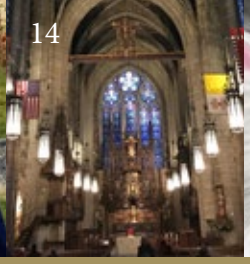

GILBERT!

"We are all actors in a terrific drama which Heaven has given us to play upon this earth"

—G.K. CHESTERTON

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN CHESTERTON SOCIETY

VOL. 21 NO. 04

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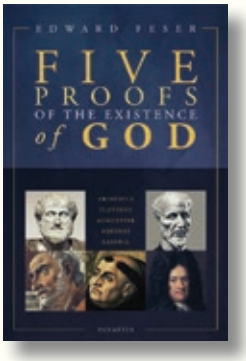
MARCH/APRIL 2018

CONNECTING
Science, Faith & Reason



◆ FIVE PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD — Edward Feser

A detailed, updated exposition and defense of five of the historically most important, but in recent years largely neglected, philosophical proofs of God's existence: the Aristotelian, the Neo-Platonic, the Augustinian, the Thomistic, and the Rationalist. It also offers a thorough treatment of each of the key divine attributes, showing that they must be possessed by the God whose existence is demonstrated by the proofs. Finally, it answers all of the objections that have been leveled against these proofs, providing the most complete defense of traditional natural theology in print.

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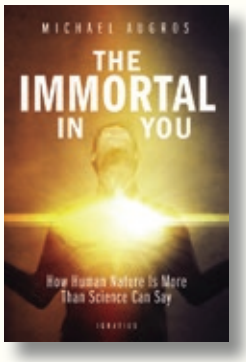
"A watershed book. Feser has completely severed the intellectual legs upon which modern atheism had hoped to stand." — **Matthew Levering, Ph.D.**, Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary

◆ THE IMMORTAL IN YOU
How Human Nature is More Than Science Can Say — Michael Augros



Many scientists and philosophers believe that we are no more than a machine. There is no afterlife and our existence is purely the outcome of chance events. The core of this belief is a philosophical assumption that modern science tells all there is to know about us and the world. With cogency and clarity, Augros exposes that assumption to the light and demolishes it. He shows how an astute use of common sense and our common human experience reveal there is much more to us than science could possibly say.

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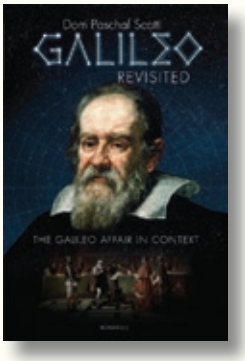


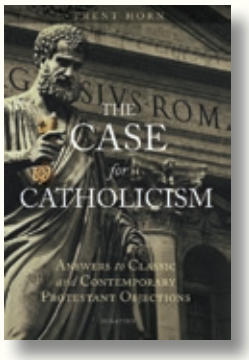
◆ GALILEO REVISITED — Dom Paschal Scotti

Galileo is the name often invoked by those who say science and religion are in opposition. But is that really the lesson to be drawn from the life of Galileo? No other work has brought together such a complete description of the historical context of the controversies surrounding Galileo in its political, cultural, philosophical, religious, scientific and personal aspects like this volume. In addition to covering the whole of Galileo's life, as well as his condemnation by the Inquisition in 1633, this book also includes a full historical discussion of the relationship between religion and science.

GAREP . . . Sewn Softcover, $18.95

"Prof. Scotti's richly detailed book brings that vibrant world to life and helps us to understand those fateful events as they happened and were understood at the time by those who took part."
— **Stephen Barr, Ph.D.**, Professor of Physics, University of Delaware

◆ THE CASE FOR CATHOLICISM — Trent Horn



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"Trent Horn offers clear and convincing answers to some of the most common Protestant objections to the Catholic faith."
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PHOTO CREDITS: Cover: 6-7: *Phil Leisenheimer;* **p.2:** *Stuart McCullough;* **p. 12, 13, 27:** *Dale Ahlquist;* **p. 19:** *David Beresford*

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TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

by Dale Ahlquist

United States Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch—who was recently appointed to the Supreme Court and is in his first term as a justice—referenced G.K. Chesterton in a Supreme Court judicial opinion issued on January 22, 2018. In a dissenting opinion in Artis v. District of Columbia (a case about state statutes of limitations), Justice Gorsuch bookended his dissent with an allusion to Chesterton's famous fence:

Chesterton reminds us not to clear away a fence just because we cannot see its point. Even if a fence doesn't seem to have a reason, sometimes all that means is we need to look more carefully for the reason it was built in the first place…. The Court today clears away a fence that one marked a basic boundary between federal and state power. Maybe it wasn't the most vital fence and maybe we've just simply forgotten why this particular fence was built in the first place. But maybe, too, we've forgotten because we've wandered so far from the idea of a federal government of limited and enumerated powers that we've begun to lose sight of what it looked like in the first place.

Gilbert! meets Gilbert.

100 YEARS AGO Just a few months after the Bolshevik Revolution, G.K. Chesterton called Lenin to task for the logical inconsistencies uttered in a recent speech. Lenin had referred to the "ignorant peasantry" of Russia who, as Chesterton says "are, of course, the great majority of Russia—have even now no comprehension of what has occurred." He quotes Lenin as saying that new revolutionary ideas "will ripen in the mind of the masses." GKC's comment: "Now it is surely obvious, on a revolutionary and not a conservative assumption, that revolutionary ideas ought to be tolerably ripe before they produce a revolution. It is absurd, upon any argument, to make the disturbance first and the discontent afterwards. It is absurd, I say, upon any argument; and it is trebly absurd upon a democratic argument. By whose authority were the Bolsheviks first rioting and then ruling, first making war, then making peace, and then wanting to make war again? If they were not acting in the name of the masses, in whose name in heaven or earth were they acting? They had no right to ask us even to excuse their success, if they had not already converted the common citizens. And now they claim the right to ask us to excuse their failure, merely because they had not converted them."

This prompted ACS member Luke Reilander to check if the U.S. Supreme Court had ever cited Chesterton before, and it appears from his search that this has happened only one other time. In a 1995 case, Qualitex Co. v. Jacobson Prod. Co., 514 U.S. 159, Justice Stephen Breyer—who is still active on the Court today—quoted Chesterton in a case considering whether color can be a trademark:

> The upshot is that, where a color serves a significant nontrademark function—whether to distinguish a heart pill from a digestive medicine or to satisfy the 'noble instinct for giving the right touch of beauty to common and necessary things' G. Chesterton, Simplicity and Tolstoy 61 (1912) . . . .

Chesterton's "noble instinct" quote is from an essay called "William Morris and His School" in the 1912 essay collection, *Simplicity and Tolstoy*, which was a reprint of essays from *Twelve Types* (1903).

In February, The Oxford Troubadours staged a production of Chesterton's play *The Surprise* at Oxford. Stuart McCullough, who runs the Catholic Chesterton Society in London, took

his family to the play, and on the way they stopped in Beaconsfield, where they visited Chesterton's grave. There son Nathanael brought the latest issue of *Gilbert!* to the graveside. The amazing ten-year-old managed to find a typo in the magazine.

Allacin Morimizu has an ongoing feature on her blog called "What is Truly Worth Knowing." She let us know that she has put together "The Gospel According to Father Brown—ALL the Detective Stories Summarized and Illustrated."

Although "all" is not quite accurate—she's missing two uncollected stories ("The Donnington Affair" and "The Mask of Midas"), she's done a lot of work and found some interesting historical and original illustrations. Check it out at allacin.blogspot.com.

What do you make of this from the Anglican Communion?

ATTENTION PASTORS
AND PARENTS

There is a new fad going around with children called G.K. Chesterton. This is [a] highly addictive reading trend that is being passed around in books on the internet through social media.

Many kids are introduced to "G.K. Chesterton" or "Chestertoning" by the seemingly harmless C.S. Lewis or Tolkien, but which are actually proven gateways. It has been proven that kids who use C.S. Lewis are 85% more likely to move to use of G.K.Chesterton. Look for use in your children! Watch for "warning words" like:

"Orthodoxy"	*"Tolkien"*
"Paradox"	*"Ordinariate"*
"Newman"	*"Walshingham"*

THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING!!! PLEASE SHARE THIS LETTER AND WATCH FOR THE WARNING SIGNS!!!

A letter from Central Europe addressed only: *"Mr. G.K. Chesterton. England's Greatest Writer. England."* was successfully delivered to GKC in January, 1925.

MEDITATION

Night And Day

Almighty God has given us, for the ordering of our lives, an alternation of day and night. "Each day echoes its secret to the next, each night passes on to the next its revelation of knowledge." [Psalm 18:2 Knox Translation] The day by its brightness typifies his glory, the might by its darkness recall to us the profundity of his mysterious being. And each day, as it were, waves is greeting to the last, bids up pick up our interrupted works, renew our plans, our hope, our anxieties. Man goes forth to his work and to his labour until the evening; then night comes, and with a kindly smile bids us put away all the toys we poor mortals make such a fuss over; shuts our books for us, hides our distractions from us, draws a great black coverlet over our lives. And so our life is marked out for us by alternations; each day is separated from the rest by a thick black line of oblivion. Oh, we take up the burden of living where we left off, the griefs, the anxieties of yesterday return with the cold light of morning, and dissipate the dreams which served for anodyne. Still, it is something to have escaped their influence only for a few hours,; we have gained some strength for the morrow. And meanwhile, alternation of day and night has served another purpose; its stands to us for a model and a sacrament of human life in general. As the darkness closes round us, we go through a dress rehearsal of death; soul and body say good-night to one another; the the soul wanders off into that unreal country where it can neither sin nor merit, can neither miss nor grasp opportunities. And then morning comes, and with morning, a re-birth.

Each day, then, begins with a birth and ends in a death; each day is a life in miniature. And the very conditions of our existence take away from us that excuse which is man's favourite excuse when he wants to shirk action and to neglect his salvation—that we do not know when to start. "Each day echoes its secret to the next"; yesterday whispers a word to today, and the word is, Begin. For today is unique; it has never happened before, it can never happen again. For one moment it is all-important, fills the stage; tomorrow it will have taken its place among the unreal pageant of dead yesterdays. It has an importance, then, which is all its own; but this importance only belongs to it because is it one of a series. It may be the first of a seies, the beginning of new life. It may stand in the middle of series, taking its colour from its fellows. And it may be the end of a series; it may be our last day on earth. (Ronald Knox, "To-Day," *A Retreat for Lay People*)

✦ ✦ ✦

There is no life without the resurrection of the dead. Every evening a man dies like Hector and every morning he returns like Ulysses. (*New Witness,* Sept. 14, 1916)

✦ ✦ ✦

People wonder why the novel is the most popular form of literature; people wonder why it is read more than books of science or books of metaphysics. The reason is very simple; it is merely that the novel is more true than they are. Life may sometimes legitimately appear as a book of science. Life may sometimes appear, and with a much greater legitimacy, as a book of metaphysics. But life is always a novel. Our existence may cease to be a song; it may cease even to be a beautiful lament. Our existence may not be an intelligible justice, or even a recognizable wrong. But our existence is still a story. In the fiery alphabet of every sunset is written, "to be continued in our next." ("On Certain Modern Writers and the Institution of the Family," *Heretics*)

STRAWS IN THE WIND

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton

Seven Days' Hard

By G.K. Chesterton

You will all be struck by my remarkable resemblance to the Devil; having only fifteen minutes in which to talk about seven days; and having great wrath because my time is short. It is obvious that this survey of a week might be made in several ways; and especially in two ways. I might make it what is called a survey of public events, which means a survey of the very few important events that are made public. In other words, I could tell you all that you have already read in the newspapers; for some of the least important social events are still allowed to appear in the newspapers. But it would be much better fun to tell you the things that do not appear in the newspapers. In that respect France is more fortunate than England; we have had plenty of politicians whose names have been linked with financiers like Stavisky, but we were never told much about them, except their affection for goldfish or their interest in breeding squirrels. It is a strange society; if private affairs are made public, it is only fair to say that public affairs are kept quite private. As it is, I could only tell you what you have read and forgotten; and the only other obvious thing would be to describe what I myself have done during the week, which I have forgotten myself. Some vague memories remain, which might be made to sound vivid by unscrupulous selection. For instance, it would be perfectly true to say that I spent most of last Sunday, after going to Mass, in making practical plans and arrangements for a murder. Indeed, it was a double murder, and as both the murdered men were millionaires, I deeply grieve to announce that the plan was not actually carried into practice. But then it was not an honest manly murder in real life; but a sneakish, evasive, make-believe murder, only meant for a murder story in a magazine. But on the whole, I think any such diary of my days would be very dull to read and to write; which is probably why I never write it.

Now I would ask your attention to the third aspect of the thing; which has nothing to do with the loud triviality that we call public life, or the loose triviality that we now generally mean by private life. It is not concerned with public life or private life, but with Life. And it seems to me that Life is the one thing that most modern men never think about all their lives. We are asked to consider what has happened in seven days. Some of the most aged among you were told, a long while ago, that the world was made in six days. Most of you are now told that modern science contradicts this; a statement which is certainly much more of a life than the statement it contradicts. It also shows that what these people call their modern science is not very modern. The ancient science, the Victorian science of the days of Darwin, did indeed entertain a queer idea that anything was credible so long as it came very slowly. As if we were to say we could believe in a hippogryph if a horse only grew one feather at a time; or in a unicorn, if its horn was not too rapidly exalted, but began as a little knob like a pimple. But that is not modern science, whatever else it is. The real modern science, the new science, for what that is worth, tends more and more to an idea of mystical mathematical design, which may well be outside time. So far as the latest science goes, the cosmos might have appeared in six days; or in six seconds; or more probably in minus six seconds; or perhaps in the square root in minus six. But I am not at all insisting on any literal six days; it is not required by my own creed. I am talking about the very grand ideas suggested by that symbol; of the creative power being for six days creative and for the seventh contemplative. For the true end of all creation is completion; and the true end of all completion is contemplation. Heaven forbid that, in the present unenlightened state of the world, I should talk theology. But why have modern men got no sense even of the majesty of mythology? Let us regard the Genesis story as a myth; but let us treat it as educated people do treat any other myth. When we read that Prometheus the Titan stole fire from heaven for mankind, we do not say a giant was a thief who stole Jupiter's match-box on Mount Olympus. When we read that the whole world went into a winter of lamentation because the Earth Goddess had lost her daughter, we do not say that those superstitious Greeks thought an old witch could wither the corn. We have some sense of the grandeur of these great natural allegories; and why have we no sense of the grandeur of that conception, by which a week have become a wonderful and mystical thing, in which Man imitates God in his labour and in his rest?

