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OUTLINING SANITY
GILBERT
MAGAZINE

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home. —G.K. CHESTERTON



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BY G.K. CHESTERTON

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by Sean P. Dailey

Next August will be here before you know it, and that means you need to start making plans now for the 2012 Chesterton Conference, which will be August 2–4 at the Silver Legacy Hotel (and Casino) in Reno, Nevada. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of G.K. Chesterton’s novel *Manalive*, we will be showing the world premiere of the movie, *Manalive*, directed by Joey Odendahl and starring Mark Shea, Kevin O’Brien, and Kaiser Johnson. The theme of the conference will be a pivotal line from *Manalive*: “Break the Conventions. Keep the Commandments.”

Featured speakers are Dale Ahlquist and Joseph Pearce; also appearing are Mark Shea and Kevin O’Brien. And Joey Odendahl himself. We will have Jason Jones, the producer of the movie *Bella*. Other speakers include Ralph Wood, Cameron Moore, Lawrence Rohrer, and Julian Ahlquist, fresh from eviscerating *Remnant* editor Michael Matt in a last-man-standing debate on Harry Potter.

Hosting the conference is the Chesterton Society of Nevada. The closing Mass will be celebrated by His Excellency Bishop Randolph Calvo in the cathedral two blocks from the hotel. According to ACS president Dale Ahlquist, “It will be the best conference we’ve ever had.” Which is saying a lot.

Speaking of conferences, the talks from the 2011 Chesterton conference are now available for download in MP3 format from the Web site. Go to www.chesterton.org, click “Store,” click “Conference talks,” and then click “30th Annual Conference.” The downloads are \$5.99 each and all talks from the conference, with the exception of Christopher Check’s talk on “Lepanto,” are there (“Lepanto” will be available soon).

Speaking of the Web site, we are overflowing with wonderful gift ideas for loved ones, friends, or even yourself. Visit [http://www.chesterton.org/wordpress/2011/11/christmas-shopping-with-us-at-the-acs/](http://www.chesterton.org/wordpress/2011/11/christmas-shopping-with-us-at-the-ac/) for a variety of gift packages. Additional items are two collections of stories by John Peterson, *The Return of Father Brown* and *Best Laid Plans*, a new collection of the “best” essays by G.K. Chesterton, *In Defense of Sanity*; and, available by pre-order, *The Hound of Distributism*, a collection of essays about, you guessed it, Distributism.

Parting Trifle: if you’re online, you can check out a great interview with ACS president Dale Ahlquist—in Portuguese. Go to chestertonbrasil.blogspot.com/2011/10/visita-american-chesterton-society-em.html to read the interview. It was translated into Portuguese by Alessandra Lass (see photo, right), who is launching the Brazil Chesterton Society and also translating Chesterton into Portuguese. You can use Google Translator to reconstrue the interview into stilted English. Here is an excerpt:

100
YEARS AGO

G.K. Chesterton debated George Bernard Shaw for the first time in public. Only Shaw was not present. Chesterton was speaking at Cambridge University and his remarks were entirely devoted to rebutting a speech made by Shaw in the same venue a few months earlier. Shaw had come out attacking Christian theology, and Chesterton defended it, because Christian theology is based on Reason and Liberty. “We believe God created the world, desiring not so much to control it as to free it, desiring to make his creatures creators in their turn responsible for the worlds they created. Now, instead of worshiping God, Mr. Shaw has chosen to worship something he calls the Life-Force. But it is difficult to worship the Life-Force for the same reason that it is difficult to worship a hyphen. If a man wants to worship the Life-Force merely because it is a Force, he may very naturally worship it in the electric battery. I am tempted to say it will serve him right if he eventually worships the life force in the electric chair. But if he wants to worship life because it is living, he will find nothing in history so living as that little life that began in the cave at Bethlehem and now visibly lives forever.”

What message would you send to readers and admirers of Chesterton in Brazil?

What surprises me most in Chesterton is the fact that it is a universal writer. The truths spoken by him transcend barriers of language, he speaks to all people, everywhere, the universal truth that influences the way we look at the world.

He inspires us joy, appreciation, gratitude and encouragement to our imagination. He encourages us to serve others, but is always interested in what is right. Chesterton makes us want to

be better people, and there are few writers capable of causing such effects. You feel good when reading Chesterton, but at the same time, you will become much better.

Have a Trifle? Send it to
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from Gilbert Magazine Readers



What a gem of a story is “A Bed-time Story” by Kelsey McIntyre (*GM* July/August 2011). I reread it three times for the pure fun of the picturesque prose. Great little characters and a spellbinder plot. Wonderful!

Maryanne Van Gelderen
Newberry, Florida



I was very pleased to read the “Miscellany of Men” article on Eleanor “Ellen” McCormack that appeared in the latest issue of *Gilbert*.

It may be of interest to your readers that Dr. Jane Gilroy (English professor emeritus from Molloy College, Rockville Centre, Long Island) wrote an account of the McCormack presidential campaign in her book *A Shared Vision*.

Dr. Gilroy was vice-chairman of Ellen McCormack’s campaign committee and thus gives us an insider view of the proceedings.

Thank you.

Clara Sarrocco
Glendale, New York.



I recently grabbed a magazine at my local library (not being one to buy magazines, ever, with the exception of *Gilbert Magazine*), attracted by the lovely cover but knowing full well the type of drivel that would be contained within its elitist covers. All the greater my surprise then, when, sandwiched between hybridized car advertisements and anti-aging eye treatment, I came across a “Tremendous Trifle”: an entire page, artistically done, featuring a quote from G.K.Chesterton. “You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the play and the opera, 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.”

It attributed the quote as follows: “G.K. Chesterton, from an early notebook, mid-1890s.”

It was a lovely, unexpected nugget to find. And while the librarian and two nearby patrons did not seem to share my excitement, I brought it home, hoping to find more signs of life and chiding myself for having previously thought of the publication as vapid. Could I have rushed to judgment? Could *Real Simple* (November 2011) be really simple, child-like, full of the wonder of life and able to appreciate our Uncle Gil?

You know the answer. Whether I cite the article on how to have religiously inclusive holidays (by having no religion at all), or the birth control advertisement of the happy mom having a pillow fight with her two little

ones (one girl, one boy) under the headline, “I love being done having kids,” vapidly reigned throughout. Like so many other publications *RS* editors seek to profitably tap into what readers still want, despite decades of decadence: a moral compass, a life filled with wonder, and simplicity that fills the soul. But the answers are as hollow as a turkey the day after the celebration. No meat. No substance. Just dead bone and empty space.

All the more reason to rejoice that Chesterton was included in the issue, a spark in the darkness. Maybe, just maybe, someone is Googling him right now to find out more. And we all know where that kind of curiosity leads.

Thank you for your excellent publication.

Doreen M. Truesdell
Castleton-on-Hudson, New York

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CHESTERTON FOR TODAY



GKC on a unicycle
by Shaylynn Rackers age 16
8-5-11 at the GKC conference
ONE WHEEL IS BETTER!!!

- ◆ The iron laws of economics are remarkably flexible. ("Starting Afresh," *Is It a New World?*)
- ◆ There are some people who say that they want Socialism, but do not want bureaucracy. Such persons I leave in simple despair. How any calculating creature can think that we can extend the number of Government offices without extending the number of Government officials and the prevalence of the official mind, I cannot even conjecture. Some people look forward to a splendid transformation of the general human soul. That is a good argument for accepting Socialism—and, when one comes to think of it, an even better reason for doing without it. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 2, 1909)
- ◆ If it be true that Socialism attacks the family in theory, it is far more certain that Capitalism attacks it in practice. (Ch. 4, *The Superstition of Divorce*)
- ◆ I know, as does nearly every man over forty, that government is always indispensable and always inadequate. But of all forms of government, if you can get it, the best is direct consultation of the citizens, that the State may not be ruled by vested interests or by fads. But most modern people do not really agree with me. Only a minority believes in the majority. Most moderns believe in minorities, each having a pet minority of his own. (*Illustrated London News*, Dec. 20, 1924)
- ◆ It is easy to show that liberties are local; it is much less easy to prove that Liberty is universal. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 4, 1930)
- ◆ There is a right relation of the sexes; there is a right rule about it; and there is a wrong appeal calculated to encourage a wrong relation. (*Illustrated London News*, March 23, 1929)
- ◆ The Press can no longer maintain that bad things do not happen. It is driven back on maintaining that bad things do not matter. (*Daily Herald*, April 19, 1913)
- ◆ It is the duty of a politician to defend the indefensible. (*Listener*, Oct. 31, 1934)

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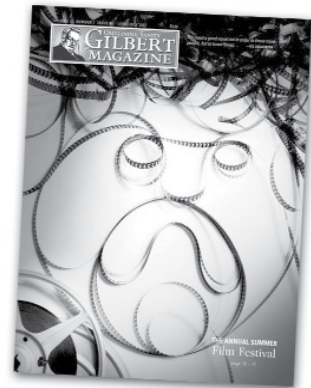
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The Difference between Penn State and the Catholic Church

In a jaded world, there are only a few things left that are able to cause outrage. With no apparent moral compass, the world somehow still manages on occasion to point in unison in one direction, and the one thing that will still get people to work themselves into a collective lather is when they detect hypocrisy in the high places that claim to carry the moral banner.

Such high places do not happen to be in Hollywood. Former child star Corey Feldman recently came forward, on the anniversary of the death of his fellow actor, Corey Haim, and revealed that both Coreys had been victims of sexual abuse by men in the movie industry. He said that the rape of male child actors by homosexual adults is an open secret in Hollywood. America yawned at this news.

In the music industry, superstar Michael Jackson created a bizarre fantasy world at his private ranch called Neverland and regularly allowed young boys to sleep in his bed with him. When the parents of one of the boys finally spoke out and initiated a lawsuit, spurring lethargic local authorities to investigate, most of the witnesses suddenly lost their memories and despite the credible evidence against him, the entertainer moonwalked free.

In Washington, D.C., Congressman Barney Frank and his boyfriend hosted parties where...I'm afraid I am unable and unwilling to complete this paragraph.

The point is, almost no one complains about criminal sexual abuse in the entertainment industry or in politics (which is a subdivision of the entertainment industry). But all that changes when the charges involve religious figures, because, well, people in religion aren't supposed to do that stuff, even if people in entertainment and politics do it. And so the outrage reflex has finally kicked in now that it has been discovered that such behavior has been discovered in the hallowed halls of religion.

That religion, of course, is football.

An assistant football coach at Penn State University has been accused of raping several small boys, ages seven to eleven, right in the showers of the locker room. The head coach, the legendary Joe Paterno, was informed of this and apparently did nothing, or at least didn't do nearly enough either to discipline the assistant or prevent the deeds from being done again. That was ten years ago. Now the story has come out as criminal charges are being filed against the assistant coach. In the wake of these revelations the head coach, after a long and storied career, was unceremoniously fired. His great achievements are now grass.

In the face of unanimous national outrage, there was surprisingly different reaction from the local football fans in State College, Pennsylvania. They rioted in

support of Joe Paterno. "Fan" of course is an abbreviation for "fanatic," and we saw something similar when Michael Jackson was accused of having sex with little boys. His fanatics went berserk defending him.


Joe Paterno is not accused of pedophilia. His downfall comes from simply not exercising his authority. We saw something similar in a less popular religion, but there were no Catholic fanatics marching through the streets in support of priests and baring their teeth at accusers who came out of the woodwork ten or twenty years after the fact; neither were they turning over cars demanding fairness for bishops who apparently protected those priests.

G.K. Chesterton says that whenever the Church is bad, the world is worse. But we are more upset with the Church, because we expect the Church to be better.

And even though football has relegated religion to an also-ran, it is still left pointing to the Church, for as Chesterton says, "Modern materialism is solemn about sports because it has no other rites to solemnize." But now we are faced with the rather painful difference between taking a game too seriously and not taking a religion seriously enough. We have made a game into a religion, and a religion into a game. And it's all fun until someone loses an eye. Perverts are entertaining until they show up in the shower room.

In *The Great Heresies* Hilaire Belloc argues that the Modernist heresy is distinctive not for tolerating sexual sins but for tolerating cruelty. This explains why a German society in the middle of the twentieth century could look the other way while Jews and Catholics were hauled away like cattle to abattoirs. It explains why American society a few decades later could look the other way while mothers participated in the butchering of their unborn babies. It explains why football coaches could look the other way while little boys were raped.

But it does not explain what happened in the Catholic Church when the bishops bungled an ongoing problem of priestly abuse. One main difference is that the pervasive problem was not the ravaging of small boys, but rather homosexual priests seducing teenage boys. But it has been more useful to talk about pedophilia, because there is still outrage at pedophilia. There is no outrage at homosexuality.

Outrage is at least a sign of hope. If we can still recognize scoundrels, we might still be able to recognize saints. But there remains the larger problem of reform. "It is not," says Chesterton, "that we have not got enough scoundrels to curse, but that we have not got enough good men to curse them." 

*Dale Ahlquist for the
editorial board of Gilbert Magazine*

An Essay by G.K. Chesterton



Do Miracles Happen?

by G.K. Chesterton

On January 19, 1914, several notable speakers were invited to take part in a panel discussion at London's Little Theatre, where Chesterton's play *Magic* was still enjoying a run that had begun the previous year. The speakers included Joseph McCabe, Hilaire Belloc, Dr. J. Warschauer, J.A. Hobson, A.P. Sinnett, Cecil Chesterton, and E.W. Lewis, and of course, G.K. Chesterton. The topic: "Do Miracles Happen?"

The moderator, Mr. Kenelm Foss, opened the proceedings with a dictionary definition of the word *miracle*. "A marvelous event occurring within human experience which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or some supernatural being."

G.K. Chesterton was then invited to make the first comments. —Ed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I call that last definition very clear-headed for a dictionary, because most dictionaries, and still more encyclopedias, are the most unscientific works in the world. But we will put that on one side for the moment while I very rapidly and simply explain my own position. When I accused Mr. Foss, as I do now, of treachery, I was referring to a conversation I had, either with him or my brother (and we all of us have brothers, and brothers are liable to be confused), in which I most definitely engaged only to come here to enter into the debate, and not in any sense to take an official part in it.

I really know nothing about these proceedings, I do not know what they are supposed to be about, I do not know what I am supposed to do, but I have that permanent equipment which

always makes it possible to make—I will not say, a good speech, but a less bad speech than you would under other circumstances, and that is knowing what you think about any subject. I will therefore, if you will, define a miracle, as that seems to be the thing that is first of all wanted. I should say a miracle is anything happening, as the dictionary truly says, in human experience, perceived by the senses—and therefore not disputed, except by those mystics who of course, like all mystics, are liable to be skeptics, who dispute the senses—it is an event happening perceptible to the senses which indicates that there is a will, or purpose, or intelligence behind the happening thing. You can argue for ever about whether the simple beauty of the sunlight proves the kindness of God, or whether the strength of the mountains proves the power of God, or whether the clearness of the starlight proves the mystery or lucidity of God; but if the mountains suddenly fall down, and something happens afterwards as if there were purpose in it, you then are face to face with the problem of a personal God so far as that event goes. That would be my definition of a miracle. It is that happening in the nature of things, that departure from the ordinary order which, whatever else it means, must mean a purpose. It is not a disorganization, but a change of plan—as a general might make a change in his plans in rushing his army through a battle. So far, I suppose, that is clear enough for the purposes of debate, and I am here only going to outline the whole question, because I see that lots of other people want to speak (and I don't want to speak), and I only want to get the ground of debate,

as it were, before you before we go any further.

Now we come to the question of whether these things do happen. That they have been supposed to happen, that men of every type of mind and every stage of civilization have again and again alleged that they happened, is, I suppose, not in dispute. Those who say that they are remains of darkness and barbarism are simply people who know no history. Everybody who knows any history knows that civilization and barbarism have gone up and down like a see-saw; that there have been periods when mankind has reached for all practical purposes the same subtlety of analysis, the same polish of manners, and the same accuracy of machinery that we have reached to-day; and that in those times miracles have been recorded by people who believed in them, and denied by people who did not believe in them, exactly as they are affirmed and denied in this hall this afternoon. That is not in dispute. King Alfred, let us say, did live in an age of barbarism; St. Louis certainly did not live in an age of barbarism; most certainly Henry VIII did not live in an age of barbarism: but they all three believed in certain miracles very firmly and tenaciously, and gave their reasons. And at this moment, alongside of anything that you may happen enthusiastically to admire, such as the Capitalistic system, board schools, motor-buses (which kill so many people a week), you can find people who believe in miracles, and whose philosophy is founded on that belief. Therefore, before we go any further, that is the first statement: these things have been believed, and believed by large numbers of people.

Then we come to the method of their analyses. How are we to discuss whether they happen or not? Well, I should keep you very much longer than I want to keep you if I were to attempt to deal with that as it ought to be dealt with; but I will make a sort of rapid summary. What is the argument of those who say that they do not happen? That argument is very simple. The human race is divided upon this as upon other problems, and some people have come to the conclusion

that miracles do happen, and some people that they don't, and the large majority probably are doubtful about the matter. The method of people who deny miracles is simple. They take all the people, however civilized, in whatever age, of whatever culture, in whatever branch of life, who have come to the conclusion that miracles do happen, and they say: The testimony of these people is of no value, for they are superstitious. It is a perfectly simple logical process. A man of the type of, say, Aristotle thinks, and thinks, and thinks, until his wife beats him for thinking, and he does not particularly come to the conclusion that miracles happen—I do not remember what his definition was.

Another man, like St. Augustine, thinks, and thinks, and thinks, and he had no wife to beat him; but his mother beat him a good deal, I believe, and he came to the conclusion that miracles did happen. The simple process is to put the word "Saint" before his name and say he was a Catholic, and his testimony is of no value. It is quite simple. No one will deny that there is an overwhelming mass of evidence—if you mean by evidence, stuff written down or sworn to, or spoken by an enormous number of different kinds of men—that things apparently unexplainable by ordinary physical causes do occur. Remember, the great point is, that you cannot pretend that it is a little tradition set up by a secret society; you cannot pretend that it is a small secret handed on from generation to generation by some particular kind of people who have some interest in it. Amongst barbarians, amongst civilized men, amongst Christians, among Asiatics, among Europeans, in every civilized or barbaric state, you will find testimony upon testimony from the beginning of the world; and that testimony is not stopping—it does not show any signs of stopping. In our own time we have seen new religions arise again and again, proclaiming that miracles happen. There is not an age goes by in the Western world when you do not see some new religion—mad, as I think; bad, as I think; but that has nothing to do with it—testifying that miracles do happen. Financiers, business men, lunatics, if

CREDO—CHRISTMAS EDITION

- ◆ I believed in Apollo when I was quite little; and I believe in Christmas now that I am very, very big. (*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 1, 1910)
- ◆ I believe that the gods who feast on ambrosia would have some special ambrosia on Christmas Day, probably in the form of a pie. And I am sure that an angel, on entering the private apartment of another angel, would take off his halo. (*Daily News*, Dec. 26, 1903)
- ◆ I believe many things which I have not seen. (*Daily News*, Dec. 14, 1907)
- ◆ I believe in Santa Claus. (*Daily News*, Dec. 21, 1907)
- ◆ I believe that Saint Nicholas is in heaven, accessible to our prayers for anybody; if he was supposed to

be specially accessible to prayers of children, as being their patron, I see no reason why he should not be concerned with human gifts to children. (*Commonweal*, Dec. 20, 1935)

- ◆ I believe in prolonging childhood. ("The Man with the Golden Key," *Autobiography*)
- ◆ I believe in giving money to beggars in the street as they stand. (*Daily News*, Oct. 10, 1908)
- ◆ I believe that our civilisation is not only founded on Christianity, but is in its very material and texture Christian. In other words, I believe that, if there had been no Christianity at all, there would now be no such civilisation at all. (*Illustrated London News*, June 10, 1922)

you like—I quite agree; I think the habit of commercial business does tend to lunacy—but people go on believing again and again, generation after generation—and without any sign of it stopping—to testify that they have seen levitation, that they have seen spirits, that these things occasionally and rarely happen. That is the second stage of the statement.

The third stage of the statement is, by what method can you test it? You can say, of course, these things are not miracles, but are part of some unexplored scheme of science—that is to say, part of some principle of nature which we have not yet examined. I do not accept that definition, but it is perfectly fair to take it. It may be so, but it is quite obvious that that philosophy covers all possible cases. You have absolutely no right whatever to say that Christ did not turn water into wine, or that God did not make Eve out of a rib of Adam—if you make the basis of your position that anything may happen—because we have not yet explored all the mysteries of nature. If I were suddenly to fly up in the air—it is improbable, but might happen; many modern scientific men have asserted that such a thing has been done, only they do not call it ascension, they call it levitation, which seems to make all the difference, I

don't know why—but if I were suddenly to fly up into the air, and you said, "This is because there are laws of nature which we do not know, and Nature is inexhaustible," you are bound to say the same of the ascension of a saint or of any miracles that have ever happened in the whole history of the world; you have no rational grounds whatever for denying any miracle.

Then you have another stage, in which it is said that all this was produced by a conspiracy of priestcraft, and so on. I do not think that that will hold water; you will find the falsehood of that, I think, by the simple process of comparison. Personally, I think the Christian religion is the healthiest thing in the world, and the only thing that can save Europe or can save anything else. But supposing it were a fact that, through the ages, a priestly class had succeeded in imposing this idea of miraculous happening upon the ignorant, you have still got to answer the same thing in equally high civilizations with an agnostic philosophy, where that agnostic philosophy has not been able to destroy the impression among large numbers of men, that these things happen.

I will leave it before you in that form. I say there is, first of all, a

very common human impression that miracles happen. It is impossible exactly to define what that impression is. You can only say that you know from the first literature you read, and the stories you heard in the conversations of your friends, and in a thousand other places, that as you got more intimate with them, people were less and less ashamed of saying that they believed in miracles; that their father thought he had seen a ghost; that they had once seen at a spiritualistic séance some very extraordinary things happen; they had tried the planchette [a device similar to a ouiji board]. I mention that as a personal confession, as I in my boyhood worked with a planchette; and, though I am perfectly willing to admit that I may have gone mad for the time being, or that there were resources in my subconsciousness I should never have imagined to exist, if anybody tells me that it was either cheating or done by my own will, I say it is nonsense. The thing ran across a table a good deal longer than this by which I am standing, with a violent pull. There was something undoubtedly behind it, and it was not either of the two people working it. I simply put that in as my own personal testimony. I also came to the conclusion afterwards that it was a bad experiment, and I would not go on with it; and that is, I fear, faintly connected with the moral of the play to which too much reference has been made.

Lastly, I want to say that, by the nature of the thing, a miracle is difficult to discuss or prove. So, for the matter of that, is a murder. There is a general legend and tradition that murders do happen, but if it is reasonable to say, as George Eliot (that very able, but, I think, somewhat superficial Victorian rationalist) made one of her characters say of ghosts: "If ghosts want us to believe in them, let them come where there is company and candles," it would be just as reasonable to say: "If murderers want us to believe in them, let them commit their murders on the lighted stage in front of a row of footlights"—as you see me now, murdering nothing more than my own reputation. It is of the nature of a murder that it should be secret,

disguised in every way possible; that the man who does it, does not, to say the least of it, boast of it. The same is true of all extraordinary occurrences addressed to some particular human soul; that they are deliberately designed to upset the apparently healthy order of the world. You can go through the parallel with murder a very long way, although I do not pretend that the parallel is exact; the one involves a human agent, and the other a supernatural agent. Why is it affirmed that no miracles can occur? It is because there is a philosophy that there is no personality behind the universe. Now, supposing there were a philosophic dogma in existence that life could not be ended by violence (I have heard madder philosophic theories in my time), I think it would be very easy to upset the evidence in every murder trial in the history of the world; I think it would be very easy—as every murder is secret, complex, as there is always so much doubt about it, as is proved by the great struggles of the lawyers in any murder case—to maintain a whole philosophic school on the theory that nobody's throat was ever cut, that nobody's skull was ever broken in. I would undertake the job myself at a good salary, if I were sufficiently venal to defend what I did not believe to be the truth.

