

GILBERT

"The skeptics have no philosophy of life because they have no philosophy of death."

—G.K. CHESTERTON



Saint Gilbert?

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 17 Number 1, September/October 2013

TREMENDOUS TRIFLES	2	FANCIES VERSUS FADS	17	<i>Jack and the Giant Apple</i>	
EDITORIAL	3	<i>It's Time We</i>		BY KELSEY MACINTYRE	
LUNACY & LETTERS	4	<i>Demanded More</i>		THE DETECTION CLUB	34
		BY CHRIS CHAN		<i>Knife Fight</i>	
		CHESTERTON UNIVERSITY	27	BY JAMES G. BRUEN JR.	
FEATURES		<i>Pieces of a Puzzle</i>			
STRAWS IN THE WIND	6	BY DALE AHLQUIST		REVIEWS	
<i>The Heretic</i>		THE FLYING INN	28	<i>Murdoch Mysteries</i>	33
BY G.K. CHESTERTON		<i>Black Widow Spiders</i>		REVIEWED BY CHRIS CHAN	
MISCELLANY OF MEN	10	BY DAVID BERESFORD		BOOK REVIEWS	36
<i>Chestertonian Troubadour</i>		THE FLYING STARS	29	<i>The Party Line</i>	
BY DAVID PAUL DEAVEL		<i>Sainthood for Frances</i>		REVIEWED BY CHRIS CHAN	
CONFERENCE REPORT	12	<i>& Gilbert?</i>		<i>Peace, They Say</i>	
<i>A Beacon of Light in These</i>		BY NANCY CARPENTIER BROWN		REVIEWED BY CHRIS CHAN	
<i>New Dark Ages'</i>		VARIED TYPES	30	FEAR OF FILM	40
BY SEAN P. DAILEY &		<i>Cheers!</i>		<i>The Scarlet Pimpernel</i>	
NANCY CARPENTIER BROWN		BY VICTORIA DARKEY		REVIEWED BY CHRIS CHAN	
THE SIGNATURE OF MAN	41	ALL I SURVEY	31		
<i>Jacob Epstein's Ecce Homo</i>		<i>Poiesis</i>		ESSAYS	
BY G.K. CHESTERTON		BY DAVID W. FAGERBERG		ALL IS GRIST	18
CHESTERTON'S MAIL BAG	47	HILLS HALF HEARD	43	<i>Modernity's Desire</i>	
<i>Movies, Spirits, and Liberty</i>		<i>From Kerouac to Chesterton</i>		<i>for Gray Smoke</i>	
LETTER TO AMERICA	48	BY ART LIVINGSTON		<i>from St. Peter's</i>	
<i>Thought for the Thoughtless</i>		THE DISTRIBUTIST	44	BY BRIAN C. POTTS	
BY G.K. CHESTERTON		<i>Cultural "Fundies"</i>		<i>The Christ-like Francis</i>	
		BY RICHARD ALEMAN		BY COLIN POWELL	
COLUMNS				<i>Friendly Facing</i>	
SCHALL ON CHESTERTON	8	FICTION		BY JOE CAMPBELL	
<i>On the "Prefatory Note" to</i>		TALES OF THE SHORT BOW	24	<i>The Mystery of</i>	
<i>The Everlasting Man</i>		<i>Heating Contractor</i>		<i>Watson's Luncheon</i>	
BY JAMES V. SCHALL S.J.		BY JAMES G. BRUEN JR.		BY SEAN FITZPATRICK	

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by Sean P. Daley



The American Chesterton Society 2013 history-making conference is, well, history, but you can enjoy the wisdom of the speakers—or relive it, if you were there—by ordering recordings of the talks. They’re available in three formats: DVDs, CDs, or as digital downloads, from chesterton.org. For DVDs, a bundle of all twelve talks is \$120, or \$12 for individual copies. Individual CDs are \$6, or \$50 for all. Digital downloads are \$5.99 each (and \$1.99 for previous conferences). Shipping and handling fees for the hard copies are on the website.

Seven weeks after Dale Ahlquist announced that Bishop Peter Doyle of the Diocese of Northampton was “seeing a suitable cleric” to investigate whether Chesterton’s personal holiness merited petitioning the Holy See to open his cause for sainthood, Bishop Doyle did just that, announcing on September 19 the appointment of Canon John Udris to undertake the task. For more information and to help in any way, please contact the ACS.

ACS President Dale Ahlquist is now, finally, on Wikipedia, at wikipedia.org/wiki/Dale_Ahlquist. The article covers, among other things, his upbringing, his conversion to the Catholic Church, a bibliography of books that Dale has written and edited, and of course the founding of the American Chesterton Society. Look for upcoming Wikipedia articles on the ACS and *Gilbert*. And kudos to ACS executive director Richard Aleman for writing the article on Dale.

Have we mentioned that *Gilbert* contributor James G. Bruen Jr. is available on Amazon.com? As this issue goes to press, he has placed another e-book on Amazon, a collection of more of his short fiction, previously published in *Gilbert: The Absence of Father Brown*—six cozy short mystery stories featuring Father Paul Petersen, a priest at St. Patrick’s in the City in Washington, D.C. James’ other e-books are *Speed Bump*; *The Christmas Stamp*; *Impossible Possibilities*; and, *The Academic Exercise*. To download the books, go to Amazon.com and do a search for James’ name.

James isn’t the only *Gilbert* contributor branching out. Grettelyn Nypaver is the featured soloist on a new CD of liturgical music, *Songs for the Eucharist Ancient and New*, by the Schola Cantorum of Holy Family. Grettelyn writes, “It’s part Gregorian chant, part Renaissance polyphony, and part Baroque. There are even a few more modern pieces on it that are really lovely. The neat thing about the CD is that it’s entirely high school girls singing (except my sister and I), so it’s a really pure sound.” Recorded at St. Vincent Basilica in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, the album is available from Amazon.com and iTunes.

And, in LifeSiteNews, Kirsten Anderson, commenting on Georgetown University caving to the Obama administration

on the HHS Mandate, writes, “In an email to LifeSiteNews, Cardinal Newman Society spokesman Adam Wilson also criticized the university’s choice to accept the Obama administration’s accommodation. Wilson quoted Catholic author G.K. Chesterton, who wrote, ‘A dead thing goes with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it.’” I agree, and I also urge everyone, if you haven’t yet, to read the book that contains that quote, *The Everlasting Man*.

Parting Trifle: In a post in July on the website pjmedia.com, Dave Swindle writes, “I’ve decided to read more G.K. Chesterton. Here’s an excerpt from page 3 of *Eugenics And Other Evils*, a book first published in 1922:

There exists to-day a scheme of action, a school of thought, as collective and unmistakable as any of those by whose grouping alone we can make any outline of history. It is as firm a fact as the Oxford Movement, or the Puritans of the Long Parliament; or the Jansenists; or the Jesuits. It is a thing that can be pointed out; it is a thing that can be discussed; and it is a thing that can still be destroyed. It is called for convenience “Eugenics”; and that it ought to be destroyed I propose to prove in the pages that follow. I know that it means very different things to different people; but that is only because evil always takes advantage of ambiguity. I know it is praised with high professions of idealism and benevolence; with silver-tongued rhetoric about purer motherhood and a happier posterity. But that is only because evil is always flattered, as the Furies were called “The Gracious Ones.” I know that it numbers many disciples whose intentions are entirely innocent and humane; and who would be sincerely astonished at my describing it as I do. But that is only because evil always wins through the strength of its splendid dupes.

100
YEARS AGO

Chesterton did something he rarely did. He said “I told you so.” He understood that the man who says “I told you so” is “commonly represented as an irritating person.” And yet, “justice is hardly done to his peculiar position. He has to point out another’s failure in proof of his own conviction, because there is often no other proof of it.” And what was it that he had said that had been proved right? Writing in the *New Witness* in October of 1913, he told how he had earlier warned that the failure of democracy would be “mostly due to a priggish imperviousness to the instincts of the sexes and the institution of the family.” If he saw this prediction already being proved right one hundred years ago, imagine what he would say today.

G.K. Chesterton: Servant of God?

St. G.K. Chesterton. Is it really that outlandish? Maybe to some. But when American Chesterton Society President Dale Ahlquist made his now-famous announcement on the first night of the Chesterton Conference in August, the hundreds of attendees didn't think so. They wept and shouted for joy. The official process hasn't even begun yet, and it may be many years before Chesterton is—God willing—declared even a Servant of God. But to have gotten even this far is extraordinary, given all the obstacles.

Don't get us wrong. We like that Chesterton is controversial. Saints usually are. Chesterton was controversial for many reasons. Only two controversies, however, seem to have gained the most attention in the wake of the announcement. The first, which we may call the external objection, is the lie that Chesterton was an anti-Semite. This is easily dealt with, and we have dealt with it before—we devoted an entire issue to it in 2008—and no doubt we will deal with it again. As Dale Ahlquist has written, "There are only two kinds of people who accuse Chesterton of being anti-Semitic: those who don't know any better and those who do. There is no excuse for either one."

The second objection is internal. Being internal, it is more subtle. Getting a lot of play in the media, it boils down to this: that Chesterton is not a saint because, well, he's not a saint. He was a journalist. He wasn't a monk. He drank in taverns and smoked cigars. He was married and he was fat. And as one incredulous friend riposted when I told him the news, "What miracles did he ever perform?"

In what way, we ask, are taverns, cigars, and journalism incompatible with sanctity? Is marriage not a sacrament? Were there no other fat saints? To be fair, a three-hundred-pound, cigar smoking journalist is not most people's idea of what a saint should look like. But it reveals a woeful lack of understanding of sanctity when we think that holiness is confined to monks or nuns living austere lives, their days filled with prayer and penance, with the occasional levitation or stigmata thrown in for good measure.

Gilbert in no way wishes to belittle these outward signs of holiness. On the contrary, we celebrate them, as did Chesterton. But people have got to break away from the idea that the life of a consecrated religious is the only path to sanctity. Were not St. Thomas More and King St. Louis IX laymen? For that matter did not St. Joseph work a trade and the Blessed Virgin keep a home? "But those other people, well, they were saints!"

As Chesterton says, "First he challenged me to find a black swan, and then he ruled out all my swans because they were black."

Most of us agree that Chesterton was brilliant. But as we have said before, brilliance alone does not explain his insight. It does not explain how his writing enkindles hearts and fires the intellect, bringing so many people to God. Scholars here and in England are researching the details of Chesterton's prayer life, but all indications are that he was always in prayer. He was always in the presence of God, every bit as much as St. Joseph and St. Mary. And Chesterton, cigar and all, was a mystic. His mystical connection is demonstrated in his boundless thankfulness to God for the gift of life and the wonder of creation:

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

And he was a mystic who understood, at a deeply theological level, that "you cannot evade the issue of God." Thus, his lament for Peter Pan's sad compromise at the end of the play:

He might have chosen love, with the inevitable result of love, which is incarnation, and the inevitable result of incarnation, which is crucifixion.

And Chesterton was a mystic because the chief characteristic of his life was love, and what he wrote about St. Francis in his biography of that saint may easily be said of himself:

He was a Lover. He was a lover of God and he was really and truly a lover of men; possibly a much rarer mystical vocation.... But as St. Francis did not love humanity but men, so he did not love Christianity, but Christ.

G.K. Chesterton's monk's cell was the office. His habit was his cape and his crumpled hat and his swordstick. To say that sanctity for a layman is different from sanctity for a consecrated religious merely recognizes the distinctions between these two states of life. And to argue that a layman cannot be a saint is to be saddled with a deplorable clericalism.

Finally, Chesterton, like St. Joseph, was a married man. And like St. Joseph, we think the woman that Chesterton was married to was also a saint. 

—Sean P. Dailey for the editorial board of *Gilbert*

from Gilbert Readers



just read the review by Chris Chan, “This *Copper* is Golden,” in the May/June, 2013, issue and I am appalled that the BBC show was considered “golden” and “marvelously entertaining.” After reading the review to my wife, we watched the trailer and saw in about one minute’s time a very immodestly dressed woman, an apparent rape scene depicting violence against a woman on a bed, a father talking lowly about his wife to his son, who then tried to strangle his father, followed by another very immodestly dressed woman, who came running into the room.

The main character adulterously visits Eva, who is the proprietress of a “wildly successful” tavern and brothel—when he is not looking for his missing wife. What kind of entertainment is this and why is it being promoted in *Gilbert*? Have we become so desensitized by immorality that even a lot of poison in our cake is no longer a problem for us? Pornography is from the evil one and “it should not be argued with,” as G.K. Chesterton said. It should be “stomped on with one’s foot.” No content

advisory will excuse the fact that we should not be watching, let alone promoting as “marvelously entertaining,” so vulgar a program. We know that G.K. Chesterton had a great respect for women and he certainly would not approve of a show where women are continuously degraded.

We have always enjoyed Chris Chan’s articles, and we look forward to better ones. Thank you.

Mr. and Mrs. Mark J. Hazel

Rapid City, South Dakota

CHRIS CHAN REPLIES: I stand by my positive review of the first season of *Copper*. Yes, it does frequently depict sex and violence onscreen, but I contend that this is not cheap exploitation for the sake of shallow titillation, but instead that the show is a brutally realistic portrayal of the wages of sin. If some people don’t want to watch this explicit content on television, I don’t blame them. But despite its content, *Copper* is a show with a strong moral core, and a quality crime show.

The characters’ misdeeds largely fail to bring them any lasting happiness or profit.

Extramarital affairs do not lead to lasting happiness, but instead they lead to emotional devastation, guilt, and self-loathing. The vigilante slaying of a pervert and killer leaves permanent scars on his executioners. The few characters to get away with certain crimes seem poised to get their comeuppance in future seasons. Additionally, while many television series portray abortion as an ultimately harmless procedure that leaves women in far less discomfort than a root canal, *Copper* depicts abortion as the cause of severe distress and pain for women, and indeed, an abortion (as well as an extramarital affair) cause the mental breakdown of one woman. In most cases on *Copper*, the wages of sin are death—literally.

As for the fact that good art can come from scandalous topics, I can do no better than to quote Chesterton on Shaw, where Chesterton addresses his good friend and frequent ideological sparring partner’s prostitution-themed play:

Of the plays collected in this book I have kept Mrs. Warren’s Profession to the last, because, fine as it is, it is even finer and more important because of its fate, which was to rouse a long and serious storm and to be vetoed by the Censor of Plays. I say that this drama is most important because of the quarrel that came out of it. If I were speaking of some mere artist this might be an insult. But there are high and heroic things in Bernard Shaw; and one of the highest and most heroic is this, that he certainly cares much more for a quarrel than for a play.”

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As repugnant as Chesterton found some of Shaw's religious, social, and political beliefs, he never wavered from his affection for the man or his respect for the man's creative work. The best way to address bad or immoral work is not to ignore, but to criticize it and produce alternative art.

**Yours,
Chris Chan**

Milwaukee, Wisconsin



This week I received *Gilbert*. I have already read through it—I absolutely love it! Thanks so much for all you are doing over there to make the ideas of GK Chesterton come to life.

One of the articles on education has inspired me to begin studying some of the classics. I have a copy of Plato's Republic sitting next to me here on my reading table. I was wondering if there was a good commentary, or course you might suggest as I begin to study. Thanks so much!

Joshua Noote
Slidell, Louisiana

Do readers have any suggestions? Send them to info@chesterton.org. —Ed.



Thank you for your excellent, edifying magazine, however, I must take issue with your most recent editorial. Although I agree with the views on education expressed in the essay, I believe you are over-reacting to President Obama's remarks. At the time of the speech, I read and heard (on talk radio) that he "attacked" Catholic education, so I sought out the speech to see what was actually said.

The relevant section is copied below. It's a stupid, inconsiderate statement, to be sure, but not shocking. It's a passing remark.

Moreover, do you really think he wholeheartedly believes everything he reads? He simply reads what's put in front of him. His views may be similar, but who knows what he really thinks? I think he's an empty suit. The point is, we (conservative Catholics) lose credibility when we make mountains out of molehills.

Now, some of that is up to your leaders. As someone who knows firsthand how politics can encourage division and discourage cooperation, I admire the Northern Ireland Executive and the Northern Ireland Assembly all the more for making power-sharing work. That's not easy to do. It requires compromise, and it requires absorbing some pain from your own side. I applaud them for taking responsibility for law enforcement and for justice, and I commend their effort to "Building a United Community"—important next steps along your transformational journey.

Because issues like segregated schools and housing, lack of jobs and opportunity—symbols of history that are a source of pride for some and pain for others—these are not tangential to peace; they're essential to it. If towns remain divided—if Catholics have their schools and buildings, and Protestants have theirs—if we can't see ourselves in one another, if fear or resentment are allowed to harden, that encourages division. It discourages cooperation.

Read more: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/06/20130617276442.html#ixzz2dawWXHJs>

Marie Cotter
Kings Park, New York



Yes to "Mark Twain", but only two fathoms rather than ten (*Gilbert*, July/August, 2013, p.8). We're talking river boats here, not modern day oceanic mega-tankers. The dangerous river depth to the shifting Mississippi sand bars was twelve feet, not sixty.

Peter Beaulieu
Seattle, Washington



While reading a book about Catholic social teaching and the theology of business I came across two quotes by Blessed John Paul II. "The Church's social doctrine," he wrote in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, "is not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another."

In *Centesimus Annus* he declares, "the Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations." These words may be common knowledge to more seasoned Chestertonians, however they remind me of the simple fact that Distributism stems from the Church's social teaching and not the other way around. Often I would pain myself in trying to be agrarian as possible, or accuse big businesses as corrupt if they were not cooperatives—although such practices are wholesome and generally in line with Catholic social teaching, other equally legitimate methods, varying according to cultures and generations, may be employed. Surely the social problems and conditions of our present day large nation-states were unimaginable in medieval Europe; their methods, including the guild system, may not work so well in ours. Not all industries are intrinsically evil just because they do not conform to this standard, as I once believed.

The universality of the Church's social principles reflects the universality of the Gospel: Christ's message is meant for all nations and all times. I am reminded of Chesterton's book on St. Francis, in which he wrote: "the casket that was locked in Palestine can be unlocked in Umbria; for the Church is the Keeper of the keys." The Church's teaching radiating from Christ's message, i.e., human dignity and concern for the poor, must be applied to every people of every age—my primary error was confusing the lock for the key; I mistook some Distributist ideas as the standard for Catholic social teaching. I now realize that the social teaching, or the key, is transferred from culture to culture and era to era. Subsidiarity does not necessarily mean every business must be a co-op; neither must every steward of nature be a farmer. These words of Blessed John Paul cured my myopia; once I could not see the proverbial forest through the trees; now a vast forest, stemming from that first fruit which hung from a tree, stretches before me and continues to expand beyond sight into the horizon.

Sean Mallen
Coconut Creek, Florida

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton



The Heretic

By G.K. Chesterton

At least on the human side of the transaction, the test and turning point of conversion is so entirely rational, and even rationalistic, that we are tempted to impatience with the irrationality with which it is discussed outside. It is a question of whether a certain messenger is or is not what he claims to be.

It is not a question of whether the message is exactly what we should expect it to be; it is not the point that there is nothing in it to surprise us, or nothing in it to puzzle us, or nothing in it that we should have put differently ourselves. It is not a question of whether we might have sent another message; it is a question of who did send this message.

A man brings me a note or a verbal communication from my friend Robinson, asking me to meet him at the sixth lamp post opposite the house with the hollyhocks in a street in Hungerford; and it is quite rational for me to doubt, on general grounds, whether the messenger comes from my friend Robinson at all. He may be cadging for a drink, or luring me into a den of thieves, or merely playing a practical joke and making me an April fool. But it is not rational in me to accept the message as genuine, and really coming from my friend, and really making an appointment, and then to say to the messenger, "Don't you think we could make it a house with sunflowers instead of hollyhocks, because hollyhocks are not my favorite flower?" Or, "Let's alter the sixth lamp post to the seventh because seven is such a lucky number." Or, "I can't imagine why he should be going to Hungerford, and for my part I shall go and wait for him in Hampstead."

This attitude is not rational, because it is not relevant to the very nature of a message, whether the message be the most trivial or the most tremendous. It is logical to doubt a messenger, or dismiss a messenger, or deny that the messenger is a messenger at all. But it is not logical to ask any messenger to alter his message.

This basic logic, the bare bones of the argument, is so familiar to us that we are tempted to irritation, as I say, when we find how very uncommon this common sense is in the contemporary crowd.

But there is a more subtle and sympathetic view of the whole matter, and there are finer degrees and shades of meaning than can be found in such a simplified syllogism. Even among those who reject the message, and among those who reject odd scraps of it, there are very various types, and some rather strange and baffling types. Only one of them need be picked out, in this particular practical sense, as the heretic.

I am not of course using any of these words in the authoritative sense of theological science, in which they would probably cover many things in theological definition, which I am only considering in their psychological variety. And in this practical sense, there is one type of human being in history who may with special exactitude be called the heretic. He is not, for instance, the same type as the bigot; though it will most often be found that a bigotry is the corpse or fossil of a dead heresy. He is something utterly different from the mere unconverted heathen; and he is very nearly the opposite of the agnostic or the skeptic.

The queer thing about the heretic is this. We all know that heresy actually

means picking and choosing as my imaginary man picked out bits of Mr. Robinson's letter. But there is a quality about the picking and choosing of heretics, and especially of the great heresiarchs, which has not always been adequately noted. The mystery of Mohammed or Luther or Calvin, or any of the great founders of heretical systems, has always been this; first, that they accepted the idea of a Divine system as already established; then that they doubted and then denied that the old system was Divine; and, third and most amazing of all, that they never doubted for a moment the one doctrine which they had chosen to accept in a system that they denied, and never seemed to dream that anybody could ever venture to deny that.

Such a heresiarch was his own witness to the fact that a man could deny a thousand things that had been counted Divine. But he does not seem to have expected anybody to deny any particular thing which he happened to refrain from denying. If he had saved any one relic out of the riot and destruction, he seems to have as that everybody till the end of the world would always save that one object in any riot and any destruction. This is the eccentricity which distinguishes the original heretic from the skeptic or even the rather inconsistent critic. It is the fanaticism with which he affirms the one thing that he does not deny.

His place in the parable above suggested is not that of the man who rejects the messenger, or accepts the messenger, or even makes fancy alterations in the message. He is the man who fixes on one feature in the messenger's story, and makes that, not only more important than the rest, but more important than anything and everything. He will turn against everything else, contradicting and cursing to any extent. He will profess to avoid Hungerford as if it were hell. He will tear up all hollyhocks everywhere, as if they were a poisonous weed or a plantation of upas. But the sixth lamp post is not only fixed but sacred; a lamp to guide all our feet, a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

This is not an exaggeration, touching the history of heresy. For instance, the Puritans treated the seventh day exactly like the sixth lamp post. In a hundred other ways they set themselves to starve

and stunt and discolor nearly all kinds of ritual or religious pageantry.