I want to put to you, what is hardest of all to put in words; something that is more private than private life. It is the fact that we are alive; and that life is far more astonishing than anything that we enjoy or suffer in life. What has really happened during the last seven days and nights? Seven times we have been dissolved into darkness as we shall be dissolved into dust; our very selves, so far as we know, have been wiped out of the world of living things; and seven times we have been raised alive like Lazarus, and found all our limbs and senses unaltered, with the coming of the day. That one simple fact of Sleep is an almost perfect example of the sort of thing I mean. It is far more sensational than any fact or falsehood that can be read in the newspapers. It is far more sensational than any scandalous secret I might reveal to your delighted ears about my own private life. If you want important events, such as journalism is supposed to report, those are the important events. If you

want the latest news, the latest news is that I died last night; and that I was miraculously reborn this morning, to your no small annoyance; for I fear that my return from the dead, though it is certainly news, is not necessarily good news. But what weeks and dates and Sundays and Sabbaths, and ancient ritual recurrences, are meant to remind us of, is exactly this enormous importance of daily life, as it is lived by every human being; as it is related to death and daylight and all the mysterious lot of Man. To tell you that I have performed this or that silly action, such as making a speech like this, might gratify my vanity. To tell you that the leading public men who control our destinies have performed this or that silly action might gratify my irritation. But neither has very much to do with my life; and neither has anything to do with that great revolving wheel of cosmic light and darkness that we call a week.

And now you will naturally say that all this is extremely vague and transcendental and unpractical. I answer, with some violence, that it is at this moment by far the most practical problem in the world. Unless we can bring men back to enjoying the daily life, which moderns call a dull life, our whole civilisation will be in ruins in about fifteen years. Whenever anybody proposes anything really practical, to solve the economic evil today, the answer always is that the solution would not work, because the modern town populations would think life dull. That is because they are entirely unacquainted with life. They know nothing but distractions from life; dreams, which may be found in the cinema; that is, brief oblivions of life. I am not going to talk about the advantages of this or that social solution; but it is true that this is the standing difficulty of all social solutions. Some people, like the late Mr. Galsworthy, think that the English poor should be helped further to colonise the Colonies. Some, of whom I am one, have even dared to dream that the English might be allowed to colonise England. But to both the objection is always essentially this: that they would be six miles from a cinema. It is perhaps true; and another way of putting the same truth is that modern men have utterly lost the joy of life. They have to put up with the miserable substitute of the joys of life. And even these they seem less and less able to enjoy. Unless we can make ordinary men interested in ordinary life, we are under the vulgar despotism of those who cannot interest them, but can at least amuse them. Unless we can make daybreak and daily bread and the creative secrets of labour interesting in themselves, there will fall on all our civilisation a fatigue, which is the one disease from which civilisations do not recover. So died the great Pagan civilisation; of bread an circuses and forgetfulness of the household gods.

So, whatever you do, do not jeer at the Book of Genesis. It would be better for you, it would be better for all of us, if we were so absolutely bound by the Book of Genesis that the whole week was a series of symbolic services, reminding us of the stages of Creation. It would be better if every Monday, instead of being Black Monday, were always Bright Monday, to commemorate the creation of the Light. It would be better if Tuesday, at present a word of somewhat colourless connotation, represented a great feast of fountains and rivers and rolling streams; because it was the day of the Division of the Waters. It would be better if every Wednesday were an occasion for the hanging the house with green boughs or blossoms; because these things were brought forth on the third day of Creation: or that Thursday were sacred to the sun and moon, and Friday sacred to the fish and fowl; and so on. Then you might begin to have some notion of the importance of a week; and what a high imaginative civilisation might really do with a week. If it had the creative power to produce such a pageant of creation, it would not bother about cinemas.

From a BBC Radio Broadcast, published in *The Listener,* January 31, 1934.

My name is Br. Gilbert Heater and I'm a novice at St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA. I was told that you were told about me...Regardless, I thought I should write to you not only to give you a greater appreciation for people who don't impose on you, but to introduce myself properly in the hopes that I can be of service in the future.

I did indeed take my monastic name after GKC. I was raised Protestant and the works of Chesterton played a large part in my conversion to Catholicism. Many paarts of Protestantism didn't hold up for me, but I have always had a deep devotion to truth and reason, and the arguments in *Orthodoxy* were a tremendous influence. The sheer beauty and wonder in *The Man Who Was Thursday* and *Manalive* also changed how I viewed the world.

Suffice to say, I've been initiated into the Catholic Church and have been follwing my calling as a Benedictine monk. I am a great reader of Chesterton and look forward to my copy of *Gilbert!* with great anticipation. It is a fantastic publication, and I thank you for all your effort and dedication. It is needed and appreciated.

Br. Gilbert
Latrobe, PA

✦ ✦ ✦

Another very good issue of *Gilbert!* I did not know that David Beresford has the high honour of being able to claim descent from the Manchester area. My congratulations! I was born in Church Street, Harpurhey, a couple of miles north of the city centre. The authorities have since demolished that area. When I was somewhat older our family moved to the slightly more elevated district in south Manchester, Chorlton-cum-Hardy. The authorities have since changed the name of the road... Does David have any detail of his area?

Aidan Mackey
Oxford, England

The Play's the Thing

By Dale Ahlquist

As if there isn't enough incidental drama in trying to run a school where almost everything you teach is opposed by the rest of the world, we also *require* drama at Chesterton Academy. Three years of it. The sophomores are introduced to the stage by performing in a comedy, usually a murder mystery. It's a good way to teach sacrifice when somebody has to die. Junior year, we put them through the rigors of an intense religious drama, usually a story about a saint. Conveniently, every saint had a dramatic life. And senior year, it's Shakespeare.

By making drama a required course, it means that every student has to get up on stage. For some this is easy, for others, drama is a trauma. For everyone, it is a great experience. My wife, who runs the theater department, says that drama is the most Christian of all the arts. It means dying to yourself and coming to life as a creature that a creator meant you to be. It means getting outside of yourself, a step of faith. It means cooperating with others in a common work, as in the body of Christ, where every part is important, and if one part, even small, does not function well, the whole body suffers. She also argues that drama is among the most complete of the arts, for it involves visual and aural, music and movement, color and balance, understanding literature and analysis of a text. Besides, the students gain self-confidence, the ability to speak in public, and they explore motivation and emotion. It's all about the word becoming flesh.

Makes perfect sense. Makes you wonder why every school doesn't require drama. Especially every Catholic school.

Well, there's one problem. Where do you get good plays to put on? Especially for high schoolers. Contemporary drama offers only the contemptible, where the glory of the spoken word has been replaced by the open sewer of foul language. Back up a bit in history and we have the trite and the sprite, which probably helped provoke the edgy, angry, and obscene that followed. Back up further, and you have Shaw, who, what he lacked in depth, made up for in length. Before that is Ibsen, Scandinavia's gift to Depression. Go back some more, and you have melodrama, which certainly is sensational, moral, and, well, melodramatic, but can't be taken seriously, even as comedy.

A scene from *The Lily of Palestine*, the Junior class play at Chesterton Academy.

I left out the experimental, the absurd, and the ponderous (Beckitt, Ionesco, O'Neill). I left out the Russians because that cherry orchard has been pretty well picked over.

What about classical drama? As in Sophocles and Aristophanes? We are, after all, a classical school. Well, my wife refuses to direct these because the comedies are too bawdy even for the jaded, and the dramas are too boring even for the most studious. She recruited another teacher direct a version of *The Trojan Women* and we decided we will do another classical play in about ten years, which should leave only a few people who will have remembered the first one.

There are good plays, of course, even if I can't think of any at the moment, but even these present an impossibility. They don't have 20 roles, with 8 male parts and 12 female parts. And even if they do have larger casts, it means there are some characters who 247 lines and others who have two. Or one. In other words, the playwrights simply did not have high school drama classes in mind when they wrote these plays, even if they were masterpieces.

The solution? Simple. We write our own plays. We make sure everybody has a part, that the parts are well-distributed, that the material has some substance, some point, some dramatic unity and opportunity, and some appeal to the audience. Plenty of laughs for the sophomore play, plenty of tears and tension for the juniors. When you're writing a play with a specific purpose, one that you know will be performed, and by performers whom you also know, you don't worry about expressing yourself. You only worry about expressing the truth. Then you adorn it with people wearing costumes. And you want them to enjoy the words you have put in their mouths. I write the plays for the students, but also for the audience.

Our murder mysteries have been madcap, with such offerings as *More Bodies Please*, where corpses keep turning up at a hotel, *Mind Over Murder*, where a psychiatrist does his best to be no help to his screwed up patients and finds himself quite shot by the end of the first act, and *Unconventional*, where the entire theater becomes a convention hall filled with the wrong people at the wrong time wanting the wrong things. For our dramas, we've presented the stories St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Genoa, and the little known St. Mariam Baouardy. We've also staged Robert Hugh Benson's compelling *Come Rack! Come Rope!* The students love them, the audiences love them. We also did a play called *Nuns and Aliens*. That got everyone's attention.

When we get to Shakespeare, we praise him for his plays, but we also lambaste him for his thoughtlessness in not taking our high school classes into consideration when writing his scripts. So we have to have some of the men's roles played by women, which can be confusing in some of his plays where women get dressed as men, and sisters as brothers, and so on. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we made artistic changes so that the Prince of Verona became the Princess of Verona, and Mrs. Montague was a single mom, and Brother Lawrence was Sister Lawrence. Only had to change a few pronouns, and somehow it all worked. All the Shakespeare came through just fine.

And the point is the students are ready to perform Shakespeare after they've had two previous years on the stage, performing both comedy and drama. There is no question about the value of drama, but there is the problem that there are so many bad plays. The solution is good plays. If you can't find a good play, write one. With drama, as with all the arts, we cannot afford to be passive and settle for what the world has been sloughing off on us. We have to reclaim the arts. Creativity is one of our God-like attributes. We can even be God-like in enjoying what we create. It's an act of love. There is also the creative act that takes place between the actors and the audience which when the word becomes flesh. When it happens, it is a glorious experience. Divine. It is indeed, as my wife says, the most Christian of all the arts.

Uproariously Encouraging Pessimism

C.F.G. Masterman, (1873-1927)

By Dale Ahlquist

In 1907, when Charles Masterman was editor of the newly formed literary magazine, *The Albany Review* he asked G.K. Chesterton to contribute a poem for the first issue. Chesterton promised the poem, but as the deadline approached, the poem did not. Masterman finally went personally to Chesterton's flat in Battersea to see if he could collect the poem.

He found GKC in bed. He was not ill. He "had merely been thinking of other things and forgotten to get up." He apologized for not sending the poem. It was ready to go, but for the fact that he still had not written down. He would be happy to recite it, and Masterman could copy it. Easier said than done. There was a distinct shortage of writing paper in the flat. Frances Chesterton started tearing half-sheets of letters, splitting open used envelopes, and finding any other available scrap of paper lying around, while Masterman furiously took dictation from GKC, who, "lying back on his pillow, poured out the first canto of *The Ballad of the White Horse*."

A year later, Masterman wrote to his fiancee, Lucy Lyttleton, the grand niece of the legendary prime minister, William Gladstone:

> Last night we had a great orgy... we had Belloc and Chesterton and Maurice Baring and Mr. and Mrs. [Rann] Kennedy ... We talked incessantly; we recited original ballads and poetry (at least I didn't as I hadn't any) and... John Burns told stories and Hilaire sang his own Sussex drinking songs. Then we all went off in cabs to Maurice Baring's and we argued about religion and other subjects till about 2 o'clock. And I walked home through the silent streets.

A month later, Masterman wrote in his diary that he went to dinner at Chesterton's flat:

> A splendid evening. Gilbert in tremendous form, discoursing about A.J.B. (Arthur Balfour). "He hath a devil, I'm sure of it, Charles, when you get up to speak in answer to him, you ought to make the sign of the Cross and say, 'Leave him and come out of him.' He would vanish into smoke and the rest of the H[ouse] of C[ommons] would rush down a steep place into the river." All the evening after dinner he recited poetry to us, Ballades of his own, Belloc's, Bentley's...

And yet, years later, when Masterman reminded Chesterton about his recitations on those evenings, GKC answered "in his delightful sing song drawl, 'Ayee have done many foolish things. But aye have never read aloud my own poetry.'"

Gilbert and "Charlie" were young liberals together, and it was while out canvassing for their candidate that Masterman worked one side of the street and Chesterton the other, but Charlie went down his side and back up the other till he found GKC still standing at the door of the first house arguing with the resident therein. "The purpose of canvassing," said Chesterton, "is conversion."

Their friendship dated back to 1904, when they were fellow members of the Patriots' Club, which met at intervals "to consume roast beef and drink good ale" and whose object was to interest people in patriotism "by every recognised method of agitation and advertisement."

Gilbert and Frances attended the wedding of Charles and Lucy Masterman at Westminster Abbey in June of 1908. When the newlyweds greeted him in the nave, he said he wanted to present each of them with one of his books. He first asked for a pen, and on the spot, he wrote an original poem in each book, "An Imitation" in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (for him), and "A Ballade of Wedding Presents" in *The Man Who was Thursday* (for her).

A graduate of Cambridge, Charles Frederick Gurney Masterman, gravitated from journalism to politics, and while Chesterton became alienated from the Liberal party, Masterman got more involved, first being elected to Parliament and then becoming a high level bureaucrat under Lloyd George. Chesterton said, "He became a politician from the noblest bitterness on behalf of the poor... he was a pessimistic official. He had had a dark Puritan upbringing and retained a sort of feeling of the perversity of the gods; he said to me, 'I am the sort of man who goes under a hedge to eat an apple.' But he was also an organiser and liked governing; only his pessimism made him think that government had always been bad, and was now no worse than usual. Therefore, to men on fire for reform, he came to seem an obstacle and an official apologist; but the last thing he really wanted was to apologise for anything." Chesterton said that Masterman had "a luxuriant gloom" about him, but that there was something about his pessimism that was "uproariously encouraging."