That, I think, is a fair statement of the case. It is true many people have believed in miracles which were mere frauds and never happened; so have a good many people been hanged for murders they have never committed. There has been at certain periods a strong and reckless and immoral presumption in favour of any miracles that anybody reported; just as there always is in the law courts, when the police are pressing for a conviction, a strong and reckless and immoral presumption on behalf of the murder having been done whereby many innocent men have suffered. But you do not get rid of the general impression. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that my imaginary philosophy of the impossibility of a violent death were prevalent; supposing all the rich were on its side, as nearly all the rich are on the side of atheism to-day; supposing it were the philosophy of society, established

and conventional—you would not find it very difficult to disprove all the murders that have ever occurred in history: as much as I think any of my opponents will succeed in disproving the miraculous this afternoon.

[After the other speakers had addressed the question, Chesterton was invited to make some concluding remarks. —Ed]

I rise as a peacemaker. I want to soothe this meeting; I want to apologize to everybody to whom I was rude—nearly everybody who spoke. I will not say very much, because I think the issue has been rather brought to a point, and a good deal of what I should have said in reply has been said by others. I will very rapidly run through one or two points, and then the whole thing will end on a note of charity and peace, and the curtain will come down on myself, Mr. Hobson, and Mr. McCabe all embracing, and all will be, shall I say, gas and gaiters.

There are two or three very fundamental errors which have been made this afternoon: one by Mr. McCabe, who said: "You say people believe in the Resurrection of Christ or anything you like to mention of that sort, but they believed in barnacle geese in the same way." Of course, but they did not get boiled for believing in barnacle geese; that sort of argument is entirely unhistorical, and entirely devoid of common sense. Of course, everybody is sometimes wrong about science and about natural history, for as far as I can make out, modern scientists, people are always wrong about science and natural history, as at any given moment every doctor is wrong in his cure, and has to wait for the next generation, when the true cure will be discovered, which will again be discovered not to be the true cure, and so on. As a doctor told me a little while ago, every doctor has to learn his business all over again every six years. That is what is called progress!

It is quite obvious that upon what a barnacle is, and what are its habits, the human race, at any stage can never be quite certain it was right. I don't know what the men of science are saying about barnacles to-day, but by their own theory it is probably wrong.

But it is a lot of nonsense to talk about things like that in comparison with the enduring of a tremendous persecution, the waging of mighty wars, the building up of a mighty civilization, and the creation of all those things that are around us at this moment. That is what Christianity did. People believing in the Resurrection made this sort of thing, raised this sort of question; they have preserved that old Roman society, admitting it is not much to look at, that it has faults. (Mr. McCabe: "I never referred to Christianity.") Are you really under the impression you are not talking about Christianity all the time? I always thought Mr. McCabe a sincere and simple person, and now I am quite certain of it. Does he really think he was talking about astronomy? Of course, there are ignorant people who have made this mistake or that, but you cannot compare it to the real creations of human history. Great creations in human history are not made in that way.

Then we are told there are parallel stories about a God who died, and so on. Of course there are. If the story is true, there would certainly be an

enormous number of parallel stories. If the universe is made like that, of course all round the Mediterranean basin there would be gods who died, sacrificed in the same way. Which of them has risen again, which of them is actually presiding over the whole of civilization, and has gone down and up again throughout hundreds and hundreds of years? Show me your Resurrection, and then I will believe in your other Mediterranean gods. Until you show me that I will tell you that they were but shadows, suggestions, hints of this which I believe to be the central truth of the universe.

Lastly, it appears to me very curious that I should receive so strong an impression as I do that it is your side—if I may venture to address those who disbelieve in miracles generally—I assure you that whatever expressions may escape me or anybody else, I personally regard you with genuine sympathy and respect—it is very extraordinary that the impression produced upon my mind—and, I think, upon many other people—is that it is now you who are on the defensive: that

bold certainty, that solidity, that splendid English common sense which in the middle of the nineteenth century refused to accept a miracle as it would an insult, that spirit which would extinguish a ghost as one extinguishes a lighted match lying on the floor, seems to me to have wholly passed away.

It is a coincidence that the two or three people who have spoken here on my side are friends of mine and connected with me; but I do not think—and I do not think that any one candidly considering the debate will think—we are merely twin-brethren, Castor and Pollux, I think we have come to the same conclusion by different lines of development. We have maintained our position as strongly as the other side, and we must leave it like that.

And o'er the thirty armies
Came wonder and affright;
And Ardea wavered on the left,
And Cora on the right.
"Rome to the charge!" cried Aulus.

And I quite agree with him. ☞

G.K. Chesterton says:

Art is the signature of man.

Be a man!*

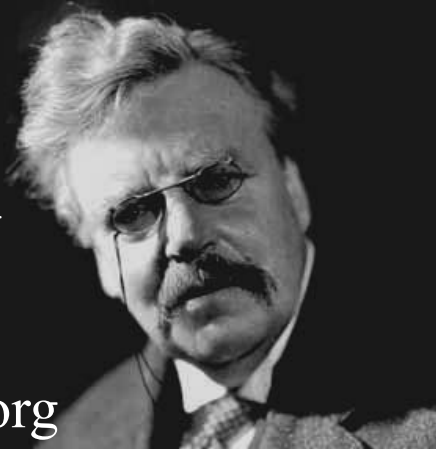
*That includes you, too, ladies!

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The Risky Adventure

by James V. Schall, S.J.

On April 27, 1912, almost a century ago, G.K. Chesterton wrote a column in the *Illustrated London News* entitled “The Sil- liness of Educated People” (*CW*, V, XXIX). No academic can afford not to read an essay with such a title! Ches- terton distinguishes the educated and the uneducated, not identical with the distinction between the smart and those who are not. Chesterton, like Aristotle, had a healthy respect for the practical wisdom of ordinary people. A doctorate did not necessarily prevent a man from being silly.

Chesterton did not think that ordi- nary people were silly. “The ignorant mob, it is said, used to be dangerous by its turbulence; it is now rather danger- ous by its apathy.” He adds: “A passive and un-enterprising populace is not a strong foundation for a State, either in the problems of population or of war.” These are remarkable words. The major worry of modern Western states is that they no longer have a population willing to reproduce or defend themselves. The present populace are now used to being taken care of by the State. The enter- prising people come from elsewhere.

Courage to *be*, to take the steps to assure one’s heritage, is something that everyone needs. “*Human life itself is an adventure as risky as hitting a police- man.* And men and women require some touch of the revolutionary flame even to affront things so horrible and so heroic as common birth and death.” We see today that a good part of our common discourse is precisely over birth and death. We have talked and legislated many out of the adventure of ordinary family life. We do not see that the greatest “revolutionary flame” is involved in founding and keeping a family.

Chesterton had great fun contrast- ing the silliness of the learned with the practicality of the ordinary men. The latter talk with “point and even wit of things that they understand; and they do not talk of things they do not under- stand: *a rare and real mark of having a mind.*” The mark of having a mind is to talk of things we understand, not of those we do not.

Educated people often speak in illogical ways. Chesterton gives exam- ples. One clergyman said at Clacton that “If we all made each other happy, the world would be a pleasanter place.” This is nothing else but saying the same thing twice. What we need to hear from clergymen how to go about making each other happy. “If everyone were good, no one would be bad.” But this is not helpful.

Many of the silliest things, Chesterton thinks, come from people with letters after their names. He cites a certain M.P. who said: “Any law which enables a man to resist temptation by preventing him from doing wrong is a good law.” In examining the M.P.’s principle, Chesterton found it “unreasonable.” Why? “If you prevent a man from doing wrong, you do not enable him to resist temptation.” St. Thomas does say that a good law would prevent evildoers from doing some evils. But the law prevents the act; it does nothing about the inner temptation that remains. The crime-doer is merely pre- vented from carrying it out.

Moreover, is any law a good law that prevents us from doing wrong? Again

Chesterton is amusing. “A law to cut off all our heads, for instance, would cer- tainly prevent us from doing wrong for a considerable time after the experiment. Sewing up all our mouths would prevent us from telling lies.”

So Chesterton questions the unthink- ing principle that the M.P. advocated. The law is to prevent crime, but not in just any way. “A public man who says such a sentence as that on a platform is behav- ing quite as irresponsibly as if he were drunk on a platform.”

It is likely that Chesterton under- stood what the man wanted to say; he simply did not take time to think it through. He intended to say: “In so far as any law prevents a man from doing wrong, it is in that respect a good law, though it may be a very bad law in hundreds of other respects.”

“(These examples) are simply evi- dence that the educated people have struck thinking, just as the uneducated have struck working.” The educated class should be the “salt of a society. It should even have the bitterness of salt; it should supply the national self-criticism.” But it cannot do this without thinking.

We must know that the human life itself is a risky adventure. Men and women require a “revolutionary flame” even to confront things so horrible and so heroic as “birth and death.”

“Life exists for the love of music or of the beautiful things.”

— G. K. Chesterton

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The Children and The Cross

by Dale Ahlquist

When Debbie Thompson of Sparta, Wisconsin, learned that I was going to be speaking at a Chesterton event in nearby La Crosse, she asked me if I could come a day early and talk to a group of homeschooled students to whom she had been teaching a writing course. Not just any writing course. She was using G.K. Chesterton to teach them how to write a good essay. There was simply no way I could say no to this. I have had the great privilege of being invited to a lot of interesting places simply because people have wanted to hear me give a talk about my favorite writer. Some of the places have indeed been exotic, the settings prestigious, and audiences, in some cases, even large. But I have also been invited to more modest settings and with very modest-sized audiences. I try my best to accommodate all requests. It is always worth it. This one could not have been more rewarding.

Debbie herself found that she could not say no to teaching the class even though she was very busy as a judge and coordinator for the Athanatos Christian Ministries annual novel contest (<http://www.athanatoschristianministries.org>). She was swamped in reading, and she knew that she could not bear to teach, read, and correct a lot of standard five paragraph essays. But then she remembered the fantastic results that years of modeling masters produced in her own, now grown children, so she decided to offer an eight-week concentrated version of that using Chesterton. "I knew that if I could succeed in helping them to love Chesterton and embrace his buoyant Christian outlook and style, I would give them valuable writing instruction, and I would not be bored by their essays." Each week the class carefully analyzed one of the essays in *Tremendous Trifles* for sentence construction, divisions,

word count, detail selection, meaning, and impact. "We talked about how Chesterton saw rich meaning in all of God's world, everything around him. The kids were a bit taken aback by this because, I think, we have inadvertently separated our everyday lives from the spiritual aspects of the ordinary. I taught them to reflect, as Chesterton did, upon the little things in their lives and to see everything as meaningful."

The result of this teaching technique, I can personally attest, has been astonishing. Kids whose every other word is "like" wrote interesting, fun, insightful essays. The evidence can be seen on the next pages, where two girls, ages fourteen and sixteen, have written essays inspired by Chesterton's "The Extraordinary Cabman."

The next day I found myself on the holy hill of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, where I was the guest of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate. Father Peter Damian Fehlner is a man of many years and much wisdom. He also knows his Chesterton. Father Angelo Mary Geiger and the other friars, Father Jacinto and Father Allan, are also well-versed in Chesterton, and so I'm not sure who enjoyed our discussion more: the friars or the layman interloper on the mountain. It was, I suppose, no surprise that such spiritually profound and joyful servants of God should have a great affection for Chesterton. They serve a grateful stream of pilgrims who come from all over the country to visit the beautiful shrine that was made possible by the vision and support of then-Bishop of La Crosse and now prefect of the Apostolic Signatura (and member of the American Chesterton Society), Cardinal Raymond Burke.

The pilgrims climb a winding path past a candle chapel and arrive at a magnificent church that rises from the hillside, lifting its hands in praise to God. The artwork and craftsmanship throughout is stunning, a testament to the rich traditions of the Church and



The four friars

a demonstration of what the arts are meant to be.

A little higher up the hill is another shrine, this one in the open air, a quiet and reflective place that exemplifies perfectly Chesterton's observation that there are some pieces of ground more sacred than others. What is this place? It is a shrine to the unborn.

There is a silence here supplemented only by the rustling of the leaves and the gentle gurgling of a fountain. At one end is a colonnade around a reflecting pool. Inside the walls are the remains of unborn children. At the other end is a dramatic statue of the Virgin Mary, with the same features and dress as Our Lady of Guadalupe but in a much different pose. From the back, her head is bowed and her draped figure suggests great sorrow. But as we walk around to face her, we see that she is cradling three tiny babies in her arms, and her face is full of comfort and healing and peace. The symbolism goes on forever. But there is more here than a symbol, more than a work of art.

During my time on the mountain, I kept returning to that statue. I took full advantage of being a guest at the friary, where I could walk the grounds long after the shrine was closed to the public. In the middle of the night, under the luminous glow of an autumn moon, I sat at the foot of that statue silhouetted against the silent sky. The moment was spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally overwhelming. I felt the holiness of the woman who is herself a sacred place because God Himself dwelt within her. I felt the loss of millions of children whose lives were ended. I felt the faithfulness and sacrifice of the people who had built this beautiful shrine. I felt my own unworthiness to be here. But then I felt a rush of comfort and encouragement and hope. We are going to win the battle against the Culture of Death.

And as I drove away the next afternoon, I suddenly remembered that the name of the town is La Crosse. As G.K. Chesterton points out in his book on St. Thomas Aquinas, the cross is not only a symbol of suffering; it is the Tree of Life. ☸



Two views of the Statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Shrine to the Unborn

The Extraordinary Dust Rag

by Morgan Roth

(with apologies to G.K. Chesterton)

Every so often, incidents occur that can shake even our strongest beliefs. It stands to reason that after such incidents our previously believed views will either be stronger or crumble away entirely. Also there is often, if not always, an awful moment of doubt and indecision. Therefore, I propose to narrate an incident of this kind. This incident occurred only a short time ago. This incident, slight as it seems, gave me a moment of genuine emotion bordering upon despair.

On the day before the aforementioned incident my mother was hosting a party. But this was not just any common party. This party was to market the incredible Norwex cloth. My mother's friends are all either bottomless skeptics or quite uncontrollable believers.

The latter were most prevalent at this party. The party started in a lighthearted manner, but soon all were listening in rapt attention as the glories of the illustrious Norwex cloth were proclaimed. This wonderful little antibacterial microfiber cloth evidently kills bacteria, saves you money and time, and is great for the environment. You can wash your toilet and your table with the same cloth (in that order) and with a Norwex cloth that is completely sanitary. You can use them wet and you can use them dry. You can wash windows, walls, or floors. (Or even your face if you feel so led.)

Then as all warmed to the subject, passionate testimonials began. The windows now shone on a brighter tomorrow of smudge-free washing, the shelves sparkled and not a trace of dust was left. Diseases had been cured; lives had

been changed, and so on...And this was not all! These cloths were practically indestructible, which one awe-stricken woman declared. It seemed as if neither boiling water, nor myriads of dust mites, nor rain, nor sleet, nor snow could keep these clothes from their worthy tasks.

Then, as the party drew to its close, all of the ladies solemnly ordered more Norwex cloths. After that out came the cookies and lemonade and talk turned to trivial matters. But I sat in their midst pondering this magnificent cloth. From all its praise it must truly be all it was reputed to be. The Norwex cloth was raised on a pedestal in my mind. The cloth's greatness compared closely with Edison's light bulb, Einstein's theory of general relativity, and Pasteur's rabies vaccine. Norwex would surely go down in history as the work of a genius who improved the quality of all life. (Save that of the dust mites, pathogens, and bacteria.)

On the day after this enlightening party we went to the house of some of our friends, who were moving, to help them pack and clean. Other friends of ours were there helping as well. In the morning I helped shred soap, drove to the store with my sister to get boxes, and helped transport broken bikes to a repair shop. For lunch we ate grilled hot dogs and hamburgers and after that more jobs were given out. A friend and I were put on car washing duty. Mother brought us some of the sacred Norwex cloths and we began to clean.

The first vehicle that we washed was a red suburban. We emptied out the interior and vacuumed it. After that we started on the windows, which we systematically washed and dried with the Norwex cloths until they shone and sparkled in the sunlight.

As we worked I enlightened my friend as to the remarkable qualities of the Norwex cloth. But, to my greatest surprise, my hope filled and joyous message was met with evident disdain. I was greatly shocked and slightly hurt. How could anyone not be persuaded by the overwhelming evidence for the superiority of the esteemed Norwex cloth? I raised my cloth and pointed to the window in mute astonishment, but my friend simply looked at me with a surprised and skeptical glance and remarked quite genuinely, "Do you

know, I actually think that you believe that these dust rags are all they are said to be." I heartily asserted that it was so. "I think that that is ridiculous," he said. I gasped in absolute horror. Had someone truly just insulted the mighty and ever-able Norwex cloth? Though in great distress, I replied with true and genuine Christian forbearance: "How come you think you know so much about it? It is quite obvious that these cloths are unmatched and authentic. Why you have just washed all of these windows and they are spotless!" "Any other cloth could do the same," he answered. I kindly and gently replied, "It could not!" "Yes, it could." "No, it couldn't!" After several minutes of that I said, "Well, fine, then prove it." "I will," he said.

Next, we moved on to another dirty vehicle, a fifteen-passenger van with lots of windows. We decided how we would test the truth of the Norwex cloth. He would wash the windows on one side of the van with a generic, common rag and I would wash the windows on the opposite side with the greatly superior Norwex cloth. In the end we would compare. So we both confidently began washing windows. I scrubbed my windows with great fervor and was sure that the quality of my work would far surpass that of my friend. So the time passed, both of us painstakingly washing, drying, and polishing our windows with zeal like never before.

Finally we came to the two back windows and in a flurry of excitement and confidence we scrubbed doubly hard in our valiant efforts to prove our points. When we finished washing the last window, we both stepped back in triumph to observe the other's handiwork. As I beheld his window I stepped back in consternation and agony. For his window shone as brightly and was as clean as my own. At that moment I was filled with despairing doubt. Was Norwex truly as great as it was said to be? How had a simple imitation rag cleaned a window seemingly as well as my Norwex cloth? Were all of the statistics false? All of the enthusiastic stories myths? Were all of the Norwex owners and I just deeply deceived individuals? Had I been tricked and fooled into believing a complete and total lie?

In a daze I slowly went to look at the rest of my friend's windows while

he followed me triumphantly. As I gazed upon his first window I gave a start as I saw what I hardly dared dream was real. Could it be? I looked closer and, wonder of wonders, I saw a streaky smudge! I joyfully looked at the rest of his work and as I did I realized that all of his windows had smudges. Some even had pieces of fuzz on them. He noticed all of this at the same time that I did and ran to look at my windows. After a short time he slowly came back to where I stood. As he walked, a kind of frightful transformation of living astonishment came over him, as if something had dawned on him that he had never before thought of. "Well it seems as if you were right," he said in an awed and sincere tone. "I could not believe that that cloth was all you said it was, but I do now." And with that he went to get the vacuum cleaner and I began removing floor mats.

As we finished cleaning the van I chanced to notice the counterfeit dust rag lying on the ground. It was covered in dirt and grime and looked rather pathetic. As I beheld the rag a thought came to me. Perhaps this cloth had been sent to tempt me from my loyalty and faith in the Norwex cloth. At any rate, as I took that worthless rag to a suds-filled wash bucket, I was glad that, although my strong beliefs had been shaken, they were now restored and deeper than before. ☸

The Extraordinary Coke Bottle

by Audrey Johnson

(with apologies to G.K. Chesterton)

From time to time I have considered myself to be eloquent enough that I should write down my musings. Though these musings may be weak and pathetic, nonetheless I will inflict them upon my poor reader. I mean only that while my oration of these ideas may be lacking, the ideas themselves are magnificent things; they are both

concrete and abstract; hence I find them difficult to comprehend. Thus being the case, I have taken it upon myself to take an idea and put it into terms the average person, like myself, can try to understand. Therefore I propose to narrate the incident of the extraordinary Coke bottle, which occurred only three days ago, that being Saturday.

As it was Saturday, my eldest sister Elaine had gone to work at the wee hour of four in the morning, while my father never left for work at all. On that day, it was decided that, after Elaine got off work, we should meet her at her first apartment to drop a few things off. Her apartment, if ever an apartment was quaint, well furnished, with cow print-lined cupboards, and holes in the walls from the many nails that pierced the drywall so as to look like a machine gun went off inside the kitchen, if ever (in short) an apartment was all that a first apartment should be, it is that little place on Tenth and Pine. My sister Hannah and I gathered up the boxes Elaine had set out for us to take, and hopped into the waiting car. We brought these things from our home, to make Elaine's apartment her home. Elaine was waiting for us when we pulled up to the corner of Tenth and Pine. Grabbing the boxes, we carried them through the open door, and back to her room.

There were boxes of clothes, and boxes of books, and boxes of random little household things. A chair, a lamp, sheets, and her big-white bear (whose name, sadly, is Big White Bear) and last, but certainly not least, a toothbrush, all this we carried over the threshold of her new home. A new home. Can you really make your home so quickly in a place that you barely have slept in? I may not be the best person to answer this, since I have never experienced such a thing as moving, but if I know my sister, our house on County Road YY is her home; it will be her home for some time, but she will also make home in the apartment on the corner of Tenth and Pine.

Now it is necessary in this narrative to preserve the utmost exactitude of detail. After we drove home, we

all set about gathering the trash from around our house to take it to the Town of Greenfield dump; Greenfield being the township in which I reside. We loaded all of the garbage into our trailer, and I directed while my dad backed the van up so we could hook the van and the trailer together. A ten-minute drive later, and the fence around the dump was in view. On a sign next to the gate I read: "Greenfield Community Recycling Center, where you meet your neighbor." My dad and I had always had a good laugh about that sign. How more hick can you get when you meet your neighbors at the dump? The sad thing is it's true.

Pulling up next to the large trash compactor, I stepped out of the van. All around me people were throwing their garbage away—burnable trash in the trash compactor; boards, windows, and a toilet seat went in another; mattresses, spark plugs, and fans in the open topped dumpster. You can find out a lot from what a person throws out. The man that helps run the dump noticed our kitty litter for the first time, and asked us when we got a cat. Somebody in that man's family is getting over a cold; bags of Kleenex give that away. It was some little boy's birthday recently; wrapping paper and empty action figure boxes are in those bags. That lady's baby is growing up fast, the exercise saucer, it seems, only a few months ago went over the edge of the dumpster; and now the number of bags of diapers is dwindling.

As I thought about this, I asked aloud, "How are many of the things taken to the dump are that different than some of the things that we have displayed in our living rooms?" The garbage man (I call him that because of the lack of a better word; just think, saying 'the man who worked at the dump' every time would become quite arduous) grinned and said, "It's different 'cause all this stuff is junk." "Not all of it," I countered, "some of it isn't in bad shape." "Yeah, well, the rest that isn't half bad is junk," he replied. "I mean, why would anyone ever want a cornucopia?" he asked pulling the wicker piece out of the open top. As I looked at it I imagined it gracing a coffee table, or any number of places.