Through the remains of their prejudice, thousands of modern men are still haunted with that one bit of thoroughly bad psychology and educational theory; the notion that all ceremonial is meaningless or deadening or dangerous to sincerity. They managed to hold this in spite of their devotion to the Old Testament, which is stuffed full of ceremonial. And yet they froze hard into a fanatical concentration on the Sabbath. It was a particular part, not only of the Christian tradition, but of the peculiarly complicated and ritualistic Jewish law. And they ultimately produced the Scottish Sabbath, which was considerably more gloomy than the Jewish Sabbath.

But the odd thing is that it never seems to have struck them that men might deny the Sabbath as they denied the Sacrament. Nor is this merely a question of the tremendous tradition of the Sacrament in the story of Christendom. It would arise in any case from the actual position of the Sabbath in the story of Jesus of Nazareth; the most direct and simplified appeal to the story in the New Testament.

It would be much easier to make a primitive Gospel attack on the thing they retained than on the things they rejected. There is really no evidence whatever that Jesus Christ disapproved of ritualism. He always referred to the services of the temple, which were enormously ritualistic, as the normal national religious duty of His people. He introduced the ordinary official offerings and presentations into His parables, and always in a good sense.

The one and only Jewish institution which He might be represented as quarreling with was the Sabbath. Nobody accused Him of denouncing the sacrifices or the seven-branched candlestick; people did accuse Him of blaspheming the Sabbath. And yet, by some huge unnatural upheaval and inversion, these typical heretics managed to terrorize whole nations with a blind idolatry of the old Jewish Sabbath; when they themselves were frightened of lighting a candle and hated even the shadow, or mystical repetition, of a sacrifice.

This is only one historical example; there are hundreds in history. The point is that the heretic is a fanatic about one thing, and a skeptic about a hundred things. And yet he always finds the thing

for which he is fanatical in the system about which he is skeptical.

Now there are not only numberless examples of this contradiction in former times; but there is an even more contradictory form of the contradiction in modern times; about which I may attempt to write something here on a later occasion. But it will be best to conclude here upon the clearer and more virile religious errors of which the Puritanism of the seventeenth century was perhaps the last.

The Calvinist was ready to kill three-quarters of Christianity and to die for the last quarter. But at least he did know that his one favorite fragment of

Christianity was Christian. In modern times we are surrounded with a new and more ignorant class of heretics, who know so little history that they do not know even their own history; or the history of their own ideas. At bottom, however, they proceed upon the same strange principle, both in relation to the things they believe and the things they do not believe. They do not know where their own belief came from; and they certainly do not know where their own unbelief is going next. But they are so amusing as to require separate treatment. ☞

From *America*, December 14, 1935

Chesterton for Today

- ◆ I should naturally be inspired to sympathy with the ideal of turning all the rising generation into good citizens, if I could believe that what we call education really was turning them into good citizens, or into any kind of citizens. (*New Witness*, Dec. 27, 1918)
- ◆ On most political platforms, in most newspapers and magazines, I observe that there are at present only two ideas, either to avoid controversy or to conduct it by mere bluff and noise. (*Daily News*, Dec. 12, 1908)
- ◆ If Christian ideals have been soiled in the course of eighteen centuries, Liberal ideals have been even more soiled in the course of one century. (*New Witness*, Feb. 10, 1922)
- ◆ It is only people who do not believe in Christianity who take it for granted. (*Daily News*, Jan. 11, 1908)
- ◆ The very last thing that modern Socialism is, is secular. Its one enthusiasm is really a religious enthusiasm—or, if you will, an enthusiasm against a religion. (*Illustrated London News*, May 16, 1914)
- ◆ To control family life, for instance, you must have at least one police spy for every family. Police spies are now a minority (though I fear an increasing minority) because it has hitherto been calculated—and not, perhaps, with too rosy an optimism—that criminals will be a minority. Once make a thing which any man may do a crime, and every man must have a “shadowing” detective as every man has a shadow. Yet this is precisely the preposterous end to which are directed most modern projects of “social reform” which select things like drink, diet, hygiene, and sexual selection. If men cannot govern themselves in these things separately, it is physically impossible for them to govern themselves in these things collectively. It not only means publicity instead of privacy; it means every man in his public capacity being in charge of every other man in his private capacity. It not only means washing dirty linen in public; it means all of us living by taking in each other’s washing. (*Illustrated London News*, June 9, 1917)
- ◆ We have lost the power to control things, largely because we have lost the power to oversee them; that is, to see them as a whole. The economic disasters we suffer are largely due to the operations having grown too large even for the operators. (*Illustrated London News*, Oct. 31, 1931)
- ◆ Nobody realizes (or anyhow admits) that our mechanical civilization is on the verge of the abyss. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Jan. 7, 1928)

Timely Essays on Chesterton's Timeless Paradoxes



On the “Prefatory Note” to The Everlasting Man

by James V. Schall S.J.

GK Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man* (1925) has a twenty-two line “note” that he added to explain to readers the nature of this rather amazing book. He did not want to be “misunderstood.” Chesterton tells us that he “makes no claim to learning.” It is of some consolation that one of the most insightful men who ever wrote had no great academic credentials. There may be a connection.

Chesterton tells in this book that he is dealing with “matters known to all.” This caveat does not mean that he was not aware of what the scholars were saying. Indeed, that is the whole point of the book. Scholars themselves finally have to come to a point wherein what they argue is evidently coherent or not. If it is not, their argument, no matter how erudite, will reveal striking contradictions that no reasonable man could hold.

To confirm the validity of Chesterton's approach, he cites his friend and antagonist, H.G. Wells. Wells, it seems, had “defended the reasonable right of the amateur to do what he can with the facts which the specialists provide.” In a sense, this capacity to evaluate the experts was one of the main purposes of a liberal education.

As formal higher education became specialized and research oriented, even the learned tended to lose their common sense. Students were never given what Dorothy Sayers called “the lost tools of learning” with which to evaluate

properly what was being maintained. A world of specialists is likely to be a deranged world because no first principles are recognized in the minds of the ordinary citizens.

This book, which deals with the “chief event of [his] own life,” Chesterton says, is “historical,” not “theological.” But he adds: “It is impossible, I hope, for any Catholic to write any book on any subject, above all on this subject, without

*No other religion maintains
that God is triune, or that one
of the Persons became man.*

showing that he is a Catholic.” If we succeed in completely hiding from the reader of our books that we are Catholic, it means simply that we are not really Catholic. To be Catholic means to have a view of the world and oneself that reveals certain ultimate positions that separate one from everyone else who lacks them.

The central theme of *The Everlasting Man* is almost exactly the same as that of Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth*, namely, that Christ, in His words and deeds, was who He said that He was. Chesterton's book, written of course long before Benedict's, deals not so much with Protestants but with Pagans. But it also deals with scholars who maintain that the story of Christ is to be classified as

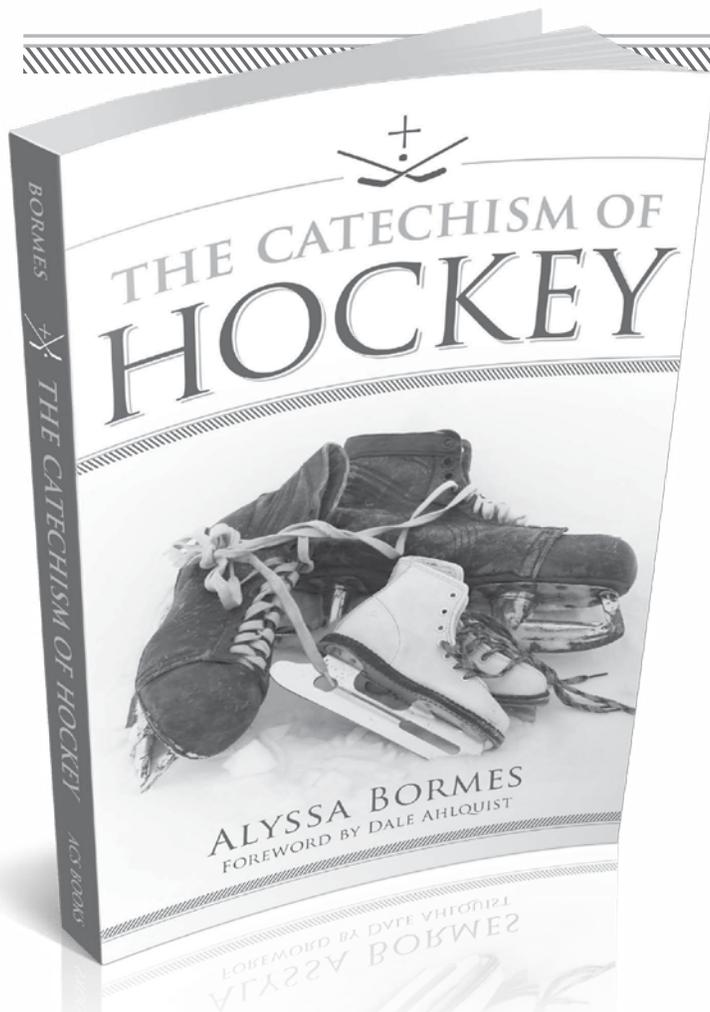
just another myth retold in another way, but revealing nothing substantially different from what can be found in the classical myths.

If we say that “Christ stands side by side with other myths and that his religion side by side with other religions,” what we are actually doing is to repeat “a very stale formula contradicted by a very striking fact.” What Chesterton was saying was this: the stale formula did not cover the striking fact. The “striking fact” is that Christ is not like other myths and His religion is not like other religions. *The Everlasting Man* is a book that shows, step by step, this difference.

Thus, we cannot pass off Christ as a myth, or His religion as like other religions. No other religion maintains that God is triune, or that one of the Persons became man. Everything that Christ did can only be explained on the basis of validity of His identifying Himself with His Father who sent Him. He is not the Father, but the Word who is God.

The title of Chesterton's book is precisely *The Everlasting Man*, not *Man the Mortal*. Once man appeared on this planet, he did not change. Or as Chesterton put it, an ape did not begin the drawings in the early caves and a man came along to finish it. The origin of man is not within this world. Man is an “image.” He is the “image” of God, but he is not God. But Christ is the Word of God and also God but not the Father or the Spirit. It is God the Son who came to dwell amongst us. He is the true “everlasting man” in whose image we are created, each of us.

So the account of the “everlasting man” shows not that man is just another myth, but the astounding fact that the things described in the account of His life really happened. They are not explained by the other myths. The myths are not all wrong, but they never come to terms with the uniqueness and authority of the Man who was Christ. He came to reveal to us what we are and what is our destiny. It is eternal, everlasting life. We are not unreal. We are not reabsorbed into the cosmos or into one another. We are precisely beings whose end is everlasting life. This is no myth, but a fact. This is why *The Everlasting Man* was written. ☚



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PATTI BROOKS, wife of the late Herb Brooks,
 Coach of 1980 USA Men's Olympic Hockey Team



Chestertonian Troubadour

Rich Mullins (1955–1997)

by David Paul Deavel

I was a casual fan of his, but had always enjoyed his music. It seemed different from most other Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) that I had heard. It was somehow more real than the standard imitation-rock bands that were and are popular. It was often acoustic and had elements of Irish music, including the use of dulcimer, Irish tin whistle, and other exotic instruments. And the lyrics were excellent: “Awesome God” and “Step By Step” seemed to be written by a guy who didn’t just know a few Bible passages but actually tried to live in the world of the Bible. But I was, as I said, a casual fan. So I was blown away when I was told after his fatal September 20, 1997, car accident that Richard Wayne Mullins was on his way to being received into the Catholic Church. The 41-year-old Evangelical fan of St. Francis of Assisi and G.K. Chesterton had been drifting that way for a long time, but something was different this time.

After a long game of phone tag Mullins had finally contacted Fr. Matt McGuinness, with whom he had done a Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) program five years before in preparation to enter the Church. He had never quite been able to take the plunge, but this time he was serious. Fr. McGuinness recounted that conversation:

“Fr. Matt, this may sound strange, but I HAVE TO RECEIVE THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.” I told him that it didn’t sound strange at all but that it sounded



wonderful. I told him that he had gone through RCIA so that all he needed to do was to go to Confession and to make a public Profession of Faith. I also remember saying, “We’ve talked about everything; you can go to Confession with me.” And he said, “Ah, no, we haven’t...” So, I said, “No problem, I’ll hook you up with another priest friend.” I set

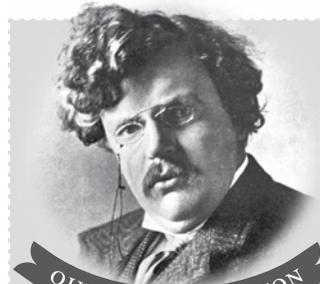
up an appointment for Rich to go to Confession to Fr. Paul Coakley who is now Archbishop Coakley of Oklahoma City. He was going to make his profession of Faith at the 7 pm Mass on September 21 at the Newman Center at Wichita State University where I was chaplain for several years.

A Presbyterian friend later told Fr. Matt that Mullins had decided at the last minute that he wanted to be received on October 4, the feast day of Francis of Assisi. As Protestant friends of his pointed out, Mullins could be a little impetuous, so he might not have gone through with it ultimately. But it seems likely, given his discussions with Fr. McGuinness and others, and the fact that he had set a date for his reception, that this time he was serious.

Of course nobody would have guessed all this from the beginning. Life has a way of almost, but not quite, making sense to us. Mullins had learned this from one of his favorite writers, Chesterton. And he had not shied away from the strange things to which God calls those who receive him. Instead, he had embraced them.

Richard Wayne Mullins was born in Richmond, Indiana to a tree farmer and his Quaker wife. He had two brothers and two sisters. Mullins learned to sing four-part harmony from his grandmother and studied piano with a Quaker teacher. He was baptized in the third grade and joked that he loved going to church so much because he was never good at basketball, and Hoosier men didn’t like to sing, except in church.

As a teenager Mullins joined a traveling church music group, and later



OUR MR. CHESTERTON

In his preface to *Back to Methuselah*, George Bernard Shaw, trying to describe Chesterton’s appearance, was driven to compare him to Gulliver as seen by the Lilliputians and to note his resemblance to Honore de Balzac. “He is our Quibus Flestrin, the young Man Mountain,” Shaw wrote, “a large, abounding, gigantically cherubic person who is not only large in body and mind beyond all decency, but seems to be growing larger as you look at him, ‘swellin’ wisely’ as Tony Weller puts it.”

attended Cincinnati Bible College, working in a parking garage to pay his bills. After some time as a music director at a Methodist church in Kentucky, he made his way to Nashville in the early eighties to put his musical ambitions to the test. He had been engaged after a ten-year relationship, and he first made it big when Amy Grant recorded his song “Doubly Good to You,” a song written for Mullins’s own wedding. But the woman broke it off.

Mullins wrote most of his songs with a childhood friend, David Strasser, known as “Beaker.” He and Beaker moved to Wichita, Kansas in 1988 to escape Nashville and attend Friends University. There he met Mitch McVicker, with whom he collaborated and then moved to New Mexico where they lived on a Navajo reservation until his death. Mullins, attracted so strongly to St. Francis, had begun, with Beaker, a ministry intended to mentor young Christian men and called it the “Kid Brothers of St. Frank.” Wanting to do something more than just use the name, Mullins made the distinctly non-CCM move of having his salary paid to his church, which then disbursed his money to Compassion International (an international ministry to poor children), its own ministries, and paid Mullins the average salary in America (\$24,000/year). In New Mexico Mullins continued this way of poverty while teaching music to reservation children. Despite objections, Mullins attended daily Mass on the reservation for several years before his death.

Mullins’s attraction to Catholicism had been coming for a long time. A friend from Cincinnati Bible College days, Catholic convert and theologian Kenneth Craycraft, testified that Mullins always carried around books by C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton. His attraction was not just to a generic St. Francis, either. His later albums, like 1993’s *A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band*, whose parts were organized according to the order of the Mass, bespoke a deeply Catholic sensibility. When producers scrambled them, Mullins was reportedly very upset. One friend called the Catholic imagery of his last two albums “over the top.” His song “Screen Door” included the following lines, “It’s about as useless as/A screen door on a submarine.” The subject? “Faith without works, baby.”

Mullins hadn’t become anti-Protestant, but like Chesterton he had discovered the Church, even if the car accident that ended his life prevented him from entering it fully. It should be no surprise that his song, “Creed,” which brings out the dynamic qualities of the Apostles’ Creed in a way quite similar to

Chesterton’s most famous book, should have as its most memorable lines a mash-up of *Orthodoxy* and St. Paul himself:

And I believe what I believe is what makes me what I am I did not make it for it is making me. It is the very truth of God and not the invention of any man. ☞

Monogamy

✦ I could never mix in the common murmur of that rising generation against monogamy, because no restriction on sex seemed so odd and unexpected as sex itself. To complain that I could only be married once was like complaining that I had only been born once. (“The Ethics of Elfland,” *Orthodoxy*)

✦ I believe in monogamy as the one complete adventure of man. (*Daily News*, Oct. 28, 1905)

✦ If marriage had not existed, it would have been necessary for artists to invent it. If ever monogamy is abandoned in practice, it will linger in legend and in literature. (*Illustrated London News*, July 15, 1922)

✦ Lovers do not only desire love; they desire marriage. The root of legal monogamy does not lie (as Shaw and his friends are forever drearily asserting) in the fact that the man is a mere tyrant and the woman a mere slave. It lies in the fact that if their love for each other is the noblest and freest love conceivable, it can only find its heroic expression in both becoming slaves. (“The Philosopher,” *George Bernard Shaw*)

✦ Lovers laboriously chip their initials on a tree or a rock in a sort of monogram of monogamy. (“The Story of the Vow,” *The Superstition of Divorce*)

✦ All the things that make monogamy a success are in their nature undramatic things, the silent growth of an instinctive confidence, the common wounds and victories, the accumulation of customs, the rich maturing of old jokes. (“The Philosopher,” *George Bernard Shaw*)



✦ The obvious thing to protect the ideal of marriage is the Christian religion. The working classes of this country have been very much cut off from Christianity. I do not dream of denying, indeed I should take every opportunity of affirming, that monogamy and its domestic responsibilities can be defended on rational—apart from religious—grounds. But a religion is the practical protection of any moral idea which has to be popular and which has to be pugnacious. And our ideal, if it is to survive, will have to be both. (“The End of the Household Gods,” *Eugenics and Other Evils*)

✦ The world will always return to monogamy. (“The Professor Explains,” *The Man Who Was Thursday*)

The 32nd Annual Chesterton Conference



‘A Beacon of Light in These New Dark Ages’

by Sean P. Dailey and Nancy Carpentier Brown

WORCESTER, Mass.—The annual G.K. Chesterton Conference is a mix of joy and revelation, of discussion and challenging lectures. It’s more than a mix, it’s a blend. At its best, it’s a marriage—a gay marriage in the classic and proper sense. This year, the conference even had an actual marriage, at the closing Mass, but not even that could eclipse the joy from the startling revelation with which American Chesterton Society President Dale Ahlquist opened the conference.

As Dale revealed at the end of his opening talk—and as has been repeated now on the ACS Web page, on our Facebook page, and dozens of other places on the Internet—Bishop Peter Doyle of Northampton, England, had given permission to state that he “is sympathetic to our wishes and is seeking a suitable cleric to begin an investigation into the potential for opening a cause for [G.K.] Chesterton.”

It does not mean that Chesterton’s cause for sainthood has been opened. It does mean, however, that the cause is definitely on the horizon (See pg. 2 for

an important update. —Ed.) And it was against a glowing horizon of friendship, inquiry, and thanksgiving that the conference unwound itself that first weekend in August at Assumption College in Worcester (pronounced “Woostuh,” we were told at every turn). Dale set the tone in more ways than one in his opening talk, which was principally on education, but which touched on many subjects, since education, properly understood, touches on everything—and everything else. When understood from a Chestertonian perspective, education is not just a matter of public school vs. private school, or institutional schooling vs. homeschooling. And, “Most of the private schools are no better,” Dale said.

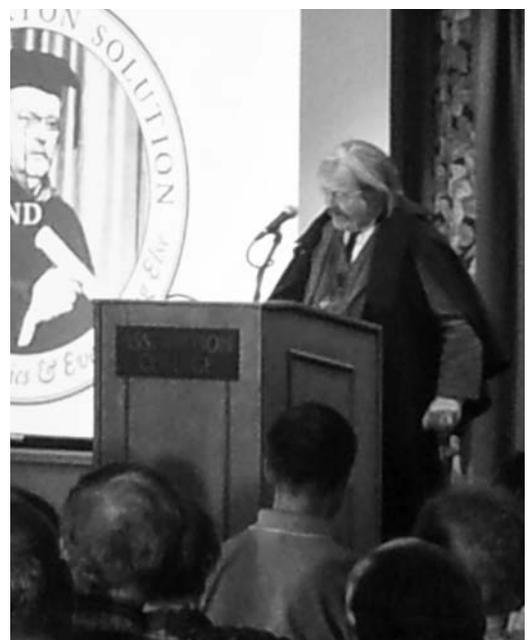
“They essentially use the same system; the same fragmented, compartmentalized approach to education as the public schools do... Religion is simply one more subject taught among many, all of them separated from the others. We don’t teach the whole truth of things, and the result of this broken, fragmented, incomplete education is a broken world: a broken society, broken families, broken babies, broken lives. Just look around.”

We did look around, especially the older ones, and realized he was right.

And what does our “broken, fragmented, incomplete education” produce?



Dale Ahlquist, Karen O'Brien, Kevin O'Brien, and Chuck Chalberg share a laugh



G.K. Chesterton (Chuck Chalberg) lectures on Eugenics



The Man in Black, Richard Aleman, flanked by Emily de Rotstein (l) and Vicki Darkey (r)

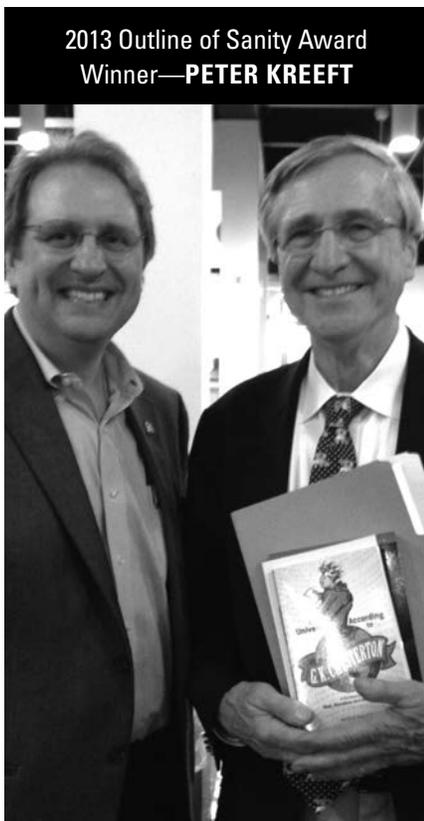
Incomplete thinkers, Dale said, who are ill equipped for battle. “The enemy is the devil, and he is always leading men into error, and we are fighting unprepared because we are not complete thinkers.” Quoting Chesterton, Dale added, “There is no such thing as secular education,

though there may be such things like secular instruction. That which is not spiritual is not educational.”