Although many of Masterman's early friends drifted away from him, Chesterton never did. And it was to Chesterton that Masterman went with

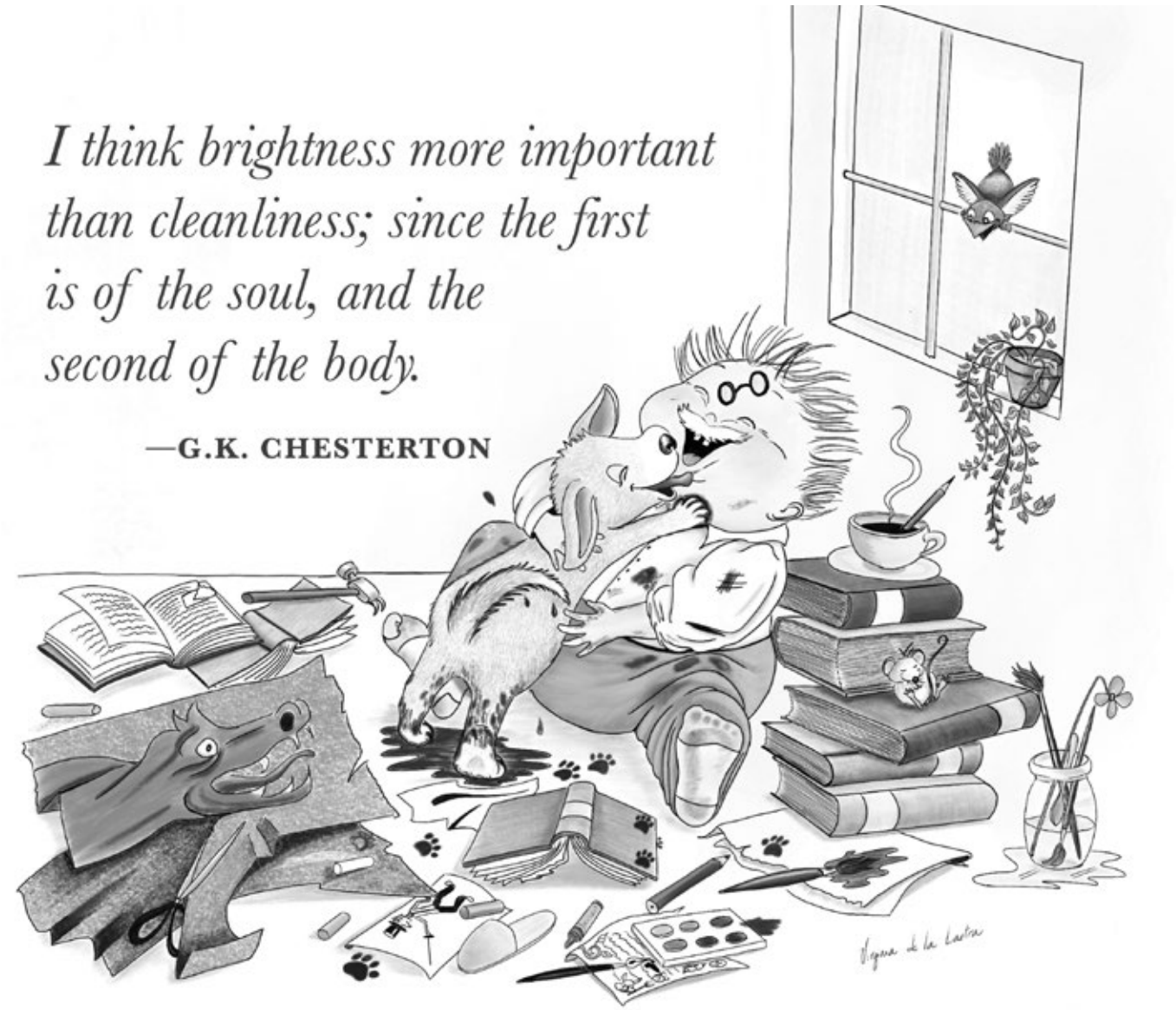
one of his most brilliant ideas during the Great War: the idea of enlisting England's greatest writers to write pamphlets, books and journalistic essays on behalf of the country, supporting the war, recruiting fighting men, and criticizing Prussia. So joining such luminaries as Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, James Barrie, John Galsworthy, Robert Hugh Benson, Israel Zangwill, John Masefield, and Arnold Bennett, was G.K. Chesterton. That's why there are all those essays about those rotten Prussians, and books like "The Barbarism of Berlin."

The propaganda effort was a great success. Chesterton said that although Masterman had "allowed himself to be used as a Party hack by Party leaders who were in every way his inferiors," he won the day and helped win the war because "all that dark humour that was deepest in him came out again, as he grinned over... his success as an intellectual smuggler."

When Masterman attempted to return as a candidate for Parliament, Lloyd George did not support him, and he lost. He switched to the Labour Party in the following election, but he eventually returned to journalism, as editor of *The Nation*.

He was, says Chesterton, "nearly as untidy as I was." They enjoyed their arguments. When they both wrote for the *Daily News*, in 1905, Chesterton said they both agreed "that the average respectable man inhabiting a modern villa in a modern suburb requires to have his soul purified by fire, and startled by signs in heaven as much as any reader in Babylon or Gomorrah." But upon this revelation Masterman would expect that average man to destroy the suburban villa and flee from it, whereas Chesterton would expect that the sacred shock would cause him to "kneel before his own home as before a temple," kissing the doorsteps and hugging the railings, to the misunderstanding of the passing policeman.

In other words, they agreed about what was wrong with the world, even if they did not agree about how to fix it. But it was the former agreement that led Chesterton, in 1910, to dedicated his great book *What's Wrong with the World* to C.F.G. Masterman.



Timely Essays on Chesterton's Timeless Paradoxes

On Going To Canterbury

James V. Schall, S, J.

I.

The fifth chapter of Chesterton's 1932 biography, *Chaucer*, is devoted to *The Canterbury Tales* themselves. Chesterton calls this most famous medieval book the first modern "novel of character". It is the first one to combine plot and story with the insides of the persons whom we meet in the tale. And we meet everyone, not just the heroes and the renowned, but also the normal and insignificant folks who also have their stories. They too go to Canterbury, a place of witness and devotion for all.

Chesterton was impressed with a world that had time to listen to long poetic sagas. "There are few cultivated moderns," he wrote, "who have not felt something of the pleasure of being able to lose themselves in the longest books of Dickens or Trollope." This reading experience requires leisure, a frame of mind that does not let the busy world about us claim everything within us. We enjoy spending time on the project of reading a long novel. "Chaucer and his friends were really capable of reacting to those surprises, of waiting patiently for the point of those stories; of treating the whole narrative process as a pleasure in itself."

The wanting to see the whole of the human adventure as it becomes manifest in each person is something innate to us. Both for good and for ill, we want to know what happened, in their respective time and place, to men and women of our kind who are like ourselves, however much each of us has a different story. "Man lives by his devouring appetite for morality," Chesterton observed. "The chivalric romance does really represent the Christian conception of life, which is at once a Quest, a Test, and Adventure." Lacking any of these three ingredients means that we do not live a fully human life, a life that needs purpose, challenge, and the unknown to discover. Like C. S. Lewis, Thomas Howard, and many passages in scripture, the dance seems best to depict the adventure of putting order into our lives.

Chesterton spells out the difference between the medieval dance and that of modernity. "The Dance has turned into a Race. That is, the (modern) dancers lose their balance and only recover it by running toward some object, or alleged object; not an object within their circle or their possession, but an object which they do not as yet possess…." In these words, Chesterton points to the distinctive difference between the modern and the classic dance. "One is rhythmic and recurrent movement, because there is a known center, while the other is precipitate or progressive movement, because

India

✦ I know very little about India; and if I were merely to make a private guess, it would be that there is no such place. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, May 31, 1934)

✦ I recently received a pamphlet from an honest Indian gentleman who has a new religion that will establish universal peace. I confess that the impression produced on my mind by the excellent Hindu humanitarian was that he might very well unite all human beings, if only all human beings were Hindus. (*Illustrated London News*, June 17, 1927)

✦ Even we who call their country India, even those of us who have dealt with it, traded with it, or sought to rule it, know not whether it be an empire, or a chaos, or a nation, or a theocratic association, or a secret society, or only a map. (Introduction to *Hinduism: the World-Ideal*.1916)

✦ Nobody has set up anything like the Cathedral of Seville to face the Taj Mahal. We have set up only tents and golf clubs. (Introduction to *Henri Massis*, 1927)

✦ The principal weakness of Indian Nationalism seems to be that it is not very Indian and not very national...there is a national distinction between a people asking for its own ancient life and a people asking for things that have been wholly invented by somebody else. (*Illustrated London News*, Oct. 2, 1909) [from the essay that inspired Gandhi]

✦ Mr. Gandhi is exhibited in all sorts of aspects and attitudes; chiefly, in the popular press, as a person who wears spectacles and not much else. (*New York American*, Jan. 9, 1932)

✦ We have come and we have conquered: but we have not seen. (Introduction to *Hinduism: the World-Ideal*.1916)

✦ It was perhaps too much to expect that we should ever really understand India. (*Illustrated London News*, April 25, 193)1

there is an unknown goal. The latter has produced what we call Progress; the former what the medieval meant by Order; but it was the lively order of the Dance." A dance is not a race, not something to get over in world-record time.

II.

The unique characters who found themselves on pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas in Canterbury were not tourists. Nor were they modern individualist mystics seeking to find themselves. The pilgrims to Canterbury had a goal in their journey. Without this common understanding of where they were going, there would be "nothing to keep the Pilgrims on the same Pilgrimage." This observation is mindful of the final scene in Belloc's *Four Men*, when the four companions finally end their journey through Sussex to return to their own homes. "A journey, if it is enjoyable on account of its object, is not equally enjoyable if it goes on for ever."

What enables men to be together are not "feelings" of good will, but facts, truths. "The broad religion creates the narrow clique. It is what is called the religion of dogma, that is of facts (or alleged facts), that creates broader brotherhood and brings men of all kinds together.… All men share in a fact, if they believe it to be a fact. Only a few men commonly share a feeling, when it is only a feeling." We cannot argue about "feelings". But we can and must base ourselves on facts that we know to be true.

"All modern critics can take pleasure in the almost modern realism of the portraiture (of the pilgrims), in the variety of types and the vigor of their quarrels. But the modern problem is more and more the problem of keeping the company together at all; and the company was kept together because it was going to Canterbury." They were walking and riding their mules to Canterbury because of what happened there, because it was a holy place that transcended the ordinary places in which they lived. "It is very puzzling to look at the real society around us at this moment, and consider whether it has a purpose. For the present, at least, there is no Canterbury in sight for the Canterbury pilgrims." If anything, a Canterbury is less visible in our time than it was in 1930 when Chesterton considered Chaucer.

III.

In a passage that reminds us of what he wrote in his book on Aquinas, speaking of what distinguishes men like Chaucer, and yes, Aquinas, Chesterton wrote: "It is gusto; it is zest; it is a certain appetite for things as they actually are, and because they actually are; for a stone because it is a stone, or a story because it is a story." Human lives are best recorded as stories, as accounts of how they freely live their lives. The story is as much a part of reality as the stone; indeed, more reality exists in a story than in any stone.

The "zest" for things as they "actually" are is rooted in the fact that they actually are and we can know them. The thirst for *what is* defines our being. This is what Chesterton saw when he considered the characters bound together not to go just anywhere, but to go somewhere, to Canterbury, to somewhere where the divine had indicated its presence.

It is the religion of dogma, of facts, that are allows us to be together in the same world, the world we look upon with "gusto" and with "zest" because things actually "are". Our pleasure consists in the astonishing fact that things, including ourselves, stand outside of nothingness. Chesterton seems to conclude that if there is no Canterbury towards which we direct our minds and steps, we can only run a race that leads us to nowhere.

CLERIHEW CORNER

Celebrating Famous & Infamous Names with E.C. Bentley's Elusive Light Verse Form

The Originator

President Hoover
Felt in need of a soother
After his little tiff
With Governor Al Smith

The Imitators: 7th and 8th graders from St. John Bosco School in Rochester, NY

Donald Trump
got a bump
from playing badminton
with Hillary Clinton.
—**CATHERINE REGGIO, MARY KATHRYN SHEBA,** and **SOPHIA MCMULLEN**

The writer Edgar Allan Poe
liked to scare you so.
His stories would make you cry,
and sometimes the characters
would die.
—**MATTHEW DENNINGER** and **PHILLIP SAVKA**

Captain Jack Sparrow
did not carry an arrow.
He was a punk
who spent his days drunk.
—**MIA CLEVELAND** and **ANNA FLUGEL**

Stephen Hake
Wrote Saxon Math while eating steak.
Those hard questions make you rage
which leaves you tearing out page
after page.
—**GABRIEL CALCAGNO** and **JOEY LEE**

Miley Cyrus
had some sort of virus.
Her career started to fall
when she sang "Wrecking Ball."
—**SOLAS CADY**

Winnie the Pooh
had nothing to do,
so he rubbed his tummy
thinking of hunny.
—**RONAN MAIER** and **EZRA MCMULLEN**

CLERIHEW: A humorous, unmetrical, biographical verse of four short lines—two closed couplets—with the first rhyme a play on the name of the subject. Readers are invited to submit clerihews for "The Clerihew Corner," with the understanding that submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned, nor will all be published.

ROLLING ROAD

Visiting the Vertical and the Horizontal

By Dale Ahlquist

When you think of Manhattan, you don't think of Kansas. When you think of Madison, Minneapolis, Washington, and Arkansas City, you don't think of Kansas, and yet those are all cities in Kansas. I recently visited Manhattan.

The one in New York.

The one where even the small buildings are tall, where walking down the sidewalks is like walking through the bottom of a canyon. It's different from, say, Kansas, where extreme flatness rules the day.