"Well," I said, "what do you have on your coffee table?" "One o' them old Coke bottles and a couple o' other stuff like it." "Why would anyone ever want an empty pop bottle in their living room?" I asked with Christian forbearance. The large man responded, "Because I met my wife while drinkin' one o' those." And at this moment there came over my features a subtle transfiguration of knowing. Things like this extraordinary Coke bottle are what make a house a home.

To be a home, it doesn't need to look all perfect, all color coordinated and tidy. It's the memories and the love, the fellowship and the rough patches, all wound up in the miscellany on the counters, and the pictures on the refrigerator. Those are the types of things that make a house a haven of happiness and love. I highly doubt the perfect house exists. If you buy a house and furnish it like in the magazines, get it all picked up so there isn't any clutter, no random little memorabilia, no missing trim around the floor, no dirt anywhere in your mud room, it might be the perfect house; but a house is not a home. I've heard this before, but it gave me pleasure to realize for myself that the small things around the house, that have the memories, make the place a home. How can you have a great home? In the dictionary a home is safe place, a sanctuary. If I wanted my home to be a haven, I think I would slowly acquire the furnishings in my house with friends and family through shopping trips, Christmas and birthday presents, garage sales and clearance racks. I think the pictures on the walls, the books on the shelves, the potted plants, and the center piece on the coffee table play a role. But there is something else though, that really makes a home and it has nothing to do with the things in it; it's the love that radiates from those who live there.

A home then is not just a place to sleep; it is a place to live, love, fellowship, and commune. The extraordinary thing about a home, is there is not one solve-all to making a home. It comes naturally. If you live in a house, you will inadvertently make it a home. ☁

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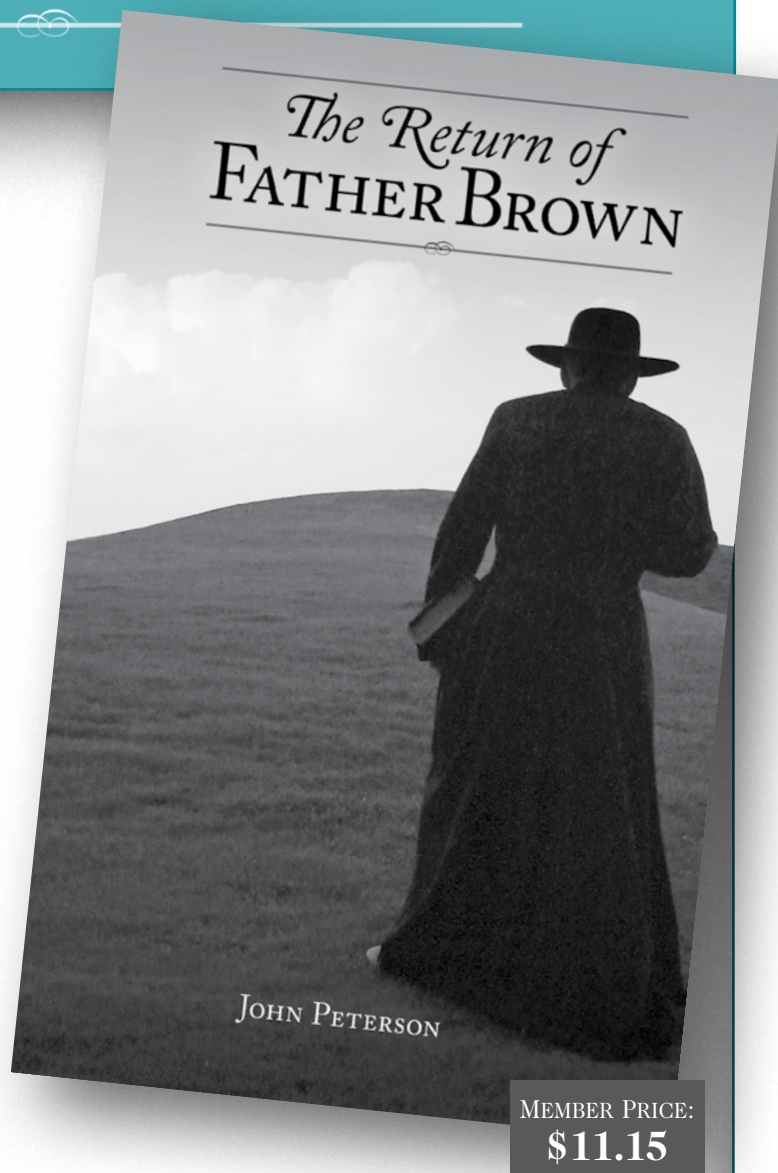
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Mrs. Cecil Chesterton

1888–1962

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

Ada Elizabeth Jones Chesterton, daughter of Charles Sheridan Jones, a journalist, was, by her own account, out on the street at sixteen, earning her living as a reporter.

She became a hard-bitten Fleet Streeter, proud of her ability to work—and drink—like men. Tall and stately, beautiful with dark, wavy hair, she took the pen name John Keith Prothero, and was known as “Keith.” Besides journalism Ada wrote sensational romantic literature and a number of expose-type books. But as a struggling self-employed writer, she sought any writing job to pay the bills, and became known as the “Queen of Fleet Street.”

Ada met Cecil and Gilbert Chesterton around 1906. They crossed paths at *The New Age*, a weekly newspaper. Ada, Cecil, and Gilbert enjoyed the atmosphere of Fleet Street. The argumentative nature of Gilbert and Cecil attracted Ada, for she loved to argue and debate, too.

Ada and Cecil developed a bantering, playful attitude. Ada, ten years his senior, teased the young journalist, and Cecil fell in love. For her part, Ada admired Cecil’s ability to understand issues and incisively take on the political and social problems of the day. He nicknamed her “Kiddy.” It became a common joke of theirs that he would ask her to marry him, and she would refuse.

Gilbert’s wife Frances did not get along with Ada because Ada couldn’t understand Frances. To Ada, the essential difference between them lay in their respective attitudes toward Fleet Street—a difference that colored the greater part of their association. Ada loved the drinking, smoking, debating, and laughing until late. Frances favored the quiet life of gardening and reading, and wanted Gilbert home to write literature. They talked about



moving to the country. Gilbert thought Frances needed the change after her brother’s suicide. Frances thought Gilbert needed the change so he would have more time to write.

Ada did not like change of any sort. Unaware of the full situation, she held the Chestertons’ move to

Beaconsfield—and away from Fleet Street—against Frances for a very long time.

Cecil became assistant editor on Hilaire Belloc’s new weekly, *The Eye-Witness*, in 1911. When it folded the next year, Cecil bought it and renamed it the *New Witness*, summoning Ada to be his editorial assistant.

The *New Witness*, like its predecessor, sought—sometimes recklessly—to expose corruption at all levels of government. Such practices nearly destroyed Cecil’s career when in the Marconi trial he was found guilty of libel. Ada and Cecil often put the *New Witness* to bed after long debates about what legally constituted “libel”—one has to wonder if she wasn’t the cause of Cecil’s lawsuit.

Cecil caught war fever and enlisted in the Great War. He then begged his love, if he were sent to the front, would she marry him? This time, Ada could not refuse.

In June of 1917, Cecil returned home from training, eagerly seeking “Kiddy.” He’d been sent to the front. He needed to be back in service in three days. The wedding was hastily arranged; they married at her Anglican church, then once again in his Catholic parish. Gilbert and Frances attended both ceremonies and after the briefest of honeymoons, he was gone.

During his absence, his new wife took over the day-to-day operation of

OUR MR. CHESTERTON

In December of 1930, a literary columnist for the *Hartford Courant*, who went only by the initials “E.N.C.” and who described himself as a “shameless hero-worshipper” of another writer who went by the initials “G.K.C.”, waxed rhapsodic on the occasion of finally being able to see his idol in the flesh at a public lecture:

There, conveying an impression of sheer dominating intellectual power such as I had never before felt in the presence of any human being, stood the man who has long been, in my estimation, the keenest and most penetrating of living literary critics...the man who is also a provocative and able essayist and one of the supreme wits of his day...I managed to control my own sense of triumph, though I own to clutching my sympathetic companion, when I heard Mr. Chesterton voicing my own pet and personal convictions as to the now rampant “psychology” craze, and blandly stating his belief that less general psychologic understanding was at present less manifest than at any point in the world’s history. I had the joy of listening to the deliciously worded utterance of my own inner convictions when Mr. Chesterton gave his examples of the present crass failure to understand human nature.”

the newspaper, while Gilbert was its absent editor.

Cecil became deathly ill at the end of the war, and Gilbert arranged for Ada to travel to France. She arrived the evening before Cecil died. Sadly, Ada was the only family member present at the funeral.

Ada continued to write, although her work at the paper had to stop. Gilbert had not intended a long-term editorship; he wanted to bring Belloc back on board, but Belloc refused to work with 'Keith.' She could remain as a drama critic, and had outlets that would bring her other work.

Although she and Frances mixed like oil and water, Ada and her new mother-in-law got along well, and 'Keith' helped nurse Mr. Ed when he died in 1922, showing she had a tender, caring side as well.

Ada demonstrated her writing versatility when she wrote an adaptation (with collaboration of Ralph Neale) of *The Man Who Was Thursday*. It opened at the Everyman Theater on January 19, 1926, to positive reviews.

Later the same year, her brother Charles Sheridan Jr. died, leaving behind a wife and three daughters. These four lived with Ada for two years, another proof that there was more to Ada than her "Queen of Fleet Street" public persona.

Ada published her most important work, *In Darkest London*, in 1927. This book was her major achievement, for it sparked a movement among Londoners to improve the lives of women living in the streets. Frances Chesterton reviewed the book favorably in *G.K.'s Weekly*, to Ada's surprise. But Frances had always had an interest in social issues and improving the lives of the poor. Ada opened Cecil Houses, hostels for homeless women that provided hospitality, a bed, meals, and a place to do washing. Gilbert and Frances gave money to support Cecil Houses during their lives, and left money for the work in their will.

After her husband died, Ada took trips to Russia and Poland, where she wrote exposes on the various social problems she found there. She served as a correspondent to newspapers while living in those countries, and the work also provided her with enough material to write books. Her titles include *I Lived in a Slum*; *St. Teresa*; *Women of the London Underworld*; *The Chestertons* (her most controversial work, in which she took out all her frustrations on Frances); *My Russian Venture*; *Young China and New Japan*; *Sickle or Swastika*; *Salute the Soviet*; *What Price Youth?*; *Motley & Tinsel: A Story of the Stage*; *A Prince of Vagabonds*; *Diamond Cut Diamond*; *Pearl Beyond Price*; *With Links of Steel*; and *An Eye for an Eye*. Her three known published plays are *The Man Who Was Thursday*, *Christine Molnar*, and *The Love Game: A Comedy in Three Acts*.

Ada Chesterton's lasting contribution, however, remains the Cecil House project that she named in honor of her husband. This work continues today as the Central and Cecil Housing Care Support. ☞



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The Flying Clocks

by James G. Bruen, Jr.

People assume that because I bear my grandfather's name, I share his abilities," laughed the young man. "I am a painter, but I don't identify with lunatics," he continued. "I prefer the sane to those who think themselves isosceles triangles."

His hosts' anxious demeanor caused him to abandon his attempt at humor. "Why do you think her insane?" he asked. "Why do you fear she'll soon do something terrible?"

The afternoon sun threw lengthening shadows across the expansive manicured lawn of the Astaire estate. The three men stood on the lawn amid well-tended beds of hybrid tea roses and ornamental shrubbery and hothouse flowers.

"My daughter hasn't been herself for weeks, Gabe," said David Astaire.

"We're worried sick about Celine," added her older brother Alan.

"She's obsessed with kings and golden suns and flying clocks," explained her father. "None of it makes any sense," said Alan. "She's mad. And she thinks we live in Disney World!"

"She disappeared early this morning," said David. "She's been missing for seven hours, and in her agitated condition, we fear she's harmed herself."

"She left a note behind," said Alan, "talking of death and going to heaven, or as she called it, touching the sky."

"We've had the entire estate searched," said David. "She's nowhere to be found."

"You called the police?" asked Gabe Gale.

"No, we don't want the embarrassment of police involvement if we can avoid it," responded David. "The search was completed by our security personnel with the assistance of our groundskeepers and the household

staff. They searched every inch of the property, including the inside of every building. Then we called you. You're about her age, and your family has had, shall we say, an affinity for lunacy."

"Perhaps she went to visit a friend?" suggested Gale.

"Leaving behind a suicide note?" rejoined Alan.

"May I see the note?" asked Gale. David Astaire pulled it from a pocket. Gabe Gale read it aloud:

"Where kings' clocks fly
when golden suns die,
there my toes
shall touch the sky."

"The lunatic is a poet!" exclaimed Gale, smiling widely as he sprung into exuberant cartwheels, finally collapsing in a burst of laughter at the base of a large tree. "I think I shall ask Miss Celine to marry me," he announced.

"Do I have your blessing?"

"I think lunacy is contagious," rejoined her father. "You seem to have gone mad yourself."

"Lunacy?" laughed Gale. "If only all men were so sane! Then all men's toes would touch the sky!" He stood on his head and wiggled his feet.

"I think we'll need to call the police after all," said Alan, but Gale did not hear him; instead, he flipped lightly onto his feet and bounded down the lengthy curving paved driveway that split the lawn, gleefully singing loudly and off tune of his impending marriage.

David Astaire gaped at the retreating figure. "We'll need their help to locate two lunatics," he observed.

Several hours later, as the police completed their initial interview of David and his son Alan in the entrance to the Astaire mansion, two small figures appeared in the distance near the end of the driveway. The smoky darkness of twilight obscured their features.

After a minute or two, though, it was apparent they were walking arm in arm toward the residence. "It's Gabe," announced Alan. "And Celine is with him," added his father.

The Astaires rushed to meet the couple; three policemen followed at a slower pace. When questioned about where he'd found Celine, Gale instead rhapsodized over their recent engagement:

"Heavenly, heavenly, heavenly Celine, Loveliest lunatic I've ever seen."

After several repetitions of the verse, David Astaire cut Gale off and demanded an explanation.

"At Disney World, they replace wilted plants nightly, when the tourists are gone," said Gale, sweeping his arm across the wide expanse of lawn and garden. "Weeds are uprooted mercilessly. The illusion of perfection is perpetrated daily. That's lunacy! That's a crime against God and man!"

"What's this got to do with us?" demanded Alan Astaire.

"Where are the weeds in your lawn? Where are the dying flowers?" replied Gale. "Flowers are but weeds someone prized and cultivated for their blossoms! Weeds are but flowers men have yet to appreciate!"

"You *are* daft," muttered David Astaire.

"Where you see a perfect lawn," continued Gale, "we see a sea of green that should be dotted with golden suns. Where you see a masterpiece, we see a marred canvas. Stand on your head. Reach your toes to the sky. See things as they really are!"

"Uh," said a policeman. "I think we'll be leaving now since the lady's returned on her own and unharmed." The three policemen headed to two cruisers parked in front of the mansion. "We don't do nut cases," added one over his shoulder as they departed.

"Golden suns?" asked Alan skeptically. "Are you talking about dandelions?"

"Ah! You do see," replied his sister. "Aren't their flowers spectacular?" she asked rhetorically. "So sad they have to die, but how else could they seed?"

"It is a strange, staggering heresy," proclaimed Gale, "that insists man owes no thanks for dandelions and need feel no wonder at them and

indeed no wonder at being thought worthy to receive them, but instead should exterminate them.”

“Dandelions? Heresy?” repeated David Astaire incredulously.

“When I found Celine standing on her head—isn’t it fortunate women can wear pants nowadays?—in a meadow of glorious dandelion blossoms, I slipped up beside her and pointed my toes to the sky too,” continued Gale. “Then I proposed.”

“But kings’ flying clocks?” asked

Celine’s father. “This all makes no sense.”

“The lion is the king of the jungle,” observed Gale. “The dandelion is king of the lawn!”

“Oh, daddy, we loitered about blowing clocks off dandelions to celebrate our betrothal,” said Celine, beaming.

David Astaire sputtered, perplexed.

“Sir,” said a suddenly formal Gale, “I learned to blow clocks at my grandfather’s knee. Seldom am I so serene as when I’m blowing clocks.”

“Stop this nonsense, you two,”

commanded David Astaire.

“Sir,” Gabe Gale continued, “a clock is the downy flower head of a dandelion that’s gone to seed. Their golden suns mature into spherical clocks containing seeds attached to fine hairs so they can fly on the wind. Haven’t you ever blown a clock off a dandelion?”

David Astaire looked with bemusement at the couple. “You two surely are unusually well matched,” he said. “You have my blessing.” ☞

The Pea and the Princess

by Kelsey McIntyre

The king and queen, seated at one end of the long dining table, fidgeted with their napkins and eyed the servant who had just entered the hall bearing the princess’s silver platter. The platter’s contents were thankfully hidden—for the moment—under a shiny domed lid. The princess, at the other end of the table, was thankfully still too busy complaining about how one of her perfect ringlet curls had been crushed as Nanny was helping her dress for dinner to notice the appearance of her meal. Yet. The king glanced at the queen as the servant placed the platter on the table. The queen bit her lip as the servant lifted the platter’s lid.

“Peas?!” The princess gasped, interrupting herself as she spied the plate of turkey, mashed potatoes, and steamed vegetables before her. Her parents flinched.

“Sweetheart, these aren’t *ordinary* peas,” the queen said. “I had them picked out especially for you at the market earlier. You’ll *love* them—they won’t taste anything like the ones you hated before.”

“Peas are peas!” the princess shouted, kicking the legs of her chair.

Motioning the servant to his side, the king whispered, “I thought I told the cook to hide them under the carrots!”

“We had some trouble, sir.”

“Trouble ladling steamed peas

and carrots onto a plate in the proper sequence?”

“As a matter of fact, yes, sir. Actually, we had quite a time steaming the peas to begin with.”

“Steaming the peas? What could possibly—”

“It appears that they felt the process was excessively hot. The cook devised to knock them to the bottom of the pot with a wooden spoon whenever they tried to jump out, and one of the maids came in very handy with a dish towel during a few of the more suspenseful moments, but we eventually subdued them. Regarding the carrots, I’m afraid that even in a more sluggish state, the peas didn’t appreciate being smothered, and threatened to roll into the mashed potatoes if we didn’t allow them to lie on top of the other vegetables. Given the circumstances, I hope we made the right decision, your lordship.”

The king quickly nodded and tugged his beard so that he wouldn’t appear bewildered in front of the staff. “Yes, yes, of course,” he muttered. “Serving the princess a meal in which the peas and potatoes have mixed doesn’t bear thinking about. Very good. Off you go—give the cook my compliments.”

“Honeycake, just try *one* for mommy, alright?” the queen wheedled as the servant withdrew. She had hurried to the princess’s side and was

holding out a little gold spoon and patting her daughter’s curly gold head.

“My dear?” the king said, somewhat apprehensively. He could hardly hear himself over the wailing of the princess and the rattling of the dishes as she banged her knees against the underside of the table. “Agnes?” he tried again, more loudly.

“Yes, darling, what is it?” the queen asked, turning.

“Those *are* just regular peas that you bought, aren’t they? I mean, they haven’t got—magical properties, have they?”

“Magical peas?” the queen repeated, biting her lip again. “Well, I wouldn’t put it quite that strongly—”

At that moment the princess’s flailing fist landed in the potatoes, splattering gravy onto the table and the queen’s sleeve, and one of the peas that hadn’t been steamed into a stupor decided that he’d had enough.

“I’ve never been so insulted in all my life!” he screamed in a voice as thin as a needle. With a rolling start he leapt off the plate and into the princess’s lap.

“Yuck! One of them fell on me!” the princess shrieked, and pushed her chair back from the table violently to try to get it off without touching it.

“How dare you!” the pea fumed, bouncing from her lap to her shoulder so that he could shout in her ear. “Do you expect me to lie on your plate for all eternity, waiting for you to consume me, while you call me names? Think again! ‘Yuck!’ you say, ‘Disgusting!’ you say—well let me tell you, the feeling is

mutual!" And, using one of her golden ringlets as a rope, he swung out and dropped to the floor.

"What was *that*?" the princess said, spinning around in her chair to find the owner of the voice.

The king and queen had both heard it as well, since the princess had stopped her racket while the pea was shouting at her. "I think it must—it must be the pea!" the queen exclaimed, pointing. The king stood up with a clatter.

"The *pea*?" the princess scoffed, and slid off her chair to get a better look.

"Yes, I'm a pea—and I resent your tone," the pea said. All three members of the royal family gaped at him. "Now I'm going to go have some fun for a change, since you don't see fit to eat me," he added, and sped towards the door of the dining hall. The princess ran after him, amazed, and the king and queen dropped their napkins and ran after her.

As soon as he was out of the dining hall, the pea began to hop up the spiral staircase, which he felt would surely lead to the bedrooms. He had always wanted to jump on a bed.

"Wait!" the princess panted, thumping up the stairs behind him. "You're too small—I might lose sight of you if you don't let me catch up."

"From what I've heard, you can't stand the sight of me anyway, so I wouldn't worry about it!" the pea laughed. He bounded up the last few steps and took off down the hallway.

"That's my room!" the princess called out, as the pea whizzed through an open door on the left. "You can't touch anything until I give you permission! If you wait for me, then we can play together."

But the pea had already sprung onto the bed, which was three mattresses high and mounded in feather pillows. "Yippee!" he chortled. "I can stick to the ceiling!"

He was a few bounces away from doing so when the princess arrived in the doorway.

"You beastly pea!" she huffed. "I don't think I want to play with you after all. Come down from there!"

"No!" The pea giggled. He hit the downy comforter and shot back up.

"Then I'll have to get you down myself," the princess said, hitching up her skirt.

"You can *try*," the pea taunted.

Just then he smacked the ceiling.

"Ha!" yelled the princess, and scrambled onto the bed. The pea struggled to unstick himself before she could reach him, but the princess was surprisingly agile when she needed to be, and peeled him off herself. "This is

an end to *you*," she said, and popped him in her mouth before he could say a thing.

The king and queen appeared, out of breath, to find their daughter sitting on her bed, looking puzzled.

"Are you alright, sugarplum?" the queen said.

"Where is the pea?" the king asked.

"I ate him," the princess answered.

"And the strangest part was, he tasted extraordinarily good. Do you think cook has kept the rest of mine warm?"

The queen sighed and squeezed the king's arm. "Just like the old lady told me they would. I *knew* I was making a good choice in buying them." ❧

THE BALLADE OF GILBERT

The Scientific Love-song

by G.K. Chesterton

I took her and I flattened her
(respectfully I hope)
I pasted her upon a slip
Under the microscope.
I used a hundred power lens,
Oh I shall ne'er forget,
While hearts can beat and
blossoms blow,
That hour when first we met.

Gaze not, ye over-amorous!
Shall mortal man deserve
To see that glimpse of heaven,
Her motor-vagus nerve?
Look not, ye too inflammable!
Beneath that golden hair
The convolutions in her skull
Are perilously fair.