Dale slaughtered a lot of sacred cows that night, while the hundreds listening tried to take it in. G.K. Chesterton himself followed Dale—or rather, John C. “Chuck” Chalberg, playing Chesterton,

**PAST WINNERS,
OUTLINE OF SANITY AWARD**

- 1998 QUENTIN HIETPAS,
University of St. Thomas
- 1999 HAYWARD CIRKER,
Dover Publications
- 2000 THE ROCKFORD INSTITUTE
- 2001 RALPH MCINERNY,
University of Notre Dame
- 2002 RACE MATHEWS,
Author and Diplomat
- 2003 JOSEPH PEARCE, *Author*
- 2004 ROBERT ROYAL, *Author*
- 2005 JOHN SHARPE, *IHS Press*
- 2006 MARK AND LOUISE ZWICK,
Houston Catholic Worker
- 2007 DAWN EDEN, *Author*
- 2008 WILLIAM ODDIE, *Author*
- 2009 MICHAEL PERRY,
Editor and Publisher
- 2010 REGINA DOMAN, *Author*
- 2012 RALPH WOODS,
Baylor University



Dale & Peter Kreeft



Kurt Griffen and Grettelyn Nypaver prepare to sing at the closing banquet.

followed Dale—addressing two things: “Eugenics, and the evil of Eugenics.” It was a lot more to take in, and more than a few people asked, “What book of Chesterton’s is that from? It sounds like it was written today,” only to find out that Chuck’s “script” was written more than a hundred years ago, and is from Chesterton’s book, *Eugenics and Other Evils*. Not a few listeners added this book to their list of must-reads.

The weekend was just getting started, as they say. Friday saw six more lengthy talks, plus one play, a staging of Peter Kreeft’s book, *Socrates Meets Jesus*, by Theatre of the Word, Inc., which followed Peter Kreeft’s talk on “The Philosophy of G.K. Chesterton.” Also speaking Friday were Worcester resident James Woodruff, on “Chesterton and Macaulay” and South Carolina resident—and London native—Joseph Pearce on “Chesterton and the Hobbit.”

William E. Fahey took us all on a journey “through the neglected works of the Chester-Belloc,” while conference veteran speakers Robert Moore-Jumonville and Carl Hasler spoke of “The Spirituality of Place in G.K. Chesterton” and “Chesterton and Wendell Berry,” respectively.

Listening is thirsty work. Fortunately, the listeners were Chestertonians, who eagerly quenched their thirsts with



Kevin O’Brien, Dave Treadway, and Maria Romine of Theatre of the Word Inc. perform Peter Kreeft’s *Socrates Meets Jesus*

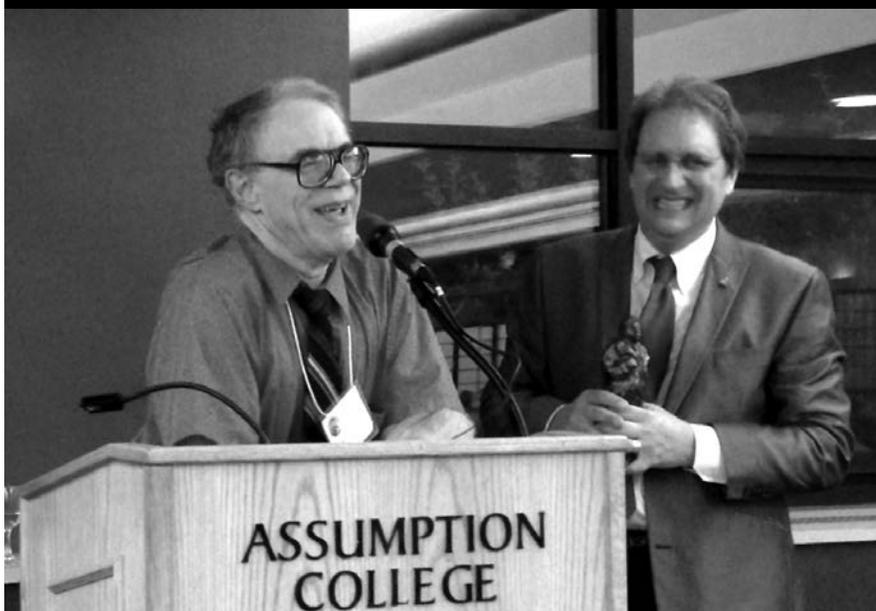
Christian beverages each night until long past midnight. The nightly “afterglows” have become a famous feature of the annual conferences and you never know what may happen at them. For instance, confusion over lodgings in the excellent Assumption dorms—a recurring hiccup all weekend—started during the first night’s afterglow, when two women complained that a man had also been assigned to their room.

Naturally, they felt awkward about this. They told conference organizers they

PAST WINNERS, LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

- 1998 FRANK PETTA
- 1999 IAN BOYD, O.S.B.
- 2000 AIDAN MACKAY
- 2001 JOHN PETERSON
- 2002 JOSEPH FESSIO, S.J.
- 2003 PETER MILWARD, S.J.
- 2004 DENIS CONLON
- 2005 JAMES SCHALL, S.J.
- 2006 GEIR HASNES
- 2012 PASQUALE ACCARDO

2013 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner—PETER FLORIANI



Peter Floriani is overwhelmed at receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award

wanted to switch rooms. They were told they could switch the next day. At one point they returned to their room to find a man asleep on the couch in the living room. Upon noticing that the man was Joseph Pearce, they weren’t so sure they wanted to switch rooms. Although they did. They later told people they passed up the opportunity to sleep with Joseph Pearce.

Joseph Pearce himself arrived in the middle of the first night’s afterglow, thirsty for beer. He asked me (Sean) for a home brew, but when I went to my cooler to fetch one, they’d all been taken. I was crestfallen. Joseph was even more crestfallen. Bad as that inconvenience was, it still wasn’t enough to qualify us as joint



Miky Tracy and Joey Odendahl go all-out for the coveted Inconvenience Award

winners of the annual Inconvenience Award (more on the winners later, and yes, there were joint winners this year). And Joseph was not completely inconvenienced as we still managed to find him a beer.

Friday started early, opening with Woodruff's talk, followed by Fahey, who greeted everyone with a hearty "*Salvete amici!*" "Hail, friends!" Those hoping that Dr. Fahey might be brief may have been disappointed when he said, "This is after all a Chesterton conference, and a rotund and rambling talk is perhaps fitting." If there were groans, however, they were drowned out by the chuckles.

Groans did greet Dale's plea that established, for the first time, a restriction on subject matter for the annual clerihew contest: "Don't submit any Obama clerihews. There are a lot of words that rhyme with Obama; a lot of Obama clerihews have been submitted over the years. None of them ever win. You just can't parody that."

The winning clerihews are on page 16.

Saturday, Kerry MacArthur explained how Chesterton invented postmodern literature, and Pasquale Accardo revealed to everyone what Shakespeare's most Catholic play is—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for those who weren't there. Concluding the conference, Aaron Friar struggled, not unsuccessfully, to find

a link between Chesterton and Eastern Orthodoxy. Saturday of the Chesterton conference is always a bittersweet day. It's an ending, a closing of what for many attendees has become also an annual reunion, not only with Chesterton, but with old friends. But for two people, it was a beginning.

Saturday evening Mass at Assumption's Chapel of the Holy Spirit began as any typical Mass (not that there's anything typical about Holy Mass). Chesterton Academy instructor Julian

Ahlquist read the readings, and then the priest proclaimed the Gospel and gave an eloquent sermon that ended, prophetically, on the word marriage, which he emphasized.

Then to the congregation's complete surprise, he announced that we had been invited to a wedding. The couple were called forth, Miki Tracey and Joey Odendahl. Miki Tracey is a longtime associate of the American Chesterton Society and is probably most famous for bringing the Petta wine to the conferences, having inherited the recipe from the late Frank and Ann Petta, founders of the Midwest Chesterton Society who were instrumental in starting the earliest Chesterton conferences.

Joey Odendahl is well-known to Chestertonians as the screenwriter, producer and director of the movie, *Manalive*, based on Chesterton's novel. But few knew the developing relationship between Miki and Joey until that Saturday evening during Mass.

The wedding was beautiful, and how blessed and honored the congregation felt to be attending a surprise wedding. And not only that, but afterward, the closing banquet became a surprise wedding reception. The bride and groom were glowing with happiness as their family, friends, and fans surrounded them, wanting pictures, hugs, and autographs—and also Miki's big carboy of Petta Wine, when the wine ran out during the banquet.



Richard Aleman, Brian Lester, Joe Grabowski, William Fahey, and Carl Hasler get an early start on Friday night's afterglow

And, because marriage is, in many ways an inconvenience, and a grand and holy adventure, Dale's wedding gift to Miki and Joey was the annual Inconvenience Award.

Dale said, in his opening talk, that G.K. Chesterton is the key to the New Evangelization that Bl. Pope John Paul II called for. For one thing, Chesterton was

a layman, and "as the Second Vatican Council clearly and rightly understood, it's the laity who will play a fundamental role in bringing the Gospel to the modern world." Why is Chesterton, the 300-pound, cigar-smoking journalist, a key figure in fulfilling the mandate of Vatican II? Because he is not "a mere prophet preaching destruction," Dale

said. He is "a beacon of light in these new dark ages."

Chestertonians are flawed sinners, same as everyone else. But they carry that light with them wherever they go. The light of Chesterton will light the campus of the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, for the 2014 Chesterton Conference. We hope to see you all there. ☞

Winners of the Clerihew Contest

Before Chesterton

HM

William Byrd and Thomas Tallis
Composed a couple of Graduales.
They wrote them for recusant
Catholic Masses

Even though they knew that if she
ever found out, Bloody Bess
would whoop their asses.

— GRETTELYN NYPAVER, *Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

Charles Dickens
Knew a plot thickens
When a man had strife
With his wife.

— JOE GRABOWSKI, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

2ND

Domenikos Theotokopoulos,
Far from the acropolis
Among the populace of Iberia won
great fame,
Though they never could pro-
nounce his name.

— ARCHIE SKEMP, *Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Petty, grasping, Anne Boleyn
Never gave much thought to sin.
Falling early into Henry's bed,
Silly girl! She lost her head.

— MAURA BURNS WATSON, *Great Falls, Virginia*

During Chesterton

HM

H.G. Wells
Learned that fiction sells,
Although it's still a mystery
Why folks bought *The Outline*
of History.

— JOHN PETERSON, *Barrington, Illinois*

Mary Baker Eddy
Had a son who said he
Was feeling a bit ill,
But she wouldn't give him a pill.

— JOE GRABOWSKI, *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

2ND

George Bernard Shaw
Had just one flaw
That led him astray:
He debated G.K.

— JOHN PETERSON, *Barrington, Illinois*

Monsignor Ronald Knox
Was fairly orthodox
But those protesting what he'd dish up
Would complain: "He's a son of a bishop!"

— JEANNE AND LOU HORVATH,
Rochester, New York

After Chesterton

HM

That poor Chalberg, Chuck
Just hasn't got the luck
To write a better clerihew
Than the Horvaths, Jeanne and
Lou, do.

— JEANNE AND LOU HORVATH,
Rochester, New York

Mean old Dale Ahlquist
My poor little arm did twist
Until I wrote this clerihew
For you.

— DEL TEETER, *Waukeegan, Wisconsin*

Has anyone ever seen Dale Ahlquist
Dance a polka, a jig, or do the Twist?
Just imagine if that's what he did everyday!
Let's hope he sticks to promoting G.K.!

— SISTER MARIE VIANNEY, *Spokane, Washington*

I am told that Dale
Thinks the conference is going wale.
What he doesn't know
Is O'Brien paid us to go.

— DANIEL COLLINS, *Oneida, New York*

2ND

I've been tempted by Betty Crocker,
You know, the cake mix hawker.
But I really can't wait, you see,
I have been secretly seeing Sara Lee.

— JOSEPH BRECZINSKI, *Newfoundland, New Jersey*

I appreciate the words of
William Fahey
When he ought to say "him,"
he doesn't say "he."
From his talk I took but one
quote:

"It's a quotation, not a quote."

— KEITH OHLENDORF, *????*

DIS-
HM*

Narcissistic Tony Weiner
Follied though he'd never seen her,
And thus authored his own fall.
All for something oh so...small.

— MAURA BURNS WATSON,
Great Falls, Virginia

(*Dishonorable Mention)

GRAND PRIZE

Best of Show

Sigmund Freud
Is someone to avoid
Unless you think yourself Oedipus Sex
... I mean Oedipus Rex

— PER HANSON, *St. Paul, Minnesota*

“The Englishman’s house is no longer his castle, nor is he king of the castle...his hut is not his hut; his children are not his children; and democracy is dead.”—G.K. CHESTERTON

It’s Time We Demanded More

by Chris Chan

Americans of all political stripes have been increasingly complaining about their elected officials in recent years. There is not enough space here to explain all the ways that government officials have disappointed the citizenry, but I would like to propose a remedy. To be an elected official, you need a lust for power, unshakeable confidence in your own abilities, support from your party’s bosses and political allies, and large sums of cash, just to name a few essentials. What one doesn’t need to be elected is proof that one actually knows enough to be a leader.

Students are constantly tested in order to advance in school, get into college, and obtain an advanced degree. If you want a driver’s license, you need to take a written test, a driving test, and an eye test. Want to be a doctor? A lawyer? A teacher? A taxi driver? You’ll need to pass multiple tests. In the city of Milwaukee, if you want to serve in a civil service position, you must pass “job knowledge tests.” Yet if you want to be a mayor, governor, congressman, senator, or even president, you need only fill out some forms (someone else can do that for you), and get enough people to sign your candidacy petition. At no point do you ever have to demonstrate to your constituency that you know anything about economics, law enforcement, the history of the area you represent, or even that you are functionally literate.

That is why I suggest that we institute a series of qualifying exams that prospective candidates must take before they can run for office. These would be lengthy examinations, consisting of both written and oral components. Every potential candidate, regardless of political party or incumbency, would be required to take this test before every election. All scores and answers would be released to the public. Any test-taker who fails to score above a certain level (perhaps 75 or 80 percent) would be

denied a place on a ballot, and no write-in votes for that person would be counted.

History and Culture

Candidates would be asked to answer questions about the history of the region they represent, and details on previous holders of their office. (Candidates for the presidency or the U.S. Congress would be given an extensive test on both American and world history, politics, and culture.) Issues of demography and current events associated with the districts being represented would be on the test.

Geography

Every potential candidate would have to demonstrate that they know the basic geography of the area they represent. For example, governors and U.S. Senators would be given a blank map of their state divided into counties, and they would be required to fill in the name of every county and identify the location of numerous major cities from a list. Since the results of every test would be made public, missing a question could potentially have some major repercussions on a candidacy (“So, why should the people of Outagamie County vote for you to be their senator when you can’t even identify them on a map?”) Candidates for federal office would have to identify nations from around the world and their capitals.

Economics

Candidates should have to display a basic knowledge of economic principles and fluency with the subject commensurate with an advanced college-level course. Test-takers would be given a sample budget with various expenses, and then they would be compelled to slash a significant percentage from that budget and justify the cuts.

Essay Questions

Various situations, crises, and conflicts

would be described, and the potential candidates would have to describe how they would deal with these situations. Issues such as crime and public safety would be addressed, and candidates would be compelled to elaborate upon the social effects of their positions on issues. Though candidates would not be punished for their specific position, failure to address a question thoroughly would cost a candidate valuable points.

Other relevant topics would also be included. This would require potential candidates to spend large amounts of time becoming experts in the necessary fields needed for leadership roles, and it would also leave documentary evidence of a candidate’s proficiency and opinions.

The oral examination would consist of similar questions posed toward all of the potential candidates. Performed in a game show style, this could be a lot more entertaining than any of the debates staged today.

Candidates who failed the exam would be given one chance at a retake. Should a candidate fail twice, that person would be barred from running for public office (even a sitting president) until the next election. These tests would vary in length depending on the office. The mayoral candidacy for a small city, for example, might take a few hours; the tests for governors, congressmen, and senators might last for a couple of days; and the test for the presidency could take a full week. If a candidate were caught cheating, all the money he raised for his campaign would be donated to local charities, he would be banned from ever running for office again, and possibly a jail term might be thrown into the bargain.

The test would be crafted and administered by volunteers, citizens from a wide variety of backgrounds and holding diverse political perspectives. These volunteers would swear never to run for public office, and they could not be directly related to anybody taking the test.

Would this test solve all the problems in the government? No. But, there is something very satisfying in seeing people with delusions of grandeur sweat from stress, knowing that all the money and power connections in the world can’t help them—they’re on their own. ☺

“The mystery of life is the plainest part of it.” —G.K. CHESTERTON



Modernity's Desire for Gray Smoke from St. Peter's

by Brian C. Potts

GK Chesterton marveled at the contradictory attacks on the Catholic Church. Critics assail the Church for her decorations and glimmer. Yet critics also rebuke the Church for her austerity and gloom. The Church has too many feasts, and too many fasts. The Church idealizes women, but also disdains them. The Church encourages too much meekness and weakness, but also causes the bloodiest wars. The Church shuns science, but also forbids superstition. Chesterton finally realized the charges revealed more about the detractors, who thought any stick was good enough for beating the Church.

John Cassidy wields such contradictory sticks in “Smoke Signals,” published in *The New Yorker* following the election of Pope Francis. The attacks are typical of the times.

Cassidy begins by noting that several procedures in the Church have changed, including the direction priests face, and the languages priests use, during the Mass. Cassidy goes on to claim the Church chooses its Pope according to “traditions that emerged in the Middle Ages.” Whether intended or not, the suggestion is that the process for selecting the pope is somehow impure, somehow unorthodox, somehow illicitly different and changed.

The main thrust of the article, though, is that the Church should change her doctrines, such as those regarding marriage and abortion, and Pope Francis should lead the way.

Thus Cassidy faults the Church for changing, and for not changing.

Some people demand the Church never alter her procedures or forms. Any deviation over time in the rubrics or styles is seen as evidence of illegitimacy, of distance from Christ.

Yet some people demand the Church change her substantive doctrines as often as they no longer suit the tastes of the majority. Insistence on truths regardless

The main thrust of the article is that the Church should change her doctrines, such as those regarding marriage and abortion, and Pope Francis should lead the way.

of popularity is seen as evidence of stubbornness, and of distance from Christ. “Devout” is a bad word among moderns.

Actually, the Church is quite the opposite.

She can change procedures and forms as often as necessary. She can coin new names for timeless truths, such as “Trinity,” a word never used in the Bible. She can instruct her priests to face God in the Tabernacle and speak primarily Latin, or to face the assembly and speak primarily the vulgar tongue, while praying the Mass. Or she can allow both forms. The 2013 conclave hearkened back to the earliest days of the Church, and included changes made by Pope Benedict just before he stepped down. Pope Peter could

wear a brown tunic smelling of fish. Pope Benedict could wear the most spectacular azure robes. And Pope Francis can wear a simple white cassock.

But the Church cannot reverse her doctrines on faith and morals. She cannot say Christ is not God, because in fact Christ is God. She cannot approve abortion, because she cannot change the fact that the fetus is a human being, and the fact that the parents are rational creatures capable of making good choices, and therefore are morally responsible for their actions. She cannot approve “gay marriage” because, as Dale Ahlquist put it in *Crisis Magazine*, such a union is neither “gay” nor “marriage.”

According to the principle of non-contradiction, a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time, in the same place, and in the same manner. Procedures and forms are subject to time and place, and therefore they can generally change across different times and different places without violating the principal of non-contradiction. A form can licitly be one way at one time or place, and a different way at a different time or place.

Faith and morals, however, are not subject to time or place. Therefore they cannot change without violating the principle of non-contradiction. To be sure, doctrines on faith and morals can develop, but they cannot contradict what came before.

The whole point is that the Church teaches things that may contradict whatever a particular group of people happen to say it wants at a particular moment. This is a great thing. What good would it be to have a Church that merely mirrored the majority's whims? The majority's whims were to eat the apple in the garden, to enslave the Israelites in Egypt, to worship a chunk of gold in the desert, to recoil from fighting Goliath, and to crucify Christ.

The mission of the Church is often to resist majorities. The mission of the Church is to change people, so they may see God in heaven, and be satisfied. The mission of the Church is not to change herself, so people may continue to see only themselves, and continue to try to satisfy only their basest desires. ☚

Brian C. Potts is a husband, a father of seven, and an attorney in South Bend, Indiana.

The Christ-like Francis

by Colin Powell

It may be rash to predict the future of our new Pontiff's papacy; I am not one for the art of predictions. But what has startled me, is how both progressive Christians and conservative Christians have taken up this art, and are seeking to determine where the Pope will take the Church. The problem lies with the fact that both schools of thought begin with unclear notions of where the Church's best times occurred.

Pope Francis is no more a progressive than Jesus was a social revolutionary; he is no more a conservative than his predecessor. Pope Francis is that rare breed of Christian who transcends human categories—precisely because they are human categories. Everyone on the nearest street corner has an idea for where the Church should go, and they never tire of telling you what it is. It is no more courageous to merely hold opinion than it is to stand in place on the battle line when the commander sounds for a charge. Courage is to live Christ; not to preach Him. Both the progressive-minded optimist and the conservative-minded nostalgic desire to preach a certain Christ to the world, and to mold his Church into a deformed shape.

The progressive Christian deludes himself into thinking that the Church's golden age is yet to come, when gays will marry and woman will be priests. The error of the progressive is that he goes along with the way of the world, one stands opposed to the way of Christ. When one stands opposed to Christ, one does not serve man as he truly needs to be served. The progressive is so caught up in this image of the Church that he loses sight of the image of man: man who is anything but free until he reckons with his sin. The Church is not a building that stands alongside the world and approves of it; it is a building that stands above the world and shows it how to rise from its ashes.

The conservative Christian is just as deluded as the progressive, thinking that the Church's golden age was behind itself; a distant dream that needs awakening. To believe that the Church is less of the Church

by ridding it of the Latin Mass and certain rituals is the same thing as thinking that man is less of a man when he is wearing no clothes.

You see, both ideologies misunderstand the entire point of the Church. The point being that it transcends temporality; it is eternal. It lives and breathes upon the flesh and blood of Jesus, and is saturated and strengthened by his Word. These fundamentals never change.

The conservative Christian is just as deluded as the progressive, thinking that the Church's golden age was behind itself, a distant dream that needs awakening.

So it should not mean anything monumental for either school of thought, that the Pope washed the feet of a Muslim, and broke from tradition by having Maundy Thursday Mass at a detention center. It is no more telling that the Pope is a radical liberal because he will not live in the Papal apartments, than it shows that I am a Christian because I wear a cross around my neck. Pope Francis understands the

eternal vocation of the Church; to love the poor in the world and to bring man to his conscience, in the hopes of his conversion.