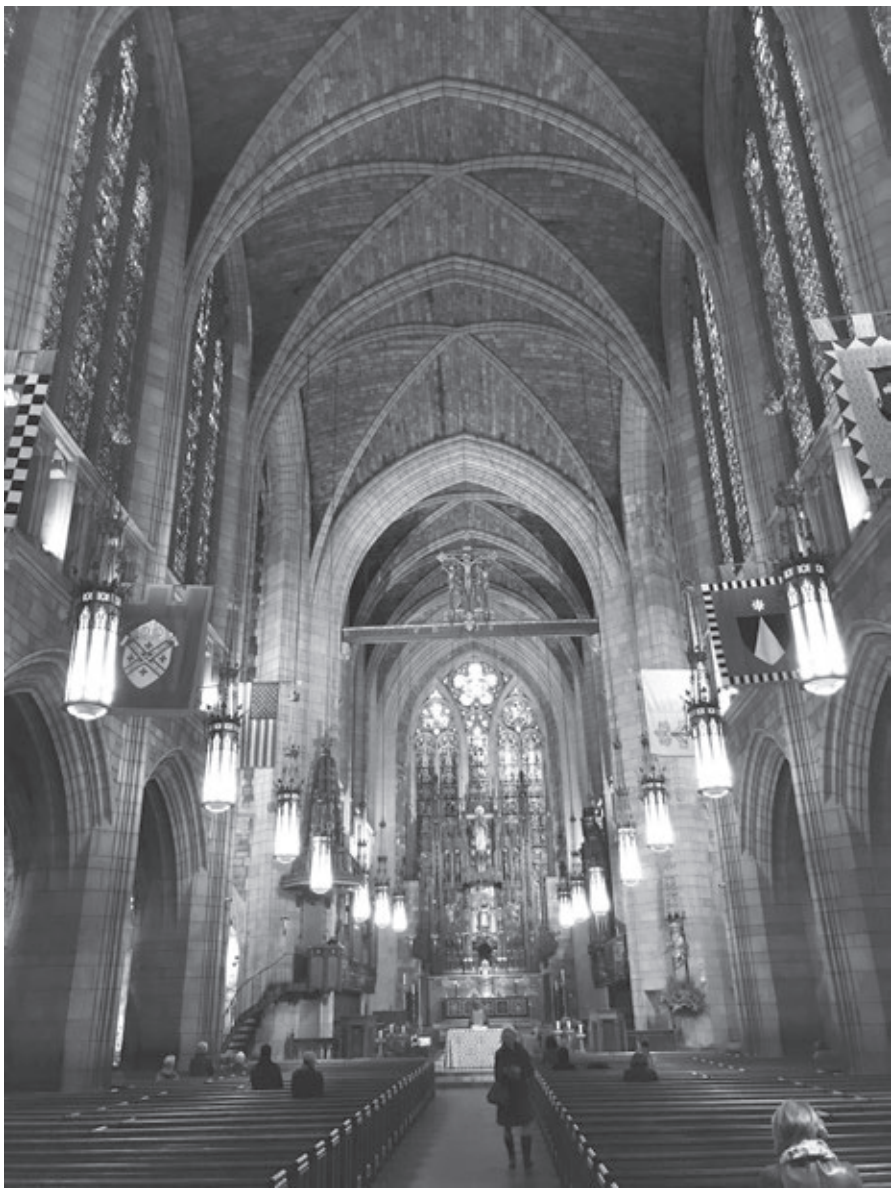
More people have chosen to live in Manhattan, New York, than in Manhattan, Kansas. About 1.6 million more. I don't understand that. I simply cannot understand how that many people can choose to live and/or work in same amount of square area as the other, stacked on top of each other.

One of the things I noticed about the more crowded of the two Manhattans was that the traffic going out of the city was always worse than the traffic coming into the city. But more hopeful.

I saw an official-looking guy on a bicycle, with the words "Pet Control" emblazoned on the back of his orange vest. People who live in New York City have dogs but don't have children. No one wants to raise children there. And no one can. People with families live somewhere else, and they commute between the two halves of their lives. In other words, New York is like the whole world, only more so.

In the midst of the maze that is Manhattan is the The Old Town Bar. That is where the heroic New York City Chesterton Society meets twice a month. It's faithful members have to take the train to get their local Chesterton meeting. I had the privilege of joining them as their guest in January. And I brought a guest of my own: Zubair Simonson, a former Muslim, who had converted to Catholicism because of reading You Know Who. The gathering including a goodly collection of other converts besides Zubair and me. There was Condy Eckerle who read *St. Thomas Aquinas,* and found that he wanted to return to the Church in which he was baptized. And there was Willie Snow, a former nothing, who, like me, started with *The Everlasting Man*. Now he's in seminary. We all enjoyed a rousing discussion that covered most things. I had such a good time that I forgot I was in New York.

But then I was reminded where I was when I walked outside. I had to step around the garbage bags lining the streets, and the folks with shopping carts, sifting through the garbage, and the cars honking at empty cars in front



St. Vincent Ferrer Church

of them. Apparently, the center of the streets also serve as parking lots. But only some people know this. Also apparently New Yorkers consider these things normal, because when I pointed them out to Zubair, he said to me, "You notice things we don't notice."

Since I was in New York City, I made it a point to do two things that I would not be able to do anywhere else. I visited the glorious St. Vincent Ferrer Church, a spectacular Gothic masterpiece built by the Dominicans. It was a place that makes you look up in amazement even more than you would at a skyscraper. Skyscrapers reach but don't touch. Gothic arches contain heaven. The only disappointment was that I did not get to meet the vicar, who was out of town. His name is Fr. Innocent Smith. Really.

The other thing I did was go to a New York deli and have a pastrami sandwich. Can't do that anywhere else.

Not many days later I found myself in Pittsburg. Now, Vicki Darkey, your'e asking why didn't I look you up? Because if you'll notice the spelling of the name, you'll see it was not in your part of the world. This was Pittsburg, Kansas, home of Pitt State University, home of the Gorillas. Really. I gave a talk to the Kansas Catholic College Student Conference. An enthusiastic and inspiring group of young people. Made me feel young. And hopeful.

Then I got in my rental car and drove to Emporia, Kansas. In spite of the lack of any natural obstacles between those two places, there is no direct highway, only a series of small highways headed in a different direction. I didn't really get to enjoy the vast horizontalness of the landscape because I drove through a raging blizzard, so that I could only see a few feet in front of me. I saw a few cows covered with snow, and drove through Yates Center, the Hay Capital of the World. Finally I arrived in Emporia, which is the Disc Golf Capital of the World. Gave a talk to another enthusiastic and inspiring group from Emporia State University. More hope for the world.

Never made it to Manhattan, Kansas.

The only thing Vertical in Kansas

A Going Concern

By Joe Campbell

Bidwell is a worrier. He worries relentlessly. When he doesn't have anything to worry about, he worries about not worrying. That is, he worries lest he has forgotten something that ought to worry him.

Had he been like Bidwell, Descartes would not have said, "I think, therefore I am." He would have said, "I worry, therefore I am." As thinking defined Descartes' existence, so worrying defines Bidwell's. Had Hamlet been like Bidwell, Shakespeare would not have written, "To be or not to be, that is the question." He would have written, "To worry or not to worry, that is the question." As Hamlet chose to be, so Bidwell chooses to worry.

Unlike Bishop Berkeley, who said that to be is to be perceived, Bidwell says that to be is to be worried about. This, no doubt, is why he has his own version of the golden rule: worry about others as you would have them worry about you. He also holds, as a corollary, that it is more blessed to worry than to be worried about.

In the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, Bidwell believes that he should never put off till tomorrow what he can worry about today.

"Worry today," he told me, "for tomorrow never comes."

So, despite his good health, he worries about getting sick and dying. But he also worries about getting sick and not dying. I don't mean to suggest that he supports euthanasia or assisted suicide. He doesn't. But he also doesn't support extraordinary methods of keeping imminent death at bay. His worry is that if the unscrupulous don't shorten his life, the scrupulous might prolong his death.

"Doesn't this conflict with your belief that he who worries last, worries best?" I asked him.

GKC on GKC – 13

✦ I was reconciled (at the age of seven) to the knowledge that I would never understand a piano. (*Daily Herald*, Sept. 13, 1913)

✦ There was once a happy fable in Fleet Street to the effect that I illustrated my defence of the chivalric prejudice by standing up in an omnibus and offering my seat to three ladies. Gallantry upon so gargantuan a scale seems almost to have an alarming flavour of polygamy. (*New Witness*, Feb. 8, 1917)

✦ I jolly well know that I would not turn out at night to hear myself lecture even if it was a free entertainment. (*Burlington Gazette*, Feb. 16, 1921 – During his American lecture tour)

✦ I wish to acquit myself of the charge of contemptuousness. All my life I have endeavoured to explain that my sympathies are entirely with the mass of people in their ordinary instincts. I am not a highbrow. I realise that it is this mass of normal people which keeps the world straight and that, without them, the world would soon qualify for a lunatic asylum. (*The Philosopher*, July-Sept., 1927)

✦ I have been happy in a minority in times when some New Theology leaders were very placidly in the majority. I do indeed believe that all rule rests on the divine hunger in all the hearts of men; and that the common conscience is that whereby we erect institutions or accept creeds. But I know quite well that whole tracts of humanity can be sunk in special ignorance or swept with special delusions. (*Daily News*, Jan. 21, 1911)

✦ I am not so frightened of life that I dare not obstruct it, like the Nature-worshipper. Nor am I so frightened of life that I have to tie it down with hundreds of little cords, like the hygienist. My test is whether the life is what can decently be called human life, life neither choked with anarchy nor enslaved by fear. (*Daily News*, Sept. 11, 1909)

✦ I am of the antiquated creed which holds that saying something is often connected with having something to say. And, right or wrong, serious conviction is a great help to humorous expression. It is because it is controversial that it is convivial. (*New York American*, December 8, 1934)

✦ When a man has an original point of view of his own, it will appear in everything he writes. (*Week-end Review*, June 24, 1933)

✦ I admit that we writers, wretched beings, have only to blame ourselves: though we generally prefer to blame each other. (*New York American*, Oct. 27, 1934)

✦ I should like to write an enormous Miltonic epic about the universe and call it "Paradox Regained." (*Illustrated London News*, May 22, 1915)

"I'm not sure," he replied. "I'll have to worry about it."

His answer surprised me, as he routinely recasts traditional wisdom to fit his worldview. In Bidwell's universe, necessity is not the mother of invention. Worry is. Worry is also what springs eternal in the human breast, what makes the world go round, and what great minds do alike. He has recast "no pain, no gain" into "no worry, no hurry".

If you were to tell Bidwell that it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness, he would worry about starting a fire. I know, because when I told him that every cloud has a silver lining, he worried about flooding the market with precious metals.

As soon as he discovered money, Bidwell began worrying about it. When he didn't have it, he worried that he might not get it. When he got it, he worried that he might not keep it.

Like many of us, he worries that he could outlive his savings and grow old less comfortably than he had expected. He also worries that his savings could outlast him and he not grow old comfortably for as long as he had expected.

"The ideal, I suppose," he said, "is for life and money to run out at the same time."

One good worry deserves another.

"But surely, Bidwell," I said, "a longer life, even though you die poor, is preferable to a shorter life, even though you die rich."

"An interesting point," he replied. "Leave it with me and I'll worry about it."

When he awakens in the morning, Bidwell worries about the weather. If it's fair, he worries that it will turn foul. If it's foul, he worries that it won't turn fair. Try as I may, I have failed to convince him that we can't do anything about the weather. Why, we can't even predict it. His stock reply is "Of course we can do something about the weather. We can worry about it."

I asked if his worrying causes him to lose sleep.

"Certainly not" he replied. "My insomnia causes me to lose sleep. I only start worrying after I wake up. As to what causes the insomnia, your guess is as good as mine. I tried dieting to cure it, but to no avail."

"You thought that if you lost weight you'd stop losing sleep?"

"I reasoned that if there were less of me, there'd be more sleep to go around."

"Bidwell," I said, as charitably as I knew how, "I worry about you."

"One good worry deserves another," he replied, and he welcomed me to share his realization that "as Socrates should have said, but didn't, the unworried life is not worth living"

The Problem With Us Chestertonians

By David Mills

They always took up pipes, never cigarettes. Their hero had smoked cigarettes like a fiend, but cigarettes choked you and made you look trashy and made your tweed jacket with the leather elbow patches stink. So no cigarettes.

These were young Evangelicals who'd discovered C. S. Lewis and through him a romantic idea of England, or a select part of England. (They wouldn't have been so happy with a Labour party rally in a mining town in 1932. It's Tory privilege they liked.) We used to see them in the local pubs when we lived near an Evangelical college, and (we were Episcopalians then) in our parish as well. When they pulled their pipes from their mouths to drink from their beer glasses, I suspected they were really saying "Hey mom, I'm not in Cedar Rapids anymore!"

They quoted C. S. Lewis for everything. There did not seem to be a subject to which some quote applied, or could be made to apply with a little pushing or stretching. It was cute, though not as cute as the pipes and the tweed.

We enjoy what we might call "Lifestyle Chestertonianism."

We Chestertonians

I'm afraid, my Chestertonian friends, that as we smile with amusement at our young Evangelical brethren smitten by Lewis and Oxfordian Englishness, someone might be able to say of us, "Hey, man, glass houses." And fair enough, though I don't think we imitate Chesterton the way the young Evangelicals imitate Lewis. Most of us, I think, are natural Chestertonians who then discover the man who put this way of living and thinking into compelling words.

We enjoy what we might call "Lifestyle Chestertonianism." I don't know anyone who dresses like him or wears those funny glasses or that odd moustache. But a lot of us enjoy the anti-puritan life, the life pursued by doing things with more enthusiasm and less care than the modern puritans can tolerate. It's the life that laughs carelessly at the fears that drive the modern puritans, that enjoys this-worldly pleasures with insouciance because it insists upon the reality of the next world.

The Lifestyle Chestertonians drink more than the proper number of daily "units" the health puritans allow. They smoke, though the health puritans don't allow that at all. They eat big slabs of rare steak and large butter-covered potatoes,

which leaves the puritans wringing their hands and muttering "cholesterol."

They argue and laugh and argue more, and take greater pleasure because the manners puritans think it indecorous. They thumb their noses at both major political parties and their ideologies, when the political puritans demand you take just one of two previously defined sides. They speak for Christian truths as if they were undoubtedly true, waving away the ideological puritans — secularists that they are — who insist that everyone hold his beliefs as if they might well be wrong.

These are all fine things, the beer and the steak and the faith. I would have to admit, however, that we might push them farther than we would if they weren't Chestertonian. We enjoy good beer, but drinking it becomes a sign of virtue, because that's what good Chestertonians do. There's the extra pint, or two, or three. The larger cigar. The unnecessarily loud dinner, the in-your-face political eccentricity, and the pointlessly provocative statements of Christian belief.

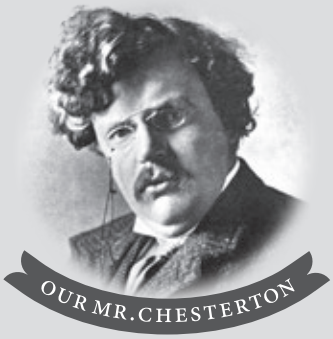
I know this from my own life. I can be bad enough on my own, but with other Chestertonians, well, let's just say things can get exuberant.

The answer is Aristotelian or Thomist, as Chesterton would have said if asked: moderation. Be a Chestertonian within limits. Free yourself from modern Puritan fears, but don't take your liberation so far that you prove they were right.

The Problem With Chestertonians

It's the quoting, though, that's the problem with us Chestertonians I'm most worried about, at least those of us who write or speak. Those who don't have reason to quote him may read him to the neglect of people they should be reading instead.