Oh keep those eyes, preserve
that hair,
Retain that marble brow—
No ancient fish, no fossil snail
Is half so fair as thou.
O Lady of the eyes of light,
Queen of the earth and sea,
O let me linger, let me live
To love and label thee. ❧

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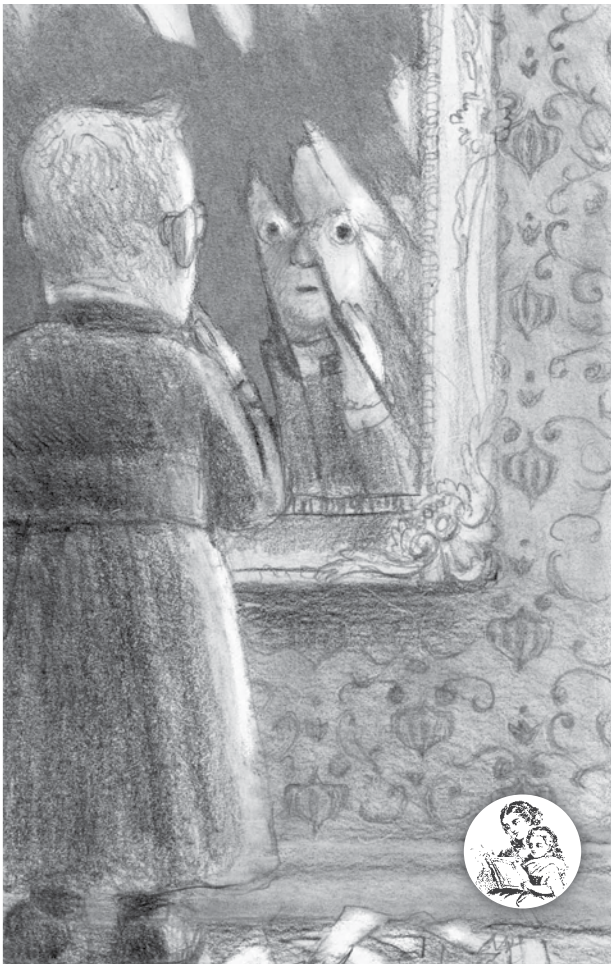
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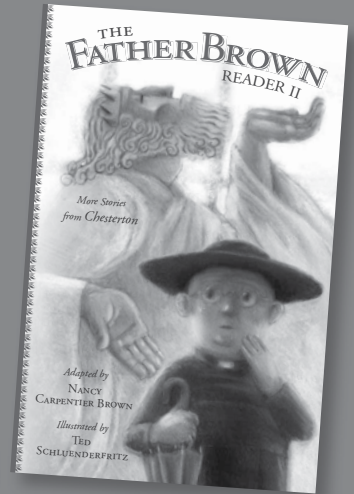
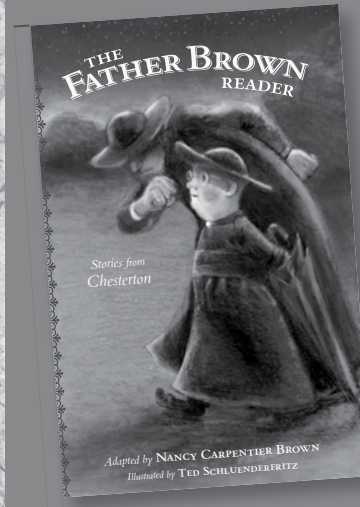


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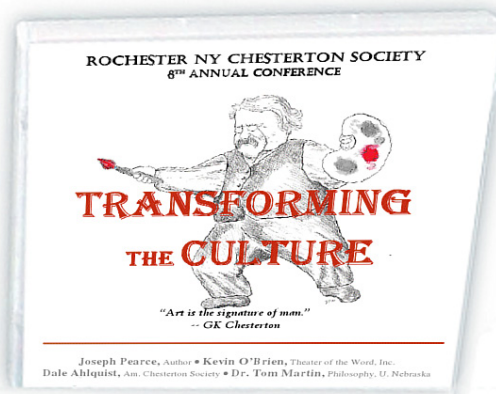
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“Hold That Thought!”

by Lou Horvath

You have aroused audience interest in your theme of “apocalyptic conflagration” and they perch on the edge of their seats, their very breath suspended, with all eyes on you, as your speech builds to a crescendo. The climax of your presentation is at hand, but...the last page...seems to have...but it’s misplaced perhaps...no, it’s missing entirely...must be in your suitcase in the lobby...

Apparently, the best way to handle this situation is to race from the podium and dash out the door to retrieve the missing page, with the words, “Hold that thought!”

This sort of thing can happen, and did, at the 8th Annual Rochester New York G.K. Chesterton Conference on the first Saturday in October before a packed house at St. John Fisher College. Dale Ahlquist handled the problem of re-entry with aplomb, appearing at last with the final page, the culmination of his stirring speech, “Apocalypse Later.”

With its theme “Transforming the Culture,” the Rochester conference drew more than 130 attendees from the local chapter and other parts of New York, as well as from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Ontario, Canada. In introductory comments, I observed that we are well in over our heads



Dale Ahlquist shows how close he came to finishing his talk.



Eureka—the missing page!



Lou Horvath makes a point.

when tackling the problem of culture and the daunting task of transforming it. When in over our heads, I said, the best vantage point is to stand on the shoulders of giants like G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and others.

Among the giants working to transform the culture were our four speakers. Dr. Tom Martin elevated the discussion—and the microphone—upward several notches and treated participants to his reflections on Chesterton’s *What I Saw in America*. From his vantage point as Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Dr. Martin well appreciates Chesterton’s observation that true democracy lives or dies with Christianity—when this is lost, democracy is replaced with something worse. He described his work in using



Joseph Pearce introduces the man behind the curtain



Tom Martin towers over his subject



Old Thunder makes some new thunder

literature to teach undergraduates and nurture in them an understanding of the importance of solid thinking as a prerequisite to an ordered life and responsible citizenship.

Author Joseph Pearce then addressed the problem of transforming the culture through the use of beauty. In his thoughtful and heartfelt presentation, Joseph discoursed on



In spite of the microphone, no one can understand anything Joseph Pearce says.

the universal attraction of beauty as a conduit to truth and faith, opening hearts and minds to important, permanent things.

Beginning the afternoon sessions, actor Kevin O'Brien warmed up the crowd with a short session of questions and prizes, building their interest in what was to follow. After a brief introduction from Joseph Pearce, Hilaire Belloc then emerged from behind the curtain to address the major heresies of history, including those that imperil Western culture to this day. A standing ovation crowned his stirring lecture. Dale Ahlquist then followed, beginning with a short Belloc poem on Matilda who told lies and was burned. Her immolation suited his theme of "apocalyptic conflagration," a phrase he reiterated a number of times because it rolls trippingly over the tongue. Ahlquist elaborated on the importance



The audience rises to salute Hilaire Belloc

Apocalyptic Conflagration

by John Finucane (Poet Laureate, Rochester New York Chesterton Society)

Apocalyptic conflagration
He said it with enunciation.
It did not come in conversation
But carefully scripted for oration.


He said it more than once or twice
He even said it more than thrice.
He said it slowly for effect
His somber words did us deject.

And page by page with dedication
He outlined the conflagration
While we with nervous trepidation
Dabbed increasing perspiration.

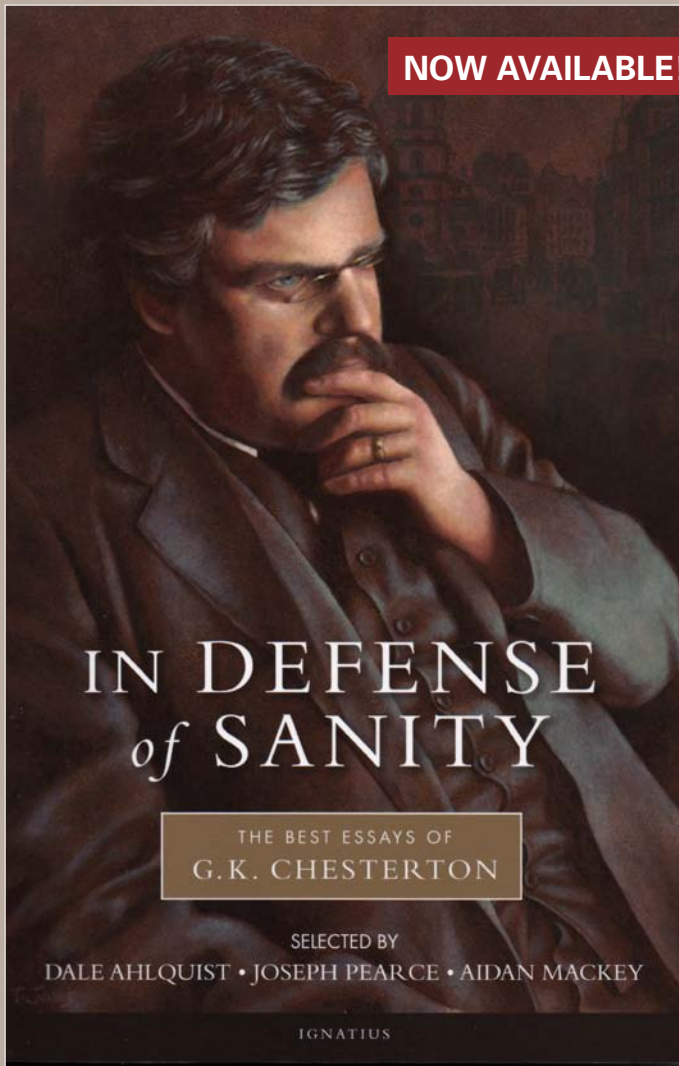
But there wasn't any conflagration
No small fire, no immolation.
His bombast ended suddenly
He came up one page short,
you see.

of family and faith in defiance of the ever-encroaching State. He ended with lines from Chesterton's poem, "A Child of the Snows":

And at night we win to the ancient inn
Where the child in the frost is furl'd,
We follow the feet where all souls meet
At the inn at the end of the world.

The conference, presented by the Rochester New York Chesterton Society, was hosted through the generosity of the Basilian Fathers of Rochester and St. John Fisher College. In addition to the local chapter, avid members of the Western Pennsylvania, Buffalo (New York), Warren (Ohio), High Park (Toronto), and Wooster, Massachusetts, societies also attended to supports these giants and enjoy the event. During breaks, participants took advantage of book sales and purchased artwork from Canadian artist Patricia Cotter, as well as tapes of previous conferences and scripture topics from the St. Irenaeus Ministries in Rochester. Recordings of conference talks are available at www.siministries.org. 

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THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS



It is our great pleasure to present a lovely Christmas gift to our readers: a Chesterton poem illustrated by the late Beatrice Wilczynski. This is the second time we have been able to do this. (In the Christmas issue of 2007, we printed “The Wise Men.”)

Miss Wilczynski illustrated a book of Chesterton Christmas poems that unfortunately has never been published. Her beautiful version of “The House of Christmas” appears in print here for the first time. It is still our hope to make the entire book available in the future.

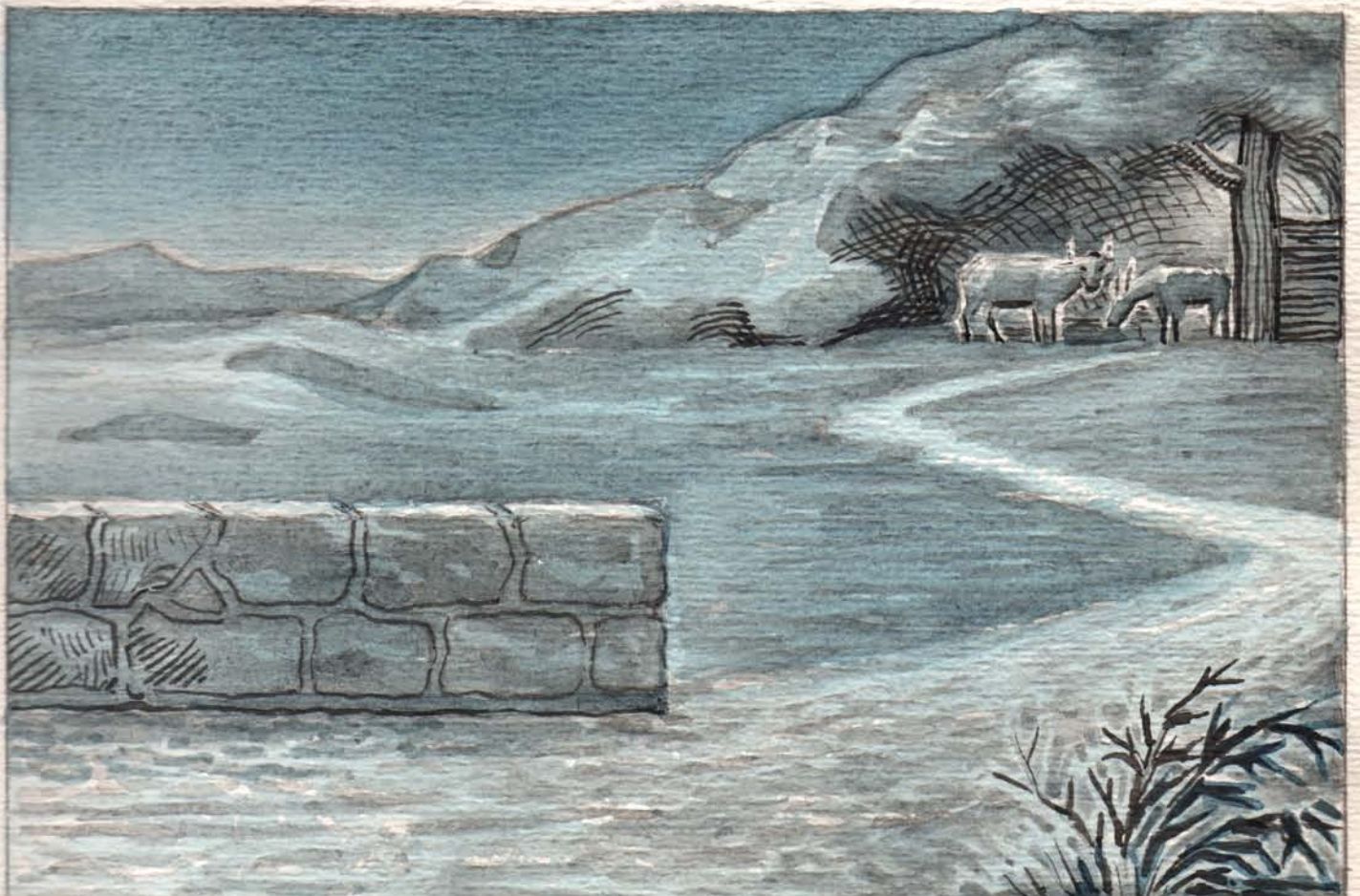
Merry Christmas from the American Chesterton Society and all of us at *Gilbert Magazine*.



There fared a mother
driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she
was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand
With shaking timber
and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing
to abide and stand
Than the square
stones of Rome.



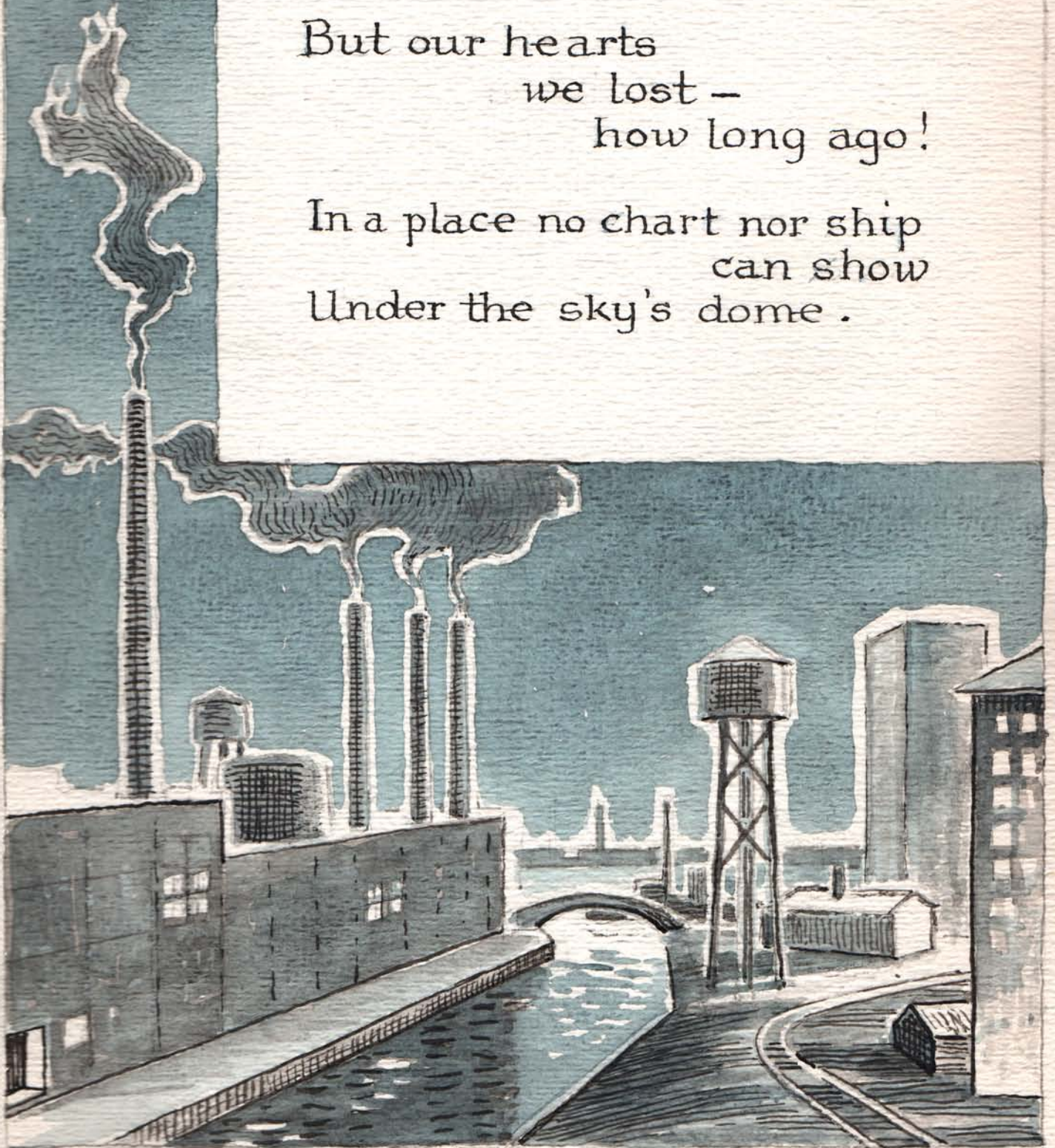
For men are homesick in their homes
And strangers under the sun
And they lay their heads in a
foreign land
Whenever the day is done .
Here we have battle and blazing eyes
And chance
and honour
and high surprise
But our homes
are under
miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun .



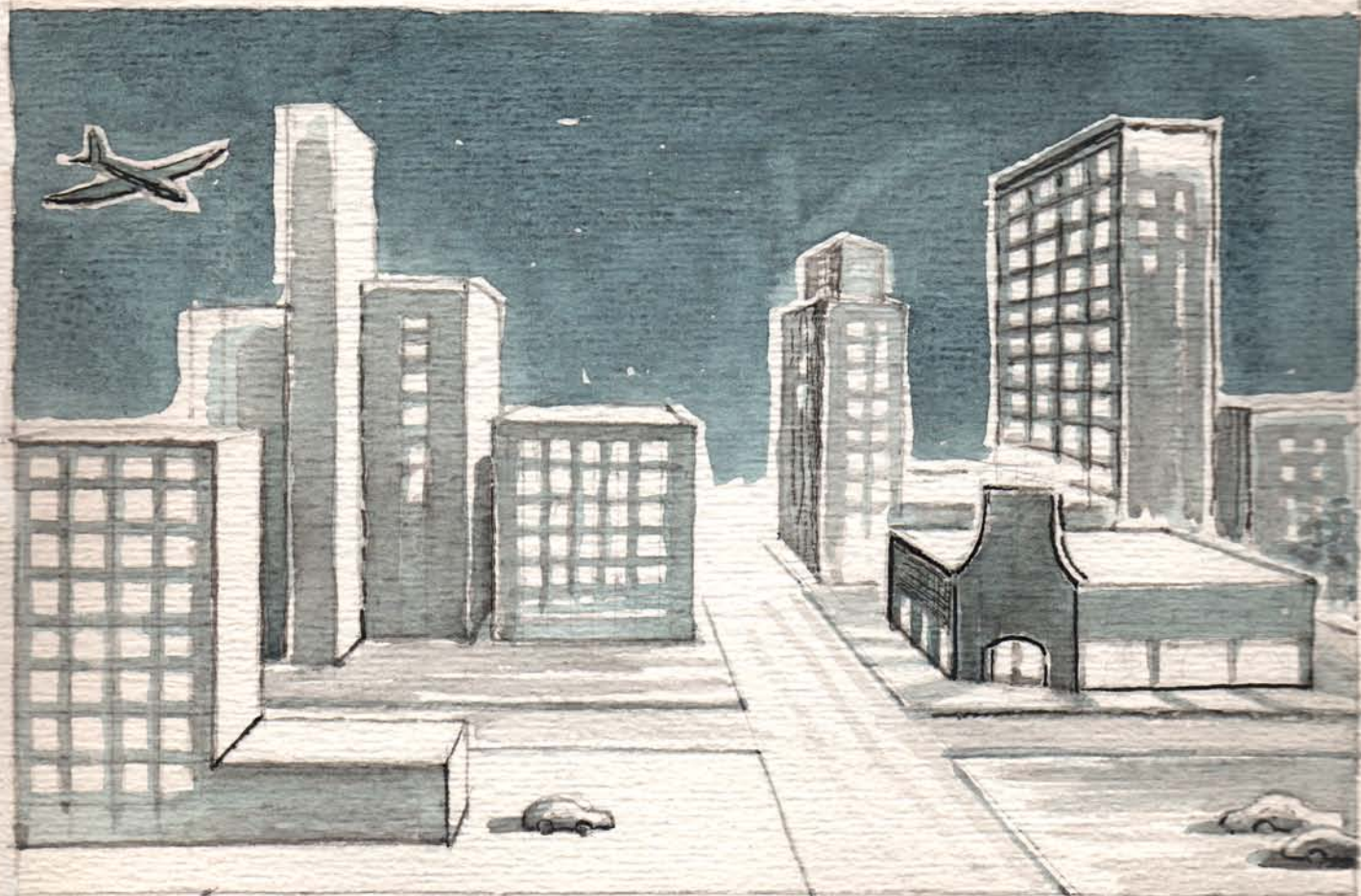
.....
We have hands that fashion
and heads that know,

But our hearts
we lost —
how long ago!

In a place no chart nor ship
can show
Under the sky's dome .