The Church will grow, the more it becomes like Christ, and adheres to its principals of love, charity, compassion, and a true spirit of dialogue. Dialogue is not bending Christian principles, nor is it to be unwilling to explain them to those who ask for an explanation. Dialogue with the world, is to reach to the individual, whether he or she be of any class or creed. Christ won so many to Himself, not because He bent to the whims of the crowd, which desired a social Savior; nor stood attached to the Jewish customs of old, which never imagined a personal Savior. He won people because He brought them to answer the most fundamental yearnings of their hearts. Rather, he showed them that He alone was that answer. He won the individual out of the crowd.

The actions of Pope Francis show that he cares very little for the views of both progressives and conservatives, and wants very much to live like Christ. Christ never fit a category, and every time he was forced into one, he showed that He was above categories. The social revolutionist was silenced when Jesus said to repay Caesar what was Caesar's; and God what was God's. The traditionalist was silenced when Jesus picked grains on the Sabbath. What Pope Francis is showing us, is not only that he is not going to fit into our narrow views, but that perhaps many Christians have not yet met the real Christ. ☞

Friendly Facing

by Joe Campbell

I don't usually shed tears over the demolition of a building. More precisely, I don't ever shed tears over the demolition of a building. But I sometimes feel sad about it.

The demolition of the Legion Hall in downtown Saskatoon especially saddened me. We were born, the building and I, in the same year. Much bolder than I, the building displayed the year of

our nativity on an outer wall for all to see. Much shyer than the building, I didn't even display it on an inner garment for me to see.

The boldness of the building pleased me, especially as our shared date appeared in Arabic numbers. If it had been in Roman numerals, as many dates are, I would not have realized what we had in common until well into my schooling, if

ever. As it was, I knew as soon as I could count that I had been around as long as the Legion Hall.

The building never let me forget it. Even as I aged and tried to distract attention from my accumulating years, the building never let me forget it. But that didn't prevent my mourning its demise. I had adopted the Legion Hall as a kind of mascot and stayed loyal to the end.

When I learned in school that besides an awkward number system, the early Romans had many brave legions, I was delighted. I boasted to my closest friends that I had a brave legion, too. My delight subsided somewhat when they told me that the Legion Hall was a watering hole for war veterans, many of whom were also brave. Alas, I wasn't old enough, or brave enough, to drink the water.

I was fourteen before I saw inside my adopted building. I had bought a trumpet and was looking for someone qualified to teach me how to play. I couldn't believe my good fortune when the first trumpeter I interviewed turned out to be eminently qualified. He played in a dance band that appeared regularly at the Legion Hall. Oh, and he was also a pretty good teacher.

I didn't attend the dances he played. I couldn't afford to. But I was able to observe them surreptitiously. A fire escape that zig-zagged up the back of the building had a landing beneath a small window overlooking the dance floor. From there, I watched and listened to my teacher on weekend evenings when I was able to go downtown. I'm not sure what excited me most, seeing my teacher perform or catching my first glimpses inside the Legion Hall.

Most aspiring musicians are dreamers. I was no different. I dreamt about playing like the jazz icons of the day, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Shavers, Dizzy Gillespie, even Harry James. But almost as much, I dreamt about playing in the Legion Hall.

In time, I was good enough—or the other musicians were bad enough—that I got on as third trumpet with a sixteen-piece orchestra made up mainly of high school students. When no other trumpeter was available, the leader included me in a small group with which I played my first New Year's Eve dance just before I turned sixteen. I was jubilant because it took place at the Knights

of Columbus Hall. Today the Knights, I thought, tomorrow the Legion.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, tomorrow does indeed come. It came for me when we incorporated the orchestra as the Bop City Music Society and put on Sunday jazz concerts financed by silver collections. The Legion Hall was one of the venues.

*I boasted to my closest friends
that I had a brave legion too.
My delight subsided somewhat
when they told me that the
Legion Hall was a watering
hole for war veterans.*

When I first performed there, I felt a deep connection with the building and drank in every feature of the interior. Well, that's not entirely true. Much to my dismay, I was still not old enough to drink the water.

I've lost count of the number of concerts and dances I played at the Legion Hall during my high school and university years. I've also lost count of the number I played elsewhere, as well as the different groups I performed with. Even so, each appearance at the Legion was special, sort of like coming home.

When I graduated from university, I retired from performing publicly as employment in radio and television news encroached on my evenings. In the following decade and a half, I am sorry to say, the Legion Hall and I grew apart, as youthful friends often do. Although it still reminded me of our advancing age whenever I passed by, I wasn't invited inside.

A change in employment led to a resumption of my part-time music career, including performances at the Legion. I couldn't help noticing that the building was no longer as fashionable as it had once been. What's more, it was deteriorating in subtle but detectable ways. I also couldn't help noticing that on both counts the same was true of me. But the passage of time had its consolations. By then I was old enough to drink the water.

My music career had pretty much ended when I learned that the building faced the wrecking ball. The demolition was to clear the way for a re-development of the area where the Legion Hall had boldly displayed our shared birth year.

I contemplated its demise with mixed feelings. That it would no longer remind me of my mortality cheered me. That I would never again drink the water in its congenial surroundings saddened me.

I had no interest in watching its destruction. Although I go to funerals, I draw the line at executions. ☞

The Mystery of Watson's Luncheon

by Sean Fitzpatrick

I had just returned to our Baker Street rooms, and had not even had time to fully remove my things before Sherlock Holmes said, "I am sorry that your luncheon with the young lady was disagreeable to you, Watson."

I was struck to a dead standstill at these words, my hat midway to the peg and my coat half off my shoulders.

Holmes sat hunched down low beneath the tangle of tubes and flasks that crowded his chemistry table.

"Holmes!" I roared. "How in the blazes could you possibly have known that? This really is outrageous! I do hope that you have not been spying on me?"

"My dear Watson!" Holmes cried, his head still buried in the apparatuses. "How dare you suggest such a thing?"

Though you do threaten our partnership with these persistent interests you take in the fair sex, I would never be so crass as to interfere with your personal affairs. I have lectured you on countless occasions concerning my opinion that women are generally not to be trusted, but you may do what you like with them.”

“But come now, Holmes,” I said, “stop dodging my question.”

Sherlock Holmes lifted his head above the equipment. His eyes were encased in an enormous pair of goggles. “What question are you referring to, my good fellow?” he asked, the corners of his mouth trembling with delight at my bewilderment.

“Come off it, Holmes! How did you know I had luncheon with a lady?”

“Watson, to point it out to you would only cause me pain, for it is simplicity itself and I have no desire to shed light on your inability to see the obvious.”

“Then be so kind to suffer me an explanation, though I prove in the end to be as blind as a bat.”

“Very well, Watson,” said he, “if you insist. Before you left earlier this afternoon I could not help but notice the care with which you dressed, choosing that very flamboyant waistcoat of yours. You brushed your hat and polished your shoes—a task which you typically reserve for Saturdays. This being Wednesday, I could not but take note. You even trimmed your moustache. Now, I have never known you to take such precautions to impress whenever you attend your club, neither when you make professional calls. That you were off to keep an appointment with a lady seemed the only viable option. My guess was confirmed beyond all doubt when I saw you pick up an order slip from the sideboard with ‘Maxwelton’s’ printed broadly upon the back, which I know to be a florist’s shop in Covent Garden. Who else should you be meeting but a lady if a bouquet was to be involved? For that matter, Watson, your reticence in telling me wither you were headed was suggestive in itself, since you are well aware of my opinions concerning such dalliances. Are you answered?”

“Not at all,” said I. “How could you have known that I did not enjoy myself?”

“Well, Watson, even though my experience is admittedly limited, I presume that any man would find it tedious

keeping company with a woman who is insecure yet overbearing, clumsy, rather forward with people she does not know well, and whose overall manner tries the normal bounds of masculine patience.”

It was all I could do to keep from hurling the fire irons at the man. I stood before him in complete and utter astonishment.

“I don’t have to be a mind-reader, my good fellow, to see that you stand

Won't You Be My Neighbour?

◆ In the modern town, there are no neighbours, but only strangers

next door. (*Illustrated London News*, April 20, 1918)

◆ The complaint we commonly have to make of our neighbours is that they will not, as we express it, mind their own business. We do not really mean that they will not mind their own business. If our neighbours did not mind their own business they would be asked abruptly for their rent, and would rapidly cease to be our neighbours. What we really mean when we say that they cannot mind their own business is something much deeper. We do not dislike them because they have so little force and fire that they cannot be interested in themselves. We dislike them because they have so much force and fire that they can be interested in us as well. What we dread about our neighbours, in short, is not the narrowness of their horizon, but their superb tendency to broaden it. (“On Certain Modern Writers and the Institution of the Family,” *Heretics*)

◆ But you do not think about the soul of your next-door neighbour. He is not a man; he is an environment. He is the barking of a dog; he is the noise of a pianola; he is a dispute about a party wall; he is drains that are worse than yours, or roses that are better than yours. Now, all these are the wrong ends of a man; and a man, like many other things in this world, such as a cat-o’-nine-tails, has a large number of wrong ends, and only one right one. (*Illustrated London News*, July 16, 1910)

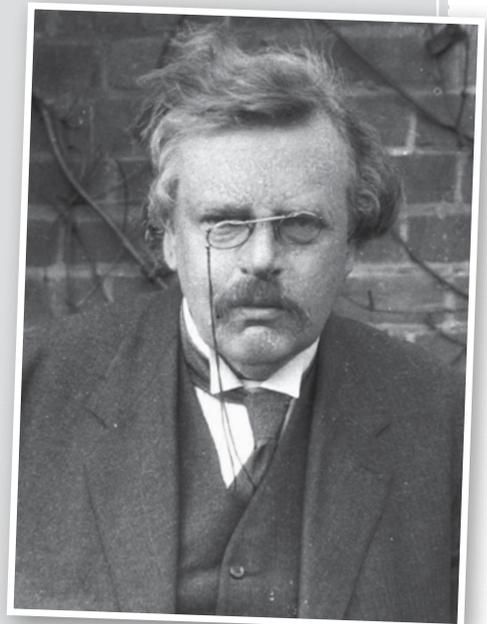
◆ It is hard for the average man to love his neighbour as he loves himself; but he had at least taken some step towards the Christian ideal if he can worry about his neighbour as he worries about himself. (*Daily News*, Sept. 13, 1905)

◆ One of our duties towards our neighbour is to talk about him. (*Daily News*, Sept. 13, 1905)

◆ Just as it is a bad economic sign in the State that masses of our fellow-citizens are too poor to be taxed, so it is a bad ethical sign in the State that masses of our neighbours are too dull to be envied. (*Illustrated London News*, April 11, 1925)

◆ It seems to be a time when men believe they can reconcile nations; but admit that they cannot reconcile neighbors. (*New York American*, March 25, 1933)

◆ Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house; that is, thou shalt not hope to foreclose on it or force him to sell it or do him out of it by any legal trick any more than raid it like a robber. (*Sign*, Nov. 1931)



thunderstruck and that, therefore, my various deductions must be true, which I am very sorry to learn, Watson, for your sake.”

“But how could you have guessed at all that, and so accurately? It doesn’t make an ounce of sense.”

“On the contrary, it makes perfect sense and only because it wasn’t guesswork. You ought to know more of my methods by now, Watson. They were logical conclusions based on observations.”

“You observed that she was both insecure and overbearing?”

“The first thing I became aware of upon your return, Watson, was a faint odor of lavender—no doubt a perfume used by the lady you dined with. There are seventy-five perfumes, which every criminal expert should be able to recognize promptly. But what an excessive application to have permeated the clothing of her luncheon partner! Such extravagant attempts to beautify

are usually symptomatic of an insecure nature, and the scent alone is enough to suggest that her presence is an overbearing one.”

“But clumsy?”

“I perceive three spots on your right shirt-cuff which look very much like sherry stains. How else could you have

It was all I could do to keep from hurling the fire irons at the man. I stood before him in complete and utter astonishment.

received such stains and in such a place except by holding your glass while someone awkwardly poured? Not only does this reveal a certain clumsiness, but also gives further testament to the overbearing female—one who makes so bold as

to pour the wine when a gentleman is at the table.”

“I believe you accused her next of being forward with others?”

“I formed that theory after glancing at your lapel. An orchid adorns it, which was not the case when last I saw you. Whether it is a sample of your gift from ‘Maxwelton’s’ or from a vase on your table I cannot say, but I can say that I know of your repugnance for wearing flowers on your person. How else could this blossom have found a place upon your breast unless this lady fastened it there? Since you would certainly have politely excused yourself from such a proffered courtesy, had your permission been sought, I must imagine that the act was done without your acquiescence. Only an overly forward individual would behave in such a way, especially with a man she hardly knows. Surely, Watson, this is your first serious interlude with the woman, is it not? I cannot believe that such a specimen of femininity as conspicuous as this could have escaped my notice for any length of time.”

I tore the telltale blossom from my coat. “Confound it, Holmes, all that you say is true. But one moment—you said that she drove me beyond the bounds of my patience?”

“When I find the good Watson stamping his feet up the seventeen steps to our rooms, angrily tearing his hat from his head, and clenching his teeth so tightly as to distort both the cheeks and temples, I know, unless I am much mistaken, that his nerves have been sorely tried. As I said, Watson, it is simplicity itself.”

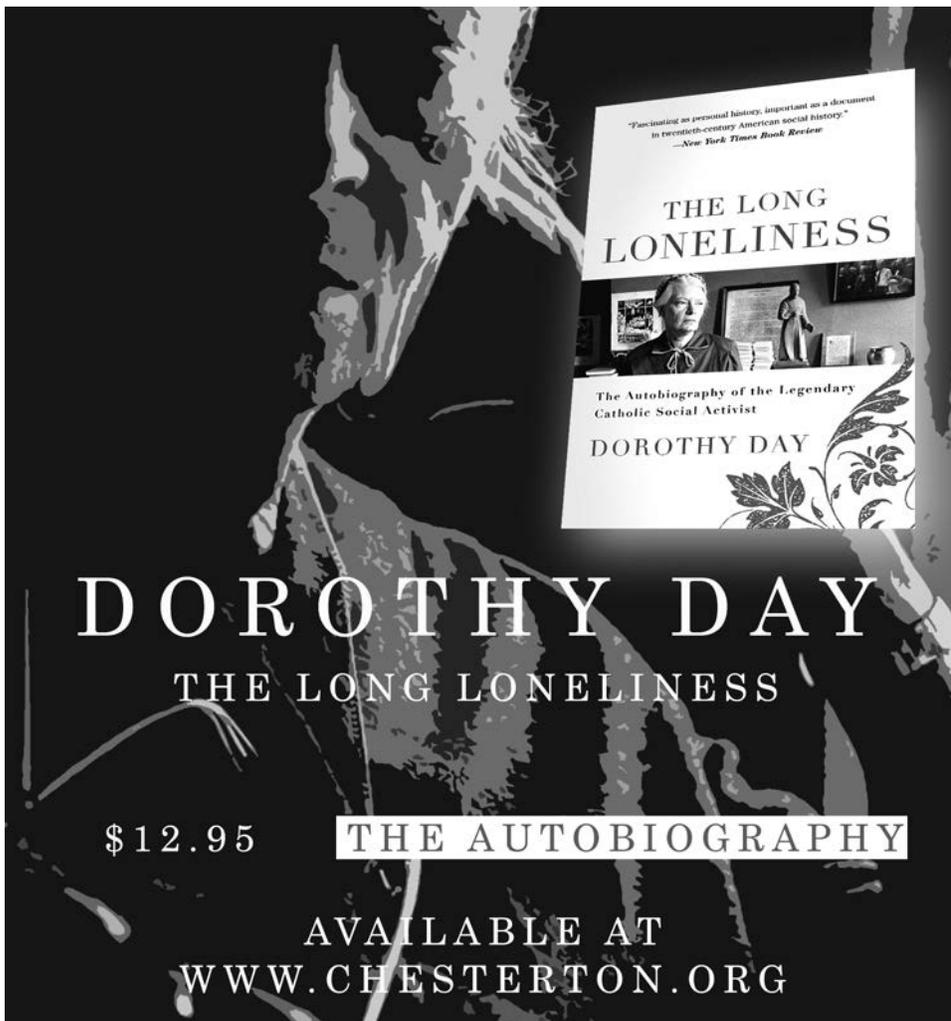
“My patience, Holmes, is being tried from every quarter,” I growled. “Next you’ll be telling me what she looked like.”

Holmes raised his face from the dish that he had been holding over his Bunsen burner.

“Oh, she was quite beautiful, indeed,” said he.

I raised my hands in defeat.

“There can be no doubt about it,” Holmes said, laying aside his work. “What else but a remarkably beautiful face could have kept a connoisseur like you in such agonies for full four hours? No, a beauty she must be. What did you have for lunch?” ☞



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Heating Contractor

by James G. Bruen Jr.

Looks like a heating contractor,” said the elderly man, peering from behind the curtains that covered the picture window in the small living room of the secluded cottage in the deep forest. “At least that’s what it says on the side of the truck, Gretta.”

Rocking gently in a chair, his sister looked up from her knitting. “I don’t know if we should let him in,” she said. “He might try to scam us, just like that man who came last year who said he’d fix our driveway, then he wanted to do the roof, too, then he was going to replace our windows, and before long he wanted us to pay him lots of money. Con men always try to cheat old people, Hans.”

“At least we got him to check out our heating system before winter came,” replied her brother as the technician navigated the leaf-strewn cobblestone path to their door. “This one looks like a nice young man. He’s a little portly, but he moves easily and is dressed in a nice crisp uniform.” Hans closed the curtain and went to the door. “We should get a measure of the man before we decide what to do,” he added, “but we need to make provision before winter sets in again, Gretta.”

“Well, that other fellow wanted our credit card numbers,” protested his sister. “The nerve of him. Did he really think we are that gullible?”

“Thank heaven we don’t have any credit cards,” he laughed.

“Whatever you decide will be all right, dearie,” she sighed, the knitting needles moving nimbly. “Just be sure to offer him some candy.”

Hans unchained the door and opened it before the man was able to knock. Crisp

autumn air flooded the cottage. Once the repairman explained he was offering a complimentary no-obligation inspection of the home’s heating and air conditioning system, Hans let him in, noting that their home was not air conditioned but had a custom-made gas furnace. The

The three chatted briefly in the living room. The two men remained standing; Gretta continued rocking.

repairman carried a small hard plastic toolbox. He donned paper shoe covers before entering.

The three chatted briefly in the living room. The two men remained standing; Gretta continued rocking. The knitting needles flew rapidly the entire time.

The repairman, Larry, said he would give them a written estimate before undertaking any repairs or maintenance. He assured them that his company was licensed and bonded, that it was registered with both the Chamber of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau, and that it was rated highly on Angie’s List. Gretta offered Larry sugar candies. Hans wanted to know who Angie was.

“What do you think, Gretta?” asked Hans at the conclusion of the chat. “Should we have Larry look at the furnace?”

“He looks like a sweet young man, Hans, but I’m not very good about these things,” she said. “It’s up to you.”

The cottage had no basement. Hans

led Larry through the kitchen to an alcove that housed the furnace.

“I’ve never seen a unit like this,” commented the technician, “or this large—I could almost walk into it. I like the window that lets you see inside. Custom built, you say?”

“Yes,” replied Hans. “We replaced the one used by the old crone who lived in the cottage before us. The people who built it for us thought we were over-building, but we like it. It works well.”

Larry placed his toolbox next to the furnace, emptied his pockets of phone and keys, turned the gas cock to off, and set about inspecting the furnace. “Electric ignition,” he noted. “I don’t see many of those.”

“Custom built, just the way we wanted,” repeated Hans proudly.

“Do you mind if I watch?” asked Hans.

“Not at all,” said Larry. “If I see any problems, I’ll point them out to you.”

A large double pane window covered much of the door to the furnace. Larry unclasped the door and swung it open. He looked about the interior with the aid of a small flashlight. “What an unusual configuration,” he observed. “That looks like an oven rack in there!”

Larry leaned inside for a better view. Hans quickly shoved Larry in, shut and relocked the door, and turned the gas cock back to on. Ignoring the muffled screams emanating from inside the furnace, Hans retreated to the kitchen where, standing on a stool to reach above a cabinet, he toggled a switch from “heat” to “cook.” He set the control at 250 degrees Fahrenheit before climbing down.

“How is it going, Hans?” asked his sister from the living room.

“Very well, Gretta,” he replied, joining her. “He’ll take a while to cook, but we’ll be well provisioned for the winter.”

“Did you remember to get the keys?” she asked. “It was quite difficult getting rid of that truck last year after that other man’s keys melted.”

“Yes, Gretta,” said Hans. “Larry left them on the floor outside the oven.”

“It’s getting late,” said Gretta, setting aside her knitting. “Let’s wait until morning to move the truck. No telling what criminals might be out and about in the night.”

Jack and the Giant Apple

by Kelsey MacIntyre

When Jack's father died, Jack and his aunt moved to a cottage to tend goats until Jack was old enough to find work in the village. Now, Jack's aunt had heard that giants lived in the surrounding hills, so when all of the apples on the old apple tree in the backyard vanished overnight, she decided to send Jack after the thief. She was not particularly fond of apples, but she was even less fond of children, and giants are known for crunching up children and swallowing them faster than you can bake a poisoned pastry or devise a way to lure them off the forest path.

Jack walked, and walked, and finally, when the evening sun leaked out from under the moist gray clouds, he heard something unusual. It was coming from just beyond the next hill, and it sounded like crunching. Jack did not know he lived in a giant-infested area, but he certainly knew about giants, and he, unlike his aunt, remembered where he had learned about them: his father was a great storyteller and used to entertain the family with tales of magical creatures and monsters. Jack's aunt, suspicious and not at all imaginative, only remembered the parts of the stories that might help her avoid meeting any such creatures, such as which regions of the country they inhabited. But Jack, imaginative and very rarely suspicious, remembered the descriptions of the creatures themselves—their habits, strengths, and most importantly, weaknesses.

The chomping and slurping continued and Jack, expecting a troll or an ogre or some other such beast, crept up on his stomach and peered down the other side of the hill. He saw what looked like an enormous apple, crouched below and munching on smaller apples that it balanced between slab-like arms cut from its sides. Its eyes were closed, two slanted gashes, and it was making too much noise to notice Jack.

Jack clambered to his hands and knees and shouted, "Hey!"

The Apple stopped mid chew and its

eyes peeled open. "What do you want?" he said, his voice as wet and grainy as a pool of quicksand.

"Those are my apples!" Jack said, and then, afraid of giving too bold an impression, added quickly, "What are you?"

The Apple seemed displeased by the question—his eyes became slitty again and a draining sound like a leaky barrel came from his throat. "I'm a giant, of course!" he cried. "You see how big I am, don't you?"

Jack looked from the Apple's supple brown stem to his shiny red belly. "I can see you're big," he said finally, thoroughly perplexed. "But you don't look like any of the giants I've ever heard about."

"I look perfectly well like a giant apple!" the Apple roared. "You're head must be very mushy if you expect me to look like a giant goose or a giant person. Really! How silly boys are nowadays. I think I'll just have to crunch you up."

"Pardon me, sir giant," Jack said, feeling that good manners could not be amiss at this point. "I've just never seen a giant apple as fine and shiny as you."

