. At any rate, I could see nothing against the darkness but the shining shop-window. There were no sounds of steps or voices in the street; I might have strayed into some new and sunless world. But something had out the chords of common-sense, and I could not feel even surprise except sleepily. Something made me say, “You look ill, Father Christmas.”

“I am dying,” he said.

I did not speak, and it was he who spoke again.

“All the new people have left my shop. I cannot understand it. They seem to object to me on such curious and inconsistent sort of grounds, these scientific men, and these innovators. They say that I give people superstitions and make them too visionary; they say I give people sausages and make them too coarse. They say my heavenly parts are too heavenly; they say my earthly parts are too earthly; I don’t know what they want, I’m sure. How can heavenly things be too heavenly, or earthly things too earthly? How can one be too good, or too jolly? I don’t understand. But I understand one thing well enough. These modern people are living and I am dead.”



## *The Detective and the Clergyman*

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“You may be dead,” I replied. “You ought to know. But as for what they are doing – do not call it living.”

## Raising Awareness

OTTAWA—The Canadian Human Rights Commission has issued a discussion paper on religious intolerance. The introduction contains the following statement.

As has often been said, no one is free until we are all free. Many societies, including our own, have been constructed in a way that places value on certain traits or identities to the exclusion of others — for example, white, male, Christian, English-speaking, thin/fit, not having a disability, heterosexual, gender conforming. Because of this, many people and communities are facing various forms of discrimination, including intersecting forms of discrimination. To address religious intolerance, it is critical to raise awareness and understanding about the various forms it takes in Canada.

The body of the paper contains the following:

Discrimination against religious minorities in Canada is grounded in Canada’s history of colonialism. This history manifests itself in present-day systemic religious discrimination. An obvious example is statutory holidays in Canada. Statutory holidays related to Christianity, including Christmas and Easter, are the only Canadian statutory holidays linked to religious holy days. As a result, non-Christians may need to request special accommodations to observe their holy days and other times of the year where their religion requires them to abstain from work. ... The loss of culture, languages, spirituality, and community resulted in the marginalization, oppression, and damage to Indigenous peoples’ own unique religions and spiritual practices.

It appears that there may be a great many more holidays in the offing for Canada, and a great many more spiritual practices to go with them.

GKC: On the day after Christmas Day it is incumbent upon us to exhibit a universal charity, and that charity should, no doubt, extend, theoretically speaking, to the sad, weird people who did not keep it. It is a severe test of Christianity, but we will set our teeth hard and be tender to them. But touching this matter of the

general observation of great feast days and occasions of immemorial rejoicing, the general principle to be followed is very clear. If it were really true that those who despise special days and seasons really extended the same mystic exhilaration and the same gay benevolence over all the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, it might be all very well. If those who dislike isolated festivals were systematically festive, it might be all very well. Something might be said for a scheme of transcendental religion which rang the Christmas bells every night to celebrate the fact (attested by all statistics) that a child was born. Something might be said for a system under which every star in the crowded heavens was regarded as a Star of Bethlehem, newly created for that single night. There is much that is to all appearance noble and beautiful about the idea of three modern constitutional monarchs visiting any stall of oxen of which they might have heard. There is much to be said for an arrangement which would induce us all to give presents every morning. There is much to be said for a principle which would permit us to eat roast turkey every day. If there were the slightest or remotest possibility that any one of the people who forget festivities really transferred their joyous and mystical atmosphere to the remainder of their lives, the question, though not settled, would certainly have taken on a different complexion. But if there is one thing which any man must know who has the most rudimentary knowledge of the world, it is that the opponents of Christmas do not have the Christmas sentiment either on special days or on any days. Nobody supposes that the rationalistic modern can scarcely sleep every night of this life for thinking of the presents that he will find next morning in his hygienic sock. Like the great part of modern iconoclasm it does not mean that the levelling up of the 3rd of August to the 25th of December; it emphatically does mean in practice the levelling down of the 25th of December to the level of the 3rd of August. If and when the moderns can produce, as the Catholic Church did at one exuberant period, a glorious holiday on every day of the year, then it will begin to understand Christmas. ❧

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





## 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

# Contemplate That

By David W. Fagerberg

**ONE WOULD NOT EXPECT CHESTERTON**, the practical, political, social reformer, whom even Bernard Shaw could admire, to indulge in the misty-eyed, fanciful, dreamy world of contemplation. But our expectations would be wrong. Consider these definitions of contemplation from three writers.