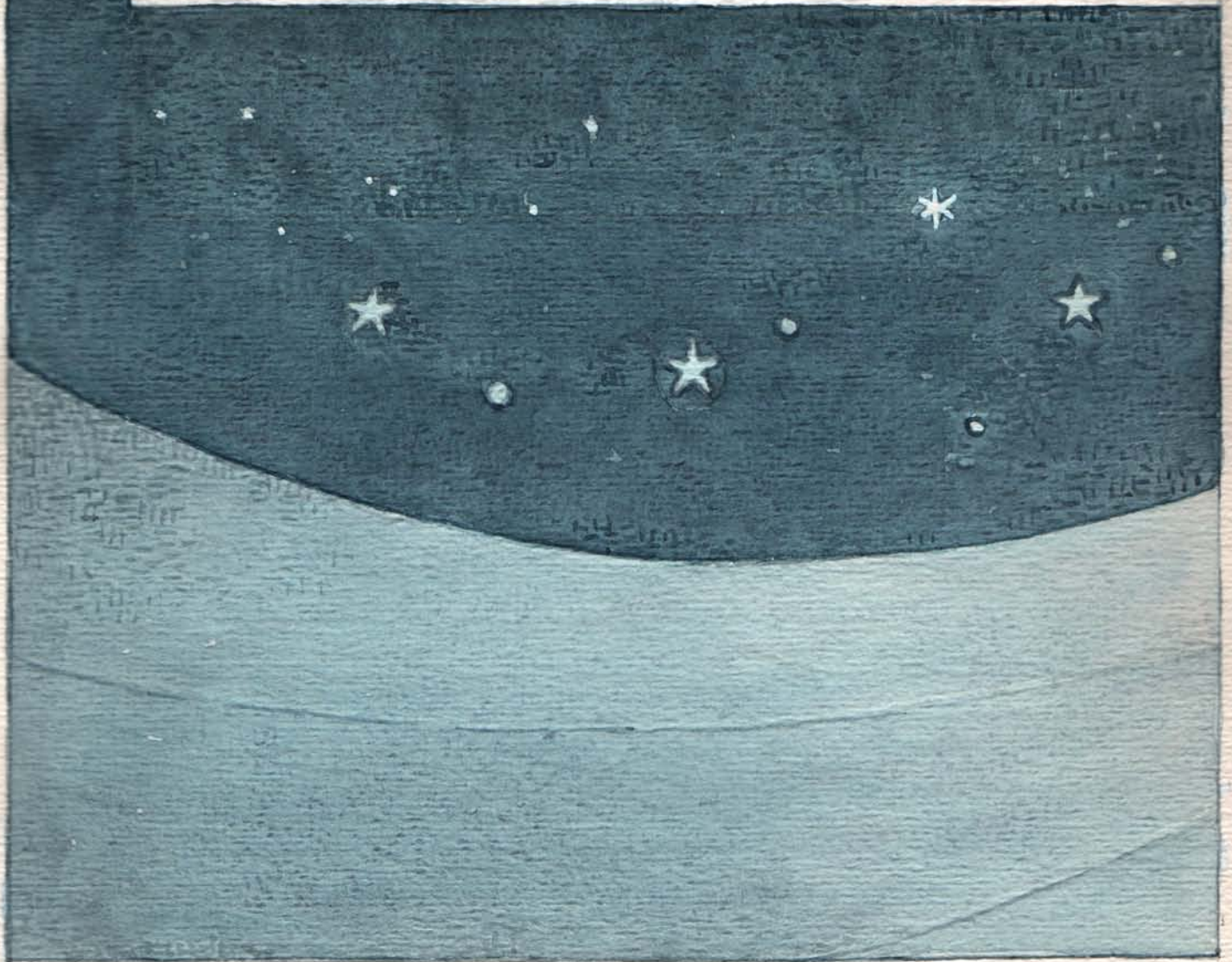


This world is wild
as an old wive's tale
And strange
the plain things are,
The earth is enough
and the air is enough
For our wonder
and our war ;



But our rest
is as far as the
fire-drake swings

And our peace
is put in
impossible things





Where clashed
and thundered
unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house
in the evening

Home shall men come



To an older place than Eden
And a taller place than Rome

To the end of the way
of the wandering star



To the things
that cannot be
and that are

To the place
where God is homeless

And all men are at home .

A Sacred Artist

Beatrice Wilczynski (1913–1984)

by Dale Ahlquist

It was the late, great Ann Stull Petta who first introduced me to the art of Beatrice Wilczynski. She had brought some copies of Beatrice’s illustrations of G.K. Chesterton’s Christmas poems to a conference in Milwaukee in 1994. The artist had already been in her grave for a decade. The few of us gathered at that early Chesterton conference were thrilled and moved by what we saw.

The more I learned about Beatrice, the more impressed I was. She was not only a gifted artist but a woman of deep faith. A third order Franciscan, she devoted her life to art. She would have loved to have been a teacher of art history, but she used her gifts to fill a number of commissions, some great but most very small. She did the art for one of the most important and popular shrines in America, but also for simple religious cards. She was both a painter and a sculptor.

She was born in Chicago in 1913. Her father was a professor of



Beatrice in the early 1970s, about the time she illustrated the Christmas poems

mathematics at the University of Chicago. Her mother was from Italy, and she took Beatrice and her sisters to Italy in 1921 to learn the language and get to know the relatives. Beatrice showed her artistic gifts very early and was sent to study with Fiore Brastolin, a pupil of a great Venetian painter, Ettore Tito. After high school and college back in Chicago, she returned

to Italy in the 1950s to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice. She also took courses at the Art Institute of Chicago.

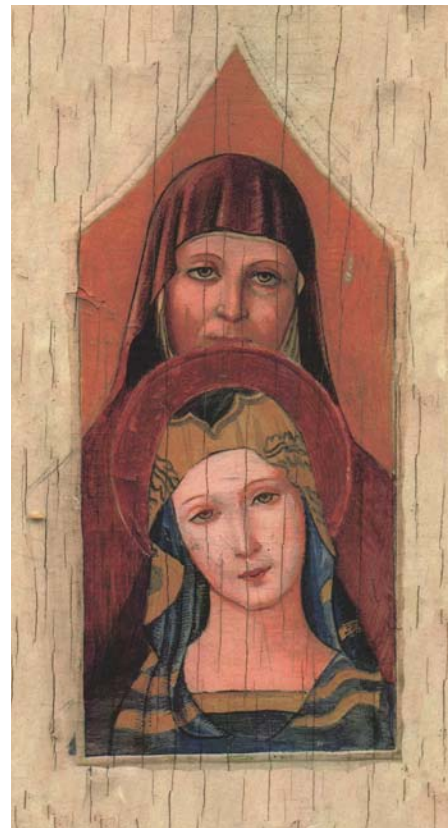
Her work can be seen in St. Mark’s Church and St. Thomas the Apostle in Chicago, St. Agnes in Sawyer, Michigan, and Duns Scotus College in Southfield, Michigan. But her most notable achievement was the extensive work she did in the course of three decades at the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Her work at the Shrine began in 1937, after she had sent some samples of her art to the famous Father Coughlin. She began by doing the paintings on the panels in the side chapels, and she would go on to decorate the sacristy, the Sacred Heart wing, and the St. Jude wing. Her large painting of St. Cecilia graces the choir loft. She produced paintings of St. Francis and St. Clare, the life-sized angels in the Narthex, the glass panels in the Little Flower chapel, and she sculpted the outdoor Way of the Cross in the garden. Many of the figures in the paintings are people Beatrice met who were also working at the Shrine. Her paintings of the saints were carefully researched and the accompanying symbolism planned out meticulously. The saints she painted for the shrine include St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Monica, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Agnes,

St. Joan of Arc, St. Bernadette, St. Thomas More, St. Joseph Labre, and St. Tarcisius.

She studied Scripture and was particularly interested in St. John’s Book of Revelation. She had plans to design a church that would illustrate the entire structure of Sacred Scripture from the procession of the Old Testament prophets leading up to the climax of the coming of Christ. I don’t know if these plans exist anywhere, but it would be fascinating to find them. One of her last projects was independent and uncommissioned. It was a series of watercolors with her own hand-lettering of four poems by G.K. Chesterton under the title “The House of Christmas.” She made several inquiries to get them published but found no takers.

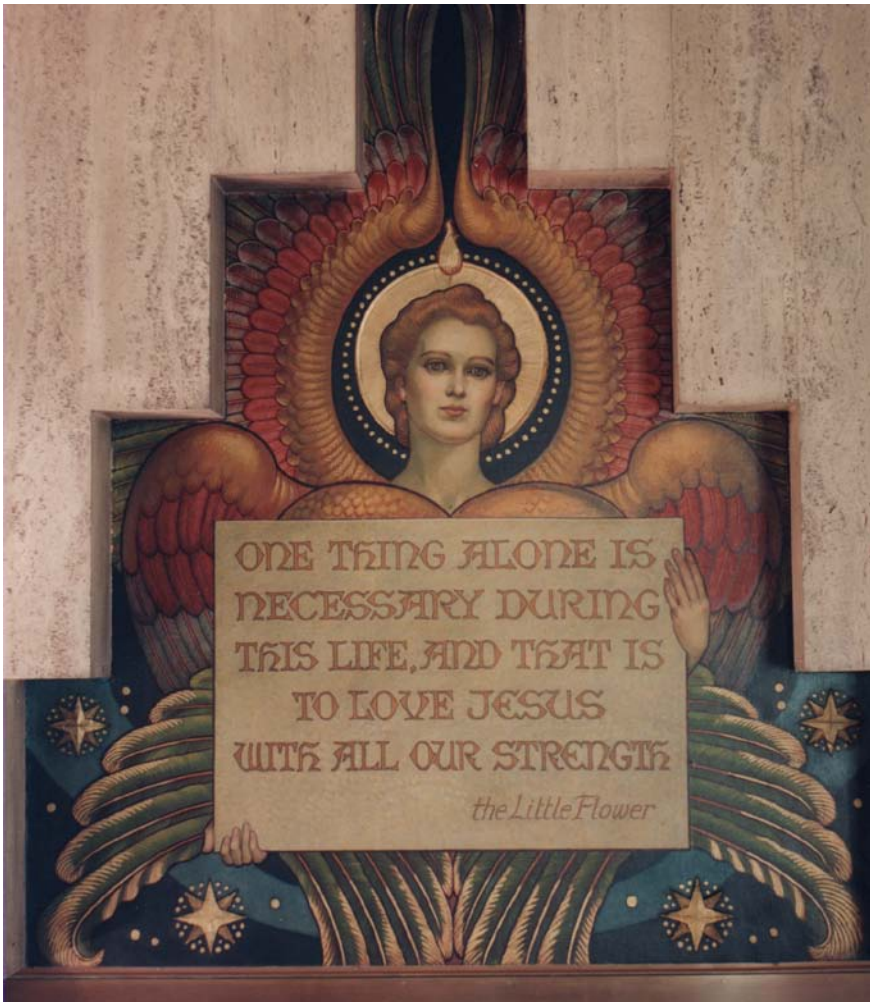
Beatrice lived with her sisters Helen and Mimi and never married. She was known for her “child-like simplicity, not without depth; humility, although fully aware of her great gift.” She died peacefully on the Vigil of All Saints in 1984 in Chicago. Her sisters arranged to have her buried near her mother on the Cemetery Island of San Michele in Venice. ☪



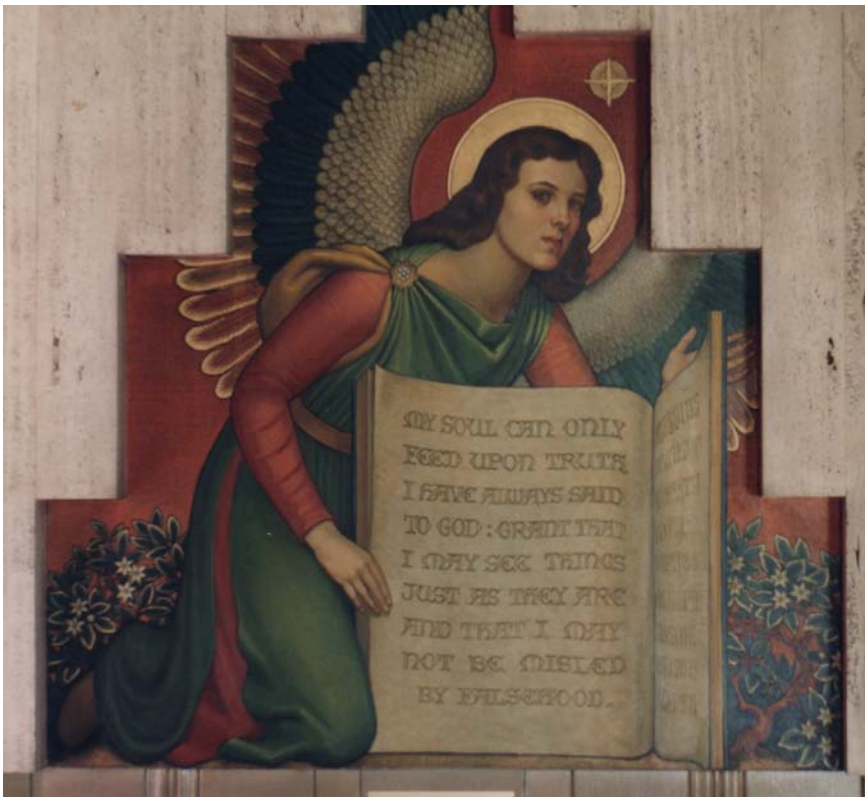
St. Mary and St. Anne (oil on a weathered wooden board)



Beatrice as a young child. She demonstrated a gift for art as soon as she could hold a color crayon.



Two Angels from the Shrine of the Little Flower, Royal Oak, Michigan



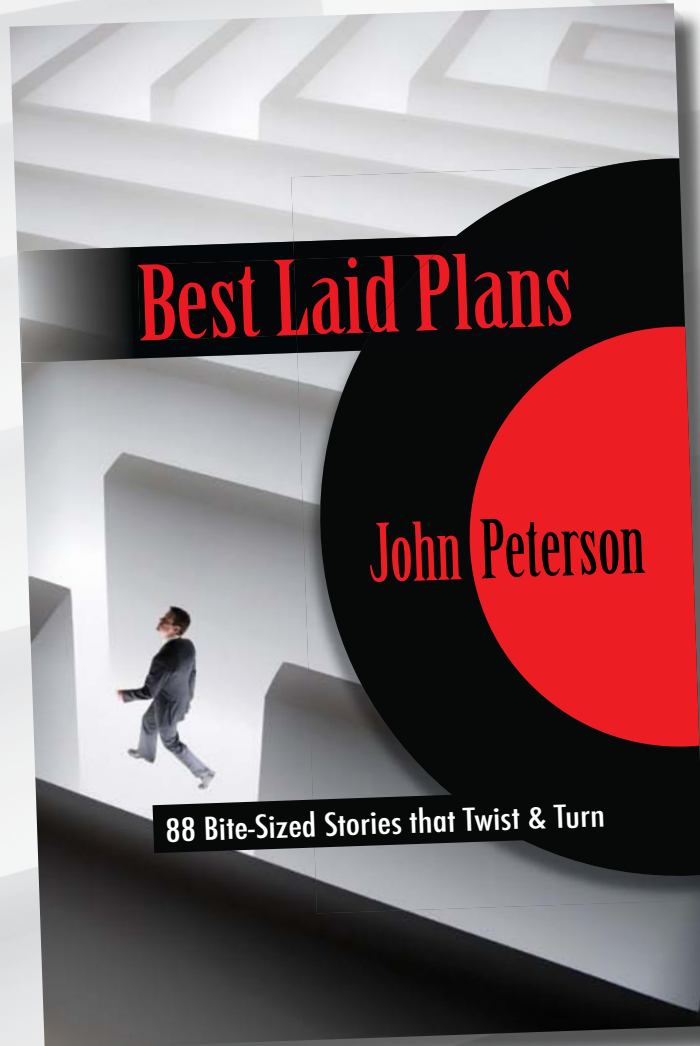
THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

- ◆ Christmas is the one example of a great popular festival that has come down from more primitive times alive and unbroken, practiced and not merely studied; a living thing still done by Christians; a real testimony to “the beginning of Christianity” and a beginning that does not end. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 13, 1930)
- ◆ Christmas is a typical case of the old Christian tradition, precisely because it gathers so many things into itself, including things that are pagan. People talk about Paganism in Christianity, and do not realize that even by that metaphor of measurement they are implying that Christianity is larger than Paganism. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Nov. 24, 1928)
- ◆ Christmas concerns the common habits of the common people; and all that private life which is so much wider than public life. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 21, 1933)
- ◆ Christmas is neither optimist nor pessimist; perhaps it is a sane but subtle blend of the truths of both. For Christmas is a winter feast; and nine times out of ten an optimist is a fool who denies that there is any winter; and a pessimist is a fool who denies that it is possible to feast. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 20, 1934)
- ◆ Christmas is utterly unsuited to the modern world. It presupposes the possibility of families being united, or reunited, and even of the men and women who chose each other being on speaking terms. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 7, 1933)
- ◆ The stocking seems to be a paradoxical symbol; for the stocking stuffed with gold is made a sign of hoarding; and the stocking stuffed with gifts a sign of giving. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 27, 1934)
- ◆ If a man is much in the habit of reflecting that God was once a little baby, if he often thinks of his Lord under the image of a little baby, if he makes much of the occasion when deity was thus identified with infancy, he will not in fact be able to keep up the practice of a pure religion of Fear. He will not be able to think of the Lord as merely rigid and ruthless. (*G.K.’s Weekly*, Dec. 21, 1929)

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**THE AMERICAN
CHESTERTON
SOCIETY**



The Difficulty of Defending the Normal

The Illustrated London News 1911-1913
Volume XXIX of *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton*

At some point we will try to do some sort of calculation to figure out exactly when G.K. Chesterton was at his most prolific, but for now I will make the case that it was during this two-year period of 1911 to 1913. He was writing regularly for three weekly newspapers and occasionally for dozens of other publications. He wrote his two greatest poems, *Lepanto* and *The Ballad of the White Horse*, during this time, and he began cranking out the famous Father Brown stories as well. Add a novel and a play and a masterpiece of literary criticism to the mix. Yet there is no sign of fatigue or even rush in his *Illustrated London News* essays in this stretch. He is evidently at the height of his creative power and full of energy. Though I would have no problem arguing that the height of his creative power and energy came earlier. Or later.

If there is a theme to this collection of weekly essays, it is the difficulty of defending the normal. We could almost say it is the disappearance of the normal, which Chesterton notices everywhere. He gets on a train and notices that there is a first class carriage and a third class carriage. That would seem to imply that there is a second class carriage. But there isn't. "It is typical of our time," he says, "that the middle thing has been knocked out. The central, the normal is sacrificed. The middle class is going or gone."

It is difficult to speak idealistically about the middle. But it is impossible and ridiculous to have to choose between extremes, between Tweedledee and Tweedledum, between Scylla and Charybdis. "We are not merely asked to choose between things equally bad, [but] between things that are exactly the same."

Defending the normal is difficult when even normal speech has been jarred. People abuse language along with reason. "They contradict the dictionary more than they do the Bible."

From one side, Chesterton sees that Prohibition is coming, a Puritan attack on one of the normal pleasures of man. While he admits that life is not all beer and skittles, he insists that it is

Chesterton is loyal to the common man, loyal to the normal, but "in the last intellectual resort" he knows that loyalty "is only due to that yet higher thing that made all of us and is above us all." And that is where the real battle rages.

not all skittles, either.

But from the other side, he sees the Pagans attacking the normal. And the Barbarians, too.

During this time the Titanic sank. Chesterton sees it as a symbol of the age: the "sinking of an unsinkable ship," the pride before the fall, the "touch of over-civilization which is always the first touch of a returning barbarism."

The barbarism can be seen in the loss of respect for human rights and the weird new respect for animal rights. The new nature worship has no limits, the sympathy with earth and animals has no verifiable results. "They pour their tears into this bottomless bucket: because it is bottomless. They

use in pathetic imaginings, by their nature useless and eternal, an energy of the heart which, if directed against real and certain wrongs, might release millions of men from the rack of an artificial agony."


Chesterton is most prophetic in defending that normal thing called marriage against bizarre attacks, such as the attempt to re-define it.

If we do not yet know what marriage is, doubtless it would be well to find out; though many generations of men seem to have been occupied in the inquiry in its most practical and scientific form.

He has no hesitation in ridiculing the "immoralists" who attack marriage, because they represent no imaginable ideal: "I do not myself think it is wrong to laugh even at a morality in which I do believe. I most certainly think it right to laugh at a morality in which I don't believe. And I shall certainly laugh my longest and loudest about a morality that nobody has yet discovered."

But he sees that there is no forum in which the normal man's voice may be heard. "The only judge of ordinary intelligence is—ordinary intelligence," but this judge has been banished from the court of opinion. The heretics are not persecuted because they are the ones in power. It is the normal man who is persecuted, who is imprisoned because he cannot afford to pay a fine, who is punished for making speeches because he has not the money to publish books.

Chesterton is loyal to the common man, loyal to the normal, but "in the last intellectual resort" he knows that loyalty "is only due to that yet higher thing that made all of us and is above us all." And that is where the real battle rages. "If you are loyal to anything and wish to preserve it, you must recognise that it has or might have enemies; and you must hope that the enemies will fall."

Nothing has changed. As others have pointed out, it is more useful—and more timely—to read Chesterton's *Illustrated London News* essays from a hundred years ago than any of today's newspapers. His weapons are as sharp as ever. 

Chesterton on Art



The Glory of Grey

by G.K. Chesterton

I will praise the English climate till I die—even if I die of the English climate. There is no weather so good as English weather. Nay, in a sense, there is no weather at all anywhere except in England. In France you have much sun and some rain; in Italy you have hot winds and cold winds; in Scotland and Ireland you have rain, either thick or thin; in America you have horrible heat and cold, and in the Tropics you have sunstrokes varied by thunderbolts. But all these you have on a broad and brutal scale, and you settle down into contentment or despair. Only in our romantic country do you have the romantic thing called Weather; beautiful and changeable as a woman. The great English landscape painters (neglected now like everything that is English) have this salient distinction; that the Weather is not the atmosphere of their pictures; it is the subject of their pictures. They paint portraits of the Weather. The Weather sat to Constable; the Weather posed for Turner; and the deuce of a pose it was. This is not really so in the greatest of their Continental models or rivals; Poussin paints ancient cities or perfect Arcadian shepherds, through a clear medium of the climate. But in the English painters the climate is the hero; in the case of Turner a swaggering and fighting hero, melodramatic, but magnificent. The tall and terrible protagonist, robed in rain, thunder, and sunlight, fills the whole canvas and the whole foreground. I admit the superiority of many other French things besides French art; but I will not yield an inch as to the superiority of English weather and weather-painting. Why, the French have not even got a word for weather, and you must

ask for the weather in French as if you were asking for the time in English.

Now among the heresies that are spoken in this matter is the habit of calling a grey day a “colourless” day. Grey is a colour, and can be a very powerful and pleasing colour. There is also a style of speaking about “one grey day just like another.” You might as well talk about one green tree just like another. A grey clouded sky is, indeed, an obstacle between us and the sun; so is a green tree for that matter. But the grey umbrellas, as much as the green, differ from each other in drift and shape, in tint and tilt. One day may be grey like steel and



another grey like dove’s plumage; one may seem grey like the frost of death and another grey like the smoke of substantial kitchens. No things could seem further apart than the doubt of grey and the decision of scarlet. Yet grey and red can mingle, as they do in the morning clouds, and in a certain kind of warm smoky-looking stone out of which they build the little towns in the west country. In those towns even the houses that are wholly grey have a glow in them, as if their secret fire-sides were such furnaces of hospitality as faintly to transfuse the walls like walls of cloud.

Again, the enemies of grey (those astute, daring, and evil-minded men) are fond of bringing forward the argument that colours suffer in grey weather, and that strong sunlight is necessary to all the hues of heaven and earth. Here, again, there are two words to be said, and it is essential to distinguish. It is true that sun is needed to burnish and bring into bloom the tertiary and dubious colours; the colour of peat, peasoup, impressionist sketches, brown velvet coats, olives, grey and blue slates, the complexions of vegetarians, the tints of volcanic rock, chocolate, coffee, mud, soot, slime, old boots; the delicate tints of these do need the sunshine to bring out the faint beauty that often clings to them.