"The more I eat, the shinier I get," the Apple said, a reply which Jack found quite disconcerting. He tried to remember the stories his father used to tell, especially the one about a cat who once defeated a giant by tricking him into assuming a form the cat could devour.

"Are you, by any chance, one of those giants who can change shape at will?" Jack said, in the soft, coaxing tone he used to get ladybugs to crawl onto his palm. "Could you, for example, turn into something that flies, like a hawk, or something that swims, like a seal? Or perhaps something smallish, like... a pie?"

"No," the Apple said. "Why on earth would apples be able to change shape?"

"Oh, of course," Jack said. "I don't know why. They wouldn't, I suppose."

"What can I do?" he thought. "The stories never mentioned giant apples!" He was almost sure he would be crunching up. The Apple, growing bored and a little hungry, picked up another stolen apple to munch on, and that was when Jack remembered something else. He remembered the way the wind usually scattered green apples underneath his aunt's apple tree, and how they rolled and bounced and bruised. He remembered touching the dark jelly under the bruised skin.

"Very well," he said, leaning over the

Credo XIII

♦ I believe in the essence of the old doctrine of equality, because it appears to me to result from all conceptions of the divinity of man. Of course there are inequalities, and obvious ones, but though they are not insignificant positively, they are insignificant comparatively. (*Thomas Carlyle, CW 18:27*)

♦ If I believe in immortality I need not think about it. But if I disbelieve in immortality I must not think about it. ("The Maniac," *Orthodoxy*)

♦ I believe in the right of national self-defence. (*G.K.'s Weekly, Nov. 14, 1925*)

♦ I believe more and more that there are no trivialities but only truths neglected. (*New Witness, March 8, 1918*)

♦ I believe that it was always common ground to people of common sense that the enslavement and importation of negroes had been the crime and catastrophe of American history. ("Prohibition in Fact and Fancy," *What I Saw in America*)

♦ I believe that the only way to say anything definite is to define it, and all definition is by limitation and exclusion; and that the only way to say something distinct is to say something distinguishable; and distinguishable from everything else. In short, I think that a man does not know what he is saying until he knows what he is not saying. (*Illustrated London News, Dec. 15, 1934*)

ridge so he was just within the Apple's reach. "You win. You can eat me, and I bet I'll taste a whole lot better than those bitter apples. But you need to catch me first!" And he jumped up.

With a noise like a starfish being ripped from a wet rock, the Apple opened his mouth, threw the apple core aside, and rolled after Jack.

Jack ran—up and over hills, between rocks, his shoes scuffing on the uneven path and the rumble of the rolling Apple-giant behind him. The sun had sunk below the horizon and a foamy gray dusk hung in the air instead. Jack hoped his aunt would keep her wits about her and come out of the cottage when she heard the noise.

"I will roll you flat and chomp you down!" the Apple bellowed, but as Jack glanced over his shoulder he saw that each bump sent the beast higher and higher into the air, and that each time he collided into the ground again a shadow of bruising appeared on his red flanks.

The final hill before the cottage was the steepest; Jack almost tripped as he began to climb it, but he grasped handfuls of the thick grass and pulled himself up. The Apple rolled faster and faster, building up enough speed to reach the top as well. He intended to catch Jack on the way down the other side, when the boy would be unsteady.

"Aunty!" Jack called, when he was almost to the crest of the hill. "Hurry out to the garden!"

Jack's aunt had been huddled by the kitchen window listening to the distant crashes and shouts for quite some time, but when she heard Jack call she suspected a trick, naturally assuming that other people disliked her as much as she disliked them. "That crafty child wants the giant to eat me instead of him," she thought, and bolted the door.

"Aunty, please come out!" Jack called again, pausing on top of the hill. "There's an apple on its way to the cottage and if you don't move it will crush you!"

Jack's aunt heard the word "apple" and thought Jack was trying to bribe her with the promise of the stolen apples she had sent him to retrieve. "Stay far away from me, you wicked boy!" she screamed. "The giant can have you, for all I care!"

The Apple finally rounded over the hilltop and Jack was forced to dive out of the way. Unable to change direction quickly on such a steep slope, the Apple barreled downward, past Jack, past the garden wall and the bare apple tree, and straight into the side of the cottage with a splat. Timbers and plaster showered from the ceiling, coating the giant in dust and splinters. Jack ran down the hill in pursuit, but when he reached the rubble neither the Apple nor his aunt stirred.

As for Jack, he filled a knapsack with slightly dusty buns and set out for the village. No one knows what he did there until he was old enough to find work, but I'm sure he thought of something interesting. After all, one of the most important things to have when seeking your fortune is imagination, and Jack had plenty of that. ☞

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Pieces of a Puzzle

What Might Have Been

Volume 14, Part Three of the *Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*

According to G.K. Chesterton's own account, he became a journalist by accident. But it is clear that he was an aspiring writer long before he made his living as a writer. The discovery of his early notebooks revealed that he was developing his literary skills just as a master musician must practice and practice on his instrument, taking whatever ready and innate talent and utterly mastering that art. Reading these stories, some complete, most incomplete, is like listening to that prodigy at practice. There are brief flourishes of virtuosity, there are also random but still beautiful notes, left hanging in the air. There is the frustration of hearing only part of a complete work, there is the anticipation of hearing something not quite ready for the audience. We are eavesdropping, listening through the wall. It is both frustrating and exhilarating.

Perhaps the comparison to a painter would be even more appropriate. We are seeing sketches, color studies, creative experiments, but no finished masterpieces. He can indeed paint vivid pictures using only words. He can combine two or three words perfectly, in a way we could not have imagined, the way a painter combines two colors in an entirely new juxtaposition. He paints familiar scenes to make them startling. He makes wildly imaginative vistas look like classical landscapes. Here are some of the things we see in this gallery of early Chesterton:

In the earliest fragment, a hero named Flickerflash escapes from goblins and is sheltered in the forest, comforted by the

chattering of a squirrel and the banging of a woodpecker.

In "The Queen of the Evening Star," we meet a magical woman, not unlike an apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we also meet, appropriately, the earliest of the many Chesterton characters named Gabriel. Unlike Hope, Syme, and Gale, this Gabriel has no last name.

Chesterton can combine two or three words perfectly, in a way we could not have imagined, the way a painter combines two colors in an entirely new juxtaposition.

In "The Bells of St. Cuthbert," the saint sits in the belfry of his hermitage and decides to let the ringing bells go free, cutting the ropes and watching them fly away, telling them that he will let them know when they must return. What an image. But we never learn of their adventures.

We do learn, however, of the adventures of Prince Wild-fire, who "seemed as if he had come to the edge of the world, and, as science was not invented then, perhaps he had."

"A Traveller's Tale" is a rare and very revealing first-person narrative. The narrator describes growing larger and larger against his will, being told that he speaks very well, and that he is known as "the poor mad boy who stares at everything." He is struggling against madness but

also against greatness. He desires to be simply normal. In a passage that pre-figures Chesterton's later writing about the Book of Job, he tells of being the first to witness creation and achieving that feeling of being "indifferent to all the pranks of heaven and earth."

There is one other, even more wildly creative first-person narrative called "Apotheosis," in which the narrator is none other than God. But it is not megalomania. It is a compassionate account of his love for a fellow image-maker. He has heard the song of the woodcarver.

One of the few complete tales in this collection is the tightly woven "Consistency," which features a shadow of The Quote: "He was...a Roman Catholic and a Royalist, who believed everything, lest he should believe nothing." Hmm.

In "Why the Moon Was Made," Chesterton offers an amazing insight into the subjectivity of nineteenth century Protestantism, answering Kierkegaard's arguments without even having heard them, as a group of Scottish Covenanters debate why the moon was made. Each has his own very narrow interpretation with no consideration of a larger, universal truth. This purely intellectual exchange is subtitled "A Romance."

"The Appalling Five," "The Face of Brass," "The Man with Two Legs," and other fragments found here prefigure The Club of Queer Trades, The Man Who Was Thursday, and Tales of the Long Bow. We even have several tables of contents of unwritten tales, known only by their titles.

Here's another idea for a story. A man acquires this collection of early Chesterton tales, most of which are unfinished, and he reads one of them aloud to his family each evening. They then try to complete the story or argue about how the author might have intended to finish it, or they fly into a rage that they will never know how it ends. This story about stories would appear to be merely Sisyphusian, because they would sit through the same experience the next evening with the same results, and again after that. "The Story of the Unfinished Stories" is a plot for Camus. But we need not bother with it because we know what all these stories led to. We know how Chesterton's story ends. And where ours will end. In the Inn at End of the World. ☞



Black Widow Spiders

by David Beresford

The most childlike thing about a child is his curiosity and his appetite and his power of wonder at the world.

—WHAT I SAW IN AMERICA, G. K. CHESTERTON

Nancy Pelosi said, one time after an electoral victory for her party, that she or he or whoever she was talking about had the Midas touch. It is a common blunder. King Midas was a king who turned everything he touched into gold, and the logic of the idea is that gold is good, so anyone who can turn things into gold must be a great person. Of course, in the story, the ability to turn things to gold was a curse placed on King Midas, so that everything he loved was destroyed, changed from its natural beauty into hard cash. Only an idiot would miss such an obvious point, but as I said above it is a common blunder. I suppose that when it comes to learning lessons, we can never remove ourselves from the lesson itself.

This applies to the book of nature as well. Aesop, a miserable cynic, revealed much about himself when he wrote the story of the ant and the grasshopper. In this story, a grasshopper sings all summer while an ant greedily stashes food away for winter. When winter comes, the grasshopper approaches the ant, whereupon the ant lectures the grasshopper about missed opportunities and laziness. The grasshopper dies of starvation and cold, and the ant is snug in his house, warmed by the self-righteous contemplation of his stored-up wealth. Of course, real grasshoppers are far from lazy, they are constantly at work eating so they can make lots of eggs, and ants tend to be

quite lazy, picking up light loads, and often walking back and forth pretending to be busy. This is so common that there are special ant castes whose job it is to find the shirkers to force them back to work. Solomon had it right when he said “go to the ant thou sluggard”, which shows the difference between wisdom and cynicism.

The black widow spider has a curious mating ritual. The male, urged on to breed, approaches the larger female, who, after mating, proceeds to catch and eat the hapless male. The technical term for this kind of behavior is sexual cannibalism. It is this that gives the spider the common name of “black widow spider”. Some curious contradictions arise from having this name given to the species; we speak of a male black widow spider, or unmated female black widow spiders—illogical phrases, given the normal meaning of the words.

The black widow spider is a poisonous spider, and one of the few that can kill a man in North America. Normally a black widow spider bite would result only in a long sickness, accompanied by intense pain, with the bitten limb turning black and swelling up like a balloon. In the early 1900s a curious entomologist wanted to describe the effect of the bite in detail. He placed a female black widow

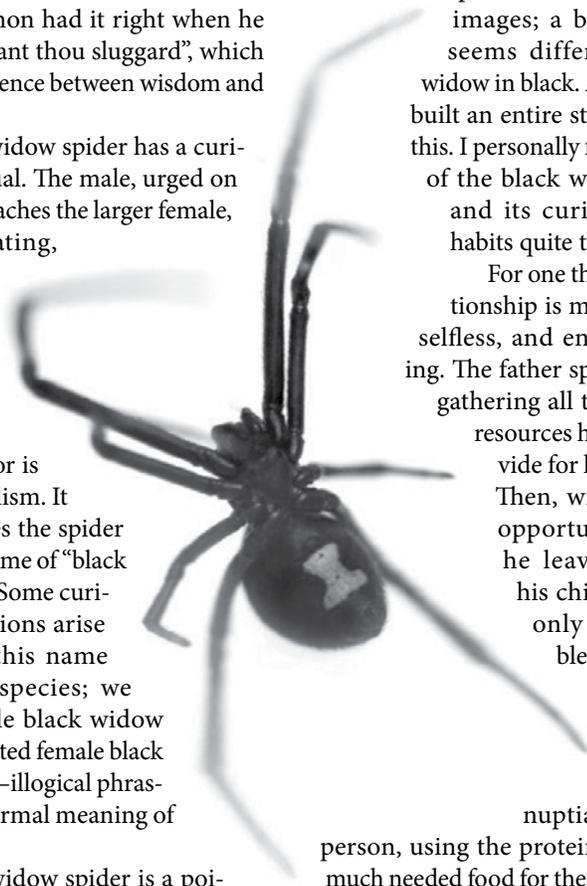
on his left arm and goaded her into biting him. His clinical observations were published, at least those observations that he was able to record before becoming unconscious. His recovery took about a year. This is a hard way to get a research paper published, and lends an interesting flavor to the proverbial academic advice to scientists that they must either publish or perish.

Her poison is not meant for us so much as for killing her prey. She is a solicitous mother, and builds a haphazard web in dark places such as under porches or in the dark corners of a garage or shed. Normally one would never find a black widow spider, unless playing hide-and-seek.

It is odd how the phrase black widow spider evokes negative images; a black widow seems different than a widow in black. Alice Cooper built an entire stage show on this. I personally find the story of the black widow spider and its curious mating habits quite touching.

For one thing, the relationship is monogamous, selfless, and entirely trusting. The father spends his life gathering all the food and resources he can to provide for his offspring. Then, with the brief opportunity he has he leaves it all to his children in the only way possible. His spouse, in the only way she can, accepts the nuptial gift of his

person, using the protein to provide much needed food for their eggs. These she carefully guards with the rest of her life. I do not know if she tells her young children about their father’s self-sacrifice on their behalf. I suppose she does not need to: their sons will follow the father’s example for their own children when they grow up, and their daughters will follow hers. There are few stories of nature that are more edifying than this. 



“What do you call the man who wants to embrace the chimney sweep?”
 “A saint,” said Father Brown. —G.K. CHESTERTON



Sainthood for Frances and Gilbert?

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

All this sainthood talk about Gilbert, what about Frances? If ever there were two people more closely knit into a marriage than Gilbert and Frances Chesterton, we have yet to find them. George Bernard Shaw invented the name ChesterBelloc to describe Chesterton's close association with Hilaire Belloc; but before that, Gilbert himself invented the ChesterBlogg to describe a different sort of close association.

Gilbert and Frances relied on each other. Frances was raised agnostic, but became an Anglo-Catholic. When Frances met Gilbert, he was a theist, unsure of his faith. Through the course of their three-year engagement, he came to believe in Christianity. He credits his conversion to Frances in *The Ballad of the White Horse*:

Therefore I bring these rhymes to you
 Who brought the cross to me

In a letter he wrote Maurice Baring he said, “I am concerned most...about... Frances, to whom I owe much of my own faith...”

They had wanted a family, and tried heroically to have one. However, when it became clear to Gilbert and Frances that they could not have children, they discussed other options. They began a concerted effort to make sure they helped the children who came their way. Children came to visit for extended periods of time, the door always open to Uncle Gilbert and Aunt Frances's house.

Frances contemplated the manger scene. Her special attention was to Bethlehem, and she wrote more about the

subject of Christmas than any other subject she wrote about. She wrote Christmas Eve plays for children. She set up a large Nativity every year, always in a place of honor. Frances leads us to the Christ Child.

Frances's heart, like Mary's, was full of sorrow. She feared, as she confided to Father O'Connor, that she wasn't carrying her cross well. Her humility shines through. She took her energy, and used it keeping track of Gilbert. She negotiated his contracts, took dictation, made meals, tended the garden, darned socks, debated him,

She cared about children. She wrote plays to help teach them.

She tutored them. She loved them. Frances teaches us how to love all the children in our lives.

prayed with him, kept track of his schedule and lectures, kept his notes in order, kept a box of cigarillos for him, and always knew where his glasses were. There is no record of her ever losing her temper; but there is a record of how marvelously patient she was with him, even when he inadvertently hurt her feelings.

And while doing all of this, she still had time to think her own thoughts, pray her own prayers, and dream her own dreams.

Gilbert called his wife's life a heroic tragedy. Frances bore many sorrows. Her life certainly did not go the way she planned it. And yet, she always had hope, she always looks to the Christ Child. And she kept her sorrows hidden deep in her heart.

No one besides Gilbert even knew she

was sad inside. She never talked about herself. She kept busy helping others, and in that way, overcame her sorrows. She was always thinking of others. Father Vincent McNabb said she had “self-forgetfulness.”

In this way, Frances is a great example. There are very few women who would say their married lives turned out just the way they planned. There are silent sorrows many women bear, and some bear them sadly while others bear them bravely. Frances teaches us how to be brave.

Frances is an exemplary wife. Many women have artistic or creative type husbands, and struggle to understand their needs and wants. Frances was ever so patient, so calm, so gentle with Gilbert. She is a good example to us of how to be a good wife. Frances teaches us how to be patient, and love the spouse God has given us.

Frances was an excellent Aunt and Godmother. She knew that childhood is a special time, and she took time to listen to children, play with them, sing to them, and create puppet shows for them. As they grew, she made tea and was patient enough to listen to the young people struggling to find their place in the world. She cared about them. She wrote plays to help teach them. She tutored them. She loved them. Frances teaches us how to love all the children in our lives.

Imagine for a moment, Gilbert Keith Chesterton without Frances. Gilbert alone could have been a famous author, but he would have failed to arrive at most of his speaking engagements. He would have eaten, drunk, and smoked excessively—more than he actually did—and died in 1915. He would have failed to write *The Everlasting Man*, *Eugenics and Other Evils*, *St. Francis of Assisi*, *The Outline of Sanity*, a bunch of Father Brown books, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, and a whole lot of other articles and books. He might never have converted to the Catholic faith. Without Frances, he simply would not have been able to do all he did.

Indeed, their marriage, as most marriages which are sacramental, was their path to heaven. Our spouse is our God-given way to heaven. Our spouse loves us, but is also willing to point out our short-comings. Gilbert needed Frances to get to heaven. Frances needed Gilbert in exactly the same way. If Gilbert is a saint, then certainly Frances is one, too. ☪

“No Devil Worshipers Please”—G.K. CHESTERTON



Cheers!

by Victoria Darkey

In the days and weeks following the American Chesterton Society conference in Worcester Massachusetts, local Chesterton Societies were abuzz with the news. We heard that we are witnessing “the beginning of the beginning” of the road to canonization for Gilbert Keith Chesterton. We have embarked on an adventure marked by hoping, watching, waiting, and praying for official recognition of Chesterton’s holiness. When we heard the news, we cheered.

The Catholic Church’s process of declaring the sainthood of any person is a journey: usually a lengthy one. This is fitting, as the path to holiness in this life is a journey: usually a lengthy one. G.K. Chesterton was well acquainted with spiritual journey. In fact, when it comes to journeying through the spiritual life, Chesterton is considered by many to be a master. His life was a continuous walk along a path to holiness, which led him from one spiritual place to another. The view of him on the path has inspired numerous souls to follow. They have found that the path leads deeper into the Truth and the Light of Christ. Chesterton’s path led him from the darkness of agnostic despair into the light of Christianity. It eventually led him into the fullness of communion with Mother Church here on earth. We now wait and hope for The Mother to acknowledge her son, and to testify that his path ultimately led him to holiness and to the Communion of Saints in Heaven.

Non-Catholics may question why the fuss about Chesterton’s possible canonization. “After all,” they might comment,

“Chesterton was a Christian, so we know he’s in heaven.”

Before I was a Catholic, my understanding of the communion of saints was defined as the fellowship shared between true believers. Of course, it was up to the believers to determine the definition of “true believer”.

It also went without saying that this “fellowship” was strictly an earthly affair, excluding believers who were on the other side of death. I viewed this limit as a prudent boundary, which would keep the

Chesterton left behind a great testament to the truth in the volumes of his writings and in the witness of his life. When, God willing, the Church recognizes his path to holiness, she will present him to the world.

believer from falling into the dangerous and forbidden arena of necromancy and other occult practices.

In addition, the idea that deceased Christians had any ability to act in heaven on our behalf, or to interact in the earthly realm of the living were notions regarded as remnants of medieval superstition; something, I’d been taught, all good Christians should guard against.

Then, the path I was on brought me to a place where I was confronted with the Catholic Church. My position on the Communion of Saints began to seriously unravel when I recognized that it was pride and fear that held it together. The

next step on my path toward Christ was to choose the way of trust and humility.

In chapter 4 of *Orthodoxy*, Chesterton writes, “Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about...” I realized that my limited view placed me in that “small and arrogant oligarchy.” I knew the Good Shepherd was calling me to walk toward a larger, more humble place. By considering the valuable spiritual input available from the Saints, I began to understand the importance of what Chesterton calls the “democracy of the dead.”

I then received the grace to trust the Holy Spirit to speak through the Magisterium. With the authority of the Church investigating and sanctioning the Communion of Saints, I was freed from fear; free to trust the light in the Saints and to experience a fellowship with those the Church recognizes as living in the heavenly household of God:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.

In the context of the Church dogma of the Communion of Saints, the reality of this scripture passage from the Letter to the Hebrews came to life more clearly than ever before. As we journey in this life, those who’ve gone ahead, and finished well, are cheering for us. They’ve successfully found the right path: the path that leads to Christ. They are supporting us with their prayers, and providing continuous encouragement to persevere on the path, through the examples of the lives they led while on earth.

Chesterton left behind a great testament to the truth in the volumes of his writings and in the witness of his life. When, God willing, the Church recognizes his path to holiness, she will present him to the world, and many more souls will have the chance to recognize and follow his path to holiness. His voice will then be heard as that of one who cheers us on from his place in the heavenly choir. And those of us hoping, watching, waiting and praying down here will cheer again. ✠

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



Poiesis

by David W. Fagerberg

It is a pity that G.K. Chesterton and CS Lewis never met. At least I've found no evidence that they did, although they overlapped (Lewis 1898–1963, GKC 1874–1936). England does not seem like that large a country. Lewis would have been ten years old when Chesterton wrote *Orthodoxy*; Chesterton would have been fifty-one when Lewis's conversion was helped by reading *Everlasting Man*. Lewis was thirty-eight when Chesterton died, and lived beyond him by a quarter century. What a conversation they would have had—someone more clever than I could write a fictional dialogue. But right now I am thinking about how vigorously they would have nodded in agreement over a glass of beer when discussing the value of story-telling.

Lewis wrote an essay titled "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," and in it he identifies various reasons why people object to fantasy. Each of them remind me of Chesterton in some way. Here is what their possible exchange over Lewis's list would have been like.

◆ **OBJECTION #1:** Fairytales are scary.

Lewis replies that none of his fears as a child came from fairytales, and if a parent confines a child's reading list to books "in which nothing at all alarming ever happens, you would fail to banish the terrors, and would succeed in banishing all that can ennoble them or make them endurable.... Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage."

Chesterton's reply: "Fairytales, then, are not responsible for producing in

children fear...because it is in the world already. Fairytales do not give the child his first idea of bogey. What fairytales give the child is his first clear idea of the possible defeat of bogey. The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairytale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon."

◆ **OBJECTION #2:** Children will confuse fact and fancy.

Lewis disagrees: "Does anyone suppose that [the child] really and prosaically longs for all the dangers and discomforts of the fairytale?—really wants dragons in contemporary England?"