I speak as a writer who knows the temptation, and also as an editor and a reader who knows the effect. This is the temptation: The man nailed it so often and made his points so cleverly, wittily, and slap-your-forehead insightfully that we don't have much reason say to anything on our own (or read other writers).



A reporter for the *Victoria Daily Times* (Mar. 12, 1931) described Chesterton during an interview at the Empress Hotel in British Columbia:

He had a ruddy, somewhat rounded face with a high, broad forehead; thin slightly grey hair that embraced the upper part of the his ears; a moustache of a sandier color that hooked down below his mouth. His large eyes twinkled. They branded Chesterton as unavoidably genial, in spite of his heavy eyebrows, his aggressive nose. Layers of chin tapered down into the folds of an ample winged collar. His skin was fair, delicate. He held a cigar in his right hand, but his left hand frequently tapped the cushions, especially when he was thinking. His replies to the interviewers were often followed by a cavernous chortle, and his whole body shook and shifted around on the settee.

This is the problem: It's not a good way to engage the world if you want to move people's minds and hearts. I love Chesterton and I've learned a great deal from him. Reading him changed my mind in the stricter sense of that phrase. He's one of my heroes. But. Even with a receptive, even with a docile, audience, you can't quote Chesterton very much without your readers or hearers beginning to block you out.

This strikes us Chestertonians as weird. Bats. Crackers. It's like someone complaining as he walks through a gallery in the Louvre that there's just too much great art here. Does he want bad art? Blank walls? What? You go to a museum like the Louvre to see great art. You read books hoping for great arguments. These Chesterton supplies by the boat load.

But that's not the way the average reader takes it. To the average reader, "Chesterton said" followed by "Chesterton said" followed by "Chesterton said" often means "Time to look at the next article." And if he picks up the same writer again and finds "Chesterton said," he's likely to skip to the next article even faster.

It has to do with the reader's instinctive feeling that he wants to read someone who knows something on his own. He wants to read an authority. Too many quotes, especially too many quotes from one source, makes the reader suspect the writer doesn't really know what he's talking about. The writer make think he's just giving his readers the best stuff he can supply, but he really tells the reader that he doesn't know anything but what his authority tells him.

Moving On From Chesterton

The problem is our invoking Chesterton rather than using him, depending on him to do our work for us. It's our speaking as devotees and not as students who've graduated and moved on to be teachers ourselves.

We need to do with him what he did with St. Thomas Aquinas: Learn both his way of thinking and specific arguments and then use what we've learned for our own purposes and in our own voices.

Do what he did with St. Thomas. Compare some philosophers' explanations of what Thomas is doing with Chesterton's *Dumb Ox* and all his other books that express his Thomistic mind. The few people who are called to the work will read the philosophers with benefit (though possibly not with pleasure, because those books can be really dry), but nearly every reader can enjoy and learn from Chesterton and through him become Thomists at second hand.

Lifestyle Chestertonianism is great. Beer! Steak! Cigars! Laughter! Enraged Puritans! But we also have truths to pass on, and the greatest Chestertonian will be one who's so absorbed Chesterton's thinking that no one — no one but another, shrewd Chestertonian — will recognize him as one.

New from ACS Books

How do we defend the faith in today's world? Where are the connecting points with an audience that does not like or does not even care about religion? What will prevent us from being merely reactionary? Surprisingly, the best strategy may come from a writer who anticipated our present problem a hundred years ago: G.K. Chesterton.

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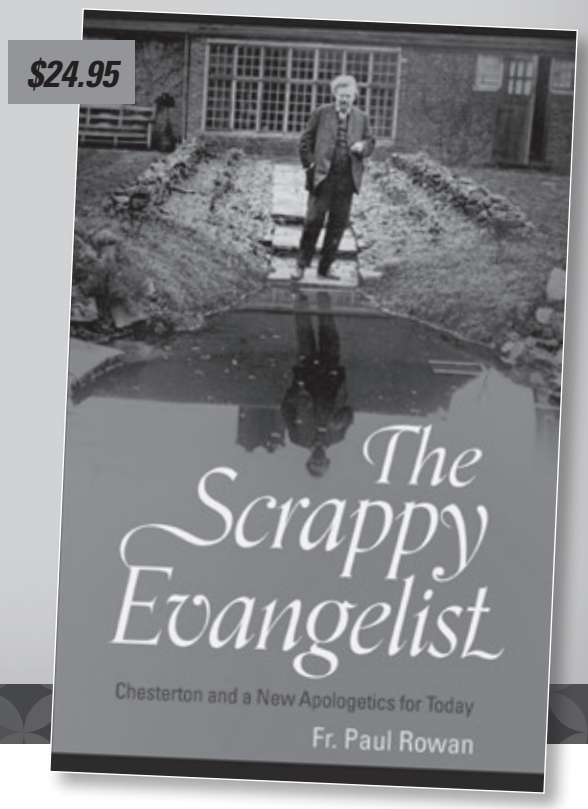
—DALE AHLQUIST, *President of the American Chesterton Society*



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Edward Nutt

By Chris Chan

Mr. Edward Nutt, the industrious editor of The Daily Reformer, sat at his desk, opening letters and marking proofs to the merry tune of a typewriter, worked by a vigorous young lady.

He was a stoutish, fair man, in his shirt-sleeves; his movements were resolute, his mouth firm and his tones final; but his round, rather babyish blue eyes had a bewildered and even wistful look that rather contradicted all this. Nor indeed was the expression altogether misleading. It might truly be said of him, as of many journalists in authority, that his most familiar emotion was one of continuous fear; fear of libel actions, fear of lost advertisements, fear of misprints, fear of the sack.

His life was a series of distracted compromises, between the proprietor of the paper (and of him), who was a senile soap-boiler with three ineradicable mistakes in his mind, and the very able staff he had collected to run the paper; some of whom were brilliant and experienced men and (what was even worse) sincere enthusiasts for the political policy of the paper.

A letter from one of these lay immediately before him; and rapid and resolute as he was, he seemed almost to hesitate before opening it. He took up a strip of proof instead, ran down it with a blue eye, and a blue pencil, altered the word "adultery" to the word "impropriety," and the word "Jew" to the word "Alien," rang a bell and sent it flying upstairs.

—"THE PURPLE WIG"

The first three essays in this series have focused on major characters in Chesterton's work. This article discusses a character who has only one brief appearance in a Father Brown short story, but who makes an indelible impression. Nutt is the embodiment of how custom can become cowardice, as he kowtows to every perceived prejudice amongst his readership, particularly anti-religious bigotry.

His very surname is a jab at the ridiculousness of his editorial policy and business plan. His first name further identifies him as a product of the spirit of his time, showing how the Edwardian era was marred by petty self-righteousness and often undetected hypocrisies. Not only that, but the title of his publication is deliberately ironic. There is no "reforming" spirit in the newspaper. It is quite content to nourish and cultivate existing popular sins. Nutt has no desire to make the world better; where Chesterton spoke of a church that moved the world instead of moving with the world, Nutt is content to adjust his step to the tune that the world calls.

"The Purple Wig" is an unusual Father Brown story because much of it is told in the first person by the journalist Francis Finn, in the form of an in-depth article meant as an exposé of the shady and sordid lives of the aristocracy. The introduction, middle, and end of the story are written in the third person.

Some journalists boast of "afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted."

In contemporary popular culture, journalists are often presented as the upholders of truth-telling and revealing dark secrets to the public. Chesterton expertly demythologizes the professions and skewers the pretensions many journalists have for being the last best hope of journalism and freedom. "The Purple Wig" contains some Chestertonian gems, such as, "I know that journalism largely consists in saying 'Lord Jones Dead' to people who never knew that Lord Jones was alive." Finn amiably puts Nutt in his place, writing that, "you don't believe in anything, not even in journalism." And the party line disbelief in the supernatural that so often dominates the culture is punctured with the observation, "If a miracle happened in your office, you'd have to hush it up."

Over the course of the story, it is revealed that Finn and Father Brown are uncovering a long-buried secret of an aristocratic family. If the true story were to be told, the romantic aura that often envelops the nobility would be swept away. Historically speaking, many members of the aristocracy live off the glorious deeds (or at the very least, the opportunity-seizing) of centuries-old ancestors. As Father Brown observes near the end of the tale, there's nothing very worthy of respect in many aristocrats, and the good father sees it as his duty to break the wall of superstition that gives some nobles and undeserved air of mysteriousness.

This attitude is anathematic to Nutt. Though the editor doesn't believe in curses and family ghosts, he is a wide-eyed believer in the worldly benefits that come from sucking up to the wealthy and powerful. Allying oneself with aristocrats can bring one wealth, honors, and political advantages. In essence, Nutt kills a piece of investigative journalism for the sole reason that it might embarrass a nobleman who exercises influence over his career. This is a clear case of censorship *by* the press.

Some journalists boast of "afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted," a goal that often distracts from simple truth-telling in reporting. Nutt is an editor who believes in kowtowing to the powerful, and who thinks nothing of keeping the public uninformed and afraid as long as his paycheck keeps coming in on time. In recent times, "fake news" has been used to described clearly false statements for propaganda purposes, but as Chesterton illustrates through Nutt, "fake news" also consists of journalists pushing obviously false narratives and refusing to address the secrets that certain people use to gain or maintain their grip on power.

THE FLYING INN

Home Rule at Home

Environmentalism

David Beresford

And Alfred, bowing heavily,
Sat down the fire to stir,
—*THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE*
VERSE 75-76, G. K. CHESTERTON

The food service that runs the coffee shops where I work gave away free coffee to anyone who brought a mug. The idea was to get people to stop using paper cups. The purpose behind this was to save the environment. Paper cups, it seems, are a scourge on the environment. We are not sure why they are a scourge, but they are. Just think about it! Do you want paper cups everywhere?

A cup of coffee is $2, and according to the sign at the counter, this initiative has saved 2000 cups from going into landfill; $20,000 in lost revenues toward a good cause!

The people who work at the counter have had their parking privileges removed. These are the lowest paid people at the office, and parking is about 300$/year—what with cut-backs, rationalization, and market forces, the company can no longer afford to pay for parking for people who work at the food counter. I can see the company's point of view, if you are committed to giving away your main product free of cost just to save the environment, it is hard to find the money to pay the parking fees of your workers.

It takes 33 grams of wood and bark to make a paper cup, or 0.073 pounds. There are about 40 pounds of softwood per cubic foot, and 128 cubic feet of wood in a cord of firewood. A cord of firewood costs $365 cut split and delivered. Working out the math means that it cost $20,000 of lost revenue to save 3 ½ cubic feet of wood, about a wheelbarrow load, or $10.38 in firewood. Or, if you prefer, a tree 5 inches thick.

This mania for saving garbage is given its most zealous expression in the recycling industry. Where we live, the municipality passed a bylaw before Christmas that garbage must be set out in clear plastic bags, and anyone who throws out something that can be recycled will be fined. Recyclable items include tin cans, glass, all cardboard or paper, and a variety of plastics, and all of these must be sorted for pickup in their own bags or else we will be fined. The ostensible reason behind this is to divert material from going to the landfill, which is a delightfully misleading euphemism for sending less garbage to the dump—or else!

There is an easy solution to keeping the landfill free of garbage. A burning barrel.

To make a burning barrel, just get an old 45 gallon steel drum. Put some holes along the bottom edge so the fire can breathe. I use a pick and punch ½ inch holes around the steel drum about 4 inches up from the bottom. There is no need to be fussy about this, a screwdriver and hammer will also work if you do not have a pick. Set your burning barrel about 30 yards from the nearest building on some sand or gravel. It needs a screen or spark arrestor to stop sparks from blowing out. I used ¼ inch hardware cloth, which is metal screen used for animal cages. I wired it to an old steel gate, and set this on the drum when there is a fire going.

There are a few tricks you need to know to use a burning barrel. Never, ever, ever use gasoline. If you are tempted to use gasoline, do not do so. Did I say not to use gasoline? Gasoline evaporates, and from the time it takes to pour it, then look for a match, there is a gas cloud in the air in front of you, and there is a real danger that when you light it you will be in the middle of a burning cloud. Lots of people have died this way, including firemen who should have known better so never use gasoline.

However, diesel fuel, stove oil, vegetable oil, or heating oil are all good fire starters. I put my garbage bag into the barrel, tear open the top and pour in about half a pint of heating oil into the bag. Then I light a piece of paper and toss it in, then put the screen lid on. If you stick to burning two or three garbage bags at a time, you do not need to do much missing. If you are burning wet items like moldy potatoes, or old clothes, then you will need to stir the fire with a shovel. Try not to breath the smoke, especially when you are burning plastic.

It is fun to have a burning barrel, it makes a nice family chore on Saturday mornings, and I am kind of happy that our town council made such a stupid law.

"No Devil Worshipers Please." —G.K. CHESTERTON

Passing the Torch

By Victoria Darkey

A handful of times over the past few years, exchanges like the following have passed through my email box. I share this in hopes that it might encourage you, as you endeavor to pass the torch.

Ms. Darkey,
We are a homeschooling family and my older boys (ages 13 and 11) have been reading Chesterton for a couple of years now and really enjoy it. We absolutely love "The Apostle of Common Sense" and try to watch it each week. They have read many of the Fr. Brown stories and two of Dale Ahlquist's books. My older son has read *St. Thomas Aquinas* and *The Man Who Was Thursday*. They want to start a club with their fellow homeschoolers and we would just like some pointers on where to start. We are trying to make the club a discussion, debate, and apologetics type program…I appreciate any input with this. I didn't think the adult groups would be an appropriate place to begin...
Thank you,
A Parent Educator

Dear Parent Educator,

As you've discovered, before the high school years Father Brown stories, quotes, and some of the books about Chesterton are good places to begin.

A good biography of Chesterton can go a long way to build a foundation for understanding Chesterton, and you might consider the biography called *Wisdom and Innocence* by Joseph Pearce. You mentioned that your teenage son read Chesterton on Aquinas. You might have him read Chesterton's *St. Francis of Assisi*. There is a study guide to accompany the St. Francis biography by Nancy Carpentier Brown, which might work well for a book club format. It is available from the online bookstore at the American Chesterton Society website.

Next, for many teens and some preteens, Chesterton's poetry is a great starting point. Some of his historical poetry may be very applicable to your idea of forming a club of budding Chestertonians. *Lepanto* is a great one to start with. Having the students dig up the historical background is a valuable exercise not only from an historical point of view, but also from a spiritual one. To help with this, I would recommend the audio materials produced by Mr. Christopher Check, as well as many of the articles he's written on the subject that can be found by putting the names 'Christopher Check' and "Lepanto" into an internet search engine. The other poetry by Chesterton that your sons might consider is *The Ballad of the White Horse*. This is an epic action/adventure poem beautifully describing an important page out of the history of English Christendom. Seton Press and Ignatius Press have both published annotated editions, which are suited for introducing readers to the poem. The Seton Press edition includes some nice illustrations and an interesting typeface that makes it very attractive, especially to young people. These are also available in the ACS web store.