But if you have a healthy taste in colour, if you choke your garden with poppies and geraniums, if you paint your house sky blue and scarlet, if you wear a golden top hat and a crimson waistcoat, you will not only be visible on the greyest day, but you will notice that your costume and environment produce a certain singular effect. You will find that rich colours actually look more luminous on a grey day, because they are seen against a dark background and seem to be burning with a lustre of their own. Against a dim sky all flowers look like fireworks. There is something strange about them, at once vivid and secret, like flowers traced in fire in the grim garden of a witch. A bright blue sky is necessarily the high light in the picture, and its brightness kills all the bright blue flowers. But on a grey day the larkspur looks like fallen heaven; the red daisies are really the lost red eyes of day, and the sunflower is the vice-regent of the sun.

Lastly, there is this value about the colour that men call colourless; that it suggests in some way the mixed and troubled average of existence, especially in its quality of strife and expectation and promise. Grey is a colour that always seems on the eve of changing to some other colour; of brightening into blue, or blanching into white, or breaking into green or gold. So we may be perpetually reminded of the indefinite hope that is in doubt itself, and when there is grey weather on our hills or grey hair on our heads perhaps they may still remind us of the morning. ☁

(From *Daily News*, September 3, 1910)



A Clash of Cultures

by David Beresford

“For instance, some people have called it inconsistent in me to be an anti-vivisectionist and yet to be in favour of ordinary sports. I can only say that I can quite imagine myself shooting my dog, but cannot imagine myself vivisectioning him.” —G.K. CHESTERTON, “ON KEEPING A DOG,” *LUNACY AND LETTERS*.

Thanks for asking, he died last week actually. Funny thing about that was that Reilly, that was our dog’s name, had been sick for about two months, and at the end kept having uncontrollable shaking fits. We were afraid he was suffering too much, so Theresa, my wife, said to me to get my gun ready to shoot him after lunch that day, and—

“You were going to shoot your dog? Where do you get the right?”

“Basic human decency, that is what I am trying to explain, he had been sick—”

“Nobody has any right to shoot a dog!”

“I had no right not to shoot him, my duty was—”

“No right at all, *that* is why all guns should be banned—”

We were at a dinner party from work, and I was trying to explain to a self-described population control zealot how my dog had died. We seemed to be at cross purposes. One of our colleagues, Monica, explained: “What we have is an interesting study of different worldviews. Dave here says he was going to shoot his dog to be humane, while Stanley considers this an inhumane act. This is a good example of a clash of two distinct cultures.”

I agreed and, like all self-righteous adherents of modernity I have known, my colleague would not let me explain.

My dog Reilly had been sick for

months. He kept falling down spread-eagled, unable to get up without being lifted, and shaking uncontrollably. As long as he could still wag his tail, or appeared to enjoy brief moments of happiness without undue pain or suffering, we were prepared to look after him. But the day eventually came when his suffering seemed constant.

It was in late spring, with lots of flowers blooming in the garden. Reilly stumbled over to the back door to go outside. I opened the door and lifted him down the steps to the lawn. As we ate our lunch, Theresa said to me, “You may want to get your gun ready, he seems utterly miserable. When the vet saw him last week she said that you would have to shoot him before the weekend, and I think it is that time now.”

I was not happy about this, but duty is duty, and I owed this last act of kindness to the dog. I sipped my tea to delay the inevitable, and then loaded a slug into my shotgun and went outside. There, lying amidst the flowers in the back garden was Reilly, already dead. It was as if he knew he was dying and had wanted to die in his favorite spot, the flower garden beside the pump. I know that dogs can think, play, have fun, or even know right from wrong in a doggy kind of way, but I did not know they could tell when they were going to die and prepare for it.

We buried him in the front yard beside a pile of rocks.

We got another dog, a chocolate lab called Nigel, from some kind folk who thought he was too wild for their house. This dog was a treasure. He got sprayed by skunks and bitten in fights with other dogs or foxes, but he never stole food from the table or was

disobedient. He lived for ten years, and died one year ago in the fall. Our vet told us that Nigel had only had a few weeks left, and that I would have to shoot him when the time came, and I waited for the inevitable request from my wife who seems to know these things.

On his last day, we found Nigel in the driveway beside the log pile, lying in the sun. Our daughter Elizabeth washed his face and cleaned him as best she could, and he wagged his tail halfheartedly, a sign of happiness. Not today it seemed, perhaps tomorrow. After supper, we checked to see if he was still okay out by the logs, and found him dead, lying where we had left him. Like Reilly before him, he was in his favorite resting spot. I have not had to shoot any of my dogs. I am not entirely sure I could; even though I like to tell myself that I am willing to do the right thing if needed, I hope I never have to find out. We buried Nigel alongside Reilly.

This rock pile where all our dogs are is our informal burial site. But not just dogs are there. Five years ago, my wife Theresa miscarried one Christmas morning, ten weeks into her last pregnancy. We named the child Anthony, and buried him or her, for we do not know, in the stone pile—our eighth child, our last, and the first to die.

My population control colleagues do not understand. This is another good example of a clash of two distinct cultures. ☁



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



Every Child is Jesus

by Nancy Carpentier Brown

Our first baby was a girl, born mid-November, so our parish priest asked if she could play Baby Jesus in the Nativity Play he put on each year during the Christmas Eve Mass. Naturally we were quite proud of our daughter's first opportunity at a stage performance, and quickly wrote this accomplishment down in her baby book.

That Christmas was special for many reasons; having a new baby added to our joy. As Mary, I watched the little children gather around us, wide eyed in wonder at the “Baby Jesus” I held carefully in my arms. To them, everything was real. I saw the awe in their faces, and knew that some of them actually thought I was Mary, my husband Joseph, and my baby Jesus. It was an incredible feeling.

I realized that the only reason we were given that privilege was because our daughter was born at the right time. Any other baby could have been baby Jesus. Any other year, some other baby will play Baby Jesus in the Nativity Play at any church, any where in the world. Because every baby, in a certain sense, is Baby Jesus.

We are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Love one another as Jesus loved us. And love one another as the Father loves the Son. We should love each other by seeing Jesus in each other. We love each child, we love each baby, and each baby, child, and person is Jesus.

Frances Chesterton developed a deep love of the Christ Child early in life. She loved children, tutoring them when she was young, anticipating the start of her own family, and hoping to welcome seven beautiful children of her own.

Gilbert Chesterton, too, had a love of the Christ Child, and this mutual interest was just another of many interests they had in common.

After years of infertility, longing and aching for a tiny hand to wrap fingers around hers, Frances penned her most famous lines, “How Far is it to Bethlehem?” This poem put into words all of her heart's desire for a baby of her own, paralleling her love of Christ in particular in the form of the Babe in Bethlehem. She pictures herself reaching down to the child, touching his tiny

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had children of their own,
and Great-Aunt Frances
rocked those children, too.*

hand, rocking him; comforting him. How far is it to Bethlehem? she wonders, and then answers, “not very far.” By then, she had welcomed nieces, nephews and many other children into her heart and home. Not her own, yet children to love nonetheless.


Frances's sister Ethel married Gilbert's good friend Lucien Oldershaw, and Ethel and Lucien had four children whom Frances adored. These four Frances could hold, rock and be auntie to. But in the early years, seeing them as babies was painful for Frances. She envied her sister, still longing for babies of her own. As the years passed, she came to accept her particular cross, and showered the love she saved up for her own children on her nieces, nephews, and the children of cousins, friends, and other family. She even had a taste of the feel of being a grandmother when her nieces and nephews had children of their own, and Great-Aunt Frances rocked those children, too.

Gilbert and Frances each wrote poems to the Christ Child, poignant and deep. Gilbert's are often about the toddler, Frances's are often about the babe. Frances pictures herself right there, right in the stable at Bethlehem. Many saints of old had special relationships with the baby Jesus. St. Anthony comes to mind. He is pictured holding baby Jesus, who is holding the world in his tiny hands.

Every child, every baby, is Jesus. In many ways, it is far easier to love Jesus in the little human baby or child than it is to love Him in an ornery oldster or fickle female. The baby is innocent, and hasn't hurt our feelings yet. The child is pure and hasn't had time for regrets.

Poems are often prayers, and I certainly think Gilbert and Frances's poetry regarding Christmas and the Christ Child can be read as a prayer, breathed as a prayer, and even (and especially) in the case of Frances's work, they can be sung as a prayer. “How Far is it to Bethlehem?” was set to music nearly ninety years ago and is still sung by choirs throughout the world today.

How far is it to Bethlehem? Not very far. Shall we find the stable room lit by a star?...God in his mother's arms, babes in the byre; sleep, as they sleep who find their heart's desire.

Gilbert and Frances each found the Christ Child and their heart's desire. May you find yours this Christmas, too. May we all find Jesus everywhere. 

“Do not look at the faces in the illustrated papers.
Look at the faces in the street.” —G.K. CHESTERTON



The Probable Existence of Elves

by Robert Moore-Jumonville

Did G.K. Chesterton believe in elves? I'm serious. Because there are only a limited number of ways you can answer that question. Of course, by “elves,” I am not asking whether Chesterton believed in cherubic creatures like the Keebler Elves, or whether he believed in Rudolph's Christmas dentist friend, Hermey; nor even in Tolkein's more noble figures like Legolas. “I had seen what Virgil calls the Old Man of the Forest,” Chesterton once claimed; “I had seen an elf.”

Chesterton often writes about elves, fairies, dragons, elfland, bewitchment, magic and the like. But does he believe in them—that is, does he believe they are real? We might decide that, no, he does not actually believe in their existence. Or, on the other side of this elfland fence, we might conclude he does believe in them, perhaps even that he's encountered them personally.

Several options fall between these two extremes, however. Bruno Bettelheim in his splendid book *The Uses of Enchantment* writes, “when [Chesterton] says that fairy tales are ‘entirely reasonable things’, [he] is speaking of them as experiences, as mirrors of inner experience, not of reality.” While there is truth to this notion of a symbolic, inner psychological component to human encounters with elfland, I want to urge caution. It's easy to detour down the dismal skeptical path that considers all things supernatural (or unexplainable) as merely arising from primitive (unenlightened) mythical thinking. Chesterton, this argument would propose, preserved the kernel (the idea, moral, or spirit) of fairyland while discarding or “demythologizing” the husk (the actual story,

event, or reality). The reality exists, but only as inner experience.

“The view that fairy tales could not really have happened, though crazy, is common,” remarked Chesterton. Such rationalism seeps in as sickness. Most people who are “physically strong and [living] in the open air” do believe in fairies, he argued. “Powerful peasants and farmers six feet high all believe in fairies. Rationalism is a disease of the towns, like the housing problem.” The close-minded rationalist decides, in advance, to exclude certain witnesses as being too simple to understand what they experience. But you ought to believe the testimony of the old apple-cart woman when she mentions elves, says Chesterton, the same as when she tells you about the Duke, because “being a peasant [she] will probably have a great deal of healthy agnosticism about both.” Is a scholar walled up in a room with volumes of convoluted opinions a more reliable authority? “I am forced to [believe],” declared Chesterton, “by a conspiracy of facts: the fact that men who encounter elves or angels are not the mystics and the morbid dreamers, but fishermen, farmers, and all men at once coarse and cautious.” I should add that most runners—living as they do “in the open air”—fall in this category of sane people who believe in elves. “What will the modern world do if it finds (as it very likely will) that the wildest fables have had a basis in fact; that there are creatures of the border land...oddities on the fringe of fixed laws?”

And what if we encounter actual “evidence” of elves? Certain stretches of my run rumor such evidence—grass much greener than ordinary; trees arranged just so; cobwebs placed in

inspired patterns—painted with dew and dazzled with morning sun—a strong spirit in the air. “I was sitting the other day on a heap of stones in the Isle of Thanet,” recalled Chesterton. “Not a straw had stirred; not a bird had spoken, but my blood ran cold, and I knew at once that I was in fairyland.” On another occasion, when he had experienced a moon-drenched soundless world, where “frost fastened every branch and blade to its place,” he wrote, “something was present there...It was an enchanted place.” Once, deep in the forest, he felt the Old English quality of faerie run through him, “an ancient elegance such as there is in trees.”

If we consider *Orthodoxy's* clear medieval logic as helpful, then we might propose that Chesterton believes elves possibly exist; that, in fact, there's no logical necessity ruling out their existence. Recall the distinction made in “Ethics of Elfland” between necessary logic and modern science's assumption that nature always operates according to fixed “laws.” If the apple (Apple) hit Bill Gates' nose, then Bill's nose hit the apple (Apple)—that is necessary logic, but fruit may float or fly from trees instead. Falling apples only implies the way things “normally” happen; “weird repetitions,” Chesterton calls them. But we cannot really explain the “why”—why this “world” or “event” instead of “another,” or none at all, for that matter. If asked “why,” Chesterton insists we must reply, “It's magic.” It may be most accurate to say then that Chesterton believes elves probably exist—it's likely.

Chesterton did admit he was gullible when it came to elves. “The fairies like me better than [the poet] Mr. Yeats,” he conceded; because “they can take me in more.” Yeats “is not simple enough; he is not stupid enough.” As Chesterton defenders, we applaud his childlike innocence, wonder, and optimistic faith. “I look at everything with the old elvish ignorance and expectancy.” And this time of year, who can blame him. “Personally, of course, I believe in Santa Claus;” he grinned, “but it is the season of forgiveness, and I will forgive others for not doing so.”

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



Leggishness

by David Fagerberg

I have confirmed, by experimental methods I would not like to recommend to anyone else, a fact that I suspected about myself, and perhaps friends knew about me but were too polite to mention, namely, that I make a lousy patient. After dealing with a degenerative hip condition, I underwent hip replacement surgery and now have a steel ball and cup that will set off airport alarms from here to Kalamazoo.

I am assured that by the time of this article's publication I will be scampering around like a squirrel, challenging small children to foot races and winning handily, but at the time of this article's writing I am pushing a walker around the house with dour look on my face. I don't complain. Norwegian stoicism is not of the whiny variety. It is an isolating type of stoicism which does not want aid or succor from even the most selfless souls, which puts my wife (whom I am describing) in an awkward position. Yes, I will need help with that bowl of cereal because I haven't mastered the gymnast's skill of balancing it on my head up the steps, but don't ask me too soon. Yes, I will need to be reminded to do my exercises, but some afternoons a boy likes to hide under the porch from responsibility. I have learned why God did not give any of the hard things and painful things to men to do, and my wife is learning the perennial male frustration of wanting to fix something that resists fixing.

All these trivialities affecting my life reminded me of an essay in one of Chesterton's earliest publications, *Tremendous Trifles*. The title of the particular essay in mind says it all: "The Advantages of Having One Leg."

Chesterton had himself sprained an ankle and although I don't know what kind of patient he made for Frances, he did spin fate's straw into philosophical gold. "I sing with confidence because I have recently been experimenting in the poetic pleasures which arise from having to sit in one chair with a sprained foot, with the only alternative course of standing on one

"Leggishness" is a perfectly fine metaphysical term to refer to the essence of a thing, "essence" being defined by Thomists as what makes a thing what it is, and not what it is not.

leg like a stork—a stork is a poetic simile; therefore I eagerly adopted it." (I am reminded of a joke from elementary school. "Q: why does the flamingo stand on one leg? A: Because if he tucked it under his wing, too, he'd fall down.")

What is the lesson? It is that "to appreciate anything we must always isolate it," and Chesterton gives a series of examples. See a house against an uninhabited landscape; depict a man alone on a dark sea sand; put a single star in the sky. "One sun is splendid; six suns would be only vulgar." It is possible not only to have too few, but also too many, and the isolation of the thing can remind one of when the arithmetic is just right. "One Tower Of Giotto is sublime; a row

of Towers of Giotto would be only like a row of white posts. The poetry of art is in beholding the single tower; the poetry of nature in seeing the single tree; the poetry of love in following the single woman; the poetry of religion in worshipping the single star."

This was 1909, or Chesterton would have said the poetry of religion is in monotheism. Anyway, he concludes, "To express complete and perfect leggishness the leg must stand in sublime isolation, like the tower in the wilderness." "Leggishness" is a perfectly fine metaphysical term to refer to the essence of a thing, "essence" being defined by Thomists as what makes a thing what it is, and not what it is not.

But the metaphysical realization must lead to a moral conclusion that takes root in the realm of the virtues. There are plenty of contingencies which cause us to realize something intellectually; the question is whether the mind will ever descend to the heart. To have a thought can be the start of a virtue, but something more must be added for it to reach the full end. "This world and all our powers in it are far more awful and beautiful than even we know until some accident reminds us. If you wish to perceive that limitless felicity, limit yourself if only for a moment." It seems that all of life was a religious occasion for Chesterton. He pities the modern man or woman who finds nothing more than an accident in an accident, whereas he finds that an accident can remind us of something awful and beautiful. My distressed hip could serve as a theophany to me as easily as Jacob's hip served him after the angel dislocated it with the touch of a fingertip. So Chesterton concludes, "I feel grateful for the slight sprain which has introduced this mysterious and fascinating division between one of my feet and the other. The way to love anything is to realise that it might be lost. In one of my feet I can feel how strong and splendid a foot is; in the other I can realise how very much otherwise it might have been. The moral of the thing is wholly exhilarating."

In a week, the doctor will ask me, "How are you?" May I answer him, "Exhilarated!" 🧘

“No devil worshippers please.” —G.K. CHESTERTON



This is How We Roll

by Victoria Darkey

Something about the Celtic font caught my eye. As the burly brewer climbed a ladder to tend two of his brew tanks, each bedecked with the St. Andrew’s Cross and the Lion Rampant, the tattoo running down his forearm read “Divided we stand, united we rise.” The Scottish theme to the establishment left me thinking that the wonderfully topsy-turvy sentiment may have some nationalistic origins. But, not being sure of this guy’s politics, I reflected on the revolutionary nature of the words inked into his skin. This was a call to fight united. “Falling” was not even an option to consider in his rift on the ancient maxim.

As I sipped my ale that day in the brewery, my mind wandered back to our local Chesterton society meeting a few weeks earlier. I had opened the meeting by observing to the Chestertonians around the table that by participating in a local Chesterton Society we are part of a growing revolution.

Every time we see a Chesterton quotation gracing the media, see any of G.K. Chesterton’s writings being published for the first time since they were written, or hear of Chesterton being discussed in the classroom, we are witnessing evidence of the revolution.

In his essay “Elizabeth Barrett Browning,” found in the book *Varied Types*, Chesterton writes,

Does not the very word “revolution” mean a rolling backward. All true revolutions are reversions to the natural and the normal. A revolutionist who breaks with the past is a notion fit for an idiot. For how could a man even wish for something which he had never heard of?

Chesterton’s definition of revolution is brilliant. Reminiscent of the fighting words emblazoned on the brewer, the thought of “falling” doesn’t appear here. Instead, according to Chesterton, a true revolution will roll back to the wisdom and sanity that once prevailed in the Christian flower of Western Civilization.

Across the United States, local Chesterton societies are growing in

Every time we see a Chesterton quotation gracing the media, see any of G.K. Chesterton’s writings being published for the first time since they were written, or hear of Chesterton being discussed in the classroom, we are witnessing evidence of the revolution.

number and scope. What Chestertonians are discovering when they are united to others of like mind and heart, is a greater voice outside of their meetings. Here in this issue of *Gilbert Magazine* (on page 22) you can read about the annual Chesterton conference put on by the Rochester Chesterton Society. This yearly event has become a regular pilgrimage for people from across a multi-state region, and Canada. It is a prime example of the expanded role that Chesterton societies can play in

bringing Chesterton style Goodness, Truth and Beauty back into our communities.

Another example is the Wisdom, Wit and Spirit Social presented by the La Crosse, Wisconsin, Chesterton Society, on October 8. This gathering at a local restaurant featured a talk entitled “A Bout of Sanity” given by American Chesterton Society president Dale Ahlquist, followed by an abundance of spirited discussion and then more spirits, and fine dining, all for a ticket price of \$20. Just a week later, on the other side of the country, the Salem, Oregon, Chesterton Society hosted the Fourth Annual Steak and Wine Dinner. This event, held at a local church, featured a presentation by notable Chestertonian Joseph Pearce on the “Chesterbelloc,” followed by a lengthy and entertaining question and answer period and, of course, a menu that included steak and wine. These events demonstrate how local Chesterton society members are able to pool their resources and talents to step outside of their monthly meetings and bring the message of a restoration of sanity to the broader world. Each of these special events featured enlightening speakers and a connection to the network of “revolutionists” rolling backwards.

As individuals feeding our minds and hearts with the good, the true and the beautiful in Chesterton’s writings, we stand. When we forge relationships with others who are also standing, we rise. Then, in a form consistent with G.K. Chesterton, when we rise, things roll... backwards. ☞

Want to enjoy the company of other readers of *Gilbert Magazine*?

Wondering where to find a Chesterton Society near you?

Check out the newly updated “Local Societies” page on the website for the American Chesterton Society

<http://www.chesterton.org/wordpress/local-societies/>

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



Helping Hand

by James G. Bruen Jr.

The murder didn't bother me any. It's not like me or someone in my family was the victim, not that I got much family. Some folks'd get all queasy about buying a house where a guy got murdered. Not me. I saw guys buy the farm in Iraq. No big deal to me. And I killed a few myself in other places, but my country won't let me talk about that because officially we never did them killings. Besides, the crime scene cleanup crew did a great job.

The cops found the stiff in an upstairs bedroom, the same bedroom where they nabbed Jake Wald, the guy who did him in. The old miser had set his desk phone to speed dial 911, and somehow he'd hit the speed dial without Wald knowing it.

The operator heard what was going on and recorded it, too. The cops got there too late to save old man Nestor but soon enough to grab Wald. Surrendered without a whimper. Gave the cops the sack of dough he'd taken from Nestor, but it wasn't much; a couple a hundred bucks if my memory's any good.

Nestor didn't have family either. No heirs. I bought Nestor's house cheap. Murder drives down the price.

Wald got five to seven in the state pen. What kind of world is it where a murderer gets five to seven instead of the chair, but kids get executed before they're born? A pretty cold world, that's what.

The old miser had let the house go. Guess he didn't want to spend the dough. It needed work, but I'm good with my hands, so that was no big deal. I didn't do much in that bedroom where Nestor took the bullets.

Wald got out early for good behavior. Didn't surprise me. And it didn't surprise me he soon showed up at Nestor's house, or I should say, my house. I expected him.

Wald walked right up to the front door, rang the bell, and introduced himself as the guy who'd knocked Nestor off. Wald didn't look like a bad guy. That surprised me, I don't know why. Sorta looked like the guy next door. No mannerisms marked him as a tough. Cheap brown sport coat, brown hair, brown eyes, medium height, a little paunch. Maybe thirty-five or so.

I like it when a guy gets right to the point, and Wald did. "I left something behind," he said. He flashed a pistol pulled from his sport coat. "Stay out of my way while I get it, and you won't get hurt." Wald said it nice and polite, but I didn't believe him for a second. I knew how old man Nestor ended up.

We headed up the stairs with me in the lead and the barrel of the pistol in my back. I knew we were headed to the room where Nestor died even before Wald told me to go there.

I didn't change the wallpaper in that room after I bought the place. Not that I liked it. The pattern was a bunch of different color lines that ran straight from floor to ceiling with another bunch of different color lines crossing at right angles and running all around the room. It was ugly. Wald put me in the corner where the cops found the corpse.

Wald went over to a wall ten feet or so from me. "This is where the police interrupted me," he said with a grin. He tapped the wall a few times with the hand that wasn't pointing the pistol at me.