Chesterton: "Though I might fill the world with dragons, I never had the slightest real doubt that heroes ought to fight with dragons."

◆ **OBJECTION #3:** Children's stories are childish, and we should outgrow them.

Lewis's reply: "A children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story.... No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally worth reading at the age of fifty—except, of course, books of information." (One is reminded of the sort of books that Eustace Scrubb read: "He liked books if they were books of information and had pictures of grain elevators or of fat foreign children doing exercises in model schools.")

Chesterton's reply is summarized by Maisie Ward: "He had begun in boyhood by realizing that the world as depicted in fairytales was saner and more sensible than the world as seen by the intellectuals of his own day." That is the whole basis for

the ethics of Efland. Chesterton was not worried about dragging children out of childhood, but of dragging adults back into it. It is adults, not children, who need fairytales in order to enable them to recover the sense of elementary wonder. "This is also why the new novels die so quickly, and why the old fairy tales endure forever."

◆ **OBJECTION #4:** Fairytales will make the real world seem dull.

Lewis believes the current in fact flows in the opposite direction. To have a fantastic castle in the clouds does not make the ordinary home seem boring. "Paradoxically enough, it strengthens our relish for real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure to the actual... [The child] does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted." Far from dulling the world, the excursion into fairyland gives the world a new dimension of depth. "It would be much truer...to say that fairy land arouses [in the child] a longing for he knows not what."

I cannot think of a more accurate description of Chesterton's goal. "These tales say that apples were golden only to refresh the forgotten moment when we found that they were green. They make rivers run with wine only to make us remember, for one wild moment, that they run with water."

Those who can, do; those who can't, teach. As a professional teacher, I have lived under that accusation for thirty years, so I have become inured to the charge. I cannot write stories; but I can write about writing stories, as I have done here. I find both of these men enlightening, though it is a light I can only appreciate from a distance. The root of our word "poetry" is *poiesis*, which does not mean finding words that rhyme, it means being *able to make things*. Lewis made Malacandra and Narnia; Chesterton made Fr. Brown and *The Man Who Was Thursday*. Even better, Chesterton would sometimes disappear into his bedroom when he had diminutive guests at Beaconsfield and return with an illustrated epic. It justifies J.R.R. Tolkien in describing man as a sub-creator. We stand under the first and true Creator, but we do not stand idle. ☸

"The mystery of life is the plainest part of it." —G.K. CHESTERTON



Knife Fight

by James G. Bruen Jr.

Tell me about yesterday, Potter," smiles Patrick Maloney as he takes the stool next to Otto Potter's at the counter in the Route 29 Diner. "Quite a collar, I hear," he adds.

The other uniformed cop grunts without looking up from his coffee. He couldn't tell if Maloney was being sarcastic or not. The waitress pours a mug for Maloney. "The usual, honey?" she asks; it's more a declaration than a question.

"Yeah, Maggie," says Maloney.

Potter swirls a stirrer in his black coffee. "You know that Vietnamese barber on 50?"

"The one that comps us?"

"Yeah, that's the one. I just got mine cropped, and I walk out, and there this black SUV pulled up 'longside the curb, motor runnin'. Full tinted Explorer. I rap a window and point to the 'No Standing' sign. Black dude lowers the window a couple of inches. He's wearin' a NFL knit cap with one of them goofy pompons—Ravens, not Skins. Ridin' low on his brow; long dreads hangin' from under it; dark sunglasses. I can't hardly see his face. Then that nigga flips off this nigga!"

"Bad ass," laughs Maloney. "You flip him back?"

"I'm boilin'," says Potter.

"I love to see black turn red!" Maloney laughs louder.

Maggie slides a plate in front of Maloney: two eggs over easy, white toast, bacon, and potatoes fried with onions. Maloney splashes ketchup over the eggs and potatoes and digs in.

"I'm about to write the dude up,"

continues Potter, "when a guy yells at me from the Korean barbecue a couple of doors down from the barber shop. 'Officer, Officer,' he screams. 'Knife fight! Help! Help!' I turn around, and this white guy's dressed all in black with one of those white collars, and he's holding the barbecue door open and pointing inside. He keeps on yellin' for me."

"A priest," observes the Irish cop.

"You're quick, Maloney," snorts Potter, turning towards Maloney for the first time.

"So much for writin' the Explorer dude up," Potter continues. "I'm inside the barbecue real quick. But there's nothin' to see. Just the priest, another white guy, and two waitresses can't hardly speak English. No knives, no fight, no nothin'. Real quiet."

"Priest suckered you?" Maloney says while shoving potatoes into his mouth.

"I'm askin' him what's up when through the window I see two dudes bolt from the bank that's between the barber and the barbecue. They got black ski masks coverin' their heads and they packin' serious hardware. They got into the Explorer real quick."

Maggie refills Maloney's mug but Potter puts his hand over his.

"The priest was a phony?" exclaims Maloney. "A lookout who diverted you! Protecting the bank robbers in case something went sour?"

"The Explorer pulls away immediately," continues Potter, "but no screechin' tires or anythin' else that'd call attention. I'm out on the sidewalk in a flash with the priest and the other guy too but there's nothin' I can do. They're gone."

"Maybe you should have knelt down and said a prayer with the priest?" laughs Maloney. "Maybe that would have helped you catch them?" He finishes his plate and wipes ketchup from his face with a napkin.

"I figure I'll call the heist in before goin' inside the bank," says Potter, ignoring Maloney's razzing.

Maggie leaves their tabs on the counter and walks away. The coffee is on the house; the food isn't.

"I'm callin' in when the guy in black says 'That's not necessary, Officer' and the other guy agrees with him."

"They were threatening you?" asks Maloney

"No," says Potter.

"Just trying to buy time," observes Maloney, "to facilitate the getaway. Aiding and abetting."

"I called it in anyways."

"Right."

"Turns out, someone beat me to it."

"The bank?"

Maloney slaps a ten on the counter to cover his tab and a tip. Potter's five is pure tip—he'd only had coffee.

"No, a law professor—the guy with the priest."

"What?"

"Yeah, the priest—name's Petersen, from the District—had him call. The priest saw the two dudes in ski masks goin' into the bank and figured out what's goin' down, so he has the prof call 911 on his cell from inside the Korean barbecue. The cars didn't get there before the perps split."

"The dispatcher probably called your car," snorts Maloney.

Potter laughs.

"Besides," challenges Maloney, "why are you so sure the priest fellow wasn't a fake, working with the others? They got away didn't they? Did you check to see if there's really a Petersen priest in DC? Why'd the priest sucker you with that knife fight baloney?"

Maggie sweeps the money from the counter. "Thanks, guys."

"Sucker me? Man, if that priest don't get me away from that Explorer those two guys perforate me soon as they come out that bank. Two on one, and I'd never even see them: writin' up that driver I'd a had my back to them." ☞

A Detective Ahead of His Time

Murdoch Mysteries

(TV series, 2008–)

Created by Maureen Jennings

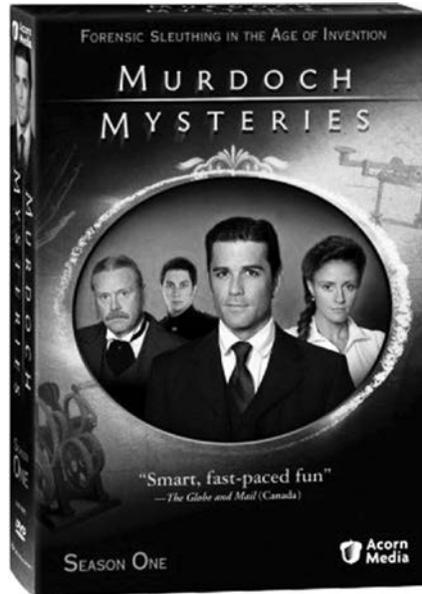
Reviewed by Chris Chan

Murdoch *Mysteries* is a popular Canadian mystery series, but it's also a historical drama and a science fiction series as well. The first four seasons have been collected into a single DVD collection, and as of this writing the fifth season is available separately, and the sixth season has just finished airing. Set primarily in Toronto in the last years of the nineteenth century (the series moves into the twentieth century at the end of the fifth season), the series centers around the title character, Detective William Murdoch (Yannick Bisson), a brilliant young police investigator who solves his crimes with the help of science and technology, often in the form of innovations that did not actually exist at the time. This isn't a series that strives for historical accuracy, so much as it tries to be "accurate-ish."

Murdoch is a dedicated detective and all-around nice guy, and the really likeable Bisson plays the role perfectly. In pretty much every episode, Murdoch creates an anachronistic invention, ranging from a lie detector to a means of transmitting photographic images by telegraph, to sonar, to night-vision goggles, and a lot of other gadgets. One wonders why Murdoch still has to work, since he could probably live like a prince off of his patents. Though Murdoch is a man of science, he is also a man of faith. A strong Catholic in a city filled with Protestants, Murdoch faces discrimination on the job and frequent assaults on the tenets of his faith. Unfortunately, the show usually doesn't allow Murdoch to defend his religious views properly, and his spiritual side is largely relegated to crossing himself every time he comes across a dead body. This is a pity, as the show often passes up on the chance to explore a really interesting aspect of its central character.

The next main member of the cast is Doctor Julia Ogden (Hélène Joy), one of the few women in this era to have a

medical degree. Ogden is the local pathologist and Murdoch's love interest. She is also the show's main source of modern attitudes and politically correct opinions, and though her perspectives are not always anachronistic, the way they are presented is often handled more blatantly than it ought to be. One expects the screenwriter to run onto the set and say, "Well said! Why couldn't more people have thought that way in the 1890s?" Though the series frequently suggests that Murdoch and Ogden are meant to be together, by season three I started rooting against their pairing, partially because I found the Murdoch/Ogden relationship increasingly tiresome, partially because I liked another romantic interest for Murdoch more.



The cast is rounded out by the gruff but warm-hearted Inspector Thomas Brackenreid (Thomas Craig) and the young, often-bumbling, but surprisingly perceptive Constable George Crabtree (Jonny Harris). Their characterizations are distinctly reminiscent of the Stottlemeyer/Disher partnership on *Monk*.

The show is a lot of fun, but its Achilles' heel is its annoying habit of occasionally revealing its knowledge of future events. For example, a UFO-themed episode makes an oblique reference to Roswell, New Mexico. Alternatively, a reference is made to something that the audience

knows will become popular in the future, such as paint by numbers, or the board game Clue, or forensic-themed entertainments; and the suggestion of such an amusement is dismissed with a curt "that will *never* catch on." The characters don't actually wink at the audience when they say this, but the fourth wall is pretty badly cracked.

The fact that Murdoch consistently creates crime scene investigative devices decades before they were actually invented is almost laughable at times. The following dialogue does not actually appear in any episode, but it could:

MURDOCH. Gentlemen, after an hour and a half of experimenting, I have finally managed to isolate the substance that makes up the genetic traits found in all living things. If anybody leaves hairs, blood, or saliva at a crime scene, I can test their genetic material and prove who left the trace evidence.

CRABTREE. Brilliant, sir! This will be perfect for catching criminals dumb enough to leave large amounts of bodily fluids near their victims! We can call it... Dastardly Nitwit Apprehender-wait, that's a bit of a mouthful... how about D.N.A. for short?

MURDOCH. (*Blank stare.*) We'll work on that, George.

BRACKENREID. Bloody hell, Murdoch! Pretty soon your new invention will be used for trashy entertainments where men will be tested in order to tell whether or not they fathered illegitimate children!

MURDOCH. I don't think it will ever come to that, sir.

BRACKENREID. Well in any case, it's a better invention than that eyeliner for men you keep using.

MURDOCH. Once again, sir, I don't use eyeliner! My eyelashes are just naturally like this! Nestor Carbonell from *Lost* has the same thing!

CRABTREE. What's *Lost*, sir?

MURDOCH. It's a television show.

CRABTREE. What's a television, sir?

MURDOCH. You'll find out when I invent it next week.

I've been complaining, but I do really like the series. One favorite dramatic device the show frequently employs is to include real-life figures in the plots, such as Nicola Tesla, Harry Houdini, Arthur Conan Doyle, Annie Oakley, H.G. Wells, and many more.

Don't watch *Murdoch Mysteries* expecting to learn the true condition of forensic science in the late nineteenth century. Watch the show to be entertained, to try your hand at unraveling twisty mysteries, and to laugh at the series' many jokes, all the while remembering that the series' creative team is playing fast and loose with history. ☞

For more information, see <http://www.acorn-media.com/>.

WHODUNNIT THEOLOGY

Father Brown on Hypocrisy and Lawlessness

Father Brown struck the table so that the glasses on it rang; and they could almost fancy a ghostly echo from the mysterious chalice that still stood in the room beyond.

"No!" he cried, in a voice like a pistol-shot. "There shall be no difference. I gave you your chance of pitying the poor devil when you thought he was a common criminal. You wouldn't listen then; you were all for private vengeance then. You were all for letting him be butchered like a wild beast without a hearing or a public trial, and said he had only got his deserts. Very well then,

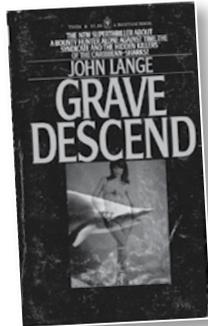
if Daniel Doom has got his deserts, Brander Merton has got his deserts. If that was good enough for Doom, by all that is holy it is good enough for Merton. Take your wild justice or our dull legality; but in the name of Almighty God, let there be an equal lawlessness or an equal law."



Chesterton's Bloodthirsty Heirs

Brief Reviews of the Contemporary Mystery Scene by Steve Miller

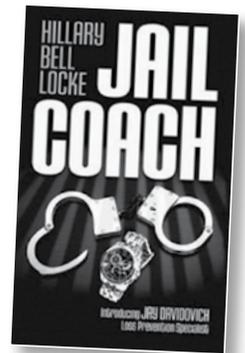
John Lange (Michael Crichton). *Grave Descend* (1970). A poem by Dr. Samuel Johnson provides the name for the sunken boat, Grave Descend. The story's villain collects Johnson works and memorabilia.



Although there is no mention of G.K. Chesterton's play, *The Judgment of Dr. Johnson*, the mystery contains sufficient quotes from the lexicographer to warm any Chestertonian heart. Otherwise the work follows pulp thriller formula. The hero, McGregor, as a not totally respectable deep sea diver is the somewhat principled loner in an unprincipled Jamaica. Hired for a suspicious salvage job which must be kept secret, his response when he learns the boat has not yet sunk is to ask for more money. A formidable comrade defeats a gang of thugs and shoots a man guarding McGregor at a highly opportune moment. The authorities, rather than throwing everyone in jail, allow McGregor forty-eight hours to clear up the mess, even when the likely result is tripling the Kingston homicide rate. But if plausibility were the standard would anyone read these books or watch most action movies? The payoff is explosions, fires, smarmy bad guys, treacherous women, competing crooks, betrayals galore, and animal dangers including Jamaican crocodiles, trained ocelots, and hammerhead sharks. Will our hero survive? Of course, he will but who is killed in the process? John Lange is a pseudonym of Michael Crichton from the days before *Andromeda Strain* and *Jurassic Park* made him a bestselling author.

Hillary Bell Locke (Michael Bowen). *Jail Coach* (2012). The closing credits of a motion picture contain such exotic titles as gaffer, best boy, key grip, animal wrangler, and inferno maker. Someday we may see the jail coach of a star listed as well.

A prominent celebrity is likely to do hard time for a drunken rampage in a suburban California county. Will the experience so traumatize him that he will be psychologically unable to fulfill a multi-picture contract? Loss prevention specialist Jay Davidovich is assigned by an insurance company to use "any legal means necessary" to avoid paying the claim. His goal is to find a jail coach to teach the star basic prison survival skills. A Dial-a-Designated Driver (only in Los Angeles) with a toddler daughter in tow has spent time in Houston jail for contempt of court and seems the perfect candidate. But one jail term and military duty to escape a second means she has significant baggage. Her Armenian ex-pimp—and possible father of her child—calls himself Mr. Ten Percent and sees blackmail, abduction, and a potential fix of the star's legal problems as his ticket to big bucks. Davidovich has enough trouble protecting his estranged wife from abusive boyfriends. But a six-foot-four blond, blue-eyed Jewish-Ukrainian veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan is not easily diverted from his mission—save the star and stay alive.



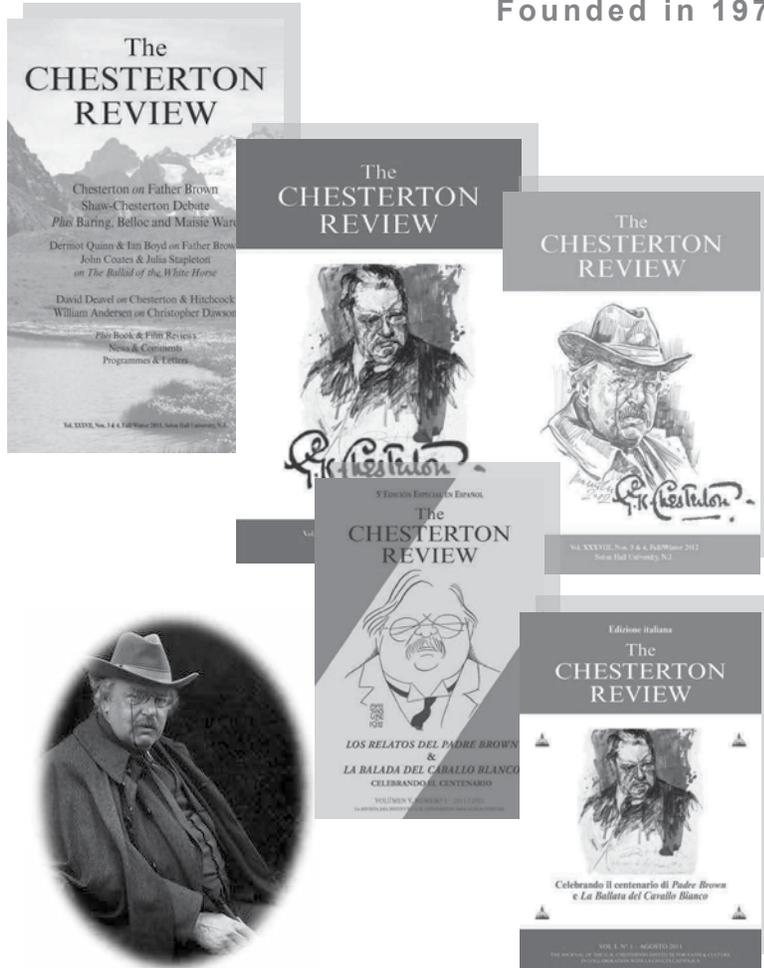
Hillary Bell Locke is a pseudonym of Milwaukee Chestertonian Michael Bowen. ☞

"I should enjoy nothing more than always writing detective stories, except always reading them." —G.K. CHESTERTON

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the journal of the G. K. Chesterton for Faith & Culture

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“When the Real Revolution Happens, It Won’t Be Mentioned In the Newspapers”

The Party Line: A Play in Two Acts

by Sheryl Longin and Roger L. Simon
New York, N.Y.: Criterion Books, 2012
160 pages, \$15.95.

Reviewed by Chris Chan

The story of Walter Duranty is a far too-little-known chapter in the history of American journalism and foreign relations. Duranty was a respected international reporter for the *New York Times*, and won a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of life in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Duranty presented Stalin’s USSR as a successful and prosperous nation, and compared the communist system favorably to the Great Depression-afflicted United States. At this time, many whistleblowers and activists were trying to alert the world to the fact that the seeming success of the Soviet Union was largely a sham. Not only was Stalin’s government horribly mismanaging the country’s development, but in order to support other areas of the nation, they were deliberately provoking a famine in the Ukraine, resulting in the deaths of millions.

Though the famine, widely known today as the Holodomor, is acknowledged by many leading figures and politicians as an act of genocide, there are vast numbers of Holodomor deniers in the present day, and there were plenty of deniers during the 1930s as well. Duranty was one of the most prominent and influential figures who declared that there was no famine or malfeasance on the part of the Soviet government. Prominent media figures and policy makers accepted Duranty’s

version of events, and people who attempted to reveal the truth were marginalized and derided.

Why did Duranty cover up the famine? There is no clear-cut answer, though the play does provide some good suggestions. Soviet sympathies may be one reason—publicizing the massive deaths from starvation would have seriously discredited the communist system. Additionally, journalists who reported the truth might have been banned from the Soviet Union, and therefore might have been blackballed from their profession.

Notably, *The Party Line* is not a straight history of Duranty’s career, but instead is a mixture of fact and fantasia, jumping between the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Some of the characters, like Duranty, Fortuyn, and Crowley, are real. Others, like Duranty’s son, have been fictionalized to the point where they almost certainly have only a peripheral connection to the actual person. Other characters are purely the creation of Longin and Simon.

The Party Line addresses the effects of Duranty’s reporting, covering multiple storylines, including Duranty’s career, other journalists wrestling with the ethics of whether to report the truth or not, and a parallel storyline between Duranty’s son and the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn crusaded against the threats he perceived were threatening Dutch society,

and in return was assassinated. Fortuyn and Duranty are contrasted as radically different men, one principled, the other unethical. I have some hesitations about the portrayal of Fortuyn—by depicting Fortuyn as a hero of conscience some of the destructive repercussions of his social and political policies are whitewashed—but the point of this play is to use Fortuyn as a metaphoric figure as to the dangers of political correctness. I do have some concerns about the presentation of Duranty’s son Michael—Longin and Simon claim to not know what happened to him, and the characterization and scenes featuring young Duranty are pure fiction, which makes me worry what might happen if the real Michael Duranty emerges to complain about his depiction in the play.

Chestertonians may be familiar with one supporting character—Aleister Crowley, the infamous Satanist and dabbler in the occult. Crowley was the one man that G.K. Chesterton flat-out refused to debate. Longtime American Chesterton Society member John Peterson once wrote, “Chesterton never stated his objection to meeting Crowley, but possibly he didn’t want to lend credibility to Crowley’s views by discussing them. Or, it might simply be that Crowley gave him the creeps.” The Crowley depicted in *The Party Line* will certainly give people the creeps, thanks to his engaging in orgiastic rituals and his consumption of bizarre and vile compounds.

This is a fascinating play. To the best of my knowledge, it has not yet been staged, so *The Party Line* exists only as a literary experience at this time, though that is likely to change in the near future.

It’s an intelligent and carefully argumentative presentation of what happens when people sacrifice their principles, either for personal gain or simply out of cowardice. Additionally, it’s a perceptive look at how people are often more apt to accept a comfortable lie rather than a brutal truth.

I have wondered for years if someone would ever bring the Duranty story to the stage, and I cannot criticize Longin



and Simon for depicting the event differently from the way I might have. I would have focused solely on Duranty, but *The Party Line* is interested in timeless truths throughout modern history, stressing recurring themes rather than set events. In any case, the tale is rich enough to provide fodder for multiple tellings.

There have been a couple of campaigns to have Duranty's Pulitzer Prize revoked, but the Pulitzer Committee has refused to rescind the award. In response, the Walter Duranty Prizes for Mendacity in Journalism have been recently launched in order to target deliberate lies in reporting that threaten people's lives and safety.