Francois Malaval speaks of the attraction – the *at-trait* – that lures someone to God as something more than a knowledge. It is rather, he says, “something by which you are seized and penetrated, something you taste and which never separates itself from you.” And “Contemplation is an experimental taste of God Present.” Though our modern sense of “experiment” has the connotation of keeping an objective distance from a subject, the root of the word (*experiri*) means conducting a trial by experience. Experimental knowledge is experiential knowledge. Thus, contemplation is “a clear and sensible experience which we cannot explain but also which we cannot deny.” It arises out of silence, because “after silence only love knows how to speak worthily of God, and there is nothing but love which understands that which love says.”

Michel Boutauld insists that such speech between God and the soul need never be interrupted. “Speak to my Soul, whilst my Body is employed in your service.” God says you needn’t fear that labor will separate you from God because

“**I hung  
onto the  
remains of  
religion by  
one thin  
thread of  
thanks.**”

“while you work you keep my eyes and my thoughts inseparably fixed upon your presence, and fast tied to your heart. Let us go together, and take a walk.” In the story of the sisters, Mary is usually called the contemplative while Martha lived the active life, but Boutauld imagines devout Martha as the one “who

thinks of temporal affairs, and has all the cares of the house upon her, [and] is not disturbed, but rather comforted ... making everything that happens an occasion of speaking to him.” She is “happy to labor, and tire out herself whilst he beholds her.”

And Francis de Sales gives a classic parable about contemplation as standing in the sight of God. Picture, he asks, a statue positioned in the court of a great prince, and that the statue was endowed with understanding, and could reason and talk. An interlocutor asks why are you here? The statue answers “Because my master placed me there ... I am content to know that my dear master sees me here and takes pleasure in seeing me here.” De Sales concludes, “contemplation is no other thing than a loving, simple and permanent attention of the spirit to divine things.”

There are more authors, and more definitions, but I have gathered these three to highlight contemplation as a *state under our activities*.

In a Russian novel someone asks an old peasant what he is doing in his life. “Doing?” he replies. “What am I doing? I am loving Olga.” Malaval thinks contemplation is an experience of God “which would enable such a soul to reply to anyone who might ask what it was doing, ‘I am in the presence of God.’”

Enter Chesterton. What was the state under all of Chesterton’s activities? We could propose a variety of answers: humility, charity, rightly ordered desire. But here the answer I propose is thankfulness. “I hung on to the remains of religion by one thin thread of thanks. I thanked whatever gods might be, not like Swinburne,

because no life lived for ever, but because any life lived at all." In his early notebooks he wrote:

You say grace before meals  
All right.  
But I say grace before the play and the opera,  
And grace before the concert and pantomime,  
And grace before I open a book,  
And grace before sketching, painting,  
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing,  
dancing;  
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

He was saying grace – giving thanks – all the time, in each activity, underneath each action. Maisie Ward recalls a friend noticing how Gilbert used to make a mysterious sign in the air as he lit his cigar, and concluded it was the sign of the cross. "He saw the Cross signed by God on the trees as their branches spread to right and left: he saw it signed by man as he shaped a paling or a door post. The habit grew upon him of making it constantly: in the air with his match, as he lit his cigar, over

a cup of coffee. As he entered a room he would make on the door the sign of our Redemption."