The wall swung open. The opening was maybe a foot tall and half again as wide. Its edges were right on them different color lines and invisible until the wall opened. I saw a leather pouch set back inside the wall. A large worn money pouch. Wald musta threatened

that old miser pretty good to get him to tell him where he hid his dough.

I wondered whether the old man put up a fight or went quiet. Probly went quiet. I wasn't putting up any fight either, just staring at the small round hole in the end of the gun barrel.

Wald reached into the hole in the wall with his free hand. He grabbed the pouch and tugged. The tug tripped the switch I hid behind the pouch when I renovated. A weighted blade dropped silently behind the wall from above the hole. It missed Wald's brown sport coat which had rode up his arm when he reached for the pouch. But it cut off Wald's arm above the wrist. Wald dropped the pistol and grabbed what was left of his arm with his remaining hand.

The blood spurting everywhere didn't interest me. The cleanup crew would take care of that. I didn't look around for Wald's hand either. Probly behind the wall. I sprang from the corner to claim the pistol and trained it on the screaming guy who'd tormented Nestor.

I'm no vigilante. I didn't kill Wald. His hand was his problem, so I helped him cut it off. Biblical, I figure. I pulled my cell out and called 9-1-1. Then I ripped a sleeve off Wald's brown coat to make a tourniquet. It tore easy. Cheap coat.

I don't think I'll be charged. The cops who arrested Wald didn't care much about his loss; probly thought he shoulda fried for Nestor, I figure. Besides, who's to say the old miser didn't mount that blade himself?

The pouch only had a couple a hundred bucks in it. Wald risked life and limb over a lousy couple a hundred.

The other hundred and forty-five thou that'd been in the pouch before my renovation? I did my part to end capital punishment. I gave it to one of them groups that talks women out of abortions. ☸

Please donate to the
American Chesterton Society.
www.chesterton.org

Mysteries That Could Happen Only in Botswana

by Chris Chan

Some detectives are simply made to live and investigate in their home territory. Nero Wolfe never seems comfortable when his investigations compel him to leave his fortress of a brownstone house in New York City. Sheriff Marge Gunderson would be a fish out of water outside rural Minnesota. And Mma Precious Ramotswe would be miserable beyond the boundaries of her beloved homeland of Botswana in southern Africa.

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency is one of the warmest, funniest, and most thoroughly enjoyable and satisfying television series of the last few years. Based on the novels of Alexander McCall Smith, *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* is the story of Mma ("Mma" is an address and term of respect, like "Mrs.") Precious Ramotswe (Jill Scott), an extremely resourceful, compassionate, and "traditionally built" woman who has decided to invest her inheritance into a private detective agency. Driven only by her enthusiasm, the how-to guide *The Principles of Private Detection*, and a much-loved but not particularly durable little white van, Mma Ramotswe opens the only female-run detective agency in Botswana, which makes it the number one agency in the country by default. Mma Ramotswe specializes in helping women solve their problems, although she certainly has no compunction against taking on male clients. It soon becomes apparent that it is harder to run a detective agency than she first believes, but through strength of will, instinct, innate intelligence, and the help of her friends, Mma Ramotswe manages to achieve an unlikely but well-deserved string of successes.

The supporting cast is composed of many memorable characters, such as Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni (Lucian Msamati), an extraordinarily kind and decent man and a skilled mechanic, who quite understandably falls for Mma Ramotswe soon after he meets

her. Their courtship is one of the major subplots of the series, though a disastrous relationship from Mma Ramotswe's past has the potential to derail the budding romance. Grace Makutsi is Mma Ramotswe's personal secretary and protégé. Described as "highly efficient yet rather peculiar," Grace Makutsi (Anika Noni Rose) earned record-setting test scores at the Botswana Secretarial College (ninety-seven percent, as she never tires of informing people). Though she is at first frustrated by the Agency's irregular cash flow and typewriters with sticky keys, Grace is soon involved in tracing clients' paternity, finding out why one hospital bed appears to be cursed, testing the virtue of beauty pageant contestants, and investigating a series of impossible break-ins, and comes to realize that there is no place else in the world that she would rather work.

Other standout members of the cast include Desmond Dube as BK, a hairdresser who does not appear in the original novels but whose presence adds a little "something else" to the show. Harish Patel plays Mr. Patel, an Indian businessman and overprotective father extraordinaire. Mosako Mogara is remarkably endearing as Wellington, an energetic young orphan. Colin Salmon as Note Makoti, Mma Ramotswe's ex-husband, manages to blend a coarse and menacing demeanor with the tragic pathos of a talented artist who is spiraling downward. By far the most touching performance comes from C.C.H. Pounder as Mrs. Curtin, a woman searching for answers regarding her son's disappearance years earlier.

Viewers who are familiar with the books will find that the series has taken the most interesting and filmable plots from Smith's first five or so books, and chopped them up and rearranged them to fill seven episodes. In one case, the solution to a mystery has been altered from the author's original, although I must say that the solution in the series is much more dramatically satisfying. The mysteries



Anika Noni Rose as Grace Makutsi, Jill Scott as Precious Ramotswe, and Lucian Msamati as Mr. J.L.B. Matekoni

in this series are not murders. There are a few disappearances, a series of poisonings, robberies, and investigations of assorted family matters. There are a couple of deaths involved, but the fact that *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* is not a traditional murder mystery series does not make it any less compelling.

While HBO and other members of the production crew were anxious to create more seasons, the death of a producer coupled with other problems led to the series being shelved, although the possibility of telemovies remains.

The failure of the series to be renewed is a grave disappointment, because one would be hard-pressed to find a warmer, joyous, more life-affirming show on television. Its mix of comedy and investigation blends beautifully, and the series also includes heart-breaking social issues facing Botswana without becoming preachy, overdramatic, political, or maudlin. Grace's brother is dying of AIDS, but the central focus of this subplot is on the love between siblings. Another quietly emotional subplot involves an orphan farm filled with little children, some of whom are disabled; but the

kindness of the woman who runs the facility makes the orphanage anything but Dickensian.

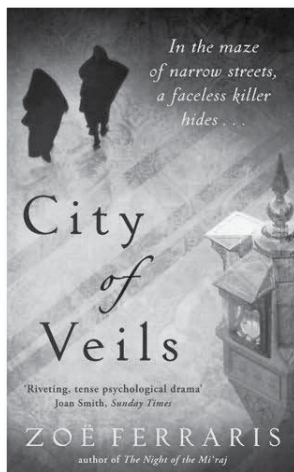
Serendipitously, I had watched the British series *Wallander*, starring Kenneth Branagh, before viewing *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* for the first time. The contrast between these two shows is as striking as that between *Sesame Street* and *The Sopranos*. The bleak, grey, cold streets of Sweden and the sunny, vibrant, color-filled towns of Botswana are as different as their methods of crime investigation. I much prefer *No. 1*, but I suggest that viewers compare and decide for themselves. ☞

Chesterton's Bloodthirsty Heirs

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

Brief Reviews of the Contemporary Mystery Scene by Steve Miller

Zoe Ferraris. *City of Veils* (2010). Possibly when bad feminists die their hell is to be sent to Saudi Arabia. Even Jeddah, the most Westernized city of the Kingdom, is a virtual prison for North Carolina expatriate Miriam Walker, and not much better for local forensic investigator, Katya Hijazi, who must pretend to be married to keep her job. Even liberal police detective Osama Ibrahim is devastated to discover his wife's birth control pills. The mutilated body of a young woman found on the beach join these disparate individuals along with Katya's fundamentalist admirer, desert guide Nayir Sharqi. A Bluetooth sewn into a *burqa* identifies the victim as Leila, a video photographer who chronicled embarrassing secrets and whose brother sells suggestive lingerie. What is the relationship between Leila and Miriam's missing bodyguard husband, Eric? Who is the mysterious Apollo who sits next to Miriam on her flight to Jeddah, participates in Leila's documentary

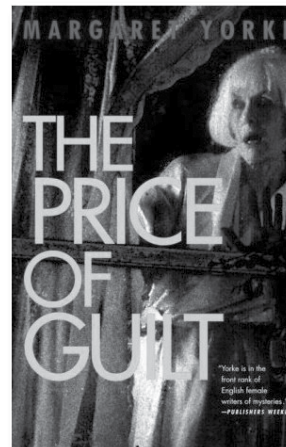


denouncing the Qur'an, and is the Walkers' secret landlord? Pursuit of answers leads to the burning desert of the Empty Quarter, a runaway camel, and impending doom from a raging sandstorm. Is one of Leila's many voyeuristic videos the key to her death? Ferraris was married to a Saudi and lived in Jeddah. She knows the joys and frustrations of being in an interloper in a land part modern and part ancient. A constant theme of the story is that relationships between men and women are as complicated in a patriarchal land as in the cosmopolitan West and that our stereotypes of the Muslim world are a mixture of truth and falsehood.

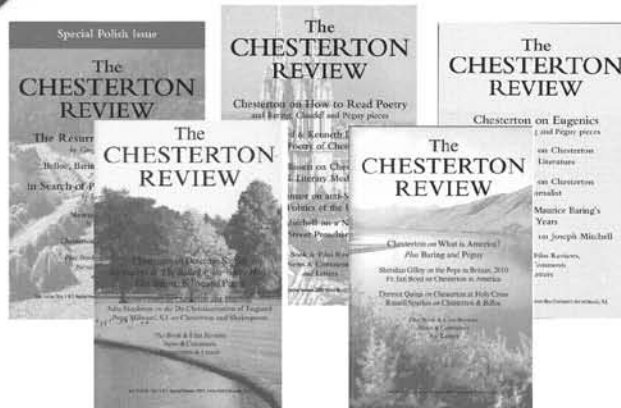
Margaret Yorke. *The Price of Guilt* (1999). Are women safe in civilized England? Psychologically abused Louise Widdows,

after her husband nearly runs her over as he flees from creditors and blackmailers, might have her doubts. But soon she has new hope when she inherits a home from her dead mother whose bequest could only be available upon the absence of the manipulative husband. She may even have found in journalist Andrew Sherwood, who helps her after an attack by hooligans on a train trip, the long lost son she gave up for adoption.

Married to a man who could vanish abroad for years at a time, Louise, whose life had been one mysterious move after another, begins to find friends and stability. But will her fugitive husband let her be? Are there other dangers unknown to her? It is a novel of relationships, some benevolent and some caustically toxic. All are complex, with each person having needs that the other may or may not be able to satisfy. For Andrew, Louise may be the key to his healing from a painful divorce. For the sinister husband, his tormenters may be trivial compared to the possibility that traumatized Louise might thrive without him. Here is a tale of many ironies, some sad and some a form of rough justice. In all it is a fascinating study. ☞



The Chesterton Review



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What Would Jesus (Bushi) Do?

The Way of the Christian Samurai

By Paul Nowak
R.A.G.E. Media, 2007
Softcover, 108 pages; \$10

Reviewed by David Paul Deavel

More than a decade ago I was desultorily scanning an announcement board at my graduate school when I came across a notice for a presentation by “Roshi Robert Kennedy, S.J.” It was one of those talks about how you can be both Catholic and Zen Buddhist at the same time. I did not attend the talk, having heard enough Catholic academic explanations about how Catholicism was something like ketchup that you just added to whatever else you like to eat. Wikipedia informs me that my intuition was correct, as it lists Fr. Kennedy’s religions as both “Catholicism” and “white plume asanga.” The latter, a “diverse organization” of Buddhists, includes “socially engaged Buddhism, family practice, Zen and the arts, secularized Zen, and progressive traditionalism.” I interpret this rather odd list to mean Fr. Kennedy’s true religion is a little more mainstream for clerics ordained to the priesthood in 1965. It’s actually left-wing politics baptized in Japanese tea.

You would infer correctly, given my previous intuition, that “not interested” was my reaction when a fellow *GM* contributor suggested we ought to review Paul Nowak’s *The Way of the Christian Samurai*. Roshi Robert, Samurai Paul: Bah, humbug! But I’m glad the book was suggested again, because when I read it I found something much more interesting than the political-religious syncretism of

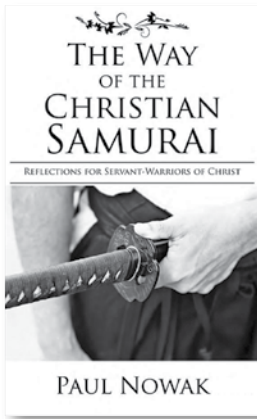
aging hippy priests.

Paul Nowak is under no illusions that one’s commitments can be “Christian and Samurai” equally. He warns the reader that “Bushido (meaning ‘way of the warrior’) is not a substitute or an equivalent of the Christian Way found through the teaching, example, and life of Jesus Christ.” But in his fascination with Japanese culture, and particularly Samurai lore, Nowak discovered certain aspects of their code that seemed to resonate with that of the Christian Way.

While many Westerners think of Samurai as simply an analogue of the Wild West free agent gunslinger, the warriors were, at their best, more like knights attached to the service of a medieval baron or king. For a Samurai to be independent (a “Ronin”) was considered a trial and something of an embarrassment. True honor consisted of defending and serving a lord with all the might and skill one had. The very title “Samurai” means “one who serves.” Being a Samurai, just as being a Christian, was considered both an honor and servitude.

Nowak correctly notes that the Japanese conception of service is much closer to the world of the Bible than our conception in the modern West.

In Chestertonian fashion he exploits the human tendency to see truths we should recognize more easily when they are displayed in other cultures. Thus the ultimate notion of Samurai service is a quasi-mystical becoming one with one’s Lord. We in the modern West instinctively rebel against service to a human lord because of a generally unthinking reliance upon the New Testament truth that in the end there can be only one Lord or, as C.S. Lewis put it when discussing Aristotle’s idea of born slaves, “I reject slavery because I see no men



fit to be masters.” But it may be the case that, as with human fatherhood, the service of a human lord, unfit though he be, is ultimately a fit vehicle for understanding divine lordship—even if it only means studying the noblest examples of service to a human lord.

And it is true that many characteristics of the Samurai service are very congenial to thinking about how we serve someone who is so much greater than a shogun or an emperor. Nowak highlights modesty and humility as essential traits of the Samurai. This should sound familiar to any Christian who remembers St. Bernard’s response to the question of what the three greatest virtues are: humility, humility, and humility. What Nowak does so well is to put quotations from some of the main sources of Samurai lore in close conjunction with parallel lines from the New Testament with a minimum of explanatory commentary. To Samurai injunctions concerning doing one’s duty quietly and not keeping “account of every service you render,” which is “not service at all,” Nowak cites our Lord’s advice concerning praying and giving alms in secret, as well as those servants who say at the end of the day, “We are only unworthy servants.”

The strength of his bare-bones approach makes this slim volume all the more powerful as it lets the obvious lessons sink in without explaining away or dulling the shocks of recognition one receives. Part of the shock is in realizing yet again how little was “new” in Jesus’ teaching. The paradox of bravery, risking one’s life in order to gain life, is revealed again (as it was in G.K. Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*) to be a principle that is the sheerest common sense but also something eminently praiseworthy, considering how difficult it is. What is new with Jesus is the power that he gives to do something more than merely act morally. We are given the strength to sacrifice ourselves in a cause much more noble and efficacious than that of the desires of a petty Japanese aristocrat. This comes through very strongly.

While most devotional books don’t do much for me (Flannery O’Connor observed their sole effect is to “corrupt the ear”), I found myself driven to prayer a number of times while reading this short volume. Samurai Paul is no humbug. Listen to him. ☸

The Taxman Is Under Your Mattress

by Richard Aleman

The late John Lennon was wrong about many things, but he was right about the taxman's excesses: "If you drive a car, I'll tax the street. If you try to sit, I'll tax your seat. If you get too cold, I'll tax the heat." Taxes are all you hear about on the tube, in the pub, and on the

street. Here's one reason why: everybody hates them. The storeowner, the father of seven, the rich and the poor—we can't stand taxes, but we love to talk about them.

The endless debates over taxes reveal just how confusing taxes really are. Our quixotic positions, fueled

by muddled political ideologies, only promote hype without the facts, utopian theories divorced from past experience. For instance, we build roads for commerce but expect citizens to pay for them. We dislike tax increases so we borrow and pass on the expenses to our children. We complain that "taxation as theft" but we like dialing 911 in an emergency. We encourage subsidies for the private sector while letting them hoard the profits. We cut taxes for the rich and then wonder why we are stuck paying the bills. We support unsuccessful programs keeping the poor on the dole.

We might ask ourselves why Distributists should spend any time on the subject of taxes, after all, isn't Distributism primarily interested in the

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

◆ It cannot be true that there is nothing abiding in what we know. For if that were so we should not know it all and should not call it knowledge. Our mental state may be very different from that of somebody else some thousands of years back; but it cannot be entirely different, or else we should not be conscious of a difference...The fact of two things being different implies that they are similar. The hare and the tortoise may differ in the quality of swiftness, but they must agree in the quality of motion. The swiftest hare cannot be swifter than an isosceles triangle or the idea of pinkness. When we say the hare moves faster, we say that the tortoise moves. And when we say of a thing that it moves, we say, without need of other words, that there are things that do not move. And even in the act of saying that things change, we say that there is something unchangeable. ("Mr. H.G. Wells and the Giants," *Heretics*)

◆ The hardest thing to remember about our own time, of course, is simply that it is a time; we all instinctively think of it as the Day of Judgment. But all the things in it which belong to it merely as this time will probably be rapidly turned upside down; all the things that can pass will pass. It is not merely true that all old things are already dead; it is also true that all new

things are already dead; for the only undying things are the things that are neither new nor old. The more you are up with this year's fashion, the more (in a sense) you are already behind next year's. Consequently, in attempting to decide whether an author will, as it is cantly expressed, live, it is necessary to have very firm convictions about what part, if any part, of man is unchangeable. And it is very hard to have this if you have not a religion or, at least, a dogmatic philosophy. ("A Note on the Future of Dickens," *Charles Dickens*)

◆ imbecile habit has arisen in modern controversy of saying that such and such a creed can be held in one age but cannot be held in another. Some dogma, we are told, was credible in the twelfth century, but is not credible in the twentieth. You might as well say that a certain philosophy can be believed on Mondays, but cannot be believed on Tuesdays. You might as well say of a view of the cosmos that it was suitable to half-past three, but not suitable to half-past four. What a man can believe depends upon his philosophy, not upon the clock or the century. If a man believes in unalterable natural law, he cannot believe in any miracle in any age. If a man believes in a will behind law, he can

believe in any miracle in any age. ("The Flag of the World," *Orthodoxy*)

◆ Most thinkers, on realising the apparent mutability of being, have really forgotten their own realisation of the being, and believed only in the mutability. They cannot even say that a thing changes into another thing; for them there is no instant in the process at which it is a thing at all. It is only a change. It would be more logical to call it nothing changing into nothing, than to say (on these principles) that there ever was or will be a moment when the thing is itself. St. Thomas maintains that the ordinary thing at any moment is something; but it is not everything that it could be. There is a fullness of being, in which it could be everything that it can be. Thus, while most sages come at last to nothing but naked change, he comes to the ultimate thing that is unchangeable, because it is all the other things at once. While they describe a change which is really a change in nothing, he describes a changelessness which includes the changes of everything. Things change because they are not complete; but their reality can only be explained as part of something that is complete. It is God. ("The Permanent Philosophy," *St. Thomas Aquinas*)

wide distribution of property in order to achieve mass ownership? Since when is the Distributist concerned with the redistribution of token wealth? How we shape and apply tax policies in a capitalist economy will greatly benefit us as we work toward our Distributist aspirations.

What Are Taxes?

Although tax collection took on various forms in pre-capitalist societies, taxes are levies placed upon the citizens of nations (under penalty of law) with the goal of generating revenue at every level of government, so as to serve the common good. While particular departments or agencies, programs or services, may violate the principle of subsidiarity, every level of government depends upon financing to cover its costs, and taxes are nothing more than proper cost accounting, that is, allocating costs back to those who cause the costs.

Whether local, state, or federal, *all taxes are redistributive*. Our taxes are collected and redistributed with the goal of providing the entire community with needed services. Some may require more services than others, but if we didn't redistribute taxes every household would be faced with hiring its own policeman, sanitation crew, and so on. All of us pay taxes with the expectation that we pay in proportion to the benefits we receive, with special consideration for the poor, the handicapped, and the elderly. Taxes are redistributed in two ways: either up or down. That is, taxes are regressive or progressive, with either the middle and low incomes or the wealthy paying a greater share of the expenses.

Popular alternatives to regressive and progressive taxation exist, however, if we keep in mind that taxes serve to cover the nation's costs, we will quickly realize these are not serious "alternatives."

The Flat Tax

Although we will find variations, the most common version of the flat tax proposes a 17 percent single tax scheme on wages, while exempting all capital gains and other income derived from rents, interest, and dividends.

Unfortunately, a flat tax on all wages will quickly expand the burden on the middle class. As the rich do not work for wages and receive most of their income from capital gains, the middle class will see their taxes increased up to 32 percent in order to reconcile the tax shift from the wealthy to the middle and poor classes. Roles will be reversed. Those garnering income exclusively from capital gains will pay nothing and those earning wages will be forced to support the idle rich. As it stands, capital gains are currently taxed less than income taxes on wages, a fact made famous by multi-millionaire Warren Buffett's comment about paying fewer taxes than his secretary.

Proponents of the flat tax also advocate simplifying the tax code. They say our tax code is too complex and can be easily reduced to the size of a postcard. However, there is one good reason why our tax code is so complicated: new loopholes demand new remedies to plug tax evasion. The more creative people get, the bigger and further complex our tax code.

Do we need tax reform? Yes, we do. But lean tax regulations in the age of Arthur Andersen, AIG, and Bernie Madoff? No thank you, Mr. Forbes.

The Fair Tax

Instead of our current graduated tax, the fair tax is a progressive scheme to replace the federal income tax with a sales tax of 23- to 30 percent on all purchases, except business purchases. In this proposal, taxes are gauged by how much a person consumes and are audited by state agencies, eliminating any need for the Internal Revenue Service.

Several obvious problems face the fair tax. While wages would no longer be taxed, the increased sales tax would inevitably hurt the poorest of society. The poor, after all, consume more than the rich, while the latter rarely convert more than one percent of their income into consumption. Thus, the poor and middle class would once again be left with the footing the nation's bill.

The claim that the fair tax would eliminate the IRS is demonstrably untrue. The fair tax would enlarge the IRS. If business purchases are exempt


from this tax scheme, *everybody* will incorporate, prompting a larger apparatus than the IRS to sift between scams aimed at avoiding tax and legitimate businesses.

Corporate Tax Cuts

We are often told that reducing corporate taxation would benefit small business owners who desperately need the relief. What they don't say is that, unlike graduated income taxes, corporate taxes are uniform. Corporate taxes are the same for Wal-Mart as for Mel's Diner. The difference is, increasing corporate taxes for the little guy can put him out of business, while they slide off the backs of Big Business, allowing mega-giant firms to swallow up Mel's clientele. Urging Congress or the President to maintain or slash taxes for the sake of small business is, sadly, a smokescreen. What we need instead is a differential tax policy in favor of mass ownership, i.e. family-owned and operated, employee stock ownership Plans, guilds and cooperative, businesses.