There have been some fierce debates amongst Chestertonians lately on whether it is acceptable to lie for a good cause. *The Party Line* argues that there is no such thing as a noble lie. ☞

For more information, see <http://www.newcriterion.com/posts.cfm/Announcing--strong-Criterion-Books-strong--and--i-The-Party-Line-i--6918> -Ed.

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by Jay Nordlinger

New York, N.Y.: Encounter Books, 2012
476 pages, \$27.99 (hardcover)

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Reviewed by Chris Chan
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The Nobel Peace Prize is arguably the world's most coveted award, but most people would be hard-pressed to name more than ten or twelve recipients. Jay Nordlinger's *Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Most Famous and Controversial Prize in the World* is a concise but detailed history of the Nobel Peace Prize (the other Nobel Prizes are mentioned but not analyzed). All of the hundred-plus laureates prior to the book's

March 2012 publication are mentioned, though some laureates only get about a page and others get far more.

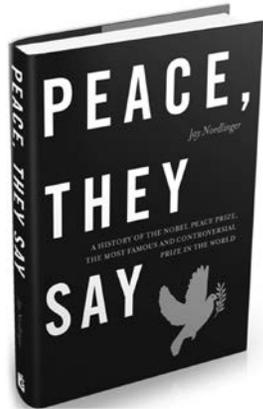
Nordlinger notes early in the book that given the scope of this study, he has to focus on concise capsule summaries of each laureate's life and achievements. This is understandable, but the subjects are so interesting and his critiques so intriguing that one rather hopes that *Peace, They Say* is not Nordlinger's only foray into this topic. Longer essays about the laureates, or comparative studies of laureates in similar fields of work, or critiques of the lasting effects of their legacies, could prove fascinating. Nordlinger also addresses certain misconceptions about the Prize. For example, the Nobels can never be revoked, the Prize does not have to be given every year (just once every five years, at minimum), and Alfred Nobel never founded the Peace Prize out of guilt for inventing dynamite. Quite the contrary, Nobel was always proud of his invention, though he may not have liked all of the ways that it was used.

Additionally, Nordlinger wisely keeps his own opinions to a minimum, only occasionally and briefly stating why a particular choice was an excellent or a poor selection. This makes the book a history rather than an editorial, and yet throughout the book there is a very palpable feeling that Nordlinger is biting his tongue. One wants to ask him, "But what do you *really* think?" In the few instances where Nordlinger relaxes his self-control and allows himself to declare why a laureate's political views were reprehensible, or why a group's effort to achieve a certain result wound up doing more harm than good, Nordlinger's prose is at its sharpest and most incisive, and also its most intriguing.

This book is essentially a history of international relations during the twentieth and early twenty-first century. The first fifty years worth of laureates are mostly European figures, with several Americans and one Argentinian (Carlos Saavedra Lamas, 1936). The latter half of the laureates are from all over the world. It is very interesting to compare the efforts of statesmen who produced lasting international alliances (George Marshall, 1953) to those bureaucrats who created treaties that ultimately

failed miserably (Frank Kellogg, 1929), to the great humanitarians (Mother Teresa, 1979) to the political action organizations (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 1985, a Soviet-supported group that receives particular criticism from Nordlinger), to brilliant scientists who saved over a billion lives (Norman Borlaug, 1970).

Interestingly, most of the early twentieth-century awards were for international relations, whereas now human rights figures working in a single country are likely winners. There are plenty of great people who have won for promoting human rights in their own nations (Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964) Aung San Suu Kyi (1991), Lech Walesa (1983), Liu Xiabo (2010)), but some commentators argue that such awards are contrary to the guidelines outlined in Nobel's will, which focus more on internationalism.



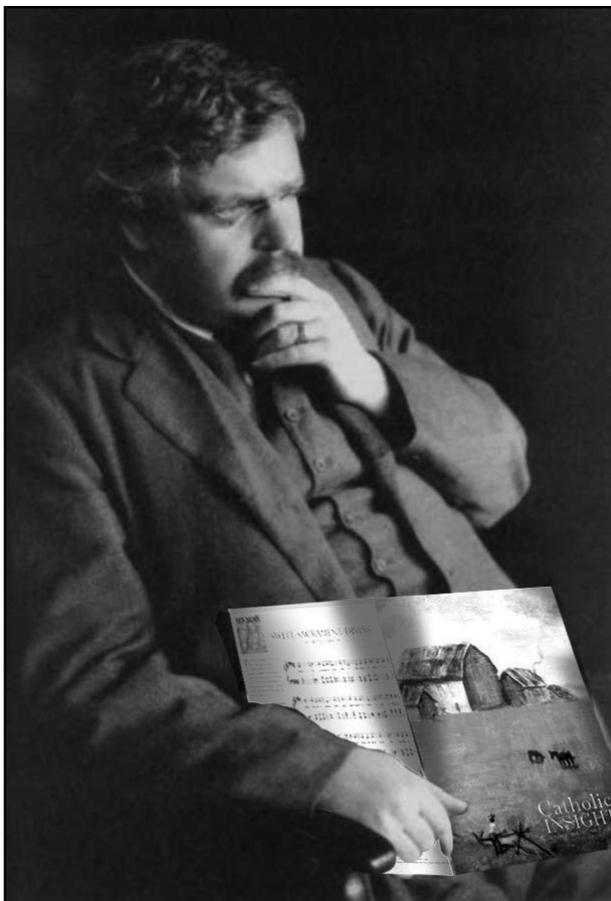
For a book about peace, *Peace, They Say* is bound to provoke a lot of arguments, and this is a good thing, for it provides a different sort of forum for people to discuss the weighty topics of what constitutes human rights, the best

ways to resolve major conflicts, and the morality of international actions. People who criticize some Laureates generally attack their targets in primarily political grounds. When Nordlinger critiques a Nobelist, he focuses on that person's or organization's actual achievements and impact, as well as their careers after receiving the awards (many have led controversial lives after winning).

The anthology "Chesterton in War and Peace," edited by Michael W. Perry, argued that G.K. Chesterton should have won the 1933 Nobel Peace Prize rather than Sir Norman Angell. Both men wrote extensively on international issues and the

threat of another war. Chesterton argued that another, even worse war would be coming unless serious steps were taken, whereas Angell, a leading pacifist, argued that nations now realized that war was unprofitable and that Germany would never start another armed conflict. Angell won the Nobel and swayed major political figures; Chesterton was ignored and uncelebrated. Perry calls this "perhaps the greatest blunder in the history of the Nobel Prize." Angell was proved devastatingly wrong, and Chesterton was shown to be prophetically correct, but by then it was too late to bestow any honors on Chesterton.

Most people talk airily of "changing the world" and "making the Earth a better place." All of the subjects of *Peace, They Say* tried to do this, some successfully, other not so much. Looking back at their impact and their careers after winning, some of these Laureates are clearly heroes, others now appear to be either villains or simply buffoons. Nordlinger's work is helpful to understanding just what "peace" really means. ☸



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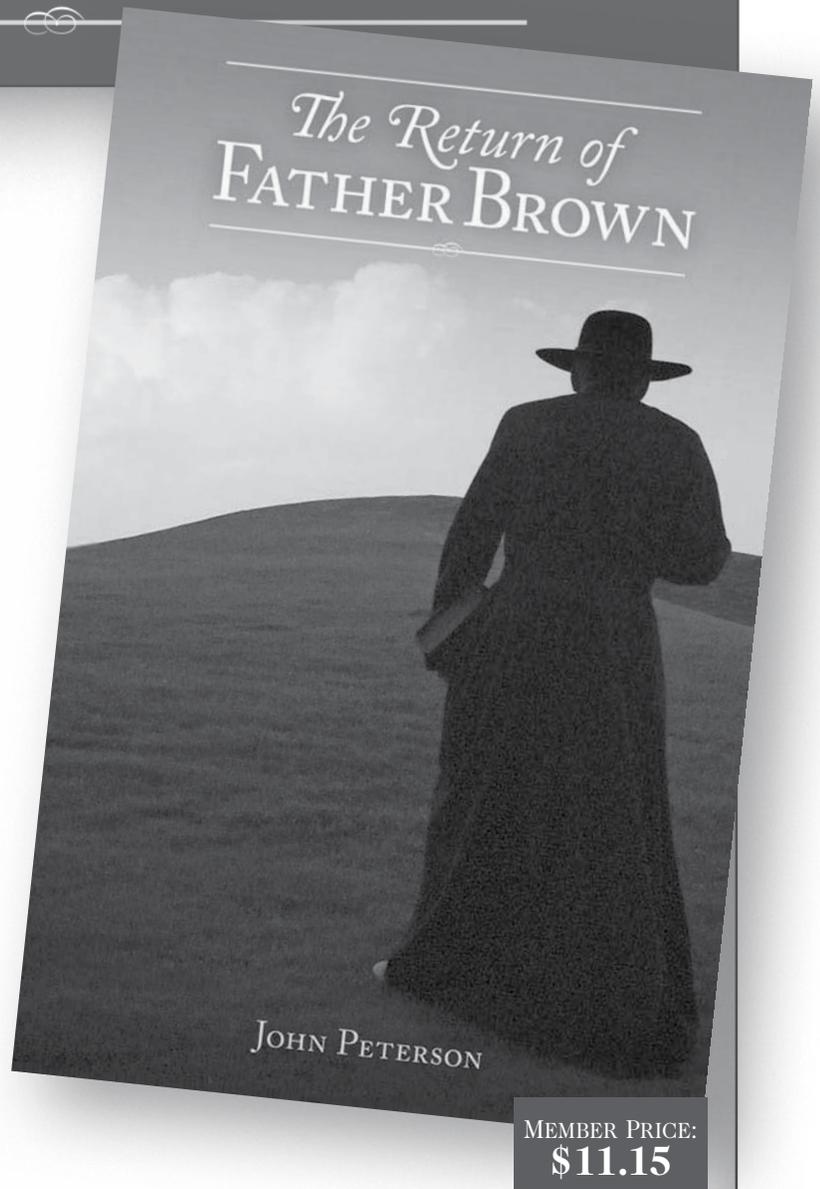
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They Seek Him Here...

The Scarlet Pimpernel (TV movie, 1982)

Directed by Clive Donner

Written by William Bast, based on the novels by Baroness Emmuska Orczy

Reviewed by Chris Chan

(Warning: major spoilers follow –Ed.)

They seek him here, they seek him there.
Those Frenchies seek him everywhere.
Is he in Heaven... or is he in Hell?
That damned elusive Pimpernel.

The *Scarlet Pimpernel* is one of the greatest adventure novels of all time. Written by Baroness Emmuska Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is actually the first in a series of books (more than a dozen and a half novels, short story collections, and a play) about a swash-buckling hero with a secret identity.

The Scarlet Pimpernel, the leader of a resistance movement, rescues condemned aristocrats from the clutches of the French Revolution, often through ingenious and elaborate escape plans.

In the original novel, the identity of the Scarlet Pimpernel is initially a mystery to the reader. As the bloodthirsty revolutionaries of the Reign of Terror are continually thwarted, once-privileged, generally good-natured aristocrats are plucked from French jails and smuggled off to safer countries. (Incidentally, a pimpernel is a small flower.) The central character of the book is Marguerite St. Just, a strong-willed French actress married to Sir Percy Blakeney, a ludicrously foppish, mentally negligible British nobleman. The

marriage is not a particularly happy one as Sir Percy seems largely uninterested in his wife, and Marguerite despises her husband for being weak-willed, shallow, and cowardly. It is hardly a spoiler to point out that Sir Percy is much more than what he seems, as it should be blatantly obvious to all readers (and indeed, often the book's cover and introductory material are filled with clues or even an outright revelation) that Sir Percy is much more than he seems, and the hidden facets of his character wind up saving his marriage. Sir Percy's buffoonish personality is just a façade. The seemingly empty-headed peer has a secret identity, and he is actually... Batman!

No, that is of course a joke, although the dual personality exhibited by Bruce Wayne in order to hide the fact that he is Batman (especially as depicted in the recent film trilogy directed by Christopher Nolan) is clearly inspired by the *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Indeed, the truth of the Scarlet Pimpernel's identity ought to be so obvious to readers even from the earliest stages, that the makers of a 1982 television adaptation see no need to disguise the fact that the Scarlet Pimpernel and Sir Percy are one and the same. It would have been dramatically awkward to even attempt to disguise that fact.

In any case, the Scarlet Pimpernel's identity is made clear on the DVD box.

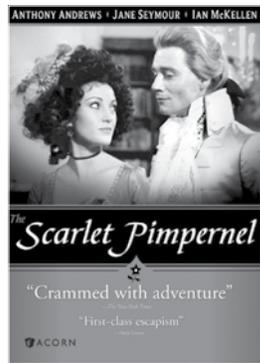
The 1982 dramatization of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is partially based on the novel of the same name, but the storyline also draws upon one of the sequels, *Eldorado*, where the Scarlet Pimpernel rescues the young Dauphin from brainwashing and imprisonment. Though the basic plotlines

and pacing have been heavily chopped up and rearranged, the spirit of Orczy's original work remains intact, and the result is a rattling good adventure story that far exceeds most of the action movies produced today.

In the 1982 television adaptation, Anthony Andrews plays Sir Percy as if he's having the time of his life, playing the dual role for all it's worth, relishing both the character of the dashing hero and the ridiculous popinjay. At times, it seems as if Andrews is marshaling every ounce of strength he has in order to keep from looking directly at the camera and giving the viewer a massive smile and a wink. For all the fun Andrews appears to be having, it's just as enjoyable to watch him at work. Jane Seymour's role is less showy and complex, but she does a fine job as the heroine (even though some of her character's facets from the novel have been pared away for this production), particularly when her marriage is left floundering on the rocks thanks to the machinations of the villain of the story. Ian McKellen plays Paul Chauvelin, an investigator for the French revolutionary government charged with tracking down the Scarlet Pimpernel. Enamored of Marguerite St. Just, intensely loyal to an increasingly violent and unstable revolution, and unworried about the moral implications of sending innocent people to the guillotine simply because they are on the government's list of enemies, Chauvelin is determined to smash the Scarlet Pimpernel and his allies. Andrews and McKellen are both brilliant playing two very different men, Andrews as the courageous and ingenious adventurer who sees no reason why he can't both save the day and have the time of his life while he does it, and McKellen as the political fanatic with ice water running through his veins.

The Scarlet Pimpernel works as well as it does because the production manages to make history entertaining. It's an adventure story with both brains and heart, and Sir Percy makes a very important point that many people forget—helping people ought to be an adventure, and saving the world can be a thrill if done properly. ☞

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Jacob Epstein's *Ecce Homo*

by G.K. Chesterton

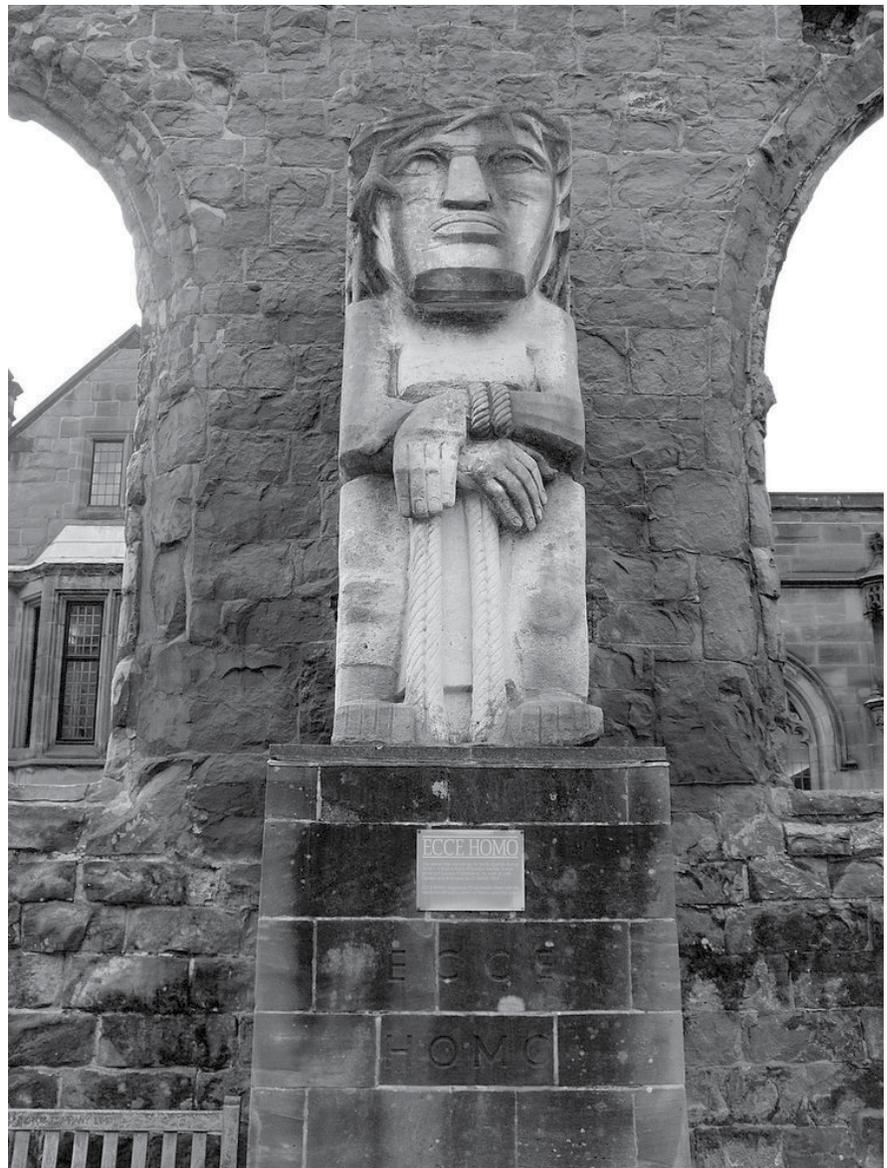
The representative of a newspaper recently rang me up to ask my opinion about the much-disputed statue of Christ by Mr. Epstein; and the printed report of my remarks, though not incorrect so far as it went, naturally did not cover much of what I really said, and especially of what I really meant. As I should not like to be entirely misunderstood, on a subject on which such a superb amount of nonsense is talked on both sides, I will add a note on the matter here. To begin with, hardly anybody seems to put clearly the primary point about the problem; that it is really two totally different problems.

There is the problem of the intrinsic intellectual truth or value of such a thing to the intellect which creates or criticises it; the question of its essence as apart from its effect; the question of whether such a statue has what Mr. Eric Gill would call absolute beauty. Second, there is the problem of its social and practical effect; of what such a thing, considered as a public monument, actually presents to public opinion. I know that some intellectuals talk in a distant and disdainful manner about this popular problem, as if it did not matter at all and could be dismissed. But that only shows for the hundredth time how very unintellectual an intellectual can be. It is a fact that human happiness may be greatly affected by its existing traditions, customs, conventions, understandings—and misunderstandings. If an artist chooses to say that he sees nothing in this, and never thinks about it, we need only infer that the artist is a very narrow-minded man. If he is content with

merely telling us that we know nothing about art, we have every right to reply that he knows nothing about life. There

may be much that is really problematic about which of the two considerations should prevail; but it is not a problem, but simply a prejudice, to say that all the other considerations need not be considered. And if we do consider this more general matter of social effect, we shall find one or two rather odd things about it, and a position that is full of paradox.

First, it is odd, in a question of reverence to religion, that the only religion we do, in fact, expose to superficial irreverence is our own religion. The stalest school of Freethinkers continue to denounce Christianity as a tyranny; but, in fact, Christianity is a target that has long been left exposed to the missiles of such Freethinkers, and of anybody



Ecce Homo

else who wanted to take any liberties with it; and it is the only target of that sort in the world. The pious forms of the other religions are protected, not only by the people belonging to those religions, but also by us. If an Englishman thought it breezy and broad-minded to walk about in a mosque with muddy boots, without either taking them off or covering them with canvas slippers, he would be instantly arrested or kicked out, not only by the Moslems, but by the Christians; anyhow, by all the other Englishmen. Note that this is strictly a question of protecting a mere custom, or even a mere convention; not even a question of any undeniable denial of a creed. The Englishman in the mosque is at least as much entitled to say he sees nothing particularly polluting about a pair of boots, as the Epstein sort of artist is to say he sees nothing profane in joining the head and body of a holy figure in the proportions of a pantomime goblin. The Englishman may say he means no harm with his mud or leather; just as the Epstein artist may say he means no harm with his clay or stone. One may call it a superstition to cover the human feet, as the other may call it a superstition to carve the human body so as to resemble the human body; it is all a matter of opinion. The point that concerns me here is that we do, in fact, force the opinion to give way to the superstition, or convention—when we are demanding respect for Mahomet; but apparently not when we are demanding respect for Christ.

It is the same with the other great faiths that dispute for the same ancient territories. A lingering bigotry still prevents Englishmen, and other Europeans, from complete religious reunion with the Thugs who throttle people as a religious gesture. But, outside such cases, we do defend the dignity of the Asiatic religions; the only thing we do not defend is the dignity of the European religion. I merely remark on this point as a paradox, and for the moment in an entirely detached spirit. The two most interesting and intelligent of the comments on the matter quoted in the press both came, curiously enough, from inheritors of Eastern, and to us, alien, traditions. A Jewish lady, distinguished

in letters, said with admirable candour and clarity: "I am an Oriental; Epstein is an Oriental, and he sees Christ as an Oriental sees him."

The other comment, which was in a sense on the other side, came from an Oriental prince ruling a country largely Buddhist in complexion, who expressed surprise at the statue, saying that the images of Buddha expressed calm and tranquillity; while nobody could say that Mr. Epstein's Christ produces that, either in itself or in its spectators. Now, I know all about the existence of different conventions in art; and it is no good to tell me that I only criticise the thing because it is not like a classic figure in the Elgin Marbles; still less that I only do it because it is not like a doll in the

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Lowther Arcade. I recognise that the image of Buddha is conceived so as to appeal to Buddhists. But I know that nobody would be allowed to present an image conceived so as to disgust and infuriate Buddhists. If a man were to fill Burma with caricatures of Buddha, or what seemed to the Buddhists to be caricatures of Buddha, he would probably be stopped from doing so; not merely by the Buddhist priests, but by the British Government. It is, therefore, broadly true, as I have said, that we do recognise over a great part of the world, even in subject peoples and in alien religions, the delicate and dangerous sensitiveness of the soul of man in connection with its sacred images, and even its artistic traditions. It does seem to me rather queer and quaint that this sensitiveness should

only be considered unreasonable in the ruling people or in our own religion.