Habit is where Malaval ends up, too. When someone works at his daily calling, he does not have to remind himself constantly of that calling. It becomes a habit, which awakens the thought of working and the desire to work. "He does not say 'I am working, I am really working at my calling!' Such a thought would be ridiculous, he does not need to do anything but work, and his work will assuredly be done." Such is contemplation. "The thought of God alone remains to him, and it is always there in the depths of his soul even when clouds of distraction or of business have covered it up and prevented it showing itself clearly." "If someone asked 'Where is your heart?' [the soul] could reply 'My heart is in God! I do not wish to think of anything but Him, nor love anything but Him.'"

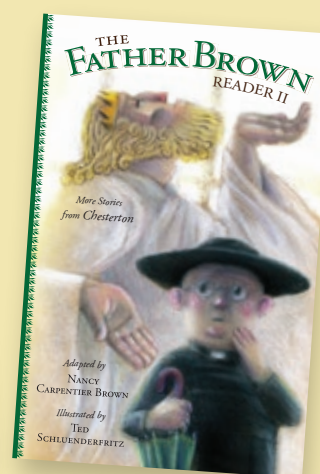
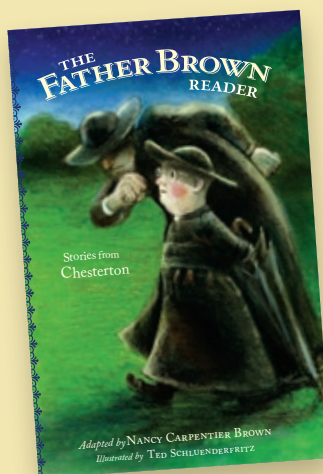
God loves you; you can taste it; so become thankful. Contemplate that. ☞

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



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## THE SIGNATURE OF MAN

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

Chesterton on Art

# Art Criticism

By G.K. Chesterton

**I DO NOT MIND THE MAN ADORING NOVELTIES**, but I do object to his adoring novelty. I object to this sort of concentration on the immortal instant, because it narrows the mind, just as gazing at a minute object, coming nearer and nearer, narrows the vision. (*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 12, 1932)

Perhaps this distinction is most comically plain in the case of the thing called Art, and the people called Art Critics. It is obvious that an attractive landscape or a living face can only half express the holy cunning that has made them what they are. It is equally obvious that a landscape painter expresses only half of the landscape; a portrait painter only half of the person; they are lucky if they express so much. And again it is yet more obvious that any literary description of the pictures can only express half of them, and that the less important half. Still, it does express something; the thread is not broken that connects God with Nature, or Nature with men, or men with critics. Now the modern critic is a humbug, because he professes to be entirely inarticulate. Speech is his whole business; and he boasts of being speechless. Before Botticelli he is mute. And the eulogists of the latest artistic insanities (Cubism and Post-Impressionism and Mr. Picasso) are eulogists and nothing else. They are not critics; least of all creative critics. They do not attempt to translate beauty into language; they merely tell you that it is untranslatable – that is, unutterable, indefinable, indescribable, impalpable, ineffable, and all the rest of it. The cloud is their banner; they cry to chaos and old night. They circulate a piece of paper on which Mr. Picasso has had the misfortune to upset the ink and tried to dry it with his boots, and they seek to terrify democracy by the good old anti-democratic



*Detail of Standing Woman, 1912. Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), Ink, charcoal dipped in oil, and gouache on two sheets of off-white wove paper*



muddlements: that “the public” does not understand these things; that “the likes of us” cannot dare to question the dark decisions of our lords. If the art critics can say nothing about the artists except that they are good it is because the artists are bad. They can explain nothing because they have found nothing; and they have found nothing because there is nothing to be found. (“The Mystagogue,” *A Miscellany of Men*)

Modern criticism has come to mean this: that nobody knows what an artist is trying to do, and therefore nobody knows whether he has done it. (*New York American*, Dec. 30, 1933)

An art-critic of conspicuous intelligence sits in front of an absurd piece of blotting-paper, dazed but submissive. He does actually say, in so many words, that he can make neither head nor tail of it, but that the Future will. (*Illustrated London News*, Dec. 23, 1911)