Chesterton was a master of the essay, and it would be an over site to discuss Chesterton for young people with out mentioning his essays. The book *In Defense of Sanity* (edited by Dale Ahlquist, published by Ignatius Press) is a compilation of Chesterton's essays that is full of essays that are witty and yet poignant, and can be enjoyed by readers young and old.

By age 14 or 15, many kids can work through *Orthodoxy* on a chapter-by-chapter basis. It helps if they have an instructor who will walk through it with them, perhaps using Socratic dialogue style... taking it slowly, and thoroughly discussing the philosophical and theological issues as they come up.

By later in the high school years, *The Everlasting Man* is a great piece to study. By that time Chesterton's social commentary, his literary criticism, and most of his other works of fiction are also really enjoyable, especially for students who've earlier learned to read him in his more basic works. Both *Orthodoxy* and *The Everlasting Man* are available as audio editions. These can be very helpful for some students. Also, in a club or co-op setting, selected key passages could be listened to by the group, and then discussed or written about.

Lastly, *Gilbert!* magazine may provide some inspiration for a Chesterton club for teens. *Gilbert!* is published bi-monthly and a subscription is included with the purchase of a membership to the American Chesterton Society. Club members or their families could subscribe and use some of the club time to talk about the articles, many of which are written by Chesterton himself and not currently published anywhere else.

Before I close, I'd like to say that there is no real substitute for parental involvement and enthusiasm. Chesterton himself once wrote, "Education is only truth in a state of transmission; and how can we pass on truth if it has never come into our hand?" If you yourself have read and enjoyed Chesterton, you can best know how to filter what of his writing will be effective in developing a love and appreciation for Chesterton in your kids and their friends. If you can inspire a Chestertonian interest in the parents of the kids you are reaching out to, it will also really help. Perhaps connecting with a local Chesterton Society would be a good way to accomplish this.

Please let me know how things work out for you and your kids.

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

Name the Date

By David Fagerberg

Here's an essay on a topic about which I shan't ever have to worry. Dating. After 40 years of marriage, even should I be widowed (or for a man, would that be widowered?) I expect that (as Chesterton quotes Swinburne saying) "not twice on earth do the gods do this," and I would not try to repeat perfection. But dedicated as I am to lurking in modernism's bushes to observe technology advancing us toward greater and greater happiness, as it promises to do, I sometimes notice certain trends and report on them as a service to you readers. A recent example follows.

There is a new concern for the dating crowd, a worrisome, troublesome development causing anxiety. It is not where to find a spouse; it is not how to win the heart of your beloved; it is not even where to find a date. It is encapsulated in this dramatic, frightening, but true account: "One warm summer night, [Name] was sitting along the Chicago River with a man she had been dating for more than three months. As they talked about the future, sipping blue Tiki drinks, he popped the question: 'What's your last name?'"

Why this dreadful apprehension about revealing one's last name? Because "many millennials say asking directly for a last name on a first date feels awkward, and signals too obviously they intend to scour the internet for biographical information." This is an unacceptable level of intimacy. "The less I know, the better," says one. "Once you have the last name, that unlocks this whole new universe of information," another observes. A third admits "she has been on more than 300 first dates since 2010, but has only learned the last names for approximately 20 of them."

Lest you breathe too heavy a sigh of relief, know that this article adds the ominous fact that even with the first name alone, an amateur sleuth can figure out last names by linking with the person's place of work, or alma mater. Were he online today, we could try "Gilbert, Slade Art School" or "Gil, Illustrated London News." Another option is to casually ask for your date's "social media handle" and jot it down when she reveals "DaddyzPrincess29." Finally, if one has to resort to old-fashioned spy techniques, take a peek at an Uber account, or the credit card used to pay for the meal.

Some revelations should be sipped slowly.

As usual, our friend Chesterton stands well in advance of the times. He admits to Frances in a letter from 1898, while they were still only engaged, that he has a pseudonym prepared. At Unwin's Publishers he was editing illustrations for a History of China, and though he admits that all his knowledge comes from reading the book he is editing, he can now "airily talk of La-o-tsee and Wu-sank-Wei, criticize Chung-tang and Fu-Tche, compare Tchieu Lung with his great successor, whose name I have forgotten…. Before I have done I hope people will be looking behind for my pig-tail. The name I shall adopt will be Tches-Ter-Ton."

But such caution and subterfuge is not his ordinary attitude toward Frances and their eventual engagement. He tended to let too much out of the bag in his letters. To friend Mildred Wain he wrote, "On rising this morning, I carefully washed my boots in hot water and blacked my face. Then assuming my coat with graceful ease and with the tails in front, I descended to breakfast, where I gaily poured the coffee on the sardines and put my hat on the fire to boil. These activities will give you some idea of my frame of mind. My family, observing me leave the house by way of the chimney, and take the fender with me under one arm, thought I must have something on my mind. So I had. My friend, I am engaged."

To his mother, he admitted he went to Bedford Park every Sunday for more than the scenery. It was rather "spent in enjoying a very intimate, but quite breezy and Platonic friendship with Frances Blogg [Ha! Chesterton was the original *Blogger*], reading, talking and enjoying life together, having great sympathies on all subjects; and … making the thrilling, but painfully responsible discovery that Platonism, on my side, had not the field by any means to itself."

He wrote numerous letters to Frances, herself, perhaps addressing them to DaddyzPrincess29. And maybe his famous "G.K.C." closure already expresses his unwillingness to reveal in public his last name. Because, you know, he was so shy. So tentative. So unwilling to reveal his opinion on matters.

Here is the one plus I think G., or Gil, or G.K. would give to this practice. The online crowd is hiding their opinions on politics and religion, keeping secret their past employment record, where they have lived, their joys and sorrows and dreams, because these are all the things that make up the wild adventure of getting to know another person, and such discoveries should be savored. Some revelations should be sipped slowly: the revelation of God to mankind, and the revelation of one man to one woman. He and Frances spent their time reading, talking, having great sympathies on all subjects. Perhaps the hesitant daters are looking to restore some mystery to romance. If so, they should come to a master like Mr. Tches-Ter-Ton for help.

CHESTERTON UNIVERSITY

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

A Primer in Paradox

Black and White, 1903-1904

As a rising young journalist, looking to find reasons to submit anything anywhere, G.K. Chesterton was reading a copy of a weekly review, when he was struck by the title of the publication: *Black and White*. He wondered vaguely what would happen if he "could succeed in proving that black was white."

> I should, I suppose, be hurled from the office, have a brief career of glory, and die by the hand of a subscriber. But this question has often been brought before me, because I have been accused, by seven different persons of wishing to prove that black is white—a thing I have never desired, but which I now feel inclined to attempt. At any rate, a few remarks on the nature of paradox (as it is called), on the general philosophical theory that black is white, I may be permitted to make.

The simplest and commonest of all the causes which lead to the charge of "mere paradox" being slung about as it is, is one fundamental assumption. Everybody takes it for granted that universal and ordinary arrangements, historic institutions, daily habits are reasonable. They are good, they are sensible, they are holy and splendid often enough, but they are not reasonable. They are themselves paradoxes; paradox is built into the very foundations of human affairs.

Then began a series of articles under the general heading "That Black is White." The titles of the essays were:

That Black Is, in a General Sense, White

That Respectable People Are More Interesting Than Bohemians

That Bigoted People Have No Beliefs

That the Simple Life Is an Artificial Nuisance

That Humour Is an Overrated Quality

That series was followed by another series under the heading,"The Creed of a Credulous Person" in which he gives an account "of the funny things I believe" such as fairies, Santa Claus, talking animals, and the idea "that all things called inanimate are really animate." He argues that it is better to be credulous than to be a skeptic, because to refuse to be "taken in" is to refuse to see the inside of anything. The skeptic "would rather be outside everything than inside Heaven."

> It is held that to believe in fairies, griffins, vampires and such things has a disquieting effect. Nothing could be more mistaken. It is the people who believe in these things who are sane and ordinary and eat large breakfasts and sleep like logs. Who are the people who believe in the fairies? Rustics, six feet high, as calm as cows; mountaineers, who hang to precipices laughing; hunters, who slay gigantic beasts; kings and warriors, whose hands and heads are steady in the topsy-turvydom of battle; and above all, children. Children, who of most people have most power of throwing off morbidity and of laughing through tears. Rustics, fighting men and babies do not go mad; they are kept from that by their belief in the supernatural. Professors go mad, ingenious inquirers go mad, philosophers go mad, psychologists go mad, young and earnest suburban agnostics go mad and take laudanum.

It is likely that these essays established the young Chesterton's reputation as a purveyor of paradox. It was thought that he was being paradoxical merely for effect. No one, surely, could actually believe that Chesterton actually believed the things he was saying.

But there is a point to his paradoxes. He claims he is "pointing out an element of mere blunder and blank mistake in many of the current assertions," that he is contradicting people and raising difficulties to show that many of our accepted ideas are nonsense.

One of them, to take a random example, is the perpetual modern nonsense whether we are egoists or altruists; the only answer to which question is to fell the inquirer to the earth. It is assumed, in the face of patent common-sense, that there is some kind of interior and natural oppositio n between enjoying yourself and enjoying other people. The pert and ethical modern altruist says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour rather than thyself." Of course, it is perfectly obvious that upon any one particular occasion a man might be distracted as to whether he should please himself or please his fellow-creatures, just as he might be distracted about whether he should be in time for the first act of an opera, or see out the tail-end of a sunset. But this is a merely accidental opposition, it is not an integral one; there is no intrinsic inconsistency between happiness for others and for oneself any more than there is between operas and sunsets.

We see in these essays, a foreshadowing of the arguments that will appear four years later in *Orthodoxy*: that poetry and imagination are sane, and that isolated logic can be maddening. The main theme? "The age needs, first and foremost, to be startled; to be taught the nature of wonder."

There was a final series of essays in *Black and White*, exploring the decline of the amateur, from "The Decline of the Amateur Dancer" to that of the amateur actor, critic, educator, politician, and soldier. These presage the great dictum which would appear in 1910 in *What's Wrong with the World*: "A thing worth doing is worth doing badly."

The Man Who

The man who will defend his field and defy his Government is just the sort of man who will defend his Government and defy the world. (*New Witness*, Aug. 16, 1917)

The man who is ten years behind his time is always ten years nearer to the return of that time. (*Illustrated London News*, Dec. 16, 1905)

The man who says that ideas are mere material results has in that very sentence destroyed all ideas, including that one. (*New Witness*, Dec. 9, 1921)

It is almost always a man who is not a Christian who reproaches the crusader with not being a Christian. (*New Witness*, Mar. 17, 1922)

The heretic (who is also the fanatic) is not a man who loves truth too much; no man can love truth too much. The heretic is a man who loves his truth more than truth itself. He prefers the half-truth that he has found to the whole truth which humanity has found. (*T.P.'s Weekly*, Christmas Number, 1907)

A man who professes a creed confesses a partiality for the creed; when he loves it he is necessarily partial. But when he hates it he generally professes to be impartial. He pretends that the thing he hates is obstructing his way to other things; such as education or hygiene or science or social reform. (*New Witness*, June 30, 1922)

An absent-minded man is a good-natured man. It means a man who, if he happens to see you, will apologize. (*The Man Who Was Thursday*)

A man who can only read a daily paper is ill-educated; but this is not because the affairs in the daily paper are unworthy of the intellect. They are not. It is because the affairs in the daily paper are for him a tangle of tails with no heads to them. It is like reading only the last chapters of a hundred complicated serials. The newspaper reader knows too little about the *polis* [Greek: city] and too much about the police. And the only sense in which popular science or history can be dangerous is not in the sense that the information is partial or is small in quantity; but in the sense that it is received out of proportion and in the wrong order. (*New Witness*, Nov. 4, 1915)

In practice a conservative commonly means a man who cannot remember anything before yesterday, and a progressive means a man who cannot imagine anything beyond to-morrow. Both suffer from the unnatural narrowness of supposing that all generations led up to one generation; but for one it is the last generation and for the other the next generation. (*New Witness*, May 14, 1920)

The man who is happy is naturally and necessarily superior to the man who is weary. ("A Defence of Bores," *Lunacy and Letters*)

BOOK REVIEW

Reading Both the Book and What the Book is About.

Seeing Things as They Are: G.K. Chesterton and the Drama of Meaning
By Duncan Reyburn
Cascade Books, 2016
298 pages

Reviewed by Dale Ahlquist

In *The Victorian Age in Literature*, Chesterton says, "There is something mediaeval, and therefore manful, about writing a book about everything in the world."

In that case, Duncan Reyburn has written a book that is medieval and manful. Ironically, the book purports to be only about G.K. Chesterton, but since Chesterton wrote about everything, Mr. Reyburn has done the same.

This is a book about everything. Not just because it is about G.K. Chesterton, which would be enough to make it about everything, but because it is about how Chesterton approaches and expounds on meaning, which necessarily includes everything. It may be one of the most scholarly books on Chesterton to date, drawing on more material than any other treatment, and yet it is surprisingly compact. The author has resisted narrowing Chesterton, as so many other scholars tend to do.

Chesterton scholarship has finally reached the point where there have been enough works written about Chesterton so that scholars are referring to each other. Mr. Reyburn gives the scholars their due, but the strength of this book is that he cites what Chesterton actually says rather than what others have said he said.

But he gives the scholars all that they could bargain for by approaching Chesterton in the light of philosophical hermeneutics, "which is the intellectual discipline that seeks to interrogate and appreciate the conditions and coordinates of interpretive understanding." As a formal discipline, hermeneutics is relatively new, and one that Chesterton was not familiar with as such, but it is a rich ground with which to consider GKC, because he always found meaning in everything, whether in a text, a historical event, a contemporary trend, or in a stone or a cloud. He was always trying to explain not only the mysterious, but the much more difficult thing to explain: the obvious. On the one hand, Mr. Reyburn has to wrestle with the paradox of getting at reality in a writer whose central theme is mystery. On the other, there is the conundrum of grappling with a text that is interpreting the real world creatively, using the Creator as the reference point. We have a direct relationship with the Truth, but also an artistic one, which enhances the plain one. Chesterton is always trying to make things clear. He's also trying to make them beautiful, or rather, trying to get us to see their beauty. To see things through the Creator's eyes is truly "to see things as they are."