The other half of the problem is much more difficult to solve; and I have left myself no space in which even to pretend to solve it. But I deny altogether that any doubts I may have in the matter are mere marks of ignorance of the very varied forms and styles in art. The matter goes very much deeper than that; and concerns, not only the methods by which the artist may express his meaning, but also the meaning that he intends to express. No man knows another man's mind absolutely; and if Mr. Epstein were to affirm that his Christ was meant for the Christ who talked to the children or who inspired the Troubadours of God who followed St. Francis, I could not, of course, disprove his statement. But it seems to me, merely as an imaginative impression, that what he has represented, apart from his way of representing it, is the Jewish idea of suffering with dignity; and that is a totally different thing from the Christian idea of suffering with tortured but unbroken love. Thus even the second half of the problem is divided in its turn into two problems; first, whether it is really good art which thus expresses a philosophy; and second, whether it is really a good philosophy. Personally, I am much more certain that I differ from Mr. Epstein about the second point than about the first. If anything is here expressed in stone, what is expressed in stone is something very stony indeed; a sterile and terrible sorrow, which, like the very spirit of Israel, can endure rather than expand. There would be nothing specially novel and provocative in that alone, in an age which is by its nature a battle-ground of so many divers moods and philosophies. But to be surprised, in face of such a representation of Christ, that the common people do not see Him gladly, as they once heard him gladly—that surprise seems to me a mere deficiency in common sense. ☞

From Illustrated London News, March 23, 1935

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From Kerouac to Chesterton

Part 1

by Art Livingston

In the early days of the Midwest Chesterton Society, we would regale each other with tales of how we first came to read Chesterton. Eyebrows often lifted when I offered my testimonial, but I wish to trumpet it again now. To understand why I blew the dust from an old library copy of *Alarms and Discursions*, we must go back eight more years, to another book, and by a different author. My adolescence lasted seventeen days in September, 1957, my first two and a half weeks of high school. On the second Sunday of this period I discovered a glowing book review, bought the book with a few saved dollars the next Saturday, read it the next two days while also shaking my head over what amounted to a retraction of approbation from the same newspaper. The book was *On the Road* and I found its message overwhelming. That message is the direct opposite of what most people who haven't looked at its contents believe.

Unlike most poor souls unprepared to hear what Jack Kerouac was actually saying, I had the good fortune to have been well grounded in moral theology in the Lutheran church of my youth. My only question, which occupied my life over a year, is whether one can enjoy the bohemian life without being dissolute oneself. Short answer: of course one can. For openers, I would ask, what is the idea of how a friar lives? Kerouac has clearly written a cautionary tale. Those either unfamiliar with the book, or who looked at it only long enough to confirm their prejudices, mistake the narrator's original beliefs as being the point of the book:

...the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad

to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars.

After many adventures with Dean, who draws Sal (our narrator living in adulation of him) into a life that blurs into one hedonistic joyride, both Dean and another close friend declare privately that they are contemplating suicide. These confessions come as fast as Dean hotwiring a car. A life of dissipation leads to the grave, and Sal looks on as Dean's wife calls her husband a louse because he deserts her whenever Dean gets an itch to go somewhere else. When Sal and Dean wander into the interior of Mexico, Sal comes down with a severe case of dysentery—and Dean leaves him sick in bed for more kicks somewhere else. Eight months later, they happen upon each other on a New York street. Even poor Sal has finally figured out Dean: "I knew he was a rat."

Beyond my learning a worthwhile moral lesson, I read the book at a crucial time of life, just as I was realizing the shallowness of the government school I had to attend. Fifty-six years later, the school experience seems an even greater waste of time than it did then, but Providence is strange. Had I gone to a good school, I probably would never have been set up for what was to follow. A chance conversation led me to Maury's bookshop on Chicago's Near North Side. I didn't have to go on the road; the road came to me, which was just as well because it came to me in the form of every conceivable kind of character the bohemian world

contains. Meeting and talking to them was my real education, saying almost nothing until I was sixteen, by which time I was squarely in the middle of the beat literary movement. Kerouac had originally called it a "beatific generation" and to no one's surprise (of those who were around at the time), two of most important of the poets were in the religious life, one a Dominican (Br. Antoninus) and, the other a Zen Buddhist (Gary Snyder). Conversation centered about the arts, religion, and social philosophy (politics not quite being the right word). The buzzword that year was "asceticism."

The younger ones, myself among them I must confess, worked so hard at appearing inconspicuous in order not to be noticed by the world at large, that we overdid it just enough to justify the caricature of dressing funereally. Many loved life so much that they relished conversations about death and they did indeed write enough bad verse on the subject that I often could not tell the difference between the original and the parody.

My own inclinations had led me to write structured poetry and to concentrate on Beauty, with Keats as my master; but I never forgot the lessons I learned from Kerouac, not only the negative one about the Dean Moriarity of the world, but the positive one: that "the devil is defeated," as I heard him say in an interview with Ben Hecht, who didn't seem to have the least notion of what Kerouac was talking about. The cycle was about complete for the peripatetic novelist, and Kerouac was close to falling into the arms of the Catholic Church, which he was to do in short order.

What has all this to do with discovering G.K. Chesterton? Those of us who know Chesterton's work are well aware that the one type of person of whom he speaks with utter contempt, and for whom he seemingly has nothing good to say are aesthetes. By the age of nineteen, I was a pagan worshipping at the shrine of Apollo (figuratively). Two questions: why did Chesterton so disdain the aesthetes above all other modern types? And, how did I come to read Chesterton? The clues for good detective work are laid out for you. ☞

To be continued. —Ed.



Cultural “Fundies”

by Richard Aleman

Anthem of freedom are the ribbons and bows in a steady stream of propaganda parades that excuse the real world consequences of the many lives broken by the narcissistic culture we’ve happily cultivated. In our profoundly fundamentalist and secular society, sacrifice is no longer a noble demand of love, but a methodically driven-out demon bolting under pain of the rite of exorcism. Individualism is destroying women and disintegrating family life. The utilitarian qualities of individualism measure others by how well they contribute to the narrative of our own lives. G.K. Chesterton writes, “There is more pure individualism in a pirate than in a peasant,” and no greater example of this selfishness exists than in the social poisons of our time.

From the earliest days of Christianity, the artificial prevention of conception was seen as a most serious sin precisely because it intended to impede the beginnings of new human life. Eighteen hundred years after Tertullian compared the prevention of birth with murder, Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* swiftly reaffirmed the Church’s rejection of contraception on the coattails of the Second Vatican Council. Paul VI’s encyclical was prophetic. First, His Holiness firmly stated that artificial methods of birth control were to become the leading vehicle toward lowering moral standards for young people, as well as a catalyst for marital infidelity. Second, wives and women in general would be objectified and disrespected by men. Finally, contraception would become a powerful tool in the hands of government to control

individuals as well as institutions.

Looking back, Pope Paul VI’s anguish is thoroughly justified. Unrealistic expectations, mostly influenced by pornography and the glamorization of sex, are pervasive among singles and couples. Statistics reveal that only a small percentage of married (Catholic) women rely on natural family planning methods, while more than thirty-eight percent of church-attending females use contraceptives. An alarming thirty-three percent believe couples have the right to decide the moral acceptability of contraception regardless of Church teaching. Paul VI’s prediction about government overreach has also been vindicated in the current struggle over the Health and Human Services Mandate. HHS requires employers to provide insurance coverage of prescription contraceptive drugs and devices approved by the Food and Drug Administration, including sterilization procedures and abortion-causing drugs. Government-mandated coverage imposes contraception without the possibility of debate over the moral implications of contraceptive use.

Representing a Western generation struggling with first world problems, spokespersons in favor of frustrating the natural consequences of the procreative act are silent about the steady stream of revenue pouring into the pharmaceutical mega-industry. Although the sale of condoms has dipped in recent years, manufacturers are still giants generating hundreds of millions in annual profit. In 1998, oral contraceptives made hundreds of millions of dollars for industry leaders. Today, companies like Bayer record profits in the billions.

Abortion generates roughly \$1 billion a year for an industry that receives almost half a billion in annual government subsidies. More than 55 million unborn children have been reportedly aborted in the United States since 1973, the year of *Roe v. Wade*. As citizens of the Western country with the highest abortion statistics, Americans have lived under the false principle that anything less than full access to legalized abortion violates a fundamental human right. But slogans like this one are straight out of a playbook introduced into American vernacular by the likes of Planned Parenthood. Invoking “reproductive health” or “choice” drowns out any serious discussion about the implications of hoisting the freedom to act above the fundamental right to life. Citing right to privacy laws, they ignore the rights belonging to the human being growing inside a woman’s body. And then, of course, there is the Eugenic angle about the ageless struggle for the survival of the fittest above the weakest in society—which, of course, is anathema when applied to economic philosophy.

The abortion lobby’s concern over the poor facilities and botched abortions performed by butchers might be taken seriously if they were not simultaneously positioning themselves as industry de-regulators. On the one hand the abortion industry say they support commonsense regulations and oppose the horrors perpetuated by Kermit Gosnell, and on the other they successfully lobby across the United States against regulations they

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believe are intolerable. The results are more abortions, fewer inspections, and less enforcement of health and safety laws. For example, a bill has been introduced in California that would allow non-physicians to perform abortions in the first trimester of pregnancy. Signed by California Governor Jerry Brown on October 9, AB 154 passed the State Assembly with support from Planned Parenthood. The deregulation of medical licensing will increase the likelihood that more cases like Gosnell will occur and the number of abortions will balloon in the state of California.

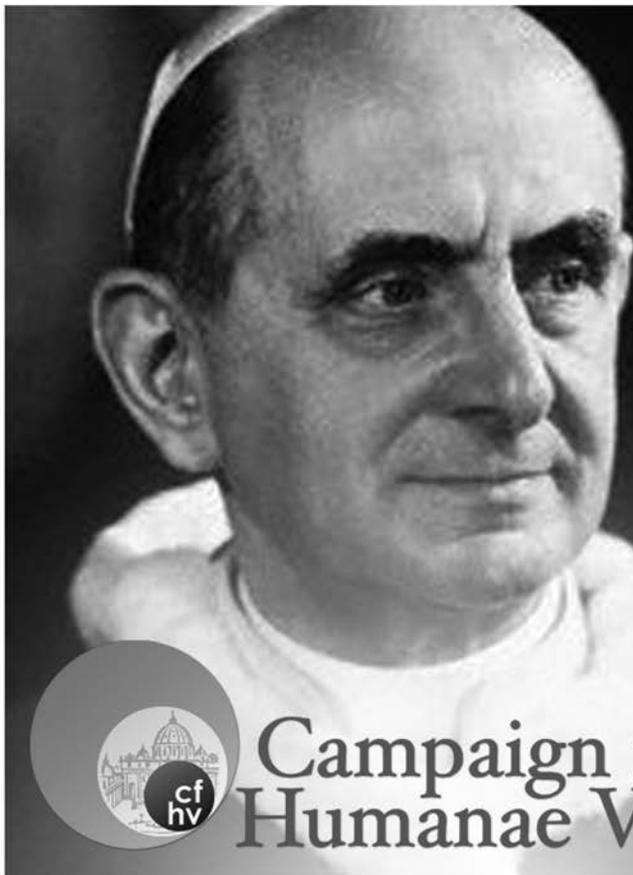
“Deregulation,” the cause célèbre of market fundamentalism, is also a sacred hymn for social fundamentalists who want their pornography, their divorce, and their birth control. When pressed, market fundamentalists and social fundamentalists will both confess that individuals must have an unrestrained right to use their property as they see fit, and by property they also mean their relationships. Afraid of being cheated or

coerced, they appear less reluctant to deceive or legally compel others in order to further their self-interest. The culture of individualism and its dogma claim to serve the common good, but truly worship at the feet of “ephemeral idols.”

An accusation often hurled against those opposed to abortion is of an unjust society favoring a masculine-dominated culture, but we must question whether feminism itself isn’t rooted in philandering. How else can we describe the cheerleading of women’s “empowerment” that encourages the flattering and seduction of women by men, the trivializing of their feelings, boasts of intimacy without commitment, and heralds abortion as the promised land of women’s sexual freedom and “reproductive rights”? Only a movement that could convince topless women to march down a street to protest our so-called patriarchal social system could seriously believe nudity might turn the consciences of men. Is this the best that one hundred years of feminism can do? This is liberation? If this is empowerment,

then the feminist movement neither understands men nor comprehends power.

Social fundamentalists will have to explain away the social science data that reveals the hefty price tag of broken families and emotionally torn children paid for our wants and desires. Pro-life men and women alike can point to the brave women coming forward in ever greater numbers to speak out about how contraception and abortion have been sources of abandonment, betrayal, and desperation for women. The children left behind by their parents’ quest for “happiness” will grow up to become our politicians and future corporate leaders. Their moral decision making will affect how we produce our food, how our environment will be preserved, and whether our limited resources are worth exploiting for a profit. But there is another ecosystem, the human ecology made up of the family. Disregard for this natural human institution will naturally lead to disregard for the natural environment they live in. ☪



Alyssa Bormes’s life changed...
...after she read *Humanae Vitae*.

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Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail



Movies, Spirits, and Liberty

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

Should we ban the cinema? Long lists are being given of particular cases in which children have suffered in spirits or health from alleged horrors of the cinema. One child is said to have had a fit after seeing a film; another to have been sleepless with some fixed idea taken from a film; another to have killed his father with a carving-knife through having seen a knife used in a film.

Signed,
Concerned Citizen

Dear Concerned,

This may possibly have occurred; though if it did, anybody of common sense would prefer to have details about that particular child, rather than about that particular picture. But what is supposed to be the practical moral of it, in any case? Is it that the young should never see a story with a knife in it? Are they to be brought up in complete ignorance of "The Merchant of Venice" because Shylock flourishes a knife for a highly disagreeable purpose? Are they never to hear of Macbeth, lest it should slowly dawn upon their trembling intelligence that it is a dagger that they see before them? It would be more practical to propose that a child should never see a real carving-knife, and still more practical that he should never see a real father. All that may come; the era of preventive and prophetic science has only begun.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(New Witness, May 12, 1922)



Dear Mr. Chesterton,

Why do you always object to Spiritualism? Isn't it enough that it is spiritual? Isn't that a good thing?

Signed,
ACD

Dear ACD,

It is not sufficient commendation of Spiritualism to show that it is spiritual. We wish to know what spirit it is of; even if it be not the mere mockery of a mountebank. The communication may even be a real miracle without being a real message; in the sense of a message from a particular man or woman who is dead. In that sense the manifestations of Plato may be authentic without being Platonic; and even what is Platonic has its perilous side. Now when we observe the actual communications that are supposed to come from the mighty dead, it is something of an understatement to say that we do not find Plato very Platonic or Spiritualism very valuable to our own spiritual life. At the best, the communications seem to consist of rather vapid universal statements of all the ideals which are at this moment in the air; and the proceedings have very much the appear-

ance of the sort of psychic assistance that was given to Macbeth; the power that leads men on with promises which are fulfilled to their own destruction.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(Columbia, October, 1926)



Dear Chesterton,

You say you are in favor of liberty. I say that the modern evils arise from people having too much liberty.

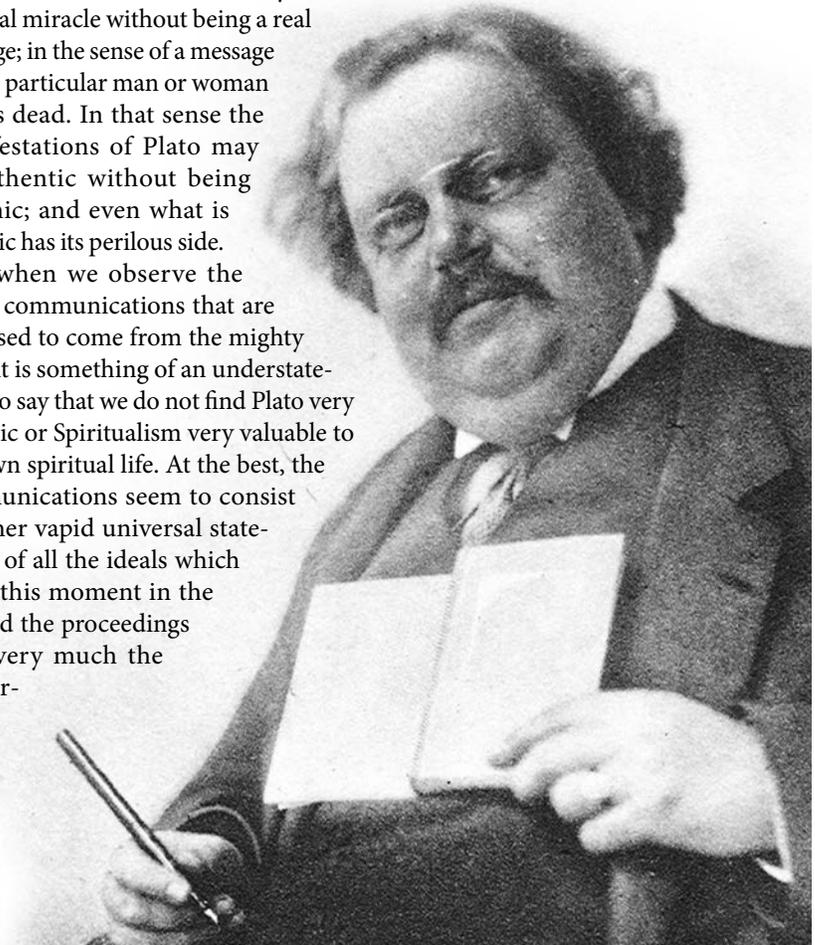
Signed,
Shaw



Dear Shaw,

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

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(New Witness, April 14, 1922)



G.K. Chesterton in the *New York American*

Thought for the Thoughtless

by G.K. Chesterton

Some essays have lately been published in England expressive of the mind of Thoughtful Youth; and calculated to make anybody turn in considerable relief to the alternative of Thoughtless Youth. It is not altogether unnatural that a boy, under certain conditions should not stop to think; it is considerably more depressing that he should stop to think and then prove incapable of thinking. The diversions of the young have been many; whether the old are diverted by them or think the young should be diverted from them.

In the old days the sportive youths had a habit of fighting watchmen; and later, when modern organization enlarged their opportunities, a taste for knocking off policemen's helmets or running away with their truncheons: always supposing, of course, that the truncheons did not get in first and give them the knock. They had also a very curious passion for unscrewing the door knockers from ordinary doors.

I have never understood the pleasure of this laborious occupation; which seemed to me to partake of the nature of a skilled and patient handicraft. Nor do I know what they can possibly have done with the knockers when they had them: it would seem a somewhat melancholy occupation to wander about the world rattling knockers that could not be expected to establish relation with doors.

That is a pretty fair sample of the silly things that boys can do when they are silly or slightly drunk. But it is nothing to the silliness of the silly things they can say when they are quite sober and entirely serious.

If I met a student from some studious college walking down the street laden with knockers, I should not perhaps think that it needed any policeman's truncheon to knock him silly. It would be only too obvious that the silliness had come first and the knocking or knockering afterwards. But the silliness would be of a sort with which I could sympathize; partly because it was so utterly and unspeakably silly.

It would have a sort of wild poetry about it; such as I have always felt in the eccentric old lady, who never collected anything from rubbish-heaps or jumble-sales, except wooden legs and doctors' brass-plates; of neither of which she could make any personal use.

But I should not think there was any wild poetry about the young man, if he stopped in the street to deliver a moral lecture about the abolition of all door-knockers; as the essayists deliver moral lectures on the abolition of all dogmas. I should not be intellectually impressed if he indignantly complained that the door-knocker was outside the door and not inside.

Nor am I intellectually impressed when he complains that church ritual is external, and not exclusively internal. I should not think much of his argument, if he merely said that a policeman's helmet does not prove a man to be a hero.

Nor do I think much of it when it says that a person's dog collar does not prove him to be a saint. The stale and vapid anti-clerical cant seems to me much more wearisome than the mere buffooneries of boyhood; and I have less respect for the highbrow revolt than the lowbrow riot.

The drinking is at least drinking; and the thinking is not in the least thinking. I would rather console myself with the proverb that boys will be boys than with a more melancholy maxim that bores will be bores. ☞

From *New York American*, May 31, 1932

Own Catholic Artwork by Artist Tony Stafki

"The Battle of Lepanto"

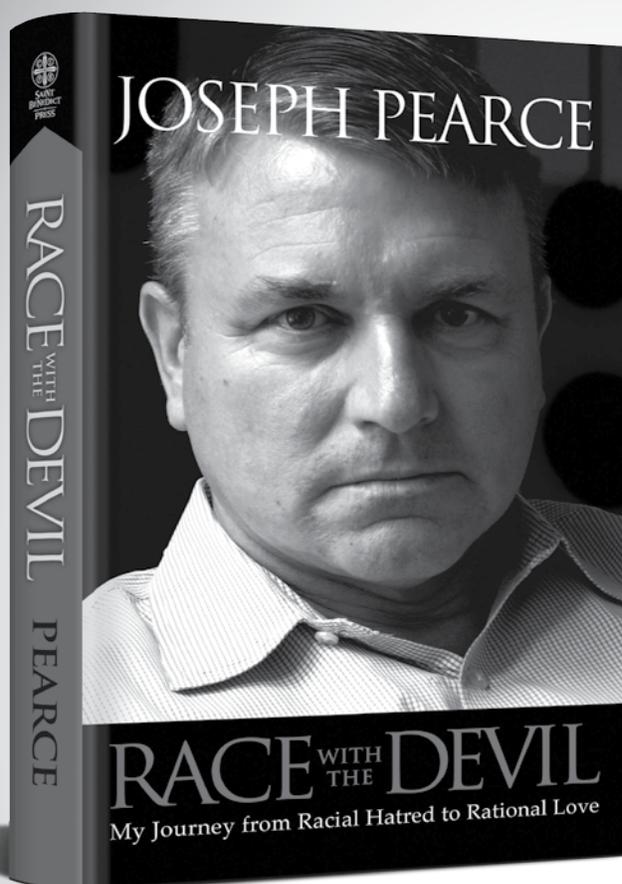


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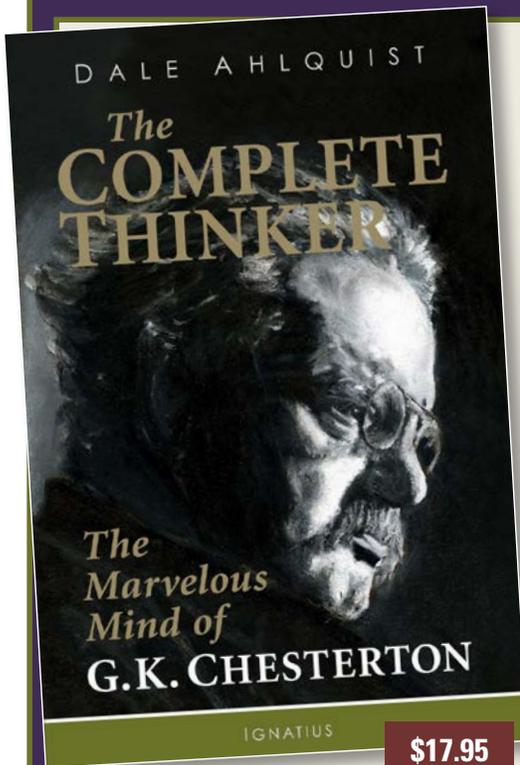
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