The best thing would be that we should all be serious art critics; that the democracy should hang its public galleries with good pictures, with Whistlers and Rossettis, with Degas and Sargents, because it really liked them. The next best thing would be that it should hang its public galleries with bad pictures, with oleographs and pictures of eminent dogs, because it really liked them. The worst thing but one would be that our taste should be guided solely by the cultured. The worst thing of all would be that it should be guided solely by the cultured, and guided wrong. (*Daily News*, July 23, 1904)

There are, when all is said and done, some things which a fifth-rate painter knows which a first-rate art critic does not know; there are some things which a sixth-rate organist knows which a first-rate judge of music does not know. (“Browning and His Marriage,” *Robert Browning*)

This is the beginning of all sane art criticism: wonder combined with the complete serenity of the conscience in the acceptance of such wonder. (“The Pantomime,” *The Common Man*)



Appreciation is the absolute condition of art. (*New Witness*, Aug. 16, 1918)

Any beautiful picture is deep; in the sense that anything beautiful always means more than it says; possibly means more than it means to mean. (“The Limits of a Craft,” *Robert Louis Stevenson*)

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Home Rule at Home

## Turtle Soup

By David Beresford

“Can you tell me, in a world that is flagrant with the failure of civilizations, what there is particularly immortal about yours?”

—G.K. CHESTERTON,  
*THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL*

WE WERE DRIVING HOME from work, having spent the day at a lake renovating a cottage for some wealthy clients, when I saw a big turtle on the edge of a swamp in the water. At my insistence Paul pulled the truck to the side of the road, and I slowly approached the turtle through the shallow water, getting soakers up to my knees. The turtle was fearless. I suppose it had a right to be, being massive. I grabbed it by the tail and pulled it out of the water onto a piece of plywood. Paul and I then lifted it up into the back of the truck.

“What are you going to do with him?” my friend and business partner, Paul Flynn asked.

“Turtle soup! Ben Hunt’s book explains how to make turtle soup. He says in his book that it is delicious.”

My fishing license allowed me to harvest a snapping turtle, and that summer I was re-reading about turtle soup in Ben Hunt’s *Big Indiancraft Book* (published in 1945). This book was 200 pages of instructions on how to make things using hand tools:

knives, axe sheaths, snow-

shoes, backpacks,

and turtle soup.

According to Ben,

all you needed was a

snapping turtle, some

fat, onions, carrots,

peas, potatoes, salt, and

pepper. The recipe ended with the excellent advice to “use what you have.”

I had caught dozens of snappers over the years only to let them go, being too tender hearted to keep any for soup, encouraged in this liberation by my wife. However, as the most recent catch swam away I had promised myself that the next turtle would be a keeper.

And, in anticipation of this, I got my wife to promise she would cook the next one I caught.

This turtle in this swamp was the next one.

When I got home Paul help me carry it into the backyard, leaving me with the problem of how to dispatch the turtle.

The thing about being a modern man having to learn from books what everyone used to know is that the books cannot tell you what the reality is going to be like. Books are good, but books cannot give you the feeling, the experience.

I had some experience of processing chickens using a method

I got from a book that advised “cutting off their heads with an axe.”

Consequently,

as a young man raised in a city but blessed with a strong desire for authentic things, and in the absence of a mentor on home processing poultry, I used an axe.

This was disturbing, and put me in a dilemma. Buying poultry from a store just meant someone else did the dispatching, whereas raising a small flock of free-range poultry meant that I was the person who had



this job. I either had to give up the work and default to big business, and scrap my distributist ideals as naïve, or accept this part of the job and get on with it.

So, for the turtle, drawing from my experience of processing meat birds, I used an axe.

The next morning, I skinned out the legs and tail to get the meat, mostly by guessing, following one simple rule: if it does not look like food, do not use it as food.

I brought a plate of turtle meat into the kitchen expectantly, I had done my part, now the distaff side could take over – a family approach to sustainable food production.