Benefits of the Distributive State

Although taxes are necessary to support our infrastructure, the widest distribution of property would allocate most functions as close to our front doors as possible, reducing the size and expense of government and our dependence on commercial Big Business. The surge of regional businesses would cover the costs of government, lower the taxes our bureaucrats constantly raise (e.g., property taxes) to substitute for losses from subsidizing commercial malls and other big businesses, stimulate independence for the family, and improve the mechanics of society's interdependence. In addition, a Distributist economy would apply a differential tax scheme to discourage growing businesses from becoming Goliaths, and ensure the continuing development of micro-property.

As our incumbent and presidential hopefuls discuss taxes, perhaps we should ask ourselves if the tired, same old, prescriptions are capable of truly restoring our sanity and our property. If your answer is no, you may be a Distributist. 

How the Music was Murdered on TV DVDs

by Chris Chan

Music is an essential part of any self-respecting television program. Some shows hire composers to craft original instrumental music to enhance the mood of scenes. Michael Giacchino (*Lost*), Sean Callery (*24*), and Daniel Licht (*Dexter*) are some of the most celebrated and talented composers for recent television series. The cliché that the best television scores are generally imperceptible until you focus on listening to them is not necessarily correct, but it is unfortunately all too often true that the composers of television background music toil in obscurity.

Viewers tend to notice the use of popular songs much more often than they do instrumental music. It is common for a contemporary hit song or an old familiar standard to play at a pivotal point in a television episode in order to enhance a mood. When songs are properly chosen to fit the scene, the effect can be memorable, even magical. Some of television's great moments are set to classic songs. Think of the opening moments of *Lost*'s second season, where we first meet Desmond Hume and his bizarre daily routine to the strains of "Make Your Own Kind of Music." Remember "Don't Stop Believin'," which provided double and triple entendres to the hotly debated final moments of *The Sopranos*. Will Johnny Mathis' rendition of "Wonderful, Wonderful" ever be the same after hearing it used in *The X-Files* episode "Home"? Would the first images from inside the Hatch, or the Soprano family settling down to dinner at a diner, or Mulder and Scully hunting the world's creepiest family, have had nearly the same atmosphere if they had been set a Britney Spears pop song? No.

Television shows obviously put a great deal of time and effort into selecting the songs they use to enrich their scenes. Unfortunately, a disturbing number of series are forced to change their music when the shows

are released on DVD, syndicated, or streamed online, and the replacement songs are almost invariably not nearly up to par with the originally chosen tunes.

When a television show wants to use a song, they must pay whoever holds the rights to that song a licensing fee. For years, the standard contract for obtaining licensing rights allowed the song to be used on the television airings of the show, and often on *only* the television airings. A handful of shows had limited "best-of" releases on VHS; with the coming of the DVD, complete boxed sets of television seasons became commonplace. The new technology was accompanied by new legal complications, however. Holders of music

The Muppet Show was forced to delete a beloved sketch wherein Vincent Price sings "You've Got A Friend" with a chorus of monster Muppets.

rights pointed out that their contracts allowed only for television airings, and demanded copious amounts of extra cash in order to allow their songs to be used on the DVDs.


Of course, every negotiation session goes differently. Some rights holders were willing to grant the additional permission for a nominal fee; others demanded huge amounts of money, and the studios refused. In cases where a single season might use forty or fifty high-profile songs, the studio could be forced to pay millions of dollars to obtain all the rights, and millions of box sets would have to be sold at outrageous prices in order to make a profit. Since even bestselling DVDs sell only a couple of hundred thousand copies when the sets are

priced at between twenty and thirty dollars apiece, it simply is not financially viable for DVD producers to pay the prices the music companies demand.

Some sought-after shows never see a DVD release despite high demand, such as the period music-filled *The Wonder Years*. In other cases, songs are simply replaced with new music. *Northern Exposure* fans mourn the fact that a large percentage of the unique tunes originally used on the show have been replaced with less distinctive songs due to budgetary woes. Sometimes even *theme songs* need to be replaced, like *Dave's World*, whose DVD producer couldn't afford Billy Joel.

Increasingly, DVD producers are unwilling to spend the time and effort to replace an expensive song. The fourth and fifth seasons of *Taxi* barely made it to DVD, and cost prohibitions meant that scenes with songs (even a single verse of "Born Free") were simply cut. *The Muppet Show* was forced to delete a beloved sketch wherein Vincent Price sings "You've Got A Friend" with a chorus of monster Muppets.

Sometimes a series is not allowed to use the original music once the episodes enter syndication. The transcendent science fiction/action-adventure/romance/comedy/thriller series *Now and Again* had a substantial music budget, but after the Sci-fi channel picked up the show's only season, the series was compelled to delete its perfectly selected songs in favor of grating, distracting, rinky-dink muzak. Among the more egregious examples is its third episode, that originally opened with a terrific montage set to "Tonight" from *West Side Story*. The entire scene was cut in syndication. *Now and Again* has never been released on DVD despite eleven years of begging by fans, yet a DVD set with the chopped-up versions would be an insult.

New contracts allowing music rights for all future technology may permit current shows to avoid licensing problems. Big Music and Big Home Entertainment have clashed, and the big losers are the viewers, who are prevented from reviewing their favorite shows as they originally saw them. A happy resolution is unlikely, unless music rights holders capitulate. 



Stained Credulity

Henry Poole Is Here (2008)

Directed by Mark Pellington

Written by Albert Torres

Rated PG (for thematic elements and some language)

Reviewed by Art Livingston

One late afternoon in my bohemian youth, while relaxing at the old coffeehouse, I faintly, but quite distinctly, divined the visage of Jack Kerouac in the froth of my cappuccino. After a few thrilling seconds the vision faded, forever lost. No doubt my having been in the middle of reading Dr. Sax had more than a little to do with this literary curiosity.

My little fancy was silly, of course, but what about those pious folk who claim a statue weeps the Virgin's tears, or that some discoloration on a wall is the likeness of Christ Himself? Why always Christ or the Virgin? Why not Stalin sent to us as a cautionary tale? Well, most times I think the reverence is quite real, while the actual vision a fancy of imagination. And so does the Church. Much time gets wasted on false visions; a very few, however, may well be authentic because no other explanation will, or can, suffice.

The media invariably reports these affairs in what seems like the same photocopied article, with only the names changed. What these efforts prove, however, is that incredulity is far more naive than credulity. The latter makes a mistake about an instance; the former makes a mistake about the universe. In an article before me, some people saw Christ in a Host that had fallen to the floor. Probably a case of projection, although the Church apparently has taken some real note of the event which arouses interest—although this is a newspaper article, we can only guess as to what is really happening. All we are required to believe is that

such miracles are possible and may even happen on rare occasions.

I heard a co-worker mutter about this piece, and she did not stay for an answer, "Now they are worshiping dirt on the floor." Sometime after wishing she were a man, that I was thirty years younger, and that she was in a more suitable venue to defend that statement with her front teeth, I decided instead to pray to keep my blood pressure in check, and even more for those whose poverty of will can make such mockery *de rigueur* in the lands of the semi-educated. Meanwhile, back in the world of journalism, we have yet to hear whatever final decision the Church made, or why the verdict fell thus and not so. Anything to make Christ and his Church look bad, don't you know.

This at long last brings us to *Henry Poole Is Here*, an independent film production. Henry Poole wants to live in a small house. His dealings with a ditsy realtor lead us to one conclusion: he simply wants to pay what she asks and for her to shut up. The poor woman tries to help him bargain, but he will have none of it. She even asks him to demand some needed repairs, but he couldn't care less. He is clearly contemplating suicide. A neighbor, a Mexican lady with a welcoming gift of tamales, receives reproof from Henry, who prefers old donuts and even older pizza.

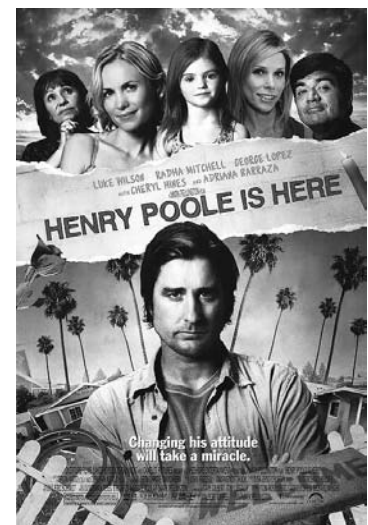
The realtor decides to repair an exterior wall so that she can do something, anything, to justify her commission, but the resultant stucco job is flawed badly, leaving a distinct stain on an outer wall. The follow-up scene begins with a shot from the point of view of that wall, telling in light of what happens next: the friendly neighbor staring straight into the wall while crossing herself. She believes she sees the face of Christ. Next a Fr.

Salazar visits Henry, who wishes to be left alone. The priest agrees that the spot is most likely a water stain, but the incident bears investigation.

The story snowballs. Soon a few people join Henry's neighbor, then a genuine crowd. The constant note stressed is that if at first Henry is annoyed, he becomes progressively angrier and angrier. The vision cannot be true, is not true, could not possibly be true. By any objective standard, an audience should be replying to the screen, "Why can't it be true? Because Henry doesn't want it to be true?" Why do things fall down and not up? Why does gravity work? How did it come about? If it is just "is," where did the "is" come from? Above all, why the vehemence, Henry? Richard Dawkins? Christopher Hitchens?

Most Christians who, thank God, will never find themselves in this sort of situation, may merely state (as does one of the characters) that Henry is an atheist and not a very nice one. They may try to make excuses for him and say some prayers for him. Eventually we do learn Henry's back-story, and the film shows him drawing progressively closer to his next door neighbor, a widow with a small daughter who never speaks.

After making its polemical point exceedingly well, *Henry Poole Is Here* draws together all kinds of disparate people as does the stain—or is it the Divine Image? We do witness the power of well-placed faith no matter what it is. And for a brief moment, we see what might just be. ☸



Gilbert Keith Chesterton Answers His Mail

Was, But is No Longer

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

I tried listening to your defenses of domesticity, but I've decided that home life is not suited to the business life of today.

Signed,
Former Housekeeper

Dear House-Loser,

You might as well say, "Heads are not suited to the sort of hats now in fashion."

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Dec. 11, 1926)

✱ ✱ ✱

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

Do you want everybody to be Anglo-Saxon?

Signed,
Former Student

Dear Dropout,

I want nobody to be Anglo-Saxon. By a great stroke of luck, nobody is.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Apr. 3, 1909)

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

I've been reading that play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, and I know enough Freud to have figured out that Hamlet didn't just hate his uncle, he also secretly hated his father because, well, you know, he was, you know... with Hamlet's mother.

Signed,
Former Non-Reader

Dear Non-Thinker,

I know not what one is expected to do with this sort of thing except laugh, unless it be urged that it is inhumane to laugh at lunatics.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Century Magazine*, May 1923)

✱ ✱ ✱

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

How can you think Christianity is true? What about all the other religions that claim to be true?

Signed,
Free Thinker

Dear Former Thinker,

The vulgar modern argument used against religion, and lately against common decency, would be absolutely fatal to any idea of liberty. It is perpetually said that because there are a hundred religions claiming to be true, it is therefore impossible that one of them should really be true. The argument would appear on the face of it to be illogical, if anyone nowadays troubled about logic. It would be as reasonable to say that because some people thought the earth was flat, and others (rather less incorrectly) imagined it was round, and because anybody is free to say that it is triangular or hexagonal, or a rhomboid, therefore it has no shape at all; or its shape can never be discovered; and, anyhow, modern science must be wrong in saying it is an oblate spheroid. The world must be some shape, and it must be that shape and no other; and it is not self-evident that nobody can possibly hit on the right one. What so obviously applies to the material shape of the world equally applies to the moral shape of the universe. The man who describes it may not be right, but it is no argument against his rightness that a number of other people must be wrong.

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, Jan. 4, 1930)

✱ ✱ ✱

Dear Mr. Chesterton,

I give up. I don't know what to tell the seeker after pleasure, who simply goes on saying, over and over again: "I must have Happiness. I must have Life. I must have Love. Why do you reproach me because I cannot live without passing from ecstasy to ecstasy?"

Signed,
Former Moralist

Dear Immoralist,

This seems to me about as simple as the speech of a savage who should say: "I must have Gin. I like Gin. I like more and more Gin. Why will you not instantly provide me with a hundred bottles of Gin?"

Your friend,
G.K. Chesterton
(*Illustrated London News*, May 18, 1929)



Compiled by the Gilbert Magazine News-Gathering Staff



“When the real revolution happens, it won’t be mentioned in the newspapers.”

LAST-MINUTE GIFT IDEAS

LINCOLN, Nebraska; CHICAGO; TURRAMURRA, Australia—For readers who are stuck for gift ideas this Christmas season, we’ve come up with a couple of items that might just satisfy even the person who has everything. First up—a 42,000 horsepower jet-propelled school bus capable of reaching speeds approaching 320 miles per hour. The bus’s builder, Paul Stender, claims he built the vehicle in order to interest school children in engineering. With the bus’s acceleration forces approaching 2 Gs, we have a feeling most students would black out before they could ask any questions.

In case your gift list includes those with an insatiable sweet tooth, you might want to inquire at Chicago’s World’s Finest Chocolate Company, that recently announced they had created the world’s largest chocolate bar. Weighing in at 12,000 pounds, the bar measures three feet high by twenty-one feet long. In case anyone is wondering, this is enough chocolate to provide a one ounce serving to every fan in the city’s four major athletic fields with 45,000 leftovers. The company created the gigantic confection as part of its “Think Big, Eat Smart” campaign; we’ll leave it to readers to figure out how six tons of chocolate might inspire anyone to moderation.

Finally, Australia’s Hugh McGuinness has just the gift for fathers whose children kick in their sleep—pajamas with built-in crotch protection. His four-year-old son, Cameron, who used to sleep with McGuinness and his wife, was the inspiration for the project. McGuinness knew he had a winner when he mentioned his idea to other fathers and he could “see the pain in their eyes.” Not one to rest on

his laurels, McGuinness is working on another project for fathers who carry their babies papoose style, noting in that case “their feet are exactly in line.” For prospective gift givers the protective fatherhood gear is purportedly available at oo.com.au.

Chesterton counseled that when giving treats to others to give them what they like, not necessarily what is good for them. We leave it to readers whether the above gifts would qualify in either sense.

’TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY

WASHINGTON, Pa.—Chesterton once described a drunkard as “the man who does not understand the delicate and exquisite moment when he is moderately and reasonably drunk.” Robert Brodnick, fifty-eight, appears to be a textbook case of what G.K. meant. Brodnick was recently arrested for driving with a blood alcohol content twice the legal limit. After the normal booking procedure, state troopers released him to the custody of a “responsible party.” Accounts didn’t identify this party and it’s just as well, because this person dropped Brodnick off where he’d left his vehicle. A mere fifteen minutes after his release the original arresting officer spotted Brodnick driving once more, resulting in what had to be a serious case of *déjà vu* all over again.

SIGNS FOR THE TIMES

BEMIDJI, Minn.—A 19th century surveyor in this northern Minnesota hamlet, Marcus Stoner was a model citizen and civic leader so it was only natural that a Bemidji street be named after him. But times change and so has

the popular meaning of the surveyor’s name, upon which we see no need to elaborate. Over the past decade local connoisseurs of home grown organic stimulants also developed a taste for Stoner Avenue street signs and have cost the city roughly \$20,000 to replace them. The Bemidji City Council had planned to change the name of the street in order to cut its losses, however residents complained this would require them to change their driver’s licenses, bank records, and other documents. In the meantime a recent inventory showed another ten signs have disappeared. Authorities, we understand, are attempting to follow the smoking bong.

DENTURE WEARER HAS GUM PROBLEMS

EDMONTON, Alberta.—Chesterton believed despair does not lie in being weary of suffering, but in being weary of joy. In that case pity poor Elsie Pawlow, forty-nine, who suffered a bout of severe depression that lasted approximately ten minutes. The cause of her distress was Stride chewing gum that she claims continued to fall apart into little pieces and stick to her dentures. She described the process of digging out the small bits of gum from her dentures as disgusting and the cause of her short-term depression. Consequently she is suing Kraft Canada, producer of Stride gum, to the tune of \$100,000. In round numbers this means Pawlow believes her suffering was worth roughly \$10,000 per minute. We’d suggest at that rate she should have claimed her bout of depression lasted for at least an hour.

MARRIAGE WITH AN EXPIRATION DATE

MEXICO CITY—Legislators in Mexico’s capital city have hit on a novel way to reduce the backlog of cases stemming from the city’s forty percent divorce rate. A bill pending in the legislature would require engaged couples to negotiate prenuptial agreements in advance of their marriage that would outline financial and child custody arrangements as well as—get this—how long they expect the marriage to last. A spokesman for one of the sponsoring legislators has termed the proposal a “renewable marriage

contract”; we prefer archdiocesan spokesman Father Hugo Valdemar’s description as adding a “sell-by” date to wedding vows. Although the bill also mandates that couples attend classes on the practical aspects of marriage, we’ve got the feeling these will deal more with negotiation strategies than how the two shall become one. And so we have yet another lame example of what Chesterton described as attempting to give respectability to a broken vow.

A NEW FACE FOR CASINO GAMBLING

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J.—Leave it to “the Donald” to up the ante in the casino gambling industry. In a new promotion Trump One card holders who earn enough points can become eligible for the drawing in the “Trump Taj Mahal Nip, Tuck, and Lift Sweepstakes.” The lucky winner, who must be gambling at the time of the drawing, will win \$25,000 toward a smorgasbord of plastic surgery procedures, from a tummy tuck to an eyelid lift. We noticed, likely out of deference to the casino’s owner, that the list of options failed to include hair implants. Chesterton defined gambling as “the vanity of guessing.” One doesn’t have to guess whether Trump is trying to cash in on his customers’ vanity.

GOING OUT WITH A BANG

MOBILE, Ala.—Looking for a way to give your dearly departed gun lover a unique send-off? All you need to do is contact Holy Smoke, a newly formed company that for \$850 will stuff your loved one’s ashes into shotgun shells, and rifle or pistol cartridges. After that it’s only a matter of choosing the right time(s) and place(s) to trigger your loved one into the afterlife. In case anyone is interested, one pound of cremains will fill approximately 250 shotgun shells and we’re guessing many more rounds of rifle or handgun ammunition. Chesterton, referring to death and the accompanying grief, said the best way to lessen sorrow is to make a lot of it. Holy Smoke seems to be taking G.K. at his word.

WHAT, NO CRUNCHY FROG?

SYDNEY, Australia—Chesterton said food was a primary necessity that can only be got from the earth, and entomologist Skye Blackburn is providing graphic proof that G.K. was right again. While looking for a way to attract people to her stall at a pet and animal expo, she hit on the idea of encasing bugs at the center of flavored lollipops. To her surprise the confections caught on and she has since expanded her offerings to include chocolate covered bugs, chocolate chip mealworm cookies, frozen bugs, and roasted bugs. She has also

begun breeding edible insects and offering culinary commentary such as how mealworms are crunchier than crickets and have a mild, nutty flavor but crickets are much better in a stir fry or curry. Blackburn also notes that termites are high in iron, silk worms contain good fats, and tarantulas and water bugs are high in protein. Blackburn claims she has a growing customer base that includes university professors, doctors, and lawyers. Her base, however, is unlikely to include right-thinking Chestertonians, who know G.K. was more likely thinking of beer than of beetles. 🐞

CLERIH EW CORNER

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The digestion of Milton
Was unequal to Stilton.
He was only feeling so-so
When he wrote *Il Penseroso*.

—E.C. BENTLEY

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The Imitators

I’d like to tell Guglielmo Marconi
That the Fairness Doctrine is baloney.
Without talk radio, there is so much I’d
be missin’.
I’ve said my piece, I’ll hang up and listen.
—JOE WILSON, *St. Louis, Missouri*

The good Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Thought no one could his Sherlock soil,
But his smug certainty began to flag
To see him played by Iron Man in drag.
—CHRIS PAOLELLI, *Park Ridge, Illinois*

There’s a poem of Don John
A masterpiece by Chesterton.
It’s better than this one,
Which was no good and now it’s done.
—KAISER JOHNSON, *Los Angeles, California*

Both our G.K. and Henry Ford
Were accused of something untoward.
But in Henry’s case the charge was right,
Because he really was an anti-Semite.
—CHUCK CHALBERG, *Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Oh, Chesterton,
As light as a ton,
Smarter than Einstein,
Cooler than Ben Stein.
—ELIJAH JOHNSON, *Perrysburg, Ohio*

Sir Alec Guinness
In Star Wars dialogue found a weakness.
Playing Fagin won him renown,
But “the Force” to convert him was Father
Brown.
—DONNY BRADY, *Albuquerque, New Mexico*

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



The Most Fictitious Sort of Fiction

by G.K. Chesterton

One of the most successful masters of fiction in England once honored me by asking if I thought he would improve his work by becoming a psychoanalyst; and I told him that, for my own pleasure at least, I should prefer him to go on being a novelist.

But it is true that the recent conjectures in psychology have a natural affinity to fiction, and especially to the most fictitious sort of fiction. For the old cynics insisted that we tell lies to each other; the new materialistic mystics insist that we tell ties to ourselves.

The unconscious part of us is not the simple, it is the very home of the complex. Our lower self is not conscious, but it seems to be extremely cunning. We are not going back into the primitive forest, but only being led up the garden; and the wild beasts of whom we must beware are no longer the ape and the tiger, but the more misleading totems of the cock and bull.

What we think we think we think sounds like a tedious repetition; but it is not even correctly repeated. It is a sort of Russian scandal, and always least frank when it is most scandalous. If we dream of three pumpkins and a purple dressing gown, that is the effect of a fit of shyness in the attempt to convey that we once wanted to elope with our grandmother, and if that is the effect of fiction on fact, even before it enters our minds, Lord knows what the fictions will be like by the time they leave it.

This has lately had some weird effects in biography. A book on Dickens, written recently by Mr. Hugh Kingsmill, has been generally denounced as a denunciation of Dickens, making him out worse than he was. In some ways it seems to me to make him out even better than he was; though perhaps not quite so sane. For it turns half his comic and casual work into a series of confessions; and open confession, and perhaps even this queer half-shut confession, may be good for the soul.

But, as stated, it is hardly very creditable to the mind. Dickens is

charged with sharp bargaining with publishers; that, anyhow, is surely a point to be settled on the facts and not on the fiction. But here it is gravely said that Dickens wrote the whole Christmas story of Scrooge the miser to confess his own avarice and display the triumph of his better self.

If he did, I congratulate him, but I hardly think even his complexes were so complex as that. Dickens really did have the fault of being self-conscious; but that seems an odd reason for treating him only as subconscious. There is a more astonishing case in Mr. Moddle, the moonstruck lover at Todgers,' whom we are asked under the staring stars to take quite seriously, as another shadow of the penitent Dickens.

But that is the too easy trick of this penitent; anything can be done with symbols. The sinner springs from the penitent form and wails aloud, "A spotted horse and two lamp-posts," which means, "I forged Uncle William's name;" or whispers in the confessional-box, "Cats and a pail of whitewash" (which means he committed bigamy), and the priest gently replies, "Six windows with blue curtains"—which is an absolution; but one a little too vague for me.

You can do only too much with symbols; they are only too suitable to fiction. But I rather prefer confessions to be facts. ☁

From *New York American*, January 26, 1935



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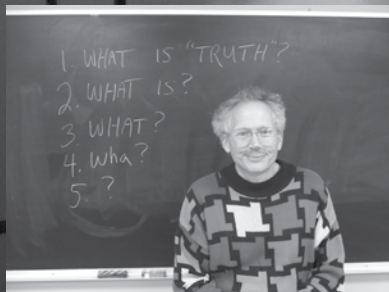
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