Mr. Reyburn also has to face the challenge of not getting lost writing about a writer who writes about writing. Chesterton says that, as one who has been "doomed both to read and write" he has been "denied all the joys of the division of labour."

Mr. Reyburn wisely (I say "wisely" because I would do it the same way) chooses to approach Chesterton's writings as a whole, rather than trying to trace the development of his thought. The more I read and re-read Chesterton the more that I marvel at the consistency of his ideas across the whole of his career. His conversion does not noticeably change his written narrative. Mr. Reyburn recognizes the same thing. Thus when surrounding an idea, he draws on texts from Chesterton's entire career. The topics he has Chesterton treat are literary criticism, patriotism, cosmology, epistemology, and ontology.

Again, those last two are not terms that we catch Chesterton using, but he sums them up by saying "meaning must have someone to mean it" and "seeing truth must mean the appreciation of being by some mind capable of appreciating it." Chesterton can state things simply, but Mr. Reyburn shows how he can also reinforce simple ideas with a bulwark of profound thought and rich language.

Conclusion: reality is dramatic. Here is a ticket to the show.

> "We all feel the riddle of the earth without anyone to point it out. The mystery of life is the plainest part of it. The clouds and curtains of darkness, the confounding vapours, these are the daily weather of this world. Whatever else we have grown accustomed to, we have grown accustomed to the unaccountable. Every stone or flower is a hieroglyphic of which we have lost the key; with every step of our lives we enter into the middle of some story which we are certain to misunderstand."
>
> —GKC, *William Blake* (1910)

Thursday's Matrix

Thursday
By Jake Kerr
Dallas: Shirtsleeve Press, 2017
Paperback, 267 pages; $14.99
(also available on Kindle)

Reviewed by David Deavel

What should we make of the now ubiquitous "reboot"? Originally meaning to restart a computer's operating system, the term now also means "to produce a distinctly new version of (an established media franchise, as a film, TV show, video game, or comic book)" (Dictionary.com). It should also include redone stories and novels. Reboots are different from adaptations to a different art form. In the latter, something altogether new is made. "To talk of seeing 'Pygmalion' on the cinema," Chesterton wrote, "is like talking of having heard the Venus of Milo on the trombone, or having bought a very expensive etching of an essay." In the reboot, we do the same story in the same form.

My wife's response to the reboot, as well as to "fan fiction" that tells different stories about beloved characters, is fairly direct: "Get your own story! Get your own characters!" Not merely from desire for marital comity do I concede she has a point. It might be one thing to find an unsuccessful book or story and rewrite it better. We know that Shakespeare did this to many middling plays. But why reboot a story already beloved for what it is? Isn't it hubris to write *War and Peace*…by Dave Deavel? And doesn't the author run the risk of simply creating a literary mini-me that is good only for a laugh? Many of the reboots do this by simply mashing genres. Exhibit A: *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*.

Yet it's understandable that great stories attract this treatment. Humans desire to imitate what they love. They see fictional worlds and want to enter them and even make them their own. And it's not impossible that a given author might indeed make a beloved story fresh by telling it from a different perspective or in a different setting than that in the original work. Truly great stories are often mythic—the truths they carry are greater even than the writing they're conveyed in.

Jake Kerr, because of love of the story, has dared a reboot—or as the cover has it, "a reimagining"—of *The Man Who Was Thursday*. A former music industry journalist who had studied with the late Ursula Le Guin at Kenyon College, he turned to science fiction and fantasy a number of years ago with a bit of success. His story "The Old Equations" was nominated for the Nebula Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America and he has been shortlisted for several other awards. And, oh, by the way, he's a self-described atheist.

That fact probably accounts for the book's afterword by a Christian writer named Matt Mikalatos attesting to a kind of Chesterton-Wells friendship with Kerr and suggesting that Kerr is on to the questions of God, good, evil, and appearance explored in Chesterton's *Thursday*. I read the afterword first, wondering what difference Kerr's unbelief might make to the telling. Not much until the ending.

Kerr's *Thursday* takes place in the now polluted and devastated Manhattan of the 2100s. Society divides between the haves, who mostly live indoors, computer jacks inserted into their heads so that they live in an online world, and the have-nots who make their way out in the real world and have to put up with the polluted climate. Lucian Gregory here is an online advocate of destruction of "Savannah," the entire internet system. Gabrielle Simm, not Gabriel Syme, a young black woman is a "mage" or high-ranking denizen of the online world who encounters (virtually) Lucian Gregory, an activist who preaches destruction of the internet. Just like the original, an encounter with Gabby leads him to invite her (this time "IRL"—In Real Life, pronounced "earl") to a café that turns out to be the sci-fi lair of "Anonymous," the twenty-second century version of the Anarchist Council, and much like the rebels of the movie "The Matrix."

The story largely follows the original, though adapted for its setting in an online world. It's not clear that Kerr quite made a decision about how the characters would speak, because the diction tends to bounce back and forth between pretty straightforward renderings of the original dialogue and the (often blue) clipped language of American gamers. (And one can see that he adapted Chesterton's dialogue from at least two uses of "Anarchist" for "Anonymous" that slipped in.) Though not a gamer, I found the change of setting somewhat clever insofar as the magical realist elements of the original story are perhaps more easy to digest as they happen in a virtual world. The questions of what is real and what is appearance are in certain ways enhanced by the online component; late in the story all the characters doubt whether their experiences are virtual or IRL—and Gabby doesn't know at the end whether any of them were either.

Was the reboot worth it? It won't replace Chesterton's original, though Kerr's fast-paced retelling and clever setting change make it a cracking good story that will, I hope, lead readers to the original. There they'll see Chesterton's more certainly hopeful ending. While Gabriel Syme was seized with a sense of "impossible good news," Gabby Simm now lives more IRL than virtually but without visible tokens of romance, human or divine. Perhaps that's because the atheist Kerr's Sunday, unlike Chesterton's, represents Nature (including the Web), but makes no Gospel hints of what or whom he is the mask.

NEWS WITH VIEWS

Compiled by Mark Pilon

"When the real revolution happens, it won't be mentioned in the newspapers."

Goo Goo Googly Eyes

MOUNTAIN VIEW, California—In the interest of selling an infinite amount of advertising, tech giant Google has applied for many patents to cover possible future opportunities. A number of these patents are for systems monitoring life in the home. These include cameras that gather information about personal tastes, as reflected in objects found in the home, in order to properly tailor advertising appeals. Also included are child monitoring systems that would issue verbal warnings to misbehaving children, and family monitors that would have Google advising parents on "areas of improvement."

GKC: "(I)t is only inside the home that there is really a place for individuality and liberty."

Google: We'll see about that.

Madame President?

MONTREAL, Quebec—The Federation des femmes du Quebec has a new president, and some of the femmes are not exactly excited. The Federation is Quebec's largest women's rights organization. New president "Gabrielle" Bouchard is a "trans woman," more specifically, a "trans advocate and public educator" with Concordia University's Center for Gender Advocacy, who said "I think that I have an advantage because I've seen both sides. I've experienced marginalization, even though people say I didn't." One feminist who isn't buying that is Diane Guilbault, a former member of the Fédération who left to start another women's group. Guilbaut stated that "the experience of a woman who is born a woman is completely different from the experience of a man who decides one day to present himself as a woman."

We think Guilbault has a point. We also think this is going to get very confusing.

Saudi Silver Screen

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia—Our friends from the Kingdom are back in the news. Plans have been announced to allow cinemas to open in Saudi Arabia in 2018. This announcement follows those announcing the lifting of other restrictions, such as those against women driving or attending sporting events. As for the cinemas, the first might be open by the time you read this. This move has been criticized by Islamic clerics as something that could "open the doors to evil."

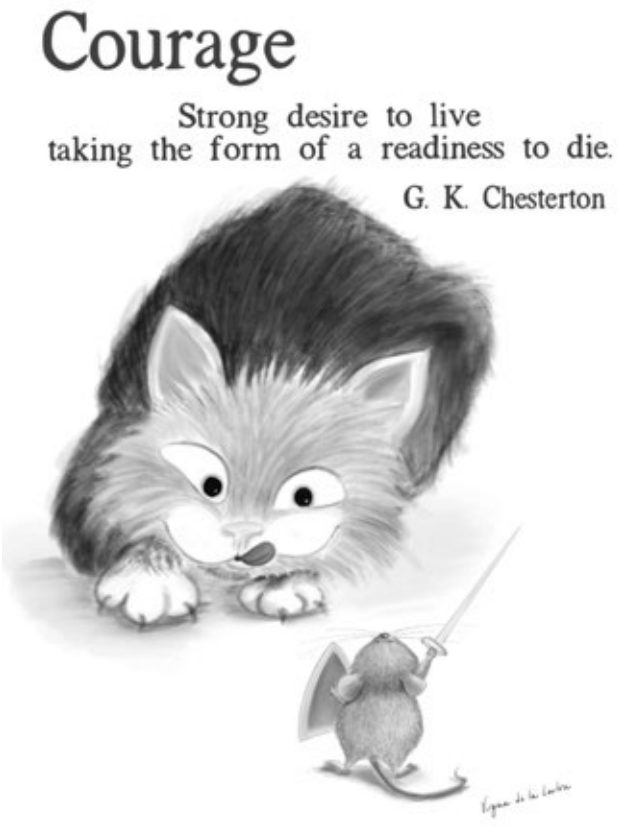
Soon to be followed by gramophones, and birth control!

Dislike?

STANFORD, California—Former Facebook executive, Chamath Palihapitiya, told an audience at the Stanford Graduate School of Business that he feels "tremendous guilt" about his role in growing the company. "The short-term, dopamine-driven feedback loops we've created are destroying how society works," he said. Citing an example of hoax messaging in India that led to the lynching of seven people, he said, "(I)magine taking that to the extreme, where bad actors can now manipulate large swathes of people to do anything you want. It's just a really, really bad state of affairs."

Palihapitiya's admission follows similar comments from Sean Parker, an early investor in Facebook, who said, "God only knows what it's doing to our children's brains."

Indeed.



THE SIGNATURE OF MAN

Architecture in Search of Style

by G.K. Chesterton

I have before me two or three very interesting books dealing with architecture. The first impression made by all these books is that architecture is at this moment in a very queer condition—much queerer than at any other period. We all know this in a away, about what may be called p-ractical architecture, especially domestic architecture. Now in the past there have been broadly two main social systems—slavery and a rough peasant equality. Most men's houses or huts or what-not have either been made by themselves because they had the timber or the clay, or they have been made by their masters for them. The Eskimo made his own house of snow and the Irish peasant generally made his own cabin of mud or peat, which was the real root of his sense of the injustice of landlordism. On the other hand Uncle Tom's cabin was presumably built for Uncle Tom, and most English cottages were built by squires and testified to their traditionalism, their carelessness and their natural instinct for the picturesque. But with the growth of modern towns and the reign of specialists a very strange situation has arisen. For most people the houses exist before the householders. Those rows of new villas in the suburbs are built for anybody, that is for nobody. William Morris, thinking of rabbit-hutches, called them man-hutches, but they really wait more like man-traps. They wait for the man who shall come or not as the case may be. However, in the case of the wealthy, the householder exists before the house. The rich man has to kick his heels in hotels and horrid places while an architect is building his house. Now the speculative builders do not know what people would really like, so they build all the houses exactly the same in a style that nobody could like very much, so as to be fair all round. In the second case the millionaire can and does tell the architect what sort of house he would like. The architect listens sympathetically and then goes away and designs something totally different, which the millionaire is obliged to accept because he is afraid of people suggesting that he knows nothing about art, which is indeed the case. In both these cases, you will note, a specialist does exactly what he likes. There is nothing to show that suburban people really like suburban villas. Indeed, I strongly suspect that most of the satire against suburban villas is written in suburban villas. There is nothing to show that Mr. Mugg, who made his money in pork, likes the aerial perspective of a new architectural style of steel and glass, and he, poor devil, is a more miserable captive than the other, for he cannot write in the papers abusing the ugliness of his own house, and the suburban clerk can.

Now all this is to say what most of these books largely agree in saying—that there is not any modern style that is popular in the sense that most people like to look at it, let alone that most people would naturally try to build it. A very sensible and well balanced little book called *How to Look at Buildings*, by Darcy Braddell, makes this point all the more pointedly because it is not in any sense a controversial book. It does not profess to go so deep, for example, as another and larger volume called *Purpose and Admiration*, by J. E. Barton, of which I shall speak in a moment. But the smaller handbook makes this point very clear, for example, by a comparison with the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century

was ruled throughout by the classical style and many hold rightly that this classicism was narrow and cold, but even its narrowness was broad in the sense that it was as broad as the whole people. As Mr. Braddell writes, 'In the eighteenth century all were agreed that as far as they were concerned classical architecture was vastly superior to what seemed to them the rude barbarities of Tudor and Jacobean architecture'. Today we have none of that. Today, that is, we have things that a few people admire and we have things that a lot of people put up with, but we have not anything that can be called the taste of the age, which in the eighteenth century would make a banker and a bankrupt and a crossing-sweeper and even a poor wretched artist or architect agree that the old Bank of England was a suitable and an elegant erection. In other times we feel that the whole community produced its art. We say instinctively that the Egyptians built the Pyramids or the Greeks built the Parthenon or the mediaeval Christians built Lincoln or Chartres, but we cannot exactly say that the modern English built the monument to Rima, or even the new shops with their sham Egyptian facades. When the French king sacrificed the old Gothic Louvre to make a superb palace in the Medici manner, most people in the street did think the palace was superb even though it was perhaps a little vulgar, like the Medici. Now I ask anybody to stand outside a very modern building in London and stop each passerby and ask him whether he really does think ferro-concrete is more superb than stone. Hence most of these books end in prophecy, the modern substitute for history. They do not describe the modern style and compare it with any ancient style. They only hope that there will one day be a modern style to describe. Many of them—most of them indeed—are conspicuously fair to every period of the past, but when we come to the present we find there is no present. There is nothing but our old friend the future. Mr. Braddell in *How to Look at Buildings* says, 'when the day dawns that does see an informed and enthusiastic public opinion, then we shall see fine architecture, and not in solitary instances as we do now, but in large quantities as Italy, Rome and Greece once saw it'. Mr. Barton in *Purpose and Admiration* writes, 'The only hope for our civilisation is a hope that something in the way of an imaginative, contagious fraternity may once more possess the spirit of man'. These men are not reactionaries. They defend modern art, they defend modern machinery, but they do not defend modern architecture because it is not there. They agree that modern art must suit modern civilisation, but it really seems either that there is no modern art or that there is no modern civilisation. How very modern they are can be seen in Mr. Braddell's curious praise of something called the Einstein tower, 'a building whose shape', he says, 'is as strange to our eyes as the great German physicist's ideas are to our minds'. I would enter a mild protest against the idea that the symbol should be ugly because the idea is unintelligible. If we understand Einstein's ideas by all means let us express them in architecture. If we believe them true let us assert their truth, but I object to erecting a weird and extravagant building merely to express my own inability to read Chinese.