“I am not cooking that, it stinks! Take it outside!”

Here is something that any new husbands reading this essay might profit from. In the middle of arguments about how to cook wild meat, do not remind your wife

about her earlier promises, it is a tactical blunder. This causes women to dig in their heels, draw lines in the sand, set their jaws, and refuse to listen to reason. There may be another side to this story, but the result was that I now had to cook the turtle soup.

I followed Ben’s directions. I was generous with the vegetables, I did not stint on the salt and pepper. I set the stove at the right temperature, and stood attentive at the soup kettle, even when the strong fish smell drove my wife out of the kitchen. Finally, hours later, the soup was done.

I have never tasted a thoroughly rotten fish, but I have eaten the closest thing to it: snapping turtle soup. 🍲

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

## BALLADE OF GILBERT

# Not in Vain

By G.K. Chesterton

I hacked a block out of the coal  
And flung it on the grate,  
I took a book out of the shelf  
And sat me down to wait.  
  
The dark coal burnt and glowed as red  
As the light sunk in the West,  
The book told, slow, its wondrous tale  
To cheer my wearied breast.  
  
The fire burnt on and I read on,  
As each had been a friend,  
Till the red glow sank in ashes grey,  
And the book displayed The End.  
  
I rose, my blood was leaping warm  
And gone the freezing cold,  
My brain was stored with something new  
Won from that volume bold.  
  
Long years ago in times long gone  
A man took pen to write,

Long years ago, in ages past,  
A tree grew in the light.  
  
The pouring thoughts of the man’s mind  
Framed letters on the sheet;  
The sunlight coursed through, like veins of gold,  
The tree’s branched arms and feet.  
  
The writer wrote and lived and died,  
And turned to churchyard dust;  
The sun-veined tree drooped and died,  
And ’neath the marsh was thrust.  
  
And ages after ages pass  
In dim and endless train  
But the short hour yet comes, to prove  
That neither lived in vain.  
  
The sunlight stored in the dead tree  
Breaks forth and warms again;  
A voice long dead speaks from the leaves  
And calms a brother’s pain.





## 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

# Let Her Works Praise Her In The Gates

By Susan Sucher

**PROVERBS 31 IS A CHAPTER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**, written by King Lemuel based on advice from his very wise mother. Sermons on Proverbs 31 are ubiquitous throughout Christianity. Seen as a model for authentic femininity, the woman described in the Ode to a Faithful Wife (Proverbs 31:10-31) is referenced extensively but not always accurately – as we are occasionally exhorted to be quiet, docile women who take direction well and do as we are told. A proper reading of the text, together with insights from Chesterton, can lead to a more useful and efficacious interpretation of this very important scripture passage.

It seems that some people who quote this text have a suburban housewife from the 1950s in mind instead of a rural Israelite who lived 2800 years before indoor plumbing was invented. I'm not sure if the Proverbs 31 woman is a literary device or based on a real person, but I know for sure that she didn't wear pearls and high heels. It is critical when approaching Scripture to attempt to read it plainly, without our own prejudices.

Far from a diminutive creature, the Proverbs 31 woman is a physically powerful woman. Verse 17 indicates that she "strengthens her arms." Good. A woman today needs all the strength she can muster. Not only does she strengthen her arms – she "girds her loins." Yes. Girds her loins. She knows there is a battle wag-

**“This lady is a force to be reckoned with.”**

ing and she readies herself for it. Loin girding was done by soldiers heading to battle. Essentially, they took their garment, flung it between the legs to guard the more sensitive bits, wrapped it around the waist, tucked it in and set off to war, much like a kilt. This lady is a force to be reckoned with.

The Proverbs 31 woman is not a shrinking violet, nor is she passive or demure. Again, she has literally girded her loins. For battle. Far from a quiet partnership, free from conflict, Chesterton saw marriage as a "duel to the death, which no man of honor should decline." The woman in Proverbs 31 is said to do her husband good and not harm all the days of his life. Only a woman well-matched to her husband, and able to call him out in a fraternal correction when needed is a worthy opponent in this "duel to the death." A strong man needs a strong partner.

The woman of Proverbs 31 is a provider. She does what needs to be done to support her family. Whether it is the work of her own hands or work that she delegates, her efforts add to the flourishing of the home. In true Chestertonian fashion, the way that this provision works itself out is highly individualized. For one woman, it is a career outside the home ... for another her focus is entirely within her own walls. For every woman, it means the home and those within are the end beneficiary of all of her efforts.

The industrious woman described in this proverb was an active part of the local economy. She kept her

business close to home and supported other business people and even employed others. Because of her efforts, she was also able to provide for the needy in her community. Her strong moral foundation and fortitude are the type of foundation necessary if an economic system like the one Chesterton and Belloc described is ever to take root in our culture. If we really want Localism, we must focus on becoming more like this woman in our economic lives.

Chesterton laments the focus on externals by the feminist movement. As feminists of his time burned satirized effigies of the Victorian woman, so too the feminists today knock down an idealized housewife who never existed at the same time some people are trying to recreate her. Similarly, King Lemuel points out that vanity and beauty are not the point for his proverbial woman of valor – her value lies in her strength.

Many times conventions and customs that are more fashionable and less enduring get spiritualized and incorporated into our religious life. Chesterton had a gift of being able to see beyond convention. That is why his thoughts on women and family life are so revolutionary. Chesterton saw the foolishness in ascribing religious significance to customs like clothing or gender roles or fashion. By breaking conventions and roasting them in a satirical fashion, Chesterton helps us discern between matters of principle and matters of taste.

Our challenge, when we see a text like Proverbs 31, is to place ourselves in the time and place that it was written – to throw off

what we think we might find and read the text the way it was written. We should imitate the woman of valor described in scripture for the characteristics which extend beyond time and place. No one is demanding that we pick up the distaff of an ancient Israelite – nor should we feel compelled to don the pearls and heels native to a suburban 50s housewife. In the scriptural exhortation and Chesterton's writing as well, we find a call to be women who prioritize the family, support the local economy, and are faithful, equal partners with their husbands in all things. With our focus on these foundational principles, we truly gird our loins and are prepared to fight the battle as only a Domestic Empress can. ☸

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



*Study for Ruth Gathering  
Wheat by Edwin Long,  
oil on canvas*



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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

# Parvenus, Professors, and Public Opinion

*G.K.'s Weekly*, Volume 16 • September 9, 1932 – March 3, 1933

By Dale Ahlquist

**"WHAT IS NEVER REALIZED AS ACTUAL**, what is never even prophesied as possible, is the thing that has just happened." In spite of his words, G.K. Chesterton seemed to realize the actual and prophesy the possible. Ninety years ago he was describing the things that have just happened to us now. To wit:

■ "I can think of nothing worse than a nation of parvenus ruled by professors." Do you know what a parvenu is? It's someone who has come out of nowhere and suddenly gained wealth and fame and influence. It describes most of our celebrities. But who influences the influencers? The bozos who sit atop academia at our leading colleges and universities.

■ Our present intellectual climate? "The two main facts of our time are that a large and cultivated minority is thinking very badly, and that the other people are not thinking at all."

■ And how is information filtered to us? "Journalism is a false picture of the world, thrown upon a lighted screen in a darkened room; so that the real world is not seen and the unreal world is seen." A nod to Plato's Cave for you students of the classics.

■ And the current state of debate? "Nobody seems to have any notion of attacking anybody in argument, except by throwing terms of abuse at him."

All these profound and prophetic gems are found in this volume of essays from *G.K.'s Weekly*. We might imagine that the times were then very different from now, but consider: The world was in the midst of economic upheaval and headed towards a major war. It had no clue what was to come, but also no understanding of its own past. Its education system was in shambles, religion had lost its leading role in society, and philosophy

was dominated by skepticism and atheism. Does any of that sound familiar?