From *The Listener,* January 18, 1933

Chesterton for Today

✦ When good citizens have at last settled down peacefully under a law, it generally means that they have found a good way of evading it. (*Illustrated London News*, May 17, 1913)

✦ If you attempt an actual argument with a modern paper of opposite politics, you will find that no medium is admitted between violence and evasion. You will have no answer except slanging or silence. ("The New Hypocrite," *What's Wrong with the World*)

✦ The same age which tends to economic slavery tends to social anarchy; and especially to sexual anarchy. So long as men can be driven in droves like sheep, they can be as promiscuous as sheep. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, Mar. 9, 1929)

✦ The sort of liberty which the modern world emphatically has not got is the real liberty of the mind. It is no longer a question of liberty from kings and captains and inquisitors. It is a question of liberty from catchwords and headlines and hypnotic repetitions and all the plutocratic platitudes imposed on us by advertisement and journalism. ("On Courage and Independence," *The Thing*)

✦ Practical politics are necessary, but they are in a sense narrow; and by themselves they do tend to split the world up into small sects. Only dogma is sufficiently universal to include us all. (*G.K.'s Weekly*, Oct. 12, 1929)

✦ A man can impose education without having it himself. But a man cannot hand on tradition without having it himself. (Introduction to *The Change: Essays on the Land*)

✦ What has happened today is that a new generation is in revolt against disorder. It has found that disorder is far more oppressive than order. (*Listener*, Dec. 13, 1933)

✦ I support the State when it interferes with interference. (*Illustrated London News*, Nov. 15, 1924)

✦ I never saw the picture of a prizewinner in any Beauty Competition without thinking that I knew several better-looking women living in my own street. ("About Blondes," *As I Was Saying*)

✦ In a world where everything is ridiculous, nothing can be ridiculed. You cannot unmask a mask. (*Illustrated London News*, July 10, 1927)

The Great Disease

By G.K. Chesterton

There is a malady in the modern intellect that must be stopped. Most of us, I suppose, have felt its presence at some time or other. It is this: that the same mental activity which is busy tearing down abuses is at the same time busy in tearing down those human principles by which alone it is possible to tear down abuses. The modern activity in politics is perpetually being weakened by the modern activity in philosophy. No sooner has a man's conscience told him to doubt a certain institution than the man's modern intelligence immediately tells him to doubt his conscience. Thus most modern revolution is in secret revolt against itself.

The examples of the thing I mean are numberless, and any choice of them must be at random. What is the good of a revolutionist telling us in a book about Macedonia that the virginity of women is insulted when the same revolutionist may tell us in a book about sex that the virginity of women is nonsense? What is the use of a humanitarian telling us that it is wicked to break the boundary of Boer nationality when the same humanitarian will tell us that all boundaries of nationality are limiting and superstitious? What is the good of a Russian pessimist writing one book to protest against a peasant being killed, and then writing another book to prove that by eternal philosophical principles he oughtto have killed himself? What is the use of a skepticism that first attacks men for violating morality, and then attacks the same morality for crushing the same men? This perpetual contradiction and weakness accounts for the comparative or the complete failure of the revolutionary spirit throughout modern Europe. One can understand a revolution for democracy; one can understand a revolution against democracy; but one cannot understand the inquiring modern young man who tries to combine the two. You can have revolution on behalf of democracy or aristocracy; on behalf of God or the devil; on behalf of Mumbo jumbo and Abracadabra. But you cannot have revolution on behalf of revolution. You cannot have revolution on behalf of scepticism; the thing is a contradiction in terms.

And the modern malady is that we are perpetually trying to get a revolution without any of those first principles, without any of those dogmas upon which a revolution rests.

Here is the peculiar modern evil. It is that the restless doubt of our day first doubts something and sends a crusade against it, and then doubts the crusade; first doubts whether something is consistent with justice, and then doubts whether anything should be or can be. The modern man has often both doubts simultaneously. Even at the moment when he is saying that education ought

to be entirely free from dogma, he is in his heart wondering whether it would not be a good thing if the nation could be entirely free from education. Even while he is declaring that women ought to have votes, he is really doubting whether men ought to have them.

This is not a weakness: it is a definite and frightful disease. Our country is dying of it. That feebleness which we can none of us help feeling in a thousand aspects of modern life in the proceedings of Parliament, in the babble of society, in the utterances of journalism and the much more wicked and

corrupt silences of journalism, in the compromises of modern religion, which are at once cowardly and intolerant all this feebleness really springs from the

common psychological root. Men have doubted too much. Men have doubted too much ever again to be rebels. Men have doubted too much ever again to be even efficient doubters.

Such, at least, is the sombre thought that presents itself for a moment to the mind; seriously, I do not doubt that they will be in some way made better, but it will be no quiet or evolutionary process. They will be tortured and transfigured by fire. At present their position and the position of our country is indeed desperate.

What is the use of our complaining that our Parliamentary leaders do not make a success of Parliament; that our churchmen do not make a success of the church; that even our revolutionists do not make a success of revolution? We have encouraged our Parliamentarians to doubt everything, including Parliament. We have encouraged our churchmen to doubt everything, including the church.

We have encouraged our revolutionists to talk about evolution. We have encouraged even our worldlings to doubt even the world.

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? What sort of fight can a modern revolutionist make against that misshapen and half-witted sin which China has recently poured into South Africa when half an hour before he has been excusing the same sin in the character of some modern aesthete? What sort of fight can a modern sceptic make against the colonists who treat black men as beasts, when he has been proving half an hour before at a scientific discussion that beasts are much the same as black men? Why should he be troubled when Dr. Clifford tells him that grown-up people have no right to teach children ecclesiasticism? Mr. Bernard Shaw will tell him (if it comes to that) that grown-up people have no right to teach children anything at all.

What amount of political energy, what sort of political accomplishment, what amount of valour and self-sacrifice and triumph, in a word, what amount of martyrdom, can we expect from people whose brains have been perpetually bewildered in this way? About as much as we get.

In politics the danger is very definite indeed. If we do not take great care, we shall really fall headlong into social evolution. Social evolution means invariably the victory of the man who can afford to wait; the victory of the man who can afford to wait means invariably the victory of the man with money.

When once people begin to talk about black being not so very black, and white not so very white we can be perfectly certain that we shall be uncertain of everything. The moment men begin to say, "Where do you draw the line?" then there is nothing before us but decay or revolution.

From *Daily News,* November 17, 1906

CHESTERTON'S MAIL BAG

Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail

A New Batch of Letters Asking "What's the Difference?"

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

What's the difference between immorality and indecency?

Signed,
Neither

Dear Neither,

There is a sharp and practical severance between pure immorality and practical indecency. It is not a difference in the end; immorality ends in a lower and more obscure crypt of Tartarus than impropriety; it is a difference in the nature of the process. Immorality attacks through the mind, and must be repelled by the mind; indecency is an abrupt attack upon the instincts. If you hit a man on the nose he may or may not hit back, according to whether he is a Christian or a Tolstoian. But if you hit a man immediately under the knee he must kick, because he is an animal, and a nervous automaton. In the same way a sophistry may affect the mind, but an obscenity must affect the mind; it is a violence. It may do one of two things equally direct and instinctive; it may shock purity or it may inflame impurity. But in both cases the process is brutal and irrational. A picture or a sentence which shocks sensibility or which sharpens sensuality does not offer itself for discussion. It is no more open to argument than a squeaking slate pencil is open to argument, or the choking smell of ether is open to argument. The human victim is drugged—or he is sick.

A man reading about a burglary is not any more likely to commit a burglary. A man who has seen a pocket picked is not in the least likely to become a pickpocket. But there is one evil which by its hold on the imagination (the creative and reproductive part of man) can reproduce itself even by report. We have a right to protect ourselves and especially our top-heavy and groping children against startling and uncivilised appeals to this instinct. Heretics have a legal claim to persuade human souls to err and sin like human souls; they have no business to make them jump like monkeys on a stick. I have no more right to give an unwilling citizen a sexual shock than to give him an electric shock. I have no more right to come behind him and inflame his passions than to come behind him and inflame his coattails. I am free to pervert his mind and ruin his soul. I must not have this savage short cut to his instincts.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Daily News*, Feb. 19, 1910)

✦ ✦ ✦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

What's the difference between happiness and pleasure?

Signed,
Both

Dear Both,

Happiness is an end, and pleasure can only be a means.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Daily News,* April 27, 1912)

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

What is the difference between a chronicler and a historian?

Signed,
Serious

Dear Serious,

A chronicler sometimes told fables; whereas the historian never tells fables, but only falsehoods.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Feb. 14, 1931)

✦ ✦ ✦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

The difference between ancient vandalism and modern vandalism?

Signed,
Planner

Dear Planner,

Vandalism is named after the Vandals, the barbarians who wrecked the classic temples and towns. But the barbarians did not wreck temples because they liked temples; nor did they ruin towns because they wanted to live in towns. But our modern Vandals do ruin the country because they want to live in the country. Our townsmen do carry the town with them everywhere, not because they like the town but because they dislike the town. The world is covered with urban ugliness, not by the people who are pursuing it but, on the contrary, by the people who are supposed to be fleeing it.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*New York American*, June 4, 1932)

✦ ✦ ✦

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

What's the difference between a dead body and a dead soul?

Signed,
Mortician

Dear Mortician,

Dead bodies can be comic; it is only dead souls that can be tragic.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
("Barnaby Rudge," *Appreciations*)

LETTER TO AMERICA

G.K. Chesterton in the New York American

Morticians and Moralists

by G.K. Chesterton

There is one little rule or precaution whereby critics might avoid being criticized; whereby they might be less frequently assailed, stabbed, shot or generally destroyed, than they deserve in the ordinary course of things. And that is this: that when they criticize or satirize something they are not used to, they should always at the same time criticize the alternative that they *are* used to. So often they take the thing to which they are accustomed for granted; and never throw out a philosophical question about why *that* exists.

The Lowlander studying the Highlander, for instance, ought to say: "These wild Highlanders wear petticoats instead of pantaloons; let us therefore plunge into profound reflection upon the mystery of pantaloons."

The American ought to say: "This mysterious and inscrutable Chinaman prefers puppy-pie to pumpkin-pie. Let me then ask myself earnestly, in the sight of heaven, why I like pumkin-pie."

It does not follow that the critic will not still have to criticize. I myself, though a mere Englishman, should still prefer to partake of pumpkin rather than puppy. But the pumpkin, if not the puppy, would be put in its right place; both would be subjected to an equal criticism, and the Chinaman would have some fair play.

Thus, for instance, I myself dislike much of the new slang and slipshod language; but we must not be slipshod in condemning the slipshod. We must criticize the old as well as the new, and understand exactly what is being supplanted.

Some Americans, as well as several Europeans, have made game of the men who are now called Morticians; whom we always called Undertakers. They may make game of them; but they must play the game fairly.

Mortician is not a very classical word; but it is better than some. It is better than many that are used by everybody, as the only words that could be used. It is better than the barbarous and monstrous word "television," which is a horrible mongrel muddle of Greek and Latin, made up by somebody who knew neither. It reminds me of the neologism of the governess in Oscar Wilde's play, who, knowing that a man-hater was called a misanthrope, supposed that a woman-hater could be called a womanthrope.

Moreover, Mortician is honest; even people who do not know any Latin know what is meant by mortality or mortal disease. It does deal directly with death like religion and the great tragedies.

Now, oddly enough, the old word was dishonest, and refused to deal directly with death. An Undertaker might mean a man who undertook anything; who undertook to supply cat's meat or linoleum or even (if such a thing were conceivable) liquor.

The word Undertaker confesses to a certain Victorian comfort – and cowardice. Indeed, the word Undertaker is curiously like the word Executioner; which again is curiously like the word Executor, for it might mean executing anything.

One day a Hangman or Headsman as the honest fellows were called when heroes and martyrs were their clients, suddenly took it into his head to be very refined. He objected to being called a Hangman, and thought it more gentlemanly to be called an Executioner. That was really the progress of refinement. But the Mortician, to do him justice, has reversed the progress, and gone back to plain words.

Future ages may be a little puzzled about these titles; and may very probably suppose that the Mortician killed men as well as buried them. But he will be a grand grim figure like the Headsman; and have something like a real Roman name.

From *New York American*, March 5, 2009

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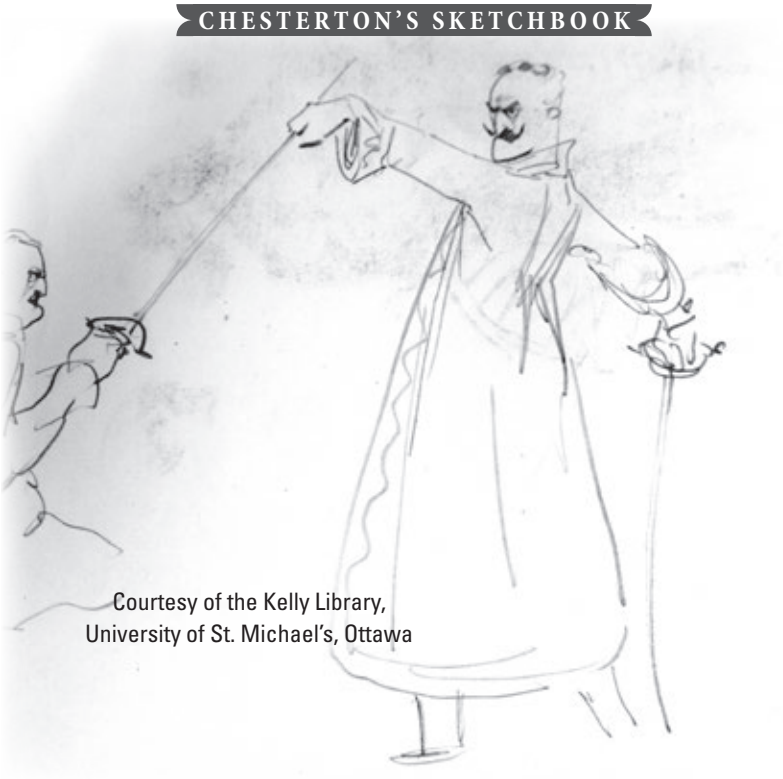

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