The thinkers were not thinking, only doubting, which is not constructive, only tortured. "The atheist," says Chesterton, "is not interested in anything except attacks on atheism." Bad philosophy and empty religion are the basis of materialism, which is the common root of communism and capitalism:

A philosophy begins with Being; with the end and value of a living thing; and it is manifest that a materialism, that only considers economic ethics, cannot cover the question at all. If the problem of happiness were so solved by economic comfort, the classes who are now comfortable would be happy; which is absurd.

And what both ends of the political spectrum also share is a contempt for democracy. The only remaining democratic institution is the jury system, and it epitomizes the whole problem that prevents true democratic rule: people are always trying to get out of it.

In the meantime, our actual rulers, that is, the experts who run our lives, "always have the fidgets. They will always be disturbing our way of living; and therefore we shall always be disputing their right of governing."

As for the world to come, Chesterton predicts the war, and said it will be started "by Prussian aggression." He reminds us of what Prussianism is:



Prussia is a patch of eighteenth century heathenry and heresy, which never did believe, nor (to do it justice) generally pretend to believe, in any sort of international ideal or common code of Christendom. From the first command of Hohenzollern to the last appeal of Hitler, it is the most simple, one-sided, savage tribal patriotism; and nothing else.

“Simple, one-sided, savage tribal patriotism.” That seems to be the same source of the wars presently budding in our world, whether in far away lands or in our own streets, with the threat of going full bloom.

As for our own past, which we do not understand, Chesterton provides an acute and amusing summary:

The Victorian Age was followed by the American Age. The Age of Public Opinion, which meant only the things the middle classes thought and believed, was followed by the age of Publicity, which meant the loud assertion of the things that nobody believed. The age in which the middle class man was

supposed to be content to be middle class or even rather stodgily proud of being middle class, was followed by a sort of feverish Utopia of unrest, in which every middle class man was idiot enough to suppose he could become a millionaire. The age of port, in which men drank after dinner was followed by the age of cocktails, in which women had to get drunk in order to face the prospect of dinner.

Our schools, says Chesterton, “have repeatedly expressed their readiness to break up the family.” Our commercial civilization emphasizes trade all out of proportion to “the practical absence of everything else,” while local craftsmanship has been blocked out. Employment produces ... unemployment. “Merely to let loose machinery on a land is to let loose a pestilence.”

Chesterton points out the problems, but he also proposes solutions. We have to realize both. “We Catholics must realise that by this time we are living in Pagan lands; and that the barbarians around us know not what they do.”



#### LETTER TO AMERICA

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

## Against Divine Discontent

By G.K. Chesterton

**I REMEMBER HEARING A GOOD DEAL** about “divine discontent” from my early youth; indeed rather specially in my early youth. For I was born towards the end of the Victorian Age; which many modern writers, strangely enough, imagine to have been a time of conservative placidity and of people content with their stations in life. As a fact, it was exactly the opposite. It was the period during which two modern ideas came into the world and fought; a true idea, that we must raise the economic as well as the political status of the poor; and a false idea, that every man must raise

his own economic status, even if he kills everybody else and ultimately himself as well. To both of these different things the more earnest Victorians gave the name of “divine discontent.”

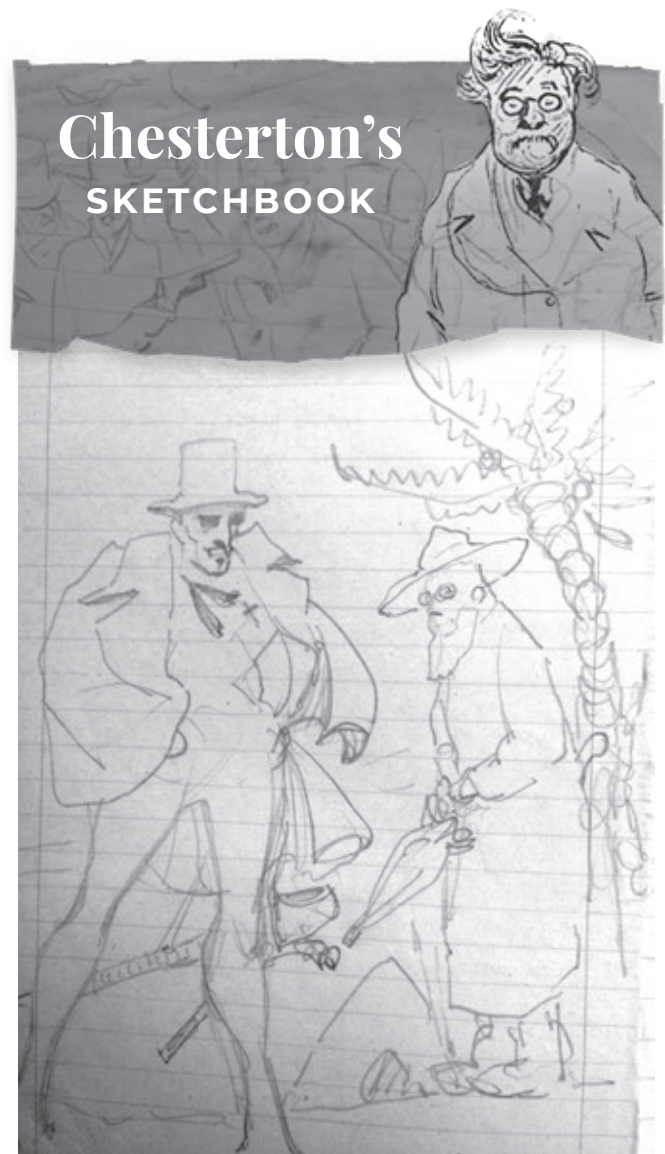
But the mistake of the earnest Victorians was that they tried to make a new morality without having studied any really good philosophy. The thing became rhetoric and sentiment; a thing of words; and they got even the words mixed; as in this case. For the truth is that the one thoroughly bad sort of discontent is divine discontent. We can all sympathise with human discontent. For human discontent means discontent with inhuman conditions. But divine discontent must really mean discontent with divine conditions. And, curiously enough, that is exactly what it did mean in the older and wiser theologies and philosophies; where it was rightly branded as the source of all our woe.

I am astonished that this simple truth has not been more simply seen. Thus, Mr. Bernard Shaw once wrote a little book on the Bible; full of rather crude criticisms, I think, about the Fall and the Flood and the fear of the devil and all the rest. He judges them, of course, in the light of his familiar evolutionary fancy; that the Creator progresses as well as the Creation, indeed, it looks as if the Creation really creates the Creator.

I have noted that the moderns lack philosophy. But I do dislike seeing a very clever man so clumsily missing the point; and in the matter of the Bible, the Fall and the Devil and so on, he does entirely miss the point. He tries to apply to such things the general sentiment of revolt which he feels as a Socialist, and which any man may quite reasonably feel as a social reformer. But revolt or righteous indignation, of that sort, is always a discontent with bad conditions. But the whole point of the spiritual revolt, dealt with in the Bible, is that it is always a revolt against good conditions. I am not now bothering about Mr. Shaw’s belief in the Bible; it is probable that I believe in it more and bother about it less. But I repeat that there is such a thing as seeing the point; and this is the point of the old moralities about the rebel angels or the rebellion of Adam. The point of the story of Satan is not that he revolted against being in Hell, but that he revolted against being in Heaven. The point about Adam is not that he was discontented with the conditions of the earth, but that he was discontented with the conditions of the earthly paradise.

That is a totally different idea (and I will add a much deeper idea) than the obvious reasonableness of revolt against gross tyranny. And until it is understood once more, people will go on being discontented even with contentment. The rich will be even more discontented than the poor. They will explain that theirs is divine discontent; and divine discontent is the very devil. You will observe that I use the term in a serious theological sense. ☸

From the *New York American*, January 28, 1933





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